



Displaced Palestinians cheer as they return to Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on January 19, 2025.

► Page 5

VICTORY on the 470th Day

Gaza Media Office: Israel unable to break the will of Palestinian resistance

TEHRAN – The head of the Government Media Office in Gaza says the ceasefire agreement that took effect between Israel and Hamas on Sunday represents a triumph for the Palestinian people.

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, Ismail Althwabta said the Palestinian resistance forced Israel to sign the truce deal.

“This ceasefire deal amounts to a victory for Palestinian people because it underscores Israel’s failure to control Gaza and break the will of the resistance,” he said.

Althwabta touched upon Israel’s crimes in the course of the war in Gaza, in particular against the media corps.

Israel has killed 214 journalists during its brutal attacks against the Gaza Strip since October 2023.

“Official grievances have been lodged against the Zionist regime concerning its crimes against journalists. These complaints will be submitted to international courts to ensure that the occupying regime is held accountable for its blatant violations of media freedom,” Althwabta said. ► Page 5

Thanks to Gen. Soleimani, Gaza emerges victorious

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – Throughout his honorable tireless life, specifically since the outbreak of the “Al-Aqsa Intifada” in 2000 until his assassination in 2020, Maj Gen. Qassem Soleimani supported Palestine, its people, cause and resistance, in every possible way.

“The martyr commander Soleimani sacrificed himself for Palestine and its people, so he is ‘The Martyr of al-Quds,’” confirmed Ismail Haniyeh, the martyr Hamas leader. He repeated the title “The Martyr of al-Quds” three times.

Following his appointment as commander of the “Quds Force,” Gen. Soleimani got closely acquainted with most of the Palestinian resistance movements.

Over the years, this rapprochement strengthened until Gen. Soleimani joined Hamas and the Islamic Jihad’s joint operations room during the 2008 Israeli aggression.

“In 2017, Major General Soleimani communicated with the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades and the al-Quds Brigades, confirming that Iran, ► Page 5

New Damascus rulers’ passivity has strengthened Israel’s covetous eye on Syria

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – For decades the Israeli regime has pursued specific military and strategic goals in Syria.

Following the illegal occupation of Syria’s Golan Heights in 1967 and annexing two-thirds of the territory in 1981 (a move not recognized under international law), the regime had always sought to destabilize Syria.

Under former Presidents Hafez and Bashar al-Assad, Syria, with a strong army, served as a staunch supporter of Hezbollah and the Palestinian resistance movement in Gaza.

Former Syrian governments also refused to sever ties with the anti-Israeli resistance groups despite many Western offers to do so.

The collapse of the Syrian army in December 2024 following a decade-old battle with terrorists and foreign-armed militant groups, coupled with U.S. occupation and sanctions have provided a golden ticket for the Israeli military to expand the domains of its occupation of Syria. ► Page 5

Palestinian Islamic Jihad praises Iran’s support, vows to continue resistance

TEHRAN – Secretary-General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement Ziad al-Nakhala has expressed deep appreciation for the courageous stance and unwavering support of Iran toward the people of Gaza.

In a phone conversation on Saturday with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, he emphasized their steadfast commitment to achieving their human and legal rights, including the right to self-determination and liberation from the grip of occupation.

The leader reiterated that the Palestinian Resistance remains resolute in its efforts to secure justice and freedom for their nation, pledging to continue the struggle with determination and resolve.

Iranian Foreign Minister praised the “unmatched victory” of Palestinians in Gaza against Israel, following a devastating 15-month conflict.

Araghchi highlighted the resilience of the Palestinian people as the decisive factor behind Israel’s approval of a ceasefire deal. ► Page 2

‘Americans call them red wasps.’ Iran reveals underground base housing fast attack craft

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) has unveiled a new strategic underground base along the southern coast of Iran, near the Persian Gulf, housing myriads of fast attack craft. The facility was officially unveiled on Saturday by IRGC Commander-in-Chief Major General Hossein Salami and IRGC Navy Chief Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, during a television broadcast that also featured glimpses of the site.

During the unveiling, Navy Chief Tangsiri highlighted the facility’s strategic capabilities, stating, “This underground city has the capability for immediate operations at sea.”

Describing the agility and lethality of the naval forces, Tangsiri said, “The Americans themselves call these Iranian boats ‘red wasps.’ The sting of these wasps is deadly.” ► Page 2



Ayatollah Khamenei leads funeral prayer for two prominent judges assassinated in Tehran

TEHRAN – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei led prayers on Sunday for two prominent Iranian judges who lost their lives in an armed attack the previous day.

A man opened fire on Ali Razini, head of Branch 39 of the Supreme Court, and Mohammad Moqiseh, head of Branch 53, in their office in Tehran. The gunman turned the weapon on himself after the assassinations.

A farewell ceremony in the two martyred judges honor was held on Sunday at Tehran’s Martyrs’ Memorial Hall. A series of additional funeral and memorial events have also been planned to commemorate their long service to Iran’s justice system.

10 questions and answers about Iran-Russia strategic partnership treaty

TEHRAN – Tehran and Moscow deepened their strategic alliance on Friday with the inking of the Treaty on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation in an official signing ceremony attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian and President Vladimir Putin.

The treaty builds upon the first strategic cooperation pact signed between the two countries in 2001. Efforts to devise a new agreement began in 2019 and ended in July 2024.

The newly forged strategic cooperation treaty between Iran and Russia comprises a preamble and 47 articles and covers a broad spectrum of collaboration, including military, economic, nuclear, and media spheres. ► Page 3

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Assassination is never a successful way to eliminate opponent

In a note, Hamshahri discussed the assassination of two senior judges in Tehran and wrote: Terrorists believe that by assassinating the leaders of the opposition side, they can remove obstacles and achieve their goals without any resistance.

From the first days of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, anti-revolution groups used terror as a tool to confront the Islamic Republic.

The MKO group carried out assassinations against key figures of the revolution and these actions triggered a full-scale war against the Iranian government and people. History has shown that terror never leads to lasting power.

Even if personal motives are not involved, it should be analyzed in the context of failed attempts to eliminate the competitor.

Such measures only shorten the life of terrorist groups and do not postpone their final defeat.

This narrative is a proof that true power is obtained through justice, service to the people, and harmony with God's will, and not through terror and violence.

Resalat: Gateway to world trade

In an article, Resalat discussed the vital role of ports in the growth of the sea-based economy and global trade and said: Maritime transport is one of the most important pillars of international trade and one of the most basic economic tools for countries having access to the sea. The Islamic Republic of Iran also has a high potential to become one of the major maritime transportation hubs at the regional and international levels given its strategic geographical location and important ports on the northern and southern coasts. The country's ports, especially on southern coasts, as the main gateways for the import and export of goods, have many capacities that, if optimally exploited, can lead to significant growth and development in various economic sectors.

By strengthening infrastructure, improving resource management, attracting large investments, and using new technologies, we can increase foreign trade, reduce transportation costs, increase employment, and improve the country's economy.

Iran: Iraq as a mediator

The Iran newspaper investigated Baghdad's moves in interactions between Iran and the United States and the management of

new developments in the Middle East.

It said: Iraqi officials have raised positions in recent weeks to take steps in a diplomatic process to reduce the crisis between Iran and the United States.

The important aspect of this role-playing is the effort to exchange messages between Iran and America. Iraqi leaders believe that improving relations between Iran and America can contribute to development goals and political stability in Iraq.

The Sudani government is trying to set a successful goal in regulating the relations between Iran and America.

In the meantime, Sudani's hope for the success of this strategy is the shared opinion of Iran and America on the "necessity of security and political stability in Iraq".

Although the nuclear issue has been the main point of confrontation and tension between Iran and America for more than 2 decades, Iraq sees its capacity to mediate in resolving regional issues to strengthen its internal security and stability.

Ham Mihan: JCPOA is on an ambiguous path

In a commentary, Ham Mihan pointed to the JCPOA and wrote: Some of Iran's (nuclear) limitations within the JCPOA expired in 2023, however, the Biden administration imposed new sanctions against Iran's ballistic missile program and drone industry, and the European Union also refused to suspend or stop the sanctions.

Designating the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization by the United States was one of the obstacles for Washington to rejoin the JCPOA. American officials also said that more nuclear advancements by Iran could make it impossible to return to the initial agreement, and now with the return of Donald Trump, implementing the terms of the JCPOA is facing serious doubts.

Although the JCPOA agreement is still legally valid and only the United States has withdrawn from it, in practice both Tehran has violated its nuclear commitments and Europe has refused to cancel its sanctions, and there is no guarantee that Europe will not take action to activate the trigger mechanism.

If it happens, it will also face a serious challenge to the legal achievements of the JCPOA.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad praises Iran's support, vows to continue resistance

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The leader reiterated that the Palestinian Resistance remains resolute in its efforts to secure justice and freedom for their nation, pledging to continue the struggle with determination and resolve.

Iranian Foreign Minister praised the "unmatched victory" of Palestinians in Gaza against Israel, following a devastating 15-month conflict.

Araghchi highlighted the resilience of the Palestinian people as the decisive factor behind Israel's approval of a ceasefire deal.

"After 15 months of genocide and atrocities, the Zionist regime



failed to achieve its malicious objectives and was compelled to surrender to the will of the resilient Palestinian people," Araghchi stated.

The ceasefire, approved by Israeli regime on Friday, will begin on Sunday with a six-week truce.

The phased agreement aims to end a conflict that has claimed at least 46,788 Palestinian lives, mostly women and children.

Hamas has also endorsed the deal, praising the sacrifices of Palestinian fighters and civilians for thwarting Israel's wartime goals.

Araghchi reiterated Iran's

"principled and constant position" of supporting the Palestinian cause and their legitimate right to resist occupation.

Iran-Yemen solidarity on Gaza conflict

Separately, Araghchi discussed the ceasefire with Yemeni Foreign Minister Jamal Ahmed Ali Amer during a phone call on Saturday night.

The Iranian diplomat emphasized the significance of regional solidarity in supporting the Palestinian Resistance.

"The truce is the result of Gaza's resilience and the support that the Resistance Front, in-

cluding Yemenis, provided for the oppressed Palestinians," Araghchi said.

Amer welcomed the ceasefire but warned that Yemen's future support would depend on Israel's adherence to the agreement and a complete halt to its genocidal actions.

He also briefed Araghchi on developments in Yemen, expressing gratitude for Iran's political and moral support amid external aggression.

The Gaza ceasefire deal, initiated after Hamas's October 7, 2023, retaliatory operation against Israeli regime, marks a significant moment in the region.

While Israel sought to achieve objectives like the release of captives and the elimination of Hamas, these goals remain unmet despite the conflict's devastating toll.

Under the phased agreement, Israel will release 1,900 Palestinian detainees in exchange for 33 Israeli captives held in Gaza. Additionally, Israeli forces will gradually withdraw from the Philadelphia corridor along the Gaza-Egypt border.

Gaza ceasefire deal marks historic defeat for Israel, says Quds Force commander



Brigadier General Esmail Qaani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), gives a speech at a ceremony in Tehran on Jan. 19, 2025.

TEHRAN – The commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Brigadier General Esmail Qaani, has described the recent ceasefire between Hamas and Israel as a significant blow to the occupying regime.

Speaking on Sunday, Qaani stated that the ceasefire, which took effect the same day, marked the "biggest defeat" in Israel's history, highlighting the regime's failure to achieve any of its objectives despite its prolonged aggression in Gaza.

"The bloodthirsty, child-killing butchers of the Zionist regime, after 15 months of relentless crimes against the oppressed people of Palestine, Lebanon, and the region, were humiliated into accepting a ceasefire today," Qaani declared. He emphasized that the terms of the agreement mirrored proposals previously rejected by Israel, underscoring the regime's inability to gain any advantage during the conflict.

Israel initiated its offensive on Gaza on October 7, 2023, following a major operation by Hamas-led Resistance groups, which was carried out in retaliation for Israel's escalating violence against Palestinians. However, despite causing the deaths of nearly 47,000 Palestinians, primarily women and children, Israel failed to secure its declared objectives, including the release of captives and the elimination of Hamas.

According to Qaani, the ceasefire represents a pivotal moment in exposing what he termed the "miserable life" of the Zionist regime. "The clauses that the Palestinian Resistance proposed in earlier negotiations were ultimately accepted by Israel, marking their humiliation and

the biggest defeat they have faced," he said.

The ceasefire agreement, which was finalized last Wednesday, included Hamas' longstanding demands, signaling a significant diplomatic victory for the Palestinian resistance. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has also intensified pressure on Israeli leaders, issuing arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former War Minister Yoav Gallant in November for crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Adding to Israel's diplomatic setbacks, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) previously ordered the regime to take immediate measures to prevent the "plausible genocide" in Gaza, following legal actions initiated by South Africa.

IRGC chief highlights advances in missile precision technology

Also speaking at the ceremony, IRGC Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami announced significant advancements in Iran's missile technology, emphasizing the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) to improve precision and minimize civilian casualties.

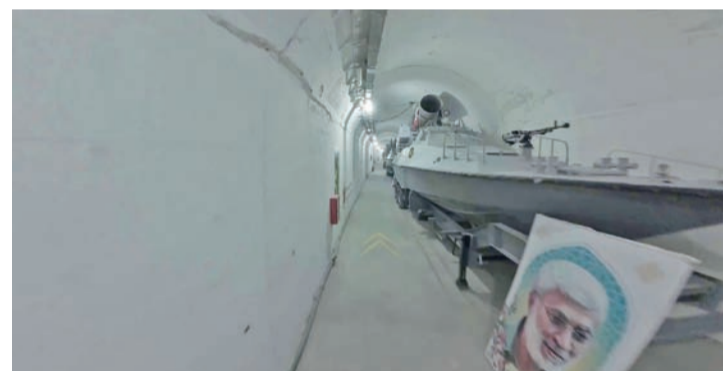
Salami highlighted Iran's efforts to enhance its defense capabilities while adhering to ethical guidelines.

Salami revealed that the IRGC had achieved precision-targeting capabilities using AI, enabling it to conduct operations against hostile targets without harming civilians. He cited a 2018 missile operation against Takfiri terrorist bases in Syria as an example, noting that Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei had instructed the IRGC to avoid civilian harm during the mission.

The IRGC commander also condemned a recent cyber-terror attack by the Zionist regime in Lebanon. On September 18, 2024, a coordinated cyber-attack caused communication devices, including pagers, to explode in multiple locations, resulting in over 2,000 injuries and numerous fatalities. Among the victims was Iran's ambassador to Beirut, Mojtaba Amani.

Salami underscored the resilience of Iran's medical staff, who played a critical role in treating injured Hezbollah forces during the crisis. He praised their dedication, drawing parallels to their heroic efforts during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

'Americans call them red wasps:' Iran reveals underground base housing fast attack craft



An Iranian fast attack craft (FAC) inside a newly unveiled underground naval base on Iran's southern coast, near the Persian Gulf, January 18, 2025.

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) has unveiled a new strategic underground base along the southern coast of Iran, near the Persian Gulf, housing myriads of fast attack craft.

The facility was officially unveiled on Saturday by IRGC Commander-in-Chief Major General Hossein Salami and IRGC Navy Chief Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, during a television broadcast that also featured glimpses of the site.

During the unveiling, Navy Chief Tangsiri highlighted the facility's strategic capabilities, stating, "This underground city has the capability for immediate operations at sea."

Describing the agility and lethality of the naval forces, Tangsiri said, "The Americans themselves call these Iranian boats 'red wasps'. The sting of these wasps is deadly."

He further explained that the Iranian-made vessels are radar-evading and can launch missiles at targets with "very, very high speed". He emphasized that these advancements were accomplished in the face of anti-Iran sanctions.

'Only a fraction of Iran's might'

Additionally, Major General Salami highlighted that the unveiled vessels and missile systems enhance the combat effectiveness of various homegrown crafts currently patrolling the Persian Gulf to safeguard Iran's sovereignty and maritime boundaries.

"This represents only a fraction of the Navy's extensive capabilities," the IRGC chief said adding that the Navy is continually advancing its combat readiness and defensive strategies.

Salami also expressed confidence in the progress made by the IRGC Navy in recent years, both in terms of the quantity and quality of offensive systems. He detailed improvements

in the operational range and speed of the vessels, as well as the range, accuracy, and destructive power of their missiles.

The IRGC Navy is now equipped to conduct warfare from both close and distant ranges and can strategically manage multiple layers of defense, the commander declared.

The underground base revealed Sunday night was the IRGC's second such facility unveiled this month, following last week's unveiling of an advanced underground missile base known as a "missile city." While much of that base still remains undisclosed, video footage displayed a range of liquid-fueled, high-tech missiles, including Emad, Qadr, and Qiam models.

The construction of underground complexes is a cornerstone of Iran's defense posture. These facilities provide protection for military assets against aerial threats, while simultaneously enabling a swift retaliatory response. The strategy is also believed to act as a deterrent to potential aggressors and significantly complicates any adversary's operational planning should they consider an attack.

A look at Iran's maritime vanguards

Iran's naval forces, consisting of the IRGC Navy and the Iranian [Artesh] Navy, have achieved significant advancements in recent decades. The synergistic relationship between these two branches creates a robust, layered defense system.

Initially focused on coastal defense following the Islamic Revolution, the IRGC Navy has transformed into a formidable force specializing in asymmetric warfare. This transformation is evident in its fleet of agile speedboats and the advanced Shahid Soleimani class stealth missile corvettes.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



"And finally, you have surrendered," reads the latest mural in Tehran's Palestine Square, unveiled as a Gaza ceasefire went into effect on Sunday, with residents beginning their return to ruined homes

Iran's top general in Pakistan for military and security talks

TEHRAN – Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, has emphasized the strengthening of military and security ties between Iran and Pakistan during his trip to the neighboring country.

In remarks to reporters, Bagheri highlighted the growing cooperation and coordination between the two nations on various regional and international issues.

Upon his arrival in Islamabad on Sunday night, General Bagheri remarked, "We have witnessed significant events in the region over the past year, where Iran and Pakistan, as two Islamic countries, are located in the sensitive area of West and South Asia."

He underscored the extensive relations between Tehran and Islamabad, stating that both countries share similar positions on many matters.

Bagheri noted the positive development in military relations between the two countries in recent years. "Relations between the Iranian and Pakistani armed forces have been developing, and we have reached good



Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, speaking to reporters after arriving in Islamabad on January 19, 2025

agreements," he stated.

The general pointed out that the two countries are working to resolve security issues while expanding friendship and economic ties along their shared border.

"The main topics of our visit include border issues and the development of military relations," Bagheri elaborated.

The top general's visit to Islamabad

follows an official invitation from the Commander of the Pakistan Army, General Asim Munir.

The two-day trip is scheduled to include meetings with top Pakistani political, military, and security officials, including President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, and Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif.

Discussions are expected to cover not only military and defense coop-

eration but also regional developments and the latest issues in the Muslim world.

This visit marks General Bagheri's third trip to Pakistan, following his visits in July 2018 and October 2021.

Last year, General Munir made an official visit to Tehran, meeting with General Bagheri and other Iranian military and civilian officials.

Growing Iran-Pakistan military ties

Tehran and Islamabad have intensified their military cooperation in recent years, particularly in response to shared security concerns along their 909-kilometer border.

Specifically, in 2023, Iran and Pakistan conducted a joint border security exercise. This exercise aimed to enhance operational coordination against terrorism, drug trafficking, and other illegal activities.

Furthermore, the two countries signed a security cooperation agreement in April 2024. The agreement includes the deployment of colonel-rank officers in border areas for better coordination in counterterrorism efforts.

10 questions and answers about Iran-Russia strategic partnership treaty

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The treaty builds upon the first strategic cooperation pact signed between the two countries in 2001. Efforts to devise a new agreement began in 2019 and ended in July 2024.

The newly forged strategic cooperation treaty between Iran and Russia comprises a preamble and 47 articles and covers a broad spectrum of collaboration, including military, economic, nuclear, and media spheres.

Here are 10 things to know about the agreement:

1. What does the treaty say about military cooperation and mutual support in case of military aggression?

According to Clauses 3 and 4 of Article 3:

If one party to the treaty is subjected to aggression, the other party will not provide military or any other assistance to the aggressor that could prolong the aggression. They will also work to ensure that disputes are resolved in line with the United Nations Charter and other applicable international laws.

The parties will not allow their territories to be used for supporting separatist movements or actions that threaten the stability and territorial integrity of the other party, nor for any hostile activities against each other.

Additionally, under Clause 4 of Article 5, the parties will consult and cooperate to address shared military and regional security threats.

2. What does the treaty say about intelligence and security cooperation between Iran and Russia?

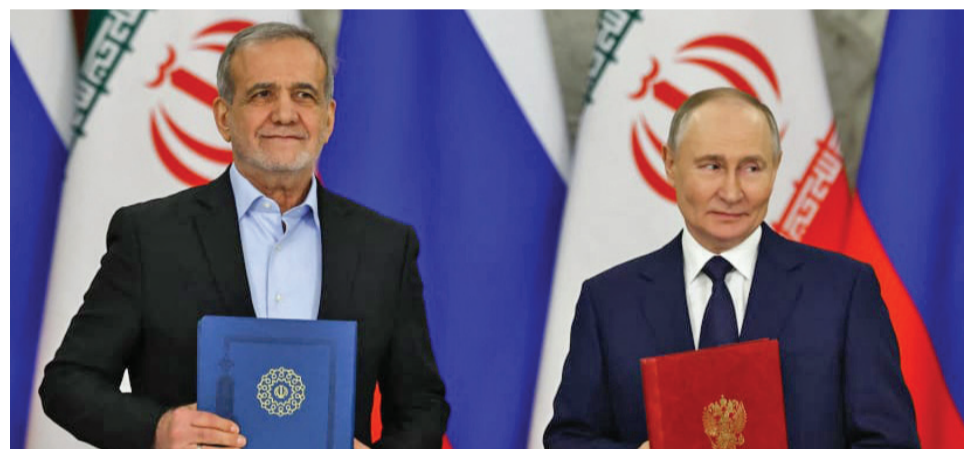
Under Article 4:

To enhance national security and counter shared threats, the intelligence and security agencies of both parties will exchange information and expertise and strengthen their collaboration. These agencies will work together within the framework of separate agreements.

3. What impact will the treaty have on security issues in the Caspian Sea?

Iran and Russia regard the involvement of third countries, particularly Western ones, in the Caspian region as a threat to their national interests. Clause 1 of Article 13 highlights:

The parties will collaborate to maintain the



Caspian Sea as a region of peace, good neighborliness, and friendship, based on the principle of excluding military forces not belonging to the coastal states, ensuring security and stability in the area.

4. What does the treaty say about countering unilateral sanctions?

While the treaty does not explicitly mention U.S. unilateral sanctions, both nations face significant sanctions from Washington. Article 19 addresses this issue generally, stating in Clauses 3 and 4:

If third-party actions directly or indirectly affect one of the treaty parties, their individuals, entities, assets, or goods moving between the two parties, or intellectual property, services, or labor, the parties will refrain from joining or supporting unilateral coercive measures imposed by any third party.

If unilateral coercive measures are imposed by a third party on one treaty party, both will take practical steps to reduce risks and minimize the direct and indirect impacts on their mutual economic relations, individuals, entities, or assets. They will also limit the dissemination of information that could be exploited by the third party to intensify such measures.

5. What are the treaty's plans to counter financial and banking sanctions imposed by the West on Tehran and Moscow?

According to Clause 2 of Article 20:

The parties will work together to establish a modern, independent payment infrastructure free from third-party interference, transition to bilateral payments in their national currencies, enhance direct interbank cooperation, and promote national financial products.

6. How does the treaty address Iran-Russia nuclear cooperation?

Article 23 states:

The parties will develop long-term and mutually beneficial relations to implement joint projects for the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including the construction of nuclear power facilities.

7. What does the treaty say about media cooperation between the two countries?

According to Article 33:

The parties will encourage their media outlets to engage in extensive cooperation to raise public awareness, support the free flow of information, and jointly counter false news and negative propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation. They will also combat the dissemination of fake information that threatens the national interests and security of either party, as well as other forms of media misuse.

8. How will potential disputes regarding the treaty's implementation be resolved?

Under Article 44:

Any disputes arising from the interpretation or implementation of the treaty will be resolved through consultations and negotiations between the parties via diplomatic channels.

9. How long is the treaty valid?

According to Clause 1 of Article 45:

The treaty is subject to ratification and will come into effect 30 days after the last written notification that the required domestic procedures for its enforcement have been completed. It will remain valid for 20 years and will automatically renew for subsequent 5-year periods.

10. Can either party withdraw from the treaty?

Yes. According to Clause 2 of Article 45:

Either party can terminate the treaty by issuing a written notice at least one year before the end of its term.

SPORTS

Iran beach soccer legend Mesigar bids farewell

TEHRAN – Iran national beach soccer team captain Moslem Mesigar announced his retirement from the sport on Saturday.

He represented Team Melli in the friendly match against Belarus and bid farewell at the end of the game.

Born in Bushehr, the forward was a member of the team that came third in FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in 2017.

The 40-year-old player also claimed the Beach Soccer Intercontinental Cup in 2013, as well as two Asian Championship titles in 2013 and 2017.

Mesigar played for the Iran national team for 18 years.

Iran come third at 2025 Kho Kho World Cup

TEHRAN – Iran secured third place in the inaugural edition of the Kho Kho World Cup.

Team Melli lost to Nepal with a score of 72-29 in the semifinals, while India triumphed over South Africa, defeating them 60-42 in the other semifinal match.

India will face Nepal in the final.

In the quarterfinals, Iran had a commanding victory against Kenya, winning 86-18. During the group stage, the Persians achieved impressive wins over Argentina (117-14), the Netherlands (142-22), South Africa (56-32), and Ghana (61-30) in Group B.

This first edition of the Kho Kho World Cup features 20 men's and 19 women's national teams competing in two stages: a group stage followed by a knockout stage.

The tournament is being held at the Indira Gandhi Arena in New Delhi, India, from Jan. 13 to 19, organized by the Kho Kho Federation of India and the International Kho Kho Federation.

Kho Kho is a traditional South Asian sport with roots in ancient India and Nepal. It ranks as the second-most popular traditional tag game in the Indian subcontinent, following kabaddi. The game is played on a rectangular court with a central lane connecting two poles situated at either end.

During the match, nine players from the chasing team (the attacking team) take the field, with eight sitting in the central lane while three runners from the defending team navigate the court, attempting to avoid being touched. Each sitting player on the chasing team faces the opposite half of the field from their adjacent teammates.

Bonyadifar to officiate Ulsan, Shandong Taishan match

TEHRAN – Mo'ud Bonyadifar has been chosen to officiate the match between South Korea's Ulsan HD and China's Shandong Taishan.

The match will be held at the Ulsan Munsu Football Stadium in Ulsan on February 19.

Shandong and Ulsan sit 10th and 11th in the East Region's 12-team table.

In 2011, Bonyadifar began his career by refereeing matches within the Persian Gulf Pro League, and in 2013, he became a FIFA listed referee.

Volleyball coach Tomaso Totolo arrives in Tehran

TEHRAN – Iran national volleyball team coach Tomaso Totolo arrived in Tehran on Sunday.

Team Melli head coach Roberto Piazza was scheduled to come to Tehran on Monday.

The Italian coach was named Team Melli coach in early September but has not traveled to Iran yet.

Piazza will finalize his deal with the Iran volleyball federation and also hold a meeting with the head of the federation Milad Taghavi.

Piazza has replaced Brazilian coach Mauricio Motta Paes.

An Iranian assistant will be named on Monday.

Iranian climber Rekabi invited to 2026 Youth Olympics

TEHRAN – Iranian climber Elnaz Rekabi will participate at the 2026 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) as a role model.

She has represented Iran at the IFSC Climbing World Championships for several times.

The 4th Summer Youth Olympic Games (YOG) will take place over two weeks from 31 October 2026 in Dakar, Senegal, bringing together the world's best young athletes for the first Olympic sporting event to be held on African soil.

The Games will be held across three host sites (Dakar, Diamniadio and Saly), and are intended as a catalyst to transform Senegal through sport, while becoming a blueprint for future YOG hosts.

PGPL: Second part of the season kicks off Monday

TEHRAN – The second half of the Iranian Persian Gulf Pro League (PGPL) is set to kick off on Monday, following a tumultuous first half marked by a staggering number of coaching changes.

An astonishing seven of the league's 16 teams have already parted ways with their managers, highlighting a trend of instability and hasty decision-making among club managements.

Defending champions Persepolis, who started the season under the guidance of Juan Carlos Garrido, experienced a mid-season slump and subsequently parted ways with the Spanish coach. The Reds currently sit in third place and will face off against Zob Ahan on Tuesday, with interim coach Karim Bagheri still at the helm as the club continue their search for a permanent replacement.

Esteghlal, one of Iran's most decorated clubs, have endured their worst start to a league season in history, amassing just 18 points from 15 matches. South African coach Pitso Mosimane faces a daunting task in reviving the Blues, who will host struggling side Shams Azar on Monday at the Azadi Stadium.

The match will see former Esteghlal goalkeeper Mehdi Rahmati return to his old stomping ground as the manager of Shams Azar.

Tractor, led by former Iran national team coach Dragan Skocic, have been the surprise package of the season. With 32 points, they sit atop the table thanks to a superior goal difference over their closest rivals, Sepahan. Both teams have maintained unbeaten away records.

Meanwhile, Sepahan, under the guidance of French coach Patrice Carteron, are also in contention for the title. The Isfahan-based club recently defeated Persepolis to lift the Iranian Super Cup and will be looking to carry that momentum into the second half of the season.

Foolad, coached by former Persepolis boss Yahya Golmohammadi, are another team in the mix. Golmohammadi has a proven track record of success in the Iranian league and is aiming to replicate his previous triumphs with Foolad.

At the bottom of the table, Havadar, who have also made a recent coaching change, are the prime candidates for relegation with just eight points. Shams Azar and Kheybar are also in danger of dropping down a division.

The match between Kheybar and Havadar on Monday could prove to be a crucial six-pointer in the battle to avoid relegation.

National drill shifts to offensive training as ground forces begin new exercises in NW Iran

TEHRAN – The Army Ground force in northwestern Iran has begun a series of offensive military drills as part of a larger national exercise.

The drills, which began Sunday night, are taking place in Torbat-e Jam, Razavi Khorasan province, and mark a shift in the broader exercise, which had previously focused

on defensive maneuvers.

This phase of the drill will continue for two days and aims to enhance combat capabilities while showcasing the latest advancements in weaponry and military technology, according to a statement by Iran's Army. It involves a coordinated effort among various units, including artillery and ar-

mored divisions, helicopter forces, drones, missiles, and electronic warfare units.

Extensive military wargames spanning the entire country marked the beginning of the year for Iran, with the involvement of multiple branches, notably the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), the Artesh (Army), the Basij,

and the Coast Guard.

So far in the course of these drills, Iran has revealed two new underground military bases, practiced intercepting bunker-buster attacks near its nuclear facilities, and simulated counter-terrorism operations in its western provinces. The exercises will be continuing for several more days.

Privatization to drive efficiency in Iran's industrial parks



TEHRAN – Reza Ansari, head of the Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), has emphasized the need to shift from government-managed industrial parks to non-governmental ones, highlighting their higher efficiency. Over 90 percent of industrial parks in the country are currently government-owned.

Speaking at the 12th council of chamber heads from across the country, Ansari called for enabling the private sector to participate more actively in managing industrial parks, IRIB reported.

He stressed that the organization should primarily focus on issuing permits and facilitating private sector involvement, despite some resistance to privatization in the sector.

According to Ansari, there are currently 870 active government-managed industrial parks and more than 70 non-governmental parks in operation, with 30 being managed by service companies. The infrastructure investment in these parks amounts to 4.80 quadrillion rials (about \$9.6 billion), while an additional 340 trillion rials (about \$680 million) is needed to address outdated infra-

structure, which requires resolution through the national budget law.

He urged the Iran Chamber of Commerce to advocate for issues affecting industrial parks and called on its members to support the development of these parks.

Highlighting the importance of integrating into the global value chain, Ansari emphasized that businesses must prioritize acquiring and utilizing advanced technology to compete in international markets. He also advocated for creating cross-sectoral institutions to support small and emerging industries, noting the need for entities that channel financial resources toward these sectors.

During the meeting, Samad Hasanzadeh, head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), expressed the chamber's readiness to collaborate with ISIPO to advance the country's industrial and economic agenda. He underscored the importance of establishing production chains and fostering cooperation between small and large enterprises to enhance production and industry development in Iran.

During the gathering, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) titled "Development of the Contractor System Framework for Iran" was signed between the ICCIMA and the ISIPO. The MOU aims to enhance collaboration, address economic and production challenges, and develop infrastructure in industrial parks.

Hasanzadeh expressed optimism that the agreement would pave the way for significant advancements in the development of industrial park infrastructure and the implementation of economic programs, contributing to the broader economic and industrial goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Non-oil goods worth nearly \$945m exported from Isfahan province in 9 months

TEHRAN – As announced by a provincial official, 1,398 million tons of non-oil commodities valued at \$944.783 million were exported from Isfahan province in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 21, 2024).

Rasoul Kouhestani-Pajouh, the director-general of the province's Customs Department, said that non-oil export from the province fell 14 percent in terms of value, and dropped 20 percent in terms of weight, as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

He mentioned petrochemical products, iron and steel, dairy products, machine-woven carpet, and copper as the major exported items and Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Turkey as the main destinations of the products exported from the province in the first nine months of the present year.

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

Forud Asgari said imports during the mentioned period, including gold bullion, amounted to \$50.89 billion. The weight of imports declined by 3.16 percent to 27.94 million tons, he added.

Non-oil export volume reached 116.35 million tons in the nine-month period, a 13.77 percent increase from the previous year, Asgari noted. The average customs value per ton of exported goods rose 3.74 percent to \$371.

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

China remained Iran's top export destination, purchasing \$11 billion worth of goods. Iraq followed with \$9.4 billion, the UAE with \$5.3 billion, Turkey with \$5.2 billion, Afghanistan and Pakistan with \$1.7 billion each, and India with \$1.4 billion. Together, these seven countries accounted for 82.4 percent of the total export volume and 82.85 percent of ex-

port value.

The UAE topped the list of Iran's import partners, exporting \$15.3 billion worth of goods to Iran. China followed with \$13 billion, Turkey with \$8.9 billion, Germany with \$1.8 billion, India and Russia with \$1.1 billion each, and Hong Kong with \$1 billion. These seven countries supplied 75 percent of the import volume and 83 percent of import value during the period.

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

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

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

The 11th session of the Supreme Council for the Development of Non-Oil Exports was held after a four-year hiatus, with the participation of Iran's first vice president on January 1.

In an exclusive interview with IRIB, Alireza Dehghan Dehnavi, head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), highlighted the significance of this council, which had been inactive for nearly four years.

He noted that the council had played a key role in national decision-making processes before falling into disuse.

Dehnavi explained that the revival of the council was prompted during this year's National Export Day event, where Masoud Pezeshkian instructed its reactivation.

With the efforts of the government and the support of the first vice president and the minister of industry, mining, and trade, the groundwork for the council's return was laid, culminating in its 11th session.

The session, chaired by First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, brought together all council members to discuss pressing trade issues. The meeting focused on three main areas:

Tehran, Moscow reach agreements on rail, air, sea, road transport

TEHRAN – Iran's transport and urban development minister outlined key agreements between the presidents of Iran and Russia, covering rail, air, sea, and road transport for both goods and passengers.

According to the Transport and Urban Development Ministry, Farzaneh Sadegh, who accompanied the president and other members of Iran's cabinet on a trip to Moscow, stated that the comprehensive strategic treaty signed by the two countries' presidents includes agreements on these transport sectors.

The comprehensive strategic treaty signifies the two nations' determination to enhance bilateral cooperation.

President Masoud Pezeshkian, during a roundtable with Russian business leaders, expressed optimism that the meeting would mark the beginning of efforts to implement the strategic agreement.

He emphasized Iran's commitment to strengthening collabora-



tion within the North-South and East-West corridors, as well as maritime routes and port infrastructure.

The president added that the two governments have agreed on the direction of their partnership, focusing on solidifying ties.

"Iran is determined to expand its relations with Russia, particularly in railways, corridors, maritime routes, and port development. These areas provide a foundation for economic activities," Pezeshki-

an said.

He underscored the need for actionable measures to implement these agreements, recommending the establishment of academic, financial, industrial, and commercial teams to ensure progress.

"Iran is ready to facilitate increased interactions and remove obstacles, demonstrating serious intent in this regard," he noted.

In related developments, the fifth joint meeting between Far-

zaneh Sadegh, Iran's Transport and Urban Development Minister, and Roman Starovoyt, Russia's Minister of Transport, was held via video conference on Monday, January 13.

The discussions focused on drafting a joint cooperation memorandum, preparing a 2025 roadmap, finalizing technical and operational details for the construction and expansion of the Rasht-Astara railway, organizing a trilateral meeting between Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan on January 28, and maximizing the use of the eastern Caspian Sea's capacities.

Iran's transport minister highlighted the importance of utilizing the Caspian Sea's potential, particularly by connecting Amirabad and Caspian ports to the rail network, advancing the commercialization of the North-South corridor, and promoting multimodal transportation.

In conclusion, Starovoyt endorsed the proposals presented by his Iranian counterpart, paving the way for strengthened cooperation between the two nations.

TCCIMA calls for simplifying tax regulations for transport companies

TEHRAN – Peyman Sanandaji, head of the Transport Committee at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), has urged the government to address tax-related challenges faced by transport companies, which hinder progress toward a company-centered transport system in Iran.

He also criticized delays in issuing budget-related executive directives during a meeting with the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and senior officials from affiliated organizations, the TCCIMA portal reported.

During the meeting, attended by the heads of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the Insurance Regulatory Authority, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the Iranian National Tax Administration (INTA), and the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), various monetary, financial, and foreign ex-

change policies were discussed.

Sanandaji pointed out that the government's recent directive on implementing Note 3 of Article 10 of the current year budget law regarding currency allocation for imported vehicles was issued late in January, leaving only two months until the end of the fiscal year.

He noted that this delay coincides with events such as the Chinese New Year and the Iranian New Year, which could exacerbate challenges in securing essential goods, thereby creating difficulties for companies and fueling market instability.

In addressing the broader challenges facing the transport sector, Sanandaji emphasized the need for fleet modernization to reduce air pollution. He highlighted ongoing efforts to shift from a driver-centered to a company-centered

transport model but stressed that significant obstacles remain, particularly in the area of taxation.

"For instance, when a vehicle is owned by a driver, they pay a fixed tax amount, regardless of other factors. However, if the vehicle is owned by a company, additional complexities, such as financial statements and various bureaucratic requirements, significantly increase costs and administrative burdens," he explained. "This discourages the move toward a company-centered transport system and undermines government policies aimed at achieving this goal."

Sanandaji concluded by calling for measures to simplify tax regulations and improve driver insurance policies to facilitate the transition to a company-driven transport model and improve the overall organization of the sector.

Export of farmed caviar rises 112% in 9 months on year

TEHRAN – Naser Karami-Rad, Director-General of the Office for the Restoration and Conservation of Genetic Aquatic Resources at Iran's Fisheries Organization (IFO), announced a 112 percent increase in the country's official exports of farmed caviar during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year 1403 (March 20 – December 21, 2024), compared to the

total exports of the previous year.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Karami-Rad stated on Sunday that 5,346 kilograms of farmed caviar, valued at \$3.2 million, were exported through Iranian customs during this period, marking a significant growth over the 4,784 kilograms exported in the entire year of 1402.

He estimated that an addition-

al 50 percent of this amount may have been exported unofficially by travelers, IRNA reported.

Iranian farmed caviar has reached 28 countries this year, with the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Belgium ranking as the top three destinations. Karami-Rad attributed the rise in exports primarily to the high quality of Iran's farmed caviar and its prominent

demand in international markets.

Last year, Iran produced 21,612 kilograms of farmed caviar, and this year's total production figures will be finalized soon, he added.

The official also noted that as of the first half of this year, 304 active sturgeon farms were operating across 22 provinces in Iran, with Gilan, Mazandaran, and Fars leading in production.

Iran exports non-oil goods worth \$1.7b to Pakistan in 9 months

TEHRAN – Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$1.7 billion to Pakistan during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 21, 2024), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Forud Asgari said that Pakistan was Iran's sixth top export destination in the mentioned nine-month period.

In a meeting between Head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Samad Hassanzadeh and Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassir Tipu in Tehran in late June 2024, the officials stressed the need for Iran and Pakistan to exercise barter trade and free trade to materialize a \$10 billion trade target.

Also, during a meeting between Iran's Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak and Pakistan's Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan in mid-October 2024, the two sides discussed trade ties between the two countries, with both agreeing that economic exchanges should be promoted further.

The two ministers met in Pakistan's capital Islamabad on the sidelines of the 23rd meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Atabak told IRNA that he and the Pakistani minister discussed trade ties between the two countries and agreed to hold further talks in order to explore ways to remove obstacles to the promotion of bilateral trade.

"Considering the historical and cultural commonalities of the two countries, we should take

advantage of the strong potentials to expand trade exchanges between Iran and Pakistan," the minister stated.

He stated that the current amount of trade exchanges between the two countries is not acceptable from the point of view of both Iran and Pakistan, and considering the strong relations and common links of the two countries, the two sides are confident that they will be able to increase the volume of trade exchanges several times.

The Pakistani minister spoke with IRNA as well. He described his talks with the Iranian minister as constructive, adding, "We had good talks with my Iranian counterpart and reached constructive agreements, and we believe that there are many remaining tasks that the two countries are determined to pursue."

In mid-July 2024, the 11th meeting of the Joint Border Trade Committee of Iran and Pakistan opened in the southeastern Iranian city of Zahedan, where the two sides pursue the increase of bilateral trade to \$10 billion per annum.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, who attends the meeting online, announced that Iranian and Pakistani delegations are scheduled to discuss the mechanism to increase mutual trade.

Iran's consul general in Quetta, Pakistan's consul general in Zahedan, and other senior officials of Sistan-Baluchestan province took part in the meeting.

Such joint meetings are held to pave the way for reviewing obstacles, removing barriers, and developing trade and economic relations be-

tween the two friendly and neighboring countries.

The two sides make the necessary coordination to help improve trade and economic ties, exchange economic delegations, organize joint exhibitions, attract bilateral investment, and establish joint industrial centers and retail markets.

The head of the Pakistani delegation to the 11th meeting of the Joint Border Trade Committee said that Islamabad strongly supports the development of joint markets and investment, which can increase the level of trust between the two nations.

Irfan Javed added that Pakistan also calls for cooperation in the field of transportation because it can affect the livelihood of the people who are living in border regions.

The deputy coordinator of economic affairs of Sistan-Baluchestan governor's office said that Iran is keen on expanding trade exchanges with Pakistan.

Davoud Shahraki added that the relationship between the two countries is historic and long-standing.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government has been pursuing in recent years.

Iran shares land or water borders with 15 countries namely UAE, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Victory on the 470th day

Ceasefire goes into effect as Hamas and Israel exchange prisoners

Palestinian prisoners walk free from Israeli jails

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - The initiation of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas clearly indicates that the regime's war ambitions in Gaza have gone down in flames.

The ceasefire went into effect on Sunday following 470 days of relentless Israeli strikes in the besieged Palestinian territory.

It was implemented after a delay of almost three hours during which Israeli forces killed nearly 20 Palestinians and injured dozens of others.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had earlier accused Hamas of not living up to its commitment to provide the names of the three captives who were set to be freed in exchange for dozens of Palestinian prisoners.



Palestinians celebrate the ceasefire announcement as Israeli leaders gnash their teeth over their army's failures in the Gaza war.

to 18,000 children. Over 110,000 Palestinians were also injured during the course of the war.

The fatalities are believed to be higher than the figures announced



Palestinians in Gaza stick together through thick and thin forcing Israel to throw in the towel and acquiesce to a ceasefire.

Later on Sunday, Hamas released the three captives as 90 Palestinian prisoners walked free from Israeli jails.

The truce will be implemented in three phases. The six-week initial phase includes the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from central Gaza and the return of displaced Palestinians to northern Gaza.

The deal should ultimately lead to the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, alongside the release of captives in return for the freedom of hundreds of Palestinians from the regime's jails. The agreement is also anticipated to result in a surge of humanitarian aid to the enclave.

Since launching its war of genocide on Gaza on October 7, 2023, Netanyahu had repeatedly promised to destroy Hamas and secure the release of captives. However, the Israeli army failed to do so after more than 15 months of war that claimed the lives of more than 46,900 Palestinians, including up

by the Health Ministry in Gaza. This is because thousands of missing Palestinians are trapped beneath the rubble of destroyed buildings and buried in unmarked graves.

Israel committed back-to-back massacres in Gaza. It not only pounded civilian infrastructure but also bombed and stormed hospitals where patients and displaced people had taken refuge.

The regime also stands accused of starving Palestinians to death by obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, particularly to the north of the enclave.

The Israeli war of genocide began shortly after Hamas carried out a surprise military operation in southern Israel dubbed the Al-Aqsa Storm. More than 1,100 people were killed and about 250 others were taken captive during the operation. All the remaining captives held in Gaza will be freed if Israel complies with the terms of the ceasefire.

Israel threw in the towel by agreeing to the truce after its

dreams of defeating Hamas turned into a nightmare.

On Friday, an Israeli tank acknowledged that Netanyahu and his allies have shot themselves in the foot by prolonging the war. "The implications of the agreement (ceasefire) are clear: Israel will not bring about the 'collapse' of Hamas because it has never been able to do so," the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) said.

It noted that Netanyahu prolonged the Gaza war for "personal survival and short-sightedness," which "has cost the lives of more Israelis soldiers and more captives". More than 800 Israeli troops have been killed since the Al-Aqsa Storm was launched. This includes 400 soldiers who lost their lives since the Israeli army began a ground incursion into Gaza in late October 2023.

The INSS also admitted that Is-

domestic rifts.

Protests against Netanyahu's failed military strategy in Gaza had become a regular occurrence in Israeli cities since the onset of the onslaught.

The abortive military actions also led to high-profile resignations among Israeli military and security officials.

Netanyahu accepted the ceasefire because he had no other option as people in Gaza stuck together through thick and thin.

Nonetheless, Netanyahu's hardline allies gnashed their teeth about his decision to acquiesce to the truce agreement.

On Sunday, far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir resigned from Netanyahu's coalition cabinet, along with other members of his party, as the ceasefire took effect.

Otzma Yehudit party had already threatened to bolt the coalition if Israel agreed to the truce deal with Hamas.

The party said the ceasefire agreement amounts to "a surrender" to Hamas and constitutes a "complete victory" for the group.

Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu is among those who submitted his resignation.

Eliyahu had said in November 2023 that one of Israel's options in the war against Hamas could be to drop a nuclear bomb on the Gaza Strip.

Neither the threat of nuking Gaza



Ben Gvir's Otzma Yehudit bolts Bibi's coalition: Ceasefire is a "completer victory" for Hamas and "a surrender" to the Palestinian group.

raeli crimes in Gaza have deepened the regime's international isolation.

In addition to seeing a substantial erosion of its international standing, Israel's inability to meet its war objectives has deepened

nor conducting brutal strikes could bring Palestinians to their knees.

Presently, Israel's military failure in the Gaza war is the elephant in the room which has pit the regime's officials against each other.

New Damascus rulers' passivity has strengthened

Israel's covetous eye on Syria

From page 1 ▶ The new government in Syria, a mix of armed groups that battled the former Syrian Arab Army, has shown little appetite to issue statements to condemn Israel's expanding occupation and aggression in Syria, let alone resist the occupiers.

That has raised major question marks about Israel's long-term intentions. Apart from capturing the entire Golan Heights and expanding its occupation to southern parts of Syria, the Israeli regime is looking to consolidate and prolong its grip on the Syrian territory.

This is while Israel has maintained an aggressive military posture bombing 80% of Syrian military assets. The prolonged instability in Syria has aligned with Israeli interests to ensure

the Arab state remains fragmented and unable to pose a threat to Tel Aviv or support the resistance groups against the regime.

Israel seeks to exploit a much weaker Syria after the fall of Assad. The regime also seeks to expand its goal of regional insecurity, using Syrian land as a hub, something consecutive Israeli governments had only dreamt of.

Another objective for Israel is to expand settlements in the Golan. The absence of a strong central Syrian authority has provided the regime with an opportunity to accelerate settlement construction in the occupied Golan Heights.

By integrating the Golan further into Israeli economy and infrastructure, Israel could solidify

its de facto control, making any future negotiation over the territory increasingly difficult.

Without a unified government in Damascus to resist the ever-growing occupation, the Israelis could exploit a weaker Syria to strengthen its deterrence strategy and expand its military footprint, not only in the Golan but potentially in other strategically important areas in southern Syria.

Israeli ambitions in Syria are also shaped by the positions of its staunchest ally, Washington. The United States has historically supported illegal Israeli actions in Syria.

Washington's recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights further emboldens Israeli plans to entrench its occupation and further destabilize the region.

Gaza Media Office: Israel unable to break the will of Palestinian resistance

TEHRAN- The head of the Government Media Office in Gaza says the ceasefire agreement that took effect between Israel and Hamas on Sunday represents a triumph for the Palestinian people.

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, Ismail Althwabta said the Palestinian resistance forced Israel

to sign the truce deal.

"This ceasefire deal amounts to a victory for Palestinian people because it underscores Israel's failure to control Gaza and break the will of the resistance," he said.

Althwabta touched upon Israel's crimes in the course of the war

in Gaza, in particular against the media corps. Israel has killed 214 journalists during its brutal attacks against the Gaza Strip since October 2023.

"Official grievances have been lodged against the Zionist regime concerning its crimes against journalists. These complaints will be

submitted to international courts to ensure that the occupying regime is held accountable for its blatant violations of media freedom," Althwabta said. Reporters Without Borders has described Israel's violence against journalists in Gaza as "flagrant examples of war crimes."

Thanks to Gen. Soleimani, Gaza emerges victorious

From page 1 ▶ the Revolutionary Guards, and the al-Quds Force all stand with our people with everything they possess, in defense of al-Quds so that it remains the State of Palestine's capital. He clearly stated that all our capabilities and potential are at your disposal in defense of al-Quds. Soleimani did not stipulate or ask for anything in return," affirmed Martyr Yahya al-Sinwar, who met Gen. Soleimani in Tehran

Gen. Soleimani addressed Martyr al-Sinwar: "I love Palestine. I love al-Quds. I love everything that would enhance the steadfastness of the Palestinian people."

Despite the comprehensive siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, Gen. Soleimani was determined to train its resistance forces on how to manufacture long-range missiles,

asserted Ziad al-Nakhalah, the Islamic Jihad secretary general.

"In person, Martyr Soleimani supervised and managed the procedures of smuggling the missiles. He toured between more than one country to convince them to approve the procedure. He traveled to Sudan to conclude with the concerned parties an agreement that facilitated it. Transporting the missiles has been a complex matter - almost miraculous - as it has required crossing vast geographical areas - by land and sea - to reach Gaza," Al-Nakhalah has acknowledged.

In this regard, Al-Nakhalah states, "All classical weapons and long-range missiles have reached Gaza through Martyr Qassem Soleimani. In 2012, and despite the war, we obtained the Kornet missiles."

For his part, Abu Hamza, spokesman for the al-Quds Brigades, points out that - for two decades - Martyr Soleimani "has overseen Iran's direct support for Palestine, and the transfer of military and security expertise to its Mujahideen."

Khaled al-Qaddoumi, Hamas' representative in Iran, says Gen. Soleimani "was not only a firm believer but also a distinguished figure on the military and political levels, as he helped the Palestinian resistance in various aspects. One of his most important contributions to the Palestinian Resistance, in addition to transferring weapons, was strengthening it in the military field."

Gen. Soleimani obviously helped enable the



Palestinian resistance to dig tunnel networks, according to Ahmed Abdul-Hadi, Hamas' representative in Lebanon.

"The idea of the tunnels has been basically proposed by two people, Martyr commander Imad Mughniyeh and Martyr Hajj Qassem Soleimani," Abdul-Hadi states, adding, "Martyr Soleimani visited Gaza more than once to participate in the defense plans."

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Mansour Haqiqatpour, Gen. Soleimani's former assistant, confirms that the Gaza tunnels will remain a nightmare for the occupation regime because Gen. Soleimani had already taken into consideration various emergency scenarios and potential challenges.

Haqiqatpour reveals that Commander Soleimani planned with the resistance in Gaza to dig tunnels extending over an area of 400 Km² under an area of roughly 40 Km².

On January 1, 2024, Osama Hamdan, a Hamas prominent leader, further reiterated "Martyr Soleimani's tangible role in the ongoing battle [Operation Al-Aqsa Flood]."

Based on multiple testimonies he has repeatedly received from the Palestinian Resistance's leading figures, Sayyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has often highlighted Gen. Soleimani's pro-Palestine unwavering efforts.

The Leader stresses that Gen. Soleimani "provided the Palestinians with all their military needs, doing everything that would help a very tiny area like the Gaza Strip confront the Zionist entity, despite all its arrogant claims. Thanks to what Hajj Qassem Soleimani has done, calamities befell the Zionists, prompting them - only after 48 hours - to seek a ceasefire."

'Bye Genocide Joe': Social media reflects on Biden's legacy on Gaza

As Joseph Biden's US presidency comes to an end, many on social media this week are saying that his legacy boils down to one thing: his active role in Israel's fifteen-month war on Gaza, which has been widely defined as a "genocide" by human rights organizations, international bodies and scholars.

Biden's last day as president, on 19 January, was also the first day of the planned Israel-Hamas ceasefire deal that was reportedly pushed to the finish line by the administration of President-elect Donald Trump, though both Biden and Trump took credit for the deal.

This has raised more significant criticism of Biden's role in Israel's bombing campaign on Gaza, with the US providing \$17.9bn in military aid since 7 October 2023 after the Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel and the subsequent war.

His unflinching support for Israel led to the infamous nickname given by pro-Palestine and social media users: "Genocide Joe".

"Everything that's happening now with the ceasefire negotiations is only further revealing how Biden could've stopped this genocide from day 1 by exerting proper pressure and refusing to send bombs and billions of dollars

unconditionally," Palestinian-American imam Dr Omar Suleiman wrote on X. "Your legacy is genocide @POTUS."

In an interview covering the last four years, Biden spoke about his first conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the attack on Israel, saying that he told Netanyahu "[he] can't carpet bombing these communities", to which Netanyahu pointed his finger back at the United States for carpet bombing areas during World War II.

Many responded to the interview online, saying that they saw this as an admission of Biden knowing he was funding what international courts are calling war crimes.

A common sentiment that has been echoed online is that Biden may have a legacy that is just as stained as that of George W Bush - whose war on Iraq caused a reported death toll of one million Iraqis.

"The Biden administration's foreign policy legacy will likely stand as one of the worst in decades, in competition with George W Bush for making the world a more dangerous place for both American interests and American values," one account posted on X.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Pope calls for Gaza ceasefire to be 'immediately respected'

Pope Francis called Sunday for a ceasefire in Gaza to be "immediately respected" as he thanked mediators and urged a boost in humanitarian aid as well as the return of hostages.

"I hope... it will be respected immediately by the parties," Francis said at the end of the Angelus prayer, adding that he expressed "gratitude to the mediators" of the deal.

Minister hails Tajikistan's enduring love for Iran and Persian language



TEHRAN – The Iranian tourism minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri has said he feels proud of the Tajik people's unwavering love for Iran and the Persian language.

"Over the years of my service in the government, I have traveled to many countries. However, my trip to Tajikistan was different and exceptionally sweet for many reasons."

In a recent note published in Persian on Sunday, the minister also wrote about initiatives taken to boost tourism and cultural ties between the two nations.

Salehi Amiri's note refers to his recent visit to Tajikistan, which hosted cultural and economic delegations headed by the Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian as well.

An English translation of the minister's note is given below:

From the moment I arrived in Tajikistan, both I and my fellow travelers felt a deep sense of pride due to the Tajik people's unwavering love for Iran and the Persian language. From their beautiful Persian dialect to the streets' names and statues of great figures of Iran's rich cultural heritage that adorn every corner, everything moved anyone who holds Iranian culture and civilization dear.

During this trip, I realized that it's no coincidence that we call the borders of a land "Qalamru" (domain) in Persian. Indeed, unlike other countries and civilizations, we Persian speakers consider the borders of our civilization not by the extent of our rule, but by where our language is heard and where it flows through the daily lives of its people.

If we understand this, we will understand why, amidst the tragic news of wars and conflicts around the world, the poetry reading event between the Presidents of Iran and Tajikistan during this very trip suddenly captured the attention of millions of Persian speakers with diverse political and ideological inclinations on social media.

Therefore, I believe that despite the challenges of the past few years, this shared history and identity have kept the Persian-speaking countries together. This rich cultural and historical asset presents an unparalleled opportunity for us, the officials, to expand relations between the two nations and make the best use of our capacities to strengthen one another and promote enduring economic cooperation. On the other hand, neglecting this shared history and identity

will lead to the estrangement of our two nations, resulting not only in cultural losses but also in depriving our people of abundant economic opportunities.

In line with this strategy, the President of Iran and the government decided before this trip to lift the visa requirements for all Tajik citizens to facilitate the expansion of bilateral relations. This constructive measure was highly appreciated by the Tajik government, and President [Emomali] Rahmon of Tajikistan, in the presence of Dr. Pezeshkian, announced the decision of his government to waive visas for Iranians and invited all Iranian people to visit Tajikistan.

With this important achievement in mind, my colleagues and I at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts set objectives for this trip. Based on this, during meetings with the Culture Minister of Tajikistan, we signed memoranda of understanding aimed at increasing the number of tourists between our two countries from 8,000 to 100,000.

In addition, in two meetings with the Tajik Minister of Culture, we reached an agreement to hold joint festivals based on our shared historical rituals, such as Nowruz, and we decided to cooperate in the restoration and preservation of Tajikistan's historical and archaeological sites.

Another positive outcome of this trip was the reopening of the Persian Language Research Institute in Tajikistan, which had been closed for seven years due to political reasons. Many prominent scholars from both countries had deeply regretted the closure of this institute.

To conclude, the sweet experiences of this memorable trip are so numerous that, as the beloved Hafez said, "It is impossible to recount them in one letter." However, I ask you, dear readers of this note, to view this account with a cultural perspective, rather than the usual administrative reports. As I mentioned at the beginning of this note, I see the outcomes of this trip in a very different light, and I am certain that if we pursue the signed agreements, a new horizon will open for both the Iranian and Tajik peoples. Once again, as inhabitants of the Persian language domain, we can celebrate the expansion of our shared cultural history together.

The recent Thai International Travel Fair 2025 saw participants from more than 500 worldwide tourism-related enterprises. China is invited as the guest country of honor to the fair as Thailand and China celebrate their 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

"There are various booths from famous tourism destinations in China during the fair, which help us preview and plan our trip. It's a fantastic experience. You can even try some local food and see handicrafts before you go," said Nam Sitanant, a 51-year-old Thai resident.

She has been to China twice and vis-

ited the capital city, Beijing, as well as Southwest Yunnan province. "Those two places impressed me a lot with totally different cultures and landscapes. As China and Thailand are close neighbors, I hope to explore the country more," she said.

China was the top source of foreign tourists to Thailand last year, with a total of more than 6.73 million arrivals and a total revenue of 378 billion baht (\$10.93 billion), according to statistics from the Thai tourism authorities.

"The same growing trend has also been witnessed in terms of Thai tourists who visited China over the past

year. Iran is now one of the most popular travel destinations among Thais," said Han Zhiqiang, the Chinese ambassador to Thailand.

In the past year, China has fully optimized its visa policies for foreign tourists. A variety of convenient measures have been introduced to facilitate travel to China. So far, China has implemented full visa exemptions with 25 countries, is trialling unilateral visa exemptions with 38 countries, and has transit visa exemptions with 54 countries.

Significant surge

At the end of last year, the Ministry

Amir Chakhmaq complex: a glorious jewel of Yazd

TEHRAN – The Amir Chakhmaq complex, located in the heart of Yazd, a UNESCO-registered city in central Iran, stands as a magnificent symbol of architectural grandeur, cultural heritage, and historical significance.

This magnificent complex, featuring a square surrounded by ancient structures, has long been a center of social gatherings and celebrations, making it a must-visit destination for both locals and tourists.

The Amir Chakhmaq Square and its associated structures were initially built during the Timurid era by Amir Jalal Addin Chakhmaq, the ruler of Yazd, with the invaluable support of his wife, Seti-Fatemeh Khatoon. That initial establishment transformed the area into a cultural and spiritual hub. Over the centuries, additional features were added, and renovations carried out to preserve its charm and functionality. Today, it shines as a vibrant symbol of Yazd's rich history and attracts countless visitors each year. Here are glimpses of key attractions within the complex:

Amir Chakhmaq Mosque

Known as the New Jame Mosque, this is the oldest and one of the most significant structures in the square. It is renowned for its stunning Persian and Islamic architecture, which includes intricate mosaic inscriptions, brick artistry, fretwork, arabesque patterns, and Quranic carvings.

The mosque stands as a testament to the artistic and religious heritage of Yazd and is considered the second most important mosque in the city after the centuries-old Jame Mosque of Yazd.

Amir Chakhmaq Tekyeh

The Tekyeh, a structure with multiple rooms, was historically used for religious rituals and gatherings. Some rooms were reserved for the city's rulers and women.

The iconic minarets of the Tekyeh



once served as platforms for the Islamic call to prayer (Azan), adding a spiritual dimension to its architectural beauty.

Bazaar of Haji Ghanbar

This bustling bazaar is a cornerstone of Yazd's economic and cultural life. Divided into two parts during the Pahlavi era, the bazaar remains a vibrant center for commerce, offering fabrics, sweets, gold, carpets, and more.

The oldest section, Haji Ghanbar Bazaar, is said to date back to the 9th century of the Islamic calendar and preserves Yazd's traditional craftsmanship, including sesame sweets and naturally dyed fabrics.

Amir Chakhmaq's historical Nakhl

The historical Nakhl, located on the eastern side of the square, is a 450-year-old wooden structure resembling a cypress tree.

This giant symbolic coffin is used during the Muharram rituals in an event called Nakhl Gardani, a tradition that honors the martyrs of Karbala. The Nakhl is intricately carved and holds a special place in the hearts of Yazd's residents.

Seti-Fatemeh Khatoon mausoleum

The mausoleum of Seti Fatemeh

Khatoon, the wife of Amir Chakhmaq, is another remarkable structure within the complex.

Its green-tiled dome and stunning interior design, adorned with mosaics and muqarnas on a stucco background, make it a site of both historical and aesthetic significance.

Water storage

The complex once had three gigantic water reservoirs, of which only two remain today.

These structures played a vital role in Yazd's water management system until modern piping was introduced about 40 years ago.

Other features

The complex also boasts nearby public baths, caravansaries, fountains, and a pond. In recent years, graves of unknown martyrs from the Holy Defense have been added, lending the square a solemn and spiritual atmosphere.

Amir Chakhmaq Complex is more than a historical site; it is a living testament to the rich cultural and architectural legacy of Yazd. Its intricate designs, vibrant bazaar, and spiritual elements combine to create a unique experience for visitors.

A UNESCO-listed destination

In July 2017, the historical core

of Yazd, the provincial capital, was named a UNESCO World Heritage site. Yazd is regularly referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a "don't miss" destination by almost all of its visitors. The city is full of mud-brick houses that are equipped with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

Cultural heritage experts believe that Yazd is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center. Furthermore, the use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs through the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

The historical core of Yazd is chockfull of mudbrick houses, bazaars, public bathhouses, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples, and centuries-old gardens. From the divine point of view, the city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

Yazd is home to numerous qanats which have supplied water to agricultural and permanent settlements for thousands of years. The man-carved underground qanat system relies on snow-fed streams flowing down the foothills of surrounding mountains. The earliest water supply to Yazd is estimated to date from the Sassanid era (224 to 651 CE). However, many others have been continually repaired and used over time, and most surviving Ab-Anbars (traditional mudbrick cisterns) can today be traced to the late Safavid and Qajar periods.

UNESCO-registered Rabab instrument rooted in Eastern Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan, official says

TEHRAN — The head of the Department for Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Alireza Izadi, has emphasized that the Rabab, a traditional musical instrument, has ancient and valuable roots in the eastern part of Iran, particularly in Sistan-Baluchestan province.

Speaking at a recent event, Izadi highlighted the upcoming National Council for Intangible Heritage registration meeting, which will be hosted by the Ministry's Sistan-Baluchestan branch in Chabahar. He praised the efforts of local officials in organizing the event.

One of the main objectives of the gathering, he explained, was to celebrate and unveil UNESCO's certificate of recognition for the Rabab, which was officially recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage element in a session held in Paraguay earlier this year.

The Rabab, with its deep cultural significance, has long been a vital part of the region's heritage. According to Izadi, its rich history can be traced back to the Sistan-Baluchestan province and the Baluch ethnic community, which has preserved the instrument's unique craft and performance methods over generations.

The inclusion of the Rabab on the UNESCO list was a joint effort between Iran, Af-



ghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan as the two nations share a common tradition in the instrument's construction and playing techniques.

Izadi noted that the recognition of the Rabab as a world heritage element not only highlights the region's rich musical traditions but also serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving such cultural treasures. He emphasized the role of cultural heritage in promoting tourism and spreading the deep-rooted values and ancient music of Sistan-Baluchestan to the world.

Known for its deep, resonant tones, the Rabab is commonly played during significant events such as weddings, funerals, social

gatherings, and ritual healings. It also plays a prominent role in orchestral and contemporary music, often featured in multinational ensembles.

The UN cultural body also praised the art of crafting and playing the Rabab for its role in fostering cultural and social cohesion across borders, particularly within migrant communities. "The Rabab has been a bridge for cultural exchanges and solidarity, linking traditions across borders," stated UNESCO.

The Rabab's craft involves a combination of carpentry, woodcarving, marquetry, and inlay work, typically passed down through generations as a family tradition. The craft is predominantly male, while playing the instrument is open to people of all genders, ages, and ethnicities. The Rabab is also deeply woven into the fabric of local literature, with many poems and myths associated with it, often shared by elders during community gatherings.

The Rabab's influence extends beyond the region as well. It is believed to have reached Europe through two main routes: a pear-shaped variety adopted in the Byzantine Empire in the 9th century, which evolved into the medieval lira, and a boat-shaped variety brought to Spain by the Arabs in the 11th century, which influenced the rebec in Europe.

China's charm showcased in travel fair

of Culture and Tourism of China announced a significant surge in inbound tourism, with the total number of inbound tourists reaching 94.62 million in the first three quarters of 2024, marking a 78.8 percent increase year-on-year.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the fair, Han revealed that the number of Thai tourists who traveled to China in the first three quarters of this year had nearly tripled compared to the same period in 2023.

"The mutual exchanges between the peoples of China and Thailand have injected vitality into both the social and

economic development of the two nations, driving the construction of a China-Thailand community with a shared future," Han said.

Organized by the Thai Travel Agents Association, or TTAA, the four-day fair gathered 12 Chinese airlines, several financial institutions such as Union-Pay, and also tourism service providers from six provincial areas, offering the latest high-quality tourism products, services, as well as presenting excellent travel routes to overseas travelers.

Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand Thapanee Kiatphaibool said Thailand has been recognized as one

of the world's top travel destinations. With the participation of Chinese representatives, this year's fair will help to boost exchanges and cooperation worldwide.

Charoen Wangananont, president of TTAA, said the participation of various Chinese enterprises reflected the long and historical friendship between China and Thailand. He estimated that the fair will attract more than 300,000 visitors, bringing a total of \$9 million.

(Source: The Nation)

Iran, Russia to foster health ties under strategic partnership

TEHRAN –The Treaty on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Russia and Iran covers several core areas including the health sector.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Russian President Vladimir Putin inked the agreement during an official signing ceremony in Moscow on Friday.

The two countries will boost collaborations on organizing state-run health system and managing activities in the health sector, preventing and treating communicable and non-communicable diseases, protecting mother and child health, establishing state regulations on distributing medicines and medical devices, promoting a healthy lifestyle, conducting medical researches, utilizing digital technologies in the healthcare system, and providing professional training to health experts, health ministry website reported.

The two countries will also strengthen cooperation in the fields of food hygiene, healthcare security, and epidemiology based on national laws and policies for the prevention and control of communicable diseases complying with international treaties.

The two sides will also enhance long-term and constructive relations in higher education, science, technology, and innovation; implement joint scientific and technical projects, and develop interactions



among interested educational and scientific institutions.

Exchanging professors and students, sharing scientific and technical knowledge, scientific literature, periodicals, and bibliographies, as well as holding joint conferences, meetings, and exhibitions were among other parts of the agreement.

Cooperation in medical equipment sector

In May 2024, Iran and Russia agreed to enhance their cooperation by conducting joint projects in the medical equipment sector.

A delegation of Russian officials visited the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology this morning to discuss potential ways to strengthen the cooperation, IRNA reported.

The Russian delegation expressed interest in collaborating with Iran on technology commercialization of knowledge-based products in the field of medical equipment.

During the meeting, the deputy science minister, Hassan Zamanian, for his part, highlighted the positive relationship between Iran and Russia, stating, "With the establishment of the international science and technology Park, Iran has succeeded in boosting collaborations with various countries, particularly Iran's neighbors, including Russia, through fruitful interactions and technology exchanges," Zamanian added.

Referring to the establishment of the Medicinal Chemistry Research Institute, the official elaborated on the capabilities and future plans of

the organization in producing medical equipment and rare medicines, as well as the commercialization of manufactured products.

Visiting prominent projects in the field of medical equipment, such as manufacturing dialysis machines, portable laboratories, and angiography equipment at the Electrical and Electronics Research Institute, the delegation gained insight into the scientific capabilities of the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technology and International Science and Technology Park.

In initial negotiations, the Russian officials asked for the implementation of similar projects in Russia.

Both sides have already made agreements for the implementation of joint projects as well as the establishment of related companies from each country in the respective international technology parks.

On March 1, a comprehensive document between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation was signed by Deputy Health Minister Mohammad-Hossein Niknam and his Russian counterpart Sergei Glagolev.

The agreement was signed on Friday, during the closing ceremony of the 17th Joint Economic Committee meeting which was held in Tehran.

The memorandum of understanding was compiled following several rounds of technical negotiations between the ministries of health of the two countries.

Iran ranks third in traditional medicine trials in ICTRP

TEHRAN – According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), Iran ranks third in traditional medicine trials in the International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP), highlighting the country's status as one of the world's pioneers in traditional and complementary medicine.

China and India rank first and second, respectively, the health ministry's website reported.

The share of clinical trials in traditional and complementary medicine in Iran makes up about three percent of all clinical trials registered in the country, while just about 0.3 percent of the healthcare staff are experts in traditional and complementary medicine. The report shows the high capacity of Iranian researchers to move towards evidence-based medicine.

Intl. Symposium on traditional, complementary medicine

The international symposium on the policy, legacy, and regulatory landscape of traditional and complementary medicine was held from November 21 to 23, 2024 in Tehran.

The symposium was held in person and online. By holding five specialized panels, the event served as a platform where experts from different Asian, European, American, and African countries discussed their views on traditional medicine.

Training and higher education in traditional and complementary medicine; integration of traditional and complementary medicine in the health care system; and laws and regulations in standardization and provision of traditional and natural products were among the main topics of



the event.

The event provided a platform to boost communications, discuss, and share global experiences on traditional medicine laying the ground for integrating traditional and complementary medicine into the healthcare system, the health ministry website reported.

"It is essential to establish and implement policies, regulations, and legislations to be able to integrate traditional and complementary into the healthcare system," the health ministry's website quoted Arman Zargar, an advisor to the traditional medicine office at the Ministry of Health, as saying.

The symposium can help figure out the best strategies to address challenges in integrating traditional medicine into the healthcare system, as well as ways to expand it, he further noted.

Health maintenance, disease prevention

Iranian traditional medicine strongly focuses on prioritizing health maintenance and disease prevention over treatment.

It is one of the most ancient forms of traditional medicine. It is grounded in the concept of four senses of humor: phlegm (Balgham), blood (Dam), yellow bile (Safra), and black bile (Sauda'). The concept of the four senses of humor is based on the teachings of Rhazes and Avicenna in an elaborate medical system.

So far, about 30,000 plant species have been identified in the world, with Iran's share of about 8,000 species which is more than the whole of species found in Europe.

Around 500 Persian medicine experts are providing health and medical treatment services across the country.

More than 1,000 general practitioners who have passed the Persian medicine courses approved by the health ministry are also offering services, Mehr news agency quoted Nafiseh Hosseini-Yekta, the director of the health ministry's Persian medicine office, as saying.

Currently, nine faculties of Persian medicine enroll students in the country's universities, she added.

Training Persian medicine experts has always been at the top of the Persian medicine office's agenda. Therefore, different skill courses have been developed and held under the supervision of the health ministry.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Special plan prepared to attract overseas Iranian researchers

The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has prepared a special plan to attract scientists and researchers living abroad, IRNA news agency reported on Saturday.

The project aims to promote "supporting technological activities and startups", "postdoctoral facilities", "supporting employment in innovation centers and accelerators as a trainer and consultant", "providing facilities for opportunity studies", "providing housing facilities", "supporting employment in reputable domestic companies", "support for lectures and specialized workshops" and "support for cooperation as invited and appointed professors".

It is estimated that about one percent of all Iranian students are studying abroad, which is not above the international average of around 3 percent.

طرح ویژه برای جذب پژوهشگران ایرانی مقیم خارج

جذب محققان و پژوهشگران خارج از کشور یکی از اولویتهای کشور محسوب می‌شود و در این راستا معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری طرحی ویژه پیشنهاد کرده است.

به گزارش ایرنا، معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری، این طرح شامل «حمایت از فعالیت‌های فناورانه و ایجاد شرکت‌های نوپا»، «تسهیلات پسا دکتری»، «حمایت از اشتغال در مراکز نوآوری و شتابدهنده‌ها به عنوان مربی و مشاور»، «تسهیلات دوره فرصت مطالعاتی»، «تسهیلات مسکن»، «حمایت از اشتغال در شرکت‌های معتبر داخلی»، «حمایت از برگزاری سخنرانی و کارگاه‌های تخصصی» و «حمایت از همکاری به عنوان اساتید مدعو و معین» است.

بر اساس برآوردها نزدیک یک درصد از کل مجموع دانشجویان ایرانی در خارج از کشور تحصیل می‌کنند. این رقم در مقایسه با میانگین بین‌المللی که حدود ۳ درصد است، رقم بالایی محسوب نمی‌شود.

Tehran, Baghdad ink action plan for scientific cooperation

TEHRAN –Iran and Iraq have signed an action plan to give a boost to their scientific collaborations.

The MOU was signed by Omid Rezaei-Far, an official with the Ministry of Science, and Haider Abd Dahed, Iraqi deputy Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, on the first day of the second Iran, Iraq Science Week, being held in the city of Karbala, Iraq, IRNA reported.

The second Iran-Iraq Science Week is being held in the city of Karbala, Iraq. The scientific event started on Saturday and will conclude on Monday.

The joint scientific programs have been developed to focus on different aspects including boosting cooperation on granting scholarships for graduate and postgraduate education, particularly within a framework titled 'study in Iraq'.

It also involves holding training courses for professors and students; promoting cooperation on joint scientific supervision; exchanging professors to conduct scientific research, and present talks in different technical fields, and establishing science technology parks in Iraq collaboratively under the management of the Higher Education and Scientific Research of Iraq.

Granting 200 scholarships for Iraqi students early

Saeed Habiba, deputy minister of science, research, and technology, has announced the country's readiness to grant 200 scholarships to the Iraqi Ministry of Science.

"Promoting joint activities, and creating equal opportunities for scientific, and cultural development of the two countries are among our top policies," the official highlighted.

He made the remarks while addressing the second Iran, Iraq Science Week.

The second Iran, Iraq Science Week 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.

"To attract more Iraqi students, we are also planning to develop virtual, as well as hybrid learning platforms," Habiba added.

Referring to the problems faced by Iraqi students in Iran, Habiba said, "we are doing our best to address these problems and improve the educational conditions for the students of the two countries. We are committed to develop infrastructure, facilitate the processes, and meet existing challenges."

The official went on to say that the two countries are planning to develop joint fields of study, requiring students to participate in an educational program that will run both in Iran and Iraq.

Baghdad calls for joint educational programs with Tehran

On January 17, Iraqi Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Naeem Al-Aboudi, 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, 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.

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.

On January 14, Al-Aboudi, in a meeting with Simaei-Sarraf, announced Iraq's interest in benefiting from Iran's experience and knowledge in establishing science and technology parks.

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

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

The official highlighted that scientific cooperation between Iran and Iraq should be on par with political and cultural relations.

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

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

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

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

First Science Week

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

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

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

Dahed, who headed the delegation of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, said that the science week between the two countries summarizes the level of understanding and coordination resulting from the agreement between the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology in the Islamic Republic of Iran and completes the dialogues that took place in Baghdad, the University of Baghdad's website reported.



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JANUARY 20, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Be afraid of nothing but sins.
Prophet Muhammad (S)

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

Resistance Film Festival to present selected works worldwide

TEHRAN- The 18th edition of the Resistance International Film Festival is set to showcase selected works from multiple countries around the world, the head of the festival's International Committee, Esrafil Kaliji has announced.

Kaliji emphasized the significance of international screenings in conveying the festival's message. "These events can help cultivate solidarity among freedom-loving nations in support of the resistance front," he stated on Sunday.

He also stressed the pivotal role of international artists in the festival's mission, asserting, "Artists hold a vital position in articulating the significant value of resistance and advocating for the oppressed, particularly the people of Palestine and other marginalized groups around the globe."

"Through our International Committee, we aspire to harness the talents of open-minded artists everywhere, employing the medium of art to convey the vital message of resistance against oppression and crimes, while striving for lasting peace," he mentioned.

Earlier this month, Kaliji stated: "Our primary concern is currently the people of Palestine, who embody the concept of resistance and stand as a showcase of rights against tyranny."

"At the 18th edition of the festival, we must focus on the theme of intelligent resistance, which reflects a lifestyle of standing against oppression and pursuing sustainable peace," he added.

He mentioned that this year alone, the festival has received collaboration requests from around 30 countries, and around 18 thematic sections for nations are being created for the event.

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

Thus, the Resistance Film Festival serves as a platform for all those passionate about the resistance cause, he concluded.

The Association of the Revolution and Sacred Defense Cinema and the Revayat Foundation organize Resistance International Film Festival annually.

The 18th International Resistance Film Festival is a vital platform for the promotion and dissemination of cinematic works that embody the spirit of resistance against injustice, oppression, and inequality.

Book about ethical vegetarianism published in Persian

TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the book "Dialogues on Ethical Vegetarianism" written by Michael Huemer has been released in the bookstores across Iran.

Mohsen Eslami and Marzieh Khakbaz have translated the book that has been published by Now Publications, Mehr reported.

In this book, originally published in 2019, two philosophy students, M, a meat-eater, and V, an ethical vegetarian, discuss the ethics of meat consumption.

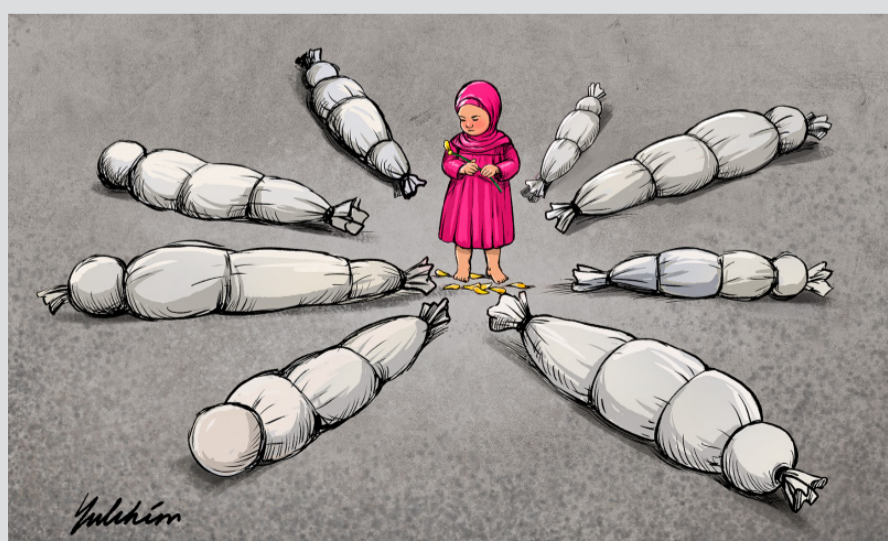
Standard arguments on both sides are reviewed, with emphasis on the argument that meat-consumption is wrong because it supports extreme cruelty. M and V also address such questions as how conflicting intuitions ought to be weighed, whether meat-eating is comparable to participat-

ing in a holocaust, why ethical arguments often fail to change our behavior even when they change our beliefs, and how an ethical vegetarian morally ought to interact with non-vegetarians.

The issues they cover also include: how intelligence affects the badness of pain, whether farm animals are better off living on factory farms than not existing at all, whether meat-eating is natural, whether morality protects those who cannot understand morality, whether morality protects those who are not members of society, whether humans alone possess souls, whether different creatures have different degrees of consciousness, and the role of empathy in moral judgment.

The two students go on to discuss the vegan life, why people who accept the arguments in favor of veganism often fail to change their behavior, and how vegans should interact with non-vegans.

Cartoon of Day



One Petal, One Life
Cartoonist: Muzaffar Yulchiboev from Uzbekistan

Doc on Turkish doctor in Gaza premieres in Tehran

TEHRAN- "Dr. Taner," a documentary featuring Turkish physician Taner Kamaci, a pediatric surgery specialist volunteering in Gaza, premiered at Tehran's Palestine Café on Saturday, coinciding with Gaza Day.

The screening was attended by a group of Palestinian solidarity activists, artists, and Dr. Taner Kamaci himself, Mehr reported.

Directed by Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Majidpour, the documentary chronicles the life and humanitarian efforts of Taner Kamaci, who traveled to Gaza with a team of international doctors following the events of October 7, encountering a series of challenging experiences along the way.

Following the screening of the film, Kamaci, who was viewing the film for the first time, expressed gratitude to those involved in the film's production.

He emphasized that the people of Gaza and Palestine have shown the world that for over 75 years, the Jewish community has been hiding behind a false mask.

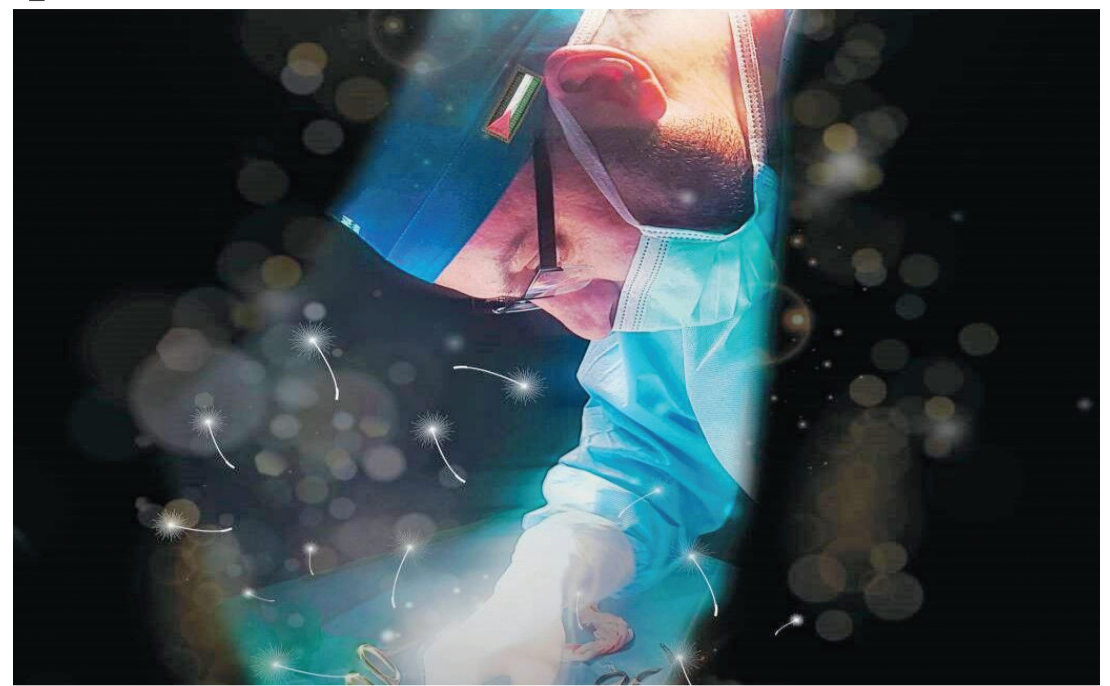
He stated that the war in Gaza is unfolding before the eyes of the world, and the injustices and hardships faced by the people of Gaza have been witnessed by the majority worldwide.

"The world is witnessing the oppression of the illegitimate Zionist regime as well as the resistance of the Palestinian people," he said and added: "For more than a century, Western countries have been striving to attract the people of the Middle East towards themselves, yet the whole world has seen that the civilization the West pursues is a façade, and they desire human rights, freedom, and democracy solely for themselves."

He explained that when it comes to Middle Easterners and Muslims, these demands hold no value.

"Therefore, one can argue that a significant victory of the Gaza war is that the humanitarian mask of the West has fallen, revealing their true nature."

Many countries, especially Muslim nations, have remained silent



in the face of this oppression; if you recall, at the outset of the Gaza conflict, Netanyahu addressed world leaders, stating that if they wished to keep their positions, they had to remain silent, he noted.

Consequently, all leaders wishing to retain power kept quiet, he added.

"It is crucial to see how a nation resists and how patient they can be while remaining grateful even after losing everything. Through various films and writings, they presented themselves as a persecuted nation, hiding behind this lie; however, following the brutal violence in Gaza, the truth has been revealed."

"Thank God a ceasefire has been declared, and it is our duty as Muslims to stand with the people of Gaza. Until now, we have had the excuse that we cannot go to Gaza to help them. With the ceasefire announcement, these excuses have no place anymore; we all have a responsibility, whether individually or through charities and organizations, to assist the people of Gaza," he concluded.

For his part Majidpour, the director of the documentary, also mentioned: "We became acquainted with Dr. Taner before this year's Arbaeen, and it took quite some time to persuade him to agree to the film's production. In this regard, in

less than a week, arrangements were made for our trip to Turkey, where we met Dr. Taner and started the documentary."

"It is our duty to document events. Various networks have interviewed Dr. Taner, but this is his first participation in our documentary. Regarding events in Palestine, governments believe that being present in war zones is to their detriment; however, Dr. Taner set aside boundaries and went to Gaza alongside physicians from other regions of the world," he mentioned.

Back in July, in an interview with the TRT World, Kamaci provided a harrowing account of the health-care situation in Gaza during his volunteer mission. He described how injured patients were frequently stitched in standing positions without local anesthesia due to an overwhelming number of casualties and a severe shortage of medical supplies.

Dr. Kamaci noted that, during his two-week stay amidst on-going Israeli bombardments, his medical team was able to perform surgeries on nearly 400 patients. He highlighted the operational challenges faced by medical staff, revealing that only four hospitals remained functional in Gaza at the time, with surgery only possible

in two of them. This left many patients requiring long-term treatment without necessary care.

The surgeon also condemned the actions of the Israeli forces, stating that they indiscriminately target civilians, including the elderly, women, and children. He emphasized the gravity of the situation, describing it as significantly worse than what is currently reported from the area.

Over the past 15 months, at least 46,707 individuals in Gaza have lost their lives, including approximately 18,000 children. This staggering death toll indicates that one in every 50 people in Gaza has been killed, and many analysts and human rights organizations believe the actual figure may be significantly higher.

The violence escalated on October 7, 2023, following attacks on southern Israel orchestrated by the Palestinian group Hamas. Despite widespread global condemnation and urgent appeals from international organizations and rights groups, Israel has persisted with a campaign of collective punishment against the besieged enclave, where half of the population is under the age of 18. This ongoing assault has led to the destruction of entire generations within families, erasing them from civil registries.

Strindberg's "Stronger" to be staged in Tangestan

TEHRAN-The play "The Stronger" written by August Strindberg and directed by Mahsa Ganji will be staged in Ahrm City in the Central District of Tangestan County, Bushehr Province.

Ganji will also perform in the play along with Nashmin Shamsizadeh and Mahdieh Arabzadeh. The performance will be on stage at Tangsiroun Theater for three nights from January 22 to 24.

"The Stronger" is an 1889 Swedish play consisting of only one scene. The main characters are two women: Mrs. X, who speaks, and Miss. Y, who is silent, an example of a dramatic monologue.

It explores the power struggle evident in human psychology, confronting the audience with timeless themes of betrayal, infidelity and hierarchy working within a masculine hegemonic society.

The women present on stage are representative of fragments of one character's mind. While some parts are incapable of action and controlled

by their persona's 'agents', others are capable of speech and autonomy facing the climactic confrontation of a destabilized relationship.

"The Stronger" has a dramatic intensity that few plays possess. Though but one character speaks, the souls of three are skillfully laid bare.

August Strindberg (1849-1912) is Sweden's foremost dramatist. He was also a schoolmaster, journalist, writer of scientific and political treatises, writer of short stories, poet, essayist and painter.

As a dramatist Strindberg's chief strength lies not so much in dramatic technique as it does in his trenchant and searching power of analysis of the human mind. His chief plays are very exact and narrow views of the feminine soul. Some of his own domestic bitterness finds expression in the feminine studies in his plays. He is very fond of showing the power of one character over another.

A prolific writer who often drew directly on his personal experience, Strindberg wrote more than sixty plays and more than thirty works of fiction, autobiography, history, cultural analysis, and politics during his career, which spanned four decades.

A bold experimenter and iconoclast throughout, he explored a wide range of dramatic methods and purposes, from naturalistic tragedy, monodrama, and history plays, to his anticipations of expressionist and surrealist dramatic techniques.

From his earliest work, Strindberg developed innovative forms of dramatic action, language, and visual composition. He is considered the "father" of modern Swedish literature.

In addition to "The Stronger," Strindberg's important one-act plays include "The Outlaw," "Countess Julie," "Creditors," "Pariah," and "Facing Death".

Gaza children's art begins tour in Ireland

An art exhibition of pictures drawn by children caught up in the war in Gaza is now touring across Ireland.

It was started in Co Sligo by Féile Butler, an architect, whose children had sent some of their pictures over to a friend of hers, Mohammed Timraz, at the Deir al-Balah camp in central Gaza at the start of the war, RTE reported.

He shared the drawings with his nieces and nephews in the enclave and then they and their friends began to draw and share their own artwork.

The drawings sent back from children, the majority of whom were displaced from their homes, is part of the 'HeART Gaza exhibition', which is also available on Instagram and has led to an additional 55 exhibitions worldwide including in France and

Germany.

"It's really about rehumanizing the absolutely dehumanized Palestinians," she explained.

"Drawings obviously, they cross borders and they cross language. They started sending drawings back that initially were basic childhood fare and then they started to get much darker and that's when I said to Mohammed, we need to share it with the world," Butler said.

"They're sending their messages out to the world so the world can actually see directly, straight from the heart of the children, totally unfiltered, what their experience of living through a genocide is."

She added some of the artists are as young as three and some are teenagers as old as 17.

"There's everything from themes

of trauma naturally to themes of displacement, but there's also themes of hope, friendship and resilience and defiance," she said.

Butler said it is a way for the most voiceless to communicate directly with the public.

She said one of the most impactful drawings was done by seven-year-old Shahed Al-Zaqzouq, who included an image of one of the pet cats she had been tasked to look after, bleeding after a missile attack.

"The extra layer that broke my heart is outside the house, there's a little cat and the cat is bleeding, the cat has been injured by a missile ... and that was just another layer that a seven-year-old is depicting this horror that I knew we had to share their perspective with the world," she said.

"The world has to see what damage we are doing to these children," she added.

Of the children whose pictures form part of the exhibition, two have since died. They were nine-year-old Reema Musbah Timraz who was killed in October 2023 after she had moved to the camp.

Her 13-year-old brother Mohammed also died on the same day when the house where they were staying was bombed. In the attack, 28 people including their mother, father and another brother died. Only their 17-year-old brother Wasseem survived as he had gone to a local shop.

Reema's picture shows her holding hands near a tree, with her older cousin. Mohammed's picture shows the Al-Aqsa Mosque and his desire that Palestine should be free.