



Palestinians react to news of a ceasefire agreement with Israel, in Deir al Balah, central Gaza Strip, Jan. 15, 2025.

Gaza war only brought more shame to Israel

By Matin Jamshidi

TEHRAN – Israel pounded the Gaza Strip relentlessly for 470 days and leveled the enclave that houses 2.3 million population, yet it failed to make the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip surrender.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had set the goal to eliminate Hamas and free all the remaining captives by force following the October 7 attack on southern Israel in 2023.

Speaking at a special meeting to mark the first anniversary of the October 7 attack Netanyahu said, “We will end the war when we complete all the goals we set: overthrowing the evil rule of Hamas, returning all our abductees home – both the dead and the living, thwarting any future threat from Gaza to Israel...”

However, none of Netanyahu’s goals were realized. His insistence on continuing the war on Gaza, known as the largest open-air prison in the world, and rebuffing any ceasefire proposal just resulted in more tragedies and destructions.

What does Trump seek by reassuring SDF?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT- Following the meeting of Mazloum Abdi, the commander-in-chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with Masoud Barzani, the leader of the Iraqi Kurdistan region, it seems that Syria’s Kurdish crisis will witness remarkable developments.

The Abdi-Barzani meeting focused on the need to support the US efforts to stop Turkish attacks on the SDF through mediation from the Iraqi Kurdistan in exchange for guarantees Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) rebels would leave.

The possibility of the Peshmerga Rojava forces entering the SDF areas to protect them was also discussed while emphasizing the importance of Kurdish reconciliation in forming a unified Kurdish reference that includes all parties active in northeastern Syria.

During the Abdi-Barzani meeting, it was agreed to send a unified Kurdish delegation to Damascus to meet with the new Syrian rulers.

Yemen supports Gaza till the end

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Yemen continues its support front for Gaza until the last moments of the Israeli genocidal war on Gaza.

A ballistic missile launched from Yemen toward Tel Aviv triggered sirens in Israel that were heard in Ramallah.

Hebrew media reported that Israelis escaped en masse from the shores of Tel Aviv. Footage shared by Israeli news platforms showed many fleeing to shelters after sirens sounded in central Israel.

According to Israeli media, rocket fragments also made an impact near the settlement of Beitar Illit south of occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem). Sounds of explosions were heard from the occupied West Bank after sirens sounded in Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport.

The Israeli ambulance service confirmed that it dealt with several injuries during the rush to shelters.

Israeli Channel 12 reported that air traffic at Ben Gurion Airport was temporarily disrupted as a result of the Yemeni ballistic missile.

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Two Iranian Supreme Court judges assassinated in Tehran terrorist attack

TEHRAN – Two Iranian Supreme Court judges were killed on Saturday in a shooting attack.

They have been identified as Ali Razini, head of Branch 39 of the Supreme Court, and Mohammad Moqiseh, head of Branch 53.

The two veteran judges were dealing with offenses against national security, espionage, and terrorism.

“A person armed with a handgun entered the room of the two veteran judges before noon Saturday and martyred them,” Judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir said, adding a bodyguard of the judges was injured in the attack.

“The gunman immediately committed suicide while running away and we cannot talk about his motives at the moment,” he said.

“Martyrs Razini and Moqiseh were always the target of malice held by the enemies because of their brilliant records,” Jahangir said. ► Page 2

Leader offers condolences over martyrdom of two prominent judges

TEHRAN – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei expresses condolences following the assassination of two veteran Iranian judges in an armed attack at their Tehran office on Saturday.

“I express my deepest condolences on the loss of the noble martyr Hojjatoleslam Haj Sheikh Ali Razini and his courageous colleague, Haj Sheikh Mohammad Moqiseh.

May God’s mercy be upon them,” the Leader said in a message published Saturday night.

Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out that Razini had previously faced an assassination attempt.

He said, “Martyr Razini had previously endured the ill intentions of malevolent individuals and suffered for years due to his injuries.

His two noble brothers were also martyred before him. May God’s mercy and blessings be upon all of them and upon their patient and self-sacrificing families.”



Global solidarity with Palestinians highlighted in Tehran conference

TEHRAN – The 13th annual conference titled “Gaza, the Symbol of Resistance” commenced on Saturday at the Art Center Hall in Tehran, bringing together prominent figures to commemorate the resilience of the Palestinian people.

Marking the anniversary of the end of the Gaza War, the event seeks to honor the steadfastness of Gaza in the face of adversity and its designation as a global symbol of Resistance.

The conference is attended by Iran’s Chief Justice, representatives of the Resistance Axis, the Yemeni ambassador to Tehran, and other notable figures. ► Page 3

West abandoned JCPOA revival talks in 2022 despite near-agreement, Ulyanov tells Tehran Times

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – For those who have closely tracked the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Mikhail Ulyanov is a well-known name. As Russia’s Permanent Representative to international organizations in Vienna, Ulyanov played an active role in the multiple rounds of negotiations between JCPOA signatories aimed at salvaging the deal after the U.S. unilaterally withdrew in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Iran.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, ► Page 3



Exclusive

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

The sanctions pressure on Iranian oil export

In a note, Donya-e-Eqtasad addressed sanctions on Iran's oil export and said: According to the Wall Street Journal, Iran has recently sold nearly 3 million barrels of its oil out of the 25 million barrels held in China's storage. These efforts are made while Iran's economy is under severe pressure from American sanctions and high inflation. The new U.S. sanctions against Iran and Russia's oil exports have disturbed the global market, and China, which is the largest buyer of Iranian oil, has stopped the official import of Iranian oil due to the pressure of the sanctions and continues to buy oil only through unofficial channels.

Now Iran's crude oil exports may decrease by one million barrels per day by summer. This may lead to Iran's reaction. Iran's reaction may not be predictable. The Economist magazine advises that in such conditions and in an optimistic scenario, Iran should take steps towards reaching a basic agreement with the United States and negotiate for the permanent lifting of sanctions.

Siasat-e-Rooz: Historic treaty

In an analysis, Siasat-e-Rooz discussed the agreement between Iran and Russia and the West's view toward it. The paper said: Global and regional developments entail adopting common approaches on some issues to deepen their relations. The visit of the Iranian president to Russia and his meeting with Putin, the signing of a 20-year partnership agreement, and strategic cooperation between the two countries are a big step towards thwarting the American conspiracies.

The Western media is trying to trivialize it. But the implementation of all the terms of the treaty can lead to economic prosperity for both countries. America is angry with the elimination of the dollar in exchanges between Iran and Russia.

This will lead to the spread of de-dollarization among other countries and will prove that economic transactions can be done in better and easier ways without dollars. The Iran-Russia treaty is historic because. The reactions of the enemies prove its importance.

Sobh-e-No: France is safe haven for terrorists

In an interview with Abolfazl Zohrevand, an expert on political issues, Sobh-e-No

discussed the action of France in hosting the conference of the MKO group. Zohrevand said: The recent events in France are a warning that shows we should change our position towards the West and adopt a policy that the Iranian nation deserves, otherwise we will face the same problems as before. Even now, France is pursuing activities in Lebanon and Iraq; including the attempt to disarm Hashd al-Shaabi (PMU/PMF) and the Axis of Resistance. The ultimate goal is to undermine Iran.

These measures are aimed at deceiving public opinion and changing the political structure in Iran like Syria. When the enemy openly tries to undermine the country, we must set our policies resolutely. With such an enemy, you cannot move on the path of building trust. It is not surprising that some people consider France's actions as a move against Iran's national interests and security, because this is the nature of France, America, and the West. Their main goal is to defeat the Islamic resistance movement and undermine the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Shargh: Time to demonstrate Iran's diplomatic ability

Shargh dedicated its editorial to the situation in Lebanon and Syria and suggested that Iran must deal with the new developments in these two countries. It wrote: Now a new chapter has begun in the history of Lebanon and it is very important to know the course of future developments in the country and how the Islamic Republic of Iran will deal with the new conditions.

The ceasefire between Hezbollah and the Zionist regime is a turning point in the political and geopolitical developments of the Middle East. It should not be forgotten that the political-strategic geography of the Middle East is still unstable. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran's connection with Hezbollah through Syria has been cut off for an indefinite period, it is not believed that the absence of Iran and Russia in Syria will be filled by Turkey and its Western and Arab allies.

New changes and developments in Syria and Lebanon have created an opportunity for the active diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It seems the time has arrived for Iran to show its diplomatic abilities in interacting with the new Syrian and Lebanese statesmen.

CIA agent admits to leaking details of Israel's assault on Iran

TEHRAN – A now sacked CIA operative, Asif William Rahman, aged 34, has pleaded guilty to disseminating classified documents regarding the Israeli regime's November 2024 aggression against Iran.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Rahman pleaded guilty to two counts of "willful retention and transmission of classified information" related to national defense.

His sentencing is slated for May 15, with a potential maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, as stipulated in his plea deal.

"Mr. Rahman betrayed the trust of the American people by unlawfully sharing classified national defense information he swore an oath to protect," Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen said.

Rahman was apprehended by the FBI in Cambodia last November.

The U.S. government announced that he had been a CIA employee since 2016 and used to hold a top-secret security clearance.

Court documents claim Rahman accessed and printed two "Top Secret" documents detailing "a U.S. foreign ally and its planned actions against a foreign adversary."

The Justice Department noted, "Rahman removed the documents, photographed them, and transmitted them to individuals he knew were not entitled to receive them."

Reports indicated that Rahman leaked documents crafted by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), which is crucial in analyzing satellite imagery and supporting covert U.S. military operations.

These leaked documents surfaced in Oc-



Mugshot of former CIA agent Asif Rahman released by the U.S. Guam Department of Corrections

tober 2024 on Telegram, indicating Israeli military preparations for a retaliatory strike following Iran's ballistic missile attack on October 1.

This operation, deemed "True Promise II," was Iran's response to the assassination of key Resistance leaders, including Hamas's Ismail Haniyeh and Hezbollah's Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, successfully targeting military and intelligence bases across the occupied Palestinian territories.

Less than a month later, Israeli warplanes breached Iraqi airspace on October 26 and attempted to target Iranian military sites.

The attack resulted in now repaired damage to some Iranian radar sites and the martyrdom of four Army personnel and one civilian.

Two Iranian Supreme Court judges assassinated in Tehran terrorist attack

From page 1 ▶ "In the past year, the Judiciary has taken extensive measures to identify spies and hypocritical groups, and this has led to the anger and resentment of the enemies," Jahangir said.

According to the initial investigations, the armed assailant had neither lodged a complaint at the Supreme Court nor referred to any court branches. The identity and potential affiliation of the gunmen have not been disclosed.

Razini previously survived an assassination attempt in January 1998 when assailant motorcyclists attached a magnetic bomb to his vehicle. In that attack, he was injured.

Razini's prosecutor-general has ordered the assassination of the two judges to be investigated as a "priority case".

Judiciary head, president address attack

Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei released a

statement hours after the attack, in which he attributed the assassination to the two judges' dedication to law and justice. "The tragic loss of two prominent, revolutionary judges, Hojjat al-Islam Ali Razini and Mohammad Moqiseh, in a



Hojjatolislam Ali Razini was born in 1953 in Hamedan, Iran. He held numerous prominent positions within the Iranian judiciary and government throughout his career. Razini's career began with significant roles in the early years of the Islamic Republic, including serving as the Revolutionary Prosecutor of Tehran.

He later became Head of the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces, overseeing the legal mat-

ters of the military. He then served as Chief Justice of Tehran Province from 1994 to 1999, a key judicial position for the capital region. His legal career continued with his appointment as Head of the Administrative Justice Court from 2004 to 2009, which handles complaints against governmental bodies. Simultaneously, from 2006 to 2016, Razini served as a representative of Hamadan Province in the Assembly of Experts, a body responsible for electing the Leader of the Islamic Revolution. He also served as the Legal Deputy of the Head of the Judiciary for a few years.

terrorist attack on Saturday, has deeply saddened and grieved everyone serving in the judiciary of the Islamic Republic," the Judiciary head wrote.



Hojjatolislam Mohammad Moqiseh, born in 1956 in Sabzevar, Razavi Khorasan, was a prominent Iranian cleric and judge. He dedicated his career to the Revolutionary Court and later the Supreme Court of Iran, known for his long service and involvement in significant cases. Moqiseh's judicial career began in 1981 within the Islamic Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office. He initially served as a deputy prosecutor before becoming supervisor of

Qezel Hesar Prison in 1985. Following the closure of Qezel Hesar, he assumed the same role at Rajai Shahr Prison, continuing his oversight of incarcerated individuals.

For 33 years, Moqiseh was a fixture in the Revolutionary Court, gaining a reputation as an experienced and influential judge within the system. He was known for adjudicating numerous important cases, including issuing rulings against members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) terror Organization and Daesh (ISIS). In November 2020, Moqiseh was transferred to the Supreme Court of Iran, where he was eventually appointed head of Branch 53.

prosecuting and punishing terrorists, spies, murderers, and those threatening citizens' security. Their courage, decisiveness, and frankness in their judicial duties

often angered traitors and hypocrites," he added.

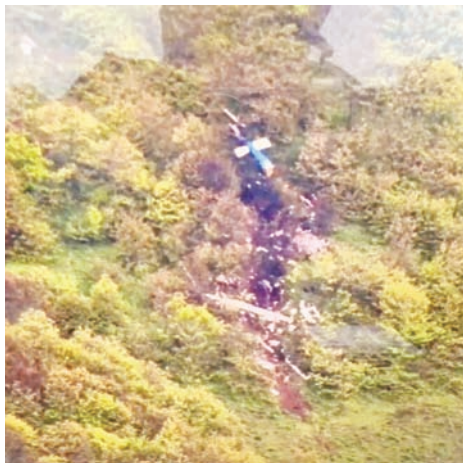
Ejei explained that Razini and Moqiseh were true believers in the Islamic Revolution and followers of its leaders, genuinely serving the people. Their unpromising stance against terrorists, whose hands were stained with the pure blood of Iranians, made them targets of the enemies' hatred, he said.

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations and condolences to the esteemed families, friends, and colleagues of these two revolutionary and sincere judges, as well as to the entire nation of Iran."

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian also offered his condolences in a separate message. He ordered Iran's security forces to launch a thorough

investigation on the matter and noted that the two judges' martyrdom would not obstruct the process of justice. "Their path will continue," the president wrote.

Iranian military reiterates bad weather as cause of Raisi's chopper crash



The site in East Azerbaijan Province where President Raisi and Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian lost their lives in a helicopter crash on May 19, 2024.

TEHRAN – The General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces issued a statement on Saturday to address new speculations surrounding the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi, emphasizing that claims circulating on social media and various platforms "are often far from the truth."

According to the statement from the Armed Forces' communication center, these assertions "stem from either ignorance or deliberate misinformation."

On May 19, 2024, a helicopter crash in the mountainous region of East Azerbaijan Province claimed the lives of 8 individuals including President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

The officials were traveling to the city of Tabriz after the inauguration of the Qiz-Qalasi dam in a ceremony also attended by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev.

Despite challenging conditions of heavy fog and rain, a diligent search and rescue operation successfully located the wreckage the following day.

President Raisi was laid to rest at the sacred Shrine of Imam Reza (AS) in Mashhad, where he was honored by the nation.

In its Saturday statement, the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces repeated previously disclosed findings from a thorough investigation which concluded that the incident was caused by "complex weather and geographical conditions," unequivocally ruling out any possibilities of technical failure, sabotage, or attack.

Iran will respond to any aggression, Pezeshkian tells NBC, 'We do not fear war'



TEHRAN – NBC has aired an extended version of the interview it conducted with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, in which he said Iran plays no games when it comes to its security, and that his administration would be willing to engage with incoming U.S. President Donald Trump if he approaches Tehran with respect.

In the first few minutes, the interviewer raised the return of Donald Trump to the White House, along with the ensuing debate on whether or not Iran would engage with his second administration.

In his conversation with NBC, Masoud Pezeshkian was unequivocal when responding to a direct question from the host: "Iran, based on principles, is ready to engage with a second Trump administration."

It is important to note that both the current Iranian government and other authorities within the Islamic Republic have never ruled out diplomatic dialogue with the West, as long as it takes place without external pressures and respects Iran's red lines regarding both domestic and foreign policy.

The president also took the opportunity to remind the audience of the previous unfulfilled commitments by the United States, as well as Washington's attempts to overthrow the government in Tehran.

Beyond expressing Iran's willingness to negotiate from a position of equality, Pezeshkian sent a clear message to the U.S. administration: abandon the "regime change" policy and engage in dialogue from a place of mutual respect, not from a stance of imposition.

Pezeshkian emphasized that negotiations should take place within a clear framework, one that involves honoring the commitments made and mutual respect and that there must be a shared will from both parties. "Our problem does not lie in dialogue."

The problem is with the commitments derived from negotiations, which must be respected. When Iran negotiated with the

major powers on its nuclear program, we fulfilled all the commitments we had made. Unfortunately, it was the other party that did not honor its promises," he stated.

In this regard, he expressed his concerns: "We have doubts that, even if we engage in negotiations, they are actually seeking to overthrow the Iranian government instead of resolving the issues."

Part of Iran's problem with the West, and especially with the United States, lies in the lack of commitment previously mentioned. In this context, the rupture of the nuclear agreement (JCPOA), signed in 2015 and ratified by Iran, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and the European Union, is viewed by Tehran as evidence of the lack of honesty and commitment from the West in its negotiations with the Islamic Republic.

The unilateral withdrawal from the agreement by Washington, as has been noted, reinforces this perception.

Despite previous experiences, Pezeshkian's government committed during its electoral campaign to attempt negotiating a new nuclear agreement with the West, with the main objective of lifting the economic sanctions that are straddling the country.

Regarding sanctions, it is expected that the Trump administration will resume its "maximum pressure" strategy against Tehran, an approach that would further complicate any attempt to reach a diplomatic agreement.

On the possibility of a military escalation in the region, the Iranian president emphasized that Iran does not intend to be a threat. When asked about a potential attack on its nuclear facilities, Pezeshkian was firm: "Iran does not seek war, but in the event of an attack on our nuclear facilities, we are prepared to defend ourselves. Naturally, we will respond to any action against us."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

West abandoned JCPOA revival talks in 2022 despite near-agreement, Ulyanov tells Tehran Times

From Page 1 ► the Russian official said the remaining signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal (Iran, Russia, China, France, Germany, and Britain) were about to reach an agreement on the revival of the pact before Europe left the talks in coordination with Washington in 2022. He believes Europeans are not the key players here and whether the JCPOA can be saved or not depends on the actions of the United States.

Ulyanov did not specify the reasons behind the West's decision to scuttle the deal's restoration. However, the timing of the Western states' departure from the negotiating table occurred when Iran was facing domestic unrest and riots.

Below is the full text of Ulyanov's interview with the Tehran Times:

What is the current status of negotiations on the JCPOA?

The JCPOA negotiations stopped in 2022, just the moment when they were at the finish line. All that was left was to agree on just a handful of provisions.

The Western countries, namely the United States, Germany, France, and the UK, decided to abandon the process of finalization of the «package» decision, while Russia, Iran, and China were ready to do it.

As far as we understand, recently there has been a resumption of informal contact between representatives of Iran with political directors of foreign services of Germany, France, and the



UK, as well as with representatives of the European External Action Service, which used to play the role of the JCPOA negotiations' coordinators.

We see that these contacts are preliminary in nature, an informal dialogue that is far from real negotiations. Moreover, it is clear that the European countries are not and cannot be a key player in this field.

However, the mere fact that the conversation has been resumed, can be assessed positively.

Do you think Russia has played a role in facilitating a successful outcome?

Russia played a considerable role during the 2021–2022 negotiations on the restoration of the JCPOA.

We genuinely made a maximum effort to achieve an outcome.

Answering your question, I think I can say that at that time all the participants of the process – Iran, China, E3, the U.S. as well as the EU assessed Russia's contribution very positively.

Indeed, on many occasions, we were able to propose certain compromise solutions that found unanimous support and allowed us to move forward.

What are the key challenges remaining in reviving the Iran nuclear deal?

I believe that the key challenge in that regard is the lack of readiness of the Western countries to resume negotiations at this stage. In many ways, the Western countries became hostages of their own political agenda.

They were not able to appropriately take into account legitimate suggestions and requests of the Iranian side. They keep resorting to unreasonable politicization of the issue and regularly undertake not just provocative, but completely irrelevant actions against Iran.

A clear example of that would be these countries' behavior at

the IAEA Board of Governors in Vienna with politically inadequate anti-Iran resolutions.

What are the implications of the JCPOA for regional security and stability?

In my view, the JCPOA had positive implications for regional security and stability in the period of 2015–2018 – before the unilateral withdrawal of the United States in 2018.

Timely resumption of the JCPOA in full could have undoubtedly become one of the factors contributing to restoring stability in the region.

Are there any potential avenues for future cooperation on the issue?

As of today, nobody has an answer to this question. The position of the United States remains unclear, specifically regarding whether it will acknowledge that its withdrawal from the JCPOA and imposition of the 'maximum pressure' campaign led to outcomes directly opposite to those it had been counting on.

It remains to be seen whether the White House is willing to look for a political solution and reasonable balance of interests, without which it would be impossible to expect a positive result.

One can probably expect that the situation will become clearer in 2–3 months.

However, what has to be taken into account while addressing this issue, is that October 18, 2025, marks the expiration of the JCPOA and the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 timelines.

Landmark Iran–Russia treaty paves way for enhanced bilateral ties: Araghchi

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has highlighted the 20-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty between Iran and Russia and described its wide-ranging scope, which includes trade, investment, energy, transportation, and tourism.

He expressed hope that with such a foundation in the relations between the two countries, the economic, cultural, and political relations between Iran and Russia will proceed more easily and in a better framework from now on.

Araghchi noted that the treaty also incorporates cultural exchange, judicial cooperation, and strengthened parliamentary ties, setting the stage for improved bilateral relations. The landmark agreement was signed by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Russian President Vladimir Putin during a summit in Moscow on Friday.

President Putin hailed the treaty as a “breakthrough” and expressed optimism about the ambitious tasks outlined within it.

Russia-Iran pact an example of relations between equal states: Lavrov

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, in comments to Mayak radio, highlighted the treaty's broader implications. “It sets an example of how nations can constructively build relations based on equality and sovereignty,” he said.

Lavrov reiterated the importance of mutual respect in fostering partnerships that withstand external pressures.

President Putin described President Pezeshkian's visit to Moscow as a significant opportunity to explore comprehensive cooperation. He emphasized the ambitious nature of the agreement, predicting that it would give new momentum to the partnership in all directions.

“This agreement provides a solid foundation for cooperation across all areas and will significantly enhance our partnership,” he stated. Russian Foreign Minister added that the treaty serves as a model for re-



lations between sovereign, equal states, praising its emphasis on mutual respect and shared goals.

A pivotal step in the evolving global order: Dugin

The significance of the treaty was further emphasized by Russian political thinker Alexander Dugin, who described it as a pivotal step in the evolving global order.

Dugin praised the formalization of the alliance, stating that it marks a decade of progress in Iran-Russia relations. He outlined three key areas of focus: economic collaboration, regional engagement, and international cooperation. According to Dugin, the treaty aims to establish a unique security framework that promotes mutual trust while maximizing opportunities. Proposals include potential Russian military bases in southern Iran and Iranian economic activities in the Arctic.

“The North-South Corridor, a trade route linking Russia to international waters through Iran, is a cornerstone of this agreement,” Dugin said, highlighting its potential to reshape Eurasian connectivity and counter Western sanctions.

Dugin also noted the cultural and geopolitical alignment between the two nations, describing their shared rejection of global hegemony as a foundation for deeper cooperation. “This partnership is a step toward building a multipolar world order,” he concluded.

The treaty's signing was lauded by both nations as a historic milestone. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova called it an “unprecedented agreement,” underscoring its depth and scope.

Persepolis's uncertain future

TEHRAN – Persepolis, one of the most storied and successful football teams in Iranian football history, spend a challenging period following the departure of coach Juan Carlos Garrido.

Their current performance in the domestic league and AFC Champions League Elite have raised questions about the future of the team.

After parting ways with Garrido, the club face the pressing task of finding a new head coach. This transition has undoubtedly created uncertainty, as the right leadership is essential for maintaining team morale and ensuring strategic direction during critical matches.

Persepolis currently sit third in the Iranian Pro League, trailing behind fierce rivals Tractor and Sepahan. The competition for the top position is fierce, and the club's management will need to act decisively to secure a coach capable of not only revitalizing the team but also sustaining their competitive edge.

Finding a suitable replacement for Garrido is paramount. The team must focus on not only tactical adjustments and game strategies but also on fostering a strong team dynamic. The arrival of a new coach can invigorate the squad and inspire players, potentially altering their current trajectory in the league. As the season progresses, the stability and coherence brought by effective leadership will be pivotal for Persepolis's ambitions to reclaim the top spot.

In addition to domestic challenges, Persepolis are preparing for a demanding schedule as they enter the 2024/25 AFC Champions League Elite. Facing formidable opponents such as Al Hilal and Al Nassr from Saudi Arabia presents both an opportunity and a challenge. These matches will not only test the club's on-field capabilities but also their resilience and mental fortitude.

Historically, Persepolis have performed admirably in regional competitions, often progressing through to the later stages of the tournament. However, to contend with top-tier clubs from Asia, a well-planned strategy and cohesive teamwork will be essential.

Iran's women's kabaddi to face South Korea,Taiwan

TEHRAN – Iran's women's kabaddi team is set to play two friendly matches against South Korea and Taiwan.

These matches will serve as preparation for the 2025 Women's Kabaddi World Cup.

The friendlies will take place in Tehran; however, South Korea and Taiwan have not yet responded to the invitation.

The Women's Kabaddi World Cup will be hosted by the Indian city of Bihar, specifically at the indoor hall of the Rajgir Sports Academy, in March 2025.

A total of 14 countries are expected to participate, including India, China, Japan, South Korea, Nepal, Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Poland, Argentina, and South Africa.

This will be the second time Bihar hosts the Women's Kabaddi World Cup, following the event held in 2012 at the Patliputra Sports Complex in Patna.

Ismail Kartal shortlisted to lead Persepolis

TEHRAN – Former Fenerbahce head coach Ismail Kartal is the latest candidate to take charge of Persepolis football club.

The team was headed by interim coach Karim Bagheri but the coach stepped down from his role after losing to Sepahan in Iran's Super Cup on Friday.

Persepolis parted company with Spanish coach Juan Carlos Garrido in late December and are negotiating with coaches for the vacant seat.

Persepolis have previously been linked with Portuguese Jose Vitor dos Santos Peseiro, French coach Julien Stéphan, former Croatia coach Slaven Bilic, ex-Dortmund trainer Edin Terzic, former Bayern Munich head coach Niko Kovac, ex-Real Madrid coach Rafael Benitez, Italian tactician Walter Mazzarri, and Foolad coach Yahya Golmohammadi.

Arman Ramezani leaves Esteghlal

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football club parted ways with their forward Arman Ramezani by mutual consent.

Ramezani joined Esteghlal from Persepolis in 2021 but failed to live up to expectations.

The 32-year-old forward has been linked with Shams Azar football club.

Esteghlal are slated to meet Shams Azar on Monday.

Iran to play Indonesia at 2025 AFC U20 Asian Cup opener

TEHRAN – Iran will play Indonesia in the opening match of the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2025.

The young Persians are drawn in Group C along with Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Yemen.

Iran are scheduled to play Indonesia on Feb 13. Hossein Abdi's boys will also play Yemen and Uzbekistan on Feb. 16 and 19.

The 16 teams were drawn into four groups with not just continental glory at stake but also four tickets to the FIFA U20 World Cup 2025 in Chile.

The 42nd edition of the tournament will take place from Feb. 12 to March 1, 2025.

- Draw Result
- Group A:** China, Australia, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar
- Group B:** Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, DPR Korea
- Group C:** Uzbekistan, Iran, Indonesia, Yemen
- Group D:** Japan, Korea Republic, Syria, Thailand

Iran beach soccer edge Belarus in friendly

TEHRAN – The Iran national beach soccer team narrowly defeated Belarus 2-1 in a friendly match held in Bushehr on Saturday.

Seyed Ali Nazem and Movahed Mohammadpour scored for the Iranian side.

Team Melli will also face Belarus again on Monday and Tuesday. Led by head coach Ali Naderi, the Iran beach soccer team are preparing for the 2025 AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup, scheduled for March 20 to 30 in Thailand.

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

“Bushehr's camp is a very good opportunity for the national team to coordinate and prepare for the Asian competitions in Thailand,” Iran coach Ali Naderi said.

“The Belarus team are one of the respected teams that will undoubtedly make a significant contribution to the preparation and strengthening of the national beach football team,” he added.

He continued, “The national beach football team will gradually reach an optimal level of readiness by holding several training camps so that they can defend Iran's credibility and position in this sport, as they always have.”

Global solidarity with Palestinians highlighted in Tehran conference



TEHRAN – The 13th annual conference titled “Gaza, the Symbol of Resistance” commenced on Saturday at the Art Center Hall in Tehran, bringing together prominent figures to commemorate the resilience of the Palestinian people.

Marking the anniversary of the end of the Gaza War, the event seeks to honor the steadfastness of Gaza in the face of adversity and its designation as a global symbol of Resistance.

The conference is attended by Iran's Chief Justice, representatives of the Resistance Axis, the Yemeni ambassador to Tehran, and other notable figures.

The gathering serves as a platform to reaffirm support for the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements and to pay tribute to the martyred commanders of the Quds Path, who played a pivotal role in defending the Palestinian cause.

Hezbollah leader praises Al-Aqsa Storm as a global catalyst

In a message shared during the event, the Secretary-General of Hezbollah underscored the transformative impact of the Al-Aqsa Storm on global awareness of the Palestinian struggle. He described it as a revitalization of the Palestinian cause, noting its ripple effects that sparked protests and demonstrations across the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and other Western nations.

“This is a true revolution on the global stage,” he stated, emphasizing that Lebanon's Resistance remains committed to its path, pre-

pared to defend its principles, and determined to honor the sacrifices of the martyrs.

Islamic Jihad representative warns of Zionist regime's shortened lifespan

Nasser Abu Sharif, the representative of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement in Tehran, delivered a poignant speech during the conference, asserting that the Zionist regime's time is limited due to its history of crimes and oppression.

Speaking to attendees, Abu Sharif highlighted the ongoing support for the Zionist regime by the United States and Europe, particularly the U.S., which he accused of disregarding humanitarian principles despite mounting domestic protests against its policies.

“The protests we have seen in the U.S. reflect a growing awareness of the injustices committed, yet American support for the Zionist regime continues unabated,” he said, lamenting the double standards in international policy.

Abu Sharif further praised the resilience of the Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza, who, despite their limited resources, have managed to sustain their resistance with the support of the broader Resistance Front. He credited their perseverance for thwarting the Zionist regime's attempts to dominate the Resistance.

“Through their unwavering determination, the people of Gaza and Palestine have successfully prevented the Zionist regime from achieving its goals,” Abu Sharif stated.

Iran-Russia monetary agreement implemented, bank networks connected



TEHRAN – The Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI), who accompanied Iran's president on a visit to Russia, announced the implementation of the Iran-Russia monetary agreement and the integration of the Mir and Shetab card payment networks.

According to IRIB, Mohammadreza Farzin stated that the monetary agreement between Iran and Russia has been operationalized, with the currencies of both nations being settled based on a mutually agreed commercial ex-

change rate.

Farzin added that another major initiative between the two countries, the integration of the Mir and Shetab card payment networks, has entered its first phase of implementation.

He explained that a joint action plan between the central banks of Iran and Russia has been executed under three key areas:

The use of national currencies in bilateral trade.

The integration of the countries' banking messaging systems (SEPAM and SPFS).

The connection of their card payment networks.

Farzin highlighted the significance of connecting the large Mir and Shetab card networks, noting that the monetary agreement with Russia has also been finalized. The settlement rate for this agreement is tied to the exchange rate in Iran's commercial exchange market, which has now been established as the basis for transactions.

Loading, unloading of goods stand at 36m tons in Imam Khomeini port in 9 months

TEHRAN- As announced by a provincial official, 36 million tons of goods were loaded and unloaded in Imam Khomeini port, in Iran's southwestern Khuzestan province, during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20- December 21, 2024).

Aboutaleb Geraylou, the director-general of the Ports and Maritime Department of Khuzestan province, said that Imam Khomeini port, as the largest commercial port in the province, accepted 1,112 vessels in the nine-month period.

As previously announced by Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), the country's ports handled nearly 175 million tons of cargo in the first nine months of the present year.

During this period, 20.83 million tons of oil goods and 39.55 million tons of non-oil goods were unloaded, bringing total unloading operations to 60.38 million tons. Cargo loading operations included 58.84 million tons of oil goods and 55.77 million tons of non-oil goods, totaling 114.61 million tons, IRNA reported.

Combined loading and unloading operations amounted to 174.99 million tons, with 79.67 million tons of oil goods and 95.32 million tons of non-oil goods.

Additionally, Iran's ports handled 2.33 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of containers during this period, reflecting a 14 percent increase compared to 2.05 million TEUs in the same period last year.

The growth in container operations highlights increased efficiency and rising trade volumes at Iranian ports.

Iran's ports have a total nominal capacity of over 260 million tons per year, allowing them to handle a wide range of oil and non-oil commodities. Key ports, such as Shahid Rajaei Port in Hormozgan Province, account for a signifi-

cant portion of the country's trade activity due to their advanced infrastructure and strategic location along international shipping routes.

Investments in port infrastructure have further enhanced the efficiency of loading and unloading operations, reducing turnaround times for vessels.

The PMO has emphasized the importance of increasing port capacity to accommodate growing trade volumes and support Iran's economic development goals. Upgrades in equipment, digitalization of operations, and expanded storage facilities are part of ongoing efforts to optimize port efficiency.

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

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

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play a significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition to facilitating the loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there.

It is worth mentioning that Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization has defined a high number of projects to develop and improve the country's ports, as the country aims to double the capacity of its ports in five years.

During the session of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee, Aliabadi invited Iranian companies to invest and expand their presence in Tajikistan's infrastructure and energy projects. He assured that the Iranian government would work to facilitate the export of engineering and technical services to Tajikistan.

He also stressed the importance of leveraging the capacities of both countries to strengthen cooperation, noting that Tajikistan's abundant water resources and vast potential provide unique opportunities for renewable energy development. He added that the presence of Iranian companies could significantly contribute to enhancing these capabilities.

At the conference, Daler Juma, Tajikistan's Minister of Energy and Water Resources, reiterated the need to enhance cooperation between the two nations. He welcomed Iranian companies, particularly those specializing in the water and power industries, to invest and actively participate in Tajikistan's development projects.

CAO developing strategic airport development roadmap

TEHRAN – The head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) announced the preparation of a strategic roadmap for the country's airport sector, stating that while a plan existed previously, it was not comprehensive.

Speaking to IRNA, Hossein Pourfarzaneh said that the organization is now working on a new roadmap, leveraging past studies and collective input from experts. This plan is considered a core responsibility of the Civil Aviation Organization and, once completed, will require Cabinet approval to prevent subjective interference or amendments.

The roadmap will encompass airports, the aviation fleet, and airlines. It is part of the organization's mandate under the seventh development plan and is expected to be formalized as a government regulation.

The official further stated that domestic specialists in the aviation industry possess the necessary capability to repair aircraft engines.

Due to the complications and challenges posed by sanctions on sending damaged aircraft engines



abroad, repairs are now conducted domestically.

He noted that according to international aviation regulations, having updated documentation, trained personnel, and essential tools enables Iran to perform such repairs.

Regarding high-tech parts, Pourfarzaneh said that while most of these components are imported, when imports are not possible, they are repaired domestically. If repairs are not feasible, efforts are made to manufacture them locally.

He highlighted that 400 domestic knowledge-based companies are active in the aviation industry and assist in these efforts.

At a press conference on Monday, January 15, Pourfarzaneh criticized undue interference, particularly from some parliament members, who pressure for the construction of airports in their electoral districts.

He revealed that Iran currently has \$16 billion worth of airport assets, while the value of the country's 180 active aircraft is only \$1.0 billion. In

the past, a significant portion of investments in the airport sector was influenced by subjective preferences, with limited evaluation of their economic viability or necessity.

Pourfarzaneh argued that part of these investments could have been directed toward expanding the aviation fleet. Had this been done, the country could now operate three times as many flights with an enhanced fleet.

He highlighted the aging fleet as a critical challenge for Iran's aviation industry. The fleet is criticized for its quantity and quality, failing to meet the country's needs.

According to officials, Iran ranks 91st globally in flight quality metrics, although its safety oversight rank is higher than countries like Syria and Yemen. Currently, some provinces have between five to seven airports, while others operate flights only during specific seasons, such as Arbaeen and Hajj. Pourfarzaneh criticized this approach, stating that it does not align with true airport development.

NIGC delivers 149 mcm of gas to power plants amid cold wave

TEHRAN – The National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) announced that on Thursday, January 16, the company delivered 149 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas to the country's power plants.

According to a Friday report from the Oil Ministry, amid a new wave of cold weather across Iran, 149 million cubic meters of gas were supplied to power plants.

This volume of gas delivery plays a critical role in maintaining the stability of the electricity grid during the winter, when gas consumption typically rises.

Forecasts indicate that temperatures will continue to drop in the coming days. Citizens are urged to manage their energy consumption to help ensure the stability of gas and electricity networks.

The Iran Power Generation, Transmission, and Distribution Company (Tavanir) recently issued a statement expressing gratitude to the public for their cooperation in optimizing energy use. The statement emphasized that maintaining indoor temperatures between 18°C and 21°C, along with turning off unnecessary lights and high-ener-

gy-consuming appliances, can ensure electricity supply for all consumers.

Over the past 24 hours, the country's total gas consumption reached 867 mcm, with residential and commercial sectors accounting for 69 percent of the total.

The residential, commercial, and small industrial sectors consumed 599 mcm of gas during this period, an 11 percent increase compared to the same time last year.

Iran exports non-oil goods worth \$5.2b to Turkey in 9 months

TEHRAN – Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$5.2 billion to Turkey during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-Decemehr 21, 2024), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Foroud Asgari said that Turkey was Iran's fourth top export destination in the mentioned nine-month period.

Exporting commodities valued at \$8.9 billion to Iran, Turkey was Iran's third top source of import in the first nine months of the present year, the official further added.

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Mohammad Atabak has emphasized that enhancing trade between Iran and Turkey requires the establishment of a preferential trade agreement and the removal of tariff restrictions.

During a meeting with Turkish Trade Minister Omer Bolat and his accompanying delegation in mid-December 2024, Atabak pointed out that the trade potential between Tehran and Ankara surpasses the current volume of exchanges.

He stressed that implementing bilateral agreements, reviving preferential trade, and strengthening interactions would serve as the foundation for increasing bilateral trade.

Atabak noted that the economic relations between Iran and Turkey, underpinned by deep cultural and historical ties, should yield a higher volume of trade.

The Iranian minister expressed optimism about progress in the joint cooperation framework between the two countries and referred to it as a crucial step toward boosting trade between the capitals. He added that the initial phase of this cooperation, in line with the terms of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee, would significantly enhance trade relations.

The official further emphasized that increasing trade would accelerate the implementation of facilitative trade programs. The roadmap developed in collaboration with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) would be pivotal in advancing the execution of these plans and deepening bilateral ties.

Atabak also welcomed the formation of specialized committees to address bilateral issues, stressing that most trade-related challenges could be resolved through the Trade Promotion Organization. He elaborated on the preferential trade agreement between the two countries, suggesting that its terms could be revisited to expand preferential trade volumes.

As a further step in improving bilateral trade, Atabak underscored the importance of joint border committees to address border issues and stream-

line goods exchange between the neighboring countries. He also highlighted the need to remove certain tariff barriers to increase trade flows.

Concluding, Atabak reiterated Iran's readiness to expand cooperation with Turkey, emphasizing the industrial advantages of both countries in joint production.

On the Turkish side, Minister Bolat acknowledged that the current trade volume between the two nations does not meet expectations. He expressed confidence that with the revised cooperation framework and agreements with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization, economic exchanges between the two countries would accelerate.

He also extended an invitation to Atabak to attend the next Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit, scheduled to be hosted by Turkey in the spring of 2025. He emphasized the importance of deepening trade and economic ties within the framework of bilateral agreements, particularly focusing on collaboration among Islamic countries.

Bolat identified the joint development of border crossings, transportation routes, removal of transit restrictions, and tariff barriers as key components of further strengthening Iran-Turkey cooperation.

In early July 2024, Director of Asia and the Pacific Office of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) International Affairs Department Niloufar Asadi said a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and Turkey should replace the previous trade agreements between the two countries to boost economic exchanges.

In a meeting with the Consul General of Iran in Istanbul, Asadi referred to a previously reached preferential trade agreement between Iran and Turkey under the framework of the Group of Eight Developing Islamic Countries (D8) and said: "Considering the shortcomings of the previously signed preferential trade agreement and the necessity to improve and develop it, I suggest that a free trade agreement between the two countries replaces the previous agreements."

During a meeting between Iranian Minister of Transport and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh and Turkish Ambassador to Tehran Hicabi Kirlangic in late October 2024, the Iranian minister said Iran and Turkey play a fundamental role in regional transit and freight transportation as the bridge between East and West.

According to her, the geographical position of Iran and Turkey acts as a link between Asia and Europe, opening up a priceless chance to boost regional and international freight and transit networks.

Sadegh noted that collaboration between Iran and Turkey across all domains will bolster peace and stability in the region.

Iran consistently endeavors to enhance its connections with Turkey across political, economic, cultural, scientific, and security fields, she said.

While emphasizing the readiness of the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, as the Iranian chairman of the Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Committee, to benefit from all available capacities in order to develop bilateral relations, she wished the two great nations of Iran and Turkey, health, prosperity, happiness, security and progress.

Iran's Minister of Agriculture Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljah and Samad Hasanazadeh, the head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), departed for Turkey alongside a delegation of agricultural and food industry professionals, on January 9.

As reported, the agriculture minister and his accompanying delegation also attended an Iran-Turkey Agricultural Business Forum on January 10, in Ankara.

The events featured Nouri Qezeljah, Hasanazadeh, Hossein Pirmoazen, the deputy head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, senior Agriculture Ministry officials, and private sector representatives.

Discussions focused on addressing trade barriers, fostering bilateral ties, and enhancing export potentials.

Speaking at a gathering of Iranian agricultural professionals in Ankara, Nouri Qezeljah stated that the government's resolve to support private sector growth, removing obstacles to agricultural and food exports remains a top priority.

He emphasized the need to modernize food packaging and facilitate export terminal licenses to expand export markets.

The minister also underscored the importance of resolving customs challenges faced by Iranian exporters in Turkey, advocating for stable policies to prevent ad-hoc regulations that undermine exporters' credibility. He added that the private sector, with its emphasis on efficiency and innovation, plays a vital role in overcoming economic challenges.

He emphasized Iran's determination to deepen ties with neighboring countries, particularly Turkey, through agricultural diplomacy.

Iran's agricultural exports constitute 20 percent of bilateral trade with Turkey, which exceeded \$14 billion in the first nine months of the Iranian year 1403 (March 20 – December, 21, 2024).

The high-profile delegation, including 180 Iranian agricultural exporters and producers, marked one of the largest economic missions between the two countries, showcasing the potential for enhanced trade and collaboration in agriculture and food industries.

Collapse of resistance impossible

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas has more than ever exposed the regime's vulnerability in the face of unprecedented Palestinian resistance.

The truce agreement that was agreed on Wednesday night is set to be implemented in three phases. The deal will pave the way for the release of the remaining captives held in Gaza and the return of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. It should also result in the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip.

Soon after Israel launched war on Gaza on October 7, 2023, initiatives were promptly undertaken to end the conflict.



Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari: *"The idea that it is possible to destroy Hamas, to make Hamas vanish — that is throwing sand in the eyes of the public"*

But Israel and its main Western ally, the United States, spun a variety of tales to nip all ceasefire efforts in the bud.



Avigdor Lieberman: *"Instead of complete victory, we received complete humiliation"*

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had consistently vowed to continue the war until "destroying" Hamas through achieving "absolute victory" over the resistance movement and returning all captives.

The United States also vetoed several resolutions at the United Nations Security Council that were aimed at establishing a



ceasefire in Gaza.

The administration of President Joe Biden further threw its full military weight behind Israel. From October 2023 to October 2024, Washington spent a record \$17.9 billion on military assistance to Israel, according to a report for Brown University's Costs of War project.

Earlier this month, American officials said the State Department informed Congress of a planned \$8 billion weapons sale to Israel.

In addition to the US, European countries such as Britain, Germany and France have backed Israel despite the crimes that it has committed in Gaza.

Nonetheless, Israel's military ambitions have fallen flat more than 15 months after waging genocidal war on Gaza which has claimed the lives of nearly 47,000 Palestinians.

Now, the ceasefire clearly indicates that Netanyahu's dream of victory over Hamas was just a flight of fantasy.

The Israeli Institute for National Security Studies admitted on Friday that the regime acquiesced to the ceasefire deal out of desperation.

"The implications of the agreement are clear: Israel will not bring about the 'collapse' of Hamas because it has never been able to do so," according to INSS.

The Israeli think tank added that Netanyahu prolonged the Gaza war for "personal survival and short-sightedness", which "has cost the lives of more Israeli soldiers and more captives".

The Israeli institute noted that troops "have been worn down by missions that had no impact on the outcome of the war, while Israel's international standing has been eroded to the core".

"None of these actions changed the fundamental reality and will only amplify the effect of Hamas's revival," it pointed out.

Over the course of the Gaza war, Israeli officials conceded that the regime would be unable to subdue Hamas.

Former war minister Yoav Gallant, who was dismissed by Netanyahu, told the Knesset members in August 2024 that the premier's "absolute victory" slogan is "nonsense" and "gibberish".

In June last year, the Israeli military spokesman also challenged Netanyahu's war aim.

"The idea that it is possible to destroy Hamas, to make Hamas vanish — that is throwing sand in the eyes of the public," Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari told Israeli media.

He added, "Hamas is an idea, deeply rooted in the hearts of the residents of Gaza."

In the same month, former war minister Avigdor Lieberman also signaled that Netanyahu has been left with egg on his face.

"Exactly eight months since the Oct. 7 attack, eight months in which instead of 'complete victory', we received complete humiliation," said Lieberman, a Knesset member and the leader of Yisrael Beytenu party.

In June 2024, National Unity chairman Benny Gantz described Netanyahu's promise for "total victory" against Hamas as "empty".

Gantz, was a former war cabinet minister, who quit the emergency coalition in a sign of deepening divisions over Netanyahu's post-conflict plans for Gaza.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid also called Israel's military strategy in Gaza "a failure".

Likewise, in mid-February last year, a document drawn up by the Israeli military's intelligence acknowledged that even if Israel dismantles Hamas's organized military capabilities, the resistance group would continue to operate in Gaza.

Furthermore, Israel's failure to achieve its military goals in

the Gaza war and its inability to prevent the Al-Aqsa Storm led to a wave of resignations among senior military and security officials.

The Al-Aqsa Storm is the surprise military operation that Hamas carried out in southern Israel on October 7, 2023, which was followed by Israel's brutal war on Gaza.

More than 1,100 people were killed in the Hamas operation and about 250 others were taken captive.



Yoav Gallant: *Netanyahu's "absolute victory" slogan is "gibberish"*

Dozens of the captives are still held in Gaza who are set to be exchanged for Palestinian prisoners during the ceasefire.

Israel's decades-long heinous crimes against Palestinians let the genie out of the bottle on October 7 which is still haunting Israeli leaders.



Benny Gantz: *Netanyahu's promise for "total victory" against Hamas is "empty"*

The ceasefire will fail to put the toothpaste back in the tube and stop the tide of resistance.

Presently, Israel regards the truce agreement as a tactic to obscure the regime's military failures and distract from rising resentment against its war crimes and crimes against humanity.

systems operated by CENTCOM and the Israeli military.

The Sanaa government has vowed to halt operations only when the indiscriminate Israeli strikes on Gaza end and the deadly siege on the enclave lifted.

Those deadly bombing attacks continued on Saturday.

According to the Gaza Health Ministry, on the 470th of the U.S.-backed genocidal war "the Israeli occupation committed three massacres against families in the Gaza Strip, resulting in 23 dead and 83 injuries arriving at hospitals during the past 24 hours."

"There are still a number of victims under the rubble and on the roads, and ambulance and civil defense crews cannot reach them."

The ministry also stated, "The death toll from the Israeli aggression has risen to 46,899 martyrs and 110,725 injuries since 7 October 2023."

What does Trump seek by reassuring SDF?

From page 1 ► The meeting coincided with the US President-elect, Donald Trump's confirmation of his continued support for the Kurds, following the visit of Michael Kurilla, the commander of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), to the US occupation bases in Syria, where he met with SDF officials to discuss the prospects of the war on ISIS in Syria and "efforts to prevent the emergence of any terrorist groups."

During a hearing before the Foreign Relations Committee in the US Senate, Marco Rubio, the candidate for Secretary of State, also reiterated Trump's support for SDF.

Rubio has noted that Trump's administration will ask Turkey not to carry out any hostile actions against the Kurds in Syria, claiming that one of the reasons for Washington's ability to dismantle ISIS is that the Kurds "guard the organization's prisons."

Rubio has further claimed that their main goal is to prevent Syria from being a "haven for ISIS", stressing the need to ensure that Syrian territory is not used by Iran "to spread its agenda."

The SDF commander-in-chief visited Erbil days after Hamid al-Darbandi, Barzani's envoy, met with representatives of the Autonomous Administration and the Kurdish National Council in Syria under the pretext of pushing forward with unifying the Kurdish ranks.

In a post on X, Abdi claimed that the position of the two sides - the SDF and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq - is identical, and aims to proceed with a "peaceful dialogue with Damascus to guarantee the rights of the Kurdish people."

During Michael Kurilla's visit to the Al-Hawl camp for displaced persons, Kurilla called for intensifying international efforts to return ISIS families to their countries for rehabilitation and integration.

The US reassurance confirms Washington's objection to the Turkish policy of exploiting the fall of the Assad government to eliminate Kurdish organizations in both Syria and Turkey.

What portends a worsening of the US-Turkish dispute over the SDF is the escalation of Turkish airstrikes on Ayn al-Arab (Kobani), the countryside of Manbij, Sarrin, the vicinity of Tishrin Dam, and even the Syrian city of Qamishli.

Ankara's escalation of pressure on the new

US administration to abandon the SDF coincided with dispelling Washington's concerns about co-operating with the new Syrian administration to control ISIS prisons and camps; Washington believes this is important to ensure that ISIS does not exploit any security vacuum.

Reportedly, following the opening of the headquarters of the Syrian Democratic Council in Damascus, coordination continues between the SDF and the al-Julani government regarding the situation in the northeastern regions of Syria.

According to Ahmed al-Dalati, a leader in the al-Julani government, "the new administration prefers to reach peaceful settlements to resolve the differences with the SDF," stressing that "the military solution will be the last option on the table."

It is worth noting that Siyamand Ali, director of the media center of the Kurdish People's Protection Units, has denied any negotiations held with the al-Julani government regarding "sensitive files such as ISIS detainees and their families."

Siyamand Ali has pointed out that such files require "comprehensive deliberations to ensure that they are consistent with the interests of the parties concerned; any future decisions will be carefully studied to ensure the stability of the region."

Besides, he has revealed that in the northeastern regions of Syria "there are 26 prisons, holding more than 12,000 detainees who fought in the ranks of ISIS, coming from 55 countries, the majority of whom are from Syria and Iraq."

Undeniably, the Julani government's positions have so far intersected with the US-Israeli priorities, especially with regard to the plan to dismantle the Axis of Resistance, encircle it in Lebanon, Palestine, and most likely in Syria, which has been one of the most important main objectives of the recent aggression against Lebanon.

Obviously, the US hegemonic ambitions cannot be achieved without a strategic shift in Syria. Therefore, it was and still is necessary to replace Syria's positioning that has been in place since the Camp David Accords (1978), as Syria has long been a strategic depth for all resistance movements.

Gaza war only brought more shame to Israel

From page 1 ► Despite intransigence and unstoppable arms shipments from the United States and elsewhere, Netanyahu and other co-criminals were finally forced to give in to the Gazans' heroic resistance to save the Zionist regime from the Gaza quagmire.

The extremists in Israel and its Western backers realized that even genocide cannot force a nation to forego its inborn rights to its motherland. Gazans suffered the most heinous crimes but did not bow. Netanyahu and his inner circle did not want to acknowledge that the Gazans had nothing more to lose.

They resisted no matter the costs, forcing Israel to finally get its captives and dead only by releasing Palestinian prisoners and withdrawing from Gaza.

Additionally, Israel and its backers tried to present the war in Gaza as the war on Hamas. It is true that started the attack on southern Israel on October 7 but all armed groups, among them secularists and communists, fought after the Israeli army invaded the enclave. In other words, all Palestinians, regardless of their political or religious tendencies, were resisting.

It is also an illusion if Israel tries to convey this idea that it has broken the back of resistance fighters.

Writing on The Conversation website on January 16, Ian Parmeter, a research scholar from the Australian National University, says, "Hamas is degraded, but not destroyed. It is now more like a guerilla band than an organized military force."

Parmeter added, "But despite the fact that total elimination of Hamas was one of Netanyahu's war aims, it's still standing."

Menachem Klein, senior lecturer at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, says, "There is a huge gap

Yemen supports Gaza till the end

From page 1 ► Meanwhile, Israeli media reported that fire-fighting teams were dispatched to Be'er Ya'akov, south of Tel Aviv, after a fire broke out due to fragments from the Yemeni missile.

According to a spokesperson for the Israeli occupation forces, the sirens were activated after missiles were launched from Yemen.

A statement issued on Saturday and read out by the military spokesman of the Yemeni Armed Forces said:

"Triumphing for the oppression of the Palestinian people and their fighters and in response to the recent massacres against our people in Gaza, and within the fifth stage of the supportive stages in the battle of the Promised Conquest and the Holy War," Yahya Saree stated.

Saree added, "The missile force of the Yemeni Armed Forces, with the help of God Almighty, carried out a specific military operation targeting the

so-called Ministry of Defense of the Israeli enemy in the occupied area of Tel Aviv, using a ballistic missile, Dhu al-Fiqar type."

The spokesman pointed out, "The missile reached its target with high accuracy, thanks to God, and the interception systems failed to intercept it."

The statement stressed, "The Yemeni Armed Forces reiterate that they will stand by the side of the Palestinian resistance in Gaza and in coordination with it to deal militarily with any violations or any military escalation committed by the Israeli enemy during the period of implementing the ceasefire agreement."

On Saturday evening, an Israeli military spokesperson said sirens were activated in several areas in the south following another missile launch from Yemen, adding that investigations into the incident are ongoing.

Israeli media also reported that sirens sounded in Eilat

and its surrounding areas while claiming that the missile was intercepted.

Yemen opened a support front for Gaza in November 2023 by blocking Israeli-affiliated ships from docking at Israeli ports. The ban on vessels heading to the Israeli regime left the port of Eilat bankrupt.

As the Gaza genocide waged on, Yemeni forces escalated their operations by targeting Tel Aviv.

Regular bombardments on Yemeni cities by the United States, Britain and Israel failed to deter the government in Sanaa from its military operations in the Red Sea and attacks on Tel Aviv with hypersonic missiles.

More recently, Yemeni forces widened their operations further by targeting Israeli power plants.

Despite the distance, hypersonic missiles launched from Yemen have evaded multiple layers of missile interceptor

Archaeologist highlights potential of Oltan fortress for World Heritage status

TEHRAN - The ruined Oltan fortress, a vast mud-brick complex located in northwest Iran, has been identified as a site of significant historical value with the potential to achieve UNESCO World Heritage recognition, an Iranian archaeologist told IRNA on Saturday.

Rouhollah Mohammadi, who serves as the head of the Archaeology Group at the Ardabil Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, described the site as the largest mud-brick archaeological site in northwest Iran.

Situated along the Aras River near the town of Oltan in Parsabad county, the fortress encompasses a rich collection of historical features. These include a cemetery dating back to the first millennium BC, the Oltan tappeh (representing Parthian and Sassanian periods), the central citadel of Oltan Qalasi (spanning the Sassanian, early Islamic, Seljuk, and Ilkhanid eras), and an outer industrial and residential area from the 2nd to 7th centuries AH. Archaeological studies suggest the site once spanned over 2 square kilometers, with early Islamic references identifying it as the historic city of "Varthan."

Archaeological research at Oltan began in 1971, leading to ten seasons of exploration, excavation, and geophysical studies. These efforts have uncovered the fortress's extensive layout and its evolution through multiple civilizations.

In 2019, a detailed map of the site's boundaries was formalized to ensure its protection, and further revisions were approved in 2023 to enhance preservation measures. Construction within the site's core area is strictly prohibited, while regulated tourism facilities are permitted in its buffer zone.

In addition, other experts have frequently



emphasized the site's potential for becoming a travel destination, likening its significance to Iran's UNESCO-listed Arg-e Bam.

"The significance of Oltan fortress and its surrounding cultural landscape is no less than that of Bam Citadel... This way, Oltan has enormous potential to become an important destination for foreign and domestic travelers if it is approved to become a national archaeological base," Ardabil's tourism chief Fardin Eyni has said.

Efforts are underway to designate Oltan fortress as a national heritage site and to establish collaborative international archaeological teams to further study, restore, and preserve the site. "With ongoing research and conservation, Oltan fortress could secure a place on the World Heritage list, transforming it into a major cultural destination," Mohammadi stated.

Located 12 kilometers from Parsabad and 500 meters west of Oltan village, the fortress rests along the Aras River, a key historical and geographical feature in the region. Its strategic position and architectural grandeur highlight its importance as a cultural and historical landmark.

Cultural tourism nexus and Sino-Iranian comprehensive strategic partnership in an era of Western media distortion

By Amir Mohammad Esmaeili

The world and the West Asian region are undergoing rapid and significant changes, which could ultimately lead to the emergence of a new regional and global order.

Meanwhile, China and Iran are two key actors in these developments, each contributing in its own way.

This dynamic necessitates a gradual transformation in how Chinese and Iranian people perceive each other, as the relationship between the two countries now extends beyond mere trade into more strategic and long-term partnerships.

One of the key areas that could influence is the expansion of cultural exchanges and direct interaction between the two countries' people.

Cultural and tourism exchanges represent a low-risk yet high-reward avenue for deepening Sino-Iranian ties, offering substantial gains across cultural, economic, security, and strategic dimensions.

Both nations have significant potential to expand cooperation in cultural exchanges, particularly given the strong commitment from both countries' leaderships.

This was evident during President Xi Jinping's 2016 visit to Tehran, which elevated bilateral relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

Iran's pivot towards Asia, exemplified by former President Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi's state visit to China in early 2023, further solidified this trajectory. As a result, 20 cooperation documents were signed between the two nations, two of which were specifically aimed at advancing tourism and cultural collaboration.

Iran's tourism: A strategic partner in China's travel horizon

China's economic power has

steadily increased in recent years, resulting in a wealthier population with a growing eagerness to travel abroad.

While in the past, most Chinese tourists visited neighboring countries such as Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, today they are increasingly venturing to more distant destinations, including Europe, the United States, and West Asia.

In 2023, Chinese outbound tourism made a significant recovery, with 101 million cross-border trips, representing 60% of pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

Furthermore, the China Tourism Academy indicated that outbound trips by Chinese tourists reached 130 million in 2024, signaling sustained growth in China's international travel market.

In 2023, West Asian tourism saw a significant rebound, with 86.3 million visitors—a 22% rise from pre-pandemic levels, per the UNWTO.

Last year, Iran and China signed two key agreements on tourism and cultural exchanges, strengthening cooperation and elevating Iran's status in China's tourism landscape.

As a result, China designated Iran as one of its top six priority destinations for Chinese tourists.

Indeed, bilateral cultural agreements not only promote cultural exchanges but also facilitate broader cooperation by establishing official channels for further communication.

As state-facilitated frameworks, they enable cultural, educational, and tourism exchanges, strengthening diplomatic ties and advancing mutual interests. Given the political systems of Iran and China, these agreements have been particularly crucial in deepening strategic relations and

Putin underlines stronger Iran-Russia cooperation in tourism and direct flights

TEHRAN - Russian President Vladimir Putin during a joint press conference with his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of strengthening bilateral tourism cooperation and further direct flights.

The Russian leader made the remarks on Friday following the signing of a comprehensive agreement on mutual cooperation between the two nations at the Kremlin, CHTN reported.

He also pointed out that Russia and Iran are working on a visa-free tourism agreement, underscoring the potential for closer cooperation in this area.

Moreover, Putin stressed that both sides are working to expand transport connections,



including the establishment of more direct flights between Tehran and Moscow, to further facilitate mutual tourism.

"Tourist exchanges are growing, there is an increase

of around 21%.

Transport communications are developing," TASS quoted Putin as saying during a meeting with Pezeshkian.

"According to the minis-

tries of culture, there is also noticeable progress - in June this year there will be days of Russian culture in Iran.

We are waiting for it and we are preparing it," Putin added.

While the Russian president celebrated the progress in the tourism and transport sectors, he also emphasized that the current level of trade and economic cooperation between the two nations does not yet match the full potential of their relationship.

The level of trade and economic cooperation between Russia and Iran is still not aligned with the capabilities of both countries, the Russian president said, suggesting there is room for growth in this regard.

Iranian dish Khoresh Bamieh ranked among World's 100 Worst Foods by TasteAtlas

TEHRAN - In a surprising development, Khoresh Bamieh, a traditional Iranian stew, has been ranked 50th among the "100 Worst Rated Foods in the World" by the popular culinary ranking platform, TasteAtlas.

The dish, a staple of Persian cuisine, is a traditional stew typically made with beef or lamb, okra, tomato paste, onions, garlic, turmeric, cinnamon, and other aromatic ingredients. It is commonly served with a side of rice.

TasteAtlas, which aggregates food ratings from users worldwide, places Khoresh Bamieh among other controversial dishes, with its placement at number 50 raising eyebrows in the Iranian culinary community.

The ranking is based on the collective feedback of the TasteAtlas audience, with over 602,500 ratings recorded as of January 16, 2025.

However, the system applies stringent mechanisms to filter out biased, bot-generated, or nationalistic ratings, ensuring that only legitimate feedback from knowledgeable users influences the results.

Khoresh Bamieh is made by first browning beef or lamb in olive oil, followed by the addition of ingredients such as tomato paste, garlic, onions, and spices like turmeric and cinnamon.

After simmering the mixture to tenderize the meat, okra is added towards the end of cooking. The stew is then served

warm with a side of rice, making it a popular comfort food in Iranian households.

Notably, the top three dishes on the list were all Scandinavian: Blodplattar from Sweden took first place, followed by Finland's Blodpalt in second, and Sweden's Calskrove in third.

The ranking sparked a broader conversation about the global reception of traditional dishes, with many users expressing surprise at some of the inclusions.

With a unique combination of flavors and a centuries-old recipe, the Iranian dish remains a cherished part of Iranian cuisine, even if it didn't resonate with the majority of TasteAtlas' international audience.



fostering cultural dialogue.

The 25-year comprehensive cooperation plan serves as the cornerstone for Iran-China relations, guiding various agreements, including those on tourism.

Iran's former Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy, Mehdi Safari, noted Iran aims to become a key destination for Chinese travelers, with the potential to attract one to two million of China's 200 million outbound tourists annually.

This aligns with Iran's 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, which seeks to increase tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million by 2025.

Paving the way: Iran's facilitating policies and actions

From March 21, 2023, to January 20, 2024, over 54,000 Chinese tourists visited Iran, spending an average of \$1,000 each.

To accommodate this, Iran introduced a visa-free policy for Chinese nationals and trained Chinese-speaking guides.

The surge in demand was evident as agencies like U Tour sold out 13-

day Iran tours, priced at 29,800 yuan (\$4,333), within a day.

Iran is enhancing accessibility for Chinese tourists by providing Chinese-language catalogs in museums to help visitors better understand its culture. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage also plans to train hotel staff and chefs in Chinese language and cuisine, reflecting China's importance as a key market for Iran's tourism sector.

The implementation of a visa-free policy, coupled with the expansion of direct flights, has been pivotal in fortifying tourism and business relations between China and Iran. Since June 2019, Iran has unilaterally extended visa-free entry to Chinese nationals, including those from Hong Kong and Macau, for stays of up to 21 days.

This initiative, aimed at facilitating both leisure and business travel, significantly streamlines entry requirements, mandating only a passport valid for a minimum of six months.

Additionally, dual passport holders may enter Iran visa-free using their Chinese passport, with mandatory

travel insurance required for all visitors.

To circumvent the payment obstacles imposed by international sanctions, Iran has introduced alternative transaction platforms such as Chinese applications, including Alipay and WeChat Pay, ensuring seamless financial transactions for Chinese tourists.

The expansion of air connectivity has further consolidated bilateral ties, with Mahan Air operating direct flights between Tehran and key Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou.

The addition of new routes by Air China and China Southern Airlines is expected to further enhance travel between the two nations, reinforcing the strategic importance of tourism and economic cooperation in their bilateral relationship.

Social media, particularly short-form videos, plays a vital role in shaping cross-cultural understanding among younger generations. In a collaborative initiative in early 2024, Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts invited 20 prominent Chinese influencers to explore the country's natural, historical, and cultural sites.

Moslem Shojai, head of the Foreign Tourism Marketing and Development Office, noted the aim is to leverage these influencers—each with around three million followers—to introduce Iran's attractions to an estimated 60 million Chinese.

Focusing on four key themes—natural diversity, cultural heritage, the Silk Road, and cuisine—this initiative sought to diversify Iran's tourism market, reduce reliance on traditional revenue, and strengthen ties with China's tourism industry through social media engagement.

Iran's active participation in multi-

lateral institutions can also enhance the tourism sector. Iran's growing prominence within international frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS has reinvigorated cultural exchanges.

Iran's historical significance as a central node along the Silk Road, combined with its strategic role in China's BRI, continues to strengthen its position as a crucial cultural partner for China.

Enhancing the Sino-Iranian strategic partnership necessitates promoting cultural and tourist interactions. Augmenting cultural outreach via festivals, exhibits, and seminars helps foster mutual understanding. Investment in tourism infrastructure, encompassing Chinese-language services and customized amenities, will enhance visitor attraction.

Digital involvement through platforms and influencer partnerships may expand cultural discourse and reach younger demographics.

Improved accessibility via direct flights and visa-exempt regulations would enhance cross-border movement. Academic exchanges and institutional partnerships will cultivate enduring ties.

Emphasizing common historical narratives, such as the Silk Road, will strengthen connections and synchronize initiatives with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

These measures will enhance bilateral ties and promote shared economic, cultural, and, most significantly, strategic objectives.

(Amir Mohammad Esmaeili is an author, researcher, and PhD candidate at the Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University)

Iran, IFSW cooperate on professional ethics of social workers

TEHRAN –According to the head of Iranian Social Workers Association, Hassan Mousavi-Chalak, the underway cooperation between Iran and IFSW involves three significant measures in professional ethics.

“The first measure includes conducting research on implementing the global social work statement of ethical principles which was approved in 2018 in the annual general meeting, it will be implemented then in the Asia-Pacific region, and later at the global level, IRNA quoted Mousavi-Chelak as saying.

The second measure is to do research on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on ethical social work practice, and the third action refers to planning to amend and promote the global statement, he added.

The official, who is also the regional commissioner of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Ethics Commission in Asia-Pacific, made the remarks on Friday on the sidelines of the annual meeting of IFSW in Asia-Pacific region.

The official went on to say that the 28th Asia-Pacific Social Work Regional Conference will be held focusing on Social Work responses to climate change and other envi-



ronmental issues, from November 18 to 21 in Sri Lanka.

During the annual general meeting, Iran the same as many other countries presented an account of the association's activities in 2024.

Iran Association of Social Workers' report included participation in policymaking, interactions with non-governmental and governmental organizations, and interactions with universities, media, students, volunteers, and veterans.

Participating in scientific and research activities, specialized conferences and meetings, as well as the association's international

interactions were among other mentioned activities.

Iran Association of Social Workers is the most proactive NGO in social policy-making in Iran. The members receive services such as professional training and workshops, participation in conferences, seminars, campaigns, recreation activities, and employee referrals.

IFSW

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is a global organisation striving for social justice, human rights and social development through the promo-

tion of social work, best practice models and the facilitation of international cooperation.

The International Federation of Social Workers supports its 141 country members by providing a global voice for the profession. IFSW has been granted Special Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In addition, IFSW is working with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The 28th Asia-Pacific Social Work Regional Conference will bring together social work professionals academics and advocates from across Asia-Pacific region to explore and address the pressing challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation.

Through a series of key note presentations, panel discussions, and interactive workshops participants will engage with innovative approaches and best practices in integrating environmental issues into social work practice.

Baghdad calls for joint educational programs with Tehran

TEHRAN –Iraqi Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Naeem Al-Aboudi, has underscored the significance of exchanging professors and students as well as implementing joint educational programs with Iran to meet the scientific and research needs of Iraq.

“Iran serves as a role model in the region in terms of scientific progress in modern technologies, nanotechnology, biotechnology, and medical science. Iraq is interested in benefiting from Iran's valuable experiences to expand its technological and scientific infrastructure. Establishing and expanding science and technology parks is one of our main priorities,” IRNA quoted Al-Aboudi as saying.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Science, Research, and Technology Minister, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, on Saturday, highlighting the need to boost scientific interactions and develop a comprehensive roadmap for future collaborations.

For his part, Simaei-Sarraf stressed scientific and academic interactions as essential means to promote sustainable development in the two countries.

Referring to the key role of universities in transferring knowledge and technology, Simaei-Sarraf highlighted holding joint research and educational courses.

“Iran is ready to share expertise with Iraq in different fields including the expansion of science and technology parks, development of research infrastructure, as well as professors and students' exchange,” the official noted.

The official, along with a delegation, is paying a visit to the city of Karbala to attend the second Iran-Iraq Science Week, January 18–20.



The event aims to enhance scientific, academic, and technological relations, bringing 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.

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.”

Iranian students shine at ICPC 2025

TEHRAN – Young Iranian inventors have won two gold medals and a silver medal at the 7th International Creative Papers Conferences and Olympics (ICPC) 2025.

Hosted by the Korea University Invention Association, the competition was held from January 16 to 17, attracting participants from 13 countries including the U.S., New Zealand, Kazakhstan, Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China, Mehr news agency reported.

The teams competed against each other in various fields such as mechatronics, artificial intelligence (AI), programming, electronics, chemistry and nanotechnology, biotechnology and cognitive sciences, new energies, physics, and astronomy.

Alireza Jafarnejad, and Mehran Rajabi grabbed a gold medal in mechatronics; Moeid Rajabi and Helena Rajabi won a gold medal in AI. Taha Kanani and Mohammad-Hossein Rahmani received a silver medal in chemistry and nanotechnology.

The ICPC is an academic event where researchers from around the world present their innovative research. This conference provides a platform for students and professionals to present creative and outstanding papers, whether they are invention papers, academic papers, or other forms of research.

The main objective of ICPC is to facilitate the exchange and presentation of exceptional papers from leading global scholars who play a pivotal role in science, technology, and the knowledge economy.

ICPC aims to lead the convergence of science, technology, and economic activities with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles by promoting the presentation of creative and independent research and learning papers. This international conference is a significant academic event co-hosted by WIIPA (World Invention Intellectual Property Associations), and various universities and academic societies both domestically and internationally

Additionally, the presented papers will be published and registered in an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) journal, thereby contributing to the academic achievements of the participants.

Recent achievements

Students of Iran University of Science and Technology managed to win first place in Eurasia Federation of International RoboSports Association (FIRA) Open competition 2024.

The competition was held from November 6 to 9 in Van, Turkey, bringing together 130 teams from eight countries.

The Iranian team comprised Alireza Abbasi, Mobina Lashgari, Alireza Mikaeli, and Shayan Ansarian. They ranked first in innovation and



entrepreneurship, for designing ‘infrasight drones’.

Iran grabbed five gold medals and two special awards in the International Science and Invention Fair (ISIF) 2024, which was held in Indonesia from November 5 to 10.

The competition brought together 1,980 teams from 24 countries competing in eight fields including technical- engineering, chemistry and nanotechnology, biotechnology and environment, energy engineering, physics and astronomy, artificial intelligence and technology, social sciences, education, and educational technologies, IRNA reported.

A total of 18 students from Iran attended the 47th WorldSkills Competition, winning 9 medals including a silver medal and medals for excellence.

The competition was held from September 10 to 15 in Lyon, France. Some 1,500 competitors from more than 65 countries and regions around the world gathered in Lyon to compete in different skills.

Hasan Mohammadi and Hamid-Reza Hamidi won the silver medal, IRIB reported

Iran grabbed a gold medal, two silver medals, and a bronze medal at the 36th International Olympiad in Informatics (IOI), ranking 9th among 96 countries.

Hosted in Alexandria, Egypt, the event started on September 1 and concluded on September 8, IRNA reported.

Each participating country selected a team of up to four contestants to represent their nation.

The team competed in a two-day competition. Each contestant competed individually to maximize their score by solving three algorithmic problems within five hours.

Iranian students attended the event online and ranked ninth globally.

In a remarkable achievement, Iranian students won five gold medals, ranking first in the 17th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA) which was held from August 17 to 27 in Vassouras, state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

EU funds €2m to WFP to help support refugees in Iran

TEHRAN –The European Union (EU) has provided supplementary humanitarian funding of €2 million to the World Food Programme (WFP) in Iran to help the organization support refugees in the country.

Earlier this year, EU humanitarian aid had already contributed €1.5 million to WFP operations in Iran, the UN website announced in a press release on January 16.

This critical funding enables WFP to sustain its cash support program for refugees until early 2025. The programme has already made significant progress over the past months empowering refugees to meet their basic needs.

Iran hosts one of the largest refugee populations globally, with 3.8 million refugees and individuals in refugee-like situations, the majority of whom are from Afghanistan.

With the generous support of donors, WFP provides vital assistance to 33,000 of the most vulnerable refugees across 20 settlements.

This support includes food, cash assistance, school-based programs, and livelihood opportunities, all aimed at supporting their resilience and eventual voluntary repatriation.

In partnership with the EU, WFP has achieved key milestones; providing thousands of refugee families with monthly cash assistance.

This innovative approach gives refugees freedom of choice and restores a sense of normalcy into their lives by allowing them to buy food items of their choice in local shops to diversify their diets.

The funds received will directly touch the lives of thousands of refugees in Iran, providing them with necessary support and ensuring their well-being and stability amidst challenging circumstances,” said WFP Representative in Iran Maysaa Alghribawy. “However, the needs remain great, and we urge other donors to join us in our mission to ensure food security for all,” she added.

With the additional resources, WFP Iran aims to continue its operations seamlessly, providing life-saving assistance to those in need. The organization remains committed to working closely with the EU and other partners to address the food security challenges refugees in Iran face.

The United Nations World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian organization saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability, and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters, and the impact of climate change.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

‘Salt particles raising from Lake Urmia contained by 80%’

Salt particles raising from the catchment basin of Lake Urmia has been contained by nearly 80 percent, Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the provincial department for the Lake Urmia restoration program at West Azarbaijan has said.

In cooperation with the Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization, some saplings and shrubs have been planted in the catchment basin of Lake Urmia to slow down the wind giving rise to salt particles since past three years, which cost 600 billion rials (nearly \$14 million), Sarkhosh said.

He went on to say that the major salt particle hotspots in the West Azarbaijan province include Jabal Kandi village in Urmia County, Saporghan, Urmia, Choopanloo and Miandoab, which are highly contained by planting vegetation, ISNA reported on Saturday.

کنترل ۸۰ درصد ریزگردهای نمکی دریاچه ارومیه

مدیر دفتر استانی ستاد احیای دریاچه ارومیه در آذربایجان غربی گفت: نزدیک به ۸۰ درصد از ریزگردهای نمکی حوضه آبریز دریاچه ارومیه کنترل شده است.

فرهاد سرخوش در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایسنا با اشاره به اینکه حجم آب ورودی به دریاچه ارومیه باعث مرطوب شدن نمک‌های سطح دریاچه و کنترل ریزگردهای نمکی آن می‌شود افزود: خارج از بستر دریاچه ارومیه و در حوضه آبریز با همکاری منابع طبیعی و کاشت نهال و درختچه‌ها ریزگردهای نمکی کنترل می‌شود که از سال ۹۳ تا ۹۶ در این راستا ۶۰ میلیارد تومان هزینه شده است.

وی خاطر نشان کرد: کانون بحرانی ریزگردها در استان شامل منطقه جبل کندی در ۴۵ کیلومتری ارومیه، منطقه سپورغان ارومیه، چوپان لو سلماس، و میاندوآب است که با نهال کاری تا حدود زیادی از این ریزگردها مهار شده‌اند.



JANUARY 19, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

I wonder at a man who loses hope of salvation when the door of repentance is open for him.
Imam Ali (AS)

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

Iranian toy industry calls for global exhibitions to boost international market presence

TEHRAN- To effectively promote and market Iranian toys on the global stage, it is essential to organize the toy exhibitions at an international level, the director of the Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) has said.

Hamed Alamati made the remarks on Friday during his visit to the 9th National Toy Festival, currently underway at the IIDCYA exhibition hall.

Highlighting the significant progress compared to previous years, Alamati underscored the importance of hosting similar exhibitions on various scales, both domestically and internationally, to successfully market Iranian toys.

He also pointed to two special sections at this year's festival, one for donating toys and activities to underprivileged children, and another for sending toys to children in Gaza and Lebanon, allowing them to share in this initiative.

Alamati asserted the necessity to extend the exhibition to the provinces. Last year, this idea was proposed but not realized due to certain circumstances; however, he is determined to bring the exhibition directly to local communities this year.

Most importantly, Alamati underscored the need to align this exhibition with the educational, developmental, and nurturing goals for children, a path they are actively pursuing with a view to enhancement.

He emphasized the importance of organizing the toy festival not only across provinces but also internationally.

Alamati highlighted several key features of this year's event, stating that it represents the governing role of education authorities in the toy industry.

He also mentioned the regulation, facilitation, and support the festival receives from the Toy Monitoring Council and the Institute itself. Furthermore, he pointed out the increased product

diversity compared to the previous year, as well as competitive pricing and high-quality materials.

The 9th National Toy Festival aims to support domestically produced goods and foster meaningful connections among designers, manufacturers, investors, and other stakeholders in the recreational and toy industry. It seeks to organize the toy industry while establishing an innovative system of design and operation, Mehr reported.

It also aims to enhance the quality of products and designers in the toy industry.

The event is organized in collaboration with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, the Iranian Toy Manufacturers Association, the Toy Monitoring Council, the Cognitive Science Headquarters, Soore University, and various sectors of the Tehran Municipality.

This year's festival features 142 toy brands showcasing over 2,400 items. The first section of the festival is dedicated to displaying and selling Iranian toys in the main hall of the exhibit. Following this, a section will promote the functionalities of play and toys.

The festival also includes a scientific segment aimed at hosting specialized meetings focused on toys, which will be conducted by Soore University.

Additionally, a competitive section will choose the best Iranian toys, with around 50 domestic companies participating thus far.

One of the specialized sessions at festival is focusing on therapeutic and rehabilitation toys, discussing the needs of children with special requirements.

The National Toy Festival serves as a platform for the public to become acquainted with quality Iranian products. Attendees will have the opportunity to observe the products of local manufacturers and provide their feedback.

This year's festival, themed "Game, A Practice of Life," will run until January 29.

Sobh Media Festival condoles martyrdom of Palestinian journalist Ahmed Hisham Abu Al-Rous

TEHRAN-The 3rd Sobh Media Festival secretariat has issued a statement on the occasion of the martyrdom of the Palestinian journalist Ahmed Hisham Abu Al-Rous, who was the winner of the Palestine Special Citizen Journalist Award at the 2nd edition of the event.

Abu Al-Rous was martyred in Zionist shelling of al-Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip on Wednesday, just moments before the ceasefire deal was announced.

The statement posted on the festival website reads, "Ahmed Hisham Abu Al-Rous was among the ones that moved to the land of light and glory. Throughout the unequal war and undeniable genocide of the occupying regime against the oppressed people of Gaza, as a passionate and motivated young man, he endeavored to reflect the sufferings of the people who stood up against all the shameless atrocities and crimes of the Zionists and gave 'resistance' a new meaning".

"He dedicated his dear life to the Palestinian cause and the liberation of his nation and homeland from the occupation of the blood-thirsty Zionists. He was presented with the Palestine Special Citizen Journalist Award at the 2nd Sobh International Media Festival, that was held less than a year ago, for documenting and bringing global attention to the iconic Palestinian grandfather, Khaled Nabhan, who called his beloved granddaughter Reem, the 'Soul of the Soul'. The award means that the 'narrative' of resistance is as effective as the 'resistance' and a



sharp blade that never stops tearing and severing the roots of lies, distortions and deliberate silence of the child-killing pro-Zionist media during the longest period of attacks on Gaza," it continued.

Local sources reported that Abu Al-Rous, along with his brother Mohamed and three others, was killed when a Zionist drone targeted his vehicle near Muscat School in Camp 2, south of al-Nuseirat. The attack resulted in the deaths of five individuals, including the journalist, and left six others injured. Abu Al-Rous was covering the escalating situation in Gaza when the deadly attack occurred.

Abu Al-Rous, known for his charitable work and providing aid to displaced families in Gaza during the

ongoing aggression on Gaza, had been a vocal advocate for the people of Gaza throughout the war.

The relentless persecution of journalists by the Zionist forces continues to be a violation of international law, aiming to silence those documenting the brutal reality in Gaza for the world.

The Sobh International Media Festival was inaugurated in 2023 with the objective of facilitating connections between a heterogeneous group of international program producers and fostering constructive interactions among them. This initiative is designed to influence the trajectory of global media trends.

The festival aims to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of

gifted individuals engaged in media pursuits, facilitating avenues for them to advance their artistic endeavors and innovation. The objective is to establish a robust and influential international media presence. Through educational initiatives, including workshops and seminars, it seeks to provide artists with exposure to a variety of media, thereby broadening their perspectives and encouraging.

It is dedicated to the examination of the nexus between media and the New World Order. In this context, the festival will investigate the significance of local and regional identities, spirituality, family values, and resistance discourse in the face of hegemonic powers.

Iranian animations at Black Movie Festival in Geneva

TEHRAN-Two short animations from Iran are present at the 26th Black Movie International Independent Film Festival, which is underway in Geneva, Switzerland.

"The Deer" directed by Baran Sedighian and "Let's Make Peace" by Abdollah Alimorad are the Iranian animated movies, which have entered the kids section of the event, IRNA reported.

A production of 2023, "The Deer" is a five-minute animation with no dialogues. The life of the deer in this animation changes radically after getting injured by hunters. His old world no longer seems to fit him, so he decides to leave.

Targeted by hunters, the deer is forced to leave its surroundings and head for the city. In this allegory of migration and uprooting, a displaced person tries to integrate without denying their identity.

Beautifully crafted, the animation resonates with the themes of transformation and self-discovery. The captivating work explores the courage it takes to embrace change and find one's true path.

Mirzaeian Choir and Orchestra to perform at Vahdat Hall

TEHRAN- The Mirzaeian Choir and Orchestra, under the baton of Serjik Mirzaeian, will take the stage at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Sunday evening.

The orchestra will perform classic pieces composed by the conductor during the upcoming concert, accompanied by the choir singing in Armenian, ISNA

reported.

Over 140 members from both the choir and orchestra will participate in this performance.

Additionally, Omid Mohebbi will serve as concertmaster, while Hossein Mahmoudi will be the concert's manager.

Video game by Palestinian developer raises \$240,000 to spotlight 1948 Nakba

Palestinian developer Rasheed Abueideh has raised (just over) \$240,000 to begin production on "Dreams on a Pillow," a video game about the 1948 Nakba.

The project raised precisely \$240,502 through crowdfunding platform LaunchGood, surpassing its target of \$194,800 after receiving backing from over 3,300 people, Game Developer reported.

The title will take the form a "pseudo-3D stealth adventure" inspired by a Palestinian folk tale set during the Nakba. The United Nations explains Nakba means "catastrophe" in Arabic and refers to the "mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war".

In "Dreams on a Pillow," Omm is a young mother from an olive farmers' family in al-Tantura. Throughout the game, the player traverses historical events and stories of the Nakba as Omm attempts an escape towards Lebanon in the North. Whenever Omm has an opportunity to rest on her perilous journey, she dreams of her childhood - reliving a rapidly fading memory of a pre-Zionist Palestine. Using historical documentation and imagery, two decades of untold Palestinian history is carefully implemented and beautifully rendered.

Throughout the game, the player will experience often untold stories of Palestinian history. As Omm travels from the massacre of al-Tantura to the concentration camps of Atlit, she will later encounter the campaign of terror that led to the fall of Haifa, the bioweapon poisoning of Acre, and the Zionist attacks on refugees towards the Lebanese border.

In a post on Bluesky, Abueideh thanked backers for their support and explained production on the game will commence imminently.

Abueideh said he hopes to "make history" in the game industry by bringing "Dreams on a Pillow" to market after initially struggling to secure funding via more traditional means.

As noted on the project page, Abueideh previously worked on a title called "Liyla & The Shadows of War" that sought to shine a light on the "harsh realities of living under invasion, apartheid, and occupation" in Gaza.

However, he says he was met with setback after setback with both publishers and platform holders reportedly rejecting the title and even banning it in some instances.

Despite those challenges, he successfully

launched "Liyla" but has struggled to make a living in the game industry ever since. Abueideh says publishers and investors feel supporting a Palestinian is "too risky" or "controversial," but is determined to find a way to turn "Dreams on a Pillow" into a reality.

"The game holds the ambition and dreams of a Palestinian who was denied the right to make games like the rest of the world could, but persists regardless. It cannot be made with traditional games funding, because such funding cannot be accessed by a Palestinian," reads the project page.

"It cannot be made with traditional crowdfunding, because most popular crowdfunding platforms do not recognize Palestine. To tell this story, to fulfil this impossible dream, to bring together a team of veteran game developers and incredible local creators".

Abueideh estimates he will need roughly \$495,000 to realize his vision for "Dreams on a Pillow". The cash raised through LaunchGood will be used to move into a production state and create "a few core levels" while plotting out and prototyping the entire experience.

Cartoon of Day



Ceasefire

Cartoonist: Mo Qasem from the Netherlands