

Biden's Foreign Policy Legacy: a Mix of Failure and Crime

In his last speech, president claims US adversaries 'weakened', but reality shows otherwise



Joe Biden speaks at the State Department in Washington, DC, on January 13, 2025, as he delivers his final foreign policy speech.

Army receives 1,000 new drones in move that allows it to 'command the skies'

TEHRAN – Iran has showcased its formidable advancements in air and naval defense, emphasizing its readiness to exert control over its airspace by adding 1,000 new drones ready to use by its armed forces.

At a ceremony on Monday, Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh celebrated the induction of 1,000 cutting-edge unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) into Iran's Army Combat Organization.

He remarked that these drones have granted the Iranian military the capability to "command the skies" and strike enemies decisively if required.

The new UAVs are versatile, with the ability to land on and take off from sea surfaces, enhancing their role in smart operations and ground force support.

Nasirzadeh cited the guidance of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who emphasized the defense sector's responsibility to equip Iran's military with essential defense systems.

Nasirzadeh also highlighted that Iran's military drills have only showcased a portion of their true capabilities.

"We possess extraordinary equipment," he stated, indicating that these assets would be deployed when necessary. ▶ Page 2

Araghchi appoints special representative for Syrian affairs

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has appointed Mohammad Reza Raouf Sheibani as his Special Representative for Syrian Affairs.

This decision comes amid ongoing regional challenges, with Syria's stability playing a crucial role in the broader peace and security dynamics of West Asia.

In the official decree, Araghchi highlighted Syria's strategic importance within the region and underscored the critical need to ensure the country's stability. He emphasized that the future of Syria must remain in the hands of the Syrian people, without foreign intervention, and stressed the necessity of respecting Syria's territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

Sheibani previously served as Araghchi's Special Representative for Lebanese Affairs.

'Autocrat' label and past crimes fuel backlash against outgoing US envoy in Japan

TEHRAN – Japanese citizens have expressed anger over a social media post by outgoing U.S. Ambassador Rahm Emanuel, in which he reiterated his inflammatory remarks about China, Iran, Russia, North Korea, and Venezuela, labeling them an "axis of autocrats."

"I'm going out like I came in: Never afraid to share my views," the former American chief of staff stated in a post on X, after claiming that the five countries are "as weak as the societies they have broken."

"The leaders of the 'axis of autocrats' have more in common than style alone. China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela bear the same hallmarks: Their economies are failing, their societal legitimacy is faltering, capital is fleeing, and their youth are breaking free. The autocrats' bluster and bravado don't fool those of us who believe in freedom, rights, and democracy," Emanuel wrote on Monday. ▶ Page 2

Gaza ceasefire "imminent" as Netanyahu capitulates

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Discussions in Qatar continued on Tuesday as mediators worked to finalize a plan to end the war on Gaza.

The focus of the talks was on a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from the enclave.

Both Israel and Hamas are reviewing a final draft proposal after a "breakthrough" in negotiations on Monday.

The White House had earlier indicated that an agreement was "imminent".

High-level meetings were held in Qatar on Monday. The Qatari government confirmed Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani held talks with Khalil al-Hayya, a Hamas leader.

The Qatari ruler also met with Brett McGurk, a National Security Council official heading U.S. President Joe Biden's talks, and Steve Witkoff, President-elect Donald Trump's appointed Middle East special envoy, the statement added.

Reports suggest this is to ensure that the incoming U.S. administration supports the terms of the deal. ▶ Page 5

Art in the rubble: how Gaza's artists are documenting the war

In a Gaza battered by war and deprivation, Israel's severe restrictions on aid and commercial goods have intensified a humanitarian crisis that the UN described in a 12 November briefing as "catastrophic", warning of "imminent famine". Yet, against all odds, Gaza's artists continue to create.

Facing shortages of basic supplies, from food to paper, they turn whatever they can find into tools of expression to document the relentless conflict around them. The Art Newspaper spoke with four artists who, amid the rubble and chaos, are using their art to preserve a record of life in Gaza and to share their stories with the world by any means possible.

Khaled Hossein

Hossein, a sculptor from Rafah in southern Gaza, initially stayed in his hometown when the war began. Israel had designated it a safe zone and directed much of Gaza's population there. Hossein worked tirelessly to provide for his family and ensure their safety, leaving little time for art.

But when Israel's military campaign reached Rafah in May 2024, he and his family were forced to flee, and their home was destroyed. In Deir al-Balah, surrounded by old friends from Gaza's once-vibrant art scene, he was encouraged to start creating again. ▶ Page 8

Lebanon's developments a lesson for those still tricked by so-called US democracy

By Sondoss Al-Asaad

BEIRUT – The stance of those who have deliberately thwarted Hezbollah's political victory in the presidential race and who openly declare their absolute loyalty to Washington is not shocking. What is shocking, however, is the stance of Hezbollah's so-called allies, who have shamefully submitted to the higher foreign orders.

This same team has expressed its concern about the anti-Hezbollah team's relentless attempt to drag Lebanon into a "civil conflict". Hence, they have communicated with the Shiite duo in a bid to reach an understanding on forming a national cabinet capable of running Lebanon until the parliamentary elections scheduled for May 2026.

They further warned Judge Nawaf Salam, the prime minister-designate, to avoid "being manipulated as a tool of confronting the Shiites or the resistance (movement), and to take the initiative to expand the circle of trust in his upcoming government." ▶ Page 5

Why Washington Post cartoonist's critique of Trump lead to her sudden exit?

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN- Earlier last week, Ann Telnaes, the Pulitzer prize-winning cartoonist for The Washington Post, tendered her resignation after the newspaper declined to publish a satirical cartoon.

The cartoon depicted the paper's owner, Jeff Bezos, alongside other media and technology moguls, kneeling before Donald Trump as he prepares for his term as president in the White House.

In a statement expressing her disappointment and frustration, Telnaes revealed that she had engaged in constructive discussions with the Post about her work in the past, but had never faced the rejection of a cartoon based on its subject matter. ▶ Page 8



I'tikaf gets underway all around country

I'tikaf is an ancient Islamic tradition that is usually held during the 13th, 14th, and 15th of the month Rajab.

During I'tikaf, an individual goes to the mosque, fasts, and remains there to stand against the consumption-driven life.

Secluded from their daily routine, the Mu'takif [the person taking part in the I'tikaf] dedicates time to themselves and seeking closeness to God.

Throughout these three days, the Mu'takifs often spend their time studying religious books, reciting the Holy Quran, praying, and contemplating.

During this time, he/she can think attentively with peace of mind about this world and its creator and the path that one has before them in order to reach the creator.

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

The time of nuclear talks in Geneva

In a commentary, Donya-e-Eqtasad dealt with the new round of talks between Iran and the European trio of Britain, France and Germany. The paper said: The second round of talks between Iran and Europe in Geneva, Switzerland, started on Monday. These talks are important just one week before Trump returns to the White House. Four main issues were raised in the meeting. Challenges related to bilateral relations, issues related to sanctions, nuclear and JCPOA, and the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. Regardless of the priorities of both sides and the will and a clear plan to reach an acceptable negotiation format, all issues are not related to Tehran and European capitals, but an important part of this process is related to Trump's return to the White House. In other words, Trump's promise for peace in Ukraine and Gaza will naturally affect the relations between Iran and Europe and reduce the challenges, and the two sides can focus more on bilateral relations and resolving related issues. But the nuclear case, especially the JCPOA, is still facing uncertainty.

Farhikhtegan: California is on fire but the opposition is asleep

In an article, Farhikhtegan discussed the fire in the city of Los Angeles and the silence of the foreign-based opposition media outlets and said: At the same time as the fire rages in California, the Iranian opposition figures (living in the West) are becoming quieter day by day. This silence occurs in the face of disasters such as massive fires in America or other parts of the world. But these people loudly analyze and criticize every event in Iran. For them, disasters are not a human issue, but a political tool. They even accused Iran of being involved in this incident and tried to provoke disputes. This hypocritical behavior is clear to people. California is burning, but the silence of the opposition is more noticeable. This silence may reveal many hidden truths, that show that the concern of these media is not humanity but politics.

Jam-e-Jam: Messages of the authority of a nation

In a note, Jam-e-Jam discussed the unveiling of Iran's new missile city and said: The unveiling of Iran's new missile city carries mes-

sages for the people of Iran, the region, and the world. Our enemies felt that if they did any actions against the Islamic Republic of Iran through sanctions and other ways, we would surrender to their demands. The achievements of the Islamic Republic of Iran are also a lesson for the countries of the region and the world. Some countries in the region are under the control of enemies. The unveiling of the successes of the Islamic Republic of Iran has a message for the countries in the region and the world that are looking for freedom; they can take appropriate steps for the success of their country by relying on their internal strength. Also, this event is considered a deterrent against our enemies like America, because they have seen and touched our strikes. For example, after Operation True Promise I, Operation True Promise II was carried out with more strength. Therefore, the unveiling of these achievements gives strength to the Iranian nation. Our young people also feel proud of these actions. In this way, they will conduct more effective actions in the future.

Iran: Effect of Iran-U.S. talks on activation of trigger mechanism

In an interview with Reza Nasri, an expert on strategic issues, the Iran newspaper analyzed the possible resumption of negotiations between Iran and the United States. He said: Trump's desire to reach an agreement with Iran has been mentioned once again. To date, Trump has not indicated that he intends to abandon the policy of "maximum pressure". He follows a foreign policy based on a doctrine known as "peace through power". But Iran should not be passive about this issue. Iran's initiative and activism can affect Trump's approach. On the other side, European countries will not resort to the trigger mechanism without U.S. permission. They know that with the revival of the Security Council resolutions (against Tehran), Iran will most likely withdraw from the NPT. The increase in tension between Iran and Western countries will endanger the stability and security of the region more than ever before. If America does not issue such permission due to the possibility of reaching an agreement or progress in negotiations with Iran, they will not act independently.

Armenia thanks Iran for backing its sovereignty



TEHRAN – Armenia's President Vahagn Khachaturyan expressed gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran for its steadfast support of Armenia's territorial integrity and national sovereignty during a high-level meeting with the Iranian Parliamentary Friendship Group.

The head and members of the Parliamentary Friendship Group of Iran's Parliament held extensive discussions with Armenia's President Khachaturyan during their official visit to Yerevan.

Highlighting the alignment of views between the two nations on regional peace and security, Khachaturyan commended Iran's principled stance amid complex geopolitical challenges in the South Caucasus.

"Iran's principled stance on supporting Armenia's sovereignty is deeply appreciated, particularly in these complex times," he added. President Khachaturyan expressed his sat-

isfaction with the steady growth of relations between Iran and Armenia in recent years. He reaffirmed the Armenian government's determination to strengthen ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran across various sectors.

"Iran and Armenia share longstanding historical and cultural bonds, and my government remains committed to fostering this partnership further," the Armenian President stated.

President Khachaturyan emphasized the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in fortifying bilateral relations. He described the visit of the Iranian Parliamentary Friendship Group as a vital step toward expanding collaboration between the two nations' legislative bodies. He called for increased interaction between members of Iran's Parliament and Armenia's National Assembly, highlighting the role of parliamentarians in advancing mutual interests.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Army receives 1,000 new drones in move that allows it to 'command the skies'

From page 1 ▶ He stressed the critical role of artificial intelligence in drone production, attributing the successful integration of such a large number of drones to the synergy between the defense industry and the military.

The Iranian Army, he asserted, has reached a high level of proficiency in drone application, utilizing diverse strategies and innovations across its military branches.

Nasirzadeh vowed that Iran's "lowly enemies" would be deterred from any acts of aggression, praising the Iranian commanders' rigorous demands that have driven the defense industry to deliver essential military equipment.

The event also highlighted the ongoing production of First-Person View (FPV) drones, further enhancing Iran's UAV capabilities.

Formation of a 'dedicated Drone Force'

Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, the Army's Command-



er-in-Chief, echoed these sentiments, noting that such ceremonies and military exercises demonstrate the extensive readiness and capacity of Iran's forces.

He assured that the forces possess all necessary resources.

Mousavi praised the defense

industry's dedication to fulfilling the leader's directive to continuously improve military preparedness.

Addressing the Iranian public, he affirmed the unwavering commitment of the Armed Forces to protect the nation, stating, "The people's death-defying

sons in the Armed Forces stand by their commitment to God, the Leader, and the nation with all their life, blood, knowledge, and power."

He warned potential adversaries against underestimating Iran's resolve, declaring, "This is the proud Islamic Iran, and its great people...are standing up wholeheartedly, and would not back down an iota."

Mousavi highlighted Monday's ceremony as the second major UAV integration by the defense industry within a short period.

He noted that this recent batch is particularly significant, having been delivered six months ahead of schedule due to pressing field conditions.

He predicted a continued expansion of Iran's drone capabilities, suggesting that the establishment of a dedicated Drone Force within the Army might be on the horizon.

'Autocrat' label and past crimes fuel backlash against outgoing US envoy in Japan



Photo shows Rahm Emanuel, outgoing U.S. ambassador to Japan

From page 1 ▶ The ambassador, who assumed his role in August 2021, first made the controversial comments during an interview with American media that largely centered around his own positive assessment of his ambassadorship to Japan.

However, Japanese citizens have condemned the outgoing envoy for his remarks, asserting that the U.S. is the real autocrat.

"Americans have hundreds of military bases around the world. You have started tens of wars and killed millions of people. It's unbelievable that you have the audacity to point fingers at others," wrote one Japanese citizen under Emanuel's post.

"Are Russians and Iranians raping Japanese girls? No! American soldiers are doing that, and their crimes are not even being investigated properly," wrote another Japanese citizen in response to Emanuel.

In the past three decades, numerous incidents involving American military personnel stationed in Japan sexually assaulting Japanese women and girls have emerged, provoking outrage among the local population.

Last year, an unnamed American soldier was charged with sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl in Okinawa, which is home to half of the 54,000 U.S. service members in Japan. This case particularly infuri-

ated the Japanese public as it resurfaced painful memories of a similar crime from 1995. In that distressing incident, three U.S. Marine Corps members kidnapped a 12-year-old girl walking home from school and raped her in a car. The fact that the American military took control of the prosecution of the rapists only intensified the anger felt by many Japanese citizens, as it is believed that many such cases have not been brought to light.

Others reacting to the envoy's vilification of U.S. rivals argued that he was interfering in Japan's internal affairs. "Do not bring your personal feelings to Japan. We don't care about your competition with other countries," wrote one Japanese man. Some also mocked Emanuel's assessment of the economies of Iran, China, and Russia

as "failing." "Says the almighty USA that can't even have a working water hydrant," was another pointed response.

Iran's embassy in Japan also responded to the American ambassador's remarks, stating on X, "The primacy of American interests over international law is the perennial fulcrum of U.S. foreign policy and its support for autocrats, coups, and interventions. Defy this and get bashed." The embassy then pointed to the 1953 U.S.-orchestrated coup in Iran, which overthrew the democratically-elected government of Mohammad Mosaddegh.

Iran calls latest round of talks with E3 'constructive and serious'

TEHRAN – Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Kazem Gharibabadi, described the latest round of talks with the European trio (E3) – the United Kingdom, France, and Germany – as "constructive."

The discussions, held in Geneva on Monday, focused on the removal of illegal sanctions against Iran and issues related to the country's civilian nuclear program.

"The talks were serious, frank, and constructive," Gharibabadi posted on X.

He emphasized that the negotiations delved into details crucial for reaching an agreement on sanction relief and the nuclear issue.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister, alongside Gharibabadi, engaged with political directors and deputies of the E3.

Both sides addressed not only the sanctions and nuclear issues but also regional matters and common interests.

Gharibabadi highlighted that there was a consensus on the need to resume negotiations and maintain a conducive atmosphere for reaching an agreement.

The British, French, and German representatives echoed Gharibabadi's sentiments in a joint statement, acknowledging the serious and constructive nature of the talks.

"Against a challenging context, we discussed concerns and reiterated our commitment to a diplomatic solution. We agreed to continue our dialogue," they wrote on X.

The recent meeting in Geneva builds upon prior dialogues that took place alongside the UN General Assembly in New York in September and another gathering in Geneva in November.

These discussions followed the adoption of an anti-Iran resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Board of Governors in November 2024.

The resolution, driven by the United States and the European Troika, accused Iran of failing to fully adhere to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed between Tehran and the P5+1 in 2015.

The JCPOA, designed to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the termination of



sanctions, was rendered ineffective when, in 2018, Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the deal and re-imposed sanctions against Iran.

The re-imposition of sanctions, coupled with European countries' often unconstructive positions, has prompted a series of responses from Iran since 2020, with the latest including the deployment of new advanced centrifuges.

Nevertheless, Iran consistently emphasizes that its primary goal is the termination of sanctions. The country's officials have repeatedly affirmed this position, stressing the need to enhance national resilience to mitigate the effects of sanctions while remaining open to diplomatic negotiations.

Last month, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi conveyed Tehran's willingness to re-engage in talks with global powers to resolve the protracted impasse over the state of the 2015 nuclear deal.

"The formula we have is the same as the previous JCPOA formula, which is building trust about Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the removal of sanctions. We are ready to negotiate on this basis," he said.

'A step forward'

In a separate X post on Tuesday, Gharibabadi provided details on the second day of discussions, stating, "We had open and constructive discussions with Enrique Mora and his team in Geneva. We exchanged views mainly on nuclear/sanctions lifting as well as other issues of mutual interest."

He also added that they discussed Europe's support for the Israeli regime's crimes in Gaza.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Biden's foreign policy legacy: a mix of failure and crime

In his last speech, president claims US adversaries 'weakened', but reality shows otherwise

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – In his last speech as the U.S. President, ailing Joe Biden defended his foreign policy legacy by asserting that he has left America and its alliances "stronger" and the adversaries of the United States "weaker".

The outgoing leader famous for his gaffes, stumbles, and missteps took aim at Iran for a good part of his 30-minute address.

"Iran's air defenses are in shambles. Their main proxy, Hezbollah, is badly wounded, and as we tested Iran's willingness to revive the nuclear deal, we kept the pressure with sanctions. Now Iran's economy is in desperate straits," he said, adding, "All told, Iran is weaker than it's been in decades."

Biden's proclamations were mocked both inside and outside the United States. Observers noted that the president's "demented" state appeared to persist until his last day in the White House and that his Saturday valedictory speech encapsulated why he and his Vice President Kamala Harris failed to secure a second term in office.

What even is Biden's foreign policy legacy?

His opponents characterize the 82-year-old's time as U.S. leader with two major wars and one humiliating end to

a two-decade conflict: the war in Ukraine, the war in Gaza, and the embarrassing withdrawal from Afghanistan.

In Ukraine, Biden's policies have sacrificed multiple generations of Ukrainian men, contributed to the decline of European economies, depleted NATO's weapons

His opponents characterize the 82-year-old's time as U.S. leader with two major wars and one humiliating end to a two-decade conflict: the war in Ukraine, the war in Gaza, and the embarrassing withdrawal from Afghanistan

stockpiles, and fueled anti-American sentiment within the Russian population, in a bid to weaken Moscow. With anti-Russia sanctions failing to cripple its economy as the West had hoped for, and Ukrainian forces struggling to halt Russian advances despite billions in military aid and the presence of some Western forces, it is believed that Russia will likely emerge victorious. Analysts predict the war in Ukraine will eventually conclude with an agreement that cedes a significant portion of Ukrainian territory to Russia and, at least for the near term, keeps the government in Kyiv in Moscow's orbit.

In Gaza, Biden funded some of the most harrowing days in human history, which were recorded and circulated

online, much to his dismay. He supported Israel in razing Gaza to the ground, bombing hospitals, raping women, burning civilians alive in refugee tents, and allowing newborns to freeze to death. The limited and fleeing victories Biden achieved against Lebanon's Hezbollah and Hamas came at the cost

of at least 50,000 Palestinian lives, and a forever stain on the reputation of the United States – the country that likes to tout itself as the ultimate defender of human rights.

In Afghanistan, the messy withdrawal of American forces from the country they had occupied for two decades became the laughingstock around the world. The Biden administration, American generals claim, failed to make timely decisions about the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, which created the chaos in which hundreds of Afghan citizens and 13 U.S. soldiers were killed.

Biden and Iran

Biden's Iran policy is particularly self-defeating. Despite initially promising to revive the 2015 nuclear

deal (JCPOA) and reduce tensions, his administration only created more challenges with Iran. His continuation of Trump's "maximum pressure" policy—unprecedented sanctions aimed at collapsing Iran's economy—only caused Tehran to expand its nuclear program.

While Iran has consistently maintained its lack of interest in developing nuclear weapons, Biden's untrammelled support for Israel and uncompromising position against JCPOA revival has, for the first time since the inception of its nuclear program, led to a large public call within Iran for nuclear weapons development.

The president also failed miserably to contain Iran's military influence. Iran's state-of-the-art weapons are now sold across Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. The country attacked Israel twice last year and conducted some of the biggest missile and drone operations in history. Furthermore, despite Biden's claims about Iran's air defenses being in "shambles", the country's latest military drills encompassing the entire nation proved Iran's defense forces are fully intact.

Biden can boast about his "successful" foreign policy agenda during his last days in office, but observers look at the reality on the ground to make an assessment.

Iranian Navy to receive new destroyer, unveil strategic base in Oman Gulf



TEHRAN – Iran's Navy is witnessing a significant boost in its maritime capabilities with the upcoming unveiling of the Zagros destroyer and the inauguration of a new military base in Jask.

Designed and built with the latest in maritime technology, the destroyer is poised to become a cornerstone of Iran's naval operations.

Rear Admiral Shahram Irani, the Commander of the Iranian Navy, announced the addition of the Zagros destroyer to the naval fleet, highlighting its unique attributes developed through Iranian expertise.

"This vessel, created with domestic knowledge and capabilities, is set to operate in the region, showcasing our naval strength," he stated.

The destroyer is intended to be the most advanced destroyer in the Iranian fleet, equipped with distinctive features for both combat and intelligence-gathering operations.

It includes facilities such

as a helicopter hangar and is meant to join the Navy's operations in the region.

In parallel with the destroyer's launch, The Navy inaugurated its largest military hub in Jask, a strategic location on the Gulf of Oman.

The base is outfitted with specialized docks and the most advanced equipment, positioning Iran as a formidable maritime force in the region.

Iran's focus on enhancing its naval capabilities aligns with its broader strategy to exploit the blue economy and assert its influence in international waters.

The Navy has achieved self-sufficiency in manufacturing both surface and sub-surface vessels, a testament to the country's burgeoning shipbuilding industry.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israel's territorial ambitions threaten global peace: Foreign Ministry

TEHRAN – The Iranian Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned Israel's ongoing expansionist policies, stating that the Israeli regime's recent actions in drawing up a map that includes parts of neighboring countries—such as Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and all of occupied Palestine—serve as a clear indication of Israel's unrestrained pursuit of territorial expansion.

During a weekly press conference on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baqaei, emphasized that this behavior reflects the Israeli regime's complete disregard for international law and territorial boundaries, labeling the actions as not only legally unacceptable but also a direct challenge to regional stability.

He underscored that this expansionist agenda shows Israel's determination to continue its policy of occupation and aggression, with no regard for the sovereignty of its neighbors.

Baqaei noted that the international community must view this development as a warning, as the Israeli regime, founded on the forceful occupation of Palestinian lands, is now openly threatening to expand its control over additional countries.

He further stated that Israel's actions demonstrate a blatant disrespect for the principles of international



law, which are vital for maintaining peace and security in the region.

'Iran-Russia strategic partnership agreement to be signed during presidential visit'

Baqei also commented on the upcoming visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Russia, revealing that during this important diplomatic trip, Iran and Russia are expected to sign a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty.

The agreement has been in the works for the past several years, with numerous drafts exchanged between the two countries.

The treaty will cover a broad spectrum of areas, including economic cooperation, energy, healthcare, agriculture, and counterterrorism efforts. It will also address challenges such as the impact of natural disasters, terrorism, and transnational crimes, with a particular emphasis on enhancing transport networks and renewable energy solutions.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

SPORTS

Kamolov joins Gol Gohar

TEHRAN – Iranian football club Gol Gohar completed the signing of Tajikistani winger Amadoni Kamolov.

The 22-year-old player has joined Gol Gohar from Istiklol and he is a member of Tajikistan national team.

Saudi Arabian giant Al-Ittihadand Persepolis had also shown an interest in signing the player.

Persepolis are looking for a replacement for head coach Juan Carlos Garrido, who left the club by mutual consent in late December.

Samimi named Iran Paralympic committee SG

TEHRAN – Hamidali Samimi was appointed as secretary general of Iran's National Paralympic Committee (NPC) on Sunday.

He has been appointed to the role by President of Iran's NPC Ghafour Karegari.

Samimi replaced Kamal Javanmard in the post.

Samimi has previously served as President of Islamic Republic of Iran Sports Federation for the Disabled.

Iran's Safdarian wins silver at UIAA Ice World Cup

TEHRAN – Mohammad Reza Safdarian won a silver medal in the 2025 International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) Ice Climbing World Cup.

The gold medal went to South Korean Younggeon Lee in the men's lead.

Swiss athlete Benjamin Bosshard seized a bronze medal.

The event has brought a total of 118 athletes from 18 countries around the world together, including 27 ice climbing players representing South Korea.

The competition is being held in Cheongsong, South Korea.

Havadar sign Joe Champness

TEHRAN – New Zealand's Joe Champness has signed with Iranian top-flight club Havadar.

The winger joined the Tehran-based team from Auckland FC.

Champness, 27, began his playing career with Moreton Bay United in Australia in 2015 and has also played for Brisbane Roar, Newcastle Jets, and Turkish sides Giresunspor, and Adanaspor.

Havadar are currently in 16th place in the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) table.

Havadar are scheduled to meet Kheybar on Jan. 20.

Ex-Esteghlal coach Majidi appointed Al Bataeh coach

TEHRAN – Former Esteghlal coach Farhad Majidi took charge of Emirati side Al Bataeh on Monday.

The 48-year-old coach previously led Al-Ittihad Kalba but parted ways with the team in March of last year.

Majidi has now been appointed as the head coach of Al Bataeh for the remainder of the season.

Al Bataeh are 12th in the 2024/25 UAE Pro League, which features 14 teams.

Davoudi shortlisted for World's Best Young Player

TEHRAN – Amir Hossein Davoudi has been nominated for the Best Men's Young Player in the World in the 25th edition of the annual Futsal prizes released by Futsalplanet.com

A total of 10 young futsal players vie for the accolade.

Davoudi was a member of Iran futsal team in the 2024 FIFA Futsal World Cup.

Best Men's Young Player in the World (Winner to be announced on January 14th, 2025)

Nominees

(Players who were still 23 years old on December 31st, 2024 – listed in alphabetical order)

Amir Hossein Davoudi (IRN)
Sanaye Giti Pasand Futsal Club (IRN) – IRAN N.T.

Eloy De Pablos De Diego (ESP)
CA Osasuna Magna (ESP) – Movistar Inter FS (ESP)

Lucas Matheus Santos de Farias (BRA)
Umuarama Futsal – AFSU (BRA)
Mehran Gholami (AFG)

Safir Gofteman Futsal Club (IRN) – AFGHANISTAN N.T.

Lucas Ezequiel Granda (ARG)
Club Social y Deportivo Pinocho (ARG) – ARGENTINA U20 N.T.

Guilherme Augusto Uesler (BRA)
Jaraguá Futsal (BRA) – BRAZIL U20 N.T.
Edmilson Camala Sá "Kutchy" (POR)

SL Benfica (POR) – PORTUGAL N.T.
Ivan Gabriel Monteros (ARG)
Club Cultural y Deportivo 17 de Agosto (ARG) – ARGENTINA U20 N.T.

Rostyslav Semenchenko (UKR)
FC Aurora Team Kyiv (UKR) – UKRAINE N.T.
Mamadou Siragassy Touré (FRA)

Barça (ESP) – FRANCE N.T.

Karim Ansarifard linked with Tractor

TEHRAN – Iranian international forward Karim Ansarifard has been linked with a move to Tractor football club during the January transfer window.

The 34-year-old striker is a free agent after parting ways with Greek side Aris.

Ansarifard began his professional career with Saipa in 2007 and has played for notable Iranian teams, including Persepolis and Tractor.

He moved to Osasuna in 2014 and has also played for Greek clubs Panionios, Olympiacos, AEK Athens, and Aris.

Additionally, Ansarifard was a member of English side Nottingham Forest during the 2018-19 season.

Esteghlal fall to Kheybar in friendly

TEHRAN – The Esteghlal football team lost to Kheybar 2-0 in a friendly match on Monday.

Ehsan Hosseini and Taha Tabatabaei scored for Kheybar during the match held on Kish Island.

Esteghlal is set to face Nassaji in another friendly before meeting Shams Azar on January 20.

Currently, Pitso Mosimane's Esteghlal sit 10th in the 16-team Iran Professional League (IPL).

TPO invites private sector to cooperate in development of border markets



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has announced the organization's readiness to collaborate with the private sector to invest in border markets.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with IRIB, Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi highlighted the challenges faced by many of the border markets in Iran's provinces, noting that infrastructure and facilities in these areas are significantly lacking.

He mentioned that during visits to these markets, both traders and locals expressed dissatisfaction with the current conditions.

Dehghan Dehnavi emphasized that the private sector can play a pivotal role by investing in and establishing export terminals, thereby improving services for traders and merchants.

The TPO is prepared to assist interested investors in obtaining necessary permits and will provide incentives to encourage private sector involvement in the development of border markets.

French company offers jet fuel to Iranian airlines

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization has announced that a French company is prepared to sell jet fuel to Iranian airlines, despite higher costs.

According to a report by Tasnim News Agency, Mohammadreza Pourfarzaneh stated that ticket sales for Tehran-Paris flights would soon commence. He also noted ongoing legal efforts to lift sanctions on Iran Air, describing the sanctions as "unreasonable and unjust."

Pourfarzaneh emphasized that Iran has raised various demands in resuming interna-

tional flights, including issues related to medical supplies and drug transportation.

He further added that, besides Iran Airtour Airlines, Qeshm Air is finalizing plans for flights to two European countries, although no flights to London are currently planned.

Pourfarzaneh acknowledged that while a company in Paris is willing to supply jet fuel, the prices are higher than usual. He highlighted that many fuel suppliers are hesitant to work with Iranian airlines due to their ties with the United States and fears of sanctions.

Iran, Turkey sign cooperation agreement on livestock, aquatic feed

TEHRAN - Majid Movahed Ghaderi, a board member of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Iran and Turkey's private sectors to enhance trade cooperation in the livestock, poultry, and aquatic feed industry.

The MOU was signed during the eighth Strategic Agricultural Committee meeting held in Ankara, with the presence of Alireza Nouri Qezeljeh, Iran's Minister of Agriculture, and Ibrahim Yumakli, Turkey's Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

According to Ghaderi, the agreement emphasizes joint investment opportunities, mutual marketing development, and information exchange on feed safety, livestock nutrition, and sustainable practices. He highlighted Turkey's significant demand for aquatic feed and raw materials, presenting

an opportunity for Iranian producers.

The economic leaders of both nations aim to increase bilateral trade to \$30 billion, with a \$5.0 billion target for the agricultural sector over the next five years. In 2023, trade between Iran and Turkey amounted to \$5.5 billion, with 16.6 percent comprising agricultural products. The trade volume of agricultural goods grew by 30 percent in the first ten months of 2024, reaching \$854 million.

Ghaderi stressed the potential for collaboration, noting that Turkey exports over 700 agricultural products to 200 countries and has valuable experience in agricultural trade. The MOU focuses on knowledge exchange, joint investments, and coordinated efforts to support both nations in global markets.

The eighth Strategic Agricultural Committee meeting, held from January 10 to 11 in Ankara, featured a 180-member Iranian delegation led by Minister Nouri Qezeljeh.

Gas consumption in Iran reaches 874 mcm

TEHRAN - Iran's total natural gas consumption over the past 24 hours reached 874 million cubic meters (mcm), according to the national broadcaster IRIB.

Of this amount, 616 million cubic meters, equivalent to 70 percent of the gas delivered

to the network, were consumed by residential, commercial, and small-scale industrial sectors.

Consumption in these sectors represents a 12 percent increase compared to the same day last year.

Iran's minister of industry to attend economic commission in Belarus

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mohammad Atabak will lead an economic delegation to Minsk, Belarus, on January 15 to participate in the 17th Iran-Belarus Joint Economic Committee meeting.

According to the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), Akbar Godari, Director General for Central Asia, Caucasus, and Russia at TPO, announced that the commission will convene on January 15 and 16. The event will be co-chaired by the two countries' industry ministers.

The commission will focus on strengthening and expanding mutual cooperation in trade, industry, agriculture, investment, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, transportation, and private sector collaboration to further enhance bilat-

eral economic and trade relations.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a memorandum of understanding will be signed by the two countries' industry ministers.

During the visit, Minister Atabak is also scheduled to meet with Belarusian Prime Minister and other high-ranking officials. Additionally, the Iranian Trade Center in Belarus will be inaugurated by the Iranian delegation.

Godari stated that trade between Iran and Belarus reached approximately \$38 million over the past eight months, with agricultural and petrochemical products being Iran's main exports.

The previous session of the Joint Economic Commission between the two nations was held in October 2023 in Tehran.

Makran petrochemical hub receives €10 billion investment

TEHRAN - The head of Negin Makran Petrochemical Development Company announced that approximately €10 billion has been invested in the third petrochemical hub at Negin Makran in Chabahar. This investment aims to establish petrochemical complexes and complete the methane gas value chain, ensuring that raw petrochemical exports will cease upon completion of the hub's phases.

Alireza Moniri Abyaneh, speaking with IRNA on Tuesday, stated that the Makran Petrochemical Complex consists of six megaprojects and 22 downstream petrochemical units. According to plans, utilities such as water, electricity, steam, and auxiliary services, along with two petrochemical units, will become operational by the summer of 2025.

He emphasized that the expertise developed in the country's third petrochemical hub is a valu-



able asset. He noted that Iran's petrochemical industry is now 63 years old, with the first two hubs, Mahshahr and Asaluyeh, established by the government.

Moniri Abyaneh highlighted that one of the main achievements of the Makran Petrochemical Complex is the employment of local workers. The workforce in this complex exceeds 5,000, with over 50 percent recruited

from the local population.

The official recounted the origins of the Makran Petrochemical Complex, which began following a directive from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution to develop the Makran coastline. In 2011, during a provincial visit to Sistan-Baluchestan, the government approved the establishment of the country's third petrochemical hub in the Chabahar

Free Zone, at a location identified by the Ministry of Oil.

Moniri Abyaneh noted that the Makran Petrochemical Complex, recognized as the third petrochemical hub, is the first instance where private-sector entities led the development of a petrochemical zone in a free trade area. Over time, even the regulatory frameworks governing development were drafted and refined as part of this pioneering project.

The Makran Petrochemical Complex encompasses 18 infrastructure and investment projects, seven of which involve petrochemical production in collaboration with private companies and investment holdings. Spanning 1,260 hectares, the majority of the hub's output will be exported, while some products will serve as feedstock for domestic petrochemical facilities and downstream industries.

Foreign currency allocations for basic goods, services exceed \$55b

TEHRAN - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced that from the beginning of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2024) until January 13, a total of \$55.127 billion in foreign currency has been allocated for the imports of essential goods, pharmaceuticals, commercial and trade commodities, as well as service-related needs.

According to IRNA, a total of \$42.576 billion

was allocated to the commercial and trade sector. Among industries, the largest shares were allocated to automotive transportation, machinery and production equipment, mining, electrical and electronic equipment, chemical and polymer industries, and textiles and apparel, in that order.

The essential goods and pharmaceuticals category accounted for \$11.448 billion. With-

in this group, \$8.995 billion was allocated to essential and agricultural goods, including wheat, oilseeds, and livestock feed. Additionally, \$2.453 billion was allocated for pharmaceuticals, raw materials for medicine, and medical equipment.

Service-related demands received \$1.103 billion in currency allocations.

Free zones urged to develop trade development frameworks

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has called for the preparation of trade development plans for the country's free trade zones, highlighting their potential for economic growth through trade.

According to a Monday report by the TPO, Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi emphasized the untapped potential of free zones and their ability to bolster trade during a joint meeting with Reza Masrou, Secretary of the Free Zones High Council.

While acknowledging concerns about free zones becoming import hubs, Dehnavi stressed that imports can lead to the development of infrastructure, such as customs facilities and roads, which could transform these zones into production centers.

"Imports and exports are interrelated. By creating the right infrastructure and planning imports in free zones, we can fulfill

consumer demand and improve people's welfare," Dehnavi stated.

The official underscored the importance of preparing trade development documents tailored to each free zone's unique strengths. These plans, he said, would help set quantifiable goals and foster systematic development. He expressed the TPO's readiness to collaborate with free zones to implement these plans and monitor progress.

He further noted the significance of export growth for addressing import-related challenges, explaining, "A positive trade balance can resolve many economic concerns. Each free zone can leverage the Eurasian Economic Union agreement to expand trade with neighboring countries, benefiting from reduced tariffs on many goods."

To mitigate the potential risks of imports, Dehnavi suggested that free zones utilize tools such

as hosting international trade exhibitions and forming sister-city partnerships with neighboring regions. He also emphasized the need for specialized task forces to address trade-related issues and enhance collaboration with neighboring countries.

Masrou, in turn, stressed the need for a joint export development framework to support export-oriented investments. He called for closer cooperation with the TPO to address policy challenges, including customs regulations for passenger goods and imported products.

He highlighted the importance of enhancing export capabilities through measures such as establishing Export Management Companies (EMCs) and specialized export consortia to target key markets. He urged the TPO to support these initiatives and ensure the alignment of policies to unlock the full potential of free zones.

The official also pointed to the critical role of commercial attachés in showcasing the potential of free zones to foreign investors. He announced plans to appoint trade advisors to neighboring countries to strengthen economic ties and attract foreign investment.

The meeting concluded with an emphasis on organizing joint trade and exhibition events. Masrou also highlighted the potential for promoting "halal tourism" and export-driven tourism within free zones as part of a broader strategy to boost exports. To ensure implementation, he proposed assigning dedicated economic and legal teams to oversee the agreed initiatives.

These discussions mark a significant step toward realizing the economic potential of Iran's free zones, turning them into dynamic hubs for trade and investment.

Iran's petchem exports reach \$10b in 9 months

TEHRAN - Iran's petrochemical industry achieved \$10 billion in exports during the first nine months of the Iranian calendar year 1403 (March-December 2024), with projections suggesting the figure could reach \$13 billion by year-end, a senior official announced.

Hassan Abbaszadeh, the head of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC), revealed the figures on Saturday, January 11, during a meeting with Oil Ministry officials, including First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, Shana reported.

He highlighted the industry's robust role in the economy, noting its 70 production complexes and three utility complexes. "Eighty-five percent of the petrochemical industry is concentrated in holding companies, primarily under pension funds, while 15 percent belongs to private enterprises," Abbaszadeh said.

In addition to exports, the sector supplied \$10 billion worth of feedstock to downstream industries, benefiting sectors such as polymers, footwear, apparel, and detergents.

Abbaszadeh emphasized that the seventh national development plan includes 61 petrochemical projects aimed at completing the industry's value chain. Unlike earlier plans that prioritized capacity expansion, the current strategy targets a production capacity of 131.5 million tons by 2028 in segments like



methanol, polyethylene, and ethylene.

"Though this approach is more challenging, it fosters value-added production and helps advance the industry's value chain," he said, adding that NPC will monitor and prioritize projects aligned with these goals.

The petrochemical projects in the seventh plan require \$24 billion in investments, with \$12 billion already spent, achieving an average physical progress of 50 percent. Abbaszadeh noted that the remaining \$12 billion will be invested to complete these projects.

Efforts are also underway to sustain feedstock supplies by investing in gas collection projects. Agreements have been signed for petrochemical companies to participate in the development of smaller gas fields to ensure reliable feedstock supply.

The petrochemical sector has entered the energy optimization field to address gas

feedstock challenges. Abbaszadeh said the industry is working with colder regions to promote energy-saving practices and upgrade equipment, freeing up natural gas for feedstock.

He also pointed to ongoing investments in renewable energy, with several petrochemical firms signing contracts to establish solar and wind power plants. For instance, Kaveh Methanol Company plans to generate 800 MW of solar power and 500 MW of wind power for its operations.

The official underscored the importance of proper land use planning tailored to local water resources, existing industries, and feedstock availability. This approach will enable provincial authorities to attract downstream investments.

The NPC is also exploring new export markets through a customer portfolio development study, aiming to expand beyond traditional clients. "We will prioritize projects with higher value-added potential and focus on diversifying our export markets in collaboration with petrochemical holding companies," Abbaszadeh said.

The Iranian petrochemical industry continues to play a vital role in driving economic growth, with significant investments aimed at enhancing value chains, expanding export markets, and improving energy efficiency.

Gaza ceasefire “imminent” as Netanyahu capitulates

From page 1 ▶ Other reports imply Trump sent his representative to make sure the deal is in place before he assumes office next week.

Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari confirmed that the talks were advancing, with Qatar, Egypt, and other key parties involved.

“We believe we have minimized disagreements between both sides. Discussions now focus on final details,” he said while urging caution against premature optimism.

For months, Hamas has expressed a willingness to reach an agreement, as long as the Israelis do not add any new conditions. It has also rejected vague guarantees that the indiscriminate bombing will stop.

The Palestinian resistance has further demanded that Israeli occupation forces pull back from the enclave as part of any agreement.

Since the U.S.-backed Israeli war on Gaza started, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted it would only end with the elimination of Hamas.

For over 15 months, the Israeli leader has promised to dismantle the Palestinian resistance, both its forces and its control over Gaza, calling it an “absolute victory”.

It now appears that Israel has been forced to submit to the demands of Hamas, which has proven it cannot be defeated militarily by the regime’s air, ground and naval forces.

Over the past week alone, more than a dozen Israeli soldiers have been killed in northern Gaza.

Last August, the former Israeli war minister, Yoav Gallant, told Netanyahu that his promises of “absolute victory” over Hamas were nothing more than “gibberish”.

Reports suggest the text of the deal implies a Palestinian Authority would govern the Strip in the long



term but does not provide details on the structure of this authority.

Some details of the deal have been leaked to some news outlets.

Three-phase plan

The key aspects of the agreement are notably similar to a proposal that Hamas accepted in May last year, but the Israeli cabinet rejected.

The deal reportedly consists of three phases, which allow the Palestinian resistance movement to keep male Israeli soldiers captive as a bargaining chip in case Israel resumes its attacks against women, children and the elderly.

Phase 1: Immediate ceasefire and prisoner exchange

The first phase will last 42 days. Hamas will release 33 Israeli captives, including female soldiers and those who are injured.

In exchange, Israel will release 1,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Israeli occupation forces will partially pull out from the Philadelphi corridor on the Gaza-Egypt border.

Humanitarian aid to Gaza will “surge” to address the ongoing crisis.

Phase 2: Continued releases and full withdrawal

Beginning on day 16 of the ceasefire, negotiations will continue to secure the release of the remaining hostages, including male soldiers

and younger male civilians.

The bodies of deceased hostages will also be returned during this phase.

Israeli occupation forces will make a “complete withdrawal” from Gaza.

Security measures will be established to ensure the safe return of residents to the northern Gaza Strip under international supervision.

Phase 3: Long-term negotiations and reconstruction

Reconstruction efforts will begin, with international aid supporting the rebuilding of Gaza’s civilian infrastructure.

Discussions will focus on long-term arrangements, including setting up a new governance structure for Gaza.

Israelis divided

The proposed ceasefire has caused division within the Israeli cabinet. Far-right police minister Itamar Ben-Gvir threatened to resign, calling the deal a “dangerous capitulation to Hamas.”

He urged Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich to join his opposition. Smotrich has also opposed the deal but Israeli media indicate Netanyahu has met Smotrich to dissuade him from resigning.

Despite the opposition, the public opinion polls show broad support for the deal. Opposition par-

ties have pledged to act as a “safety net” for Netanyahu to prevent a government collapse if the deal is concluded.

Families of the Israeli captives and their supporters have urged politicians not to make statements that could undermine the negotiations.

Israeli media reaction

Military analysts in the occupied territories have expressed concerns about the deal, pointing out the difficulty in dismantling Hamas’s infrastructure despite extensive military efforts. Analysts noted that the concessions to Hamas indicate recognition of the high costs of the war and the limited success in achieving military goals.

Ben Caspit, an Israeli journalist and political analyst for the Hebrew daily Maariv, discussed the political challenges facing Netanyahu.

“With all due respect to ideology, principles, ‘absolute victory,’ and all these hollow statements driven solely by fear of Ben Gvir, all of this evaporates in seconds when faced with Trump. Netanyahu has done his calculations. Dealing with Ben Gvir might be manageable, but with Trump, it will be much more challenging,” he wrote.

Yossi Yehoshua, a military analyst for Yedioth Ahronoth, Israel’s largest daily, stressed the Israeli army’s inability to dismantle Hamas’s military wing and the lack of a clear political plan for Gaza.

Yoav Limor, a senior military correspondent for Israel Hayom, a pro-government newspaper, criticized the Israeli concessions and questioned the long-term objectives in Gaza.

He noted, “The only regret is that this deal was on the table since May last year, and the delay in implementing it has cost many Israeli lives.”

Lebanon’s developments a lesson for those still tricked by so-called US democracy

From page 1 ▶ The Saudi-American orders have dictated the renunciation of the “January 9 National Understanding” that secured the election of Gen. Joseph Aoun as president after pledging not to violate political balances.

Verified sources confirmed that Walid Bukhari, the Saudi ambassador to Beirut, met Fouad Makhzoumi (the founder of the National Dialogue Party and a member of the Renewal Bloc in the Lebanese Parliament) ordering him to withdraw from his candidacy. The meeting made it clear that the nomination of MPs Makhzoumi and Ashraf Rifi was nothing but a poor play.

President Aoun has been reportedly quoted as saying: “I found myself before an international and Arab opportunity to carry out a ma-

ior rescue operation. The understanding was a way to facilitate matters. As for now, I do not know how things will go. Nevertheless, I will do my best with the prime minister-designate so that the government is not formed in a way that threatens the stability of the country.”

“We regret those who want to spoil the consensual beginning of the presidential term. It is our right to demand a ‘constitutional government’. We will monitor the steps. We are waiting – with all wisdom – and we will see their efforts to ‘expel Israel and return the prisoners,” said Mohammad Raad, the chief of Hezbollah’s parliamentary bloc. Raad intended to reassure the people, amidst the growing threats, that any “rebellion” will be met with unexpected retribution that will hinder the

reconstruction of what was destroyed by the US-backed Israeli aggression.

Undeniably, Lebanon’s political dilemma has reached a dangerous peak. The selection of Judge Nawaf Salam to form the upcoming cabinet was nothing but a deception that the Hezbollah and Amal Movement duo were subjected to, especially since the anti-Hezbollah team wanted this entitlement as a political gain for Washington after its aggression failed to eliminate the resistance movement.

Seemingly, this team will not stop at excluding the legitimate representatives of the Shiites from the cabinet. It will take revenge on the very existence of the Shiites in the country, simply because of their anti-imperialism stance.

The UN can end the Middle East conflict by welcoming Palestine as a member

The June 2025 UN Conference on Palestine can be the long-awaited turning point for the region

By Jeffrey Sachs and Sybil Fares

The UN, on its 80th birthday in 2025, can mark the occasion by securing a lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East, by welcoming the State of Palestine as the 194th UN member state. The upcoming UN Conference on Palestine, set for June 2025, can be a turning point – a decisive, irreversible path towards peace in the Middle East. The Trump administration would greatly serve America’s interests, and the world’s, by championing the two-state solution and a comprehensive Middle East peace deal, at the gathering in New York in June.

Amid Israel’s shocking brutality in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria, a small window of hope has nonetheless emerged. Almost the entire world has coalesced around the two-state solution as the key to regional peace. As a result, a comprehensive deal is now within reach.

The UN General Assembly recently adopted a potentially transformative resolution (PDF) by an overwhelming margin. The UNGA demands an end to Israel’s illegal 1967 occupation and reaffirms its unwavering support for the two-state solution. Most importantly, the resolution laid out a roadmap for establishing a Palestinian state at The High-level International Conference (PDF), to be held in June 2025, at the United Nations.

Consider how long the Palestinians, and the world, have waited for this moment. In 1947, the UN first took on the responsibility of addressing the Palestinian question. With Resolution 181 (PDF), the UN General Assembly proposed the partition of Mandatory Palestine into two independent states – one Jewish and one Arab. The proposed partition, alas, was neither fair nor agreed upon by the parties. It allocated 44 per-

cent of the land to the Palestinians though they were 67 percent of the population. Yet before the plan could be revised and settled peacefully, Zionist terror groups began to ethnically cleanse more than 700,000 Palestinians from their homes, the so-called Nakba, or catastrophe, of the Palestinian people.

After Israel declared its unilateral independence, and defeated the Arab neighbours in war, a senior UN mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, tried to resurrect the two-state solution. Yet Bernadotte was assassinated by Lehi, a Zionist paramilitary organisation. Israel signed the 1949 Lausanne Protocol, resurrecting the two-state solution under UN auspices, but then blatantly disregarded it. What ensued instead was Israel’s 75-year quest to deny Palestinians their rights to a homeland.

For decades, the US govern-

ment, under the guidance of the Israel lobby, presided over a phoney negotiating process. These efforts ostensibly involved direct bilateral talks between an occupying power and an occupied people, inherently unequal parties, in which Israel’s goal was always to reject a truly sovereign Palestinian state. At best, Israel offered “Bantustans,” that is, little powerless enclaves of Palestinians living under Israel’s control. The US-dominated process has continued since the mid-1970s, including the 1978 Camp David Accords, 1991 Madrid Conference, 1993-1995 Oslo Accords, 2000 Camp David Summit, 2003 Quartet Roadmap for Peace, and 2007 Annapolis Conference. In this hall-of-mirrors process, the Israelis have continuously blocked a Palestinian state while the US “mediators” have continuously blamed the Palestinians for their intransigence.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israeli officials struggle to conceal frustrations as Gaza truce nears

A ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas is at its closest point, according to officials involved in negotiations in Doha.

With expectations that an announcement is imminent, Majed al-Ansari, Qatar’s foreign ministry spokesperson, said that final details were being discussed on Tuesday.

“Negotiations are taking place on final details but we have ironed out the main obstacles,” he told a news conference.

“Today we are closest to any time in the past to a deal. The situation is still fluid but we are all upbeat.”

Joe Biden, the outgoing US president, said an agreement would “free the hostages, halt the fighting, provide security to Israel and allow us to significantly surge humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians.”

A Palestinian source close to discussions told Reuters that he expected a deal to be finalised on Tuesday “if all goes well”.

The incoming Donald Trump administration appears to have played a significant part in negotiations, according to multiple reports in Israeli media.

Haaretz reported that Steven Witkoff, Trump’s Middle East envoy, last week told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s aides that he would be arriving in Israel on Saturday afternoon.

The aides said that was the middle of the Sabbath and the meeting would need to occur in the evening, which reportedly was “of no interest” to Witkoff, who pressed ahead with the meeting regardless.

A senior Israeli diplomat told Haaretz that Witkoff, a Jewish real estate investor without a diplomatic background, “charges ahead unusually aggressively”.

The Times of Israel reported, citing two Israeli officials, that the meeting between Witkoff and Netanyahu was “tense”.

It said that while the prime minister wanted a deal bringing about only a temporary truce, the agreement being finalised would include second and third phases, making it harder for Israel to resume hostilities.

Ben Gvir threatens resignation

Both Witkoff and Brett McGurk, Biden’s Middle East envoy, attended talks in Doha hosted by the Qatari prime minister on Tuesday.

David Barnea, the director of the Mossad intelligence agency, and Ronen Bar, director of the Shin Bet internal security agency, are representing Israel during the talks.

The first stage of the proposed deal would involve the release of 33 captives held in Gaza, including children, women (some of whom are soldiers), men above 50 and the wounded and sick, according to an Israeli official cited by Reuters.

Israeli general threatened with arrest for treating Palestinians as ‘human animals’

An Israeli major general, who oversaw weaponizing famine and targeting civilian infrastructures in the Gaza Strip, where the Israeli regime has been waging a genocidal war, is threatened with arrest over his treating Palestinians as “human animals.”

The Hind Rajab Foundation (HRF), an NGO that focuses on research, documentation, and the collection of evidence of war crimes and human rights violations, recently initiated legal proceedings against Ghassan Alian, who is currently in Rome, as a means of prompting Italian officials to place him under arrest, Press TV reported.

The organization filed cases with the International Criminal Court (ICC). It informed Italian authorities, demanding the immediate arrest of Alian, the current head of the Israeli body that supposedly coordinates Tel Aviv’s activities in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The military official oversaw the regime’s strengthening of its already stifling blockade of Gaza, therefore, weaponizing famine and targeting civilian infrastructures, including hospitals, in acts amounting to genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

According to HRF, Alian’s public dehumanization of Palestinians as “human animals” reflects his intent behind these policies.

The ICC has already issued arrest warrants

A Palestinian source said the first phase would include the release of 1,000 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons.

Talks to reach an agreement for the second phase of the deal, intended to end the war, would reportedly take place around two weeks after the first phase begins.

The deal is expected to involve a phased withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, including along the so-called Philadelphi Corridor on the border with Egypt, and the so-called Netzarim Corridor in central Gaza.

Netanyahu previously stated in the summer that Israeli control over the Gaza boundary with Egypt was critical and would remain indefinitely.

A deal will also involve a return for displaced Palestinians to northern Gaza, though it is not yet clear what kind of security arrangement Israel would agree to north of the strip.

Middle East Eye could not immediately independently verify the details of the proposed deal.

The agreement being discussed has been heavily criticised by senior figures on the Israeli far right, with National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir threatening to resign if it is agreed.

“The deal that is being formed is terrible,” Ben Gvir wrote on X.

He said it included the release of “terrorists” from prisons and to northern Gaza, and Israeli withdrawal from the Netzarim Corridor. He said the deal was “effectively erasing the war achievements that have been achieved with much blood by our fighters”.

Ben Gvir added: “I call on my friend, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, to join me in full cooperation against the terrible deal being crafted, and to inform the Prime Minister clearly and firmly that if the deal goes through, we will resign from the government together.”

The national security minister said he would not bring down Netanyahu, but that resigning was “our only chance” to prevent the deal being implemented.

Smotrich described the deal as a “catastrophe”.

“This is the time to continue with all our might, to occupy and cleanse the entire Strip, to finally take control of humanitarian aid from Hamas, and to open the gates of hell on Gaza until Hamas surrenders completely and all the hostages are returned,” the far-right finance minister wrote on X.

It is not yet clear if Smotrich will resign from the government – a move that would likely bring down Netanyahu’s far-right coalition.

More than 46,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom are women and children, have been killed by Israel’s war on Gaza since October 2023.



for Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the regime’s former minister of military affairs Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the bombed-out Palestinian territory.

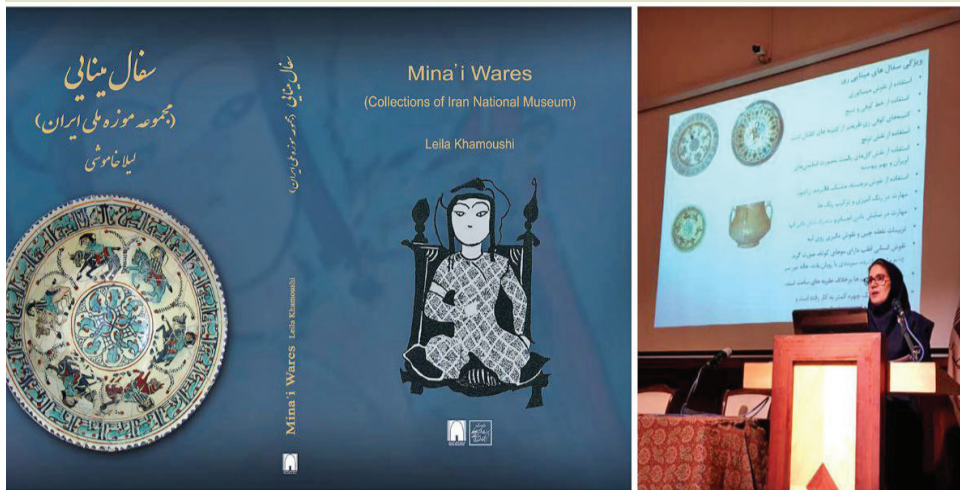
The decrees have triggered the House of Representatives in the United States, the regime’s biggest supporter, to approve imposition of sanctions against the tribunals’ judges.

The HRF has underlined Italy’s obligation towards submitting immediately to the court’s orders.

On Monday, United Nations rapporteur Francesca Albanese posted on X, former Twitter, saying, “I understand this individual (Alian) may soon leave Italy, posing challenges for prompt action by Italian authorities.”

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

National Museum of Iran hosts seminar on Mina'i ware



TEHRAN - On Sunday, a specialized seminar on Mina'i ware was held at the National Museum of Iran, where Leila Khamooshi, an Islamic period pottery expert at the museum, presented the findings of her recent research.

Her research, conducted in collaboration with specialists from interdisciplinary fields, as well as the Islamic and pottery departments of the museum, focused on Mina'i ware, which is a significant collection at the National Museum of Iran. These wares primarily date back to the Seljuk and Khwarezmian periods and were produced in cities such as Kashan, Ray, Gorgan, and Saveh.

According to Khamooshi, the most important development in Seljuk-era pottery was the invention and introduction of a white glass-like paste for making ceramic vessels. This innovation meant that potters no longer needed to apply slip or a whitewash coating to the pottery. She continued by explaining that Mina'i ware is decorated with intricate paintings on glazed surfaces, which feature a wide variety of colors. Some pieces also include gold or gilded decorations.

Khamooshi emphasized that decorating these vessels with such a wide array of colors was a complex task, often requiring multiple layers of painting and several firings in the kiln. These vessels were considered luxury items, with their designs frequently depicting opulent royal scenes. There was undoubtedly a close relationship between Mina'i potters and manuscript illustrators. The motifs on Mina'i ware often reflected literary and historical themes, as well as religious and astronomical subjects.

The expert also noted that the motifs on these ceramics could be compared to

illustrations in manuscripts like Varaqeh Golshah, and similar designs found on metalwork, textiles, and other contemporary pottery. In conclusion, Khamooshi shared that alongside general studies of the collection, specialized analyses—such as XRF, PIXE, petrography, dilatometry, and thermoluminescence—were conducted with the help of experts from the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism and the University of Tehran. These analyses aimed to obtain more precise information about the production methods, colors, paintings, materials, and dating of the samples.

It is noteworthy that the results of this research were published in a book titled Mina'i ware (The National Museum of Iran Collection) in March 2024. The 168-page book includes two main sections: the text and the catalog. It covers various topics, including the art of pottery and key production centers during the Seljuk period, decoration techniques of Mina'i ware (also known as "seven-color" pottery), the formation periods of Mina'i ceramics, dated and inscribed Mina'i ware, as well as the specific characteristics of Mina'i ware from Ray, Kashan, Saveh, and Gorgan. The book also compares the motifs on Mina'i ware with miniatures from contemporary manuscripts, and examines connections with motifs on metal, textile, and stucco works, as well as Seljuk clothing patterns in relation to the decorations on Mina'i ceramics. The analyses included in the book focus on XRF and PIXE methods for identifying glazes and pigments, petrography for examining the composition of clays, dilatometry for determining firing temperatures, and thermoluminescence for validating relative dating based on material properties.

Morocco sets a new tourism record with 17.4 million visitors in 2024

The Moroccan Ministry of Tourism has released tourist data for the past year, revealing that Morocco has become Africa's most visited destination, attracting 17.4 million visitors.

According to data from UN Tourism, Africa welcomed 6% more tourists between January and September 2024 than in the same months in 2019. Previously, Egypt was Africa's most visited destination, with 15.7 million arrivals over the last twelve months, a record in itself.

Thanks to various efforts from Morocco, the country experienced a 20% rise in visitor numbers compared to 2023, and over 33% compared to the pre-pandemic peak of 13 million visitors in 2019. Among them, 51% were foreign tourists, while 49% were Moroccan expatriates.

"These remarkable figures represent a major step towards our goal of positioning Morocco among the top 15 global tourist destinations," said Tourism Minister Fatim-Zahra Ammor in a statement. "Morocco as a destination made a strong impact in 2024. With 17.4 million tourists by the end of December, Morocco is ahead of schedule in meeting the ambitious target set out in its roadmap, initially scheduled for 2026."

To rank among the top 15 global tourist destinations, Morocco must surpass Japan, which hosted 25 million visitors in 2023 according to the UN, while data for 2024 is still pending.

Regarding tourism revenue, Morocco registered \$11 billion in tourism spending, compared to \$10.5 billion in 2023. However, Egypt won the race in terms of spending with \$14.1 billion in revenue in 2024.

In 2024, several factors have driven Morocco's tourism growth. Tourism Minister Fatim-Zahra Ammor announced 120 new airline routes, notably a nonstop flight from Newark to Marrakesh via United Airlines. Additionally, luxury brands like Four Seasons, Royal Mansour, and Nobu launched hotels across the country, complementing newly established locations from these luxury brands.

While predictions for 2025 may be premature, the outlook for tourism in the country appears positive. The Africa Cup of Nations is scheduled to begin at the end of this year, from December 21st to January 18th, 2026. Additionally, in 2030, Morocco will co-host the FIFA World Cup alongside Spain and Portugal, anticipating an influx of around 26 million visitors.

(Source: traveltomorrow.com)

Tehran prepares for 18th Intl. Tourism Exhibition: Focus on unity and opportunity

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN - On Monday, the unveiling ceremony of the poster for the 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition was held at the Persian Gulf Hall, hosted by the Deputy of Tourism.

The event was attended by prominent figures including Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey, Deputy of Tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts; Seyyed Mostafa Fatemi, Director General of Domestic Tourism at the same Ministry; Mostafa Shafiei-Shakib, President of the National Tourist Guides Association; and Hormatollah Rafiei, President of the Association of Air Travel and Tourism Agencies.

Scheduled to take place from February 11 to 14, at the permanent exhibition venue in Tehran, the 18th International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition aims to showcase Iran's diverse cultural, geographical, and historical tourism potential.

Speaking at the event, Mohseni-Bandpey highlighted three essential elements for tourism development: attraction, security, and infrastructure.

The deputy minister underscored Iran's richness in cultural heritage, climatic diversity, and religious tourism, particularly the revered shrines such as those of Imam Reza and Hazrat Masoumeh.

The official further outlined the government's strategy of comprehensive utilization of all tourism capacities, stressing the need



for private sector involvement to address existing challenges and support tourism businesses.

"Initiatives like affordable travel packages, banking credit cards for tourists, education, empowerment [of the local communities], and international travel exchanges were noted as crucial steps."

He then sharpened the focus on the need for updating public transportation as a prerequisite for the tourism surge. "For example, in preparation for a tourism arrival of 19 million people in the year, 500 aircraft and 8,000 buses should be added to the country's transportation fleet, all currently in the planning stages."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official emphasized the necessity of enhanced promotional efforts for the exhibition, stating, "Every initiative requires optimal presentation, and we must strive for greater promotional efforts despite past weaknesses in advertising."

Regarding this year's exhibition theme, "Peace among Iranian Tribes and National Harmony," Mohseni-Bandpey highlighted increased private sector participation, with 1,700 investors and 750 investment packages.

"Invitations have been extended to 12 [foreign] ministers and 20 foreign ambassadors to further showcase Iran's domestic tourism potential and strengthen international relations."

Fatemi, discussing the exhibition's objectives, noted recent tourism sector crises and emphasized the event's role in fostering tourism development. He compared this year's focus on reducing previous shortcomings, enhancing private sector visibility, and promoting national unity.

Fatemi detailed the diverse exhibition layout, with governmental booths giving way to a more prominent private sector presence this year. He emphasized the

inclusion of Iran's cultural provinces, free zones, and private sector entities, each showcasing unique tourism aspects.

In terms of facilities, the exhibition will feature dedicated sections for food and health tourism, highlighting indigenous crafts and providing annual tourism packages.

Meanwhile, Rafiei, the head of the Association of Air Travel and Tourism Agencies, called for early environmental advertising for the exhibition and urged national media to provide detailed coverage to enhance public engagement. He also requested governmental facilitation in tax matters to prevent currency outflow.

Another speaker, Yaavar Abiri, president of Iran's Ecotourism Associations, highlighted the significant presence of ecotourism in this year's exhibition, with outdoor exhibition spaces allocated for eco-tourism showcases and ceremonial events.

With expectations high for the 18th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition, stakeholders across government, private sectors, and specialized associations are gearing up to make this event a pivotal platform for showcasing Iran's tourism attractions and capabilities.

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.

Indian ambassador meets Isfahan's governor-general during visit to ancient city

TEHRAN - The Governor-General of Isfahan, Mehdi Jamalinejad, hosted the Indian Ambassador to Iran, Rudra Gaurav Shresth, on Monday during the ambassador's visit to the historic city.

The meeting highlighted opportunities for deepening cultural, economic, and tourism collaboration between the two nations.

Jamalinejad warmly welcomed the ambassador on his inaugural trip to Isfahan, emphasizing the cultural affinities shared by India and Iran. "India is culturally very close to Iran, and we hope for a bright future in fostering closer ties in tourism, trade, culture, and even political relations," he said.

Addressing the potential for boosting tourism, Jamalinejad noted that despite the strong bilateral ties, inbound tourism from India to Iran remains limited. "Several countries have benefited from our visa-free policies, yet Iran seems to remain lesser-known.



We aim to change that perception," he added.

Referring to Isfahan's upcoming international event, which is dedicated to professional tour operators, set to take place in March, the governor-general extended an invitation to Indian tourism ambassadors, re-

questing the Indian envoy to take a profound interest in the city and its global significance.

Highlighting Isfahan's historical and cultural prestige, Jamalinejad said, "Known worldwide as a historical city, Isfahan has served as Iran's capital during three different eras." He also mentioned Isfahan's designation as the Cultural Capital of Iran and its selection as the Islamic World's Capital for 2026.

Ambassador Shresth expressed his enthusiasm for fostering tourism growth and strengthening the bond between the two countries.

In a symbolic gesture of friendship, the Indian ambassador planted a rose bush in the Global Peace Garden in Isfahan, underscoring the shared commitment to harmony and mutual cooperation.

The Persian proverb "Isfahan nesf-e-jahan ast" (Isfahan is half the world) reflects the city's cultural and historical prominence.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region

The Lake Ohrid region, a mixed World Heritage property covering c. 94,729 ha, was first inscribed for its nature conservation values in 1979 and for its cultural heritage values a year later. These inscriptions related to the part of the lake located in North Macedonia. The property was extended to include the rest of Lake Ohrid, located in Albania, in 2019.

Lake Ohrid is a superlative natural phenomenon, providing refuge for numerous endemic and relict freshwater species of flora and fauna dating from the tertiary period. As a deep and ancient lake of tectonic origin, Lake Ohrid has existed continuously for approximately two to three million years. Its oligotrophic waters conserve over 200 species of plants and animals unique to the lake, including algae, turbellarian flatworms, snails, crustaceans, and 17 endemic species of fish including two species of trout, as well as a rich birdlife.

Situated on the shores of Lake Ohrid, the town of Ohrid is one of the oldest human settlements in Europe. Built mostly between the 7th and 19th centuries, Ohrid is home to the oldest Slav monastery (dedicated to St. Pantelejmon) and more than 800 Byzantine-style icons of worldwide fame dating from the 11th century to the end of the 14th century.

Ohrid's architecture represents the best

preserved and most complete ensemble of ancient urban architecture in this part of Europe. Slav culture spread from Ohrid to other parts of Europe. Seven basilicas have thus far been discovered in archaeological excavations in the old part of Ohrid. These basilicas were built during the 4th, 5th, and beginning of the 6th centuries and contain architectural and decorative characteristics that indisputably point to a strong ascent and glory of Lychnidos, the former name of the town. The structure of the city nucleus is also enriched by a large number of archaeological sites, with an emphasis on early Christian basilicas, which are also known for their mosaic floors. Special emphasis regarding Ohrid's old urban architecture must be given to the town's masonry heritage. In particular, Ohrid's traditional local influence can be seen among its well-preserved late-Ottoman urban residential architecture dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. The limited space for construction activities has led to the formation of a very narrow network of streets.

On the Lin Peninsula, in the west of the Lake, the Early Christian Lin church, founded in the mid-6th century, is related to the basilicas of Ohrid town in terms of its architectural form and decorative floor mosaics, and possibly also through liturgical links.

(Source: UNESCO)



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Over 14,000 multiple births registered in 9 months

TEHRAN – Within the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20, 2024), 14,090 multiples were born in the country, according to the Civil Registration Organization.

Out of the registered multiple births, 13,565 were twins, 504 were triplets, 19 were quadruplets, and 2 were higher-order multiple births, IRNA reported.

Tehran, Khuzestan, and Khorasan Razavi provinces had the highest number of multiple births with 2,127, 1,207, and 1,186 cases, respectively.

A total of 734,249 births were registered in the country over the nine-month period. Approximately, four percent of the births (that is 28,728 babies) were multi-birth deliveries.

Tehran province with 89,325 births, and Ilam province with 4,963 births had the highest and lowest number of births, IRNA reported.

According to the Civil Registration Organization, more than 36.8 percent of the births in the first eight months of the current calendar year were second-born children.

First-born children accounted for 36 percent of the births. Over 36.8 percent, 18.7 percent, and 8.5 percent were related to second-born to fourth-born children, respectively, IRNA reported.

Over 1m births registered in a year

According to the Civil Registration Organization, a total of 1,057,948



births were registered in the country in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2023-March 2024).

Second-born children with 405,993 births accounted for the highest number of registered births.

Tehran province with 131,176 births and Semnan province with 6,907 births had the highest and lowest number of births, IRNA reported.

Out of registered births, 51.8 percent were boys and 48.2 percent were girls.

According to the Organization, a total of 33,080 multiple births were registered in the country in the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year that ended on March 20, 2024.

Twins made up the majority of multiples born; 31,320 out of 33,080 registered multiple births were twins, and 1,686 births were triplets, IRNA reported.

the number of aged citizens in the country is growing by 3.62 percent which is five times faster than the total population growth rate, which is 1.24 percent.

In Iranian year 1385 (2006-2007), there were 5,121,043 men and women aged above 60. In 2015, 10 percent of the country's population was older than 60, ISNA quoted Mohammad-Javad Mahmoudi, an official with the National Institute for Population Research.

In the next 30 years, the population aged 60 years or older is projected to hold a 32 percent share of the whole population, that is, the elderly will account for one-third of Iran's population by 2050, the official noted.

Currently, men and women aged above 60 constitute some 11.5 percent of Iran's population, an official with the health ministry has said.

It is one of the most important challenges facing the country.

"At best, Iran's population with a total fertility rate of 2.5 will reach 102,890,000 by the next seven years," IRIB quoted Mahmoudi as saying.

In the last two years, the fertility rate has stabilized around 1.6 which has intensified concerns over the decreasing trend in population growth in the coming years, and the probability of turning Iran into one of the oldest countries in the world, the official highlighted.

ICRC underscores boosting ties with IRCS in rehabilitation, mental health

TEHRAN – Vincent Cassard, the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Iran, in a meeting with Razieh Alishvandi, the director of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) for international affairs, has highlighted the need for expanding cooperation in humanitarian sectors, mainly rehabilitation and mental health.

"The cooperation in rehabilitation and mental health fields has progressed well so far, and we believe that it will provide suitable and effective platforms for enhanced collaborations between the two sides," IRNA quoted Cassard as saying.

The official made the remarks during a meeting held on Monday in Tehran. "We are also ready to expand collaborations in family reunification; it is one of our key priorities, which can play an effective role in alleviating the pain of families affected by crises," he added.

Referring to the joint courses held on fundamentals of the ICRC and IRCS, Cassard said, "We look forward to similar educational cooperation in the future."

The official went on to laud the IRCS efforts in providing relief services to war-affected people, particularly in Gaza, and Lebanon including Syrian refugees, announcing readiness to enhance cooperation with the IRCS in providing humanitarian protection to Syrian refugees.

Alishvandi, for her part, said the IRCS is ready to promote its cooperation in various humanitarian fields, like rehabilitation, to play a more effective role in improving human living conditions.

"The IRCS is providing rehabilitation services both nationally and globally. These services are provided in cooperation with the ICRC in the east-

ern provinces of the country which are mainly hosting immigrants," she noted.

Referring to the challenges and problems faced by Syrian and Lebanese refugees, Alishvandi asked for the ICRC support in helping the war victims in the region.

"Along with our international colleagues, we have always done our best to fulfill our humanitarian duties by assisting those in need and those affected by crises, regardless of geographical borders."

Co-op in rehabilitation sector

In August 2024, Alishvandi and Cassard discussed potential ways to boost cooperation.

"We are interested in maintaining and boosting joint activities, but the current focus of the Iranian Red Crescent Society is on strengthening cooperation in the field of rehabilitation, the official stated.

The Iranian Red Crescent Society has more than 200 active rehabilitation centers nationwide. Accordingly, screening patients with musculoskeletal disorders is on the agenda to identify the patients and prevent these problems, she highlighted.

Cassard, for his part, lauding the IRCS efforts in various fields, said, "The International Committee of the Red Cross is ready to cooperate with the Iranian Red Crescent Society in all sectors."

Cassard went on to extend an invitation to the IRCS, in recognition of its outstanding activities in the field of rehabilitation, to attend and cooperate in the international rehabilitation conference.

In June 2024, the IRCS and the ICRC discussed ways to enhance rehabilitation services for vulnerable and disabled individuals in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Baluchestan.

Tehran province with 14.7 percent and Semnan province with 0.5 percent had the highest and lowest number of multiple births, respectively.

Last year, out of the registered multiple births in the first nine months, 28,148 were twins, 1,506 were triplets, 64 were quadruplets, and 10 were higher-order multiple births.

Some 34.6 percent of registered births were first-born children; 38.9 percent, 17.6 percent, 5.1 percent, and 2 percent were related to second-born to fifth-born children.

In the first nine months of the past Iranian calendar year, more boys than girls were born. Over 51.8 percent of babies born were boys and 48.2 percent were girls.

Population aging five times faster than growth

According to the latest census,

During a meeting on June 13, 2024, Alishvandi and Cassard visited the rehabilitation center in Zahedan, the IRCS website reported.

Visiting the center, Alishvandi reviewed the joint rehabilitation project which in collaboration with the ICRC aims at providing physical rehabilitation services to migrants in need as well as vulnerable citizens in the cities of Zahedan, Iranshahr, Chabahar, and Zabol in Sistan-Baluchestan province.

Based on the agreement, physical rehabilitation services have been provided in Sistan-Baluchestan province since the Iranian year 1398 (2018-2019).

"Currently, the Iranian Red Crescent Society operates rehabilitation centers in all 31 provinces; they offer a wide range of services to individuals with physical disabilities as part of its program," Alishvandi stated.

The ICRC funds physical rehabilitation programs for vulnerable and disabled individuals, both Iranians and Afghans in Sistan-Baluchestan province.

The support covers the costs of various services and supportive devices such as prostheses, orthotics, physiotherapy, special shoes, wheelchairs, canes, and walking aids.

The logistics department of ICRC purchases needed items either from Sistan-Baluchestan (in case available) or Tehran provinces.

Ongoing training sessions and on-the-job support are provided during field visits to orthotists and prosthetists throughout the manufacturing process.

Moreover, the ICRC allocates a budget to cover the costs of the project, including human resources, building rent, and equipment required for conducting screening assessments.

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System to be set up for monitoring, forecasting agricultural drought

A system will be launched to monitor, forecast and report the agricultural lands being hit by drought, Amir Qaderi, an official with Disaster Management Organization has announced.

Over a meeting of a special working group for addressing drought and risks threatening agricultural sector, a plan for establishing a system for monitoring and forecasting agricultural drought in the country was approved and submitted to the Disaster Management Organization for review, he explained. "Following the study of other countries' experiences and existing global methods, the necessity of establishing a domestic system to recognize the lands prone to agricultural drought was emphasized," he noted.

سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران ایجاد می‌شود

معاون امور بازسازی و بازتوانی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور از ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران خبر داد.

به گزارش پایگاه اطلاع رسانی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور، امیر قادری روز یکشنبه با اعلام این خبر گفت: طرح ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران طی جلسه‌ای با حضور مدیران و کارشناسان سازمان مدیریت بحران و وزارت جهاد کشاورزی بررسی شد.

وی ادامه داد: پس از بررسی تجارب داخلی و روش‌های موجود جهانی، ضرورت استقرار نمونه بومی پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی مورد تأکید قرار گرفت و با مشارکت مراکز پژوهشی سازمان هواشناسی کشور و پژوهشکده حفاظت خاک و آبخیزداری طرح ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران پیشنهاد شد.

Iraq seeks Iran's expertise in establishing sci-tech parks

TEHRAN – Iraqi Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Naem Al-Aboudi, in a meeting with Science, Research, and Technology Minister, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, has announced Iraq's interest in benefiting from Iran's experience and knowledge in establishing science and technology parks.

Highlighting Iran's high capabilities in technology sectors, the official said, "Regulations have been passed to found technology parks in the country, and we are willing to use Iran's expertise," IRNA reported.

"Enhancing cooperation between Iraqi and Iranian universities will boost scientific capacities of the two countries and help solve their problems," Al-Aboudi noted.

Highlighting that scientific cooperation between Iran and Iraq should be on par with political and cultural relations, the Iraqi official said Iraqi universities are making necessary arrangements for holding Iran-Iraq Science Week.

Simaei-Sarraf, for his part, underscored Iran's extensive experience in founding technological and knowledge-based companies, saying that Iran is prepared to share its experience in establishing science and technology parks and help Iraq either through providing consultation or investment opportunities.

The official also announced Iranian universities, namely Iran University of Science and Technology, Sharif University of Technology, and Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, to open branches in Iraq.

Referring to the shared interests and commonalities between Iran and Iraq, he said the two countries are interested in developing relations in science and technology, hence existing agreements and memorandums should be implemented.

Referring to the second Iran-Iraq Science Week, which will be held next week in Karbala, the official said Iranian universities have prepared a roadmap to foster scientific cooperation between the two nations which will be presented at the event.

The first Iran-Iraq Science Week was hosted by the Iranian city of Mashhad from October 9 to 12, 2023.

Iran ready to set up joint sci-tech park in Iraq

In December 2024, Simaei-Sarraf, announced the country's readiness to establish a joint science and technology park in Iraq.

The official also expressed Iran's interest in attracting talented and motivated Iraqi students, particularly to the universities of border cities.

The Iraqi students are required to study in Persian, Simaei-Sarraf said, adding that the Iraqi



administration has welcomed the idea, IRNA reported.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Haider Abd Dahed, the Iraqi deputy minister of higher education. Both officials emphasized their interests in expanding scientific ties through exchanging students, research, and technology.

During the meeting, the Iraqi official proposed granting 100 scholarships to Iranian students to study in Iraq.

Referring to Iran's successful experiences in the development of the technology ecosystem, Dahed said, "We have taken Iran's experience as a role model in establishing science and technology parks, and in this regard, have passed regulations in the parliament."

The potential of establishing a joint science and technology park in Iraq has been examined by experts and will be finalized at the joint meeting of Iran-Iraq universities in Karbala, the Iraqi official noted.

Referring to the significant number of Iraqi students in Iran, Dahed said, "We would like Iraqi students to study in Persian to get more familiar with Iranian culture and knowledge."

Simaei-Sarraf, for his part, said the Iranian faculty members and post-graduate students can take sabbaticals in Iraq as one of the possible ways to further develop scientific relations between the two countries.

First Iran-Iraq Science Week

Hosted by Ferdowsi University, representatives of over 60 universities and educational institutions attended the event.

The scientific event aimed to develop diplomatic interactions, academic relations, and cultural exchange.

To expand and promote scientific and technological relations implement joint research projects and develop joint cooperation between the scientific and research centers of the two countries, memorandums of understanding were signed.

Over 600 prisoners released to mark Father's Day

TEHRAN – On the occasion of National Father's Day, which fell on January 14 this year, a total of 603 prisoners of unintentional crimes were freed across the country.

In Iran, Father's Day falls on the thirteenth day of the lunar calendar month of Rajab, the birthday anniversary of Imam Ali (AS), the first Shia Imam.

In this line, a nationwide campaign, titled 'Hello dad', is being held from December 21 to January 19. A third of the released prisoners of involuntary crimes (171 individuals) were from Isfahan, Khorasan Razavi, and Fars provinces, IRNA reported.

The total debt of the released prisoners was over 14 trillion rials (about \$20 million).

Currently, there are over 15,061 prisoners of involuntary crimes, including 14,301 men and 760 women.

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

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

During the first nine months of the current Iranian year (March 20 – December 20, 2024), 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.

On the occasion of National Mother's Day, which fell on December 22, 2024, this year, a total of 1,000 female prisoners of unintentional crimes were released across the country.

National Woman's Day (also called Mother's

Day), coincides with the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatemeh, the daughter of the holy prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

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

Governmental support

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

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

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

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

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

Freeing prisoners of involuntary crimes is done in three ways. The first way is granting prisoners leave and the second way is providing a number of them with loans to be paid inside the prison.

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



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

That knowledge which remains only on your tongue is very superficial. The intrinsic value of knowledge is that you act upon it.
Imam Ali (AS)

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“A Little Cloud” appears at Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN- Irish novelist and poet James Joyce's short story “A Little Cloud” has recently been published in Persian.

Translated by Mohammad Javadi, the book has been published by Diar Namag Publications in Tehran.

“A Little Cloud,” a short story Joyce from Joyce's 1914 collection “Dubliners,” follows Thomas Malone Chandler, affectionately known as Little Chandler, as he grapples with feelings of inadequacy and lost dreams. The narrative juxtaposes Chandler's mundane life in Dublin with the adventurous existence of his old friend Ignatius Gallaher, a successful journalist in London.

The story begins at Chandler's day job, where he struggles to concentrate, anxiously anticipating a reunion with Gallaher, whom he hasn't seen in eight years. Gallaher, a charismatic figure in the London press, represents everything Chandler feels he lacks—a life filled with excitement and creative freedom. As he waits, Chandler's thoughts evoke a deep sense of dissatisfaction with his own life.

Despite his ambitions as an aspiring poet, he is too timid to share his work with his wife, Annie. This lack of self-confidence weighs on him, fueling his regrets about what could have been if he had pursued writing more seriously.

When Gallaher arrives, he captivates Chandler with tales of his travels and experiences, further highlighting Chandler's frustration with his own limitations. As Gallaher recounts his glamorous life, Chandler's envy intensifies. He begins to resent the domesticity that ties him down and questions whether his marriage and fatherhood are hindering his potential. The more they drink, the more Chandler feels overshadowed by Gallaher's adventurous spirit, masking his envy by suggesting that Gallaher, too, will one day settle down.

The scene shifts back home, where Chandler holds his crying child while reflecting on his wife's photograph. He perceives Annie's beauty

but feels a disconnection, interpreting her as cold and lifeless compared to the vibrant women Gallaher has described. This leads him to wonder about his choice to marry her and the dreams he has forsaken.

In an attempt to seek solace through poetry, he turns to Byron's work but is interrupted by his child's incessant crying. His frustration mounts, and in a moment of exasperation, he snaps at the child, revealing his inner turmoil.

As Annie arrives to tend to the child, it becomes clear that Chandler's feelings of isolation and resentment are deepening. Ultimately, he realizes that he is trapped not just by external circumstances, but by his own reluctance to pursue his aspirations.

This epiphany brings tears to his eyes, encapsulating his profound sense of disappointment as the story concludes, leaving readers with a reflection on aspiration, regret, and the consequences of inaction.

James Joyce was an influential Irish modernist writer and is best known for his groundbreaking works that reshaped the landscape of 20th-century literature. His most acclaimed novel, “Ulysses,” published in 1922, is celebrated for its innovative narrative techniques, including stream-of-consciousness writing and extensive use of symbolism.

Joyce's exploration of the complexities of human experience, identity, and the intricacies of everyday life is evident in his earlier collection of short stories, “Dubliners,” as well as in his semi-autobiographical novel, “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man”. Through his distinctively rich prose and bold experimentation with form, Joyce delved into themes of alienation, desire, and the search for meaning, making him a central figure in modernist literature.

His work has had a lasting impact on literature and has inspired countless writers, establishing him as a pivotal figure in the literary canon.

Why Washington Post cartoonist's critique of Trump lead to her sudden exit?

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN- Earlier last week, Ann Telnaes, the Pulitzer prize-winning cartoonist for The Washington Post, tendered her resignation after the newspaper declined to publish a satirical cartoon.

The cartoon depicted the paper's owner, Jeff Bezos, alongside other media and technology moguls, kneeling before Donald Trump as he prepares for his term as president in the White House.

In a statement expressing her disappointment and frustration, Telnaes revealed that she had engaged in constructive discussions with the Post about her work in the past, but had never faced the rejection of a cartoon based on its subject matter.

Telnaes had been a prominent voice at the Post, and her decision to leave has sent shockwaves through the editorial and cartooning communities.

“I have had editorial feedback and productive conversations – and some differences – about cartoons I have submitted for publication, but in all that time I've never had a cartoon killed because of who or what I chose to aim my pen at,” she noted in an online post on Substack.

“The cartoon that was killed criticizes the billionaire tech and media chief executives who have been doing their best to curry favor with incoming President-elect Trump,” she said.

The group in the cartoon included Facebook & Meta founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg, AI CEO Sam Altman, LA Times publisher Patrick Soon-Shiong, the Walt Disney Company mascot Mickey Mouse, and Washington Post owner Jeff Bezos.

“While it isn't uncommon for editorial page editors to object to visual metaphors within a cartoon if it strikes that editor as unclear or isn't correctly conveying the message intended by the cartoonist, such editorial criticism was not the case regarding this cartoon,” she added.

“To be clear, there have been instances where sketches have been rejected or revisions requested, but never because of the point of view inherent in the cartoon's commentary. That's a game



changer...and dangerous for a free press,” she mentioned.

The decision made by The Washington Post has sparked debate over editorial independence and the pressures facing media outlets in today's highly charged political climate. David Shipley, the newspaper's opinions editor, defended the decision, claiming that it was based on timing and the fact that related content had recently been published. He asserted that his judgment was not a reflection of any bias, but rather adhering to editorial policies.

Telnaes's cartoon, which remains unreleased, was meant to critique the actions of billionaire executives who have attempted to gain favor with Trump.

The inspiration for the cartoon was the trek by top tech chief executives including Bezos to Trump's Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, as well as the seven-figure contributions several promised to make toward his inauguration.

Ann Telnaes's resignation from The Washington Post highlights a concerning pattern of self-censorship among powerful individuals and corporations in the media, especially in the context of Trump's impending presidency. This is not an isolated incident; the Post faced backlash for its decision to cancel an editorial endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris during the presidential election—a move mirrored by The Los

Angeles Times. Additionally, ABC News recently paid \$15 million to settle a defamation suit brought by Trump, further raising concerns about media accountability.

Compounding these issues, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg announced the suspension of professional fact-checking on Facebook and Instagram, a move perceived as catering to Trump and highlighting the pressures media outlets face from influential figures.

These actions have prompted significant discontent among readers, many of whom have expressed a growing lack of trust in The Washington Post—a publication that once adopted the motto “Democracy Dies in Darkness.” Jeff Bezos's decision to block the Harris endorsement has led to a significant number of subscription cancellations, highlighting readers' concerns over perceived editorial bias and diminishing journalistic integrity.

Telnaes's departure highlights the deepening unease within the media industry as powerful figures like Trump and Bezos exert their influence, casting a shadow over editorial independence and raising crucial questions about the sanctity of journalistic processes. The incident underscores the far-reaching consequences for press freedom, as the lines between corporate interests and political pressures continue to blur.

The Association of American Editorial Cartoonists released a statement in support of Telnaes, a member and former president of the group:

“Corporate billionaires have once again brought an editorial cartoon to life with their craven censorship in submission to a wannabe tyrant,” the statement read. “Her principled resignation illustrates that while the pen is mightier than the sword, political cowardice has once again eclipsed journalistic integrity at The Washington Post.”

In response to the rejection of Ann's cartoon by The Washington Post, other cartoonists took to their own creative mediums, producing cartoons that mirrored the themes of Ann's original work. Many depicted American billionaires and tech moguls kneeling or bowing before Trump. These artists strive to defend democracy and free speech while supporting their colleague.

As Telnaes reflects on her time at The Washington Post, her resignation signals a critical moment for editorial cartooning and the responsibilities that come with it. With a legacy that includes a Pulitzer Prize and accolades from the National Cartoonists Society, her departure leaves an indelible mark on the field and can serve as a reminder of the challenges faced by artists who dare to critique those in power.

Art in the rubble: how Gaza's artists are documenting the war

In a Gaza battered by war and deprivation, Israel's severe restrictions on aid and commercial goods have intensified a humanitarian crisis that the UN described in a 12 November briefing as “catastrophic,” warning of “imminent famine”. Yet, against all odds, Gaza's artists continue to create.

Facing shortages of basic supplies, from food to paper, they turn whatever they can find into tools of expression to document the relentless conflict around them. The Art Newspaper spoke with four artists who, amid the rubble and chaos, are using their art to preserve a record of life in Gaza and to share their stories with the world by any means possible.

Khaled Hossein

Hossein, a sculptor from Rafah in southern Gaza, initially stayed in his hometown when the war began. Israel had designated it a safe zone and directed much of Gaza's population there. Hossein worked tirelessly to provide for his family and ensure their safety, leaving little time for art.

But when Israel's military campaign reached Rafah in May 2024, he and his family were forced to flee, and their home was destroyed. In Deir al-Balah, surrounded by old friends from Gaza's once-vibrant art scene, he was encouraged to start creating again.

Having lost most of his old life, Hossein fashioned his own tools and began making sculptures from everyday clay, often inspired by the death and loss surrounding him. “There are many cases of loss, you can't imagine. Unfortunately, we can only express this,” he says.

Hossein places his sculptures in various environments, such as devastated homes, photographs them and then destroys them, filming

the entire process. Due to a lack of space and the constant threat of displacement, he does not keep his works.

One-piece, titled Yousef, is inspired by a heartbreaking event: a mother searching for her son in a hospital and describing her “beautiful boy” to staff, only to be taken to his lifeless body. Yousef's mother's words deeply moved Hossein, prompting him to recreate her son in sculpture “to express the extent of the loss”.

Other works include Martyr's Farewell Kiss, depicting a woman affectionately kissing a dead man, and a sculpture of two dead toddlers lying side by side, one with only a head and the other missing a limb. He placed this piece amongst the ruins of a house and photographed it.

“This is a scene we see a lot after houses are bombed—children's bodies scattered from the explosion,” he says.

Hossein says that when he holds clay, he loses track of time, finding peace amid the chaos of a warzone. “The clay creates a strange state of coexistence with the place, as if I don't see, hear or speak,” he says.

Raed Issa

Issa has transformed his temporary shelter into a space of teaching, creativity and solace he calls “my studio in the tent”. “I created it for some privacy, but every day there is no peace or comfort, there is just fatigue, anxiety, and fear,” says Issa, an artist and co-founder of Eltiqa Group for Contemporary Art, Gaza's first contemporary art space, which was destroyed in December 2023.

Issa's “beautiful home” and studio in Gaza City were also bombed by Israeli forces. The father of four and his family have been displaced more

than ten times and are now in Deir al-Balah in the center of Gaza. “Everything turned to ashes and now I live in a tent that does not protect us from the cold of winter, the heat of summer. Or the roar or threat of airplanes,” he says.

Despite the hardships of life under constant bombardment in Gaza, Issa paints what he sees “almost every day”. He documents his surroundings in “a visual diary of suffering”, which he regularly shares on Facebook and Instagram. His themes include tragedy, fear, joy, fatigue and waiting. But with a severe shortage of art materials, Issa has had to get creative, repurposing discarded aid boxes and even medical envelopes as canvases.

The scarcity of paint has pushed him to use “anything” at hand as pigments, such as tea, hibiscus, coffee, charcoal and even rust. “In the beginning, I used alternative materials because there were no colors, but now I love them,” he says.

Issa, who has worked with children for more than 25 years, has opened his makeshift studio to displaced kids in the camps. He focuses on their “emotions and psychological exhaustion” while nurturing the talents of the more gifted. They have the freedom to express themselves however they wish. “Children are sincere in their feelings, which is why I love working with them,” he says.

Issa says the international arts community can support Gaza's artists by exhibiting their work or acquiring their pieces, some of which are already being displayed abroad.

“This war is a long nightmare that has affected people, stones, trees, art, humanity and dignity. But we have not despaired or broken,” he says.

Cartoon of Day



Israel Uses Hunger as A Weapon
 Cartoonist: Mikail Çiftçi from Turkey