

Time for Professionalism

The IAEA should not fall under the influence of Israel’s hostile claims against Iran

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Gaza truce ‘ball in Israel court’, Hamas chief tells Iran FM

TEHRAN- Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, informed Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian of the Palestinian resistance group’s response to a planned ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Amir Abdollahian stated in a post on his X account on Monday that Haniyeh valued the hard stances taken by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, President Ebrahim Raisi and the Iranian nation in support of Palestine and the Gaza Strip.

In the Sunday phone call, the Iranian minister said that Haniyeh also gave him an update on the most recent events occurring on the ground in Gaza, which is ravaged by conflict.

He also underlined that Haniyeh stated he had sent Hamas’ reaction to a combined proposal from Egypt and Qatar on stopping the attacks by the Israeli authorities, trading prisoners, and removing the siege.

The ball is now in the court of the other team, according to the Palestinian official. Haniyeh was described by Amir Abdollahian as stating that “Hamas has honest intentions.” ► Page 2

Iran applauds Hamas reaction to Gaza truce proposal

TEHRAN- Iran said that Hamas’ support for an Egyptian-Qatari plan for a ceasefire in Gaza demonstrated the political astuteness of the Palestinian resistance.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani praised Hamas’s affirmative answer to the political proposal put out to stop the Zionist regime’s assault on the Gaza Strip in a statement released on Monday night.

He said that political intelligence was just another way the resistance movement demonstrated its might on the battlefield.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran supports the plan presented for the restoration of the Palestinian people’s rights, including the immediate and permanent cessation of the Zionist regime’s attacks and crimes, removing the oppressive blockade on the Gaza Strip, releasing Palestinian prisoners, the complete and unconditional pullout of the Israeli occupying forces from the Gaza Strip, and reconstruction of ruins of the war,” he added, according to the ministry’s website.

According to reports, the plan contains three stages, and calls for the cessation of Israel’s attack on Gaza in addition to the release of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli jails and Israeli hostages held in the enclave.

In Gaza, Palestinians celebrated Hamas’s declaration on Monday, hoping that it would finally put an end to a nearly seven-month-long conflict in which Israel has murdered at least 34,700 people in Palestinian territory. ► Page 2

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Will a ceasefire take effect?

By Batool Subeiti

BEIRUT - The Israeli occupation entity cannot breathe without American oxygen and is effectively bound by the supreme American interests.

If there is a primary difference between the two entities the former will submit to the dictates of its imperial master. It is enough for one to consider the extent of the Israeli occupation entity’s dependence on America for military ammunition. 2 months into the war America had already supplied 10,000 tons of military equipment and approved more than 100 arms sales to the Israeli occupation entity. America is leading the battle and the occupation entity is unable to continue waging war without them.

This begs the question of America’s position on the continuation of the war; the American establishment has expressed interest in ending the military campaign against Gaza that has failed. However, the war continued with Netanyahu receiving the support required to sustain it. If a person other than Netanyahu had been in power, Benny Gantz or opposition chief Yair Lapid for example, then a ceasefire agreement would have likely already been achieved.

Netanyahu under pressure to accept ceasefire deal

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN- The political bureau of Hamas has informed Egyptian and Qatari mediators that the organization accepts the text of the latest proposal to reach a ceasefire in Gaza.

The new proposal involves a framework of three stages, which includes many aspects that have been affected by the war, but the stages are not necessarily connected to one another.

In the three-stage formula, the text covers the main issues to reach a permanent ceasefire.

These are the exchange of Israeli captives held in Gaza in return for Palestinian prisoners, a process that will take place in different phases. There is a significantly larger volume of humanitarian aid entering the enclave, the return of all displaced Palestinians and the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the Gaza separation barrier along with all military sites and installations completely dismantled.

Among the notable amendments from the previous text that U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken described as “extremely generous” to Hamas are the following:

Textbook war crime

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- Israel has carried out a ground incursion on the eastern part of Rafah despite global concerns over the fate of some 1.5 million Palestinian civilians who have been crammed into the southernmost city of the Gaza Strip.

Israeli troops seized control of the Rafah border crossing early Tuesday.

The Israeli military said its tanks entered the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing, which links the besieged Palestinian territory with Egypt, and took “operational control” of the crucial border point.

Israel’s move has led to the closure of a route vital for the aid entering Gaza.

Israel claims that the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement has used the crossing to attack Israeli forces. It said Hamas fighters near the crossing launched a mortar attack that killed four soldiers on the Karem Abu Salem crossing, known as Kerem Shalom to Israelis. But the regime has failed to provide any evidence to back up its assertion.

On Monday, Israel ordered about 100,000 Palestinians in parts of eastern Rafah to evacuate to an “expanded humanitarian area” in Khan Younis and al-Mawasi.

Qazvin wins ambassadors’ hearts

TEHRAN - Ambassadors from South Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Nicaragua have recently explored a selection of destinations during their two-day tour to Iran’s Qazvin.

The envoys toured Sa’d al-Saltaneh Caravanserai, the Anthropology Museum of Qajar Bath, Kantur Church, the Alamut fortress, and the tourist village of Aloulak in a program aimed at enriching their understanding of the city’s cultural heritage.

Michael Wehi Mailetonga Walsh, representing New Zealand, expressed his enthusiasm, noting that we would share Qazvin’s beauty with the other ambassadors “who couldn’t make it to join us on this trip”.

He further praised Qazvin for its renowned hospitality and historical architecture, stating that despite the great distance between the two countries, Iranians are known for their warm hospitality and friendly demeanor in New Zealand. ► Page 6



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Iran-Turkey friendship group meets FM

TEHRAN- Members of the Iran-Turkey parliamentary friendship group met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Tuesday. The meeting took place at the Iranian Foreign Ministry. The meeting comes two days after Amir Abdollahian met with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan on the sidelines of an Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit in Banjul, Gambia.

Iran, Azerbaijan to inaugurate major water project soon

TEHRAN - Iran and Azerbaijan are expected to inaugurate a major water project within the coming days, according to a local official in the bordering province of East Azarbaijan.

Yousef Ghanbarzadeh, the managing general of East Azarbaijan Regional Water Organization, said that the construction of Qiz-Qalasi dam, which is the biggest joint water project of Iran and Azerbaijan, has been completed and will be inaugurated within the next days.

He noted that the project has been carried out by the knowledge and potentials of domestic engineers.

The project is expected to lead to agricultural prosperity and expansion of tourism in the region, the official said. ► Page 4

TEHRAN PAPERS

The necessities of a conference

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

Siasat-e-Rooz devoted its editorial to the first International Nuclear Science and Technology Conference 2024 in Isfahan and the visit of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency to participate in this meeting. It wrote: The visit of Grossi takes place while Iran is on one side of the equation, and according to the Agency, Iran has given the most inspections and access to the Agency's inspectors. On the other side of the equation are the Western parties of the JCPOA, who were obliged to implement the JCPOA obligations. They have not only not done anything but have always used the Agency as a political tool to put pressure on Iran. In this situation, during Grossi's trip, Tehran demands to change the Agency's behavior from political work to a technical and specialized approach. What is going on in the nuclear field in Iran these days is derived from Iran's comprehensive interactions with the IAEA. Iran is trying to give another opportunity to the IAEA and Grossi to end the political activities and move in the correct technical direction. Also, this conference should become a place for synergy between thinkers in the nuclear field, and its result can bring many achievements to solve the problems of the world today.

Ham Mihan: A trip with a positive approach

In its headline, Ham Mihan investigated the visit of the Kurdistan Regional President Nechirvan Barzani to Tehran and said: In the past three years, various events have occurred in the region. Some parts of these events are related to the direct relations between Tehran and Erbil, and another part is related to Kurdistan's relations and Israel. These political and security events double the importance of the visit of the head of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to Iran. The economic and political relations between Iran, Iraq, and the Kurdistan Region cause this Region to have special political and security importance for Tehran. Therefore, cooperation with forces like Barzani is naturally helpful in regional issues and deepening Iran-Iraq relations. Iraq has capacities that the Islamic Republic can use, and Iran also has capacities that can be used by Iraq. Iran and Iraq are the strategic depth of each other. When the strategists of both sides are in harmony, these relationships become deeper. For this reason, Barzani's trip will be positive and blessed.

Iran challenges enemies by relying on domestic equipment, expertise: commander

TEHRAN - The commander of the Iranian Army's Air Defense Force has emphasized the strategic imperative of leveraging the skills and knowledge of domestic specialists while pushing the boundaries of indigenous technologies as the cornerstone of the army's approach to tackling threats.

Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard made the remarks during the twenty-sixth practical session of the War Introduction Committee held in Dezful, Khuzestan.

He articulated the significance of Iranian army's strategy among a gathering of professors, veterans, and students from military universities.

Sabahi Fard highlighted the resounding success of the country's armed forces in the True Promise Operation, underscoring not only its impact on inspiring Muslims globally but also as a manifestation of divine promises and the power of unwavering faith in divine will.

Moreover, he underscored the pivotal role played by the Iranian Air Defense Force in safeguarding the nation's airspace and ground bases, both during and after the aforementioned operation, which instilled a sense of pride and appreciation among the Iranians.

Addressing the historic True Promise Operation as the first direct confrontation with the Zionist regime, Sabahi Fard emphasized the unequivocal defeat suffered by the aggressive and deceitful regime, highlighting the stark contrast between its weakness and the formidable preparedness of Iran's armed forces. He also highlighted the Force's crucial role in protecting vital national interests, such as safeguarding oil exports from Kharg Island and securing air routes and airports from potential blockades.

Attributing the victory of the Islamic Republic

Sobh-e-No: An opportunity to solve problems

In a note, Sobh-e-No dealt with Grossi's trip to Tehran. The paper said: The meeting of the Director General of the Atomic Energy Agency with the officials of our country in Tehran is one of the important developments in the process of the country's nuclear activities, which originated from the purposeful diplomacy of the 13th government. It shows that Iran has been able to advance its nuclear diplomacy with the IAEA in line with the regional foreign policy. During the months after the start of the Al-Aqsa storm war, the news of nuclear diplomacy has been under the shadow of the news related to the escalation of political and military tension between Tehran and Tel Aviv, and it has had less opportunity to be reflected in the world media. This provided an opportunity for some Western-Zionist circles to talk about reducing Iran's nuclear breakout time in a false claim and put Grossi under double pressure to pursue this undocumented accusation. Grossi's presence in Iran also provides an opportunity for the two sides to share their concerns about the Agency's inspectors with each other.

Etemad: Iran's deterrence power

In an analysis, Etemad discussed the increase of Iran's deterrence power in the region and said: In the field of foreign policy, the security and defense policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran are based on deterrence and forward defense. When Iran's rivals and enemies have high military power and there is no balance of power, Iran has sought to increase its deterrence power. Simultaneously with the increase of conventional deterrence power, which is mostly based on missile power, drones, and also the expansion of naval power, Iran has made tremendous progress in the nuclear field in these years; but the doctrine of the Islamic Republic in the nuclear field has not been to build nuclear weapons, and there is no proof that it has made a political decision to build nuclear weapons. Therefore, today Iran has the ability to make nuclear and atomic weapons and has become a nuclear power, but it has not made a decision to physically produce an atomic bomb, and there is no proof that it will make such a decision in the near future.



system over its enemies to the wise leadership of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khomeini and the unwavering dedication of Air Defense Force personnel, Sabahi Fard emphasized the enduring legacy of sacrifice, martyrdom, operational initiative, and creativity instilled during the Iran-Iraq War era.

Finally, he reiterated the importance of relying on domestic expertise and pushing the boundaries of indigenous technologies as the linchpin of the army's strategy to counter modern threats, emphasizing the Air Defense Force's continued advancements in acquiring cutting-edge weapons and systems for defense and interception purposes.

In recent years, Iranian military specialists and engineers have achieved notable advancements in producing a diverse array of domestically developed equipment, fostering self-reliance within the armed forces.

Officials from Iran affirm their commitment to enhancing the nation's military capabilities, particularly in missile technology, emphasizing their defensive nature.

Iran unequivocally states that negotiations will not affect its defense capabilities. Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, consistently emphasizes the importance of maintaining and enhancing Iran's defense capabilities.

Gaza truce 'ball in Israel court', Hamas chief tells Iran FM

From page 1 ► In a brief statement released on Monday, Hamas noted that after fighting a seven-month Israeli offensive that has claimed tens of thousands of lives, the group has accepted a ceasefire proposal in Gaza.

The statement said that Haniyeh had notified the mediators from Qatar and Egypt that it approved of their plan for a truce in Gaza.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Monday that Haniyeh had informed Amir Abdollahian about the political strategy intended to halt Israel's attack on Gaza during the negotiations on Sunday night.

It further stated that Haniyeh has reaffirmed Hamas' position, which is to demand the restoration of the Palestinian people's rights to reach any kind of political settlement.

For his part, the chief diplomat for Iran praised the courageous fight of the Palestinian people and resistance groups against the



Israeli regime during the course of the last seven months of war and slaughter against Gaza.

Additionally, Amir Abdollahian expressed Iran's support for the plan aimed at bringing the rights of the Palestinian people to fruition.

This plan calls for the immediate and permanent cessation of crimes committed by the Israeli regime, the lifting of

the harsh blockade on Gaza, the exchange of prisoners, the full and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Strip, and the reconstruction of the areas devastated by war.

He also gave Hamas an update on Iran's most recent diplomatic initiatives in support of Palestine and the resistance movement abroad, including the Islamic Republic's active participation

in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) 15th annual Islamic Summit Conference in Banjul, the capital of Gambia.

According to him, the Israeli soldiers would evacuate to regions close to Gaza during the first phase of the ceasefire.

A permanent truce and an end to hostilities would be proclaimed in the second stage, he added.

Shortly before the invasion, Hamas launched a short-lived but massive military campaign into Israeli-occupied territory close to Gaza, killing about 1,200 Israeli soldiers and settlers.

In October, during its anti-Israeli offensive, Hamas also captured over 250 prisoners.

The Israeli regime has been pressing for the release of the prisoners as part of a possible peace agreement with Hamas in response to mounting pressure from settler groups residing in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Iran applauds Hamas reaction to Gaza truce proposal



From page 1 ► In Gaza, Palestinians celebrated Hamas's declaration on Monday, hoping that it would finally put an end to a nearly seven-month-long conflict in which Israel has murdered at least 34,700 people in Palestinian territory.

Israel's response, meanwhile, has been less enthusiastic as it has persisted in highlighting its intention to strike Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip and to vanquish Hamas altogether.

On the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting in the capital of Gambia, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian met and held talks with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry on Saturday afternoon.

The discussion focused on recent developments both regionally and bilaterally, with particular attention to the situation unfolding in Palestine and Gaza, including efforts to curb the Zionist regime's violations against Palestinians.

At the outset, both ministers recognized the

cordial exchanges between their presidents and emphasized their leaders' shared commitment to strengthening bilateral ties. Updates on regional affairs, notably concerning Palestine and the Gaza conflict, were also exchanged.

During their meeting, Amir Abdollahian extended gratitude for Egypt's proactive measures in addressing the Gaza crisis and reiterated Iran's readiness to extend humanitarian assistance to the region, urging Cairo's collaboration in these humanitarian efforts.

Reflecting on an agreement between the two nations' presidents, Amir Abdollahian highlighted the importance of religious delegations' exchanges to foster interfaith dialogue, a notion endorsed by Egypt.

Tehran cautions IAEA over U.S. political machinations

TEHRAN- The Iranian foreign minister has emphasized that the UN nuclear watchdog must take unbiased and professional positions, urging the U.S. officials to stop inconsistent and erratic actions that could hurt Tehran-IAEA cooperation.

Rafael Grossi, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, met with Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the Foreign Minister of Iran, on Monday in Tehran.

Grossi is in Iran to take part in the 30th national nuclear conference and the first International Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology.

The timing of the IAEA chief's trip to Iran, according to Amir Abdollahian, is ideal, especially in light of the delicate and complex circumstances in the region.

The Iranian foreign minister emphasized the vital role played by the IAEA and stated that stability and security will be restored to the region thanks to Grossi's unbiased and professional views as well as Iran and the Agency's successful collaboration.

According to the Foreign Ministry's website, the top Iranian diplomat then characterized the threats made by the Zionist

authorities to use nuclear bombs as an obvious danger to regional and global peace and security.

He also underscored how crucial it is for the IAEA to react to such alarming claims made by the officials of a regime that is armed with nuclear weapons.

He continued by outlining the history of U.S. non-compliance with earlier agreements about Iran's peaceful nuclear program and asserted that cooperation between Iran and the IAEA should not be impacted by Washington's inconsistent and unstable policies and actions.

Amir Abdollahian also said that while this collaboration should continue in the correct path, both parties must believe that it leads to a breakthrough.

Grossi, for his part, praised Iran's stance of recognizing and expanding the reassuring collaboration with the IAEA and emphasized Iran's critical role in restoring peace and security to the region.

Grossi emphasized that anyone attempting to inflate conflict, tension, and confrontation in the region with any rationale or pretext will fail if Iran and the IAEA work together more closely.

Muslims should widen front against U.S.: IRGC commander

TEHRAN - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Chief Commander, Major General Hossein Salami, has warned that United States is targeting the entire Muslim world in a bid to dominate and exploit its peoples, adding that the Islamic world should unite against Washington.

Addressing a ceremony honouring IRGC advisors assassinated in an Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate in Syria, Salami emphasized that the primary mission of the IRGC's Quds Force is to combat enemies in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and expand the battlefield to weaken them.

«All Muslims are in the same boat,» Salami said. «If the enemy infiltrates one Muslim state, it will move on to others. Therefore, aggressors must be blocked from advancing

their dominance.»

Salami explained that the IRGC Quds Force has successfully halted the enemy's advance in the eastern Mediterranean and is expanding the front to force enemies into disarray. «We are doing this to protect our own national security and the security and dignity of other Muslims,» he added.

Salami also denounced Israel and the U.S. as «the most abhorrent regimes on earth,» accusing them of supporting Israel with weapons and political backing. He warned that the deployment of forces by non-regional powers, particularly the U.S., in the Muslim world only leads to chaos, poverty, and bloodshed.

Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, launched by

Palestinian resistance groups in Gaza, was cited by Salami as evidence of the failure of Israeli intelligence. He also highlighted the IRGC's Operation True Promise, which involved missile and drone strikes on Israeli-occupied territories, as a significant blow to Israel and a demonstration of the weakness of Western-deployed anti-missile systems.

«The political life of the Israeli regime is nearing its end,» Salami asserted. «America's political geography has declined globally, and its moral bankruptcy is evident. The U.S.'s false pretence as a defender of human rights, democracy, and prosperity is crumbling.»

Operation True Promise successfully targeted Israeli military bases across the occupied territories.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Time for professionalism

The IAEA should not fall under the influence of Israel's hostile claims against Iran

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN - The recent visit of Rafael Grossi, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to Iran has raised expectations for a potential breakthrough in relations between Iran and the IAEA regarding the country's peaceful nuclear program.

However, for a significant change to occur, both sides, particularly the UN agency, must be willing to take decisive actions to address the situation once and for all.

Despite Grossi's previous visits to Iran, few have resulted in the level of optimism currently expressed by both parties.

During a press conference in Isfahan, Grossi announced an agreement with Iran to implement joint operational measures based on a statement issued in March 2023, which he said addresses "all concerns" regarding Iran's nuclear program.

Mohammad Eslami, the Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), also confirmed that the agreement reached between the two sides in March of last year is a good basis for mutual cooperation.

"Although Iran's ill-wishers are always dissatisfied with the country's interactions with the agency and seek to downplay the measures and decisions through stigmatization and destructive literature, both sides believe that the recent joint statement is a good basis for cooperation," Eslami



said.

The agreement demands that Iran provide technical explanations for the reported presence of "uranium particles" in three locations. Tehran addressed some of the reports shortly after the 2023 talks with the IAEA, but its cooperation with the agency seemed to get hampered after the West interfered by upping pressure against the country for political purposes.

IAEA needs to decouple from politicization

While talking to journalists, Grossi vowed that the IAEA would prioritize Iran's role and disregard external influences.

Eslami, for his part, said he hopes attempts by the Zionist regime, which has carried out several sabotage attacks on Iranian nuclear sites and assassinated a number of the country's nuclear scientists, would not affect interactions between Tehran and the IAEA.

"At this point, when the nature of this regime has been revealed more than ever to the world and protests are taking place all over the world, we must pay attention to the fact that this destructive regime has been behind anti-Iran actions, and we should no longer use the Zionist regime's remarks and positions as a criterion," the AEOI chief maintained.

The UN nuclear watchdog and its Director-General have long faced persistent allegations of being under the influence of Western and Israeli politicians. The IAEA has often laid out egregious accusations against Iran while overlooking its extensive cooperation with the agency.

"Grossi is close to political circles in the West and throughout his different positions in the IAEA, he has acted more like a politician than a watchdog chief that's supposed to make assumptions and allegations based on authentic reports," said

Hassan Beheshti Pour, a senior analyst of international affairs. "I don't think, however, that Grossi's mistakes should make us cut ties with the IAEA. This is the perfect opportunity for us to finally put an end to all these unfounded accusations. Also, that way, the West will no longer be able to use our nuclear program as an excuse to fulfill its political interests," he told the Tehran Times.

Iran's nuclear sites are among the most heavily inspected by the IAEA globally. The close cooperation largely began after Tehran and the 5+1 group of countries agreed Iran would limit its already peaceful nuclear program in exchange for the termination of sanctions. The deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was signed in 2015 and scrapped by the U.S. less than three years later when then-President Donald Trump withdrew from the pact and reinstated the sanctions under the "maximum pressure campaign". Germany, Britain, and France although officially still part of the JCPOA have followed in the footsteps of Washington in practice.

"I think there is a general understanding that we should resolve our issues with the IAEA once we have dealt with the revival of the JCPOA. I say we should begin to treat the IAEA as an independent body and if the Agency also wants that, it should make sure that it maintains a neutral and independent position under all circumstances," Beheshti Pour added.

Since the overthrow of the Baath regime in 2003, Iraq and the Kurdistan Region have become two important destinations for Iranian goods.

Iran's trade volume with Iraq and the Kurdistan Region has stood at around 13 billion dollars in recent years, just over half of which passes through around half a dozen land border crossings with areas under the control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Iranian officials have repeatedly said that they want to increase the volume to 20 billion dollars in the coming years.

According to the Iraqi Kurdistan's Importers and Exporters Union, Iran ranks as the second-largest trading partner of the Iraqi Kurdistan region, just behind Turkey. Their annual trade amounts to approximately \$6 billion.

The Iraqi Kurdistan's market offers the best opportunity for the presence of Iran's capabilities in various fields.

Over the last two decades, it has seen the regional countries jockeying for position, but Iran's presence in the market has been minimal despite the existence of common cultural and social capacities between the two sides.

Various memorandums have been signed, especially by the provincial authorities in recent years, but the presence of Iranians in the regional market is not proportional to the capacities and talents at their disposal.

For example, there is significant capacity in the medical sector in Iran's Kurdish-populated regions near the border, which can be used by patients and clients from Iraq, including Iraqi Kurdistan.

Currently, the presence of health tourists from the Iraqi Kurdistan in Iran's Kurdish regions is a familiar sight, but there is still room for much bigger numbers given the existing capacities and linguistic and cultural similarities.

The Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran are connected through three official and internationally recognized border crossings: Parviz Khan in Garmiyan, Haji Omran in Erbil, and Bashmakh in Sulaymaniyah. Additionally, trade persists between the two regions through semi-official border points such as Shushme, Sayranban, Kele, and Pishtay Tawela.

Kermanshah in Iran alone has 371 km of land bordering the Kurdistan Region and Iraq, with six border crossings and border markets.

Food industries and industrial products are one of the most important market needs of the Iraqi Kurds, for which there are significant capacities in the Iranian Kurdistan.

Overall, Iraq has always had a significant place in Iran's international trade, where the export of engineering services to rebuild the country's infrastructure is more desirable than the export of goods.

Iran futsal complete top five in FIFA ranking

TEHRAN - Iran national futsal team moved up to fourth place in the first FIFA Futsal Men's World Ranking.

Brazil sit at the summit of the ranking. Portugal pipped Spain to second spot, while Iran and Argentina complete the top five. It means those five nations, along with hosts Uzbekistan, will be the Pot 1 seeds in the upcoming draw for this year's FIFA Futsal World Cup.

Pot 2 will comprise Morocco, Kazakhstan, Thailand, France, Ukraine and Paraguay. New Zealand (19th) and Costa Rica (31st) are the highest-positioned nations from the OFC and Concacaf regions respectively.

Brazil have been on fire since bagging bronze at the last global finals in 2021. They registered back-to-back victories away to Spain last year, and recaptured the Futsal Copa America crown from Argentina in February.

Portugal won Lithuania 2021, the last two UEFA Futsal EUROs and the first Futsal Finalissima.

Spain, the two-time global kings, lost close games to Portugal at the last world and European finals, but have registered positive friendly results in recent years, including a 6-0 win over their Iberian rivals.

Iran finished third at Colombia 2016, famously eliminating Brazil en route, and are fresh from an AFC Futsal Asian Cup triumph. In Asghar Hassanzadeh, Moslem Oladghobad and Hossein Tayyebi, Vahid Shamsaei has three of best players in the world in their respective positions.

President Raisi honors medal winners

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi held a reception at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Tehran, Iran on Tuesday for the Iranian medal winner athletes at Olympics, Paralympics, world championships and Asian Games.

Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs Kioumars Hashemi, head of National Olympic Committee (NOC) Mahmoud Khosravi Vafa and head of National Paralympic Committee (NPC) Ghafour Kargari attended the ceremony.

More than 1,500 athletes were honored in the ceremony.

The President stated that sports champions are the pioneers of creating hope and national pride and that every athlete standing on the championship platform and waving the proud flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran makes people happy, adding, "This public and social happiness is very valuable and precious. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize the expansion of championship sports and the provision and development of its infrastructure".

In this ceremony, with the presence of the President, the top champions and medallists of 32 disciplines and sports departments were praised.

Mauricio Motta Paes daunting task in 2024 VNL

TEHRAN - As the newly appointed head coach of Iran's men's national volleyball team, Mauricio Motta Paes finds himself at the helm of an ambitious mission: to secure Iran's coveted spot at the 2024 Paris Olympics. The path to Olympic qualification, however, is fraught with challenges, testing the mettle of both the coach and his team.

Iran are scheduled to play Serbia in the 2024 Volleyball Nations League (VNL) on May 22 in Brazil in their opening match and will also face Italy (May 24), Cuba (May 25) and Argentina (May 26).

"A daunting task ahead

have further complicated their chances, leaving them with a significant points deficit to overcome.

The weight of expectations is undoubtedly heavy upon Paes' shoulders. Volleyball holds a special place in Iranian hearts, and the national team's performance is a source of immense national pride. Paes must navigate this pressure while simultaneously instilling confidence and belief in his players.

To emerge victorious from this daunting task, Paes will need to demonstrate strategic brilliance and adaptability. He must create a gameplan that capitalizes on his team's strengths while effectively countering the diverse playing styles of their opponents.

"A mission of determination and belief

While the challenges facing Paes and Iran's men's volleyball team are immense, they are not insurmountable. With unwavering determination, strategic brilliance, and the unwavering support of their nation, they have the potential to defy the odds and etch their names in Olympic history.

The 2024 VNL will be their battleground, and the Olympic dream is their ultimate prize. Paes' leadership and the team's collective spirit will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in determining their fate. As they embark on this extraordinary journey, the Iranian volleyball community eagerly awaits the unfolding of this captivating story.

Iran's women's futsal team eighth in FIFA ranking

TEHRAN - Iran's women's futsal team are eighth in the first FIFA Futsal World Ranking released on Monday.

FIFA has launched the official FIFA Futsal World Ranking with powerhouses Brazil the first number-one nation in both the men's and women's charts as the rapidly growing sport takes another major step forward.

Team Melli are eighth in the ranking, above Japan and Italy.

Brazil sit top, followed by Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Colombia, Thailand and Russia.

Although the FIFA Men's World Ranking for football has existed since December 1992 and women's senior national football teams have been officially ranked by FIFA since 2003, that has not previously been the case for futsal. However, the indoor game has enjoyed exponential growth in recent years and this milestone moment represents the natural next step, as well as being the first time that FIFA men's and women's rankings have been launched concurrently.

Javad Karimi joins Brazilian club Itambe Minas

TEHRAN - Iran international setter Javad Karimi joined Brazilian volleyball club Itambe Minas.

The 36-year-old player, who represented Iran at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, has joined the Brazilian side from Arcada Galati of Romania.

"I am very happy to have this opportunity to play for Itambe Minas. It's a big club, who has a fantastic structure and is an iconic team in Brazil and the world. Furthermore, Brazilian volleyball is a school that I admire a lot, so I'm sure it will be a fantastic experience. I will do my best to achieve our goals", said Karimi.

Karimi is among Iran national volleyball team in the 2024 Volleyball Nations League (VNL).

Women's football team to play Belarus in Tehran

TEHRAN - Iran's women's football team will play two friendly matches with Belarus in Tehran.

Team Melli Banovan will play the European team in Tehran on May 30 and also face it on June 2.

Iran's women's football has improved in the recent years.

Team Melli have previously played with Belarus in Tehran and Minsk.

Iran, Azerbaijan to inaugurate major water project soon

From page 1 ► Back in March, Iranian Minister of Energy Ali-Akbar Mehrabian and his Azeri counterpart Parviz Shahbazov weighed plans to enhance cooperation, especially in the completion of two joint projects, namely Qiz-Qalasi and Khoda Afarin dams.

Mehrabian said that the Qiz-Qalasi dam will be inaugurated in the near future in a ceremony to be attended by the Iranian and Azeri presidents.

The two energy ministers also held talks about connecting Iran's electricity grid to that of Russia through the Republic of Azerbaijan.

With a capacity of 62 million cubic meters, the Qiz-Qalasi dam is expected to supply

water to the irrigation and drainage networks of Khoda Afarin County in Iran's northwestern province of East Azarbaijan. The hydroelectric power station at the dam is designed to generate 270 MWh of electricity per annum.

Furthermore, the importance of accelerating the tasks related to hydropower plants was emphasized and it was stressed that the completion of the construction process will be important for both countries.

During the discussions, the two sides also exchanged views on other issues on the energy cooperation agenda of the two countries.

The Minister of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan arrived in Tehran on Thursday, March 14, at the head of a delegation.

Foreign transit from Iran continues to grow

TEHRAN - Foreign transit from Iran was still on an upward trajectory in the calendar month to late April, according to a recent report by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

The IRICA report says that some 1.6 million tons of goods were transited from Iran in the one-month period which shows a 47 percent growth compared to the same month of last year.

Parvizkhan customs on Iran's western borders with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, Shahid Rajaei customs in the southern country, and Bashmaq customs which connects Iran to Iraq, registered the largest foreign transit in the one-month period respectively.



Some 486,000 tons of goods were transited through Parvizkhan customs, with 377,000 tons of goods being transited through Shahid Rajaei customs and another 203,000 tons going through Bashmaq customs, the report said.

FAO, Iran sign co-op MOU to enhance saffron authenticity

TEHRAN - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and Iran's Agriculture Ministry have recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to cooperate in a project aimed at ensuring food authenticity and managing food supply chains.

Titled "Control of Food Authenticity and Management of Food Supply Chain for Successful Achievement of SDGs," the project is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), Sustainable Development Goals and FAO Country Programme Framework (CPF).

The initiative is part of FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and is set to span two years, concluding in December 2025.

Under the auspices of the Deputy for Horticulture of the Agriculture Ministry, the project targets the enhancement of a transparent and reliable saffron supply chain, ensuring food and nutrition security and safety for consumers.

The initiative seeks to address the

challenges posed by the globalization of food supply and the complexities of modern trade, particularly in the saffron industry, where Iran holds a dominant position, contributing approximately 90 percent of the world's production.

The project's impact will be profound, warranting consumers access to safe and authentic saffron products through the enhanced capacity for immediate response and effective enforcement mechanisms for food quality testing and traceability.

This project represents a significant step towards enhancing transparency and traceability in the saffron industry, ultimately contributing to food security and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

This project exemplifies FAO's commitment to fostering sustainable agriculture and food systems, aligning with the global agenda for achieving the SDGs. By collaborating with national counterparts and leveraging expertise, FAO aims to empower countries like Iran in enhancing the resilience and sustainability of their agricultural sectors.

Iran ready to supply gas to Pakistan in sustainable manner: Envoy

TEHRAN - Iran's Consul General in Karachi Hassan Nourian has said that Iran is well aware of Pakistan's need for energy and is ready to supply the gas in a sustainable and sufficient manner to the neighboring country.

Addressing the Meet the Press program at Karachi Press Club, Nourian expressed his gratitude to the organizers of the event, where both brotherly countries can exchange their viewpoints on bilateral relations.

He pointed to the official visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to the three major Pakistani cities of Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi, he said it is not out of place to mention that the two nations of Iran and Pakistan have always stood with each other in sweet and bitter times and both have behaved like one soul in two bodies.

"Iran correctly understands Pakistan's need for energy and is ready to supply the gas in a sustainable and sufficient manner to its neighboring country," Nourian said.

"Lack of energy in Pakistan, as a developing

country, has become a major obstacle for the economic development of this country, and we understand that the Pakistani industrialists and businessmen and even ordinary people consider energy supply as an indisputable issue."

The envoy noted that Iran has recently increased the electricity export required in Baluchistan and Gwadar region up to 200 megawatts and will not spare any help for the economic development of Pakistan.

"We believe that new horizons have been opened for bilateral relations, and hopefully, with the implementation of these agreements, we will witness speedy economic growth and overcome the economic challenges of the two countries," he said.

According to Nourian, both countries have vowed to boost bilateral trade to \$10 billion annually and agreed to boost trade and energy cooperation, including on the gas pipeline deal that has faced delays due to technical and political reasons.

Iran calls for removing obstacles to trade ties with Iraq

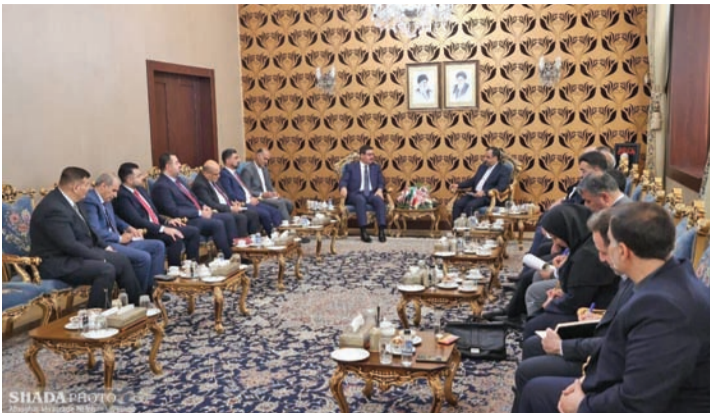
TEHRAN - Iran's Economy Minister Ehsan Khandouzi has called for continued joint efforts with Iraq to remove obstacles to the promotion of trade ties between the two countries, IRNA reported.

The Iranian minister was speaking on Monday at a meeting with Iraq's Trade Minister Atheer Daoud Salman and his accompanying delegation in Tehran.

Khandouzi said that trade relations between Iran and Iraq have made progress over the past years. However, he added, there are still obstacles which need to be removed, including those in financial transactions.

The Iranian official referred to a project to establish a joint industrial town by the two sides, saying that his colleagues have made a lot of efforts in that regard and the project currently awaits Iraq's approval in order for the zoning of the project to be decided.

The Iraqi and Iranian ministers



Iran's Economy Minister Ehsan Khandouzi (R) met with Iraq's Trade Minister Atheer Daoud Salman and his accompanying delegation in Tehran on Monday.

also discussed other projects between the two countries, as well as the reasons behind delays in financial transactions between the two sides.

The Iraqi official pledged that he would make every effort to help remove the obstacles in the way of bilateral trade and economic

relations.

Also on Monday, Iran's First Vice-President Mohammad Mokhber met with Atheer al-Ghurairi and stressed the need for Tehran and Baghdad to carry out trade in national currencies.

He also said that the expansion of trade between Iran and Iraq would require facilitating cooperation

1st shipment of imported hybrid vehicles arrives on Iran's Qeshm Island

TEHRAN - The first shipment of imported hybrid cars has arrived on Iran's Qeshm Island, the director of the customs office of Qeshm Free Zone Organization (QFZO) said.

Speaking to reporters, Amir Ali Davood stated that all the imported vehicles are brand new models, adding that some of the imported cars (including Toyota Corolla, different models of Mercedes-Benz, Toyota SHR, Toyota Camry, Lexus (UX) and 18 models of vans) will be used in the public transportation fleet.

The customs clearance and plate numbering of the imported cars started shortly after these cars were imported to Qeshm Free Zone by one of

a reliable import and export company, he stated.

Under the agreement inked in March 2024 between Qeshm and Kish free zones and this import-export company, some of these cars will be supplied by this company at Kish Free Zone, he said, adding that talks are underway with other free zones of the country for the supply of these cars.

All necessary licenses have been received from the National Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI) and the Department of Environment (DoE) and the imported cars meet requirements of the international CCC and GCC standards, he added.

The next shipments of the imported cars will

arrive in Qeshm Free Zone in the coming days, Davood added.

Back in February, the Manager of the electric vehicle project of the Industry Ministry Hasan Karimi-Sanjari said Iran's public transportation fleet is expected to receive 2,500 electric vehicles.

Referring to a plan for the import of electric cars to the country, Karimi said: "It is expected that 2,500 electric vehicles will be added to the public transport fleet before the New Year." According to the official, the mentioned vehicles are already purchased and 600 of them have been cleared from customs, 600 are still going through customs procedures and 1,500 are being transported into the country.

Tehran Oil Show 2024 to open in Tehran on Wednesday

TEHRAN - Despite all the propaganda against Iran oil industry's international successes and its energy diplomacy approach, the growing number of foreign oil companies' presence at the 28th Oil Show is a clear sign of rising trust in Iran's oil industry.

Director of the 28th Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition, known as Iran's Oil Show 2024, Gholamreza Jamali, made the remarks during a press conference on 6 May in Tehran adding the exhibition opens its doors to the public on 8 May.

Jamali said that 1750 oil industry related companies, including 250 foreign companies, have participated at this year's exhibition from 12 countries including Russia, China, Germany, France, Japan, Belarus, India, Canada, Italy, Turkey, Austria and Argentina adding that Iran's oil show is not only one of the largest oil exhibitions at home but also in the West Asia region.

The great achievements of Iran's oil industry over the last two years, is due to the support of the Minister

of Petroleum, Jamali said at the press conference.

He added: A number of companies failed to take part in this year's oil exhibition mainly due to lack of appropriate infrastructures expressing hope improvements in the facilities to provide proper conditions for participation of all companies in the next rounds of oil exhibitions.

Elsewhere in his remarks he said: a number of world high-ranking officials have been invited to participate at the opening ceremony of the exhibition.

According to him, while during last year's oil exhibition, just 2 thousand square meters had been allocated to accommodate foreign companies, this space has been expanded this year so that the foreign companies exclusive space reaches 5 thousand square meters.

As far as it concerns allocating spaces, the organizers have decided to pay attention to the arrangement based on upstream, midstream and downstream activities and the halls

and booths locations are somehow related to the subject of value chain in the oil industry

In order to support the technological innovations in the oil industry, an especial space has been allocated to the knowledge-based companies, technological companies, universities and start-ups, he also said.

Pointing out that numerous side events will be held on the sidelines of the exhibition, the director of the Tehran Oil Show 2024 announced that many of these events would lead to the signing of contracts and memorandums of understanding in the oil industry, resulting in boosting production with economic results.

Face to face connections

Jamali noted that providing appropriate conditions for direct connection between private and public sector activists is one of the main functions of the oil exhibition every year, which often faces some obstacles over the year due to the existence of administrative

between the private sectors of the two nations.

The vice president called on the Iraqi side to help lift the hurdles on the way of trade exchanges.

The Iraqi minister, for his part, said that Iran is the land of history, civilization and thought, noting that Baghdad seeks further enhancement of trade with Tehran.

Highlighting that Iraq is a good market for Iranian products, Al-Ghurairi said that his country has always been seeking to give a boost to imports from Iran.

He referred to Iran as one of the main trade partners of Iraq, voicing his readiness to remove obstacles in the way of exchanges with Iran.

The 6th meeting of the Iran-Iraq Joint Economic Committee kicked off in Tehran on Sunday.

The two-day event was co-chaired by Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi and Iraqi Minister of Commerce Atheer Daoud Al-Ghurairi.

bureaucracy.

Announcing the slogan of this year's oil exhibition as "Oil industry, production leap, technological optimization", he noted: "At this year's exhibition we will reveal some equipment for the first time which is very important in view of meeting domestic needs and exporting to other countries."

The International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition as the main and most important oil event in Iran is held annually by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) with the support of the Petroleum Ministry. The Petroleum Ministry's subsidiaries including the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) and the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) have an active presence in the event.

Iran's Oil Show 2024 is held from May 8 to May 11 at Tehran International Permanent Fairground.

Abadan Oil Refinery now profitable: Oji

TEHRAN - Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji, says that the Petroleum Ministry has managed to change the Abadan Oil refinery into a profitable one.

In a report to the cabinet on Sunday, May 6, Javad Oji said that the Abadan oil refinery's second phase of development had been completed by relying on the capabilities of domestic contractors, experts, and manufacturers, so currently the refinery was one of the most profitable oil refining facilities in the country, with a 12 trillion rials (about \$24 million), profit last year.

"This profitability happened while the former

minister of petroleum, in 2015, had announced the refinery as a loss-making business which should be transferred for free," the minister said in his report to the cabinet.

Oji said: Gasoline production at the Abadan oil refinery has gone up from 8.0 million liters per day at the beginning of the 13th administration in office in August 2021 to 15 million liters now, while gasoil output has risen to 19 million liters, up by 4.0 million liters when compared with its production when the current administration took office.

According to him, the oil refinery sat on top of

the list of oil products exporters at the Energy and Commodity Exchange last year.

He further noted that the hydrocracker unit of the refinery will come online over the next two months which will increase the value of its euro-5 gasoline production by another 3.0 million euros. Since taking office in August 2021, the number of Abadan oil refinery's oil-derived products has reached 34 items while three years ago it produced only 21 oil-derived products amid the creation of 1300 job opportunities over the last year and the potential to deploy another 600 workforce this year, the minister of petroleum concluded.

TEDPIX falls 15,000 points on Tuesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 7,649 points to 2,231,450 on Tuesday, which is the fourth 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 the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy

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

Head of Iran's Securitas and Exchange Organization (SEO) Majid Eshqi has said that using the capacities of the country's private sector in the stock market has been one of the main strategies of the organization over the past year.

"One of the main approaches of the Securitas and Exchange Organization during the past year has been to use the power of the private sector, because government entities and the public sector do not have the necessary characteristics for economic prosperity, so we must increase the share of the private sector in the capital market," Eshqi said.

Textbook war crime

Israeli forces seize Rafah crossing and cut off vital aid route as famine spreads in Gaza Strip

From page 1 ► The majority of people, who are now in Rafah, have sought refuge there from Israeli offensives in other parts of the Gaza Strip.

They are living in the city amid poor conditions with little shelter, food, or medicine. The closure of the crossing will undoubtedly exacerbate the humanitarian situation there.

Aid shipments have been halted due to the closure of the crossing; three humanitarian relief agencies told Reuters.

Israel has largely restricted the entry of essentials such as food and medicine to Gaza since launching war on the territory on October 7.

UN experts have said that the regime is deliberately starving Gaza's 2.3 million population.

On Sunday, the head of the United Nations World Food Program painted a bleak picture of the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Cindy McCain told NBC News that northern Gaza has entered "full-blown famine". He added that famine was now moving south in Gaza.

The Israeli assault on Rafah has drawn global reactions.

UN denied access

A spokesman for the UN's humanitarian agency, OCHA, said the world body has no access to the closed Rafah crossing.

"We currently do not have any physical presence at the Rafah crossing as our access... has been denied by COGAT," Jens Laerke told a press conference in Geneva, referring to the Israeli agency that oversees supplies into the Palestinian territories.

"We have been told there will be no crossings of personnel or goods in or out for the time being. That has a massive impact on how much stock do we have," he explained.

The World Health Organization also reacted to the closure of the crossing. The UN agency noted



that Israel is not allowing patient transfers through Rafah.

Another UN agency also warned Israel's military operation will disrupt aid deliveries to Gaza.

"Continued interruption of the entry of aid and fuel supplies at the Rafah crossing will halt the critical humanitarian response across the Gaza Strip," the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said in a post on X.

UNRWA added, "Catastrophic hunger faced by people, especially in northern Gaza, will get much worse if these supply routes are interrupted."

EU warns of rising casualties

The European Union criticized Israel for the assault on Rafah.

"The land offensive against Rafah has started again, in spite of all of the requests of the international community — the US, the European Union member states — everybody asking Netanyahu not to attack Rafah," the EU foreign policy chief said on Tuesday.

Josep Borrell warned Israel's offensive could cause a lot casualties.

"In spite of these warnings and these requests, the attack started yesterday night. I am afraid that this is going to cause again a lot of casualties, civilian casualties, whatever they say. There are 600,000 children in Gaza. They will be pushed to so-called 'safety zones' — there are no safe

zones in Gaza," he said.

The head of the Norwegian Refugee Council's operations in Gaza also added her voice to mounting criticism of Israel's move.

"Not only is there nowhere safe to go, for many people there's also no way to get there," Suze van Meegeen told CNN.

Denouncing Israeli atrocities

Officials from across the world also condemned Israel's offensive, with Turkey describing it as a war crime.

"By carrying out a ground attack on Rafah, just a day after Hamas approved Qatar and Egypt's proposal for a ceasefire deal, Israel has added another to the war crimes it has committed in Palestinian territories since October 7," Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz said on X.

Egypt denounced Israel's operation in Rafah, warning its takeover of the crossing point "threatens the lives of Palestinians who depend on it for aid.

Israel launched the offensive on Rafah a day after Hamas accepted an Egyptian-Qatari mediated ceasefire proposal.

The resistance movement said Israel's offensive confirms its intention to disrupt mediation efforts for a ceasefire and the release of captives.

Hamas added that Palestinians in Gaza "are subjected to a war of extermination and systematic starvation" by Israel. Hamas likened it to "the Nazi occupation".

Abject failure

The Israeli incursion appears to be short of the full-fledged offensive into Rafah that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has threatened to carry out for months.

Netanyahu has repeatedly vowed to launch a ground incursion into Rafah in line with his plan to achieve "total victory" over Hamas and "destroy" the resistance group.

Seven months have passed since Israel declared war on Gaza. But, it has failed to defeat Hamas on the battlefield.

Netanyahu is widely aware that the Israeli army will not be able to eliminate Hamas. But he wants to prolong the war to sweep his regime's military failures under the rug.

Currently, Israel has closed the Rafah crossing which is a lifeline for delivering humanitarian aid to the hungry and starved people.

International humanitarian law prohibits the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides that intentionally starving civilians by "depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival, including willfully impeding relief supplies" is a war crime.

Over the past months, UN agencies and human rights organizations have asserted that Israel's actions in Gaza amount to committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Since October 7, Israel has slaughtered nearly 35,000 Palestinians in Gaza. If Israel expands its ground offensive in Rafah, more civilians will be massacred in the city.

Israel is a bogus entity, which is doomed to failure. But a dramatic surge in civilian deaths in the Gaza Strip will bring an absolute disgrace on the US and its Western allies which continue to support it.

INTERNATIONAL

MAY 8, 2024

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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WORLD HEADLINES

Biden urged to apply Leahy Law to Israel

Nine US senators have called on the administration of President Joe Biden to consistently apply the Leahy Law to Israel.

"My predecessor Patrick Leahy wrote the law that bans U.S. aid to foreign military units that violate human rights, yet multiple administrations have failed to equally implement the law," Senator Peter Welch said on X.

"My colleagues and I are calling for the consistent application of the Leahy Law to the [Israeli forces]."

In the letter dated April 30, addressed to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the senators said: "The Leahy Law holds all countries to the same standard, yet it appears that the IDF, by far the largest recipient of US military assistance may be held to a different standard."

The term "Leahy law" refers to two statutory provisions prohibiting the US government from using funds for assistance to units of foreign security forces where there is credible information implicating that unit in the commission of gross violations of human rights, according to the State Department.

GOP senators threaten ICC

A dozen Republican senators sent a letter warning International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Karim Khan not to issue arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials.

"Target Israel, and we will target you," the senators, led by Sen. Tom Cotton, warned in the letter. "Such actions are illegitimate and lack legal basis, and, if carried out, will result in severe sanctions against you and your institution."

On Friday, the office of the chief prosecutor posted a statement on X denouncing threats against it as well as attempts to intimidate and impede its officials.

US media has reported that Israeli officials have recently grown increasingly worried that the ICC is preparing to issue arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, War Minister Yoav Gallant and military chief Staff Herzi Halevi over violation of international humanitarian law in Gaza.

Meanwhile, Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian-American lawmaker in the US Congress, called on the ICC to issue arrest warrants for the Israeli officials.

Israel is accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Ukraine: Russia plotted to assassinate Zelensky

The Ukrainian security service (SBU) says it has foiled a Russian plot to assassinate President Volodymyr Zelensky and other high-ranking Ukrainian officials.

Two Ukrainian government protection unit colonels have been arrested, the BBC reported.

The SBU said they were part of a network of agents belonging to the Russian state security service (FSB).

They had reportedly been searching for willing «executors» among Zelensky's bodyguards to kidnap and kill him.

Israeli protesters: Netanyahu has blood on his hands

Hundreds of Israelis staged rallies calling for the cabinet of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to agree to the terms of a ceasefire deal that Hamas accepted earlier on Monday, according to the Guardian.

About 1,000 protesters gathered in Tel Aviv, while in al-Quds (Jerusalem), at least 100 pro-

testers marched toward Netanyahu's residence with a banner reading, "The blood is on your hands."

Police were forced to clear a large protest from Tel Aviv's Ayalon highway twice on Monday evening, local media reported.

The highway, which has been a focal point of anti-Netanyahu protests over the last year, was blocked by families of captives and others supporting a deal to free captives. Images from the scene showed a number of people who appeared to have been detained by police.

Footage from the scene showed hundreds of demonstrators banging drums, brandishing signs and shouting slogans.

"Bibi is abandoning the hostages!" the demonstrators shouted.?

Putin begins his fifth term as president

President Vladimir Putin began his fifth term at a glittering Kremlin inauguration Tuesday, embarking on another six years as leader of Russia, AP reported.

At the ceremony in the gilded Grand Kremlin Palace, Putin placed his hand on the Russian Constitution and vowed to defend it.

"We are a united and great people and together we will overcome all obstacles, realize all our plans, together we will win," Putin said after being sworn in.

Using the first moments of his fifth term, Putin took a jab at the West.

Russia "does not refuse dialogue with Western states," he said. Rather, he said, "The choice is theirs: do they intend to continue trying to contain Russia, continue the policy of aggression, continuous pressure on our country for years, or look for a path to cooperation and peace."

UK faces fallout from Rwanda scheme

The British Home Office is dealing with growing fallout from the high-profile round-ups of asylum seekers it wants to send to Rwanda, as some have gone into hiding while others have fled across the border to Ireland.

Officials began rounding up asylum seekers to detain them for the Rwanda scheme a week ago, with at least one now on hunger strike and another threatening suicide, the Guardian reported.

While the government has disseminated its message widely about detaining people for Rwanda, it is not clear whether officials had anticipated that some asylum seekers would go into hiding and others would go to Ireland.

Lou Calvey, the director of the charity Asylum Matters, said: "Frontline asylum charities report people leaving their asylum accommodation in order to avoid arrest. They are raising the alarm about the increasing risks of destitution and exploitation."

Asylum seekers who have attended regular reporting sessions at centers around the UK have said that they had never seen things so quiet.

Dutch police attack pro-Palestinian demonstration

Dutch riot police ended a pro-Palestinian demonstration at the University of Amsterdam on Tuesday morning, arresting some 125 people in sometimes violent clashes, according to authorities.

In messages posted overnight on X, police said they had to act to stop the event and dismantle tents set up by protesters, who used violence against police at the site.

"The police's input was necessary to restore order. We see the footage on social media. We understand that those images may appear as intense," police said.

Netanyahu under pressure to accept ceasefire deal

From page 1 ► TEHRAN- The political bureau of Hamas has informed Egyptian and Qatari mediators that the organization accepts the text of the latest proposal to reach a ceasefire in Gaza.

The new proposal involves a framework of three stages, which includes many aspects that have been affected by the war, but the stages are not necessarily connected to one another.

In the three-stage formula, the text covers the main issues to reach a permanent ceasefire.

These are the exchange of Israeli captives held in Gaza in return for Palestinian prisoners, a process that will take place in different phases. There is a significantly larger volume of humanitarian aid entering the enclave, the return of all displaced Palestinians and the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the Gaza separation barrier along with all military sites and installations completely dismantled.

Among the notable amendments from the previous text that U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken described as "extremely generous" to Hamas are the following:

On the 16th day of the first stage, indirect talks would commence regarding the second stage.

In previous texts, the Israeli terms revolved around a second stage that would have seen Hamas lay down its arms and leave the enclave, Israeli forces maintain a military presence in Gaza and Tel Aviv decide who rules the Strip after the war.

The guarantors to the latest agreement, Qatar, Egypt, and in particular the United States, saw Hamas was not budging on these specific Israeli terms despite enormous pressure from Washington to the extent that these conditions have been removed by the U.S. itself.

CIA director Wiliam Burns arrived in the Egyptian capital Cairo on Friday to oversee the changes.

Israeli media have reported that the U.S. was aware of the changes to the latest proposal that was presented to Hamas but did not inform the Israeli side, which experts say is something very hard to believe considering the extremely close ties between Tel Aviv and Washington.

point is not imposing a ceasefire. Facilitating the conditions for a political settlement also includes the objective of weakening the Gaza resistance, which the Israeli occupation entity has failed to achieve thus far.

The strength of the resistance that the Israeli occupation entity cannot overcome implies the Gazan resistance can reach compromises that guarantee their interests, with the American solution to sideline the resistance constituting a political failure. In this case, the West's need for the Israeli occupation entity will naturally reduce incrementally, within the rule of the continuity of policies with time. The entity will shrink to match its true size that reflects its actual capabilities since

Another key element of the ceasefire involves a change to the prisoners' exchange deal.

In the previous text, all Israeli captives held in Gaza would have been released before indirect talks began on a sustainable ceasefire.

The altered agreement stipulates that captured female soldiers, believed to be five in total, along with the elderly, young and sick (believed to be 33 in total, among whom some that the Israeli military may have killed with its indiscriminate bombings) would be exchanged in the first stage in return for Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

Hamas backed down on its demand of 400 Palestinian political prisoners in exchange for one Israeli female soldier held captive in Gaza to 50 Palestinian prisoners.

In the second stage, all remaining Israeli captives, including male soldiers, would be released in return for Palestinian political prisoners, some of whom are serving life sentences, based on the outcome of indirect talks that must end with a sustainable ceasefire.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

it cannot be given a role greater than what it can perform competently.

It can therefore be said that the continuation of the war is an indication of America's acceptance of this; however, what constitutes a red line for America cannot be transgressed by the Israeli occupation entity. This includes acts that would precipitate expansion of the war fronts; for this reason, it forced the Israeli occupation entity to respond mildly to the Iranian retaliatory strikes. It is also due to a lack of American support for the invasion of Rafah that it has not yet occurred.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

Will a ceasefire take effect?

Which entity holds the cards to a ceasefire?

From page 1 ► The continuation of the war will increase the Israeli occupation entity's predicament. It will be of strategic harm. Gaza may run out of food, but it has not run out of weapons. Even if the Israeli occupation entity gains control of areas such as Rafah, it will not be able to maintain control over it.

America is not concerned about the continuation of war, as much as it is concerned with facilitating the conditions for the political settlement it seeks to impose, steps which have included the building of a port in Gaza, facilitating the Palestinian Authority's control over Gaza, and pressuring Saudi Arabia into normalize relations with Israel through a security pact. Therefore, America at this

Qazvin wins ambassadors' hearts



From Page 1 ► “I will promote the beauty of Qazvin among other diplomats,” Kim Junpyo, the South Korean ambassador noted. “And to my fellow Koreans.”

The ambassador further mentioned that this was his first trip outside Tehran since his appointment, which makes the trip unforgettable.

Qazvin is famous for its rich history, and I am proud to be here, he added.

The ambassadors also participated in the opening ceremony of a rural and tribal festival in Qazvin, aimed at showcasing the region's rural and nomadic capabilities in celebration of an ancient local festival, “Panjah be dar,” which is a custom to celebrate day 50th of spring and showing the gratitude to the mighty God for the blessings such as rain.

The province boasts 1,516 nationally regis-

tered natural and historical sites, positioning it as an attractive destination for cultural and historical tourism.

Home to 845 inhabited villages, the Qazvin region was once the capital of the mighty Persian Empire, under the Safavids, from 1548 to 98. Moreover, the province is a major tourist destination with a wonderfully restored caravanserai-turned-arts precinct, some quirky museums, and a handful of decent eating options. For most travelers, Qazvin is also primarily the staging point for excursions to the famous castle of the Assassins and hiking in the sensational Alamut Valley.

Also known as the castle of the Assassins, the 12th-century Alamut castle is nestled on top of a peak. It was once a shelter for the followers of Hasan-e Sabbah (1070–1124) who was a spiritual leader of an Islamic sect. In the early 1930s, British-Italian explorer and travel writer Freya Stark described her exploration of the place in her book “The Valleys of the Assassins.”

Qazvin is also home to one of the biggest roofed caravanserais in the country, Sa'd-al Saltaneh caravanserai. Dating back to the Qajar era, it's a place for discovering tens of Højreh shops, cafes, yards, and a stunning mosque. It's a place for visitors who want to experience the culture, cuisine, and hospitality of Iran.

Menorca village threatens to close to tourists after explosion in numbers

Perched over a small bay, the village of Binibeca Vell on the Spanish island of Menorca has long been a magnet for tourists looking to wander along its winding, narrow lanes lined with whitewashed villas.

But as its popularity swells on social media, setting off a stampede for selfies snapped along its cobblestone streets, residents are threatening to stop access to the village all together.

“The problem isn't tourists,” said Óscar Monge, who heads the group representing Binibeca Vell's 195 property owners. Instead, he pointed the finger at officials, who he said had forsaken residents as they grappled with the noise generated by the constant parade of visitors and the rubbish that piled up daily.

“Binibeca Vell is not a place of adventure, but it's a private housing development where people reside,” Monge added.

It's a debate playing out across Spain and much of Europe as residents call on officials to more when it comes to striking a balance between their needs and soaring tourist numbers.

As mentions of Binibeca Vell multiplied on social media, the number of visitors has rocketed to about 800,000 a year, with most of them arriving between May and October, said Monge. This year residents are bracing for as many as 1 million visitors, he added.

“If the administration continues to leave us abandoned, in August we'll carry out a vote

among owners on whether we should close up the development,” he said.

The threat follows years of complaints by residents. Speaking to the news website EIDiario.es last month, one resident vented her frustration over how tourists had behaved while visiting the village. “They went into homes, they sat on chairs, they take things, climb on our walls, they have outdoor parties,” she said. “If this isn't regulated, it will happen every summer.”

Residents began cracking down last year, asking tourists to visit only during certain hours. The schedule was tightened this month to ask that tourists stop by only between 11am and 8pm. “We want to have breakfast peacefully on our terraces and sleep peacefully without noise,” said Monge.

The request on the village's website also asks tourists to refrain from “entering homes” and “climbing balconies”. The request is accompanied by a series of photos depicting one tourist splayed out on a stairwell and another sitting in the chair of a resident.

Seemingly at the heart of the residents' stance is a lapsed deal with local officials. Last year, residents were given €15,000 (£12,850) to help with rubbish removal, while officials committed to better training for tour guides that visit the area and curbs on public transport into the area.

So far the deal has not been renewed. As both sides lay blame on each other, they are scheduled to meet in the coming days. “We're going with very little hope, to be honest,” said Monge.

Iran in frames



A foreign couple poses for a photo during their visits to the UNESCO-listed Tchogha Zanbil, an Elamite-era ziggurat situated in southwest Iran.

IAEA chief visits -400year-old bridge during Iran trip

TEHRAN – On Monday evening, Rafael Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), paid a visit to Pol-e Khaju during his mission to Isfahan.

The UN nuclear watchdog chief was accompanied by his technical negotiating team and Mohammad Eslami, who leads the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), when they walked on the arch bridge built by Shah Abbas II in about 1650.

Grossi touched down in Tehran on Monday morning for discussions with Iranian officials and participation in a nuclear-related conference hosted in Isfahan, home to the imposing



bridge.

The conference, scheduled from May 6 to 8, is set to address various aspects of Iran's nucle-

ar advancements and provide a platform for international dialogue on nuclear issues.

Upon his arrival in the Irani-

Fars attractions delight journo

TEHRAN – A group of journalists and bloggers has embarked on a three-day trip to explore lesser-known attractions in the southern Fars province.

As revealed by the provincial officials, more than 30 Iranian and foreign media personnel have joined the tour which is scheduled for May 6 to 8, according to organizers.

The event is intended to put the UNESCO-listed Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region front and center on the travel itinerary.

The Sassanid era is of very high importance in the history of Iran.

Under the Sassanids, Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance.

Architecture often took grandiose proportions, such as the palaces at Ctesiphon, Firuzabad, and Sarvestan, which are amongst the

highlights of the ensemble.

Crafts such as metalwork and gem engraving grew highly sophisticated, yet scholarship was encouraged by the state.

In those years, works from both the East and West were translated into Pahlavi, the language of the Sassanians.

Rock-carved sculptures and bas-reliefs on abrupt limestone cliffs are widely deemed as characteristics and striking relics of Sassanian art, top examples of which can be traced at Bishapur, Naqsh-e Rostam and Naqsh-e Rujab in southern Iran.

In 2018, UNESCO added an ensemble of Sassanian historical cities in southern Iran -- titled “Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region” -- to its World Heritage list. The ensemble comprises eight archaeological sites situated in three geographical parts of



Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan.

It reflects the optimized utilization of natural topography and bears witness to the influence of Achaemenid and Parthian cultural traditions and Roman art, which later had a significant impact on the architecture and artistic styles of the Islamic era.

The Sassanid archaeological landscape also represents a highly efficient system of land use and strategic utilization of natural topography.

Esfahak artisans lead the revival of ancient skills

TEHRAN – The handicraft scene in Esfahak village has played a pivotal role in both reviving ancient skills and reshaping the local economy and tourism, a local official said on Monday.

“Craftspeople in Esfahak have significantly contributed to revitalizing the value chain of local handicrafts, souvenirs, and tourism in this historical village,” Hassanali Fouladi said.

In the historical village of Esfahak, which is part of Tabas county, more than 20 artisans are engaged in individual and collective handicraft production in 15 workshops located within the historical fabric of the village, Fouladi explained.

The official noted that Esfahak's artisans are active in the fields of rug weaving, pottery, and palm leaf weaving, and their products are used for packaging and presenting the region's souvenirs as effectively as possible.

“Palm leaf and pottery products are utilized for packaging agricultural products such as dates and local fresh vegetables, and the produced fabrics are used for packaging local dried vegetables.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official acknowledged the significant role of women in the local community and their participation in this productive chain.

In 2020, Esfahak won a TO-DO Award that is annually presented by the German Institute for Tourism and Development.

The ancient village boasts a mild climate ideal for crop growth, presenting lush scenery nearly everywhere you look. Its houses typically feature domed roofs and small windows.

In addition to handicrafts, local music holds particular significance for the villagers. Traditional songs and the playing of the tar, a local stringed instrument, are integral parts of village celebrations.

According to local tourism officials, the original essence of



Esfahak was tragically altered by a 7.4 earthquake in 1978. Following the quake, a new village was constructed adjacent to the old one, which had been heavily affected.

Today, with the active involvement of the locals, the refurbished village has been transformed into a tourist destination with plentiful eco-lodge units.

Yazd to host festivals dedicated to flatbreads and handicrafts

TEHRAN – Yazd is gearing up to host the 15th edition of its handicraft exhibition simultaneously with the third traditional flatbread baking festival set to run from May 13 to 18.

On Monday, during a coordination meeting, attended by the provincial officials in charge of arranging the festivals, one of the local officials stated the exhibition aims to show-

case the capabilities of artisans and craftspeople.

“The event is designed to familiarize the public with the culture, customs and traditional handicrafts of Yazd province,” Mohammad-Ali Shah-Hosseini said.

Elaborating on the stalls, Shah-Hosseini added that the exhibited items will include

local clothing, rugs like Gilim and Ziloo, carpets, ceramics, leatherwork, Termeh (a traditional Persian handwoven fabric), candles and traditional dolls.

Encouraging enthusiasts to visit the exhibition during its six-day run, he outlined that the event serves as a platform for local artisans to promote their traditional skills and crafts to a wider audience.

17th-century Caravanserai of Semnan under restoration for tourism

TEHRAN – The northern facade of Caravanserai of Semnan has been restored to its former status as part of a main project to set up the gigantic inn for tourism.

The restoration project is intended to help prepare the caravanserai for public visits and for make it ready to play host to cultural programs, a local tourism official said.

The official noted that the caravanserai, which is a national heritage site since 1973, had served as the central prison of Semnan for 40 years until 2020.

The caravanserai is one of the 999 caravanserais construct-

ed across the country upon the order of Shah Abbas the Great, the 5th Safavid king of Iran. It sprawls across 8,500 square meters and features four iwans (porches) and two entrances.

A caravanserai, also known as a caravansary, is a compound word combining “caravan” with “sara”; the former referring to a group of travelers and the latter meaning the building. These structures often boasted massive portals supported by elevated load-bearing walls. Guest rooms were constructed around the courtyard, with stables situated behind them and doors located in the corners of the yard.

The earliest caravanserais in Iran date back to the Achaemenid era (550 – 330 BC). Centuries later, during the reign of Shah Abbas I from 1588 to 1629, a network of caravanserais was commissioned across the country.

These roadside inns were strategically positioned along ancient caravan routes in the Muslim world, providing shelter for people, their goods, and animals.

The former Silk Road remains the most famous example, dotted with caravanserais that once facilitated trade and travel across vast distances.

Staying at or even just visiting



a centuries-old caravanserai can be a memorable experience for many visitors to Iran, allowing them to immerse themselves in the past and travel back in time. Stories abound of merchants bargaining on prices and recounting their arduous journeys to one another, while their camels leisurely chew on hay.

Technical workshop held to introduce IMIRA

TEHRAN – The National Disaster Management Organization (NDMO) in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), held a technical workshop focusing on the introduction of the new Iranian Multi-sectoral Initial Rapid Assessment (IMIRA).

The two-day workshop was held on April 23 and 24 at the Tehran Disaster Mitigation and Management Organization (TDMMO) in response to the pressing need for improved coordination and strategic planning in disaster response efforts, the UN Website announced in a press release on May 1.

The IMIRA tool aims to establish a well-defined, coordinated, standardized countrywide approach to multi-sectoral needs assessment following disasters.

“Any coordinated response can be effective and efficient with a collective needs assessment,” stated the UN Resident Coordinator, Stefan Priesner, emphasizing that a collective needs assessment using reliable data and analysis is crucial for an effective and efficient response.

“IMIRA will help identify the most pressing needs of disaster-affected populations across various sectors, streamline strategic planning, and optimize resource allocation,” he added.

Over 60 representatives from key government entities involved in disaster management attended the workshop, facilitated by a resource person from UNOCHA Geneva. The event served as a platform for dynamic discussions, exchange of practical exercises, and in-depth exploration of multi-sectoral needs assessment methodologies.

Participants were introduced to the IMIRA phases, from data collection to interactive dashboards, reporting, and interpreting assessment results.

A pilot implementation of IMIRA will be conducted in seven provinces including Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari,



Golestan, Hormozgan, Isfahan, Qom, Qazvin, and Mazandaran.

This pilot phase aims to evaluate IMIRA across diverse disaster contexts, shedding lights on its efficacy in real situations, and laying the groundwork for national rollout.

Government representatives have underscored the importance of standardized multisectoral needs assessments like IMIRA in elevating coordinated response efforts.

The event marked a significant step forward in fortifying the analytical framework that guides the systematic collection and analysis of information on affected people and their needs to inform strategic planning in disaster response.

Iran, OCHA to boost cooperation

On January 26, the UNOCHA and the NDMO conferred on ways to enhance cooperation in dealing with emergencies, providing rapid response to incidents, and taking humanitarian measures.

Birgit Velte, the OCHA humanitarian affairs officer for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and Nejad Jahani, the NDMO deputy director for reconstruction and rehabilitation affairs, met in Tehran on Sunday, January 21.

Referring to the positive relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations, especially the Regional Office of OCHA, Velte said the office is trying to overcome its weaknesses and have a road map for emergency situations, IRNA re-

ported.

She added that the OCHA office's main responsibility is to coordinate the entry of foreign forces and facilities during emergencies, at the request of the affected country's government.

“We want to develop a preparedness plan based on international and the Islamic Republic of Iran's laws to provide rapid response to incidents,” Velte said. Developing such a plan requires more cooperation and talks, she added.

“According to United Nations Resolution 2665, all humanitarian aid programs are exempt from any sanctions, and American sanctions cannot stop banking operations and the provision of equipment in times of emergency,” IRNA quoted Velte as saying.

She went on to add, “We are ready to cooperate for the joint implementation of the program to remove international sanctions in crisis conditions, taking into account national and international capacities.”

Jahani, for his part, said that the humanitarian activities of Iran have nothing to do with political issues.

On the contrary, certain countries delay the delivery of humanitarian aid, even from Iranians to other countries by imposing cruel sanctions, he stressed.

Crisis Management Organization is a coordinating organization the same as OCHA, and according to the organization's rules, the whole goals,

duties, and tasks are foreseen for crisis management in emergencies, he highlighted.

Jahani expressed hope that the development of cooperation along with the exchange of experiences and knowledge and cooperation in the programs of INSARAG (International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) and MIRA (Multi-sectoral Initial Rapid Assessment) will reduce the problems after the accidents and meet the needs of the victims.

INSARAG, Russian EMERCOM assessment

The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and Tehran Fire Department have been assessed by the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) and Emergency Situations and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters of the Russian Federation (EMERCOM).

The initial assessment mission was held from March 9 to 14 to achieve international classification according to the INSARAG standards.

Capacity building is at the heart of INSARAG and the EMERCOM of the Russian Federation, as a member of the INSARAG network, agreed to provide its technical expertise to support this initiative, UN Website announced in a press release on March 19.

Throughout the week-long mission, INSARAG and EMERCOM representatives met with Iranian officials and visited the Relief and Rescue Center of IRCS and Training Center of Tehran Fire Department.

The mission was initiated in response to a request from Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was facilitated by the Tehran Disaster Mitigation and Management Organization (TDMMO) on behalf of the National Disaster Management Organization (NDMO).

This mission established a road-map for the remaining steps ahead of the completion of the classification process.

Protected lands expand to 19.5m ha

TEHRAN – Five new protected areas, measuring 230,000 hectares, have been created across the country, expanding the protected areas to 19.5 million hectares.

The protected areas under the supervision of the Department of Environment (DOE) account for 11.8 percent of the country's lands, IRNA reported.

The history of Iran's first protected areas dates back to 1967 when the proposal for the establishment of two national parks and 15 protected areas as the first protected sites in Iran was approved.

In 1976, there were more than 65 protected areas covering an area of 6.7 million hectares in the country, which has now extended to more than 300 areas with an area of 19.5 million hectares.

The first new protected area with an area of about 63,000 hectares is located in Gavkhoni Wetland with the aim of preventing any change in land use and protecting the vegetation as well as safeguarding the wetland and birds that are present at special times and when the wetland is filled with water.

The second site with an area of about 11,000 hectares is Kalate and Tang-e Sorkh located in Fars province. The goal is to preserve the diverse vegetation and pristine wildlife there. It is one of the prohibited hunting zones.

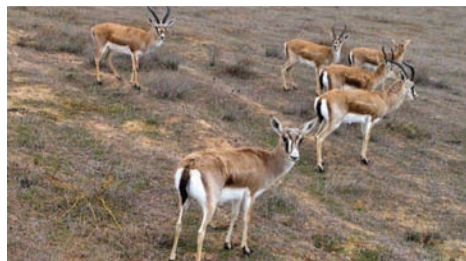
Padena, measuring 30,000 hectares area in the city of Semirom in Isfahan province, is the third added area.

It can enhance the protection of the Dena National Park conservation, which is one of the most important protected areas in Zagros since wildlife moves between these two regions.

With good vegetation and abundant water sources, wildlife can be easily revived. This area was one of the free zones before.

The next area is located in the Kalate desert, covering about 126,000 hectares in the east of Isfahan around Khur and Biabanak. It is home to valuable species such as rams, ewes, gazellas, and Bustards.

The last area, about 200 hectares, is a national natural monument called 'Sheikh Mo-



hammadlu' in Ardabil province. It contains a collection of fossil trees dating back to pre-historic geological periods.

Protected areas rise 5.5 times

The number of protected areas under the supervision of the Department of Environment has increased 5.5 times after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Before the Revolution, there were a total of 58 protected areas in the country, Alireza Najimi, an official with the DOE said.

The number of protected areas has increased to 309 after the Islamic Revolution, ISNA quoted Najimi as saying.

In terms of area, the protected sites have expanded from 6.335 million hectares to 18.963 million hectares, he added.

In September 2023, Hasan Akbari, the DOE director for natural environment and biodiversity, said that during the last two years, the number of protected areas under a comprehensive management plan has increased, indicating a growth of 18 percent.

“The comprehensive plan studies the condition of wildlife, vegetation, water, and soil. Based on that, the land is classified into several zones,” IRNA quoted Akbari as saying.

In these zones, parts of the area are considered only for protection, parts for recreation and nature tourism, and small parts for administrative activities, he explained.

“In fact, zoning and management are done based on specific conditions and the use of land.”

A series of restrictions are imposed on these zones. For example, road construction or mining are banned. These limitations will ultimately lead to better management and preservation of the region, Akbari concluded.

FAO inks project on saffron authenticity in Iran

TEHRAN – The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has signed a project with the Ministry of Agriculture aimed at warranting access to safe and authentic saffron products.

Titled “Control of Food Authenticity and Management of Food Supply Chain for Successful Achievement of SDGs,” the project is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), Sustainable Development Goals, and FAO Country Programme Framework (CPF).

The initiative is part of FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and is set to span two years, concluding in December 2025.

Under the auspices of the Deputy for Horticulture of the MAJ, the project targets the enhancement of a transparent and reliable saffron supply chain, ensuring food and nutrition security and safety for consumers. The initiative seeks to address the challenges posed by the globalization of food supply and the complexities of modern trade, particularly in the saffron industry, where Iran holds a dominant position, contributing approximately 90% of the world's production.

The project's impact will be profound, warranting consumers access to safe and authentic saffron products through the enhanced capacity for immediate response and effective enforcement mechanisms for food quality testing and traceability.

This project represents a significant step towards enhancing transparency and traceability in the saffron industry, ultimately contributing to food security and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

This project exemplifies FAO's commitment to fostering sustainable agriculture and food systems, aligning with the global agenda for achieving the SDGs. By collaborating with national counterparts and leveraging expertise, FAO aims to empower countries like Iran in enhancing the resilience and sustainability of their agricultural sectors.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Men with obese wives at higher risk of cardiovascular disease

The results of a 16-year study at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in Tehran showed that men whose wives were obese or overweight had a higher risk of cardiovascular disease.

Farzad Hadaegh, the lead researcher of the study, said that couples share socioeconomic status, dietary patterns, and other environmental and lifestyle factors, but are genetically unrelated.

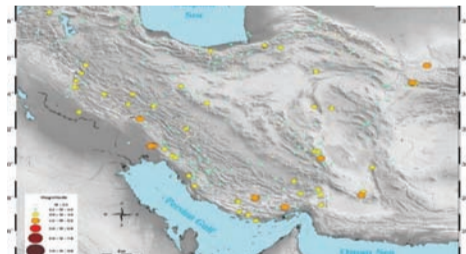
The results of this study emphasize the role of environmental factors, especially lifestyle behaviors of family members in the incidence of cardiovascular disease, and this may help to identify early at-risk individuals in the community and family to implement prevention programs, he explained.

خطر ابتلا به بیماری‌های قلبی عروقی در مردانی که همسران آنها چاق هستند بیشتر است

نتیجه یک پژوهش ۱۶ ساله در دانشگاه علوم پزشکی شهید بهشتی تهران نشان داد خطر ابتلا به بیماری‌های قلبی عروقی در مردانی که همسران آنها چاق یا دارای اضافه وزن بودند، نسبت به مردانی که همسران شان وزن طبیعی داشت، بیشتر است و جالب اینکه این ارتباط مستقل از عوامل خطر مردان است.

دکتر فرزاد حدائق، مدیر پژوهش، گفت: زوجین در موقعیت‌های اقتصادی - اجتماعی، الگوهای غذایی و سایر عوامل محیطی و سبک زندگی مشترک اند، اما از نظر ژنتیکی بی ارتباط هستند.

نتایج این مطالعه به نقش عوامل محیطی به ویژه رفتارهای مربوط به سبک زندگی اعضای خانواده در بروز بیماری‌های قلبی عروقی تاکید می کند و این موضوع ممکن است به شناسایی زودهنگام افراد در معرض خطر در جامعه و برای اجرای برنامه های پیشگیری کمک موثری کند.



TEHRAN –A total of 439 earthquakes have been recorded across the country over the past calendar month that ended on April 19, according to the seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

The epicenter of 22 earthquakes was in neighboring countries, namely Azerbaijan (2), Afghanistan (11), Turkey (2), and Turkmenistan (6), and Armenia (1).

Of the total quakes, 2 had a magnitude of 4.8 on the Richter scale, one occurred on April 5 in Moshrageh in the southwestern Khuzestan province, and the other one occurred on April 17 in Abolfazl-mosque in the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province.

Statistically, 155 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 2; 224 earthquakes with magnitudes between 2 and 3; 48 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4, and 12 earthquakes with magnitudes between 4 and 5 have occurred in the country.

Among the provinces of the country, Khorasan Razavi with 52, Kerman with 50, and Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari with 40 earthquakes, respectively, recorded the highest number of earthquakes in the country.

A total of 6,949 earthquakes were recorded across the country over the past calendar year (March 2023 -March 2024) according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Most of the earthquakes happened respectively in the northeastern Khorasan Razavi, southeastern Kerman, northwestern West Azarbaijan, and eastern South Khorasan provinces, ISNA reported.

Statistically, 2, 268 earthquakes were less than 2 on the Richter scale, 3,685 were between 2 and 3, 796 were between 3 and 4, 181 were between 4 and 5, 22 were between 5 and 6, and 5 were between 6 and 7.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seis-



MAY 8, 2024

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Justice puts everything in its place, and liberality brings out things from a special direction. Justice is a statesman who gives everyone his right, and liberality is a habit belonging to one person only. Therefore, justice is worthier.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:01 Evening: 19:17 Dawn: 3:28 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:04 (tomorrow)

Adaptation of “Hamlet” goes on stage in Isfahan

TEHRAN- A loose adaptation of English playwright and poet William Shakespeare's most popular play “Hamlet” is currently on stage at the Tamasha Hall in Isfahan.

Director Roham Bahirai has renamed the play “Hamlet's Delusions” to perform it in Iran.

Sam Koravand is the sole actor of the play, which will remain on stage until May 16.

“Hamlet” is a tragedy that follows the story of Prince Hamlet of Denmark as he seeks revenge for the murder of his father, King Hamlet. The play begins with the ghost of King Hamlet appearing to his son and revealing that he was murdered by his own brother, King Claudius, who has since married Queen Gertrude and taken the throne. Hamlet is torn between his desire for revenge and his inner turmoil, struggling with his own mortality and the consequences of his actions.

As Hamlet plots his revenge, he becomes increasingly isolated and paranoid, leading to a series of tragic events. He puts on a play reenacting his father's murder in an attempt to confirm Claudius's guilt, which ultimately leads to the exposure of his own madness. Hamlet's relationships with those around him, including his love interest Ophelia and his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, become strained as he becomes more consumed by his quest for vengeance.

As the play progresses, the tension between Hamlet and Claudius reaches its peak, leading to a dramatic confrontation that results in several deaths. Hamlet ultimately fulfills his quest for revenge but at a great cost, as he too succumbs to his wounds. The play ends with the deaths of Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, and Laertes, highlighting the destructive nature of revenge and the tragic consequences of acting on impulse.

Through complex characters and poetic language, Shakespeare explores themes of revenge, madness, and mortality in “Hamlet.”

The play delves into the inner workings of the human psyche, portraying the struggles of a young prince caught in a web of deceit and treachery. Ultimately, “Hamlet” serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of succumbing to one's darkest impulses and the tragic outcome of seeking vengeance at any cost.

“Hamlet” has been adapted into various forms of media, including film, television, and stage productions. One notable adaptation is Kenneth Branagh's 1996 film version of “Hamlet,” which remains faithful to the original text and features an ensemble cast of acclaimed actors. Branagh's adaptation captures the essence of Shakespeare's tragic tale while incorporating cinematic techniques to enhance the narrative, making it accessible to a wider audience.

In addition to traditional adaptations, “Hamlet” has also been reimaged in modern settings and contexts, offering new interpretations of the classic play. Examples include films like “The Lion King,” which draws inspiration from “Hamlet” with its story of a young prince seeking revenge for his father's death, and stage productions that place the characters in contemporary settings to explore relevant social and political themes.

William Shakespeare, widely regarded as the greatest playwright in English literature, was born in 1564. Throughout his career, Shakespeare wrote an impressive body of work that includes over 36 plays, 154 sonnets, and several poems. His plays span across various genres, including tragedies like “Hamlet” and “Macbeth,” comedies such as “A Midsummer Night's Dream” and “Twelfth Night,” and histories like “Henry V” and “Richard III.” Shakespeare's works are renowned for their intricate plots, memorable characters, and profound insights into the human condition, making them timeless pieces of literature that continue to captivate audiences worldwide.

Cartoon of Day



Israeli Genocide

Cartoonist: Muzaffar Yulchiboev from Uzbekistan

Iranian adaptation of “Macbeth” performed at Germany’s Shakespeare Festival

TEHRAN-The Iranian play “Macbeth Zar” was performed at the Shakespeare Festival in Neuss, Germany, on Tuesday.

Written and directed by Ebrahim Poshtkoohi, the play is a production of the Titowak Theater Troupe. It is the only play from Asia participating in the event, IRNA reported.

In “Macbeth Zar,” the director has blended the famous play by Shakespeare “Macbeth” with Zar, a rite commonplace in southern Iran.

“Macbeth” is one of Shakespeare's finest plays, and presents a man's conscience and the effect of guilt on his mind. A dark and bloody play, Macbeth explores reality and illusion; witchcraft and the supernatural; ambition and kingship; the natural order; light and life, darkness and death; blood and dead babies.

Shakespeare's popular royal drama with its blood-soaked plot about guilt, lust for power and manipulation has always promised an intense theater experience. The supernatural magic and enchantment inherent in the plot provide an additional thrill.

The mystical element of the story is the linchpin of Titowak Theater's reading. It combines Shakespeare's great tragedy about the Scottish tyrant Macbeth with the Zar ritual in the southern Iranian province of Hormozgan.

Zar is the name for an evil spirit that is believed to possess people in the southern parts of Iran. In a Zar ritual, the possessed persons are freed from these spirits, which is associated with food and musical performances that culminate in



ecstatic dances.

Zar is a legacy from slavery as it was performed by African slaves who were brought to southern Iran. They performed it on weekends in order to gain energy to enable them to bear the burden of bondage for the rest of the week. Over time, ordinary people also joined in their musical rite comprising ecstatic dance with dammam (tom-tom) playing.

In Titowak's reading, Macbeth lives on the rocky island of Hormoz in the Persian Gulf. Out of greed and a desire for recognition, he kills Duncan, the Zar's master of ceremonies, in order to crown himself as the master of exorcisms.

Rarely has such a transcultural view been taken of a Shakespeare

text. The western text encounters elements of Iranian, Arabic, Indian and African culture and brings a good dose of humor into play. The story of Macbeth serves as a template: Macbeth shakes our faith in human self-determination. What dark forces are simmering within us and who can ultimately save us from the abyss of our own souls?

Having earlier been staged in Tehran, the play was invited to the International Theatre Festival Rainbow in St. Petersburg, Russia last June and received a trophy as well. It also won the Jury prize of the 4th Baghdad International Theater Festival last October.

The cast includes Mojtabi Pirzadeh, Gata Abedi, Yashar Pournaderi, Fahimeh Mousavi Niyaraki, Matin

Mokari Moghaddam, Seyed Javad Hosseini, Alireza Yaghoubi, Reza Khosrofer, and Mohammad Shokravi.

Shakespeare Festival in Germany is a part of the European Shakespeare Festivals Network (ESFN), which organizes similar festivals in Romania and Poland as well. This year's edition of the festival started on May 4 and will run until May 25.

The ESFN brings together the key festivals across Europe who present Shakespeare from an international perspective. Its mission is to encourage collaboration across the various festivals, and to develop new opportunities and possibilities for theatre and performance makers who want to work with Shakespeare.

Vocalist Vahid Taj to give concert at Vahdat Hall

TEHRAN- Prominent Iranian vocalist Vahid Taj is scheduled to give a concert at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on May 14.

He will be accompanied by the Najvay-e Eshq (Whisper of Love) ensemble led by pianist Harir Shariatzadeh, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

the music group, which also performed pieces from enduring Iranian music works at Vahdat Hall last March, will be showcasing new pieces this time.

The ensemble includes Behzad Ravaqi on tar, Ehsan Kalhor on violin, Saeid Chavoshi on aerophone and Amir Kheiri on tombak.

Arasbaran Cultural Center to show Christopher Zalla’s “Radical”

TEHRAN- “Radical”, a 2023 Mexican comedy-drama film written and directed by Christopher Zalla, will go on screen at the Arasbaran Cultural Center in Tehran on Wednesday.

The screening will be followed by a review session by Iranian critics Kurosh Jahed.

The film follows the story of Sergio Juarez Correa, a new teacher who arrives in 2011 at the poorly-run Jose Urbina Lopez Elementary in Matamoros. In an environment plagued by drug cartel violence, the students at the school face some of the lowest academic scores in Mexico due to the lack of resources, including computers, and the teachers' focus on passing standardized tests rather than inspiring true learning.

Sergio surprises his sixth-

grade students by adopting an unconventional teaching method that prompts them to solve problems creatively. For instance, he transforms the classroom by flipping all the desks upside down to represent boats in an ocean, encouraging mathematical thinking. This unique approach leads his students to discover the correct answers, much to the surprise of the school principal, Chucho.

Despite initial skepticism, Sergio's teaching style starts to show positive results as his students become more independent thinkers and gain confidence beyond their challenging circumstances. By fostering student-led learning, he engages the children like never before, earning support even from

Chucho when the outcomes prove successful.

However, Sergio faces opposition from a visiting administrator who disapproves of the students openly discussing moral issues. While attempting to defend his teaching methods, Sergio is sidelined and disheartened, ultimately withdrawing from his responsibilities following the tragic death of Nico, one of his students, causing a setback in the students' academic progress.

Moved by concerns for Sergio, Chucho visits him at home to offer encouragement and persuade him not to give up on the sixth graders. After reflecting on his mission, Sergio reconnects with his gifted student, Paloma, and convinces her father to

support her dream of becoming an aerospace engineer. As the academic year draws to a close, Sergio rushes to the school during standardized testing to motivate his students to believe in themselves, leading to their success on the exams.

Inspired by Sergio's guidance, some of his students go on to achieve success in private business and secure positions at major tech companies in the United States, illustrating the transformative impact of his innovative teaching methods.

At the 7th Astra Film Awards, “Radical” was nominated for Best International Feature while Eugenio Derbez was nominated for Best International Actor. At the Sundance Film Festival, the film received the Festival Favorite Award.

55 U.S., UK artists unite for benefit album to support Palestine

More than 50 artists from across the U.S. and the UK have united for a new benefit compilation in support of the Palestine Children's Relief Fund and Palestine Legal. The digital album, entitled Merciless Accelerating Rhythms – Artists United for a Free Palestine, features 55 unreleased songs from independent musicians across genres ranging from ambient electronic to jazz, the National News reported.

The title comes from the poem by Jamaican-American author and anti-apartheid activist June Jordan, who passed away in 2002. Entitled “I Must Become a Menace to My Enemies,” the poem was written in tribute to Agostinho Neto, former president of the People's Republic of Angola in 1976.

The organizers on the album's Bandcamp listing have written: “We as Artists United for a Free Palestine see retaliation as a diversity of tactics; as mutual aid; as solidarity with the people of Palestine; as direct action, if necessary; as an immediate end to the Israeli Occupation Force and a Free Palestine, forever; as a liberated world.

“Our duty as artists has – and always will be – radical acts of care; the least we can do is send aid to those facing/fighting genocide in Palestine, and those organizing access to lawyers and legal support for those who need it.”

Artists who contributed to the compilation include singer-songwriter Phil Elverum, the tenured independent rock musician Kyle Field, rocker John Andrews, folk musician Libby Rodenbough, Magnolia Electric Co.'s Jason Evans Groth, and more. Numerous projects in benefit of Palestine have been released over the last six months. Also in the independent music world, American singer-songwriter Adrienne Lenker released a solo EP ahead of her latest album release, with all proceeds also going to Palestine Children's Relief Fund.

Artists from the film industry also joined forces recently for the Cinema for Gaza initiative, a ten-day auction which raised \$315,000 for Medical Aid for Palestinians, a British charity that offers medical services in Gaza. Contributions to the auction

included Tilda Swinton, Ramy Youssef, Annie Lennox, Joaquin Phoenix and Jonathan Glazer.

The death toll for the continuing conflict in Gaza has surpassed 34,600, with over 77,800 injured.

More than seven months into the Israeli war, vast swathes of Gaza lay in ruins, pushing 85 percent of the enclave's population into internal displacement besides a crippling blockade on food, clean water and medicine.

A report by UNDP and the UN Economic Commission for Western Asia paints a dire picture of the struggle to survive in Gaza where 201,000 jobs have been lost since the war began and the economy contracted 81 percent in the last quarter of 2023.

According to the report, the world hasn't seen anything like the unprecedented destruction of housing in Gaza since World War II, and it would take at least until 2040 to restore the homes devastated in Israel's bombing and ground offensive if the conflict ended today and the rough estimate for the overall reconstruction of Gaza is between \$40 billion and \$50 billion.