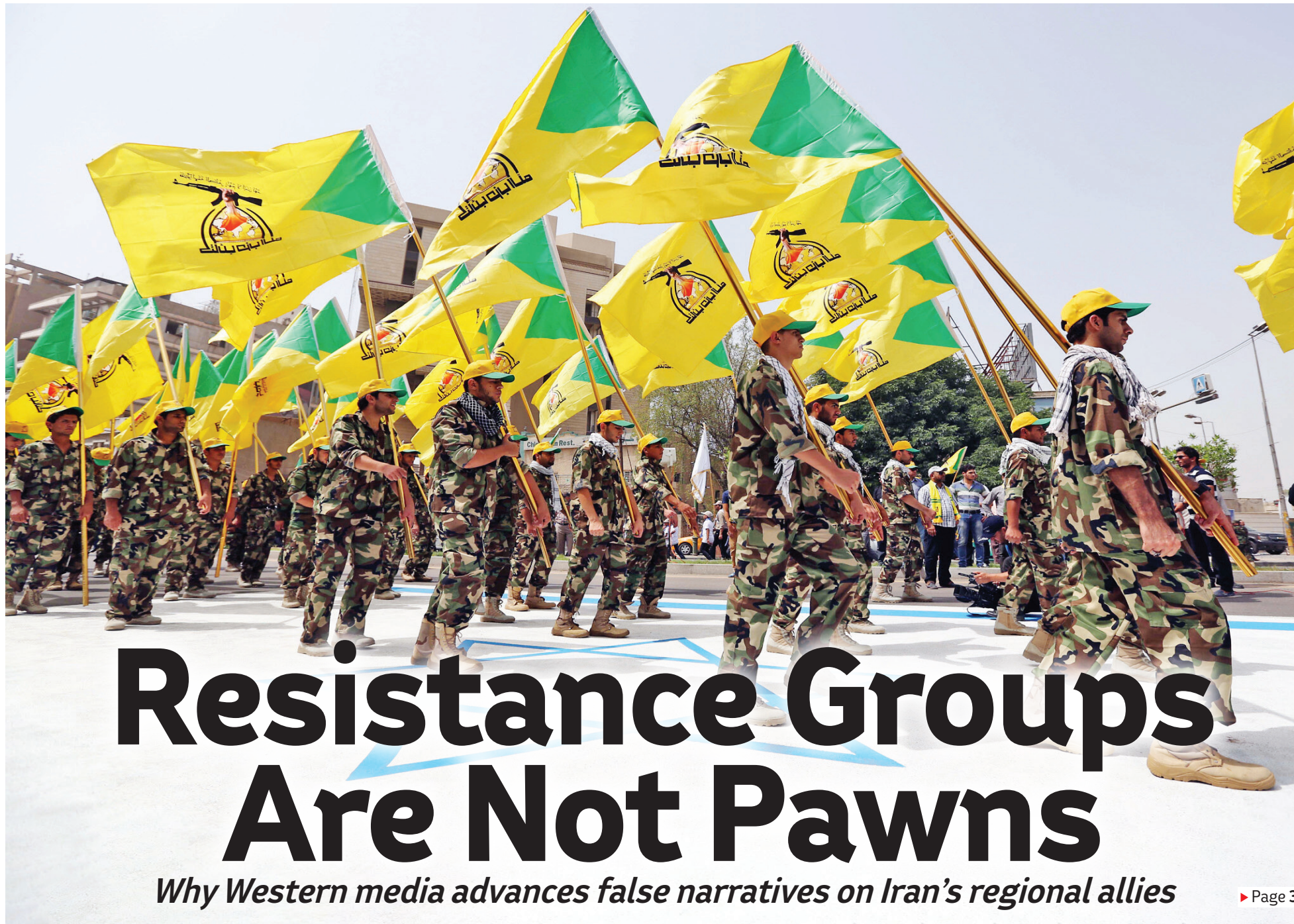


# TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 100,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 45th year | No. 14715 | Tuesday | February 20, 2024 | Esfand 1, 1402 | Shabān 10, 1445



## Resistance Groups Are Not Pawns

*Why Western media advances false narratives on Iran's regional allies*

► Page 3

### Iran slams West's muzzling of free speech in support of Israel

TEHRAN- Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman on Monday criticized the removal of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's accounts from Instagram and Facebook, saying the move is the latest in a string of attempts to silence the critics of Israel.

Delivering remarks in response to the Tehran Times' question during a press conference at the 24th Iran Media Exhibition, Nasser Kanaani said it has now become evident that Western politicians only blivate about freedom of speech, without actually caring about it.

"The West cannot tolerate any narrative different from the one it's promoting. With its control over most social media platforms, the West obstructs free speech and prevents citizens all around the world from gaining access to the truth," Kanaani stated.

Earlier this month, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's accounts were removed from Instagram and Facebook, both of which are owned by the Meta company. A spokesperson for Meta said the action was taken as the Leader had been violating the company's "Dangerous Organizations and Individuals policy". ► Page 2

### Iran's nuclear activities transparent since day one: nuclear official

TEHRAN - In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, the Deputy head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) rejected claims that the country's nuclear program is not fully transparent.

"We have made it clear since day one that our nuclear activities are nothing but peaceful. Every time the IAEA asked us for clarifications we provided them with answers. Nothing has changed. Tell us which part of our nuclear program is not transparent and we will prove that it is. As the Leader of the Islamic Revolution once said, 'The West knows very well that it's lying about our nuclear activities,'" Pejman Shirmardi stated.

The official made the remarks after the UN nuclear watchdog accused Iran of not being completely transparent with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"Iran is presenting a face which is not entirely transparent when it comes to its nuclear activities. Of course, this increases dangers," Rafael Mariano Grossi said during a summit earlier this month.

Grossi's comments seemed to be in response to a former Iranian official's remarks, who said that Iran had pieces for a nuclear weapon in its hands.

The IAEA Director-General's reaction to the comments of an ex-official in Iran comes as he has chosen to ignore Israel's alarming nuclear threats against Palestinians in the past months. ► Page 3

### Newlywed Palestinian couple killed in Israeli strike in Rafah

A newlywed Palestinian couple was killed in an Israeli airstrike targeting a shelter camp in Rafah city in southern Gaza.

Abdullah Abu Nahel and his bride tied the knot on Friday but lost their lives two days later after an Israeli fighter jet struck a camp housing displaced Palestinians in Khirbat al-Adas northeast of Rafah, Turkey's Anadolu News Agency reported.

Six other Palestinians were killed and three injured in the same strike.

The attack came amid Israeli preparations for a ground attack in Rafah, home to more than 1.4 million residents seeking refuge from war.



### Zionism is synonymous with Hitlerism

By Ali Karbalaee

TEHRAN- Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has joined a growing list of global leaders and countries that have accused the Israeli regime of committing genocide against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip.

"What's happening in the Gaza Strip isn't a war, it's a genocide," President Lula told reporters in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa on Sunday, where he was attending an African Union (AU) summit.

"It's not a war of soldiers against soldiers. It's a war between a highly prepared army and women and children," the Brazilian leader added.

Since Hamas's al-Aqsa Storm Operation on October 7 last year, which the Brazilian president also denounced at the time, Lula has been increasingly critical of the Israeli daily bombardment of Gaza.

Also, at the 37th AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Lula said: "What is happening in the Gaza Strip and to the Palestinian people hasn't been seen in any other moment in history. Actually, it did when Hitler decided to kill the Jews." ► Page 5

### ICJ reviews occupation of Palestinian lands, as Gaza death toll tops 29,000

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN-Israel's decades-long atrocious crimes against Palestinian people once again grab the headlines as the International Court of Justice holds public hearings on the legal consequences of the regime's occupation of Palestinian territories.

Judges of the UN's top court have been asked to review "occupation, settlement and annexation... including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures."

The Palestinian foreign minister took the floor in the first session of the six-day hearings held in The Hague in the Netherlands on Monday.

Riyad al-Maliki lashed out at Israel for subjecting Palestinians to decades of discrimination and apartheid.

He said such practices have left Palestinians with the choice of "displacement, subjugation, or death". ► Page 5



*Renowned Tajik Musician Davlatmand Kholov, known to Iranian for his Imam Reza song, passes away*

► Page 8

### Pneumococcal vaccination of babies kicks off

TEHRAN - A national program for pneumococcal vaccination of babies under 12 months of age started on Monday.

The program was officially launched in the city of Bandar Khamir, southern Hormozgan province, IRNA reported.

The vaccination program to combat pneumococcal has been added to the country's immunization program, Pedram Pak-Aein, an official with the ministry of health, said.

It will be implemented in several phases, with the priority given to underdeveloped areas, he added.

Some 3.5 million doses of pneumococcal vaccine have been imported. In the first phase, the vaccines will be distributed in deprived areas of the southern provinces of the country, the official explained. ► Page 7



### Two new warships added to IRGC Navy Force

TEHRAN - At a ceremony in the southern Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas on Monday, two new warships from the Shahid Soleimani-class were unveiled.

The two catamarans, namely "Shahid Sayyad Shirazi" and "Shahid Hassan Bagheri," were delivered to the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) in the presence of top military officials.

The impressive ceremony in the capital of Hormozgan province was attended by Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri, IRGC Navy commander Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, and other senior military officials. ► Page 3



## TEHRAN PAPERS

## Iran has emerged as a superpower vis-a-vis America and Israel

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

In a note, Kayhan addressed Iran's position in the region and wrote: The events of the last few months in the region indicate a much more important event: the emergence of Iran as a Middle East superpower. According to the Singaporean Straits Times newspaper, Iran's missile attacks on Syria, Iraq and Pakistan are a sign of Iran's power as a regional hegemon. In late 2023, the Pentagon accused Iran of a drone attack on an oil tanker in the Indian Ocean. Each of these attacks had its immediate justifications. But all these operations, which took place in a short period and a wide geographical radius, indicate a much more important event: the emergence of Iran as a Middle East superpower, which is no longer content with using only proxy militias. Iran is ready to use its armed forces to achieve its strategic goals. From the point of view of the West, this is a worrying development and the beginning of a new and even dangerous period in the Middle East.

## Siasat-e-Rooz: Repeating a mistake

Siasat-e-Rooz referred to the Munich Security Conference and wrote: This meeting was held while the founders of this meeting claimed to act for the security of the world. The trend of developments shows the opposite of this claim. Iran was not in this meeting as the first country to fight terrorism. Not paying attention to Iran's experiences and views in the fight against terrorism shows the West's lack of motivation to realize security in the world. This approach becomes more obvious when the West continues to insist on the old policy of sanctions against Iran. Also, the issue of the Gaza war has been raised in Munich, where, first of all, no action has been taken to hold accountable and punish the Zionist regime as the perpetrator of the genocide and the continuation of the war, and the Westerners have even emphasized the political and military support of this regime and the accountability of the Gaza resistance. Secondly, in this meeting, the leaders of the resistance, who are the main axis of Gaza, were not invited, which is also contrary to the principle of pacifism.

## Iran: Another false claim

Reuters has claimed that the demand of the IRGC Quds Force commander to the Iraqi resistance has led to the stop of these groups' attacks on U.S. military bases in the

region. The claim of this Western news agency has been made while following the Iraqi resistance attack on an American military base, this country threatened to retaliate and claimed that the Islamic Republic supports these groups. The Iraqi resistance group immediately announced in a statement that it would act independently and without Iran's support and stop its attacks on American bases in order to prevent the spread of tension in the region. This is while our country, despite pursuing its strategic goals in supporting the resistance, has not intervened in the attacks of the resistance groups, especially in the recent war in Gaza. These groups have carried out retaliatory measures against the massacre of the American-Israeli axis in the occupied territories at their discretion. For this reason, the publication of this type of news by a media outlet such as Reuters, which has a history of falsifying news about Iran, can be evaluated in the framework of the imaginary requests of the American authorities to Iran to prevent the reactions of the resistance front against Israel.

## Shargh: Iran supports but not provoke!

In a commentary, Shargh addressed the Washington Post's claim about Iran's private negotiations with Lebanon's Hezbollah and Shiite groups in Iraq and said: The Washington Post newspaper claimed in an exclusive report and quoted Western and Arab sources that Iran during private negotiations with Lebanon's Hezbollah and Shiite groups in Iraq and Syria wanted them to exercise restraint and not to face off American forces. It is written in this newspaper that Israel's brutal war against Hamas in Gaza has provoked conflict between the United States and Iranian proxies on several fronts.

Without a ceasefire, Iran could face the most significant test that has been done so far regarding its ability to influence these allied militias. When U.S. forces launched attacks against Iran-backed groups in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq in February, Tehran publicly warned it was ready to respond to any threat. But according to Lebanese and Iraqi officials who were involved in the talks, Tehran calls for caution. Despite the independence of the resistance axis in their attacks, Iran has always emphasized that it is always a spiritual supporter of the resistance axis and its effort is to reduce tension in the region.

## Iran slams West's muzzling of free speech in support of Israel

From page 1 ▶ Since the beginning of the war in Gaza, Western states have been trying to tone down criticism against Israel by blocking pro-Palestinian social media accounts. Several journalists have also been fired from their jobs in the past months after calling for an end to the massacre of Palestinians online.

Countries like France and the UK have banned demonstrators from taking to the streets in support of Palestine or tried to fabricate their message by vilifying their cause.

Suella Braverman described the demonstrators taking to the streets in support of a ceasefire in Gaza as being involved in "hate marches" when she was still serving as Britain's home secretary.

## "U.S. phony claims of advocating human rights"

Kanaani also said that Israel's U.S.-backed murderous bombardment on the Gaza Strip removed the mask from the faces of self-proclaimed human rights advocates.

He went on to point out that the Gaza conflict revealed that human rights are "nothing more than a lie" as they are promoted in the media by nations pretending to be rights supporters.

"The disaster in Gaza removed the mask from the face of the so-called advocates of human rights and showed the extent of vileness, brutality and lies hidden within the nature of the Israeli regime, whose supporters used to refer to as a symbol of democracy," he added.

The spokesman further stated that the Israeli regime should be held accountable for



its almost five months of atrocities against the oppressed Palestinian people.

The United States is the principal collaborator in Israel's misdeeds, he added, emphasizing that the usurping entity cannot handle the Gaza conflict without Washington's assistance.

## Iran signals readiness to host OIC meeting on Gaza

Kanaani also said Tehran has voiced readiness to host a second meeting of the foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on the Gaza war.

Recently, Algeria has proposed a new resolution that seeks an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" in Gaza. It will be put to a vote at the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

"What is happening in Gaza is not only an obvious crime and genocide, but also a threat to international peace and security," Kanaani stressed, adding, "The international community and bodies must stop these actions."

## Security in Afghanistan common issue for surrounding nations: envoy

TEHRAN- The Iranian president's special envoy on Afghanistan affairs, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, has said that the security, stability, and welfare of the Afghan people are shared concerns among the surrounding nations.

In a post on X on Sunday after meeting in the Qatari city of Doha with his counterparts from Pakistan, China, and Russia, respectively, Zamir Kabulov, Yue Xiaoyong, and Asif Ali Khan Durrani, he added that the regional contact committee has mostly been successful in influencing issues that affect the security and stability of Afghanistan.

On February 18, Special Envoys on Afghanistan appointed by the UN began a two-day conference in Doha to deliberate on Resolution 2679, which deals with a "commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan."

The Doha session on Afghanistan is being hosted by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. It is the second UN-organized meeting on the topic in less than a year. Leaders of the Taliban have declined to attend the conference because they were not invited to the May 2023 session.

Defending the Afghan people is important to Tehran's diplomacy, Kazemi



Qomi stated in a Sunday meeting with Suhail Shaheen, the director of the Taliban political office in Doha.

He stated that cooperation between the peoples of the two adjacent nations has taken place in a number of areas, including religion and culture. In a separate post on X on Saturday, he also stressed that he had "explicit but very constructive" discussions with Tomas Niklasson, the Special Representative of the European Union for Afghanistan (EUSE).

"If Europe wants to help the Afghan people, it should not take humanitarian aid as hostage for its regional relations," Kazemi Qomi told the European diplomat.

During the meeting, he highlighted that Europe should not tether sending humanitarian

aid to Afghanistan to its regional affiliations. He also disclosed the details regarding the meeting on his online platform. He wrote, "Pivotal emphasis was placed on the necessity for Europe to refrain from tying humanitarian aid to its relationship with the regional alliances if it genuinely aims to support the people of Afghanistan."

The Taliban stormed back to power in August 2021 after making sweeping advances across the country, which triggered a messy withdrawal by the United States-led foreign forces as well as the rapid collapse of the country's security forces. The U.S. invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, despite the fact that

no Afghan national was involved in the attacks. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans died in the U.S. war of aggression on the country.

After its withdrawal, Washington imposed sanctions on Afghanistan and blocked its assets.

Foreign aid has also declined dramatically since then and the country's key central bank assets have been seized by the United States, compounding one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Also on Wednesday, during an interview with the private Shamshad TV at the Iranian Embassy in Kabul, Kazemi Qomi noted that security and stability in the region is premised on carrying out the collective action in the domain of security.

Qomi also underscored the need for vigilance of regional countries against anti-security and destabilizing schemes of enemies.

Given the recent border incidents in the region, he stated, "Security is not fun for any country or establishment, and it is the undeniable right of any system to defend its land, people, and national security." "It is possible that a region may not be under the control of a central government, and then what happened was essentially a response against a threatening point," Kazemi Qomi continued.

## Iran praises African Union statement, urges stop to Israel's assaults on Gaza



TEHRAN- Iran has welcomed a recent statement by the African Union (AU) demanding an end to the military aggression and atrocities committed by the Israeli regime against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

Moussa Faki, the chairman of the African Union Commission, made a vehement condemnation of the Israeli brutality and indiscriminate airstrikes on Gaza during the 37th African Union Summit held on Saturday in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

"Rest assured, we strongly condemn these attacks that are unprecedented in the history of mankind," Faki said. "We want to reassure you of our solidarity with the people of Palestine," he added, while accusing Israel of having "exterminated" Gaza's inhabitants. Speaking on Sunday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani voiced the country's "categorical support" for the statement.

He went on to add, "The Islamic Republic of Iran declares its categorical support for the content of this statement, which shows commitment of the

Union, as well as African leaders and nations to valuable humanitarian ideals regarding Palestine."

Iran, he continued, is confident that the African states and "many other countries and nations around the world in support of the oppressed Palestinian nation will tighten the grip on the Zionist warmongers and criminals, and their supporters." African states have been known to adopt principled and humane positions.

Such actions would also "pave the way for the cessation of the Israeli onslaught on Gaza and the occupied West Bank, and will alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people," stressed the spokesman. He made the remarks on the 135th day of the Israeli regime's full-scale military assault against Gaza. Almost 29,000 Palestinians have been killed so far in Israel's genocide campaign, which started after Gaza-based resistance groups' Operation al-Aqsa Storm. The majority of these victims were women and children.

Similar praise for the AU's statement was expressed earlier on Sunday by Hamas, the Palestinian resistance movement, which stated, "We hope it would translate into practical steps from all friendly African countries in a way that contributes to stopping the aggression and war of extermination against our Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip." In addition, Hamas demanded the creation of an independent Palestinian state and the termination of all ties with the regime.

"We call for severing of all ties with the criminal

Zionist entity, and supporting the struggle of our Palestinian people until they achieve their legitimate national rights, most notably the establishment of the Palestinian State" with al-Quds as its capital, Hamas continued.

## "U.S. rewards Israel through providing military aid"

In a post on his X account on Sunday, Kanaani said that the U.S. Senate's ratification of a \$14 billion assistance package to Israel demonstrates that the U.S. is rewarding the regime for massacring innocent Palestinian people during the unequal warfare in Gaza.

According to spokesman, the approved U.S. package, which was paid for by American taxpayers means that people who carried out ruthless crimes in the Gaza war, like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, "will be rewarded with a daily sum of one hundred million dollars from the #United States for massacring innocent Palestinian civilians."

He went on to say that money could only be wasted for the ruthless killing of innocent people by crooked and tyrannical bodies that are based on the murder of life. On Tuesday, the U.S. Senate cleared a \$95.34 billion assistance package for Ukraine, Israel, and Chinese Taipei.

The package includes \$61 billion for Ukraine, \$14 billion for Israel, and \$4.83 billion to bolster the anti-China alliance in the Indo-Pacific area, including Chinese Taipei.

## Tehran warns U.S. to steer clear of hypocrisy about Israel attack on Rafah

TEHRAN- According to Iran's foreign minister, the U.S. should stop acting hypocritically regarding the Gaza war and quit talking about a truce in the Gaza Strip while encouraging the Israeli regime to strike Rafah.

During a cabinet session on Sunday, Hossein Amir Abdollahian said that "the Americans must stop being hypocritical and talking about a ceasefire while encouraging the Zionist regime to attack Rafah."

He said that Israel has created a dire situation in both northern and southern Gaza, especially in Rafah, and that it is still committing war crimes against the Palestinian

people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Amir Abdollahian went on to add that Hamas has put out a comprehensive proposal on behalf of the Gazan people to end the Israeli genocide in the region, lift the siege, negotiate a prisoner swap agreement, and rebuild the area devastated by conflict.

Iran's top diplomat continued by saying that "the resistance leaders have warned that any military action against the residents of Rafah will have severe reciprocal consequences."

Reiterating that the Israeli regime

has failed to achieve its desired goals in Gaza, he added that "this is the reason it still continues to beat the drum of war and threat."

Iran firmly supports any resolution to the current situation that would enhance regional security and protect the rights of the Palestinian people, Amir Abdollahian reaffirmed.

The people of Gaza have been forced to escape towards the Egyptian border city of Rafah in the south due to Israel's continuous shelling of the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military has said that it will begin a ground assault in addition to conducting airstrikes on

the border city.

As Israel contemplates extending its attack into Rafah, Egypt is building a walled enclosure along its border with Gaza, raising worries about possible Palestinian displacement.

Last week, the Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesperson, Nasser Kanaani, sternly denounced the Israeli airstrikes that have killed scores of Palestinians in the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

In a statement, he censured the deadly "criminal airstrikes" the Tel Aviv regime has launched on residential areas in Rafah.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## Amir Abdollahian calls on UN to stop Israeli genocide in Gaza Strip

TEHRAN- In a letter to UN Secretary General António Guterres, on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian urged him to intervene responsibly in the efforts to end the Zionist regime's heinous crimes and acts of aggression against Palestinian people.

The full text of the letter is as follows:

Pursuant to my previous letters concerning the occupying Israeli regime's genocidal invasion of Gaza strip, I feel obliged to highlight, once more, the responsibility of the United Nations to act

swiftly and resolutely in order to stop further massacre of the Palestinian people.

The high number of innocent people killed and wounded as well as the intensity of demolition in Gaza during the past 4 months of incessant attacks on Gaza are visible evidence of a premeditated plot to exterminate a whole nation, including through their forced expulsion out of occupied Palestine. As of 18 February 2024, close to 30,000 Palestinians, majority of them young children and women, are brutally killed while more than 7000 people remain buried under the collapsed buildings and

more than 60000 are wounded. The Israeli's genocidal vengeance has not spared anyone who happen to live in the occupied Palestine, as over 85 journalists and more than 135 UNRWA aid workers are also brutally targeted.

The occupying regime has combined its indiscriminate military operation with cruel starvation campaign by deliberately depriving Gazans of Food, water, humanitarian aid and other essential resources and making Gaza unlivable in order to force Palestinians out of Gaza.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))



# Resistance groups are not pawns

By Mehran Shamsuddin

TEHRAN – The whirlwind of recent headlines from The Washington Post and Reuters have taken center stage, where they have thrust into the spotlight audacious claims about Iran's alleged influence over regional Resistance groups.

The narrative unfolds dramatically, suggesting that, in a calculated response to the specter of a broader conflict, Iran has purportedly pressed these groups to momentarily suspend their assaults on U.S. troops.

Unraveling the complexity of these weighty claims requires a discerning eye, inviting us to plunge into the intricate dynamics that define the ties between Tehran and a diverse array of Resistance groups. However, it is crucial to dispel the notion that Tehran holds sway over every move made by these factions – a claim which is as naive as it is erroneous.

To brand these Resistance groups as mere pawns in Iran's geopolitical chess game is to grossly misrepresent the complex tapestry of allegiances and motivations that underpin their actions. These entities, while their interests may occasionally align with Tehran's, operate with a degree of autonomy that cannot be overlooked. The portrayal of them as proxies serves to oversimplify the intricate dynamics at play and undermines their agency as independent actors on the regional stage, a fact that the U.S. is undoubtedly aware of, but these claims are made, clearly, with alternative goals in mind.

Beyond the surface drama, such



narratives perpetuate a damaging stereotype—casting Iran as the primary source of violence and instability in the region. By painting Tehran as the puppet master pulling the strings of these Resistance groups, these claims not only absolve the actors of responsibility but also serve to reinforce a one-dimensional view of West Asia's geopolitical landscape.

In an effort to exacerbate tensions and perpetuate a cycle of violence, such claims are made to problematize the relationship between Iran and the Resistance groups, which are now aligning in the same direction and working toward shared goals, undermining the grand plans of the U.S. to control and manipulate the situation in West Asia. These fabricated narratives eclipse the varied realities on the ground, hindering efforts to address the root causes of instability in the region.

The attribution of a pause in attacks solely to Iran's influence dismisses the multifaceted motivations driving

these Resistance groups. Their actions are propelled by a mosaic of regional concerns, internal dynamics, and strategic considerations that transcend alleged Iranian directives. Crucially, it is imperative to note that Iran vehemently denies these claims, emphasizing the potential for oversimplification and the perilous casting of doubt on the legitimacy of these groups' independent decision-making processes.

To comprehend these allegations fully, we must immerse ourselves in their historical context. Similar accusations of Iran's control over Resistance factions have been wielded as weapons in the past, sparking discord within the region. By perpetuating this narrative, there looms the risk of not only tarnishing Iran's standing but also instigating internal strife among these groups, potentially jeopardizing their united front against common adversaries.

As we navigate the convoluted realm of geopolitical narratives, it becomes increasingly evident that

the persistent portrayal of Iran as a puppet master serve a purpose beyond their surface implications. At the heart of these assertions lies a subtle but powerful undercurrent – a narrative carefully woven by the U.S. to provide a semblance of “self-assurance” in the face of perceived losses in controlling the regional situation. In recent times, the geopolitical landscape has witnessed a recalibration of power dynamics, with the U.S. experiencing a sense of unease as its influence in certain regions undergoes transformation. These claims regarding Iran's influence over Resistance groups can be seen as a strategic maneuver, a tool wielded by the U.S. to reconcile its own uncertainties and project an image of control.

By fabricating narratives that paint Iran as the orchestrator of regional unrest, the U.S. crafts a narrative that conveniently deflects attention from its own challenges in managing the shifting dynamics. This act of self-assurance serves a dual purpose – externally, it attempts to maintain an illusion of control and dominance, while internally, it provides a narrative that reassures the American public and policymakers alike.

In reality, these claims may be a manifestation of a coping mechanism employed by the U.S., a way to grapple with the discomfort of adapting to a transformed geopolitical reality. As the global landscape evolves, the U.S. may find itself grappling with a sense of diminished control, leading to the creation of narratives that, at least rhetorically, place the blame on external actors such as Iran.

## Two new warships added to IRGC Navy Force

From Page 1 ► General Bagheri, in his remarks during the ceremony, proudly acknowledged the advancements in Iran's naval capabilities. He emphasized the impressive efficiency in research-to-production timelines, noting that Iran's progress is nearly unmatched compared to other nations.

Discussing the regional situation, Bagheri observed the apparent withdrawal of the U.S. invading army from the Persian Gulf, only to witness an immediate return with various excuses and in different forms.

Underlining the defensive prowess of the Islamic Republic of Iran for national security, the top general emphasized the armed forces' dedication to taking even the smallest threat seriously, ensuring a constant state of preparedness.

Touching on the Gaza situation, Bagheri portrayed it as a pivotal moment globally, signifying the undeniable and irreparable defeat of the Zionist regime. He rejected the Israeli attempts to compensate for their costly loss through the tragic killing of defenseless Gazan civilians, underscoring the two distinct fronts in the conflict – the righteous side, which includes the oppressed Palestinian people and their allies like Yemen, Hezbollah, and resistance groups in Iraq; and the opposing forces, comprising unjust Zionists, the U.S., and Europe, exposing the hypocrisy in Western discussions on human rights and democracy.

Rear Admiral Tangsiri, in his speech, provided some features about the two new warships, describing them as a domestically designed and manufactured catamarans with sophisticated radar-evading technologies.

He said both of these warships can cruise within a radius of 5,500 nautical miles (9,500 kilometers) without being detected by enemy radars and reconnaissance systems.

The two new warships are the second and third models of Soleimani-class vessels, the first of which, unveiled on January 6, has been named after Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, an Iraqi commander of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) who was martyred alongside Iran's Lt. General Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. strike in Baghdad in January 2020. Measuring 67 meters in length, 20 meters in width, and weighing 600 tons, these two IRGC warships are powered by four propulsive engines and can carry a combat helicopter and three light corvettes.

These state-of-the-art, radar-evading warships boast the advanced “Navvab” missile system which is capable of vertical launches and the “Sayyad” cruise missile, showcasing an impressive range of 700 kilometers.

The Shahid Sayyad Shirazi vessel is armed with formidable long-range defensive missiles, specifically the Sayyad and the Navvab defensive missile systems. This development underscores the continuous enhancement of Iran's naval

capabilities in the region.

According to General Bagheri, the construction of these warships took place at the specialized naval center in Bushehr city.

The Shahid Soleimani class is relatively smaller in tonnage, comparable to corvettes, but has a longer range (5,000 miles) than modern destroyers and comparable firepower and air defense capabilities to frigates.

This design allows breaking the seawater during sailing more easily than a conventional catamaran, as well as more transverse stability in harsh sea states. Although it has shipbuilding capacity for large tonnage warships, Iran has no plans for them and favors smaller vessels for global power projection.

The combination of new cruise missiles, hypersonic missiles, anti-ship quasi-ballistic missiles, naval drones and swarm drones have made today's large warships more vulnerable than ever. Iran's Navy has achieved self-sufficiency in manufacturing surface and sub-surface vessels in recent years. It has also increased its presence in international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for merchant vessels and tankers.

Iranian military experts and engineers have made remarkable breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment in recent years, contributing to the armed forces' self-sufficiency.

The AEOI deputy head also is focused on improving the everyday lives of people. That's why we are always willing to share our knowledge and provide other countries with services or products,” the official added.

## Nouri takes Iran's second gold at IBSA Grand Prix Heidelberg 2024

TEHRAN – Vahid Nouri of Iran claimed a gold medal at the 2024 IBSA Grand Prix in Heidelberg Sunday night.

He defeated Ibrahim Bolukbasi of Turkey in the final match of the J2 +90kg.

Briton Jack Hodgson and Zhurkamyrza Shukurbekov of Kazakhstan won the bronze medals.

Iran's Meysam Banitaba had defeated his Brazilian rival Eielton De Oliveira in the final match of the J1 -60kg on Day 1.

Almost 250 judokas from 47 nations compete in the city of Heidelberg, Germany, for the first Paralympic qualifier of 2024.

The tournament is being held from Feb. 14 to 19.

Germany hosts the first tournament of three that holds the final list of athletes qualified for Paris 2024.

## Azmoun sees 'different' Roma with De Rossi but thanks Mourinho

TEHRAN – Sardar Azmoun was back on the scoresheet tonight as he made his first start for Roma in the 3-0 win over Frosinone.

The Iran attacker was given the chance to start and play the full 90 minutes, scoring the team's second goal of the night in the second half, romapress.net reported.

In his post-match reaction, Azmoun analyzed the team's performance and thanked Jose Mourinho who departed the club while the striker was away on international duty.

“It was a tough match, especially in the first half. In the locker room, however, we changed tactics with the staff and in the second half we played well. Scoring is my job, I'm happy with the victory.”

“Why I apologized to Frosinone fans? Because after Huijsen's first goal the Frosinone fans didn't appreciate his celebration. The Frosinone players made us understand and I wanted to apologize. Respect in football is the most important thing. We are colleagues, friends, it's difficult on the pitch, but it's right to have respect for each other.”

“De Rossi? When I was little, I was a Roma fan. I always followed the big matches, because in Iran they only broadcast those. De Rossi was very aggressive but he had a big heart as a player. He is the same as a coach, he helps us a lot and motivates us a lot.”

“Before leaving I want to thank José for everything he did for Roma and for us players. I hope that now with De Rossi we will do even better.”

## Dastarbandan bags gold at 2024 Asian Indoor Athletic C'ships

TEHRAN – Toktam Dastarbandan of Iran won a gold medal in the women's 800 meters of the 11th edition of the Asian Indoor Athletic Championships on Monday.

Dastarbandan came first with a time of 2:09.17 minutes.

Her compatriot Negin Azari Edalat won the silver, clocking 2:11.43 minutes.

The 2024 Asian Indoor Athletic Championships are being held from Feb. 17 to 19 in Tehran, capital of Iran.

Almost 400 athletes from 26 nations are competing in the event.

The Asian Indoor Athletics Championships, running since 2004, is a biennial competition organized by the Asian Athletics Association.

The 2024 edition is being held in Tehran's Aftab e Enghelab Sports Complex.

## Women's 4x400 relay wins silver at 2024 Asian Indoor Athletic C'ships

TEHRAN – Iran's Kazhan Rostami, Shahla Mahmoudi, Nazanin Fatemeh Eidian and Maryam Mohebi won the women's 4x400 relay silver in the 11th edition of the Asian Indoor Athletic Championships on Monday.

Team Melli finished in first place with a time of 3:41.72 minutes.

The gold medal went to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan claimed the bronze medal.

Iran's Mahsa Mirzatabibi also seized a bronze medal in the Women's Pole Vault with 4.10 meters.

The 2024 Asian Indoor Athletic Championships are being held from Feb. 17 to 19 in Tehran, capital of Iran.

Almost 400 athletes from 26 nations are competing in the event.

The Asian Indoor Athletics Championships, running since 2004, is a biennial competition organized by the Asian Athletics Association.

The 2024 edition is being held in Tehran's Aftab e Enghelab Sports Complex.

## Dejan Milakovic to be appointed Iran's water polo technical director

TEHRAN – Serbian Dejan Milakovic will be appointed as technical director of Iran's men's water polo national team.

Milakovic has traveled to Tehran to negotiate with the Iranian officials.

He worked as technical director of Team Melli in the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Milakovic will be appointed as technical director of all Iranian water polo teams at all levels.

## Over a dozen MEPs request FIFA, UEFA to ban Israeli teams

TEHRAN – More than a dozen members of the European Parliament have demanded the International Football Federation (FIFA) and the European Football Union (UEFA) expel Israeli teams from European and international competitions, in a show of support for the Palestinian people in war-ravaged Gaza.

13 MEPs sent a letter to FIFA and UEFA, requesting the expulsion of Israeli teams, including its national football team, from participating in European and international competitions, according to a Monday report by IRNA.

“We, as MEPs and political representatives of the people of Europe, call on FIFA, UEFA, and other competent bodies to take decisive action against the continuing human rights violations in Palestine,” the letter said.

“The indiscriminate killing of civilians, the blockade of humanitarian aid, or the destruction of infrastructure -- which also affects players, referees, public servants, and sports facilities -- is a crime that we cannot ignore,” it continued.

“Both FIFA and UEFA, claim to promote the values of equality, respect, and human rights through football. All of these are undoubtedly being violated in Gaza today,” the letter added.

“Football cannot contribute to legitimize the occupation and extermination of the Palestinian people. For all these reasons, and following historical examples such as the veto applies to the apartheid in South Africa, we call for an immediate expulsion, as a measure of pressure, of the Israeli national team and the rest of the Israeli teams from all European and international competitions until this genocide ends.”

“Sport cannot serve as a display for those who violate the most essential rights of an entire population,” the MEPs concluded in their letter.

The European lawmakers representing Spain, Ireland, Belgium and Germany put their names at the end of the letter which they sent to the aforementioned international bodies on February 15.

## Iran's nuclear activities transparent since day one: nuclear official

From Page 1 ► Israel's so-called heritage minister has suggested twice since the start of the war in Gaza that the enclave should be destroyed with the help of nuclear weapons.

The threat was an open admission

to Israel's possession of a nuclear arsenal. IAEA inspectors have never sought to inspect Israel's nuclear sites despite repeated calls from regional countries that feel insecure due to the regime's warmongering policies.

The AEOI deputy head also commented on reports of Iran and Saudi Arabia's cooperation in the nuclear field, saying Tehran is always ready to transfer its knowledge to regional and friendly countries. “Our nuclear program

## Tehran, Minsk hold high-level defense talks

TEHRAN – In a significant development, Brigadier General Hamzeh Ghalandari, the Deputy for International Affairs at the Ministry of Defense and Support of the Armed Forces, initiated a diplomatic mission to Belarus on Monday.

This diplomatic endeavor marks a pivotal step forward in the continuous collaboration between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Belarus, specifically in the defense sector. The primary focal point of this diplomatic mission was to drive the implementation of the memorandum of understanding on

military cooperation between the two nations.

Reports from the Iranian media shed light on the visit, highlighting General Ghalandari's role as the leader of a high-ranking defense delegation to Belarus. The discussions during this diplomatic encounter centered on strategic approaches to amplify defense and military cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Belarus.

As both nations are esteemed members of prominent international organizations, the

talks emphasized the alignment of Tehran and Minsk on crucial regional and global issues. The leaders mutually underscored their commitment to not only advancing bilateral relations but also fostering enhanced cooperation. This visit symbolized a concerted effort to explore untapped opportunities for expanding and intensifying collaborations, not only at the bilateral level but also within the broader international arena.

The commitment to strengthened cooperation was particularly emphasized in the context of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

(SCO). The leaders expressed their keen interest in leveraging the SCO framework to further solidify ties, contributing to regional stability and security.

General Ghalandari's diplomatic mission serves as a testament to the enduring partnership between Iran and Belarus, with a focus on elevating defense collaboration to new heights. As the talks progress, both nations are poised to unlock unprecedented opportunities for mutual growth and shared security objectives.



## Value of Iran's 10-month export to India stands at \$1.8b



TEHRAN- Iran exported commodities valued at \$1.8 billion to India during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023-January 20, 2024), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced. According to Mohammad Rezvanifar, India was the fifth top export destination of Iranian products in the mentioned ten-month period.

Also, exporting commodities valued at \$1.6 billion to Iran, India was Iran's fifth source of imports in the first ten months of the present year, the IRICA head announced.

As announced by India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the value of trade between Iran and India reached \$1.836 billion in 2023.

The trade exchange between the two countries declined by 26 percent in 2023 compared to its previous year, the figure was reported to be

\$2.499 billion in 2022.

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

Petroleum products were the top goods imported by India from Iran in 2023, and India imported \$221 million worth of such products from Iran this year. The import of Iranian oil products by India in 2023 increased by 26 percent compared to the previous year.

Raw materials for dye production and various fruits were also among the top exported goods to India in 2023.

India's exports to Iran in January-December 2023 experienced a 35 percent decrease and reached \$1.187 billion. In the previous year, India had exported \$1.847 billion worth of goods to Iran.

Rice was the top export product of India to Iran in 2023. India's rice exports to Iran decreased by 34 percent in 2023, falling from \$1.98 billion in 2022 to \$723 million.

India's tea export to Iran also declined by almost a third, from \$86 million in 2022 to \$30 million in 2023. The country's fruit exports to Iran however increased by 14 percent and reached \$55 million and spice exports decreased by 28 percent to \$15 million.

## Iran negotiating with 21 countries to establish joint free zones

TEHRAN - The Secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council Hojatollah Abdolmaleki said the country is negotiating with 21 different countries to establish joint free zones, with six of which agreement documents have also been signed.

Speaking to IRNA on Monday, Abdolmaleki said a new generation of free zones is being formed in the world which are based on international cooperation, adding: "Iran is one of the leading countries in this regard, we already have shared free zones which are formed based on international cooperation and have different models."

The official stated that the neighboring countries are the priority for the establishment of joint free zones.

"Cooperation with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Russia, and distant countries like China are on the agenda, and we are pursuing the creation of a network of free zones in order to form economic chains with friendly and neighboring countries in the region," he explained.

"We had meetings and discussions with the senior officials of many of the mentioned countries, and the investors have taken measures in this field so that if we proceed according to the plan, we can achieve our goals in the atmosphere of international interactions based on the economic diplomacy, which is considered a kind of practical paradigm," he added.

The official further noted that 10 new free zones have been established in the country, of which three are currently operational, seven will start operating in the next two months and three will be inaugurated in the next Iranian calendar year (starting on March 20).

According to Abdolmaleki, the imports of consumer goods will be limited in these new zones to guide the imports towards production and export.

The establishment of free trade zones (FTZs) in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989 - March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Some five other free trade zones have been established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azərbaycan Province and Maku in West-Azərbaycan Province, both in the northwest of the country.

As the free trade and special economic zones have great potential to accelerate economic development, the development of existing free trade and special economic zones and the establishment of new zones has become one of the major economic approaches of the Iranian government, and the government is determined to attract investment to these zones.

In last August, the secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council said the growth of investment-making has doubled in the country's free trade and special economic zones during the current government's incumbency.

The official said that the implementation of development projects has also doubled.

In an interview conducted by the Tehran Times in last June, Abdolmaleki said: "In the past, the amount of foreign investment made in the zones was very limited and the reason was that the investment opportunities and capacities in these areas were not well introduced. This [Iranian calendar] year (began on March 21, 2023), we started a program that, thank God, is working very well, and that is preparing investment packages and introducing them to domestic and foreign investors."

These packages are in fact a preliminary feasibility study plan that shows the profitability of that plan, the amount of capital required, the required raw materials, technical and technological issues, consumer and market, which is actually the feasibility studies of that project and it shows whether the project is profitable or not, he added.

"We gave the title of "Safe haven for Investment" to Iran's free trade and special economic zones because, first of all, the cost of production in these areas is very low, the cost of land, the cost of manpower, the cost of energy and the cost of access to raw materials are very low, and there is appropriate infrastructure in these areas, and they mostly have good access to global markets, in addition to domestic markets. And in these areas, very special discounts and exemptions are offered as well", the secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council further highlighted.

"Profitability in these areas is very high and our goal with these packages is to make the work of the investor easy", he underlined.

As announced by Abdolmaleki, Iran unveiled 850 foreign investment packages in the 23rd China International Fair for Investment & Trade (CIFIT), which was held in last September.

As reported, the country presented packages ready for investment in its 48 free trade and special economic zones during the mentioned fair.

The secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council, who traveled to China to participate in the mentioned event, said at the time that 850 foreign investment packages worth 15 billion euros were ready for the investment of foreign partners, which were presented in that exhibition.

# Iran's export to EAEU members rises 11% in 10 months yr/yr

TEHRAN - The value of Iran's exports to the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) increased by 11 percent in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023-January 20, 2024) as compared to the same period last year, the spokesman of the International Relations and Trade Development Committee of Iran's House of Industry, Mining and Trade said.

According to Ruhollah Latifi, the Islamic Republic exported 3.370 million tons of commodities worth \$1.337 billion to the members of the Eurasian Economic Union in the mentioned 10 months, IRNA reported.

Exports to the EAEU also increased by 19 percent in terms of weight, according to Latifi.

According to the official, fishery, agricultural, and food products account for 42 percent of Iran's export value to Eurasia, and the average value of each ton of Iran's export goods to this union was \$723 in the mentioned period.

The exports of fishery, agricultural, and food products to the EAEU in the said 10 months increased by 17.2 percent in weight and 16.4 percent in value compared to the same period last year.

The Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Belarus were the top destinations for Iranian goods in the mentioned period, respectively.

Iran and EAEU reached a preferential trade agreement in



2018 based on which about 862 commodity items are currently subject to preferential tariffs.

The agreement came into effect on October 27, 2019.

Back in July, the minister in charge of trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) said that the EAEU's cooperation with Iran is actively expanding in various fields, and trade between the two sides has doubled over the past four years.

Andrey Slepnev also said that trade between the union and the Islamic Republic of Iran rose 22 percent in 2022.

The important thing is that bilateral trade exchanges are balanced, that is, almost as much as the Eurasian Economic Union supplies goods to Iran, Iran also exports goods to the member countries of this union, the official noted.

Emphasizing that the EAEU attaches great value to Iranian goods, the minister in charge of trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission said: "Agricultural products now account for 75

percent of the trade exchanges of this union with Iran."

"Industrial goods have a special place in the framework of cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and Iran, and therefore, we are developing trade exchanges in the field of minerals, industries, and chemicals", he added.

Slepnev further expressed his hope that the trade exchanges of the parties would expand in the field of machinery.

During a meeting between the Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mohammad Rezvanifar and Minister in Charge of Customs Cooperation of the Eurasian Economic Commission Eldar Alisherov in Tehran in late April, the two sides explored the ways for increasing customs cooperation to boost the bilateral trade.

During this meeting, Rizvani-Far said: "Although the memorandum of understanding with Eurasia is for three years, the formalities of turning this

memorandum into a long-term agreement will be completed soon, and we will follow up on these agreements through approval in Iran's parliament."

According to the IRICA head, Iran's trade with Eurasian countries is 3.3 billion dollars annually, which includes over 1.5 billion dollars of Iran's exports to Eurasia and more than 1.7 billion dollars of imports from Eurasia.

He also said: "After the agreement and facilitation, our trade exchanges with this union increased by 32 percent in the previous year, and we have set a target in the customs that the figure will increase from 3.3 billion dollars to 10 billion dollars. I think it is quite possible."

"In the goods transit sector, our trade volume was 1.8 million tons, of which more than one million tons of goods were transited from Eurasia through Iran, and over 700,000 tons of goods were transited from Iran to Eurasia", the official further announced.

Minister in charge of Customs Cooperation of the Eurasian Economic Commission, for his part called the meeting with the IRICA head a success and said: "We hope that our three-year temporary agreement with Iran will turn into a long-term agreement in the future and more privileges will be considered between this union and Iran."

He expressed hope that the trade exchanges between Iran and this union be doubled and a trade agreement between the two sides be arranged as soon as possible.

## Annual trade between Iran, Tatarstan up 25%

TEHRAN - The value of trade between Iran and the Republic of Tatarstan in Russia increased by 25 percent in 2023 compared to the previous year, Iran's Consul General to Kazan Davoud Mirzakhani said.

"The value of trade between Iran and the Russian Republic of Tatarstan increased by 25

percent to more than 200 million dollars in 2023," Mirzakhani told Tatar-inform on Sunday.

According to the official, the trade exchanges between the two sides stood at \$182 million in 2022.

Referring to the signing of the free trade agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran

and the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), of which Russia is also a member, Mirzakhani said: "With the implementation of this agreement after its approval in the parliaments and the removal of the customs tariffs on about 7,000 commodity items, it is expected that bilateral trade exchanges will increase significantly."

## NDF to invest \$35b in oil industry within 5 years

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's National Development Fund (NDF) said the fund is going to invest \$35 billion in the oil industry within the next five years, IRNA reported on Monday.

"The fund has a serious plan to inject liquidity in the oil industry,

according to which, in order to realize the plan to increase the country's oil production by one million barrels per day, a total of 35 billion dollars will be invested in five years, and nearly 22 billion dollars of the mentioned figure will be allocated in the next two

years," Mehdi Ghazanfari said.

The official noted that the National Development Fund has recently designed an investment statement, according to which 60-70 percent of its resources will be invested in oil, gas, and petrochemicals sectors; It also

invests 20 percent of the capital in the field of mining, i.e. mineral chains and basic metals.

According to Ghazanfari, NDF is also going to invest 25 trillion rials (about \$500 million) in new technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI).

## Commodities worth \$730m traded at IME in a week



TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 3,180,635 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$731 million on its physical market.

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,708,160 tons of commodities valued at nearly \$506 million.

On this floor the IME sold 1,210,277 tons of cement, 745,000 tons of iron ore, 392,000 tons of sponge iron, 344,103 tons of steel, 8,660 tons of copper, 7,880 tons of aluminum and 250 tons of molybdenum concentrate.

Moreover, the IME witnessed on both

domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 469,613 tons of commodities worth more than \$219 million.

Commodities traded on this floor included 167,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 101,918 tons of polymeric products, 100,342 tons of bitumen, 53,000 tons of lube cut, 33,608 tons of chemicals, 9,150 tons of sulfur, 4,133 tons of oil, 260 tons of feedstocks and 100 tons of waterproofing materials.

The IME also traded within the same week 2,861 tons of goods on its side market.

As previously reported, IME witnessed trade of 13,986,385 tons of commodities, 29 vehicles and four apartment units with a total trading value of nearly \$3 billion on its physical market, during the past Iranian calendar month (ended on January 20), logging growths of 16.7 percent in volume and seven percent in value of trades compared with the month before that.

The exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor, trade of 11,144,000 tons of commodities and 29 vehicles valued at almost \$2 billion.

On this floor the IME sold 4,900,284 tons of cement, 4,249,500 tons of iron ore, 1,725,807 tons of steel, 520,500 tons of sponge iron,

69,725 tons of zinc, 36,206 tons of copper, 32,835 tons of aluminum, 800 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 600 tons of coke, 200 tons of cast iron, 175 tons of lead, 57 tons of precious metals concentrate and 29 vehicles.

It's worth noting that the IME also traded four apartment units on its real estate and housing trading floor.

Moreover, the exchange saw trade of 2,361,184 tons of commodities worth more than \$1 billion on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor.

Items traded on this floor included 754,131 tons of bitumen, 737,400 tons of vacuum bottom, 419,600 tons of polymeric products, 223,500 tons of lube cut, 152,463 tons of chemicals, 46,500 tons of sulfur, 17,819 tons of oil, 9,612 tons of petroleum products, 1,860 tons of feedstocks, 1,148 tons of waterproofing materials and 500 tons of slops wax.

Last was the IME's side market on which the exchange traded 122,990 tons of goods.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

## TEDPIX gains 6,600 points on Sunday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 6,606 points (0.32 percent) to 2,071,132

on Sunday, which is the second day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of

the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange

(IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).



# ICJ reviews occupation of Palestinian lands, as Gaza death toll tops 29,000

From page 1 ▶ Al-Maliki added, "The only solution consistent with international law is for this illegal occupation to come to an immediate, unconditional and total end."

The Palestinian foreign minister also touched upon Israel's deadly war on Gaza that began on October 7.

"The genocide underway in Gaza is a result of decades of impunity and inaction. Ending Israel's impunity is a moral, political and legal imperative," al-Maliki said.

More than 50 countries and three international organizations speak during the nearly week-long event which had been requested by the United Nations General Assembly.

The assembly passed a resolution in December 2022 calling on the world's top court to give an advisory or non-binding opinion on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967.

## ICJ's second opinion in 20 years

This is the second time the UN General Assembly has asked the ICJ for an advisory opinion related to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories.

The ICJ found in July 2004 that Israel's separation wall in



the occupied West Bank violated international law, urging the regime to dismantle the structure. But, Israel has so far refused to do so.

The ongoing ICJ hearings that will continue until February 26 are different from a case filed by South Africa at the UN's top court against Israel for violating the 1948 Genocide Convention in its onslaught in the Gaza Strip.

In late January, the ICJ ruled on South Africa's legal case ordering Israel to take all measures to prevent genocide in Gaza.

Israel captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the Six Day War in 1967. It has expanded settlements in the

West Bank since then. All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law.

Israeli forces withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005. A year later Hamas won a majority in the Palestinian legislative council election. After Hamas took power in 2007, Israel imposed an airtight land, sea and air blockade on the Palestinian territory which has continued till today.

## Gaza death toll tops 29,000

Israel announced a "total" blockade of the already besieged Gaza Strip, including a ban on food and water, after the Hamas resistance movement launched a military operation codenamed

Operation Al-Aqsa Flood in southern Israel on October 7. More than 1,100 were killed in the Hamas attack. About 240 others were seized as captives as well. Around 100 of them were released during a seven-day truce in late November. That was in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners from the regime's jails.

Following the Hamas operation, Israel launched a genocidal campaign in Gaza.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza announced on Monday morning that the death toll from Israel's military action since October 7 has risen to 29,092.

The ministry said the number of people who have been injured in the Gaza Strip over the past 132 days stands at 69,028.

But, the death toll could be higher than official figures as thousands more are missing and feared dead beneath the rubble.

Israeli airstrikes that were followed by a ground invasion on October 27, have destroyed large swaths of the Gaza Strip and displaced a vast majority of the population.

## Zionism is synonymous with Hitlerism

### Brazil's Lula: 'What's happening in the Gaza Strip isn't a war, it's a genocide'

From page 1 ▶ Hamas described the remarks as "an accurate description" of what Palestinians are suffering in the Gaza Strip.

Earlier on Sunday, the Brazilian president also condemned the suspension of humanitarian aid to the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA).

The Brazilian president, who held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the AU summit with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, said his country will increase its contribution to the agency, and urged other countries to do the same.

"When I see the rich world announce that it's halting its contributions to humanitarian aid for the Palestinians, I just imagine how big these people's political awareness is and how big the spirit of solidarity in their hearts is," Lula noted.

Lula, who is a popular voice for the global south and his country currently holds the rotating presidency of the G20, has been attacked non-stop by Israeli officials since his pro-Palestinian remarks at the AU summit.

On Monday, the Israeli regime declared President Lula "persona non grata" after summoning Brazil's ambassador for a reprimand.

This followed the regime formalizing its opposition to what Tel Aviv termed the "unilateral recognition" of a Palestinian state.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu brought the "declaratory decision" to a vote in his cabinet, which unanimously approved the measure, that effectively rubber stamps the regime's stance over its rejection of a Palestinian state.

Public statements and remarks by Israeli ministers have been clear that they seek Israeli settlers to return to the Gaza Strip and expand in the West Bank.

Ministers such as Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir have told their Zionist party supporters that only Jews must be allowed to settle in the occupied West Bank and "Jordan" as well as the Gaza Strip.

It would lay the platform for a

forced expulsion of Palestinians to leave all the occupied lands that were once a Palestinian state from the River to the Sea in 1948.

This is the stark difference between a genocidal campaign – the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group – and ethnic cleansing, which has already been proven without doubt amid the regime's forced displacement of Palestinians over the decades.

According to former Mossad official, Rami Igra, all children in Gaza over the age of 4 should be subject to the occupation's collective punishment, including withholding food and humanitarian aid, because "no one in Gaza is uninvolved."

It is the same fascist rhetoric that was presented by South Africa to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in a case that saw a vast wealth of evidence by current Israeli officials that showed Tel Aviv is waging a genocidal campaign against the Palestinians.

In a separate case brought against the Israeli regime at the ICJ on Monday, the Palestinian foreign minister also told the UN's top court that the regime is committing genocide in Gaza and has enforced a policy of apartheid against Palestinians.

Riyad al-Maliki was the first to speak at the opening of hearings on Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

"The genocide underway in Gaza is a result of decades of impunity and inaction. Ending Israel's impunity is a moral, political and legal imperative," he said.

Al-Maliki highlighted that the regime has "continued to defy with impunity" a provisional order handed down by the court last month telling Tel Aviv to take measures to prevent the possibility of genocide taking place in Gaza.

"I stand before you as 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza, half of them children, are besieged and bombed, killed and maimed, starved and displaced," al-Maliki added.

Many analysts say that it is to countries such as South Africa, and leaders like Lula's, who have shown the courage to voice the reality on the ground, and a reflection of the masses that are demonstrating around the world in their millions over the Israeli military's genocidal campaign in Gaza.

Genocide may not necessarily come in the form of dropping bombs and killing civilians. The regime has employed other deadly tools at its disposal to wage the genocidal campaign in Gaza.

Starvation has been used as a weapon of war by the regime, with the water taps switched off for 2.3 million people in the enclave and a collapsed health system.

Tel Aviv has allowed a trickle of food and medicine to enter Gaza despite UN warnings that hunger and diseases will outnumber the death toll of Palestinians killed by Israeli airstrikes.

International aid and human rights agencies have signed a joint statement blaming the regime for making it "virtually impossible" to carry out humanitarian work.

The statement read that "all of the Israeli supposed-safe spaces have been compromised, without exception, further proof that there was never truly anywhere safe in Gaza."

The statement highlights yet another step by the regime to ensure that the trickle of aid into Gaza is virtually impossible to deliver.

The looming Israeli offensive in Rafah, where 1.4 million Palestinians have been pushed to seek shelter, now appears to be a key part of Tel Aviv's genocidal campaign.

With Egypt making it clear that it won't play a role in forcibly displaced Palestinians being allowed into its territory, the UN has been asking where these Palestinians should go.

Apart from the sea, half of Gaza's population has nowhere else to return to. There is nothing left but rubble in what was once their homes in the tiny coastal enclave.

Israel claims it is working on an "evacuation" plan for the entrapped mass of people in Rafah. The use of that word to describe the further forced expulsion of Palestinians under threat of death is grotesque – implying that they are being saved rather than terrorized. The Biden administration is on record as saying it won't support an Israeli ground offensive in Rafah, but with a glaring caveat: According to a White House readout of Biden's recent call with Netanyahu, the administration's position is "that a military operation should not proceed without a credible and executable plan for ensuring the safety of and support for the civilians in Rafah."

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](https://tehrantimes.com))

## WORLD HEADLINES

### Yemen army hits British ship, downs U.S. drone

Yemen's Ansarullah movement said on Monday the country's army has attacked the Rubymar cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden and the vessel is now at risk of sinking.

The crew are safe, Ansarullah army spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in a statement.

The Yemeni army has also shot down a U.S. drone in the port city of Hodeidah, he said, Reuters reported.

"The ship was seriously hit which caused it to stop completely. As a result of the extensive damage the ship suffered, it is now at risk of sinking in the Gulf of Aden," Sarea said.

The Belize-flagged, British-registered and Lebanese-operated general cargo ship came under attack in the Bab al-Mandab Strait off Yemen on Sunday, British maritime security firm Ambrey said.

### Plight of patients at Gaza hospitals in the spotlight

Doctors across Gaza have described operating on patients without anaesthetics, turning people with chronic conditions away, and treating rotting wounds with limited medical supplies, according to the BBC.

"Because of the shortage of painkillers we leave patients to scream for hours and hours," one of the doctors said, as Israel continues to target health facilities in the Gaza Strip.

Yousef al-Akkad, director of the Gaza European Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis, described the current situation there as the "worst we've faced since the beginning of the war".

"This situation was severe before, so what do you think it's like after receiving thousands more who've been displaced and are now staying in the hallways and the public areas?"

"We're missing anaesthetics, supplies for the ICU, antibiotics and lastly painkillers," said Dr al-Akkad. "There are a lot of people who were severely burnt... we don't have any suitable painkillers for them."

Other doctors from across the Gaza Strip described similar situations. "Even if there is somebody with cardiac arrest or cardiac problems, we put them on the floor and start to work on them," said Dr Marwan al-Hams, director of Rafah's Martyr Mohammed Yusuf al-Najjar Hospital.

### Russia: Ukraine uses toxic agents to carry out attacks

The Ukrainian army uses toxic substances to carry out terrorist attacks, Chief of Russia's Radiation, Chemical and Biological Protection Troops, Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov, said.

"The Ukrainian armed forces use toxic substances not only during military operations, but also to carry out terrorist attacks. For example, on August 9, 2022, Kherson Region Governor Vladimir Saldo was hospitalized with signs of poisoning. Laboratory tests showed the presence of ricin in biomedical tests, which is listed in Schedule 1 of the Chemical Weapons Convention," Kirillov said, TASS reported.

In addition, he said that on December 5, 2023, the head of the Lugansk People's Republic, Leonid Pasechnik, was poisoned with phenolic compounds.

"We know of other cases in which high-ranking officials were poisoned, investigations into which continue," Kirillov added.

### UK blocked resettlement applications from elite Afghan troops

UK Special Forces blocked Afghan troops they had fought alongside from relocating to the UK after the Taliban seized power, according to BBC Panorama.

Leaked documents show special forces rejected applications despite some containing compelling evidence of service alongside the British military. Afghan commandos accompanied British special forces on some of the most dangerous missions of the conflict.

The Ministry of Defense said it was conducting an independent review.

When the Taliban swept to power in August 2021, members of Afghan Special Forces units CF 333 and ATF 444 – known as the "Triples" – were among the groups most at risk of reprisal, having supported UK Special Forces in their fight against the Taliban.

They were eligible to apply for resettlement to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (Arap) scheme, but hundreds had their applications rejected.

### Palestinian resistance warns Israel against limiting Al-Aqsa access in Ramadan

Palestinian resistance groups have warned Israel against its plan to restrict Palestinians' entry to Al-Aqsa Mosque during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, vowing that such measures won't go unanswered.

In a statement released on Monday, the Islamic Jihad said the plan "indicates that the Israeli occupation government has placed the holy mosque under direct targeting, as part of a systematic displacement and Judaization plan that the enemy government seeks to impose within the framework of the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing against our people in Gaza."

It also called on the Palestinian people as well as Muslim and Arab people to take action in a bid to defend the sanctities, on top of which is Al-Aqsa Mosque, according to Al-Manar.

For its part, the Hamas resistance movement said the Israeli plan "is a reflection of the Zionist crimes and religious war waged by radical elements of the Israeli government against the Palestinian people," a statement released on Sunday read.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has sided with far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, endorsing restrictions on Palestinians' access to Al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan, according to Israeli media.

### Amnesty International: Israel must stop fueling apartheid

A prominent rights group has called on Israel to end its "brutal" occupation of Palestine and "stop fueling apartheid and systematic human rights violations".

Agnes Callamard, the secretary general of Amnesty International, said Israel's occupation of Palestine has been characterized "by widespread and systematic human rights violations against Palestinians".

"The occupation has also enabled and entrenched Israel's system of apartheid imposed on Palestinians," she said.

Callamard added that the occupation has over the years "evolved into a perpetual occupation in flagrant violation of international law".

"The world must recognize that ending Israel's illegal occupation is a prerequisite to stopping the recurrent human rights violations" in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, the secretary general of the international NGO said.

## With Netanyahu threatening Rafah invasion, Biden prepares to send Israel more bombs

The most relevant fact about the Biden administration's current position on the war against Gaza is this: There is no Israeli war crime too extreme for Joe Biden to consider pausing, to say nothing of cutting off, the flow of U.S. weapons and financial support for Israel's war of annihilation. On Tuesday, the Senate passed an extraordinary \$14 billion in additional military aid for Israel to continue its occupation and bombing of the Palestinians of Gaza. Biden remains defiant in rejecting global demands for an immediate cessation of Israel's military assault on a starving, overwhelmingly defenseless population. Not only has Biden flatly rejected suggestions that he use the threat of halting military sales to Israel, his administration is

currently preparing a new shipment of powerful munitions to Tel Aviv.

As the conservative death toll in Gaza nears 30,000 — with more than 13,000 children confirmed dead — the White House spin doctors are worried about the 2024 U.S. election. They are desperately trying to project a public image of compassion for the people of Gaza and to sell the public on the idea that Biden has reached the end of his patience with his great friend of nearly 50 years, Benjamin Netanyahu. Confronted with a disastrous series of public statements by Biden where he claimed to have recently met with a special counsel's assertions about his mental acumen, the president's re-election campaign has been

thrust into a scramble to stabilize their public narrative.

Since the International Court of Justice formally ruled that South Africa's genocide suit against Israel should proceed and issued a series of emergency orders directing Israel not to engage in genocidal actions, Tel Aviv has intensified its military operations, laying siege to hospitals and bombing civilian sites as it prepares for a possible full-scale ground invasion of Rafah. The city, which is on the border with Egypt and has been subjected to intense Israeli bombardment in recent days, creating an unsecured 25-square-mile death cage in which 1.4 million Palestinians are now trapped — after being told by Israel to flee there for safety.



## Foreign students tour Soltaniyeh cultural treasures



TEHRAN - In an appreciable endeavor, more than hundred foreign students studying at various Zanjan universities embarked on visits to explore the historical treasures nestled in the famed Soltaniyeh county.

This cultural visit, attended by 120 international students, comprised stops at the UNESCO-designated Soltaniyeh Dome, Soltaniyeh Museum and the Chalabi Oghlou Complex.

During the visit which happened on February 17th, students received enlightening narratives from expert guides, unraveling the precious history of the county.

Parvaneh Asgari, Head of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Soltaniyeh county pinpointed that beyond passive observation, the participants engaged actively in workshops dedicated to the meticulous preservation of historical artifacts. This hands-on experience aimed to foster a deeper appreciation for the significance of cultural heritage.

She also emphasized that the excursion was meticulously crafted to blend recreation with ed-

ucation.

"Its primary goal was to augment the international students' awareness of Soltaniyeh's rich historical and architectural marvels," Asgari noted.

What lends a profound significance to this exploration is Soltaniyeh's standing as a repository of cultural wealth recognized by UNESCO. The Soltaniyeh Dome, an architectural gem, and the Soltaniyeh Museum, housing a trove of historical artifacts, stand proudly on UNESCO's list of protected heritage sites. This acknowledgment by UNESCO adds an extra layer of prestige to the county's commitment to preserving and sharing its cultural legacy.

A World Heritage site in the northwestern province of Zanjan, the mausoleum of Oljaytu at Soltaniyeh is topped by one of the world's largest domes.

The monument located in the capital city of the Mongols' Ilkhanid Dynasty is a mausoleum for Ilkhan Oljeitu, the Ilkhanid's eighth ruler. Though much of the structure's exterior coloring and tiles have faded through the centuries, the intricate brickwork, tilework, and vibrant designs inside the mausoleum have remained largely unscathed.

The unique double-shelled structure of the Soltaniyeh Dome is also believed to have influenced the design of India's Taj Mahal mausoleum.

The UNESCO-registered sites served as a backdrop to an enriching experience, ensuring that these international students carry a piece of Soltaniyeh's cultural legacy with them on their academic journey.

## When did the ancient Egyptians first mummify their dead?

Ancient Egyptians are perhaps best known for the way they treated the dead — from constructing colossal pyramids to filling subterranean tombs with lavish treasures and artifacts. The Egyptians also famously mummified many of the recently deceased to preserve their bodies.

But when did people in ancient Egypt start mummifying their dead?

"The origins of Egyptian mummification, for which there is clear scientific evidence, is [circa] 4,300 BC," Stephen Buckley, a researcher at the University of York in the UK who co-wrote two papers on the topic, told Live Science in an email. "We may find it goes back earlier still," Buckley said.

This evidence includes 6,300-year-old mummy wrappings that were found at an ancient Egyptian cemetery at the site of Mostagedda, about 200 miles (320 kilometers) south of Cairo. The burials were excavated in the early 20th century, and the wrappings were brought to the UK and are now in the Bolton Museum as Buckley and colleagues noted in the PLOS One study in 2014.

In the study, the scientists tested the wrappings and found that they contain resins typically used in mummification. The tests indicate that these resins were made from a variety of ingredi-

ents such as plant oil, animal fats, wax and plant gum. Similar resins were also used in later time periods by the ancient Egyptians for mummification, the scientists noted.

To put the 4,300 BC date into context, this is about a millennium before the Egyptians developed hieroglyphs and about 1,500 years before they started building pyramids. It is also about a millennium before Egypt became unified under a single pharaoh.

### Natural mummification

While the oldest evidence for using artificial means to mummify bodies dates back around 4,300 BC, Egyptians underwent natural mummification in even earlier times.

Natural mummification "is an accidental process caused by favourable burial conditions," such as being buried in hot, dry sand, Buckley said. "The Egyptians didn't start to naturally mummify their dead at any point in time in terms of a conscious act," Buckley said.

Salima Ikram, an Egyptology professor at the American University in Cairo, told Live Science in an email that the earliest examples of naturally mummified mummies date from 5000 BC if not earlier.

(Source: Live Science)

## Iran in frames



A foreign backpacker marvels at the intricate beauty of Khan-e Tabatabaei, a historical gem in Kashan, renowned for its stunning stone reliefs and elaborate courtyard designs dating back to 1880. The house is arranged around four courtyards, the largest of which boasts a large pond with fountains, helping to keep the courtyard cool.

# Discover mesmerizing tale behind stone-adorned trees!

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN - If you find yourself venturing into the deserts of Kerman, southern Iran, don't miss the opportunity to take a 30-mile detour to witness the extraordinary Bagh-e Sangi ("The Garden of Stones").

Situated just east of the town of Sirjan, this remarkable site appears otherworldly at first glance. Tall, dry trees dot the landscape, each adorned with stones, hanging gracefully from their branches. It's a manmade haven for those seeking the unusual, and its visual impact is nothing short of incredible.

What makes this garden even more fascinating is the compelling narrative woven into its creation. Crafted by Darvish Khan Esfandiarpour, a hearing-impaired landowner, the garden took shape starting in 1961. He meticulously suspended each stone from thick wires and large ropes on the withering limbs of the trees.

In January 1963, Mohammad Reza Shah initiated a series of far-reaching reforms recognized as the White Revolution. Following the implementation of land reforms, Darvish Khan,



alongside other prominent landowners, experienced a substantial loss of his extensive holdings. It is recounted that his remaining lands were severed from access to the paramount resource in Iran's arid climate: water.

This way, Darvish Khan's silent protest served as a response to the land reform plan. Over the years, the garden acquired additional layers of meaning, with a new tree symbolizing significant events in the man's life.

Darvish Khan passed away in 2007 at the age of 90 and found his final resting place within his rocky

creation. Though he may no longer be present to narrate the story behind the symbolic stones, the spectacle remains a worthwhile journey.

As mentioned by Visit Iran, Darvish Khan devoted his entire life to building this unique garden. Each stone hanging from the trees and the creation of every tree held a distinct significance for him throughout the years. For instance, a curved stone resembling a shaved head was hung on a tree when his grandson joined the military, while another tree was adorned based on his evolving thoughts during spe-

cial days.

Darvish Khan's life and his Garden of Stones became the subject of films by Parvizi Kimiavi, an Iranian film director, screenwriter, and editor. Darvish Khan's body was laid to rest in his Garden of Stones, marking the culmination of a life dedicated to this mesmerizing creation.

### Who was Darvish Khan?

Darvish Khan Esfandiarpour, better known as Darvish Khan, was born in January 1925 in Miandoab village, Kerman. It is believed that his grandfather was among the powerful rulers of the era, so Darvish's family, enjoy the title 'Khan' after their names. Darvish Khan was one of the major landowners of Sirjan while also making a living through raising sheep and gardening, mainly almonds.

Due to congenital disorders, he was not able to hear or speak but this didn't stop him from trying. There are some myths about him. Locals say he once combated with two leopards and killed them for hunting one of his sheep. Others say he used to entertain himself by playing with wolves and dangerous snakes.

## Seminar to illuminate Baluchestan's cultural canvas

TEHRAN - An inaugural specialized seminar on the authenticity, identity, and production of Iranian handicrafts with a particular focus on the culturally rich region of Baluchestan, titled "Iranian Handicrafts" will be held by Development and Revival Fund in coordination with the Deputy Minister of Handicrafts.

The seminar will be presented on Wednesday, February 21, from 14:00 to 17:00 at the Amphitheater of the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Tehran for enthusiasts in the field of handicrafts.

Aiming to get to know the authenticity and identity of local regions, creating hope and employment, dialogue, and scientific expansion intended to promote investment in the field of handicrafts, the event will be conducted.

This noteworthy gathering will attract a diverse audience such as students, graduates, researchers, small and large-scale producers, exporters, investors, and enthusiasts of Iran's culture and art, to gather to explore

and engage in the diverse world of handicrafts industries.

As per some plans announced by authorized, the seminar's agenda includes presentations from four distinguished speakers, each specialized in different areas of the handicrafts landscape, including Yekta Asgharzadeh, seminar scientific secretary and researcher in intangible heritage, and Reza Ghadirian, an academic lecturer and researcher in textiles for handicraft industries, are the two seminar's lecturers.

The seminar also features Farzad Faraji, former president of the Iranian Potters Association and member of the Biennial Ceramics Policy Council, along with Bita Bahrami Qasr, lecturer and researcher in the interpretation of patterns in handicrafts and clothing.

This free seminar welcomes the public, offering attendees a certificate of participation.

The event marks the beginning of a series that will continue to explore artistic indus-

tries in various regions of Iran in the future.

Currently, a total of 13 cities and three villages in Iran have been registered by the World Council of Handicrafts as "world cities of handicrafts". Based on available data, the handicraft sector of the country has generated jobs for more than 2.5 million people, of which some 1.5 million are registered in government databases and around 0.5 million are licensed workers.

From exquisite carpets to subtle miniature paintings, and from turquoise inlaid objects to floral pottery, each one hints at skills passed down from generation to generation. The majority of skilled Iranian artisans use raw materials like wood, bones, silk, wool, copper, silver, gold, and gemstones to create exquisite handicrafts. They perform a miracle by infusing their sentiments and cultural ideas into these traditional handicrafts. Because of this, Persian artwork is incomparably valuable compared to many other works of art from around the world.

## Zahedan to enhance accessible tourism

TEHRAN - Zahedan, the vibrant capital of Sistan-Baluchestan province in southeastern Iran, is set to transform into an accessible tourist destination.

Reza Ganjali, the deputy chief of tourism in the province, revealed during an interview with ISNA on Monday that Zahedan has been selected as a national candidate for accessible tourism initiatives.

The official highlighted that emphasis was placed on establishing Zahedan as an accessible tourism hub during the national meeting on accessible tourism held in Tehran with the participation of officials from the provincial authority.

"That discussions and exchange of ideas revolved around the topic of enhancing accessibility in tourism, with the attendance of the secretary and members of the national board on accessible tourism, representatives from the provincial tourism directorate, and the Zahedan Municipality," Ganjali added.

Concluding the session, it was agreed upon by the provincial authority and the municipality that Zahedan would be nominated as a candidate for

an accessible tourism city.

Accessible tourism, also known as inclusive tourism or disability tourism, refers to the travel industry's efforts to cater to individuals with disabilities, ensuring they can participate in tourism activities and access facilities without barriers. It primarily focuses on providing equal opportunities for people with disabilities to enjoy travel experiences, accommodations, attractions, and transportation services. The concept extends beyond physical disabilities to include sensory impairments, cognitive limitations, and other accessibility needs.

One key aspect of accessible tourism involves the design and modification of infrastructure and facilities to accommodate individuals with disabilities. This includes wheelchair ramps, elevators, widened doorways, accessible restrooms, and tactile signage.

Promoting accessible tourism not only benefits travelers with disabilities but also presents economic opportunities for destinations and businesses. According to the UN Tourism, individuals with disabilities represent a significant market segment within the global tourism



A view of Makki Mosque in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Baluchestan province, southeast Iran

industry. By making destinations and services more accessible, businesses can tap into this market and attract a broader customer base. Moreover, accessible tourism initiatives contribute to job creation, economic growth, and social inclusion within communities.

## Unveiling Xinjiang's archaeological wonders: a journey through time

Explore the heart of ancient civilizations at the Capital Museum in Beijing. An exhibition showcases 108 remarkable artifacts from Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, including a Bronze Age felt cap and tales from the Gumugou Cemetery. The findings highlight possible sun worship practices and human resilience throughout history.

Delving deep into the heart of ancient civilizations, an exhibition at the Capital Museum in Beijing has emerged as a window to the past, offering a rare glimpse into the archaeological wonders of Northwest China's

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

This showcase, featuring 108 remarkable artifacts, transports visitors to a time where ancient political powers thrived and a unique offshoot of Christianity flourished. Among the treasures on display, a Bronze Age felt cap stands out, not just for its exquisite craftsmanship, but as a testament to the sophisticated culture that once dominated the region.

### Uncovering the secrets of the past

The exhibition is more than a collection of artifacts; it's a narrative

of human resilience, innovation, and belief. One of the focal points of this narrative is the Gumugou Cemetery, an early Bronze Age necropolis that whispers tales of life, death, and reverence in the Xinjiang region.

Researchers have meticulously analyzed the burial orientations at Gumugou, discovering a fascinating connection between these ancient graves and the position of sunrise on the horizon. This significant correlation suggests that the people of Gumugou may have been sun worshippers, paying homage to the celestial body that governs life on Earth.

Such findings underscore the importance of archaeological endeavors in shedding light on the beliefs and rituals that shaped ancient civilizations. The unique cultural and geographical context of Xinjiang, with its blend of ancient political power and religious practices, offers a rich tapestry for exploration. The exhibition not only showcases the region's archaeological development but also highlights the critical role of excavation sites in understanding our shared human history.

(Source: BNN Breaking)



# Iran attending FAO intl. conference on agrifood systems reform

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran is taking a step to reshape agrifood systems across the Asia-Pacific region by dispatching a high-level delegation to the 37th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (#APRC37) being held from February 19 to 22 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The conference aims to address the complex challenges stemming from prolonged pandemics, climate emergencies, and volatile markets that have significantly impacted millions of agrifood producers and consumers in the region.

Headed by Alireza Mohajer, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Agronomy, the Iranian delegation is set to participate in the multi-lateral effort for regional agrifood system reform.

Technical support for the delegation is being provided by the FAO Representation in Iran.

Yubak Dhoj GC, FAO representative ad interim to the Islamic



Republic of Iran, highlighted that "FAO in the Islamic Republic of Iran is contributing to sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation while strengthening the community resilience against natural disasters and climate change impacts."

"This country's high-level participation in this important conference will help guide FAO's work here in Iran and right across the Asia and Pacific region, as all FAO

Member Nations share a common goal of achieving the SDGs by 2030, particularly those goals relating to hunger, poverty and inequality," he added.

The Regional Conference, with participation from 46 FAO Member Nations in Asia and the Pacific, has previously seen hundreds of high-level participants engaging in a virtual Senior Official's Meeting from January 31 to February 2.

The agenda includes a special Ministerial Session, highlighting modernization and digitalization for smallholders in aquaculture and livestock, as well as an overall transformation of agrifood systems in countries across the vast region.

QU Dongyu, the FAO Director-General, is expected to travel from the FAO headquarters in Rome to join the Ministerial Session.

Ministerial roundtable discussions will cover topics such as securing future food and nutrition, investing in poverty reduction and modernization, and strategies for water and food conservation to reduce loss and waste, which are of vital interest not only to the Islamic Republic of Iran, but other countries around the region.

Key areas of focus for Iran include crop production, livestock and animal health, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, water governance, and climate change.

## Italian university ready to expand academic ties with Iran



TEHRAN – Luiss University of Italy has announced readiness to reinforce scientific and academic cooperation with Iranian universities.

Andrea Prencipe, the rector of the Rome-based university, met with Mohammad-Reza Sabouri, the Iranian ambassador to Rome, on Thursday, IRNA reported.

During the meeting, Prencipe said that a number of Iranian students are studying at Luiss University. He expressed the university's readiness to attract more Iranian students.

Sabouri, for his part, highlighted scientific and academic achievements and capabilities of the country in various fields, including economics, management, political science, and international relations, announcing Iran's readiness to exchange professors and students with Luiss University.

### Iranian universities' global ranking

A total of 435 Iranian institutions are among 11,989 institutions ranked in Webometrics world ranking 2024.

Tehran University is the top among Iranian institutions. Its ranking has improved from 305 in 2023 to 285 in 2024, Mehr news agency reported.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences (445), Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Science (606), Sharif University of Technology (639), Amirkabir University of Technology (792), Iran Science and Technology (890), Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (920), Iran Medical Sciences University (940), Ferdowsi University

of Mashhad (940), and Shahid Beheshti University (967) are ranked second to tenth, respectively, in the country.

The Ranking Web is not a ranking of the websites of universities. It is a Ranking of Universities. It uses both webometric (all missions) and bibliometric (research mission) indicators.

According to the results of the 2023-2024 edition of the University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP), 71 Iranian institutions were included in the ranking compared to 64 institutions in the 2022-2023 edition.

URAP World Ranking is based on six academic performance indicators including number of articles, citations, total document, scientific productivity, research impact, and international collaboration.

In the academic performance ranking of 71 universities in Iran, Tehran University was ranked first nationally with a global rank of 231, IRNA reported.

Tehran University of Medical Science (277), and Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Science (436) were ranked second and third, respectively.

In the 2023 edition of URAP, the University of Tehran was ranked first nationally with a global rank of 231.

Golestan University of Medical Science (1307), University of Hormozgan, Amol University of Special Modern Technologies, Vali-e-Asr University of Rafsanjan, Ilam University, University of Science and Technology of Mazandaran are institutions that have recently been ranked among the best in the world in the 2023-2024 edition.

The main objective of URAP is to develop a ranking system for world universities based on academic performance indicators that reflect the quality and the quantity of their scholarly publications.

In line with this objective URAP has been annually releasing the World Ranking of Higher Education Institutions since 2010, and Field

Rankings since 2011.

The most recent ranking gathered data about 3,000 Higher Education Institutes (HEI) in an effort to rank these organizations by their academic performance. The overall score of each HEI was based on its performance over several indicators.

Since URAP is an academic performance-based ranking, publications constitute the basis of the ranking methodology. Both quality and quantity of publications and international research collaboration performance are used as indicators.

In December 2023, the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC) released a report, ranking 115 governmental and 17 non-governmental universities according to six indices.

Education counts for 30 percent, Research counts for 25 percent, Technology and Innovation counts for 20 percent, International Outlook counts for 10 percent, and Social Services, Infrastructure, and Facilities counts for 5 percent, ISNA quoted the ISC head Ahmad Fazlzadeh as saying.

The universities of Tehran, Ferdowsi of Mashhad, Tarbiat Modarres, Shahid Beheshti, and Shiraz were placed first to fifth in the ranking.

The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2024 has listed 36 Iranian universities among the world's top 1,000 institutions, compared with 29 universities in 2023.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024 include 1,904 universities across 108 countries and regions.

The ranking is based on 18 carefully calibrated performance indicators that measure an institution's performance across five areas: teaching, research environment, research quality, industry, and international outlook.

Sharif University of Technology ranked first among Iranian universities with a rank in the range of 301-350.

## Pneumococcal vaccination of babies kicks off

From page 1 ▶ Pak-Aein went on to say that vaccination against rotavirus will start in the calendar month starting February 20 aiming to prevent the hospitalization of 10,000 children per year.

Knowledge-based companies and domestic manufacturers will soon produce both pneumococcal and rotavirus vaccines and present them to the market within the next few months.

### Pneumococcus

Diseases caused by Streptococcus pneumoniae (the pneumococcus) are a major public health problem worldwide. In the developing world, young children and the elderly are most affected; it is estimated that about one million children die of pneumococcal disease every year.

Streptococcus pneumoniae is an encapsulated bacterium with a polysaccharide capsule an essential factor in virulence. About 90 distinct pneumococcal serotypes have been identified throughout the world, with a small number of these serotypes accounting for most diseases in infants. Pneumococci are transmitted by direct contact with respiratory secretions from patients and healthy carriers.

### Vaccination against rotavirus, pneumococcal

A national vaccination plan aiming to combat rotavirus and pneumococcal, which most notably cause diarrhea and pneumonia respectively, was said to be added to the country's immunization program on January 21.

Rotavirus can cause severe watery diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and abdominal pain. Children who get rotavirus disease can become dehydrated and may need to be hospitalized.

Babies can get three doses of vaccine at the 2nd, 4th, and 6th months of life. The vaccine is administered by putting drops in the child's mouth, IRNA quoted Mohsen Zahraei, the head of the preventable diseases department of the Ministry of Health, as saying.

The pneumococcal vaccine helps protect against some types of bacterial infections that can cause serious illnesses like meningitis (an infection in the brain and spinal cord) sepsis (a life-threatening reaction to an infection) pneumonia (an infection in the lungs).

Zahraei further noted that pneumococcal vaccine can be injected when babies are 2, 4, and 12 months old.

"We hope to be able to develop these two vaccines soon. Once the vaccines pass the quality control trials, and obtain the Food and Drug Organization approval, we will be able to use the domestic products in the national vaccination program," Zahraei said.

"Since the development of a vaccine is a complex process and takes a lot of time, the vaccines are imported now. Annual vaccination worldwide prevents the death of two and a half million children, which shows the very high effectiveness of vaccines," he added.



### Measles and rubella eliminated in Iran

In April 2023, the World Health Organization confirmed that measles and rubella have been eradicated in Iran, Health Minister Bahram Einollahi said. This success was achieved for the country in a situation where many European countries have not yet received approval from the World Health Organization regarding the eradication of measles and rubella, but the Islamic Republic of Iran has succeeded in eradicating these two diseases, he added, ISNA reported.

Measles is potentially a deadly disease. Severe complications include pneumonia, diarrhea, blindness, and encephalitis (brain swelling). Most people who get rubella usually have a mild illness, with symptoms that can include a low-grade fever, sore throat, and a rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body.

On December 18, 2022, UNICEF donated 600,000 doses of the measles vaccine to Iran.

In May 2022, Iran announced that the number of confirmed measles cases in the past six months had exceeded 100 cases, despite the fact that the country had eliminated the virus prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sudden rise in the number of refugee arrivals from Afghanistan to Iran as of August 2021 and the delay in providing both Afghan and Iranian children with the necessary routine vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic, were some of the potential causes of increased measles cases in Iran. In response, the Ministry of Health rolled out a measles vaccination campaign, vaccinating all refugees in the country aged 9 months to 30 years old, and called on the public to ensure that the routine vaccination of children is completed as per the national schedule as soon as possible, including children who had missed vaccinations because of the pandemic.

The measles vaccination program in Iran started in 1984 when 34 percent of the population was vaccinated in the first year and 90 to 95 percent of the population after 6 years. Also in 2003, 33 million people were vaccinated with a national program to eradicate measles in the country.

Concerns about the spread of measles in the country are growing as the Afghan population grows. Iran's Primary Health Care (PHC) system is known as a role model in the Health Sector which could be adopted by other countries, both in terms of expanded networking and outreach as well as the successful linkage between the Health Sector and Medical Education institutes, such as Medical Universities, according to UNICEF.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## \$22m earmarked for equipping technical-vocational schools

A total budget of 900 billion rials (nearly \$22 million) has been requested to develop and equip technical-vocational high schools across the country in the current Iranian calendar year (ending March 20, 2019), Mohsen Hosseini, an official with the Ministry of Education has announced.

Describing some of the programs and priorities of the technical and vocational training organization affiliated to the Ministry, Hosseini pointed to improvement of technical and vocational training plans as the Ministry's main priority.

Competency-based education and assessment is among the most important programs of the technical and vocational organization, which must be well implemented in all career and technical education high school, he added, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

## تخصیص ۹۰ میلیارد تومان اعتبار برای تجهیز هنرستان های کشور

مدیرکل فنی و حرفه‌ای دفتر متوسطه وزارت آموزش و پرورش از تخصیص ۹۰ میلیارد تومان اعتبار برای تجهیز هنرستان‌های کشور در سال جاری خبر داد.

به گزارش خبرگزاری مهر، سیدمحسن حسینی مقدم در دیدار با مدیران هنرستان‌های فنی و حرفه‌ای شهر شیراز و برخی از مناطق استان فارس با تشریح برخی از برنامه‌ها و اولویت‌های وزارت آموزش و پرورش در بخش فنی و حرفه‌ای، گفت: کیفیت‌بخشی برنامه‌های دفتر فنی و حرفه‌ای اولویت اصلی آموزش و پرورش است.

حسینی مقدم اظهار کرد: آموزش و ارزشیابی مبتنی بر شایستگی از مهمترین برنامه‌هایی است که در آموزش‌های فنی و حرفه‌ای دنبال می‌شود و باید این شیوه آموزش به خوبی مراقبت شده و در همه هنرستان‌ها اجرا شود.



## Naybandan, Iran's largest wildlife sanctuary

Naybandan, in the eastern province of South Khorasan, is the country's largest wildlife sanctuary. Mammals like Asiatic cheetahs, Persian leopard, caracal, wild goat, jebeer gazelle, wild sheep, mouflon, ibex, Blanford's fox, Rüppell's fox are found in the sanctuary which measures some 1.52 million hectares.





Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
Email: info@tehrantimes.com  
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430  
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737



No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.O. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*The worst co-religionist brother is he who brings trouble to others.*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:18 Evening: 18:09 Dawn: 5:21 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:45 (tomorrow)

## Hamas official addresses Iran Media Expo, highlights journalists' role in resistance



TEHRAN- Osama Hamdan, Hamas' representative in Lebanon has underscored the crucial role of journalists in the resistance and the significance of media warfare at the 24th Iran Media Expo in Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla.

During the opening ceremony of the event on Sunday, Hamdan stated that media warfare is as critical as battlefield warfare, noting the sacrifice of journalists at the hands of Israeli forces due to the importance of reporting, Mehr reported.

"The importance of reporting is greater than the importance of fighting on the battlefield, which is why the Israeli forces martyr journalists."

Highlighting the historical and ongoing impact of media in the struggle against the Zionist regime, he emphasized its role in documenting atrocities during the Al-Aqsa Intifada. He stressed that media plays a vital role in shaping the culture and consciousness of regional countries.

"Media has had an important role from the past to the present. Media activity is part of our battle against the Zionist regime."

Hamdan also acknowledged the responsibility of truthful reporting, noting the positive state of resistance after 140 days of conflict in Gaza. He shared that resistance is not only crucial on the battlefield but also in shaping the future of the region.

Expressing gratitude to the Iranian media outlets and journalists for their support of Palestine, he conveyed his

pleasure at being part of the 24th Iran Media Expo audience.

The 24th edition of the Iran Media Expo kicked off in Tehran on Sunday after a six-year hiatus, bringing together over 600 media outlets, creative groups, and knowledge-based companies to showcase the latest developments in the industry. The event will run until February 21 at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla.

As of February 19, 2024, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)'s preliminary investigations showed at least 88 journalists and media workers were among the more than 29,000 killed since the war began on October 7—with more than 28,000 Palestinian deaths in Gaza and the West Bank and 1,200 deaths in Israel.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) told Reuters and Agence France Press news agencies in October that it could not guarantee the safety of their journalists operating in the Gaza Strip, after they had sought assurances that their journalists would not be targeted by Israeli strikes, according to a Reuters report.

Journalists in Gaza face particularly high risks as they try to cover the conflict during the Israeli ground assault, including devastating Israeli airstrikes, disrupted communications, supply shortages, and extensive power outages.

"CPJ emphasizes that journalists are civilians doing important work during times of crisis and must not be targeted by warring parties," said Sherif Mansour, CPJ's Middle East and North Africa program coordinator.

"Journalists across the region are making great sacrifices to cover this heart-breaking conflict. Those in Gaza, in particular, have paid, and continue to pay, an unprecedented toll and face exponential threats. Many have lost colleagues, families, and media facilities, and have fled seeking safety when there is no safe haven or exit."

## Cartoon of Day



Genocide in Gaza

Cartoonist: Mohammad Sabaaneh from Palestine

## Renowned Tajik Musician Davlatmand Kholov, known to Iranians for his Imam Reza song, passes away



TEHRAN- After a long battle with cancer, the celebrated Tajik virtuoso and music composer Davlatmand Kholov, known to many Iranians for his heartfelt rendition of the piece "Shah Panaham Bedeh" (King, Save Me), passed away on Monday. He was 74.

Kholov was highly regarded by pioneer musicians of Tajikistan. His timeless Piece "Shah Panaham Bedeh" is dedicated to Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shiite imam, and has been cherished by both Tajik and Iranian audiences alike.

Born in 1950, he specialized in the southern folk genre of Tajik music known as Falak, or 'the firmament'. A versatile multi-instrumentalist, Kholov received formal training in Shashmaqam at the Conservatory of Music in Dushanbe. He was renowned for his mastery of instruments such

as the dutar, ghijak, and setar, all of which are popular in Central Asia.

Having earned a doctorate in music from the prestigious Tajikistan Music School and Tajikistan Art University, Kholov was not only a talented vocalist and instrumentalist but also a highly respected educator. His teachings in vocal and instrumental music played a significant role in shaping the next generation of musicians in Tajikistan.

Kholov's performances often featured verses from renowned Persian mystic Jalal ad-Din Rumi. This fusion of Tajik and Persian influences in his music resonated deeply with fans of classical music in the region, showcasing his innovative approach to composition.

In addition to performing with various ensembles, he also shared

his wisdom and experience as a teacher at several educational institutions in Tajikistan.

Over the years, Kholov performed in numerous concerts and festivals both in Tajikistan and abroad, showcasing his talent and spreading awareness of Tajik music. He has also released several albums, garnering critical acclaim.

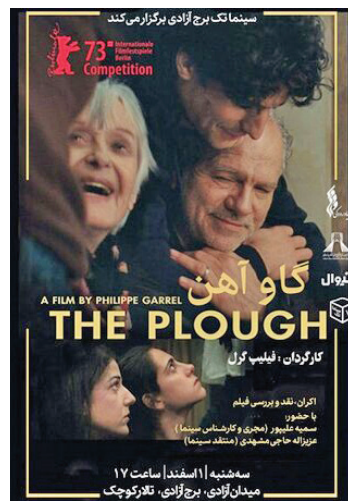
One of Kholov's notable works is the album "The Voices of Falak", in which Kholov employed European symphonic arrangements to depict stories of Tajik life and rural traditions. This unique fusion of traditional Tajik music with symphonic elements showcased Kholov's innovative approach to music and storytelling.

Davlatmand Kholov's contributions to the world of music were further enriched by his collaborations with renowned

Iranian musicians, as evidenced by the joint concerts he performed in Tehran on several occasions that highlighted the fusion of Tajik and Persian musical traditions. These concerts were highly anticipated events that celebrated the cultural heritage shared between the two countries, fostering greater understanding and appreciation for each other's musical styles.

In addition to his successful career as a performer, Kholov was also a respected teacher and mentor to aspiring musicians in Tajikistan. His dedication to preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of his homeland, as well as his commitment to fostering musical collaboration between Tajikistan and Iran, solidified his legacy as a musical pioneer in the region.

## Azadi Tower cinematheque to screen "The Plough"



TEHRAN- The cinematheque of Azadi Tower in Tehran will screen French director Philippe Garrel's 2023 movie "The Plough" on Tuesday.

A review session will be organized after the screening at 5 p.m. by Iranian film critics Somayyeh Alipour and Azizollah Haji-Mashhadi.

"The Plough" tells the story of three siblings, their father, and their grandmother who run a traveling puppet show business. When the father unexpectedly passes away during a performance, the

remaining family members are left to grapple with the loss and the challenge of keeping their beloved family legacy alive. Despite their grief, they band together to continue the show and honor their father's memory by carrying on with the performances.

With the guidance of their grandmother, who serves as a source of strength and wisdom, they strive to maintain the traditions and values instilled in them by their father while also adapting to the changing times and audience expectations.

Through the backdrop of the traveling puppet theater, "The Plough" explores themes of family, legacy, and resilience. As the siblings come to terms with their father's death and find strength in each other, they also discover the power of storytelling and the ability of art to transcend boundaries and connect people.

"The Plough" made its world premiere on February 21, 2023, as part of the 73rd Berlin International Film Festival, where it competed and ultimately won The Silver Bear for Best Director.

## Iranian bookstores host "Doctor Socrates"

TEHRAN- A Persian translation of Brazilian journalist Andrew Downie's 2017 book "Doctor Socrates: Footballer, Philosopher, Legend" has recently been published by Hamgu Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Farnoush Jafari.

"Doctor Socrates: Footballer, Philosopher, Legend" delves into the multifaceted life of Brazilian footballer Socrates, who transcended the boundaries of sports to become a symbol of resistance and social change. Born in 1954, Socrates rose to prominence as a talented midfielder for both the Brazilian national team and Corinthians, where he played a pivotal role in the club's successes in the 1980s. Known for his elegant playing style and astute tactical awareness, Socrates quickly became a fan favorite and earned a reputation as one of the most intelligent and talented players of his generation.

Beyond his accomplishments on the pitch, Socrates was also

a vocal advocate for democracy and social justice in Brazil during a tumultuous period in the country's history. Through his involvement in the Corinthians Democracy movement, Socrates used his platform as a footballer to promote political awareness and encourage civic engagement among his fellow players and fans. His willingness to speak out on controversial issues endeared him to many and solidified his status as more than just a sports figure, but also a respected intellectual and activist.

In "Doctor Socrates," Andrew Downie captures the essence of a man who defied conventions and challenged stereotypes, both as a footballer and as a thinker. Through meticulous research and interviews with Socrates' friends, teammates, and family members, Downie paints a vivid portrait of a complex and charismatic individual whose influence extended far beyond the confines of the football field. The book not only celebrates Socrates' achievements as a player but also pays homage to his unwavering

commitment to his principles and his unwavering belief in the power of sport to effect positive change in society.

Socrates Brasileiro Sampaio de Souza Vieira de Oliveira, known simply as Socrates, was born on February 19, 1954, in Belem, Brazil. Growing up, Socrates showed a natural talent for football and quickly made a name for himself with his creativity, vision, and tactical intelligence on the field. He began his professional career with Botafogo-SP before transferring to Corinthians, where he truly excelled. He was a key player in Corinthians' success in the 1980s, leading the team to victory in the prestigious Campeonato Paulista and the Brasileiro.

Socrates was not only admired for his prowess as a footballer but also for his intellectual pursuits and strong social conscience. He earned a medical degree while continuing to play professionally, earning him the moniker "Doctor Socrates." He was a vocal advocate for democracy and

social justice in Brazil during a time when the country was under military rule. Socrates used his platform as a footballer to speak out against corruption and authoritarianism, becoming a beacon of hope for those seeking political change. His involvement in the Corinthians Democracy movement, where players were given a say in the club's decision-making process, showcased his commitment to empowerment and equality.

Throughout his career, Socrates played a total of 297 games for Corinthians, scoring 172 goals and leaving a lasting impact on the club and its fans. He also represented Brazil at the international level, earning 60 caps and scoring 22 goals. Despite never winning a World Cup, Socrates is fondly remembered for his contributions to the beautiful game and his unwavering dedication to using his platform for social good. His legacy as a footballer, philosopher, and activist continues to inspire generations of athletes and individuals striving to make a positive impact on the world.

## Bassem Youssef believes he lost "Superman: Legacy" role for supporting Palestine

Bassem Youssef, the comedian often called "the Jon Stewart of the Middle East," believes he lost a role in James Gunn's film "Superman: Legacy" because of his outspoken pro-Palestine stance.

In an interview with Salon, Youssef says he had been cast in the film but the role was rescinded shortly after he spoke with Piers Morgan on the subject of the Israel-Hamas war. A clip from that interview went viral in October 2023.

"I was a little bit bitter about losing the role, and I was very sad. In the United States of America,

you can talk about Joe Biden, you can talk about Joe Biden, you can talk about Donald Trump, but you cannot criticize a foreign government, which is very sad, you know?" Youssef told Salon. "And then because of that, I was cast in the new movie Superman, and then they told me 'We changed the script' after Piers Morgan. And I want to assume good faith. I want to believe that this is true."

A source close to the production told The A.V. Club that Youssef never had a formal offer for "Superman: Legacy." According to the source, the

role Youssef was in consideration for was cut from the final draft of the script, which was submitted soon after the writer's strike ended on September 27 (the deal was ratified by union membership on October 9) and before the Hamas attack on October 7. Though Youssef did send in an audition after the actors' strike ended on November 9, the character had already been cut from the film, the source added. (Gunn responded to an IGN story about the character being cut with the comment, "This is accurate.")