

Araghchi congratulates Hamas on Gaza ceasefire victory

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi congratulated the Palestinian Resistance group Hamas for its "significant victory over Israel in the conflict in Gaza."

The statement was made during a Thursday phone call with Khalil al-Hayya, deputy leader of Hamas's Political Bureau, after a ceasefire was announced to end Israel's deadly war in Gaza.

During the conversation, Araghchi praised the indomitable spirit of the Palestinian people amid "the occupying regime's genocidal acts and unprecedented atrocities over the past 15 months."

He asserted that the Palestinian Resistance forced the occupying forces to capitulate to a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement.

Reiterating Iran's steadfast commitment, Araghchi highlighted the country's ongoing support for the Palestinian struggle and their resistance against the occupation, as well as their right to self-determination. ▶ Page 2

Minister advocates for joint research on Persian dialects during Tajikistan visit

TEHRAN – Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri has proposed conducting research to identify and introduce the shared dialects of the Persian language between Iran and Tajikistan.

During his visit to the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan on Thursday, Salehi-Amiri, along with his accompanying delegation, met with Tajikistan's top scientists and academics, ISNA reported.

In a bid to strengthen cultural ties between the two nations, the Iranian minister called for joint linguistic research initiatives to promote the shared Persian language and dialects between Iran and Tajikistan.

At the event, attended by professors and poets sent from the Saadi Foundation and the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, Salehi-Amiri stated: ▶ Page 8

Iran opens trade center in Minsk

TEHRAN – Iran's Trade Center in Minsk, Belarus, was inaugurated during a visit by Mohammad Atabak, Iran's Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade. The opening ceremony also featured Mohammad Ali Dehghani-Dehnavi, Deputy Minister and Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

As part of the visit, the minister and TPO head held a meeting with Iranian business representatives in Belarus, where proposals were made to facilitate trade between the two countries.



Iran and Russia Sign Strategic Cooperation Treaty

What does the Tehran-Moscow strategic partnership treaty encompass?

Pezeshkian: The new partnership treaty opens a new chapter in relations between the two countries

Putin: Iran and Russia have intelligence cooperation in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter

▶ Page 3

Iran's Qalibaf calls for deeper ties in Ethiopia visit

TEHRAN – Iran's Parliament Speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, embarked on a two-day journey to Ethiopia on Thursday at the invitation of his Ethiopian counterpart.

During his visit to Addis Ababa, Qalibaf met with Ethiopian Parliament Speaker Tadesse Chafo to discuss strategies for boosting economic, political, and parliamentary collaboration, with a special emphasis on removing barriers to private sector engagement.

In their discussions, Qalibaf underscored the strategic importance of establishing an Ethiopian embassy in Tehran, highlighting it as a crucial step toward deepening economic and political ties. He noted the recent release of four Ethiopian sailors from Iranian prisons, emphasizing that a diplomatic presence in Tehran could expedite such matters. ▶ Page 2

Wild goose chase: Israeli army scrambles to achieve unattainable goals

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – The escalation of Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip following the announcement of a ceasefire highlights the regime's deep sense of desperation.

Israel and Hamas reached the truce agreement on Wednesday night, which is anticipated to take effect over the weekend.

Nonetheless, Israel has continued its attacks killing so far more than 100 Palestinians across the besieged enclave.

Israeli strikes have primarily targeted residences densely populated with families, including women and children. The Israeli army has also hit areas that civilians have fled to following forced evacuation orders. ▶ Page 5

Resistance triumphs, exposing Western double standards

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON – After more than 15 continuous months of barbaric US-led Israeli aggression, the Palestinian resistance – i.e. the Axis of Resistance – has triumphed.

The 467 days of legendary steadfastness have reinforced the firm conviction that the resistance option is capable of imposing conditions on the temporary entity and its supporters, and not the so-called "international community" that is already involved in the systematic genocide and destruction. ▶ Page 5



Nationwide rallies in Iran as Gaza secures ceasefire

TEHRAN – In a show of solidarity with Palestinians, Iranians across the country participated in nationwide rallies to celebrate Gaza's successful ceasefire agreement with Israel, marking the end of 16 months of conflict.

The ceasefire, announced on Wednesday night, was seen as a major triumph for the Palestinian Resistance. The agreement included the acceptance of all Hamas conditions, forcing the Israeli regime to halt its deadly military campaign without achieving its objectives, one of which was the eradication of Hamas itself. ▶ Page 2



Regional reactions to Gaza ceasefire

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Reactions from across the region to the Gaza ceasefire agreement have been coming in.

Here are some highlights.

YEMEN

Ansarallah leader Sayyed Abdul-Malik al-Houthi affirmed that the stance of the Yemeni Armed Forces is aligned with that of the Palestinian factions and will remain supportive during the implementation phase.

In a televised speech, Sayyed al-Houthi stressed that Yemeni military operations will continue to support the Palestinian people if the Israeli enemy persists in its genocidal massacres and escalation. ▶ Page 5

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

Prospects of strategic agreement between Iran and Russia

In a commentary, the Iran newspaper addressed President Pezeshkian's trip to Russia to sign a 20-year comprehensive partnership between Tehran and Moscow. It wrote: Pezeshkian and Putin signed a broad strategic partnership agreement in the Kremlin. For Russia, the treaty symbolizes deepening cooperation in key areas such as energy, transport projects, defense, science, and technology. This agreement will be a step towards transforming the relations between Russia and Iran into a full-fledged strategic alliance. Of course, this does not mean the establishment of a formal military-political union like NATO. Now the two countries Iran and Russia are facing a large number of strict sanctions by the United States. Therefore, strengthening the ties between Tehran and Moscow can lead to finding alternative mechanisms to neutralize the sanctions through close interaction. For Iran, this will be a step towards diversifying its relations by promoting cooperation with its allies. And for Russia, it will be a tool to strengthen its position in the Asia region and establish cooperation with the countries of the Middle East.

Kayhan: What a commotion if Los Angeles fire had happened in Iran!

In a note, Kayhan discussed the fire in Los Angeles. It wrote: Suppose the fire in Los Angeles had happened in Iran. In that condition, all the Western media outlets would have republished the photos and images in detail day and night. And, if they had not found an image, they would have used past or fake photos or artificial intelligence for the purpose. Trump has admitted that the fire control rate is zero. Biden has described the burnt city as a war zone and is worried about the looting of people's property, but no American media outlet humiliates the country's officials or accuses them of incompetence and asks them to resign. If it had been here, all the celebrities would have republished the content provided by the Westerners to create the feeling that the government has failed to control the crisis and this failure has resulted from the structural inefficiency of the past 40 years. If this incident happens in Iran, it will be a symbol and sign of structural weakness and inefficiency, but if it happens in America, it will be a natural disaster caused by water, wind, soil, and forest.

Siasat-e-Rooz: Strategic approach with neighbors

In an analysis, Siasat-e-Rooz dealt with Iran's approach toward its neighbors. The paper said: The approach of the neighboring countries to the development of strategic relations and its expansion to the regional sphere can be a component to confront the domination of the West. Certainly, Iran and Russia, as two old neighbors that relatively face common threats and challenges, and share a single goal to confront the domination system and excesses of the West, need comprehensive development of relations based on a codified and long-term strategy. Tehran-Moscow strategic partnership can be a turning point to realize this important goal. Along with bilateral relations, this agreement can be a component for playing a greater role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, which can result in economic openings. This agreement will set new regional and global equations. The Western media are working hard to humiliate and create a negative atmosphere towards this agreement. This is proof of the importance and high capacity of Tehran-Moscow relations and the role of the parties in global equations.

Jam-e-Jam: Iran and Russia on complementary economy

The policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the framework of looking to the East and the influential countries of the world, is to expand relations as much as possible to secure the national interests of our country. Both Iran and Russia are under U.S. sanctions, and in this sense, the situation in the countries is similar. Considering the many capacities that the two countries enjoy, we can establish a complementary economy to meet national interests. Russia and the Eurasian economic bloc constitute a very large market, and Iran's private sector, due to its large capacities, can gain good benefits. If Iran takes advantage of the expanding relations between the two countries, it can serve as a source of economic opportunity. The agreement between these two countries will be an incentive for other countries to advance their national development plans independently without relying on the financial relations of the Western world.

Coast guard joins Iranian armed forces in national drill



TEHRAN – Iran conducted a naval drill along the shores of the Oman Sea in Chabahar, with the participation of Brigadier General Ahmadreza Radan, Commander-in-Chief of the Law Enforcement Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as military and law enforcement leaders from Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

The exercise, dubbed "Muhammad Rasullullah (PBUH) 3," was organized by the Border Guard Command of Sistan and Baluchestan under the slogan "Unity, Power, for Security."

The event featured a parade of both border guard and civilian vessels.

The primary objectives of the drill were to maintain operational readiness, strengthen combat capabilities, and improve coordina-

tion among border and maritime forces.

It also aimed to ensure the security of the province's territorial waters—a fundamental responsibility of the Border Guard Command. Various border management organizations and armed forces stationed in Sistan and Baluchestan also participated in the event.

Speaking at the ceremony, Brigadier General Radan highlighted the strength and readiness of Iran's armed forces.

"This exercise demonstrates the power of our armed forces, which prevents enemy warships from even approaching Iranian territorial waters with just one warning from the Islamic Republic's military," he said.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

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During the conversation, Araghchi praised the indomitable spirit of the Palestinian people amid "the occupying regime's genocidal acts and unprecedented atrocities over the past 15 months."

He asserted that the Palestinian Resistance forced the occupying forces to capitulate to a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement.

Reiterating Iran's steadfast commitment, Araghchi highlighted the country's ongoing support for the Palestinian struggle and their resistance against the occupation, as well as their right to self-determination.

For his part, Al-Hayya updated Araghchi on the current situation in Gaza and the state of ceasefire talks.

The Palestinian official expressed gratitude for Iran's backing, as well as the support from Resistance factions in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq, which he deemed crucial to this monumental triumph.

Al-Hayya vowed that the determined and courageous Palestinian people would persist in their struggle with unparalleled unity and solidarity until all their rightful claims are fulfilled.

Qatar's Prime Minister Mohammed Al Thani officially announced the ceasefire late Wednesday.



The agreement, structured in three phases, is set to commence on Sunday, spanning 42 days.

The truce aims to halt the Israeli regime's devastating military campaign in Gaza and includes a significant prisoner swap, with 1,000 Palestinian prisoners and hundreds of long-term detainees slated for release.

Hamas will release 33 Israeli captives in the first phase as the Israeli military begins withdrawal from the enclave.

Acknowledging Egypt and Qatar's role

Araghchi also discussed the Gaza ceasefire in separate phone calls with his Qatari and Egyptian counterparts on Thursday.

In a conversation with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelaty, the Iranian top diplomat recognized Egypt's role in brokering the truce and expressed hope for its complete implementation. Abdelaty, in turn, welcomed the ceasefire and hoped it would alleviate Gaza's humanitarian crisis.

During his call with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrah-

man Al Thani, Araghchi praised Qatar's efforts in securing the ceasefire. He also stressed the importance of international action to improve living conditions in Gaza through immediate humanitarian assistance, refugee support, and the reconstruction of infrastructure damaged by Israeli aggression.

The Qatari diplomat shared details of the negotiation process that led to the ceasefire and acknowledged Iran's steadfast support for Palestinians, particularly during the recent conflict.

Israel's latest war against Palestinians in Gaza began on October 2, 2023, after Hamas managed to infiltrate the occupied territories through an unprecedentedly successful operation. The group said the operation was conducted in response to the regime's escalating violence against Palestinians and the repeated desecrations of the al-Aqsa Mosque.

A subsequent 15-month period of Israeli aggression in Gaza led to the near obliteration of the territory's homes, hospitals, schools, religious sites, and civilian infrastructure. The conflict

also left behind a grim carnage of at least 46,000 Palestinian deaths and over 110,000 injuries.

Axis of Resistance's support for Gaza

The Resistance Axis, including Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Ansarullah in Yemen, and various Resistance groups in Iraq, have undertaken numerous operations and attacks in support of Gaza since October 2023.

Iran directly attacked Israeli positions in the occupied territories twice in 2024. The operations dubbed 'True Promise' hit military sites across occupied Palestine with the help of hundreds of drones and missiles. Simultaneously, it offered logistical and diplomatic support to other factions within the Resistance front.

Hezbollah engaged in military operations along the border to divert Israeli resources from Gaza, leading to significant sacrifices, including the loss of its revered leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and other senior commanders.

In Iraq, the Resistance groups not only targeted U.S. military facilities but also directly aimed at Israel.

Yemen's Ansarullah focused its efforts on the Red Sea, targeting ships linked to the Israeli regime or heading to its ports, as well as launching direct attacks on Israel.

Meanwhile, many regional and Islamic nations were either apathetic or implicitly supportive of Israel in the past 15 months. Some have pursued diplomatic normalization with Tel Aviv, while others have tacitly backed the regime through trade or by failing to oppose its actions in international forums, despite widespread circulation of images of Israel's harrowing crimes.

Iran's Qalibaf calls for deeper ties in Ethiopia visit

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During his visit to Addis Ababa, Qalibaf met with Ethiopian Parliament Speaker Tadesse Chafo to discuss strategies for boosting economic, political, and parliamentary collaboration, with a special emphasis on removing barriers to private sector engagement.

In their discussions, Qalibaf underscored the strategic importance of establishing an Ethiopian embassy in Tehran, highlighting it as a crucial step toward deepening economic and political ties. He noted the recent release of four Ethiopian sailors from Iranian prisons, emphasizing that a diplomatic presence in Tehran could expedite such matters.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Qalibaf praised Ethiopia's influential role in East Africa, particularly in ensuring regional security and stability.

Since the 1970s, Iran and Ethiopia have enjoyed a cooperative relationship, with both nations keen on enhancing their economic,



political, and cultural ties.

Ethiopia, often dubbed the "Gateway to Africa," holds vital importance due to its geopolitical position in the Horn of Africa and its role as a fast-growing economy and regional stabilizer.

Moreover, in a meeting with the Head of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council,

Sheikh Ibrahim Tufa, Qalibaf underscored Iran's diverse religious representation in its parliament, which includes Shia, Sunni, Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian members.

Sheikh Tufa, for his part, commended Iran's support for oppressed Muslims worldwide, adding that he views Iran as a beacon for Muslims.

Nationwide rallies in Iran as Gaza secures ceasefire

TEHRAN – In a show of solidarity with Palestinians, Iranians across the country participated in nationwide rallies to celebrate Gaza's successful ceasefire agreement with Israel, marking the end of 16 months of conflict.

The ceasefire, announced on Wednesday night, was seen as a major triumph for the Palestinian Resistance. The agreement included the acceptance of all Hamas conditions, forcing the Israeli regime to halt its deadly military campaign without achieving its objectives, one of which was the eradication of Hamas itself.

Observers noted that the strength of the Resistance Front ultimately drained Israel's ability to continue, leading to its acceptance of terms.

In a statement, Iran's Islamic Development Organization called the ceasefire a "strategic defeat" for the Zionist regime.

"The agreement represents the triumph of the Palestinian nation's steadfastness and highlights the decline of the occupying regime. It serves as a symbolic victory of blood over the sword and a strategic lesson for the Resistance Axis and freedom seekers worldwide."

The statement further emphasized Israel's failure to meet key objectives, including the release of prisoners, the suppression of Islamic Jihad, and control over the Gaza Strip. The council described the ceasefire as a reflection of the growing weakness of the Israeli regime following its prolonged and bloody offensive.

IRGC announces arrest of 15 terrorists in SE Iran

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has apprehended 15 terror suspects in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchistan.

The Public Relations Office of the Quds Headquarters of the IRGC Ground Forces announced on Thursday that its soldiers, along with other security forces, conducted a ground operation in the border regions between Iran and Pakistan.

The operation saw extensive support from combat helicopters and drone units, culminating in the successful capture of the suspects.

The IRGC's statement further noted that during the area's cleanup to eradicate terrorist

factions, a substantial cache of various weapons and ammunition was confiscated.

The operation was part of the ongoing "Martyrs of Security" exercises.

The intensified anti-terrorism initiative led by the IRGC has been ongoing since late October 2024.

The large-scale exercises also involve the Ministry of Intelligence and police forces, which have successfully dismantled at least three terrorist teams so far.

Among those detained are figures affiliated with the so-called Jaish al-Adl, the terrorist organization responsible for a deadly attack on a police convoy in Tafan County in October 2024.

Iran and Russia sign strategic cooperation treaty

TEHRAN – The presidents of Iran and Russia inked a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement during an official signing ceremony in Moscow on Friday.

Speaking at a joint press conference following the signing event, Masoud Pezeshkian said the treaty will open a new chapter in relations between the two countries. He noted that the newly discussed agreements focus on enhancing cooperation across various sectors and that it specifically includes increasing the level of exchanges by utilizing the capacities within the Eurasian Economic Union.

Beyond economic ties, Pezeshkian underscored the crucial role of bilateral collaboration in addressing regional security challenges. He emphasized the importance of improving bilateral cooperation on issues such as the fight against extremism, terrorism, and organized violence.

The president expressed optimism about the future trajectory of the two countries' relationship and underscored Russia's significance in Iran's foreign policy, asserting that "Russia is an important country in the world".

The Iranian leader also described his discussions in Moscow as "positive," focusing on regional and international cooperation. The topics covered included the developments in the West Asia region, the Caucasus, and peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Recognizing the shared membership of both countries in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS group, Pezeshkian noted that the development of mutual relations will have a leading impact on strengthening regional convergence and serving common interests.

Furthermore, the president reiterated Iran's stance on conflict resolution, stating that "war is not a proper solution to issues," and expressing Tehran's support for "the establishment of peace



between Russia and Ukraine through negotiations." He also added a clear critique of Western

What does the Russia-Iran strategic partnership treaty encompass?

The Treaty on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran builds upon an agreement that was signed between the two countries in 2001 and subsequently extended for two five-year periods. Specifically, the treaty encompasses several core areas, including:

- Economic cooperation: This includes trade, financial and banking collaboration, transportation, customs and health matters, reciprocal exports and investments, agriculture, and water resource management.
- Scientific, cultural, and sports collaboration: The treaty promotes academic partnerships, scientific and technological initiatives, youth activities, media relations, cultural heritage preservation, and sports cooperation.
- Security and intelligence collaboration: The agreement addresses combating international crime, terrorism, and extremism, along with the non-proliferation of weapons and combating new forms of crime like cybercrime.
- Regional and international cooperation: Under the agreement, Russia and Iran commit to working together in international organizations such as the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.
- Judicial and parliamentary collaboration: The agreement includes provisions for cooperation within judicial and parliamentary systems.
- Provincial Partnerships: Collaboration at the local level between specific regions is part of the agreement.

The treaty signed on Friday comprises a preamble and 47 articles. One of its new clauses explicitly includes respect for each other's territorial integrity, however, overall, it is a broader and more detailed version of the 2001 agreement.

policies stating that "We firmly believe that Western countries should respect the security concerns of other countries and avoid imposing their own excessive demands on others."

For his part, Vladimir Putin

accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter.

Putin said the two sides have very close stances on the developments in West Asia and the Caucasus which will be beneficial to all countries. Iran and Russia do

not interfere in the internal affairs of the countries and stand against illegal sanctions against them, he noted.

The Russian president emphasized strengthening trade relations with Iran, mentioning that discussions with Pezeshkian focused on boosting trade exchanges.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Putin also expressed hope for a lasting ceasefire in Gaza leading to long-term stability, and called for a comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, Putin affirmed Russia's support for resolving issues in Syria while respecting its territorial integrity.

How the strategic partnership treaty came to be

Over the past two to three decades, the relationship between Iran and Russia has evolved into a significant collaboration that now spans crucial areas like economics, trade, security, and energy. This strengthened alliance, occurring amidst a changing global landscape, necessitated a formal update to an existing accord signed in 2001.

The Tehran Times understands that the strategic cooperation agreement signed on Friday was the culmination of a multi-year effort that began in 2019. Under President Ebrahim Raisi, Iran took the lead in crafting the text of the treaty. Iranian officials and analysts convened in 35 meetings over six months and factored both the evolving international environment and the strategic goals of each country.

The draft was finally revised by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in July of 2023, which incorporated input from the Presidential Office's Legal Deputy and the Supreme National Security Council, before sending it to Russia. Following the exchange of drafts and numerous rounds of discussions, officials from both nations met in Moscow in June of 2024 to finalize the text.

Regional setbacks will not fulfill the Western dream of 'regime change' in Iran

By Mohammad Khatibi

TEHRAN – Since October 2023, when Hamas launched its surprise offensive on Israel, the landscape of West Asia has been shifting. The operation brought the Palestinian cause back to the forefront of media attention and sparked debate in elite circles. However, despite numerous Western claims, Iran's regional influence remains a significant factor in the power dynamics of West Asia.

In a recent Foreign Affairs article titled "The Iran Opportunity: What America Needs to Do to Achieve a Breakthrough," Richard Haass advocates for a combination of force and diplomacy against Iran. Haass writes, "It is hard to think of a country that has lost as much influence in as short a time as has Iran." However, there are several factual inaccuracies in his assessment of the situation on the ground.

For over a year and a half, Tel Aviv has targeted Hezbollah facilities and fighters across Lebanon, yet these efforts have been largely unsuccessful. Hezbollah could launch operations in northern occupied Palestine, and even deeper into Haifa and Tel Aviv, very quickly if Israel were to violate the ceasefire on a large scale. Furthermore, without Hezbollah's participation in the political process in Beirut, the deadlock in Lebanon would likely have continued, as evidenced by the election of Joseph Aoun as president.

The fall of the Assad government in Syria was certainly a setback for the Resistance Axis. However, the

Axis was not solely dependent on Syria; Hezbollah was a significant force long before Damascus became a logistical hub for the Lebanese resistance.

Ansarullah in Yemen also provides a good example of a Resistance faction operating independently. Despite being under siege by the Saudi Arabian-led coalition, Ansarullah has successfully thwarted attempts to overthrow the government in Sana'a. Yemenis have been launching attacks in the Red Sea and surrounding waters against U.S.-Israeli interests. They have also successfully launched missiles and drones into occupied Palestine, despite being constantly under attack by the U.S.-led coalition.

After more than 15 months of Israeli attacks on Gaza, Tel Aviv has finally accepted the terms of a ceasefire, which could be viewed as a victory for Hamas. This three-phase ceasefire deal will take months to complete, but each of the agreed-upon terms appears to be a major concession for the Resistance group. Tel Aviv's stated goal of "completely" eliminating Hamas has not been achieved. The agreement requires Israel to fully withdraw from Gaza and to exchange captives for a large number of Palestinian prisoners. Furthermore, Israel will gradually allow unarmed Palestinians to return to the northern part of the Gaza Strip, and a significant increase of aid, up to 600 trucks per day, will be allowed into the territory.

As the article rightly points out,

PODCAST FOREIGN AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER

The Iran Opportunity

What America Needs to Do to Achieve a Breakthrough

RICHARD HAASS

January 6, 2025



RICHARD HAASS is President Emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, Senior Counselor at Centerview Partners, and the author of a weekly newsletter, *Homo Et Aegyptus*.

Show by Richard Haass →

Iran will likely try to rebuild its powerful network of resistance against Western imperialism. While the Resistance Axis may have suffered some operational setbacks, these are not irreversible.

Haass, in his article, echoes Western claims that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons. However, based on Tehran's continued cooperation with the IAEA and adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), it is evident that Tehran is not seeking a nuclear bomb. Iran's reactions have been a result of escalations against the country. The U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was the initial trigger for Tehran's retaliatory measures, and step by step, Iran increased the purity of its uranium enrichment. Despite questions about the U.S.'s capability to destroy Iranian sites, any attack on those facilities would destroy any justification for negotiations.

Moreover, the technical expertise that Iran has accumulated over the years would remain intact. Such an operation might push Iran to a further level of escalation, potentially leading to direct attacks on U.S. military sites in regional countries.

While Tehran's ties with Moscow have strengthened in recent years, even the Friday signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement doesn't elevate the relationship to one of true "strategic partners." Contrary to what some articles may imply, this partnership will not result in Russia or any other nation providing Iran with nuclear detonation technology. Moscow has consistently maintained a cautious stance regarding Iran's nuclear program, and has even, on occasion, approved resolutions against Iran within the UN Security Council and elsewhere.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Sepahan edge Persepolis to win Iran's Super Cup

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team edged past Persepolis 1-0 to win Iran's Super Cup for the first time.

Steven Nzonzi scored the winner just two minutes into the match at the Imam Khomeini Stadium.

Persepolis put Sepahan under pressure to score but their strikers lacked the final touches to equalize the match.

The Iranian Super Cup is an Iranian association football trophy awarded to the winner of a match between the Persian Gulf Pro League's season champions and the winners of the Hazfi Cup.

Esteghlal eye Orenburg midfielder Ghorbani

TEHRAN – Iran's Esteghlal football team have reportedly set their sight on signing Orenburg midfielder Mohammad Ghorbani.

The 23-year-old player joined the Russian team from Sepahan last year.

Ghorbani is also a member of the Iran national team.

Esteghlal officially completed the signing of Joel Kojo last week.

Iran beach soccer to play three friendlies with Belarus

TEHRAN – Iran national beach soccer team will play three friendly matches with Belarus.

Team Mell will play Belarus on January 18 (Saturday) and also play the European team two more matches on January 20 and 21.

Iran beach soccer team, headed by Ali Naderi, prepare for the 2025 AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup, slated for March 20 to 30 in Thailand.

Iran have been drawn in Group C along with the UAE, Indonesia and Afghanistan.

Azmoun scores as Shabab Al Ahli win Qatar-UAE Super Cup

TEHRAN – Shabab Al Ahli secured their second consecutive Qatar-UAE Super Cup title, defeating hosts Al Rayyan 3-1 to lift the Challenge Shield at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.

Shabab Al Ahli had defeated Qatar's Al Duhail 2-1 to win the Super Shield in Dubai in the inaugural bilateral tournament last year.

Shabab Al Ahli's goals came off the boots of Yuri César (28th minute), Sardar Azmoun (52nd minute) and Guilherme Bala (90th + 7 minutes).

Al Rayyan were gifted an own goal by Shabab Al Ahli's Renan in the 42nd minute of the highly entertaining.

Taj visits his Turkish counterpart Haciosmanoglu

TEHRAN – Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran President Mehdi Taj held a meeting with Turkish Football Federation (TFF) President Ibrahim Ethem Haciosmanoglu on Thursday.

Taj was accompanied by consul general of Iran in Istanbul Ahmad Mohammadi, board member Mohammadreza Saket, Team Melli head coach Amir Ghalenoei and ex-Iran player Hassan Roshan at Riva Hasan Dogan National Teams Camp and Training Facilities.

TFF 1st Deputy President, executive board member responsible for Super League Mecnun Otyakmaz, TFF board member responsible for league 1 Clubs Zafer Bahador Saraç, TFF General Secretary Abdullah Ayaz, and Turkey senior

national team assistant coach Selçuk Sahin also attended the meeting.

During the visit, where developments in international football were discussed, projects that could be implemented in line with the cooperation between the federations of two friendly countries were evaluated.

The meeting ended after mutual gift presentations between Haciosmanoglu and Taj.

Photo credit: tff.org

Iranian players win three golds at WTT Youth Contender Tunis 2025

TEHRAN – Three Iranian table tennis players claimed gold medals at the WTT Youth Contender Tunis 2025.

Nikan Shirvani defeated Iraqi player Mohammed Andya 3-1 in the final match of the U11 Boys Singles.

Faraz Shakiba beat Italian player Trevisan Francesco 3-1 in the final match of the U15 Boys Singles.

Benyamin Faraji defeated Austrian Rzihauschek Julian 3-1 in the final match of the U17 Boys Singles.

The WTT Youth Contender Tunis 2025 took place at the El Menzah Sports Palace in Tunisia till January 16.

Al Urooba forward Azadi on Esteghlal's radar: report

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team have reportedly set their sight on signing Al Urooba forward Mohammad Reza Azadi.

Azadi joined the Emirati side from Iran's Nassaji in last year's August but failed to live up to expectations.

Media reports suggest that Esteghlal have reached an agreement with the 25-year-old striker.

Azadi has previously played for the Blues in 2021-22 season.

Karim Bagheri no longer Persepolis head coach

TEHRAN – Karim Bagheri, who had been appointed as Persepolis interim coach three weeks ago, announced that the club must find the head coach as soon as possible.

Persepolis parted company with Juan Carlos Garrido Fernandez in late December and Bagheri was named as the team's interim coach.

Under his leadership, Persepolis won two matches against struggling teams Kheybar and Havadar.

Persepolis have not found the head coach yet and they have negotiated with so many foreign coaches.

The Reds sit third in 2024-25 Iran Professional League (IPL), three points behind Tractor and Sepahan.

Rahmati takes charge of Shams Azar in PGPL

TEHRAN – Mehdi Rahmati has been appointed as the new head coach of Shams Azar football team for the 2024/25 season of Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

The former goalkeeper of the Iran national football team replaces Mohammadreza Mohajeri.

Currently, Shams Azar sit in 15th place in the 16-team table.

Rahmati is the third head coach of the team this season, following Maziar Zare and Mohajeri.

Shams Azar are scheduled to play against Esteghlal on Monday.

Iran, Tajikistan sign 23 cooperation agreements during president Pezeshkian's visit



TEHRAN - Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian concluded his two-day official visit to Tajikistan and departed for Moscow early Friday, marking a significant milestone in bilateral relations with the signing of 23 agreements across various fields.

The agreements, aimed at strengthening diplomatic ties, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges, highlight the commitment of both nations to overcoming obstacles and expanding collaboration.

During the visit, Pezeshkian emphasized the

potential for trade to exceed \$500 million and announced plans for a joint economic commission meeting in the near future.

Key moments of the visit included bilateral talks with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, focusing on fast-tracking joint projects and removing trade barriers.

The presidents hailed the agreements as a foundation for further cooperation in science, education, transportation, and agriculture.

Pezeshkian addressed Tajik academic circles, stressing Iran's commitment to global health and rejecting violence and conflict.

The visit also featured discussions with top Tajik officials, including the prime minister and parliamentary leaders, to facilitate trade agreements, including a preferential trade pact.

The visit culminated in a shared vision for deepened partnerships, with both countries expressing readiness to remove remaining barriers to trade and investment.

Iran, IRENA discuss expanding cooperation on renewable energy

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) met with Binu Parthan, Director of Country Engagement and Partnerships at the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and Tarek Ahmed, Regional Director for West Asia and North Africa, to review past collaborations and plan joint initiatives during the IRENA General Assembly in Abu Dhabi.

According to the Ministry of Energy, the meeting covered the development of a Renewables Readiness Assessment (RRA) report for Iran.

This comprehensive evaluation is set to begin in mid-2025, involving all stakeholders in Iran's renewable energy sector and concluding within a year.

Discussions also highlighted the successful completion of a training workshop on crafting a national green hydrogen strategy with IRENA's assistance.

Other proposed initiatives include raising public awareness of renewable energy benefits, conducting joint training programs to prepare the electricity grid for integrat-



ing large-scale renewable power plants, and long-term energy planning.

The meeting addressed enhancing collaboration between Iranian NGOs and IRENA, with IRENA representatives expressing optimism about expanding these partnerships in coordination with SATBA, Iran's primary contact with the agency.

The 15th IRENA General Assembly opened last Monday in Abu Dhabi, hosting 500 delegates from 170 member countries. Iran's SATBA delegation, alongside the Iranian ambassador to the UAE and the embassy's Head of Economic and International Affairs, participated in the event.

Iran retains position as OPEC's third-largest oil producer: report

TEHRAN - According to OPEC's first report of 2025, Iran maintained its position as the organization's third-largest oil producer in December 2024, with an average daily production of 3.314 million barrels.

Data from OPEC's Secretariat revealed that the organization's 12 member states produced a combined total of 26.741 million barrels per day (bpd) in December, marking an increase of 26,000 bpd from November. Saudi Arabia and Iraq retained their positions as the top two producers, with daily outputs of 8.938 million barrels and 4.019 million barrels, respectively.

Production from OPEC+ members, which includes OPEC countries and allied producers, reached 13.913 million bpd in December, a decrease of 40,000 bpd compared to the previous month. Overall, the combined output of OPEC and its allies in December totaled 40.654 million bpd,

slightly lower than November's 40.669 million bpd.

Iran's heavy crude oil price averaged \$73 per barrel in December 2024, reflecting a \$0.19 (0.3 percent) increase compared to \$72.81 in November. For the entire year of 2024, the average price of Iran's heavy crude stood at \$79.71 per barrel.

Meanwhile, the OPEC Reference Basket price averaged \$73.07 per barrel in December 2024, a \$0.66 (1.0 percent) rise from the previous month.

OPEC's January report forecasts that global oil demand will grow by 1.45 million bpd in 2025, reaching a total of 105.2 million bpd. The organization also projects that global demand will rise by an additional 1.43 million bpd in 2026, bringing the total to 105.63 million bpd.

Iran-Qatar trade increases 53% in 9 months yr/yr

TEHRAN - The Iranian commercial attaché in Qatar referred to the development of trade interactions between Iran and Qatar, and announced a 53-percent increase in the value of trade between the two countries in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 - December 21, 2024), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Abbas Abdolkhani, citing the report of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), put the worth of trade between Iran and Qatar in the first nine months of this year at about \$265 million, and added this figure shows a 53-percent growth compared to the same period last year.

According to him, the trade statistics during the mentioned period indicate the development of

economic interactions between the two countries.

While listing the most important export items of Iran to Qatar, Abdolkhani noted that vegetables, agricultural products, foodstuffs, eggs, shrimp, saffron, carpets, constructional materials, and minerals are among the most important export goods of Iran to Qatar; which indicates the diversity of Iran's non-oil export basket.

The Iranian commercial attaché in Qatar continued: "Iran's export products to Qatar play an important role in meeting the needs of this market, while Iran's imports from Qatar are mainly intermediary goods used in the production process. This trend indicates the completion of the supply chain and the strengthening of economic cooperation in industrial and production sectors between

Iran-Russia comprehensive agreement: outcomes and implications

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN - Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian arrived in Russia's capital Moscow on Friday, January 17, to strengthen ties between the two regional powers. His visit marks the beginning of an official strategic partnership with President Vladimir Putin, focusing on boosting bilateral cooperation in energy, economy, and technology sectors.

Notably, they are expected to sign a comprehensive agreement that will encompass various fields, including finance, energy, and trade, with a strong emphasis on circumventing Western sanctions.

The discussions aim to enhance economic connectivity and foster long-term collaboration between the two nations.

The comprehensive Iran-Russia cooperation agreement represents a significant milestone in bilateral economic relations.

The agreement emphasizes collaboration in key areas such as trade, energy, and infrastructure development. It modernizes a 2001 treaty to reflect the evolving



geopolitical and economic environment.

Key economic initiatives include the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which will connect Iran, Russia, and other regions, reducing costs and trade routes significantly.

The agreement also envisions increased bilateral trade and investments, supported by measures to integrate financial systems and bypass Western sanctions through alternative payment mechanisms.

Trade expansion and regional impact

Iran and Russia's annual trade grew by 15 percent last year, with this agreement aiming to accelerate the trend.

Russia sees Iran as a critical partner in countering Western hegemony and promoting a multipolar world order.

For Iran, the partnership reduces its economic isolation and provides access to advanced technologies in sectors like nanotechnology, aerospace, and AI.

Implications for the region and beyond

The agreement's emphasis on energy cooperation aligns with Iran's position as a significant gas producer and Russia's status as a global energy powerhouse.

Joint projects, such as the transfer of Russian gas through Iran, will enhance energy security for both nations and neighboring regions. Additionally, this partnership challenges U.S. sanctions and could influence global energy markets. By strengthening ties within frameworks like BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Eurasian Economic Union, the agreement bolsters regional integration. It sets a precedent for partnerships among emerging powers seeking to challenge the unipolar dominance of the West.

In summary, the Iran-Russia agreement deepens economic ties, supports mutual interests in countering sanctions, and enhances their influence in shaping a multipolar global order. It also promises economic benefits for both nations and broader regional stability.

IMIDRO reports 53% surge in exploratory drilling by late Dec. 2024

TEHRAN - The Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) has reported a significant increase in exploratory drilling and investment calls during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2024).

According to IMIDRO, exploratory drilling by the organization and its subsidiaries grew by 53 percent, reaching 519,581 meters by the end of Azar

1403 (late December 2024), compared to 340,410 meters in the same period last year.

In addition, IMIDRO issued 81 investment calls for exploration projects during the period, marking a 170 percent rise compared to the 30 calls announced during the same timeframe last year.

These calls aim to attract investors for all exploration phases and required legal permits, ensuring continuity in activities.



Iran urges removal of barriers to agricultural exports to Russia

TEHRAN - Iranian Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Qezelgeh met with Russian Agriculture Minister Oksana Nikolaevna Lut in Moscow to discuss bilateral agricultural cooperation and emphasized the need to address barriers hindering Iran's agricultural exports to Russia.

During the meeting on Thursday, January 16, Nouri highlighted Iran's extensive agricultural capabilities and described agriculture and food as key pillars of economic ties between the two countries.

He proposed establishing a joint agricultural cooperation committee to strengthen collaboration in areas such as farming, horticulture, fisheries, forestry, natural resource protection, research, education, and advanced agricultural technologies, including seed and livestock breeding innovations.

Nouri urged Russia to prioritize importing certain agricultural products from Iran rather than from other regions and expressed Iran's readiness to attract Russian investment in



Iranian Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Qezelgeh (2nd L) met with his Russian counterpart in Moscow on Thursday, January 16.

joint agricultural projects.

Russia's readiness to expand agricultural collaboration

Russian Agriculture Minister Oksana Lut praised Iran's strides toward self-sufficiency in agricultural and food production, noting its continuous advancements in agricultural technologies.

Lut expressed Russia's willingness to collaborate in joint projects focused on seed, sapling, and livestock breeding, as well as enhancing self-sufficiency across various agricultural industries.

She also highlighted the potential for expanding cooperation in biotechnology, technology transfer, and agricultural education, emphasizing the importance of engaging skilled specialists and young talent in agriculture.

Addressing export challenges, Lut assured that Russia is committed to resolving issues and announced plans to dispatch a high-ranking technical delegation to Tehran to address plant and animal quarantine concerns.

Financial and trade discussions

During his visit to Moscow, Nouri also met with officials from major Russian banks and financial institutions to discuss facilitating trade for Iranian agricultural exporters and exploring avenues for bilateral agricultural and financial cooperation.

High potential for trade expansion between Iran, Canada

TEHRAN - The head of the Iran-Canada Business Association emphasized the significant opportunities for expanding trade relations between the two countries, citing Iran's potential to export technical expertise to North America.

Mohammad Vahidi Rad stated that Canada's advanced economy,

abundant natural resources, and strategic position in global markets make it an ideal trade partner for Iran.

He noted that key Iranian industries, including oil, gas, mining, information technology, and agriculture, stand to benefit from economic collaboration with Canada.

He acknowledged that international sanctions and restrictions present challenges to trade development but suggested that innovative approaches, such as adopting new financial systems and strengthening indirect interactions, could help overcome these obstacles.

Vahidi Rad further highlighted

Iran's unique capabilities across various economic sectors, arguing that enhanced relations with Canada could facilitate the transfer and export of technical knowledge and expertise in areas such as advanced technologies, sustainable agriculture, and petrochemical industries to North America.

tee meeting concluded on December 12, 2024, in Doha, with officials from both nations pledging to enhance bilateral economic ties and increase trade to \$1.0 billion annually.

The meeting, co-chaired by Iran's Minister of Energy Abbas Ali-Abadi and Qatar's Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal Al Thani, focused on expanding cooperation across multiple sectors, including energy, infrastructure, and trade.

The event featured four specialized committees: Trade (covering commerce, banking, and insurance), Infrastructure (transport, agriculture, and ICT), Social and Cultural (tourism, health, and research), and Energy (water, electricity, oil, and gas). Over 60 representatives from public and pri-

private sectors of both countries participated in the discussions.

Ali-Abadi emphasized the strategic importance of the partnership, saying, "Today's economic relations between Iran and Qatar require a strategic outlook." He noted that current trade between the two countries stands at approximately \$200 million annually, with plans to increase it fivefold to \$1 billion in the near future.

The official further highlighted a significant energy project involving a 200-kilometer undersea power line to connect Iran and Qatar's electricity networks. Initiated in March 2023, the feasibility study is in its final stages, with implementation set to follow approval.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Wild goose chase: Israeli army scrambles to achieve unattainable goals

From page 1 ▶ Civilians in Gaza characterize the current circumstances as reminiscent of the early months of Israel's war on the Palestinian territory.

Israel initiated its war of genocide against Gaza on October 7, 2023, in response to a sudden offensive by Hamas in southern Israel, referred to as the Al-Aqsa Storm. The Hamas operation resulted in over 1,100 fatalities and approximately 250 captives. Dozens of those captives are still held in Gaza.

Since the onset of the conflict, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has consistently vowed to continue the war until Hamas is eradicated and all captives are returned.

Netanyahu has neither been able to defeat Hamas nor secure the release of all captives.

Israel's deadly attacks against Gaza after the establishment of



The Israeli army has killed more than 100 Palestinians since reaching a ceasefire with Hamas which is expected to begin on Sunday

the ceasefire are just displays of bravado amid the regime's failure to achieve its military goals.

Netanyahu and his allies are trying to spin a narrative of success and are also using propaganda to dupe the public into believing that the war is winnable.

In other words, Israel is attempting to pull the wool over the eyes of the public.

The ceasefire that must go into force on Sunday, clearly illustrates that Israeli soldiers have been sent on a wild goose chase in the course of the Gaza war.

More than 800 Israeli troops have been killed since Hamas conducted the Al-Aqsa Storm. The fatalities include over 400 Israeli soldiers who have lost their lives since the regime launched ground offensive in Gaza in late October 2023.

In social media, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been likened to a "rabid dog" who has ordered the massacre of tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza. Nevertheless, Netanyahu's ability to perpetuate the violence in Gaza has been significantly bolstered by the backing of Israel's Western allies, especially the United States.

Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has described the ceasefire deal as a "surrender" to Hamas.

Presently, Israel's "surrender" to Hamas shows that the "rabid dog" won't hunt.

Resistance triumphs, exposing Western double standards

From page 1 ▶ In the temporary transitional phase, Western experts warn of the "danger" of leaving a security vacuum in Gaza, which may once again strengthen "Hamas' influence," and negatively affect the chances for "peace" in the region.

During the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, and Syria (under its former ruler Bashar al-Assad) played decisive roles in supporting the Palestinian resistance, on the military, financial, political, and media levels.

For its part, Hezbollah established itself as a decisive front in the conflict, exhausting the enemy for about a whole year; observers expect that the next phase will witness continuous pressure to enforce the implementation of UN resolutions 1559, which stipulates the need to dismantle and disarm Hezbollah, while resolution 1701 stipulates the expulsion of Hezbollah from south of the Litani.

Thus, it is likely that international intelligence coordination will be strengthened to monitor and cut off Hezbollah's supplies, in parallel with pressure on the Lebanese government.

Despite Western claims about arming the Lebanese army, the tangible reality reflects its deprivation of any qualitative weapons

that enable it to form a deterrence in the face of threats by imperialist expansionists.

It is known that Hezbollah has long provided the Palestinian resistance movement with Iranian weapons along with accurate intelligence information about the Israeli occupation army, which has been highly useful in launching defensive and offensive operations.

Despite all the challenges it faces from Israel, Britain, and the United States, the Ansar Allah movement has also played an influential role through the naval blockade in the Red Sea. In parallel, its leader's occasional speeches, Sayyed Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, have provided fundamental political support to the entire Axis of Resistance.

In the context of the increasing security challenges, the US and Western policies continue to destabilize – through sanctions and military interventions – Syria, which will highly likely contribute to the emergence of terrorist cells, and thus deepen political and social divisions.

With regard to the temporary colonial entity, the military and political support that Tel Aviv receives from Washington and other Western allies has strengthened its destructive role in West Asia.

This exposes the double standards of the arrogant West, falsely accusing Tehran of threatening West Asia's security. It continues, in parallel, to tighten its hostile economic, political and even military pressure against the Iranian people, as a decisive means of pressure if its "diplomatic" tricks fail.

Repeatedly, the pro-Israel West openly declares the need to support the anti-Iran terrorist groups in a bid to wreak havoc in Iran, only because it supports resistance movements and poses an existential threat to its hegemonic ambitions.

Tehran, undoubtedly, has been a strategic backbone: its vivid role has been evident through financial, military and diplomatic support for all resistance factions.

Operations "True Promise 1 & 2" have constituted direct military friction between Iran and the Israeli entity. Iran has contributed, along with its allies, to exhausting the US proxy, i.e. Israel.

Iran's committed policy has united Arab, Islamic and international support for the Palestinian cause, which undermined the US influence, thus posing major challenges to Washington's foreign policy in the region.

Regional reactions to Gaza ceasefire

From page 1 ▶ He added, "We will continue to monitor the stages of implementing the agreement, and if Israel retreats, commits massacres, or imposes a siege, we will be ready for immediate military support."

He pointed out that the announcement of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza is a significant development, noting that Israel, along with the U.S., was forced to accept the agreement after months of horrific crimes.

Regarding Yemen's support front, Sayyed al-Houthi noted its unprecedented global impact. He stated, "No one expected Yemen's stance to emerge at this level of effectiveness and influence through naval operations and strikes deep within occupied Palestine."

He noted Yemeni Armed Forces operations involving 1,255 ballistic, cruise, and hypersonic missiles, as well as drones and naval vessels.

Al-Houthi affirmed that the U.S. moved towards an agreement after significant setbacks and failures, realizing there was no path forward for its war on Gaza. He added that the mass killing of Palestinian civilians, children, women, and the elderly is a crime, not a military success, underscoring that the resilience demonstrated in this war signals hope for the Palestinian people's future.

On Friday, Yemenis held over 140 marches in different provinces in solidarity with Gaza and in support of Yemeni military operations aiding the Palestinian

people.

LEBANON

Hezbollah-affiliated media saluted Gaza and its martyr Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

Hezbollah-allied cleric Sayyed Ali Fadlallah congratulated "the Palestinian people on the achievement of reaching a ceasefire agreement and recovering its prisoners, which allows for stopping the bloodshed and destruction in Gaza, even though the enemy continues to maneuver in its acknowledgment, seeking to gain more advantages and portray itself as the sole decision-maker in the matter."

In his Friday sermon from the pulpit of the Imamain al-Hasanain Mosque in Harat Hreik, in Beirut's southern suburbs, Sayyed Fadlallah added, "We believe that this achievement would not have been possible without the legendary resilience of the resistance, along with the military, political, and popular support that made significant sacrifices in support of Palestine. Most importantly, the sacrifices made by the Palestinian people on this path."

IRAQ

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al Sudani, during a trip to the UK, told British media, "The decision to stop the war is not just up to the Israelis; there are other factors that play a part, like the international community. Iraq has been seeking international partners to stop this destructive war, which [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin]

Netanyahu has been trying to lengthen for various reasons, including internal political reasons that interest him. One of which is to embroil the region in an all-out war to give him more time in office."

"Everyone realizes that this war, this genocidal war, must stop and that efforts should be made, regionally and internationally, to reconstruct Gaza."

Iraq's foreign ministry said it "welcomes the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, which came after great sacrifices and great suffering of the Palestinian people."

In a statement, the ministry also called "for the need to immediately allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip and the affected Palestinian territories, and to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian people."

The ministry also stressed "the need to intensify international efforts to rebuild the areas that were destroyed by the aggression, in a way that ensures the return of life to normal and improves the living conditions of the population."

Meanwhile, the Iraqi Nujaiba movement (a faction of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq) announced the suspension of its military operations against the Israeli occupation.

The movement's Secretary-General, Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi, said, "We congratulate the Palestinian people and the free people of the world on this significant development and announce that we will suspend our

military operations against the Zionist entity in solidarity with the ceasefire in Palestine and to strengthen the continuation of the truce in Gaza. However, the usurping entity should know that any foolish act in Palestine or the region will be met with a harsh response."

Al-Kaabi added, "Our fingers remain on the trigger, and our missiles and drones are fully ready. If they return, we will return, and victory will be for the steadfast, struggling believers."

QATAR & EGYPT

Both countries played a key role as mediators.

The Qatari Emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, said, "We hope that the announcement of a ceasefire agreement in Gaza will contribute to ending the aggression, destruction, and killing in the strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and to start a new phase in which this just cause will not be marginalized."

In a social media post, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi welcomed the Gaza ceasefire deal and stressed the importance of the fast delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

SAUDI ARABIA

The Kingdom's foreign ministry welcomed the deal and urged commitment "to the deal to end the Israeli aggression on Gaza and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the strip and all Palestinian and Arab lands... It also affirms the importance of building on this deal to resolve the basis of the conflict."

Yemeni army claim attacks on Israeli cities, US aircraft carrier



Yemen's Ansarullah movement said on Friday that it launched multiple rocket and drone attacks at three Israeli cities and also conducted a fresh attack against US aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in the Red Sea.

"In response to the recent massacres against our brothers in Gaza, we carried out a military operation targeting vital targets in the Israeli southern port city of Eilat, using

four cruise missiles," Yemeni army spokesperson Yahya Saree said in a statement aired by al-Masirah TV.

He added that the Yemeni army also targeted other vital targets in the Israeli cities of Tel Aviv and Ashkelon and launched the 7th attack against the US aircraft carrier in the northern Red Sea since its arrival.

ICC chief: Israel making 'no effort' to probe Gaza war crimes allegations

The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) says Israel has not properly investigated war crimes allegations brought against it during the war in Gaza.

"The question is have those judges [in Israel], have those prosecutors, have those legal instruments been used to properly scrutinize the allegations that we've seen in the occupied Palestinian territories, in the State of Palestine? And I think the answer to that was 'no,'" Karim Khan said in an interview with the Reuters news agency.

"We're here as a court of last resort and ... as

we speak right now, we haven't seen any real effort by the State of Israel to take action that would meet the established jurisprudence," he added.

Khan also criticized the US House of Representatives' vote to sanction the ICC for issuing an arrest warrant against Netanyahu, saying it "is a matter that should make all people of conscience be concerned."

On top of its warrant for Netanyahu, the ICC has also issued warrants for former Israeli war minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Israel cannot ignore the Palestinian cause after failing to quash it by force

By Meron Rapoport

It is still too early to say who won and who lost Israel's war on Gaza, especially since the ceasefire has not yet begun. But if at least the first stage of the agreement goes ahead, it can be said that Israel has not achieved its war goals.

Israel has not succeeded in achieving its pronounced goals: wiping out Hamas and returning the captives by military force.

More importantly, its undeclared goal was to eliminate the Palestinian human presence in Gaza and that was not achieved. Despite all the destruction and mass killing that Israel inflicted during the 15 months of war in Gaza, the Palestinians continue to cling to their land.

The Palestinians who took to the streets in Gaza after the announcement of the ceasefire agreement celebrated their survival as a people and as human beings against Israeli aggression. These scenes indicate that as far as Israel is concerned, it failed.

We cannot talk about a Palestinian victory either. With probably more than 50,000 Palestinians killed, most of them women and children, and their cities in ruins in a way never seen before in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, any talk of victory seems detached from reality.

However, if the Palestinian goal was a kind of "sumud", or steadfast perseverance, then the Palestinians achieved this goal.

Why did Netanyahu agree now?

It is difficult to know exactly why Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to accept a deal that has been on the table since May 2024. Pressure from Donald Trump may have played a major role, but Netanyahu has problems also within Israel.

All polls show that a large majority of the public supports a deal that would free the 100 or so Israeli captives in return for an end of the war, and his coalition has weakened

significantly.

According to a recent poll, the current coalition would win 49 of the parliament's 120 seats in a new election, losing almost 20 and its majority in the process.

Agreeing the first stage of the hostage deal, therefore, may allow Netanyahu to regain support within center-right voters while at the same time promising the more hard-right wing to renew the fighting afterwards.

Until now, Netanyahu rejected a deal, mostly for political reasons. His extreme right-wing allies, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, threatened to topple his government if he ends the war.

Such a threat also exists now. But Netanyahu had other more profound reasons to refuse. The end of the war, he feared, may put the Palestinian issue back on the negotiation table.

As Netanyahu dedicated his political career to preventing a Palestinian state, such an eventuality may undermine his legacy. And yet he now agreed to cease fire, forced by Trump and Israeli public opinion.

Is there a chance of a permanent ceasefire?

Whether it won or lost, Israel after the signing of the ceasefire is very different from Israel before the Hamas-led attack on 7 October 2023. The attack caused a trauma from which Israeli society did not recover. The destruction in Gaza was an attempt to heal it, but the trauma remained.

On 7 October the idea that Israel can "manage the conflict" with the Palestinians collapsed. Researchers at the Forum for Regional Thinking, an Israeli think tank that deals with Middle East affairs, recently showed how and why this line of thinking failed and how it led to the devastating results of 7 October.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Chahar Bagh: cultural night celebrates Champs-Élysées of Isfahan



TEHRAN – The rich history and cultural significance of Isfahan's Chahar Bagh Boulevard were brought to life during a special event, "Shab-e Chahar Bagh" (Chahar Bagh Night), held on Thursday evening in the heart of the ancient city.

The gathering, which took place along this historic avenue, featured passionate speeches by architects, writers, and researchers, who explored the transformation of the boulevard, sometimes referred to as the "Champs-Élysées of Isfahan."

Morteza Bekhradi, a prominent Isfahan-based architect, opened the event with a heartfelt address, expressing his sorrow over the ongoing changes to Chahar Bagh. "Today, Chahar Bagh has been destroyed. It no longer evokes the memories of the past, and it deeply saddens me," he remarked, recalling how the street had shaped his youth.

Bekhradi recalled the teahouses that once lined the avenue, serving as hubs for social gatherings and cultural activities, such as storytelling and Shahnameh readings. "These teahouses were where the people of Isfahan came together, sometimes even watching a worker carry thirty cups of coffee at once," he said.

Mehrdad Khorsandi, author of *The Story of the People of Chahar Bagh*, offered a different perspective, focusing on the historical significance of water management in the area. "The first water organization in Iran was established in Isfahan, and the first water distribution line was also constructed along Chahar Bagh," Khorsandi explained. Drawing from historical stories, he said that his decision to write the book stemmed from his desire to capture the unique narrative of Chahar Bagh. "Anyone can write their own story of Chahar Bagh," he said, inviting others to explore the street's multifaceted history.

Ali Khodai, author of *The People of Chahar*

Bagh, took the stage next, offering insights into the street's evolution over time through the lens of prominent travelogues. Reflecting on the changes Chahar Bagh underwent, Khodai noted, "Decades ago, Chahar Bagh was full of fascinating people and remarkable achievements. Visiting Chahar Bagh itself was an event, one that influenced even how we dressed."

Khodai also highlighted some unique characteristics of the street, such as its cinema culture, the prominence of secretarial education, and the variety of sweets available. "Chahar Bagh was a place where you could find anything; from cinema to different kinds of sweets," he added.

Later, a documentary film titled *Fragments of Chahar Bagh* was also screened during the event, offering viewers a glimpse into the lesser-known stories and memories tied to the street. The documentary illustrated how Chahar Bagh, beyond being a street, had served as a symbol of cultural and social life in Isfahan, playing a pivotal role in the city's identity.

All the speakers underlined that Chahar Bagh is not just a street; it is a living representation of Isfahan's history and culture. "From the teahouses to the galleries, from the cinemas to the sweet shops, Chahar Bagh has always held a special place in the hearts of the people of Isfahan," said one of the speakers.

In the end, the participants expressed hope that Isfahan would be able to make a balance between modernity and the preservation of its rich heritage.

Chahar Bagh Boulevard, constructed during the Safavid era, is one of Isfahan's most iconic landmarks. Often compared to Paris's Champs-Élysées, the avenue stretches approximately 6 kilometers, connecting the northern and southern parts of the city, with the historic Hasht Behesht and Chehel Sotoun gardens on its eastern side.

Vietnam sets tourism target of 23 million visitors for 2025

Vietnam has revealed a tourism target of 23 million international visitors in 2025, with plans to continue to use visa conditions, air connectivity and destination marketing to boost the sector, create jobs and increase its contribution to the Southeast Asian country's economy.

Tran Phong Binh, deputy director of the tourism marketing department at the National Authority of Tourism told delegates at the ASEAN Tourism Forum that the 2025 target would be a 31% increase from the more than 17 million foreign arrivals in 2024, who brought in about US\$30 billion in tourism revenues.

Behind its competitors

It is perhaps a modest target given that the 2024 arrival figures represent a 41% year-on-year hike compared to 2023. Nonetheless, it would represent a significant recovery for a nation that is currently only just in line with pre-Covid benchmark figures and playing catch-up with its neighbors.

Vietnam wants to achieve 160 million domestic tourists and 35 million international visitors by 2030, but that would only equal Thailand's 2024 figures.

Tourism represented just 7% of Vietnamese GDP in 2023 and 8% in 2024, below the world-wide average of 10.3%, and far behind Thailand (23%), the Philippines (22.5%), and Cambodia (25.8%).

How to drive growth?

Still, the Vietnamese want to increase tourism's GDP contribution to 13% and through that generate over 10 million jobs. With experts blaming the policy climate for the lag, authorities will be scrutinizing international markets for growth opportunities. Asia is far and away the biggest source of international guests, accounting for 79.6%. Europe sent over 11.3%, while the Americas and Oceania provided 5.7% and 3.1% respectively. Africa currently only sends less than 0.3%.

Starting where things are already going well, the Vietnamese will be seeking to attract more South East Asian travelers, and those from China, Japan, and South Korea. India, the Middle East and North America are also key targets, according to FTNnews.

Raising the profile of Vietnamese attractions

Part of the trick will be better marketing for Vietnam's many treasures, from the central, UNESCO-recognized province of Thua Thien Hue through the Visit Vietnam Year, to the Danang International Fireworks Festival in early summer, or the curiosity that is the world's largest cave (the 9km long, 200m high Son Doong). Authorities are also likely to look closely at the state of Vietnam's visa-free entry and waiver policies. It offers unreciprocated visa waivers for 45-day stays to only 13 countries at the moment.

(Source: *Travel Tomorrow*)

Iran's Lorestan claims world's oldest animation originates from this province

TEHRAN – Lorestan province's tourism chief, Ata Hassanpour, has declared that the world's oldest known animation originates from the province.

Addressing the closing ceremony of a local photo and short film festival, Hassanpour highlighted ancient rock engravings in the Humian region of Lorestan, which depicts a deer in five different stances, creating an early form of animation.

According to Hassanpour, this rock art, dating back thousands of years, represents the earliest recorded idea of animation in human history.

"The rock art illustrates the deer's movement across five distinct poses, making it the oldest animation in the world, encapsulating the first form of film, photography, and early human thought," he said.

While some have argued that a similar pottery found in Shahr-e Sukhteh [a UNESCO-registered site also known as the Burnt City] located in southeastern Iran holds this title, Hassanpour asserts that the artwork from Lorestan pre-dates it.

The official emphasized that his-



torical context supports Lorestan's claim as the origin of the world's first animation.

Further elaborating on the province's rich heritage, Hassanpour also mentioned the ancient rock carvings and petroglyphs of Lorestan, particularly those found on the Suren mountain in the Humian region, and other areas across the province.

These markings were first uncovered and introduced to the world by [Charles Brian Montagu] McBurney [who was a British-American archaeologist] and Iranian researcher [Hamid] Iza-

dpanah in 1969, and have since contributed to the global recognition of Lorestan's historical significance.

In his speech, Hassanpour stressed the importance of tourism development in the region, noting that attracting investors is crucial for the province's ongoing bid for global heritage recognition.

"The tourism sector is essential to the province's future, and we urgently need investors to support this effort," he remarked.

The festival, which aimed to promote the region's lesser-known attractions, is seen as a step towards

improving Lorestan's visibility as a tourist destination. "There is much work behind every photo and film, and such festivals play a crucial role in showcasing the untold stories of Lorestan," Hassanpour added.

He concluded by expressing pride in the province's deep cultural and historical roots, emphasizing the importance of continuous efforts to introduce Lorestan to the world. He also hoped for the future inclusion of the Khorramabad Valley in the UNESCO World Heritage list, with the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders.

Home to various nomads and tribal communities, Lorestan was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC.

The Luristan (Lorestan) Bronzes noted for their eclectic array of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Iranian artistic motifs, date from this turbulent period. Moreover, Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanid dynasties.

Iranian airline to launch direct flights to Paris, other European cities amid sanctions

TEHRAN – Iran Airtour, a private Iranian airline, has announced it will begin direct flights from Tehran to several European destinations, with Paris being the first city on its new route.

The move comes in the wake of sanctions imposed by the European Union (EU) and the UK that have targeted other Iranian airlines, limiting their ability to operate flights to Europe and the UK.

Starting January 31, Iran Airtour will begin regular weekly flights between Tehran and Paris using its Airbus A300 aircraft. The flights will operate every Monday and Friday, providing an essential air link for Iranian citizens and travelers between Iran and France.

The airline's CEO Seyyed Reza Mousavi has confirmed that additional European routes, including destinations in Germany, Spain, and Italy, are in the pipeline, expected to be launched by the conclusion of the Iranian calendar year.

The launch of these flights follows three years of preparation, including securing Third

Country Operator (TCO) authorization from the EU, which certifies that Iran Airtour meets European safety and operational standards.

Mousavi expressed confidence that the airline will be able to fill the flights, citing strong demand from passengers who have been unable to travel directly between Iran and Europe due to the ongoing sanctions.

The sanctions, introduced in October 2024, specifically targeted Iran Air, Saha Airlines, and Mahan Air, accusing them of facilitating the transfer of Iranian weapons to Russia for use in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

The Iranian government has strongly denied these claims, arguing that the sanctions unfairly affect ordinary citizens, particularly Iranian expatriates living in Europe.

Iran Airtour's entry into the European market signals a strategic effort to bridge the gap left by the sanctioned airlines, offering much-needed connectivity for both Iranian and European travelers.



Mousavi emphasized the airline's commitment to safety and quality service, noting that Iran Airtour's compliance with international aviation standards demonstrates its resilience in the face of political and economic challenges.

He also predicted that the new routes, particularly to Paris, would experience high occupancy rates, as many Iranian citizens and business travelers have faced significant challenges in finding direct flight options due to the sanctions.

Iran takes legal action to seize historic coins sold at foreign auction



TEHRAN – Iran's General Directorate of Museums has announced that it has initiated legal measures to stop the sale of two historic coins at a foreign auction house.

The action comes after the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism was alerted to the upcoming auction of ancient coins by the CNG Auc-

tion House, which includes items believed to originate from Iran's archaeological sites.

Leila Khosravi, the head of Iran's Directorate of Museums, stated that as soon as the Ministry was informed of CNG's intention to auction the coins, it took immediate steps to request the seizure of two specific coins, which have been definitive-

ly linked to Iran's ancient sites, CHTN reported on Thursday.

The Ministry sent official communications to the relevant authorities to request the stoppage of the sale.

As mentioned by the CHTN, the coins in question are from the pre-Achaemenid and Sassanian periods, and their sale was first reported by Iranian media.

In response, the Ministry's cultural heritage division acted swiftly to assert Iran's claim of ownership and demand the return of the artifacts.

Despite these efforts, reports from local counsel reveal that CNG Auction House sold one of the coins the previous day, with

another still pending sale.

Khosravi added that the Ministry is continuing to explore all legal avenues to ensure that Iran's rights are upheld and to recover both coins.

She emphasized that under international law, and in accordance with UNESCO's regulations, cultural objects obtained through illegal excavation or trafficking are prohibited from being sold or acquired in any museum or auction house worldwide, and must be returned to their country of origin.

The Classical Numismatic Group (CNG), established in 1975, is a prominent auction house specializing in ancient, medieval, and British coins.

Kuwait-Budapest direct flights by Jazeera Airways boost travel options for summer 2025

Jazeera Airways teams up with Budapest Airport and Visit Hungary to launch direct flights linking Kuwait and Budapest, starting in 2025.

Jazeera Airways, a prominent low-cost airline in Kuwait, has entered into an agreement with Budapest Airport to establish direct flights linking Kuwait and Budapest.

The collaboration was officially sealed with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by Hungary's Ambassador to Kuwait, HE András Szabó.

Boosting travel and exchange travelers from Kuwait will soon enjoy a direct connection to Budapest, providing easy access to the city's abundant historical landmarks, cultural experiences, wellness retreats, and vibrant commercial hubs, catering to the increasing demand for nonstop flights.

Through its collaboration with Visit Hungary, the initiative will feature dedicated promotional campaigns to highlight Hungary's dynamic tourism offerings, ensuring an exceptional experience for Kuwaiti visitors trav-

eling for leisure or business.

With flights set to be available for booking soon, the new route promises to establish a strong air connection, catering to both holidaymakers and corporate travelers alike.

This new twice-weekly service aims to strengthen travel links while promoting economic, cultural, and tourism interactions between Kuwait and Hungary.

(Source: *Travel and Tour World*)

2nd Iran-Iraq Science Week to be held

TEHRAN –The second Iran-Iraq Science Week is scheduled to be held from January 18 to 20 in the city of Karbala, Iraq.

The event aims to enhance scientific, academic, and technological relations; it will bring together representatives from over 60 of the best universities in the two countries, IRNA reported.

The week will serve as a platform for sharing expertise, showcasing modern sci-tech achievements, and setting the stage for new partnerships in various technical fields.

Iran's cultural attaché in Iraq, Gholam-Reza Abazari, said the first Iran-Iraq Science Week, which was held in Mashhad, Iran, from October 9 to 12, resulted in signing several memorandums of understanding that led to the expansion of scientific relations and opened up opportunities for more operational cooperation in various fields.

However, the significance of the event is not limited to the exchange of knowledge, it also provides an opportunity to increase communication among scientific elites, develop joint technologies, and strengthen academic infrastructure, Abazari noted. The official went on to say that Iran-Iraq Science Week is beyond a scientific event; it is a key point in strengthening scientific diplomacy and developing strategic links for a brighter future.

The coordination meeting has already been held with Iranian and Iraqi officials, discussing the details of the programs, and the ways to realize joint scientific, research goals, Abazari added.



Iraq seeks Iran's expertise

Iraqi Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Naeem 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 the 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 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.

First Science Week

During the five-day conference, memorandums of understanding were signed to expand scientific and technological relations, implement joint research projects, and develop joint cooperation between the scientific and research centers of the two countries.

The memorandums of understanding included a number of cooperation files, including research opportunities for graduates, joint supervision and development of the post-doctoral path, as well as the exchange of students between universities and mutual fellowship in various specializations, cultural, artistic and sports programs, and joint research projects, in addition to benefiting from laboratory services and logistical equipment at the universities of the two countries," INA quoted the website of the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, as saying.

The memorandums also included scientific cooperation in the field of training, and the exchange of scientific consultations related to curricula and academic courses, while it was agreed to form a committee from both parties to coordinate, follow up, and facilitate implementation procedures."

Air pollution contributes to 16% increase in mortality



TEHRAN –According to national studies, exposure to air pollution is associated with a 16 percent increase in mortality increasing deaths from cardiovascular diseases, and lung cancers by 27 and 28 percent, respectively.

Air pollution is contamination of the indoor or outdoor environment by any chemical, physical, or biological agent that modifies the natural characteristics of the atmosphere.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has called air pollution one of the greatest environmental health risks. In recent years, air pollution has killed more than seven million people due to increased risk of stroke, heart, and lung cancers, as well as other ailments.

Studies show that fine particles, known as particulate matter, are less than 2.5 microns, on cold days in Tehran. The chemical composition of the particulate matter varies by location, time,

and climate, IRNA reported.

Emission sources of fine particles include a variety of combustion activities (motor vehicles, power plants, wood burning, etc.) as well as specific industrial processes. These particles are emitted directly or as secondary pollutants in the atmosphere.

In general, the main sources of particulate matter emissions are fuel combustion such as burning coal and wood, diesel engines, industrial and agricultural processes, and vehicle emissions. Suspended particles generally affect the air quality during the cold months.

Numerous scientific studies on particles show that exposure to the particles causes many health problems including premature death in patients with heart and lung diseases, non-fatal heart attacks, irregular heartbeats, lung cancer, exacerbation of asthma, decreased lung function and increased respiratory symptoms, reduction in fertility rates, and ultimately it leads to a decrease in life expectancy.

Moreover, excessive use of fertilizers and chemical poisons have caused soil pollution and contaminated food products can negatively affect the health of future generations. Degraded lands reduce food resources while increasing food insecurity, and the resulting economic conditions also decline fertility rates.

According to a report released by the Health Ministry, air pollution in Iran leads to 50,000

deaths each year, of which 7,000 occur in Tehran.

Air pollution also accounts for 2,029 and 661 deaths in Isfahan and Arak, respectively. Costs of air pollution on the health system in Isfahan amount to 796 million dollars, and in Arak, it is equal to 2 million 564 thousand dollars.

Therefore, people with heart or lung problems, the elderly, and children should avoid any outdoor activities, and other people should also limit prolonged and heavy activities outdoor, they should all avoid exercising outdoors.

Environmental regulations, enforcement of strict laws, and the development of renewable energy are essential to curb air pollution.

Raising public awareness of the harmful effects of pollution and training the ways to deal with it, improving waste management systems, sewage, and water treatment, and improving public health via the development of health services in deprived areas are some other effective measures to address air pollution.

According to WHO, air quality is closely linked to the earth's climate and ecosystems globally. Many of the drivers of air pollution (i.e. combustion of fossil fuels) are also sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

Policies to reduce air pollution, therefore, offer a win-win strategy for both climate and health, lowering the burden of disease attributable to air pollution, as well as contributing to the near- and long-term mitigation of climate change.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

"Noora" vaccine successfully passing first phase of clinical trial

"Noora" coronavirus vaccine is successfully passing the first phase of the clinical trial, Hassan Abolqassemi, the chancellor of teh university, has said.

The vaccine is well undergoing the first phase of human testing, he noted, adding, the first phase of human testing lasts 2 months, so far more than a month has passed, IRNA reported on Saturday.

He stressed the need to integrate the human testing phase of the Noora vaccine and said that "this must be done to make the vaccine available for the mass vaccination; while many vaccine producing countries have done the same."

واکسن نورا مرحله پایانی فاز اول تست انسانی را طی می کند

تهران - رئیس دانشگاه علوم پزشکی بقیه الله گفت: تزریق دز اول واکسن نورا به تمام داوطلبان انجام شد و دز دوم هم به نیمه تزریق رسیده است. دکتر حسن ابوالقاسمی روز شنبه در گفت و گو با ایرنا، روند فعالیت کارآزمایی بالینی واکسن نورا را مطلوب ارزیابی کرد و افزود: این واکسن به نحو مطلوبی درحال طی کردن فاز اول تست انسانی است. وی با یادآوری اینکه طبق برنامه ریزی انجام شده طول دوره مرحله اول تست انسانی ۲ ماه است، ادامه داد: تاکنون بیش از یک ماه از این دوره سپری شده است. وی بر لزوم ادغام مراحل تست انسانی واکسن نورا تاکید کرد و گفت: این کار باید صورت گیرد و بسیاری از کشورهای تولید کننده واکسن هم از این ظرفیت بهره بردند.

WFP releases December report on Iran

TEHRAN –The World Food Program (WFP) has released a report, expounding on activities in Iran over December 2024.

In December, WFP food assistance reached 33,215 beneficiaries, which included Afghan and Iraqi refugees as well as Iranian teachers. Refugees are assisted with a staple food basket which includes fortified wheat flour (12 kg per person per month) and vegetable oil (810 ml per person per month).

In addition to this in-kind food assistance, WFP provides cash assistance to 7,370 Afghan and Iraqi refugee households each month. In December, households headed by refugee men received Iranian rials (IRR) of 2.5 million (US\$ 4.6, according to the UN Operational Rate) per person.

Households headed by refugee women received a slightly higher monthly cash allocation, amounting to IRR 3 million (US\$ 5.5) per person due to limited access to working opportunities, leading to higher food insecurity.

Due to the approaching winter lean season, under authorization by the Centre for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (CAFIA), of the Ministry of Interior, WFP doubled its cash assistance to all beneficiaries in settlements for December 2024. This extra allocation aimed to safeguard food security during the lean agriculture season and enhance the purchasing power of refugees, given restricted income opportunities.

The winterization top-up, equivalent to the standard cash entitlement for December, was provided to both male-headed and female-headed households.

In December, 9,252 refugee school children including their teachers received daily school snacks consisting of milk, date bars and/or fortified biscuits.

By December 2024, WFP Iran helped ease the financial burden associated with the gluten-free dietary needs of 52 refugee celiac patients from WFP's beneficiaries by providing them with an extra cash amount of 7.7 million rials (US\$ 14.27) per person as a replacement for their usual food entitlement.

To support the income generation and resilience of 312 refugees (51 percent women and 49 percent men), in December, WFP continued sup-

porting the operations of 20 livelihood activities across 17 settlements, including welding, tailoring, baking, and farming.

Following WFP's Disability Inclusion Workplan 2023, WFP implemented a pilot initiative in two settlements, Shahid Naseri of Markazi and Moshajerin of Semnan provinces, providing refugees with disabilities a monthly cash top-up of IRR 1.5 million (US\$ 2.7) across nine settlements, on top of their regular entitlement.

In December, WFP scaled up its response by assisting an additional 10 refugee since November, reaching a total of 271 persons. This follows the program expansion in October, covering Kerman, Lorestan, West Azarbaijan, Fars, Khuzestan, Markazi, and Semnan provinces.

WFP Iran's Budget Revision of the Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP) was approved in September, leading to adjustments in the Needs Based Plan (NBP). Due to evolving circumstances including the suspension of two planned new refugee settlements to accommodate displaced persons from Afghanistan, the revision made changes as follows.

**Reduced the total planned number of beneficiaries from 52,000 to 35,000.

**Extended the duration of ICSP by two years, now covering April 2023 to December 2027, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) duration.

The total ICSP budget has increased by USD 5.8 million, bringing it to USD 42.82 million, to account for these adjustments and the plan's extended timeline.

WFP determined to support Iran in hosting refugees

Maysaa Alghribawy, the new representative of the World Food Program (WFP) in Iran, has announced the organization's commitment to supporting Iran as one the biggest refugee hosting countries.

Highlighting the challenges faced by the WFP in the region, Alghribawy asked for enhancing cooperation and interactions with the country to advance the organization's efforts and responsibilities in Iran, as well as the region, foreign ministry website reported.

Over 1,000 individuals receive rescue services in a week

TEHRAN –A total of 1,004 individuals benefited from rescue services of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) over the past week.

From January 4 to 10, 274 wounded individuals were transferred to hospitals; 22 others received pre-hospital emergency care, the IRCS website reported. Relief teams conducted 78, 59, and 35 rescue missions in Mazandaran, Isfahan, and Golestan provinces, respectively.

From January 11 to 15, the IRCS conducted 351 rescue missions on roads, transferring 204 people to medical centers, and treating 65 individuals were treated at the scene.

Carrying out seven rescue operations, rescuers provided assistance to 2,205 people and rescued 1,205 people impacted by flooding and snow.

IRCS is a top organization

In September 2024, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) project manager, Faisal Mahboob, lauded the capabilities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) as outstanding.

The official said he was really impressed by the capacity and the wide range of activities carried out by the IRCS. The IRCS is recognized as one of the five prominent societies worldwide thanks to its wide range of activities and great achievements both nationally and internationally.

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



Maharloo Lake hosting flamingoes

With an area of 600 sq. km, Maharloo Lake in southern Fars Province is a perfect stopover for migratory birds, including flamingoes.

In mid-summer, the lake loses its water due to high evaporation leaving behind a white bed and pinkish color water.



JANUARY 18, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Often your utterances and expressions of your face leak out the secrets of your hidden thoughts.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:15 Evening: 17:37 Dawn: 5:44 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:12 (tomorrow)

What's in Tehran art galleries



Painting

* Paintings by Mehdi Farrokhi are currently on view in an exhibition at Gooya Gallery.

The exhibition named "Iranian Abstraction" will be running until February 3 at the gallery located at No. 89, Karim Khan Ave.

* Tehran's CAMA – Contemporary and Modern Art Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Reza Abdolhai.

The exhibit titled "Based on A True Story" will be running until January 22 at the gallery located at No. 44, 10th Golestan, Pasdaran St.

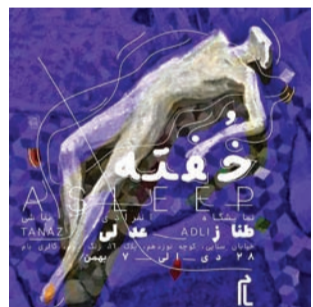


* A collection of paintings by Mohammad Hassan Nematian is on view in an exhibition at Adapa Gallery.

Titled "Eagerly Awaiting", the exhibition will run until February 5 at the gallery located at No. 5, Sumesara Alley, Sazesh St., Vali-e Asr Square.

* Bashgha Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Ali Razavi.

Entitled "Raree Show", the exhibition will be running until January 27 at the gallery located at No.13, Hosseini St., Karim Khan Ave.

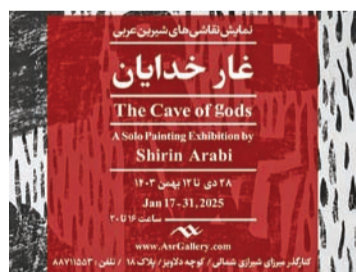


* Paintings by Tannaz Adli are on display in an exhibition at Baam Gallery.

The exhibit named "Asleep" will be running until January 26 at the gallery, which can be found at No.16, 19th Alley, Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.

* Paintings by Arash Lahiji are on display in an exhibition at Sheidai Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "By the Time I Count to Seven, You'll Be in Love" will continue until January 31 at the gallery located at 149 Bahar Shiraz Square near Hafte Tir Square.



* Paintings by Shirin Arabi are on display in an exhibition at Asr Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "The Cave of Gods" will run until January 31 at the gallery located at 18 Delaviz St. off North Mirzaye Shirazi St.

* Sohrab Gallery is hanging a collection of paintings by Ali-Reza Espahbod in an exhibition entitled "1976-1978 London".

The exhibit will run until February 3 at the gallery located at 142 Somayeh St.

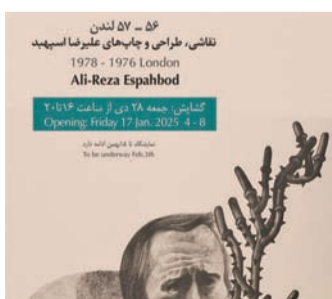
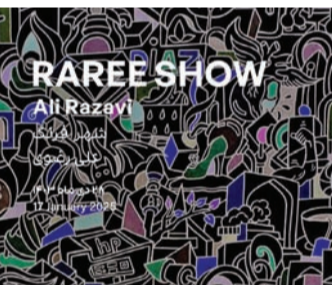
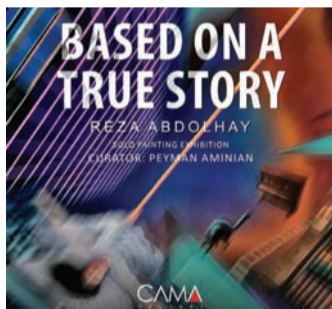


* Golnaz Qadiri is showcasing a collection of her latest paintings in an exhibition at Shirin Gallery.

The exhibition named "Reverie" will run until January 29 at the gallery located at No. 5, 13th St., Karim Khan Ave.

* An exhibition of paintings by a group of artists is underway at Ebteda Gallery.

The exhibition titled "The Fate OF A Man Who Knew Too Much" will run until January 21 at the gallery located at 35 Farrokhi Alley, near Vali-e Asr Square.



Minister advocates for joint research on Persian dialects during Tajikistan visit

TEHRAN- Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri has proposed conducting research to identify and introduce the shared dialects of the Persian language between Iran and Tajikistan.

During his visit to the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan on Thursday, Salehi-Amiri, along with his accompanying delegation, met with Tajikistan's top scientists and academics, ISNA reported.

In a bid to strengthen cultural ties between the two nations, the Iranian minister called for joint linguistic research initiatives to promote the shared Persian language and dialects between Iran and Tajikistan.

At the event, attended by professors and poets sent from the Saadi Foundation and the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, Salehi-Amiri stated: "Considering the many shared roots of words and dialects between the people of Iran and Tajikistan, it is suggested that studies and research be forecasted to identify and introduce the common dialects of the Persian language between the two countries."

During this occasion, Hossein-Ali Rahimi, the Saadi Foundation's representative, along with Ehsan Tufaninejad, the Saadi Foundation's technology advisor, Mahmoud Rezai Dasht Arzhani, a professor at Shiraz University, Mehdi Rahimpour, a member of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature faculty, and Maryam Hosseini, an associate member of the Academy, delivered speeches on behalf of the Iranian delegation.

Additionally, concurrent with President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Tajikistan and with the efforts of the Saadi Foundation and cooperation from the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in that country, a gathering of Iranian and Tajik poets met in a warm atmosphere on Wednesday.

This event, which took place at



the National Library of Tajikistan, was attended by Salehi-Amiri, along with the Minister of Culture of Tajikistan Matlubakhon Sattoriyon, and various cultural officials from both countries, where they emphasized the historical and civilizational commonalities of the two nations and the necessity of enhancing bilateral cooperation in the realms of culture and literature. In a portion of the ceremony, Iranian and Tajik poets recited their works, while Tajik musical pieces were also performed.

Among the Iranian poets present were Shahdokht Zare Golestani, Leila Hosseini, Afshin Ala, Mahmoud Reza Ekramifar, Saeed Biabanaki, and Hamed Asgari.

Moreover, the Tajik Persian Culture Research Institute was inaugurated in Dushanbe on Wednesday in a ceremony attended by Salehi-Amiri and Sattoriyon as well as a number of Iranian and Tajik cultural and literary figures.

During the ceremony, Salehi-Amiri emphasized that the Persian language is a cornerstone of cultural identity for both Iran and Tajikistan.

He celebrated the enduring cul-

tural and linguistic bonds between the two nations amidst global conflicts, noting that Persian, symbolized by the poet Ferdowsi, is rich in mysticism, ethics, and poetry.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted the opening of a new research institute as a transformative step in cultural relations, with its initial project focusing on the linguistic roots and dialects of Persian and Tajik.

He concluded that this initiative reflects the commitment of both nations to preserve and enhance their shared Persian heritage and boost cultural cooperation.

Persian, also known as Farsi, is an ancient language spoken primarily in Iran, Afghanistan (as Dari), and Tajikistan (as Tajik), boasting a rich literary heritage that dates back over a millennium. Its script, derived from Arabic, can initially pose challenges for learners unfamiliar with the right-to-left writing system. Persian vocabulary is influenced by both Arabic and various Turkic languages, adding layers of complexity. While the phonetic structure of Persian is relatively straightforward and lacks gendered nouns, the nuanc-

es of its grammar, such as verb conjugations and the use of subordinate clauses, require dedicated study and practice, often making it a rewarding yet challenging pursuit for foreign learners.

The difficulty level of learning Persian can vary significantly based on a learner's background and native language. For speakers of languages that share similarities with Persian, such as Turkish or certain Indo-European languages, the transition may be smoother due to overlapping linguistic features.

However, learners from languages with markedly different structures, like Mandarin or Vietnamese, may find the concepts of Persian syntax and grammar more daunting.

Additionally, the rich cultural context embedded in Persian literature and expressions can require learners to engage deeply with cultural references to achieve proficiency.

Nonetheless, many learners find studying Persian to be an enriching experience, allowing them to gain insight into a diverse and historically significant culture.

IAF cinematheque to screen "Platoon"

TEHRAN- The Cinematheque of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) will screen American filmmaker Oliver Stone's war drama "Platoon" on Monday. The screening will be followed by a review session by Iranian film critic Kourosh Jahed.

Released in 1986, "Platoon" features an ensemble cast that includes Tom Berenger, Willem Dafoe, Charlie Sheen, Keith David, and Johnny Depp, among others.

This film marks the first entry in Stone's Vietnam War trilogy, followed by "Born on the Fourth of July" (1989) and "Heaven & Earth" (1993). Drawing from Stone's own experiences as a U.S. infantryman in Vietnam, "Platoon" seeks to challenge the romanticized depictions of the war seen in films like John Wayne's "The Green Berets."

The story revolves around Chris Taylor (played by Sheen), who volunteers for service in Vietnam and finds himself amidst a vulnerable, inexperienced command structure led by Lieutenant Wolfe. The platoon is defined by two contrasting figures: the battle-hardened and ruthless Staff Sergeant Barnes (Berenger) and the more compassionate Sergeant Elias (Dafoe). Tensions mount within the platoon as they navigate the horrors of war while grappling with the morality of their actions.

From the outset, Taylor witnesses the brutal realities of combat, including the loss of fellow soldiers, and the psychological impact of vio-



lence on those involved. Following a traumatic ambush, the fragility of loyalty among the soldiers is tested. The film powerfully depicts the moral dilemmas faced by the soldiers, culminating in a violent confrontation between Barnes and Elias, representing the conflict between compassion and brutality that defined the Vietnam experience.

Upon its release, "Platoon" was met with both critical and commercial success, grossing over \$138 million against a modest budget of \$6 million. It received eight Academy Award nominations, winning four, including Best Picture and Best Director. The film significantly influenced public perception of the Vietnam War and is widely regarded for its gritty realism and powerful performances.

In 1998, it was featured on the American Film Institute's list of the 100 greatest films and, in 2019, it was selected for preservation by the

Library of Congress for its cultural significance. Stone's "Platoon" not only informs audiences about the Vietnam War but also serves as a poignant reflection on the enduring scars of warfare, the loss of innocence, and the complexities of human morality. As Taylor's journey illustrates, the true cost of war is often paid in both lives and souls, leaving lasting effects on those who survive.

Oliver Stone is a highly acclaimed American film director, producer, and screenwriter, known for his intense and unflinching portrayals of real-life events. Born in 1946, Stone served in the United States Army as an infantryman in Vietnam, experiences that would later shape his cinematic vision. Stone's filmography is marked by critically acclaimed films such as "Platoon" (1986), "Born on the Fourth of July" (1989), and "JFK" (1991), each offering unapologetic and often provocative explorations of war, politics, and the American psyche.

Stone's unique visual style, blending gritty realism with poetic introspection, has captivated audiences and left an indelible mark on contemporary cinema. With a career spanning over five decades, Oliver Stone remains an uncompromising voice in Hollywood, unafraid to tackle the most complex and contentious issues.

His unyielding passion for storytelling has earned him numerous awards, including three Academy Awards for Best Director.

Gaza Biennale protest outside London's ICA highlights Palestinian art and resistance

Activists gathered outside London's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) to show support for the Gaza Biennale and protest the ICA's sponsorship ties.

The streets outside the ICA in London were alive with voices and projections on Tuesday night, as protesters gathered for the first UK event of the Gaza Biennale.

Led by Gaza Biennale - Jinnaah UK (with Jinnaah meaning "pa-

vilion" or "wing"), artworks were projected onto the ICA's walls, making a visible statement about the resilience of Palestinian creativity in spite of Israel's military onslaught.

The Gaza Biennale is a global project that aims to showcase Palestinian art both within the embattled coastal strip and in international galleries. It features artwork from more than 60 Pal-

estinian artists - many of whom continue to create in Gaza under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions.

Tuesday's protest also served as a form of resistance against the ICA's ties to Bloomberg Philanthropies, which protesters say was funding the New Contemporaries exhibition hosted at the ICA that same evening. According to the Palestinian Youth

Movement (PYM), Bloomberg Philanthropies, led by billionaire Mike Bloomberg, has been "directly implicated in facilitating settlement infrastructure in the West Bank."

These settlements, deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice, have been a focal point for global protests against Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories.