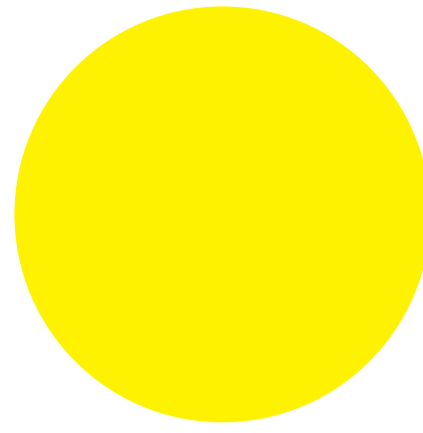


Raisi: Muslim states' united stance could have prevented Israeli crimes

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Israel faces int'l criticism over crimes against Gazans

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Rescuers pull a child out of the rubble of a building hit in an Israeli airstrike in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on October 24, 2023. AFP



Artsakh from self-determination to forced displacement

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Iranian literary agency prefers Lebanon Int'l Book Fair over Frankfurt

The director of the Seljuk Literary Agency emphasized her preference for participating in the Lebanon International Book Fair over the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Nazila Javadpour said, "Although I knew the trip to Beirut would not yield commercial benefits, I chose to attend to witness the courage of Palestinians," IRNA wrote.

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Israel faces int'l criticism over crimes against Gazans

UN deplors Israeli 'clear violations'

International Desk

The Israeli regime has faced international criticism and scrutiny as its intensified airstrikes have increased civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip under the pretext of self-defense and eliminating the Hamas resistance group.

Rapidly expanding Israeli airstrikes across the besieged strip killed more than 700 people in the past day as medical facilities across the territory were forced to close because of bombing damage and a lack of power, health officials said Tuesday, AP reported.

The Health Ministry in the Hamas-governed Gaza said Tuesday that 5,791 people have been killed in the territory since the outbreak of war with Israel. The death toll includes 2,360 children. A total of 16,297 people have also been wounded in two weeks of the airstrikes in response to Hamas' surprise attack on Israel on October 7, resulting in more than 1,400 Israeli casualties and over 200 people captured, as reported by AFP.

'Clear violations'

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday alleged violations of international law as Israel pounds Gaza, and urged an immediate humanitarian cease-fire to bring in relief, AFP reported.

"I am deeply concerned about the clear violations of international humanitarian law that we are witnessing in Gaza. Let me be clear: No party to an armed conflict is above international

humanitarian law," Guterres told a Security Council session, without explicitly naming Israel. The Security Council session was bringing together top diplomats including Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who has previously rejected calls for a cease-fire, saying it would only allow Hamas to regroup.

The Palestinian Authority's foreign minister on Tuesday deplored inaction by the UN Security Council to stop "massacres" in Gaza by Israel.

"The ongoing massacres being deliberately and systematically and savagely perpetrated by Israel – the occupying power against the Palestinian civilian population under illegal occupation – must be stopped," Riyadh al-Maliki told a special Security Council session.

"It is our collective human duty to stop them," he said. "Continued failure at this council is inexcusable."

'Beyond the scope of self-defense'

China has condemned violence and attacks on civilians in the conflict, with Foreign Minister Wang Yi declaring Israel's actions "beyond the scope of self-defense".

In a Tuesday phone call with his Israeli counterpart, Eli Cohen, the Chinese foreign minister called for Israel to take effective measures to protect the safety of Chinese citizens and institutions in the Middle East, adding that "all countries have the right to self-defense, but they should abide by international humanitarian law and protect the safety



↑ Palestinians pull a boy from rubble after an Israeli strike on the Zaroub family house in Rafah, Gaza Strip, Palestine, on October 24, 2023. ● HATEM ALI/AP

of civilians". China will do its utmost when it comes to contributing to Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation, its foreign minister told Cohen. China will firmly support any resolution as long as it is conducive to peace, Wang said, calling the conflict a "major choice between war and peace", Reuters quoted the state media as saying. In a separate phone conversation with Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyadh al-Maliki, Wang said he "deeply sympathizes" with the people of Gaza, adding that they need security and efforts to promote peace, not weapons or geopolitical calculations.

'Unrestricted authorization to kill'

Qatar's ruling emir on Tuesday urged the international community not to grant Israel "unrestricted authorization to kill" Palestinians in its fight against Hamas, in what he called a dangerous escalation that threatens global security. "We say enough. Israel shouldn't be granted an unconditional green light and unrestricted authorization to kill," Sheikh

Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani said in an annual speech to open the Persian Gulf state's advisory Shura (Council), his first public comments since Qatar began its most recent efforts to mediate between Israel and Hamas.

'Fight must not be without rules'

In what was apparently a message to Israel, French President Emmanuel Macron said, "The fight must be without mercy, but not without rules" because democracies "respect the rules of war," AP reported.

Macron added that, for example, democracies don't target civilians.

Speaking after meeting Israel's prime minister on Tuesday, he called for access to aid for Gaza and for electricity to be supplied to Gaza hospitals – not for making war. Macron also proposed a coalition to fight terror groups in the region "that threaten all of us."

The French president compared the proposal to the international coalition fighting the Daesh group in Iraq and Syria. He was referring to the resistance groups in Palestine, Lebanon,

and Yemen, saying they must not take the risk of opening a new front.

Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that it is Hamas that is responsible for civilian casualties, but that "we will do every effort to avoid them." He added, "It could be a long war."

Israel said on Tuesday it had killed dozens of Hamas fighters overnight in strikes on Gaza but that its war to destroy them, which involves bombarding and blockading the Palestinian enclave, would take time.

Lebanon won't initiate war

A prominent Lebanese Christian politician allied with Hezbollah said Tuesday that Lebanon would not initiate a war with Israel but would defend itself if attacked.

The comments by Gebran Bassil, head of the Free Patriotic Movement of former president Michel Aoun, came as sporadic clashes continue on the Lebanese border between Hezbollah and armed Palestinian groups in Lebanon on one side and Israeli forces on the other.

"No one can drag us into war

unless the Israeli enemy attacks us, and then we will be forced to defend ourselves," Bassil said after a meeting with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, another Hezbollah ally. Bassil also spoke by phone to Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on Monday. "All the Lebanese agree that they do not want war, but that does not mean that we should allow ourselves to be attacked without a response."

Warning of backfire

In rare comments on an active foreign policy crisis, former US president Barack Obama said some of Israel's actions in its war against Hamas, like cutting off food and water for Gaza, could "harden Palestinian attitudes for generations" and weaken international support for the regime, Reuters reported.

Obama said on Monday any Israeli military strategy that ignores the human costs of the war "could ultimately backfire". It was not clear whether Obama had coordinated his statement with US President Joe Biden, who served as his vice president for eight years.



Raisi: Muslim states' united stance could have prevented Israeli crimes

International Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said that a united stance of Islamic countries could have prevented the aggression of the Israeli regime against Palestinians. The Iranian president made the remarks in a meeting with Saudi Arabia's new ambassador in Tehran, Abdullah bin Saud al-Anzi, on Tuesday.

Referring to Israel's 75-year oppression against the defenseless and innocent people of Palestine, Raisi said that lack of a united position by Islamic countries has led to the continuation of the killing and aggression against

Palestinians.

The president also described Iran and Saudi Arabia as two important countries in the region, saying that expansion of relations between the two countries will be effective in developing and strengthening regional cooperation and solving the problems of the region and the Islamic world.

Saudi Arabia and Israel have been seeking to normalize relations. But following the regime's onslaught on the Gaza Strip, Riyadh reconsidered its foreign policy priorities, putting US-backed plans to normalize ties with Israel on ice.

During a meeting with the new Tunisian ambassador in Tehran, Imad al-Rahmuni, the Iranian president expressed appreciation for the positions of the Tunisian government in rejecting normalization with Israel and emphasized the importance of the unity of Islamic countries in securing the interests of Muslim nations.

Raisi said that the tragedy and crimes that are taking place in Gaza are a shame for those countries that are seeking normalization with Israel.

The UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco signed US-brokered normalization agreements with

Israel in 2020, drawing condemnations from Palestinians who slammed the deals as "a stab in the back of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people."

Iranian president also held a separate meeting with Brazil's new ambassador to Iran, Eduardo Ricardo Gradilone Neto. Raisi said that sending humanitarian aid, stopping Gaza bombardments and lifting the siege on the Palestinian territory and the realization of the rights of the Palestinian nation should be the priorities of the UN Security Council. Brazil currently holds the United Nations Security Council presidency.



↑ Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (R) meets with Saudi Ambassador to Iran Abdullah bin Saud al-Anazi (C) in Tehran on October 24, 2023. ● president.ir

Try Yazd's traditional sweets: Haji Badam and Maqut



Maqut

Iranica Desk

Many believe that the term “cultural heritage” applies exclusively to historical artifacts and tangible remains left behind by previous generations. However, it's important to recognize that our intangible heritage, encompassing cultural creations and practices of our ancestors, holds great significance as well. These intangible aspects often find their rightful place in the country's national heritage list. Our country's cultural wealth encompasses both tangible and intangible

treasures. The tangible aspects, such as magnificent architectural structures and captivating artworks, showcase our rich heritage. Yet, equally significant are the intangible elements that shape our culture, including melodies, festivals, traditions, delectable culinary delights, and handicrafts. Together, they form an exquisite tapestry of our cultural heritage, ISNA wrote.

Intangible heritage represents the intangible forms of culture, which may not have physical presence but are experiential and recordable. Unlike their tangible

counterparts displayed in museums, they transcend physical spaces, enriching our collective heritage.

Boasting a magnificent ancient heritage, Yazd Province captivates with its abundance of historical marvels and fascinating landmarks. From tangible treasures to intangible wonders, many of them have received national and even global recognition.

Although many tangible heritage sites in Yazd are well-known, the intangible heritage of this region, which includes some significant local delicacies such as *Haji Badam* sweet, remains largely unknown. Nevertheless, they hold cultural value and have even received national recognition.

Haji Badam is a true gem among Yazd's renowned pastries. Made with the finest almond flour, chickpea flour, nutmeg, and eggs, this delicacy boasts extraordinary nutritional value. But that's not all. Its exquisite flavor and unparalleled distinction truly make it a pastry like no other.

Haji Badam has a great reputation among families due to its delicious taste and small size. It is also baked in some other cities of Iran like Kashan and Saveh. However, the fascinating history of this pastry dates back to Yazd itself, where it originated and became a global brand. According to research, almond is rich in unsaturated fats and nutritious proteins, making it a beneficial and health-promoting element. Almonds also contain a significant amount of fatty acids that help soften the skin. Due to its high con-



Haji Badam

tent of vitamin E, almond has anti-aging properties and helps prevent the formation of wrinkles.

On the other hand, nutmeg is widely recognized for its remarkable therapeutic effects in alleviating various types of pain. In traditional medicine, the nutmeg fruit and its oil are extensively utilized to effectively address ailments associated with the nervous and digestive systems.

Moreover, one of the hidden gems of Yazd culinary delights is a dessert called *Maqut*. This mouthwatering treat is not only known for its exquisite taste, but it also boasts a captivating aroma and vibrant colors. Moreover, *Maqut* is incredibly nourishing and promotes health. Indulging in this heavenly dessert will surely leave you satisfied and energized.

This exquisite Yazdi dessert is truly one-of-a-kind; it is typically enjoyed during

the colder seasons, as it is not usually prepared during the hot summer days. Its production spans from mid-autumn to mid-winter, creating a delightful treat for your taste buds.

The yummy ingredients of this delightful dessert include starch, water, fragrant rosewater, and melted Persian sugar candy. The cooking method is easy. First, we mix the starch with a cup of cold water, allowing the starch to dissolve completely in the water. Next, we carefully pour the dissolved starch into boiling water and give it a gentle stir, ensuring a perfect blend of flavors without any lumps formed.

Then, we boil all the ingredients for about 10 minutes and stir them regularly until it reaches the desired thickness. We pour the prepared mixture into a bowl and place it in the refrigerator. Once it sets, we add rosewater and musk.

Rey: A historical journey of rise and decline

Rey suffered in the eleventh century from incursions of the Ghuzz (a western Turkic people), but it recovered under the Seljuqs; the founder of this dynasty's might, Toghriq Beg, was buried there. The fatal blow was struck in the Mongol invasion of 1220. However, Rey had already become almost depopulated before that date as a result of factional strife between the Hanafis and Shafi'is.

In the

thirteenth century, the dissensions assumed the character of armed struggle; one legal school predominated among the city dwellers, the other among the villagers: this would suggest that the rivalry had economic rather than religious causes.

After the Mongol calamity, Rey did not recover its former importance. One of the nine districts into which Persian 'Iraq, that is, ancient Media, was divided under the

Mongols was Rey, together with its local towns and villages, but the chief city of this district was not Rey but Varamin, which now also lies in ruins.

As a village, Varamin is already mentioned by the tenth century geographers. The district was administered under the Mongols by special hereditary governors. Rey was partly restored under the reign of the Ilkhan Ghazan (1295-1304 CE); also built (or rather restored) was the fortress called Tabarak in the northern part of the city at the foot of the mountain,

which had already existed in the twelfth century.

The inhabitants of the district were at that time mostly Shafi'is, and only a few villages remained aligned behind the Hanafis. After the collapse of the Ilkhans, Rey, as in the tenth century, shared the lot of the Caspian provinces and became part of the possessions of the Amir Vali, who had established his control over Astarabad and Mazandaran. In 1384 Vali was beaten near Astarabad by Timur, whose armies in that same year took Rey without resistance. The city was thus spared calamity under Timur. Rey is mentioned several times in connection with Timur's campaigns, but the district rather than the town is meant in this context.

The preference that the population had acquired for Varamin can be partly explained by the supply of water in the latter, which benefited from the most substantial watercourse in the district, the Jajrud.

Besides Varamin, however, Tehran, the present capital of Iran, to which the residents of Rey and Varamin must have moved, was already an important

city by the fifteenth century.

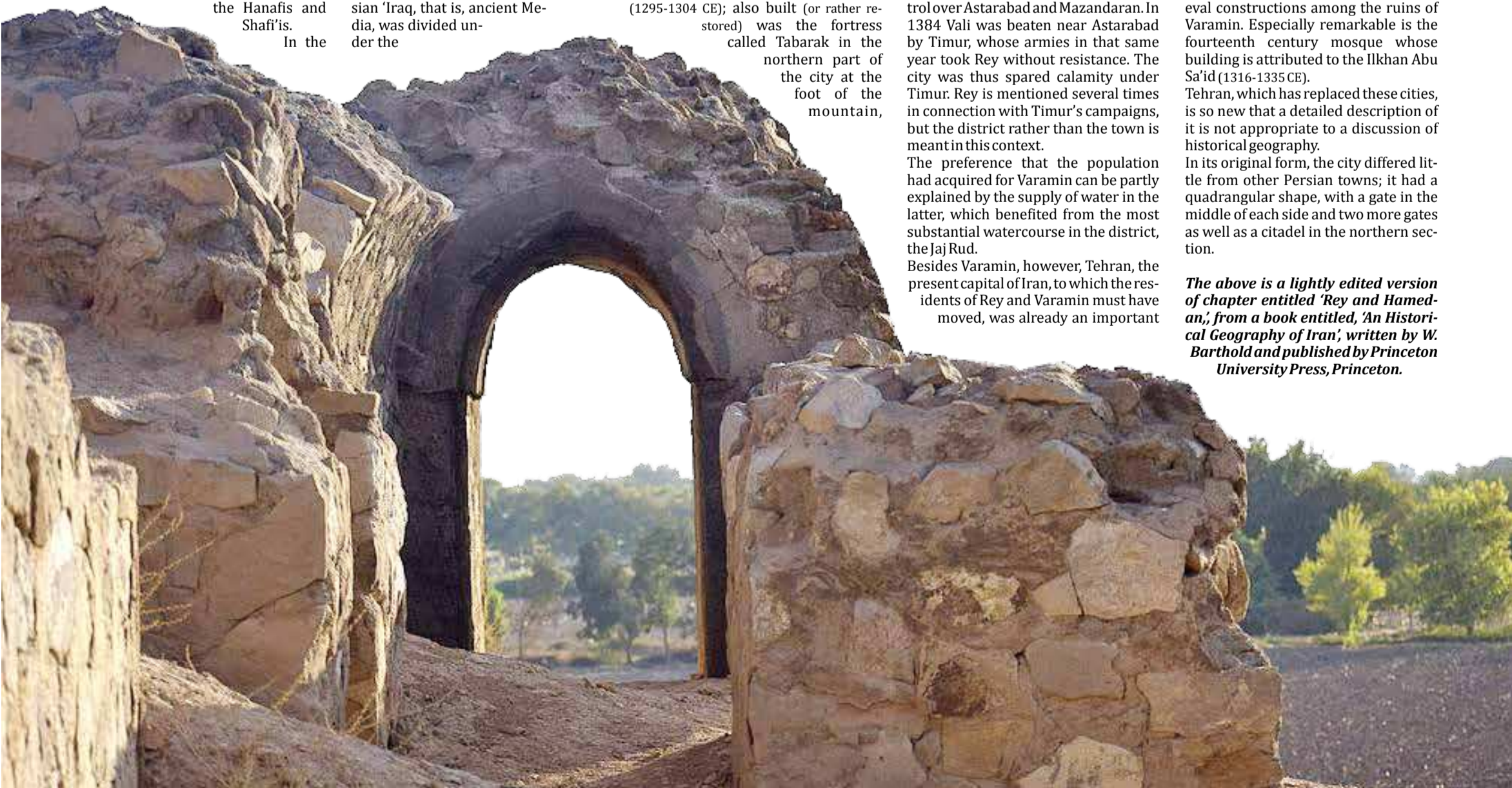
The ruins of Rey have been described more than once, by R. Ker Porter in the 1820s among others. The plan of the ruins that he made will never lose its relevance, because the remnants of the buildings and walls are no longer as evident today as they were in his time.

There are also several beautiful medieval constructions among the ruins of Varamin. Especially remarkable is the fourteenth century mosque whose building is attributed to the Ilkhan Abu Sa'id (1316-1335 CE).

Tehran, which has replaced these cities, is so new that a detailed description of it is not appropriate to a discussion of historical geography.

In its original form, the city differed little from other Persian towns; it had a quadrangular shape, with a gate in the middle of each side and two more gates as well as a citadel in the northern section.

The above is a lightly edited version of chapter entitled 'Rey and Hamedan,' from a book entitled, 'An Historical Geography of Iran,' written by W. Barthold and published by Princeton University Press, Princeton.



From self-determination to forced displacement

Historical, political background of Artsakh



By Artak S. Khachatryan
Ethnographer

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

One of the hotspots in the South Caucasus is Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenian: Artsakh). The Armenian-Azerbaijani confrontation over Artsakh existed from 1918-1920. Following the 70-year break of the USSR, the Karabakh conflict flared up with new strength and qualitative features in 1988. The outburst of Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) was a response to a discriminatory policy adopted towards the autonomous region during the Soviet period. The essence of that policy was to destroy the Armenianness of the territory. The means to achieve that goal were different: From creating unfavorable socio-economic conditions to changing the administrative-geographical and demographic picture in favor of the Azerbaijani element.



● Arax

One of the important features of the Artsakh movement, unlike other conflicts, was that it began with actions aimed at determining the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh through peaceful, legal means. The right to self-determination under both international and Soviet laws allowed Artsakh Armenians to control their own destiny. When talking about self-determination, it should be noted that Artsakh Armenians exercised their right to self-determination. Thus, on December 1, 1989, the National Council of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Supreme Council of the Armenian SSR decided on the unification of ASSR and NKAO, and on September 2, 1991, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic was declared. The Declaration of Independence was in accordance with the USSR legislation. On April 3, 1990, the Law on "The Procedures of the Resolution of Problems on the Secession of a Union Republic from the USSR" was adopted. This law regulated the mechanism of the referendum to withdraw from the USSR. Hence, from

union republics to autonomous regions, they had the opportunity to leave the USSR by maintaining these legal conditions. Thus, on December 10, 1991, a referendum on independence was held in Artsakh, and the majority voted for independence. Let's note, that Artsakh declared its independence de jure in accordance with the USSR legislation. The other union republics declared their independence via the same procedures and became members of the United Nations and, as such, subjects to international law. The above-mentioned USSR law of April 3, 1990, referred to both Azerbaijan as a union republic and Artsakh as an autonomous region since the law did not impose any restrictions regarding administrative and political status. Therefore, since the end of 1991, Azerbaijan has unleashed large-scale military operations against Artsakh, another entity that had also declared independence from the USSR. Viewing the conflict from this perspective romanticizes the perception of the situation a bit. However, it should

be taken into account that significant geopolitical transformations took place at the end of the 1980s with an impact on regional developments. The South Caucasus is a chief strategic and logistic hub in the Eurasian region, and since the 1990s, all the extra-regional role-players including the West and the Russian Federation entered the region's processes with the sole concern of satisfying their own interests. Those interests are satisfied at the expense of the countries and peoples of the region. One of the classic examples of this is the Artsakh conflict. Russia's interest in the Artsakh conflict was to maintain its presence in the region, and the West by taking part in the conflict settlement process, aimed not to be left out of the game in the South Caucasus. In the great noise of geopolitical transitions, the simple fact that Artsakh, having followed all the procedures for independence from the USSR, entered into a brutal war under the coercion of Azerbaijan to protect its self-determination, was ignored and perhaps silenced.

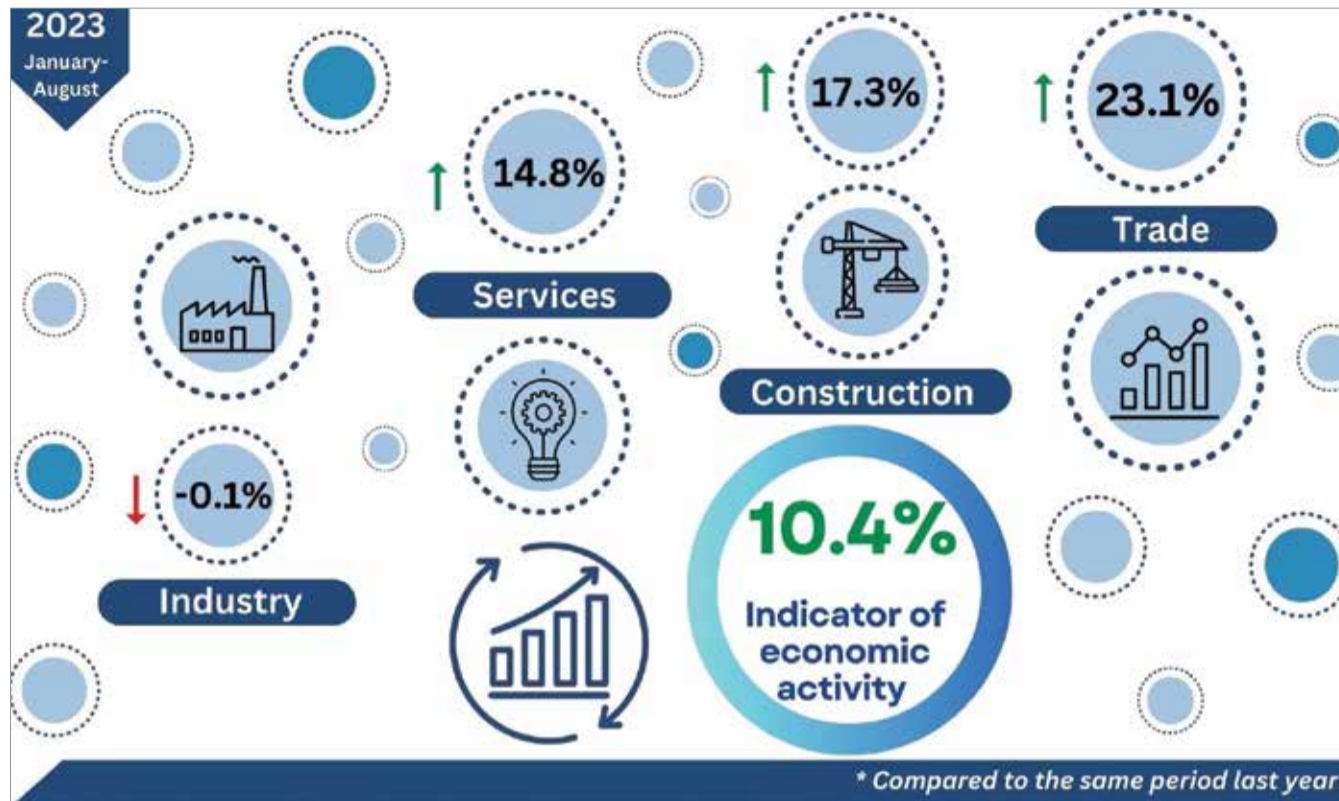
The 1992-1994 war was an act of self-defense on the part of Artsakh against the attack of Azerbaijan. If Azerbaijan, taking into account the self-determination of Artsakh, calls the latter "separatists", then logically, it also admits its "separatism". Nevertheless, more than two decades of Azerbaijan's continuous propaganda and consistent policy as well as geopolitical shifts led to the 2020 war. It was then followed by a one-day war on September 19, 2023, resulting in the forced deportation of Armenians of Artsakh. Azerbaijani aggression in the territory of Artsakh and the hostage-taking of the representatives of the military-political elite are part of the general policy of eliminating the Armenianness of Artsakh. Considering that the Artsakh movement started due to the wave of democratization and reconstruction of the USSR, calling the officials of Artsakh who took the path of self-determination "terrorists" does not fit within the logic of any international legal regulation, neither does Azerbaijan's hostage-taking.

Armenia, Georgia have great potential in energy cooperation

The local production of electricity in Georgia has increased by 42% in 2022. Up to 75% of its total produced electricity is produced by HPPs, 24% by thermal plants, and 1% by wind power plants. However, Georgia continues to import and export electricity. In September 2023, the Deputy Minister of Economy of Georgia announced that the ongoing year was seeing "record figures" in the production and exports of electricity. According to the official data of the Electricity Market Operator of Georgia, Georgia exported a small amount of electricity to Russia, while the volumes of electricity exports to Armenia (78 million kW/h), Azerbaijan (86 million kW/h), and Turkey (1.1 billion kW/h) were significantly large. For the first 8 months of 2023, Georgia did not import electricity from Armenia and Turkey. It is worth noting that

from 2019 to 2021, Georgia did not buy electricity from Armenia. It purchased 8 million kW/h from Armenia in 2018 and 127 million kW/h in 2017. Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration of Armenia Hakob Vardanyan announced that in 2022, Armenia exported 365 million kW/h of energy to Georgia, and from 2012 to 2021, exported 242 million kW/h. In 2023, however, according to the Georgian official data, Georgia has not yet purchased electricity from Armenia. It should be noted that Armenia's electricity production is distributed as follows: thermal plants (43.5%), nuclear plants (32%), hydroelectric plants (21.8%), and solar plants (2.7%). According to the Armenian Hetq media, Armenia provides 20-30% of its energy demand with internal resources, and the rest is





In the case of Armenia, it is too early to assess the economic consequences of its complex military-political situation, the 44-day war that started on September 27, 2020, and the ethnic cleansing process of Armenians living in Artsakh carried out by Azerbaijan. Despite the current circumstances, some positive changes have been observed in the economy of Armenia since last year. In particular, the flow of international visitors has significantly increased in the Republic of Armenia (RA), as a result of which economic demands have increased, especially in the fields of trade and service. For years, the mining and agriculture fields occupied the largest share in the structure of the gross domestic product (GDP) of Armenia, but in recent years the picture has changed. The mining sector has lost ground to the trade and service fields. Studying the RA GDP according to the types of economic activity, we note that according to the data of the second quarter of 2023, the largest share in the GDP

structure is devoted to trade: 13.2% compared to 12.3% in the same period last year. Contrary to that, the share of manufacturing and mining fields in GDP decreased to 10.4% and 3.1% respectively, compared to 10.7% and 5.1% in the previous year. The share of agriculture in the structure of GDP also decreased to 7.1% from last year's 10%. In the second quarter, the GDP at current prices was \$2.138 trillion. Particularly, in the first 8 months of this year, the Indicator of Economic Activity (IEA) increased by 10.4% compared to the same period last year. The IEA's high growth rates were mainly due to the high growth recorded in the fields of trade and construction, by 23.1% and 17.3% respectively. Significant growths in the fields of trade and services (especially in IT) have been noticed in RA since the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and the growth of the construction sector is mainly due to an increase in the volume of residential building construction in the real estate

sector and the corresponding increase in demand. Even so, it should be noted, that a certain decline of 0.1% was recorded in the field of industry, which is mainly due to the decline of the manufacturing industry branch, as well as the relatively low growth of the mining industry branch. During the last 2 years, the volumes of the RA foreign trade turnover have also increased at a fairly high rate. Since the beginning of last year, the foreign trade turnover of RA has recorded a significant growth trend. Evaluating the current economic developments in Armenia and taking into account the high growth rates in the fields of construction and services, the Central Bank of RA raised the economic growth forecasts. At the end of 2023, 7.2% economic growth is expected compared to the previous forecast of 6.9%. The RA Government has set a 7% growth rate for 2023, expecting that the current positive developments in the RA economy will continue to be maintained. According to the latest Mac-

roeconomic Outlook report of the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), the improvement of the current situation and economic prospects in Russia will have a positive impact on the volume of foreign remittances and foreign demands of Armenia. As a result, real GDP growth of 7.5% was predicted for 2023, which was improved by 3.3 percentage compared to the previous forecast. A relatively low growth of 5.1% was predicted for 2024. According to the latest forecasts made by EBRD and EDB, at the end of the current year, the highest growth among the countries of the region is expected in Armenia. Thus, despite the current complex geopolitical situation, in general, the RA economy has managed to absorb the impulses transmitted from the external sector, responding to the existing challenges. In recent years, structural changes have also been recorded in the RA economy, as a result of which trade and services and to some extent construction are considered the leading branches of the economy.

The energy sector is not one of the most developed avenues of cooperation between Armenia and Georgia, but the parties started to secure cooperation in this field last year. Like Armenia, Georgia has few fossil fuel resources and is mainly dependent on imports. Most of Georgia's domestic energy production comes from hydro and biofuels.



Arax

dependent on imports, mainly from Russia. Increasing energy trade with neighboring Georgia and Iran as well as alternative options for electricity have been discussed in recent years. Infrastructure works, unfortunately, are being implemented slowly. Currently, there are three power transmission lines between Armenia and Georgia: one with a capacity of 220 kW and two with a capacity of 110 kW. In 2023, the construction of a line with a capacity of 400 kW will begin, with a loan received from the German bank KfW. The construction of a new infrastructure connecting Georgia and Armenia is important for strengthening the energy systems of the two countries. Moreover, in 2022, Armenia and Georgia signed an agreement on mutual electricity aid in emergency situations. The framework agreement of Rus-

By Hasmik Meliksetyan
Expert on Georgian affairs
OPINION EXCLUSIVE

sia-Georgia-Armenia-Iran continues to operate as well. The construction of a 400 kW line from Iran to Armenia is also underway, which will be completed by the end of this year. It should be noted that after the construction of these 2 lines, the above-mentioned countries will be able to trade electricity more easily. The implementation of the North-South energy corridor project between Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Iran will enable these countries to secure regional cooperation in the energy sector. It is important for all parties to implement the construction and operation of the infrastructure as quickly as possible in accordance with the highest standards. Especially after the recent change in the balance of power in the South Caucasus region, regional cooperation in the energy sector can be an impetus for stability.

Armenia faces external challenges

Economic risks, opportunities

By Meri Boyajyan
Economist

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Under the current external challenges and uncertainties, the development and implementation of policies that are aimed at performing highly efficient risk management and curbing the negative impulses transmitted from the world economy have gained great importance. The global structural changes in the world economy have a direct impact on all types of economic activity, disrupting the normal process of the development of countries. Armenia, being a small open economy and a country with semi-closed borders, is significantly dependent on the outside world. So, it cannot remain aloof from geopolitical changes. In recent years, the normal functioning of the world economy has been mainly disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which started at the end of February 2022.

A pictorial of death and destruction

After maintaining a blockade on the Gaza Strip for nearly 16 years, Israel has now left a trail of death and destruction in the Palestinian territory under the pretext of battling Hamas fighters. Israel's relentless airstrikes have flattened thousands of Palestinians homes, badly damaged several hospitals and destroyed the coastal enclave's infrastructure. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, at least 5,800 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli bombardment since October 7 when the conflict flared up. These photos, all captured by AFP, illustrate the dire situation faced by the people of Gaza amid Israel's ongoing attacks.



▲ A relative mourns by the bodies of members of the Abu Morad family who died following Israeli strikes earlier, during their funeral in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on October 24, 2023. ● MAHMUD HAMS/AFP



▲ Palestinian Christians take part in rally in solidarity with the people of Gaza in the village of Jifna, north of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on October 23, 2023. ● JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP



▲ Rescuers look for survivors in the rubble of a building following Israeli strikes in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on October 24, 2023. ● MAHMUD HAMS/AFP



▲ Palestinians line up to refill their water containers in Rafah on the southern Gaza Strip on October 24, 2023, amid the ongoing attacks by the Israeli regime on Gaza. ● MOHAMMED ABED/AFP



▲ A Palestinian medic carries the body of a child killed in an Israeli strike, at Najjar hospital in Rafah on the southern Gaza Strip on October 24, 2023. ● MOHAMMED ABED/AFP



▲ A woman reacts next to the rubble of a building following Israeli strikes on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on October 24, 2023. ● MOHAMMED ABED/AFP



▲ An Israeli artillery crew prepare to fire from a field near the southern city of Sderot toward the Gaza Strip, On October 23, 2023. ● THOMAS COEX/AFP



▲ Palestinian children receive food at a UN-run school in Rafah, on the southern Gaza Strip on October 23, 2023. ● MOHAMMED ABED/AFP



▲ Ayman Abu Shamalah stands next to his daughter Mecca, as she receives care inside an incubator at a hospital in Rafah on October 23, 2023. Ayman Abu Chamalah, a 34-year-old Palestinian, and his family fled Israeli bombings on Gaza City to take refuge with relatives in Rafah, in the south of territory controlled by Hamas. A strike killed his children and his wife, Dareen Abu Shamalah, 28, who was pregnant at the start of the ninth month of pregnancy. The couple had already chosen a name for the baby, Mecca. ● MAI YAGHI/AFP

Employment rises in Iran with economic growth: Minister

Economy Desk

Iran's minister of economic affairs and finance on Tuesday said one of the advantages of economic growth in the last two years is that it has been accompanied by an increase in employment. Speaking in a weekly press conference,

Ehsan Khandouzi added that according to the latest report by the Statistical Centre of Iran, 907,000 people have been added to the country's workforce in the year to September 22, IRNA reported.

Iran's unemployment rate has decreased by one percent, to 7.9



percent, the minister added. Khandouzi went on to say that the increase in revenues earned from oil exports is among the reasons for foreign exchange (forex) market's stability. "The government's economic headquarters plans to control the forex market and the Central

Bank of Iran (CBI) can do the job," he noted. The incumbent government has given priority to promote economic diplomacy and boost relations with neighboring states, with the aim of increasing trade and investment and minimizing the impacts of sanctions on the

economy, said the minister. When the effects of sanctions wear off, Iran will enjoy a higher position and will have more bargaining power in talks with Western countries, such as in the negotiations on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Khandouzi concluded.

Bitcoin soars to near 18-month high

REUTERS - Bitcoin rose 6% on Tuesday to \$35,198, its highest in nearly a year-and-a-half, on mounting speculation that an exchange-traded bitcoin fund is imminent. That followed a 10% surge on Monday, when bitcoin posted its best day in almost a year, and the bullishness spread across the wider crypto market and into related stocks. Bitcoin, a volatile asset whose price has doubled so far this year, was last up 3.2% at \$34,129. The second-largest cryptocurrency ether climbed to its highest since August.



Iran's gas industry in dire need of \$25b investment: MP

Economy Desk

Iran's gas industry needs \$25 billion in investments, which is not included in the draft bill of the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan that has been submitted to Parliament, said an MP. Ebrahim Najafi, a member of the Civil Committee of the Parliament of Iran, told Mehr

news agency that the country's energy imbalance has not been addressed by the government plans for the next five years. In the field of oil, we need to invest more than \$100 billion, he added. Despite the launch of some refineries in the country, the MP said, practically they could not compensate for our energy shortages, so we need to invest in infrastructure.

The exploitation of Phase 11 of South Pars by the Ministry of Oil was an innovative measure by the incumbent government, which took office two years ago, noted the lawmaker, explaining that it took 20 years for foreign contractors to fulfill their promise to operate this phase, but it was still not implemented. "All other countries are extracting from

their joint gas fields; of course, we invested for boosting extraction because the government is not able to provide the required financial resources," Najafi said. We need to use private sector investment, he added, noting, "We must negotiate with foreigners but the priority is with the domestic private sector." "In the past, we have always faced a

drop in gas pressure in winters, as this pressure drop created problems for people during the cold days and even caused us to import gas from neighboring countries. But with the operation of Phase 11, the gas extraction capacity has been increased, which can help us in solving the gas imbalance," he concluded.

Potentials of Persian Corridor as transit hub

The issue of corridors and transit ports in Iran is so important that all capacities should be used to attract investment for their development.

The transit potential of Iran's territory is very important for Central Asian countries because to boost their trade and export opportunities, they need access to world oceans, Press TV wrote.

Iran, being situated among three continents, is known as the connecting bridge between the East and the West, where land and air routes passing through the country can bring Central Asia closer to the West and the Persian Gulf countries by a shorter route.

But the transit potential of Iran can only be used in conjunction with regional partnership.

One of the important axes of Iran's 7th development plan is the development of corridors, which foresees annual transit of at least 50 million tons of goods through Iran. Transit of goods from Iran in the past years, including at the height of crises, has stood at five million tons. According to experts close to the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, the transit of about 12 to 13 million tons of goods from Iran is tenable.

This figure can reach 23-24 million tons with new marketing methods, but for higher numbers, it is necessary to develop infrastructure and solve international challenges, including banking problems.

Transportation infrastructure has a significant impact on business productivity and costs. For example, better port and back-border connections can reduce the costs of connecting to distribution networks or transporting raw materials. Hence, having an effective and efficient logistics system is the foundation of a flourishing economy and success in attracting foreign investment.

Iran's logistics performance index (LPI) ranking in 2018 was 64, which declined to 123 in 2023. To improve it, the country

needs to use all capacities to develop transit corridors and ports.

On Monday, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash was expected to sign a contract for the construction of a part of the North-South corridor in southern Armenia during his visit to Yerevan.

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) was established by Iran, Russia and India in September 2000, and subsequently expanded with the admission of 13 countries.

The INSTC connects India to the Caspian Sea, Russia, and northern Europe through Iran. By bypassing the Suez Canal, the route is 40% shorter and 30% cheaper than traditional routes in terms of distance and time.

The corridor combines trade in three western, eastern, and central routes with road, rail, and sea routes.

The INSTC's western route passes through Russia, South Caucasus, and Iran. The middle axis reaches India through the ports of Saint Petersburg and Astrakhan in Russia and Amirabad, Astara, Anzali and Chabahar in Iran. The eastern axis passes through Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Iran.

Long beaches, special transit, and geographic location, and easy access to the sea and other countries can make Iran one of the highways of trade, with several international corridors already passing through the country.

As part of its "Look East" roadmap, Tehran is increasingly focused on strengthening relations with Russia and India. Since the outbreak of the Ukraine war, the strategic importance of the INSTC has become especially important for Moscow and Tehran, which are both under Western sanctions, because of its importance in accelerating the process of de-dollarization and neutralizing the embargos.

President Ebrahim Raisi has also underlined his government's plans to build the

Chabahar-Zahedan railway and connect the Oman Sea and the Persian Gulf to Europe.

The development of Chabahar port, the establishment of the Makran Coastal Development Organization, and the Special Plan for the Development of Makran are some of Iran's plans to become a regional transit hub.

Iran's ports in the north and south have the capacity to move 270 million tons of goods annually. This capacity can strengthen the country's economic diplomacy.

One of the development opportunities is tied to the development of Chabahar port, which has been facing challenges for several years.

In 2016, India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) and Arya Ports of Iran signed a contract for the development of Chabahar Shahid Beheshti Port. The Indian company committed to providing 85 million dollars for the development of Chabahar port along with granting a credit line of 150 million dollars. Since 2023, India has deployed six gantry cranes worth \$25 million for the development of Shahid Be-

heshti Port, but progress has been slow. Tehran needs to use all capacities, including investment by other foreign operators. Experts say China is a potential candidate despite developing the Gwadar port in Pakistan near Chabahar. They cite the local people's opposition to the project due to its military nature to believe that the Chinese are potentially amenable to investing in Chabahar.

A full operationalization of the INSTC is estimated to bring Iran about \$20 billion in annual revenues and reduce the country's dependence on oil earnings.

First Announcement



N.I.S.O.C
NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 08-21-0240002

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
01	TUBING 1/5 IN. API GRADE I-80 SEAMLESS " HYDRIL CS" THREAD, RANGE 2 PSL: 2 X 1.90 OD X 1.462 ID, 4.19 PPF	4000 LE

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 171,467/58 EURO or 67,379,044,448 RIAL, in favor of NISOC. Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material-procurement-management-tab. **ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN. PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.**

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Iran's cinema audience up by 500k in one month



TASNIM - Statistics for the Iranian cinema industry in the month ending on October 22 have shown a significant increase, with daily sales reaching to \$1,767,721.

This marks an increase of \$580,381 compared to the previous month. Furthermore, this figure has experienced a boost of \$1,327,089 compared to the same month last year. According to the report, the total number of cinemagoers nationwide reached 1,825,297 people. Notably, on October 10, 194,518 people attended cinemas, while October 3, saw 182,293 attendees, making them the two days with the highest audience figures in the month.

Comparing the numbers, it's evident that the cinema audience in Iran has experienced a significant increase. In the month ending on September 22, a total of 1,265,069 people visited cinemas, and this figure rose by 560,228 individuals in the month ending on October 22.

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Iranian literary agency prefers Lebanon Int'l Book Fair over Frankfurt

Arts & Culture Desk

The director of the Seljuk Literary Agency emphasized her preference for participating in the Lebanon International Book Fair over the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Nazila Javadpour said, "Although I knew the trip to Beirut would not yield commercial benefits, I chose to attend to witness the courage of Palestinians," IRNA wrote.

Participating for the eighth time in the Lebanon International Book Fair, Javadpour said that Seljuk

Literary Agency accepted an invitation from the Lebanese Publishers Union in Beirut for a six-day participation in the book fair.

She stated that the sole reason for her, as the agency's director, to attend the Lebanon International Book Fair was to experience the suffering and bravery of Palestinians.

She explained that although she paid for the booth, the Lebanon International Book Fair did not provide any support.

Colleagues had advised against participating in this situation, but nevertheless she decided to attend. As a result, they engaged with Syrian, Lebanese, and Iraqi publishers, French cultural centers, as well as organizations under the full supervision and support of Iran Book and Literature House, such as Behnashr, Afra, and others.

Additionally, the director of Seljuk Literary Agency noted that they had the opportunity to get acquainted with Lebanese authors and French graphic designers, adding that her publication established comprehensive connections with over 22 publishers at the Lebanon International Book Fair.



● IRNA



● IRNA

Iran's participation in this event effectively managed the conditions and directed its programs toward Palestine, according to the Iranian Cultural Attaché in Beirut, Kamal Baqerzadeh.

Comparing the Lebanon International Book Fair to Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF), Javadpour explained that the Lebanon International Book Fair and other fairs in neighboring countries are

not on par with the Iranian book fair. TIBF is universal and receives millions of visitors, while the Lebanon International Book Fair is akin to sitting in a library, requiring attendees to be cautious not to make any noise.

The Seljuk Literary Agency was the only Iranian literary agency to participate in the Lebanon International Book Fair, held from October 13 to 22.

Ancient Iranian piano compositions released

The book 'Morteza Mahjoubi's Piano and Qamar-ol-Moluk Vaziri's Vocals', a collection of ancient Iranian piano compositions, authored by Bahar Barkhordar, published and is now available in Iranian bookstores.

This compilation, with notation and editing by Barkhordar, breathes new life into 11 old piano compositions.

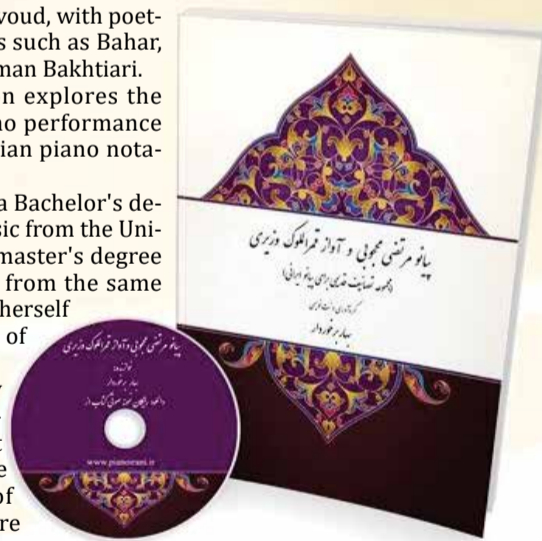
These compositions are the legacy of recordings made on gramophone pages by Parlophon Company from 1931 to 1932, IRNA wrote.

The piano section notes have been extracted from the preserved copies and translated into international notation for Iranian piano.

The collection includes works for the voice of Qamar-ol-Moluk Vaziri, the piano of Morteza Mahjoubi, the tar of Morteza Neydavoud, and the violin of Mousa Neydavoud.

The majority of these works were composed by Morteza Neydavoud, with poetry from prominent poets such as Bahar, Vahid Dastgerdi, and Pejman Bakhtiari. The book's introduction explores the specifics of Iranian piano performance techniques and the Iranian piano notation system.

Bahar Barkhordar, with a Bachelor's degree in instrumental music from the University of Tehran and a master's degree in musical composition from the same university, has dedicated herself to researching the works of Iranian piano maestros. Her work aims not only to preserve the Iranian piano repertoire but also to contribute to the growth and progress of this instrument for future generations.



Iranian 'Seven Citrus Aurantium' to compete at Dhaka Int'l Film Festival

The Iranian film 'Seven Citrus Aurantium', directed by Farshad Golsefidi, is slated to compete at the 22nd edition of the Dhaka International Film Festival's Competition Section for Spiritual Films, taking place in the capital of Bangladesh, from January 20 to January 28.

According to ILNA, this cinematic work marks Golsefidi's directorial debut, offering a poetic narrative of the life and sacrifices of a solitary and selfless old man on a spiritual journey of love.

The cast of 'Seven Citrus Aurantium' includes Ali Nassirian, Ladan Mostofi, Sara Rasoulzadeh, Faraj Golsefidi, and Arsha



Golsefidi.

Furthermore, this cinematic piece boasts the honorary presence of Farhad Aesh, Hooman Haj-Abdollahi, and the young actress Baran Lotfi.

The international distribution of this film is overseen by Elaheh Goodarzi.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Leading Palestinian actor Maisa Abd Elhadi detained for supporting Hamas

Israeli police have arrested Palestinian actor Maisa Abd Elhadi on accusations of incitement relating to posts she made on social media in the aftermath of the assault by Palestinian fighters in southern Israel on October 7.

Israeli officials accuse Abd Elhadi of "spreading incitement and support for terrorism" for a series of comments she made, the Middle East Eye reported. In one, she is alleged to have shared an image of a Hamas fighter with an elderly Israeli captive, captioned with laughing emojis.

In another, she commented on the breach of Israel's barrier surrounding Gaza with the caption: "Let's go Berlin style." The former post, while not specified, was likely a viral image of an elderly Is-

raeli carrying a Palestinian fighter's rifle and holding up a two-finger victory sign, while a masked man posed next to her. The latter is a reference to Germans tearing down the Berlin Wall during the collapse of communist East Germany and the reunification of the country in 1989.

Abd Elhadi was initially arrested last week but was released under a home detention order until her second arrest on Tuesday. On Tuesday morning, the Magistrate Court in the northern city of Nazareth, where Abd Elhadi lives, ordered that the actor be detained for two more days. Abd Elhadi, a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship, is the latest to be caught up in Israel's crackdown on dissent in the aftermath of the attack in early October.



● GETTY IMAGES