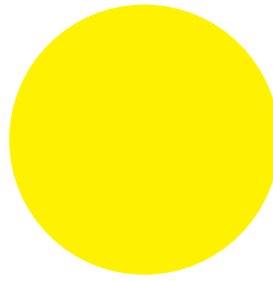


Iran's 'yes' vote at UNGA in line with Palestinian cause

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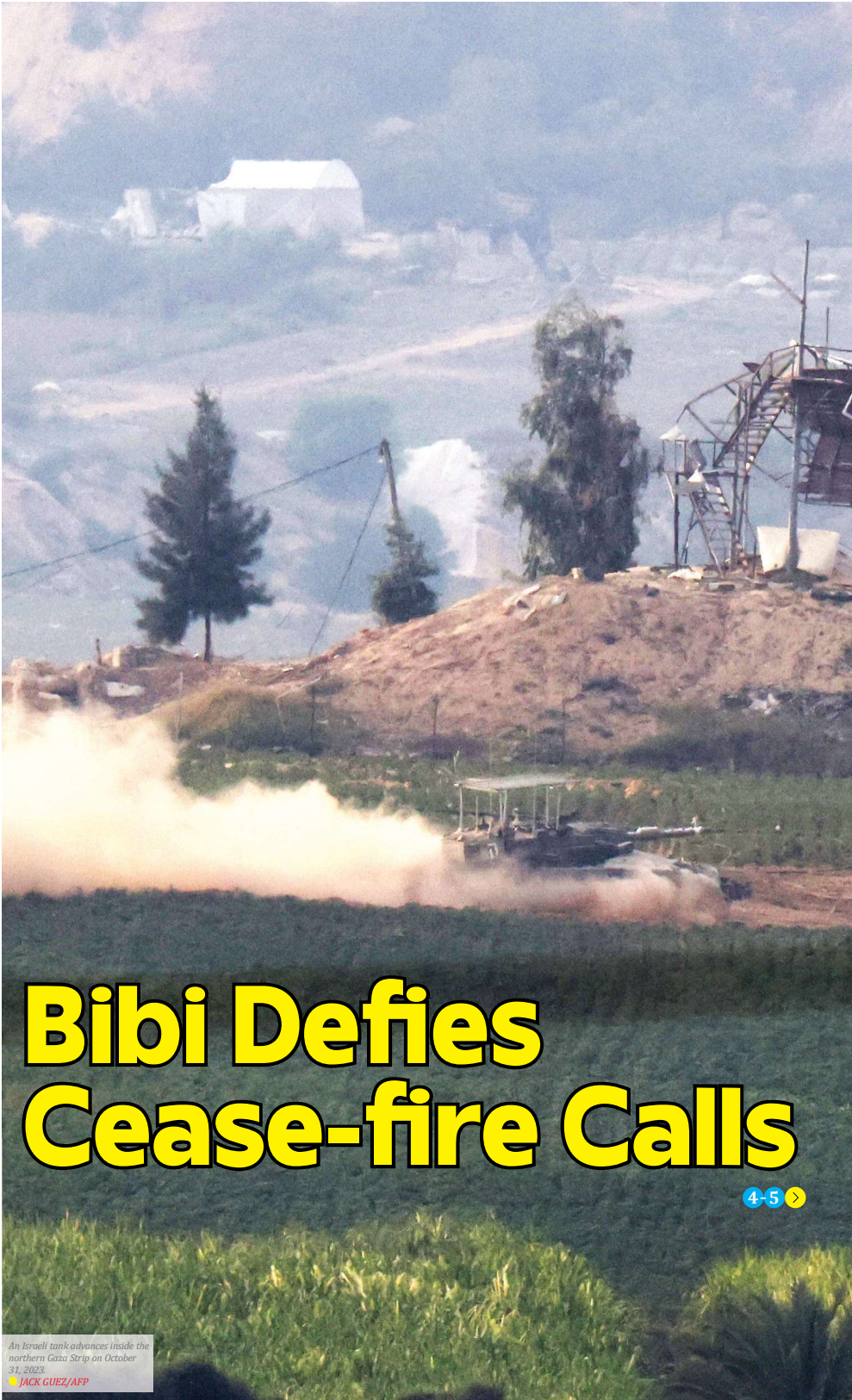


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An Israeli tank advances inside the northern Gaza Strip on October 31, 2023.
 • JACK GUEZ/AFP



Iran, Armenia sign MoU on workforce exchange, economy

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Iran eyes energy stability as shortage bites

The chronic energy shortfall in Iran has been a thorn in the side of both industries and households for years. It's a perplexing situation, given that Iran boasts the second-largest natural gas deposits on the planet, totaling about 34 trillion cubic meters. Moreover, when it comes to proven crude oil reserves, the country is ranked third globally with over 206 billion barrels at its disposal.

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Iran's ceramic, tile production at 720m cubic meters



Over 140 ceramic and tile production units are currently active in Iran, producing 720 million cubic meters of products each year, announced the head of Iran Ceramic Producers Association (IRCPS).

"Today, all kinds of ceramic tiles in different sizes and designs are produced in the country, as the production technology of the ceramic tile industry has been localized," Morteza Saftarizadeh told IRIB News.

He said the private sector's efforts to have a serious presence in the industry has resulted in the increase of production by domestic manufacturers, as there are 120,000 people working directly in the industry.

The official pointed to cheap energy, the existence of rich mines and the development of related industries in the supply chain as the advantages of the industry, noting that such advantages have made the production more cost efficient.

According to Saftarizadeh, currently, Iran is the fifth-largest producer of ceramic tiles in the world, and more than 46 percent of the country's total production is exported.

Iran, Armenia sign MoU on workforce exchange, economy

Economy Desk

Tehran and Yerevan inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Tuesday to cooperate in the fields of labor exchange, technical and professional training.

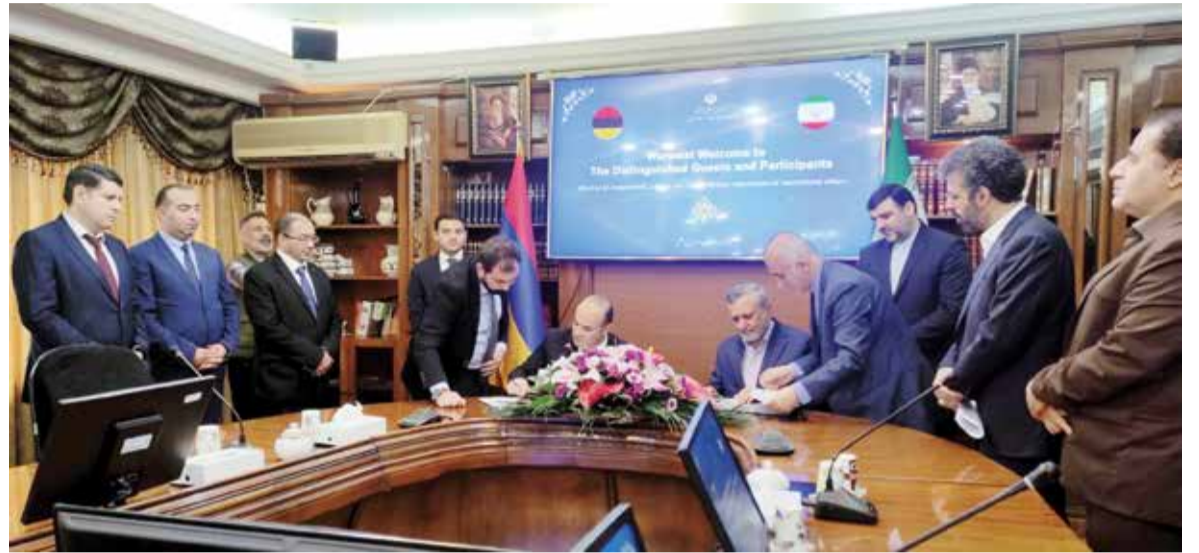
Signed by Iranian Labour and Social Welfare Minister Solat Mortazavi and his Armenian counterpart Narek Mkrtchyan, the MoU also covers economic cooperation between the two countries in the fields of petrochemicals, road and construction materials, and medicine, IRNA reported.

Speaking in a meeting with Armenian delegation in Tehran, Mortazavi said, "Iran is fully prepared to send workforce to Armenia while establishing techno-vocational training centers in the country, as

well as transferring experiences to empower the disabled and war victims." Referring to the rise in the economic exchanges between the two countries, the Iranian minister said, "Economic exchanges between Iran and Armenia have improved slightly, reaching \$700 million, but we should aim for \$3 billion in bilateral trade with a proper planning."

Mkrtchyan, for his part, admired Iran's interest in boosting trade ties with Armenia, saying, "In the few days that our delegation has been in Iran, we established ways of cooperation more than expected, and this is a source of satisfaction."

"By signing this memorandum, we can move things forward and implement the MoU as soon as possible. I am sure that we will



make arrangements so that the Iranian workforce will consider Armenia as their home when they enter the country," the Armenian minister noted.

An Armenian delegation

led by Mkrtchyan visited Iran during October 29-31, with the aim of giving new momentum to the cooperation between the two countries in the field of labor and

social protection, getting to know the best respective practices and innovative initiatives of Iran, as well as developing a constructive dialogue in this regard.



Iranian Labour and Social Welfare Minister Solat Mortazavi (l) and his Armenian counterpart Narek Mkrtchyan sign an MoU in Tehran on October 31, 2023.

● IRNA

Oil Ministry inks contracts worth \$34m with NTBFs

Economy Desk

The Iranian Oil Ministry has signed contracts worth \$34 million with new technology-based firms (NTBFs) in the past year.

According to a report by Shana on Tuesday, by the implementation of the signed deals with Iranian startups, the country will save \$305 million annually. The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has signed six contracts, with a total value of \$15 million,



the report added.

The ministry also has plans to sign 20 contracts, worth \$135 million, with domestic firms during the current and next year.

Oil Minister Javad Owji told an international energy meeting in July that the country has plans to invest some \$250 billion in its massive oil and gas sector until 2031.

The minister said Iran's plans to maintain and expand its petroleum facilities have remained unaffected

by US sanctions that bar the country's access to foreign investment and technology. "Today, Iran carries out expansion and repair in its oil and gas refineries without the presence of foreign experts," he said.

Experts say that US sanctions on Iran, which have been in place since early 2018, have failed to dent the country's ability to expand its massive petroleum industry.

They believe a major expansion in the Iranian nat-

ural gas sector in recent years has compensated for the relatively low levels of production and exports of crude oil in the country.

Iran is currently producing some 3.8 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil, and more than one billion cubic meters per day of natural gas.

The country has some 10 active oil refineries and 21 natural gas refineries, while it also counts on massive hard currency revenues from its petrochemicals sector.

Iran eyes energy stability as shortage bites



By Mostafa Shirmohammadi
Staff writer

The chronic energy shortfall in Iran has been a thorn in the side of both industries and households for years. It's a perplexing situation, given that Iran boasts the second-largest natural gas deposits on the planet, totaling about 34 trillion cubic meters. Moreover, when it comes to proven crude oil reserves, the country is ranked third globally with over 206 billion barrels at its disposal. The energy deficit becomes even more troublesome during peak seasons with electricity use breaking records every summer and heavy gas consumption in northern regions causing a pressure drop in the national distribution net-

work every winter.

Iran has already rolled up its sleeves to tackle the pressing issue. The country has pinned its hopes on renewables, considering such endless sources of energy to be a trump card to make electricity and partially fulfill its ever-growing demand for power.

A country blessed with vast deserts that get plenty of sunshine and strong winds, Iran has drawn up a grand plan to generate 20,000 megawatts of clean energy through solar panel farms and wind parks by 2027 and 50,000 MW by 2031.

To make the dream come true, the government has recently loosened the purse strings to allocate about \$5 billion from the National Development Fund to finance renewable energy projects such as solar and wind power plants. The

investment is aimed at creating 10,000 MW of green electricity in the next two years.

Iran isn't stopping there as the country is dishing out incentives to industrial sectors, especially steel and petrochemical industries that have been hit hard by seasonal power outages, to set up solar or wind parks in their vicinities to not only meet their own electricity needs but also contribute to the national grid's capacity with the surplus. In mid-October, Iran broke ground on two solar farms in southeastern Kerman and Yazd provinces, together packing a punch of 500 MW, to provide local industries with green electricity. The Kerman solar power plant, once up and running, will churn out 400 MW of electricity annually, to become the biggest solar park in Iran, right in the heart of the Lut Desert.

On top of that, Iran is eyeing a partnership with China's Qinghai province — a solar powerhouse home to the world's second-largest solar farm — to help implement renewable energy projects in Iran's northwestern Ardabil province, where local authorities have plans to generate 1,000 MW of clean power annually.

However, these projects have yet to yield results, and fresh government data suggest an uphill task ahead.

According to the latest Energy Ministry figures, renewable power plants, including wind, solar, biomass, and hydroelectric facilities with capacities less than 10 MW, contribute only 1,101 MW, or 1.2% of Iran's yearly electricity gen-

eration, which looks more like a drop in the ocean.

A local media report on October 28 added to the gloomy outlook, revealing that Iran's renewable energy capacity had grown by only 21% (less than 200 MW) over the past two years and indicating that clean energy projects coming online are quite sluggish.

When it comes to the natural gas sector, Iran's efforts seem to be paying off more tangibly. Two years ago, Iran renewed a gas swap deal with its northern neighbors, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, to make sure the pressure inside its gas pipelines stays steady during cold months.

Furthermore, it is doing its utmost to get the most out of its gas fields in the southern region, especially the colossal South Pars (SP), which is the world's largest gas field and is shared with Qatar. Iran's two major players in the energy game, the South Pars Gas Co. (SPGC) and the South Zagros Oil and Gas Production Co. (SZOGPC), which are responsible for 95% of the country's gas production, have cranked up output and extraction, all in preparation of the upcoming winter.

Back in August, the SPGC, Iran's number one gas producer, added up to 15 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas to Iran's daily production of 760 mcm, after bringing on stream the only underdeveloped phase of the SP's 24 phases.

The SZOGPC, on the other hand, announced plans earlier in October to extract an extra 7 million cubic meters of natural gas every day before the winter

hits.

And that's not all. Iran has high ambitions. The country aims to boost daily gas production by 55%, beating the milestone of 1.2 billion cubic meters within the next five years.

However, all these measures seem to be insufficient as President Ebrahim Raisi said on October 23 that the country was facing what he called a "severe energy imbalance," demanding more action be taken.

"I urge the relevant authorities to minimize the impact [of the energy shortage] on various sectors including industry, agriculture, and household consumption by redoubling their efforts to promptly address this issue," Raisi said.

Just a day later, Iranian lawmaker Ebrahim Najafi said the country had failed "in practice" to tackle the energy deficit despite efforts to boost gas production. "We need more infrastructure investments in the gas sector," Najafi said, adding that Iran needed at least \$25 billion in investments to further develop its gas industry.

The MP also implied that Iran had fallen behind other nations in effectively harnessing its shared gas fields.

The upcoming five years are make-or-break for Iran, a country whose energy infrastructure has remained underdeveloped for quite some time due to Western sanctions that have diminished its revenues and scared away foreign investments. If the country fails to achieve at least half of its energy improvement goals, the pinch of the unfolding crisis would be more painful.



Shiraz leading the way in medical tourism across Iran



● IRNA



● fangostar.com



● IRNA

Iranica Desk

The tourism industry is undeniably one of the most profitable industries globally. Today, there is a fierce competition among numerous countries around the world to capture the attention of travelers. In order to stand out, these countries strategically design well-thought-out programs to entice tourists. One of the crucial factors in the tourism industry, not just in our country but worldwide, is religious and medical tourism. Living in an Islamic nation abundant with revered religious sites and a flourishing medical sector, we must fully appreciate the significance of

these two aspects.

Fars Province, especially the vibrant city of Shiraz, shines as one of Iran's top medical hubs. Boasting remarkable health care infrastructure, world-class medical professionals, and cutting-edge facilities, it propels the vision of creating an international health city. The goal is to unlock and maximize the healing capabilities of this city, propelling it to become the nation's leading medical tourism destination.

Taking a holistic approach to health tourism can be a key asset in fostering a sustainable economy in this field.

Speaking in an interview with ISNA, Rouhollah Rav-

anshad, a tourism official from Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organizations, said, "In the past, health tourism used to follow a more traditional approach, where travelers from both within and outside the country, including Persian Gulf littoral states, would visit and avail themselves of medical services. Remarkably, this cycle continues to persist even today."

He added that Fars Province takes pride in its rich cultural heritage, vibrant tourism opportunities, and exquisite handicrafts. With the aim of organizing the realm of health and catering to the needs

of health service seekers, both domestically and internationally, the Health Tourism Society has been established. This esteemed organization collaborates with 83 certified travel and tour agencies, ensuring top-notch services for those seeking health-related services.

With an emphasis on the fact that this important initiative was realized through collaboration with the Medical Sciences University, important and practical approaches are being pursued to organize health tourism. Undoubtedly, the establishment of the Health Tourism Society can be a turning point in carrying out activities in

this field.

Health tourism encompasses a wide range of areas, including advanced medical treatments, therapeutic clinics, internal and cosmetic surgeries, as well as traditional medicine therapies.

Lowering treatment and accommodation costs in the field of medicine, embracing new technologies, and equipping advanced medical devices can greatly enhance the therapeutic capabilities of this city. These initiatives can turn it into a leading medical tourism destination in the country, attracting visitors from far and wide.

Ravanshad revealed that since mid-March 2023,

over 17,000 health tourists have flocked to Shiraz. He emphasized that the expenses for treatment, surgery, and accommodation vary for each tourist. Furthermore, he confidently exclaimed, "Undeniably, health tourism in Shiraz plays a pivotal role in fostering growth across multiple sectors in the tourism industry."

He continued that this organization has provided specialized training for 400 health tourism guides, and out of this group, 150 to 200 individuals possess health cards. It was mentioned that these tourism guides are generally fluent in Arabic, as the majority of health tourists visiting

Shiraz are Arabic speakers. Moreover, we also have guides who are proficient in other languages.

Ravanshad noted that several travel and tourism agencies, equipped with medical professionals from Fars Province and relevant medical facilities, have been launched not only in Oman but also in other Islamic countries.

"It's worth noting that various entities involved in health tourism, including both public and private sectors, medical organizations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Traffic Police are cooperating with the aim of increasing the number of health tourists in this field," he concluded.

Forced resettlement and cultural exchange between Roman and Sassanid empires

As a result of the nearly constant warfare between the Roman and Sassanid empires, massive numbers of individuals, both soldiers and civilians, were deported from their homelands and forcibly resettled. This process was another important, though unfortunate, engine of exchange between the two empires.

In especially the campaigns of Shapur I in the third century until those of Kosrow II in the seventh century, the Sassanid kings systematically resettled the populations of conquered areas, carefully skimming off aristocrats and skilled craftsmen whose talents and manpower they exploited to build their cities, execute their civil engineering projects, and defend their eastern and Caucasian borders. The Persians often kept family and even community structures intact in their deportation of populations, sometimes even "recreating" a ravaged city within a Sassan-

id province.

This active policy of deportation enriched the Sassanid empire immensely, both economically and technologically, to the point that some have even argued that the prospect of gaining human capital was the primary motivation for Sassanid military campaigns. However, this phenomenon of sustained large-scale deportations was a double-edged sword for the Sassanids, since it augmented their vibrant native Christian populations, as well as enriched the empire with skilled craftsmen.

In addition to the craftsmen who produced art objects, the Sassanids captured a large amount of booty during their incursions, facilitating the movement of Roman art objects into their realm, some of which the king took as his own share.

Population transfers were a function of military success but could take on a symbolic significance as well. The Romans did not



have a developed policy of deportation, as they did not enjoy as regular or as spectacular military successes as the Sassanids. While the Romans did not gain as much economically or technologically from the Persian captives, when

possible Roman emperors resettled Persian captives in Roman territory as farm laborers to repopulate ravaged provinces and, if nothing else, for propagandistic reasons. Ardashir I equipped four hundred men, picked for

their impressive physical stature, with splendid clothes and arms and sent them as envoys to Severus Alexander. Ardashir I clearly intended the spectacle to overawe the emperor, since, the envoys were instructed to

demand "back" Ardashir's Achaemenid inheritance from the Romans. Very much attuned to the symbolism, Severus Alexander stripped them of their finery and resettled them in Phrygia to show his disdain for Ardashir's request.

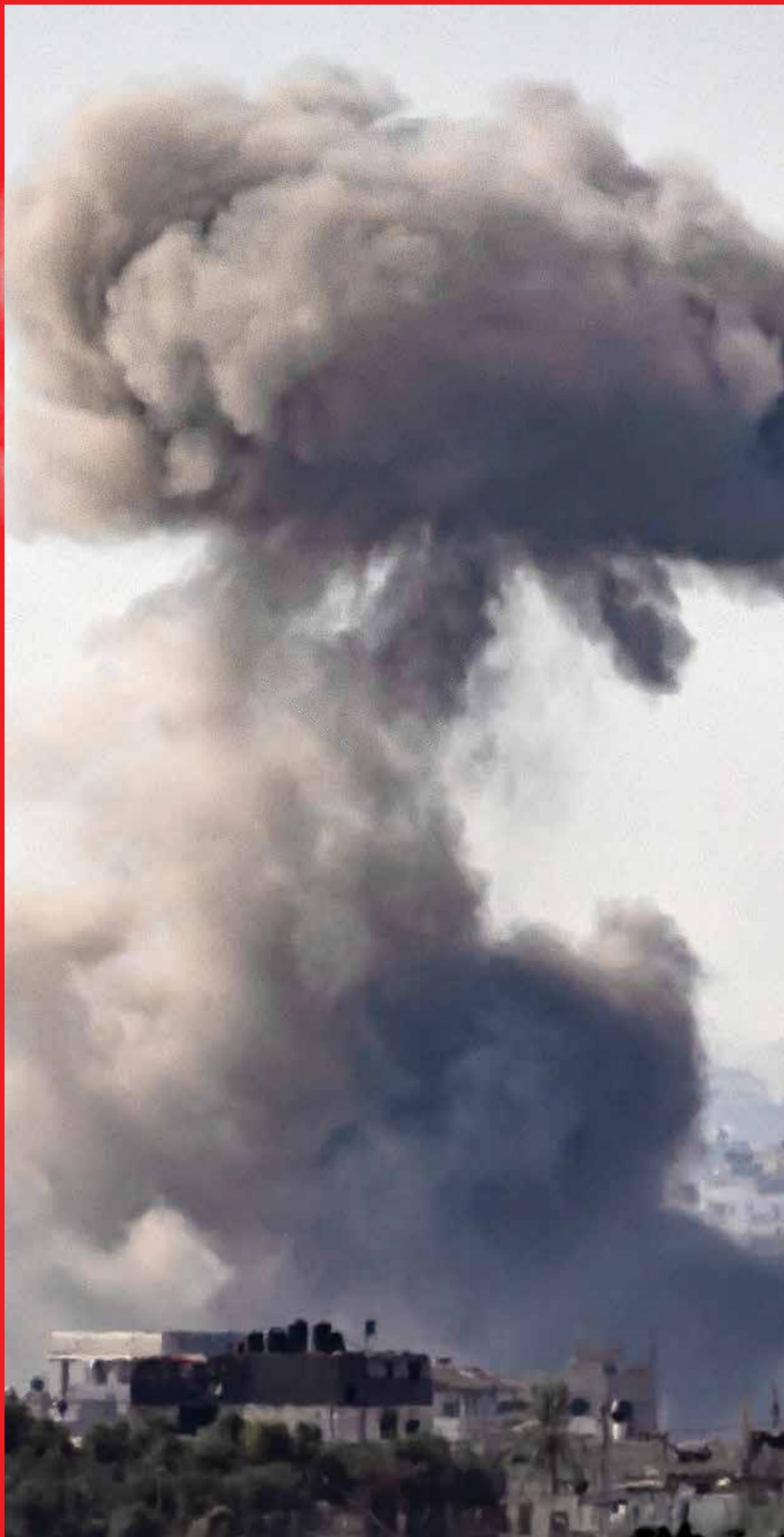
After the victory of Roman ruler Galerius over Sassanid king Narseh, Diocletian resettled Persian captives taken in battle in Thrace; Constantius II reportedly resettled Persian captives taken in raids into Sasanian territory in Thrace as well. The *Notitia Dignitatum*, a document of the Late Roman Empire, records a division of equites Persae Clibanarii (a Sasanian Persian, late Roman and Byzantine military unit of armored heavy cavalry) that was possibly formed by troops who fled to Rome with the Sassanid prince Hormozd.

Justinian, an emperor especially tuned to symbolic gestures, formed a detachment of captured Persian soldiers called the Per-

so-Justiniani who carried out the very practical task of fighting the Goths in Italy, much like his Justinian Vandali, who fought in the east. A funerary inscription of a cavalryman from the Perso-Justiniani, which shows some level of integration with the local population, is extant at Grado, a town in the north-eastern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Although the amount of booty, and thus visual material, that the Roman armies captured pales in comparison to that taken by the Sassanids, it was still a considerable point of entry for many foreign ideas. The presence of the Persian armies in the Roman Near East and Egypt also fostered cultural exchange. After Heraclius's seventh-century invasion, many Christians emigrated from the shattered Sassanid Empire and settled inside Roman territory, including Constantinople, bringing new ideas with them.

Israel escalates Gaza attacks as Netanyahu defies int'l calls for cease-fire



Smoke rises after Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip on October 31, 2023.
● FADEL SENNA/AFP

International Desk

Israel intensified assaults on Gaza on Tuesday after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected global demand for a humanitarian cease-fire, declaring “this is a time for war”. Israeli troops and Hamas fighters engaged on Tuesday in “fierce battles” in Gaza, where the dire humanitarian crisis spiraled and tearful Palestinian families scoured rubble in a desperate search for loved ones.

Israeli troops pushed deeper into Gaza, driving tanks and armored bulldozers through the rubble of shattered buildings, in what Israel claims is scouring for Hamas fighters who carried out a large-scale attack on October 7 that saw 1,400 people dead and 230 others captured.

Gaza’s Hamas-run Health Ministry said Tuesday that at least 8,525 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory, including at least 3,542 children and 2,187 women, as Israel pressed on with its air and ground campaign in the Gaza Strip. As Israel stepped up its relentless bombing of Gaza, desperate Palestinian families scabbled through debris searching for survivors and mourned over the bodies of some of the thousands killed, draped in white shrouds.

‘Scale of horror is hard to convey’

Major UN agencies are calling for a humanitarian cease-fire to allow deliveries of aid for more than two million civilians

trapped with scarce supplies of food, water and medical equipment, and also for the safe release of 230 prisoners.

The entire population of Gaza is “being dehumanized,” the chief of the main UN agency operating there told the UN Security Council on Monday, as pressure intensified on the besieged strip with Netanyahu ruling out the cease-fire, saying that while the Bible says there is a time for peace, “this is a time for war.”

“Calls for a cease-fire or calls for Israel to surrender to Hamas ... that will not happen,” he said.

Philippe Lazzarini, commissioner general of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) told the Security Council that thousands of children killed in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza in the past three weeks “cannot be collateral damage.”

“An immediate humanitarian cease-fire

International Desk

Iran’s permanent mission to the United Nations said there has been no change in Iran’s policy towards Palestine, noting that Tehran’s ‘yes’ vote to a UN General Assembly resolution on Gaza conflict on Friday was consistent with the country’s position.

The mission said on Tuesday that the Iranian government considers the UN approval of the resolution a victory for the international community supporting Palestine, defending the Palestinians’ right to determine their own fate, and that Iran supported the resolution in its entirety in a unified move with Islamic countries, according to IRNA.

At the same time, and according to the working procedure of the General Assembly, the Islamic Republic has announced its objection to the two-state solution and the recognition of the Israeli regime as a state. Therefore, the Islamic Republic did not co-sponsor Jordan’s motion due to the contradiction in some parts of the resolution to Iran’s position, it said. The two-state solution calls for es-

tablishing an independent state for Palestinians alongside Israel.

On Friday, the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favor of the resolution, calling for an immediate humanitarian truce between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas.

The 193-member body passed the non-binding resolution, drafted by a group of 22 Arab countries, by a margin of 120 to 14, with 45 countries abstaining. The United States and Israel voted no.

Among the abstentions was Canada, which had introduced an amendment that would have more explicitly condemned Hamas for its October 7 attack and demanded the immediate release of captives seized by the group.

The General Assembly voted after the UN Security Council had failed to take action over two weeks, with the US and Russia using their veto powers to block proposals supported by the other.

The adopted resolution calls for an “immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a ces-



● JACK GUEZ/AFP

has become a matter of life and death for millions," Lazzarini said. The director of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Lisa Doughten, told the Security Council that the "scale of the horror" being experienced by Gazans is "hard to convey." "We simply do not have enough essential supplies to provide for the survival of internally displaced people at this scale," Doughten said.

800,000 have fled south
Israel said its troops attacked underground compounds on Tuesday with a focus on northern Gaza. An estimated 800,000 Palestinians have fled south, even though Israeli airstrikes have pounded the entirety of the besieged enclave. More than half the territory's 2.3 million Palestinians have fled their homes, with hundreds of thousands sheltering in packed UN-run schools-turned-shelters, or in hospitals alongside thousands of wounded patients. Israeli strikes have hit closer to several northern hospitals in recent days, alarming medics. The UNRWA says nearly 672,000 Palestinians are sheltering in its schools and other facilities – four times their capacity. Thousands of people broke into its aid warehouses over the weekend to take food, as supplies of basic goods have dwindled because of the Israeli siege. There has been no central electricity in Gaza for weeks, and Israel has barred the entry of fuel needed to power emergency generators for hospitals and homes.

Children's casualty toll
UNICEF Executive Director Cath-

erine Russell said that the toll includes over 3,400 children killed, and more than 6,300 injured. "This means that more than 420 children are being killed or injured in Gaza each day – a number which should shake each of us to our core," she said. Lazzarini said: "This surpasses the number of children killed annually across the world's conflict zones since 2019." And he stressed, "This cannot be collateral damage."

64 of UN staff killed in Gaza
UNRWA, on which hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza rely for basic services even in normal times, said 64 of its staff have been killed since the start of the war, including a man killed alongside his wife and eight children in a strike late Monday. "This is the highest number ever of UN aid workers killed in any conflict around the world in such a short time," spokesperson Juliette Touma told the Associated Press. "UNRWA will never be the same without these colleagues."
Norway: Israel breaks int'l law
Meanwhile, Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide on Tuesday criticized Israel for breaking international law in its bombardment of Gaza that has leveled neighborhoods and killed thousands of Palestinians. The foreign minister told Reuters in an interview that while Oslo supports Israel's right to self-defense, humanitarian law must be adhered to. This meant distinguishing be-

tween combatants and civilians and ensuring military attacks are proportionate to avoid excessive harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure, he said. "We believe that there have been cases where this proportionality and this distinction have not been fully respected," he said, speaking in the UAE. In Oslo, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said it was crucial to get relief to civilians in Gaza as soon as possible. "It is paramount now to have a humanitarian pause to get the support, to get the humanitarian relief to two million people who now are in an extremely dire situation," he told reporters.

China's effort for ending Israeli violence
Also, China on Tuesday said it will work with the international community to help end the ongoing Israeli violence in the Gaza Strip, noting that the core of the conflict is Israel's "illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory." "The root of the cycle of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict lies in the long-term illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory, the long-term neglect of the right of the Palestinian people to independent statehood, and the lack of a fundamental guarantee of the basic rights of the Palestinian people," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, stressing, "This historical injustice should not continue."

Tehran's readiness to work out a deal
Meanwhile, the Iranian Foreign Minister was in Qatar on

Tuesday to coordinate and discuss efforts needed for an immediate stop in the fighting in Gaza. Tehran has announced it is ready to use its relations with Hamas to work out a cease-fire deal between the group and the Israelis, although Iran does not have any relations with the Israeli regime. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian held meetings with senior Qatari officials, including Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha before departing for Turkey to continue his diplomatic efforts to help find a solution to the crisis in Palestine. Emphasizing the need to use the last political opportunities to stop the war in Gaza, Amir-Abdollahian stated that the resistance stream will not wait for anyone's advice to confront the Zionists. Yemen's Houthis on Tuesday pledged more attacks against Israel if its war in Gaza continues, saying it had already fired drones and ballistic missiles in three separate operations. Amir-Abdollahian also met with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in the second such encounter since the war erupted. During the meeting, the top Iranian diplomat was briefed about the latest situation of people in Gaza amid ongoing Israeli aggression on the small blockaded territory.

AP, AFP, Reuters, CNN, and Press TV contributed to this report.

Why doesn't Egypt open Rafah crossing?



● REUTERS

By Hojjatollah Joudaki
Former Iranian diplomat in Egypt
OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The war between Israel and Hamas, and the subsequent Israeli war crimes in Gaza prompted a question in the minds of many: Why doesn't the Islamic government of Egypt open the Rafah border crossing and let Gazans into its Sinai Desert? It seems to me that one of the most significant measures of the Egyptian government in recent years, which turned in favor of Palestinians, was the same decision to keep the Rafah closed. Cairo has so far ignored numerous suggestions by Israel and some Western countries and never gave the green light to their project of relocating the people of Gaza into the Sinai Desert. Moving Gazans out of Gaza is the main step in Israel's plan for ethnically cleansing the land. Our past experience tells us all that if the people of Gaza were ever forced to migrate out of Palestine, there would never be another chance for them to return. In this light, Cairo's resistance against Israel's demands for the forced migration of Palestinians to the Sinai becomes justifiable. Tel Aviv claims to be fighting Hamas's armed forces in Gaza. So the Egyptians proposed that the Gaza civilians be relocated, not to the Sinai Desert, but to the Negev Desert, within the occupied territories in order to keep them safe from the war. Yet, the Israelis declined the proposal because their main goal is not to distinguish between combatants and civilians. Israel wants both to force Gazans to migrate out and to crush Hamas fighters, but this is easier said than done. Whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wins or loses this war, he will soon be sacked and indicted in court. Nevertheless, he thinks that if he can come out of this as a war hero, it may positively affect his open lawsuits in Israeli courts. Of course, he is mistaken since more and more voices are starting to slam his warmongering policies within the occupied territories. Even now, there are Israeli media and former officials that stress the need to remove Netanyahu. It has been proven that he can't bring peace and prosperity to Israel. Netanyahu is working against himself and Israel. Even if he manages to destroy Hamas, from the ashes of that devastating war another group or groups would rise that would surely be a tougher opponent than Hamas. What is more, the world public opinion is against Israel already. The efforts by Netanyahu and the Israelis to play innocent during the early days of the war fell flat quickly. Their continuous string of war crimes in Gaza has angered people everywhere. So, it doesn't seem like Israel would be able to achieve its goals. It can neither force Gazans out of their homes, nor can it destroy Hamas. It may be able to kill the fighters of Hamas, but the idea behind Hamas will not die. Netanyahu is sinking deeper into Gaza's quagmire, and whatever war crimes he commits only strengthens the case against him.

Iran's 'yes' vote at UNGA in line with Palestinian cause



sation of hostilities" and "firmly rejects any attempts at the forced transfer of the Palestinian civilian population".

It also stresses the need to avoid a wider escalation of the fighting and demands increased humanitarian aid for Gaza, where

only a small handful of trucks carrying aid have been allowed to enter over the last week.

● The UN General Assembly votes for an "immediate humanitarian truce" in Gaza at the UN in New York on October 27, 2023. ● ANDREA RENALTY/AFP

Iranian Karimi overcomes personal woes to find consolation in Hangzhou



Mahdieh Qazvinian
Staff writer

Despite a last-four loss for the defending champions in the newly-finished Asian Games, Iranian women's kabaddi player Zahra Karimi says she was still pleased to leave Hangzhou with a bronze medal to put an end to a gloomy 12 months in personal life. "We were in the midst of the preparation for the Asian Games when my father passed away last year. It was a huge loss for me as he was my biggest support and always by my side throughout my career," Karimi told Iran Daily. "It took me less than a month to pull myself back together and start all over again because I had promised my dad to go to the Games. I just wanted to make him proud, though I wasn't really pleased with my performance in Hangzhou," added the Iranian girl. Karimi, 25, was part of the team that stunned India in the final to walk away with the ultimate prize in Jakarta-Palembang 2018 - a maiden team medal for the Iranian female athletes at an international event - but she says they were surprised to see how other teams had improved over the course of five years. "The competition was held at the highest level. I have to confess that we had underestimated our opponents but all teams were much stronger than they were in Jakarta," Karimi said. Prior to the Games, Karimi says, the Iranian players thought that only India would stand between them and a second successive gold medal, before a shock semifinal defeat (24-35) against the Chinese Taipei saw them share the third podium with Nepal. The Chinese Taipei went on to settle for the silver after being narrowly beaten (26-25) by India in the final showdown.

"The Chinese Taipei was truly a brilliant team. They shared the spoils with India in the group phase and lost in the final by a single point," Karimi said of the last-four opponent. "I guess we had a better chance against India, had we played them in the semifinals, as we prepared for months for a likely encounter against them. The Taipei team's style of play was in stark contrast with the Indians, that's why we were caught off guard against them. The Taipei players play with a lot of pace, whereas the Indians are more reliant on their physical strength," Karimi added. The women's bronze was the first of the two kabaddi medals the Iranian teams collected in Hangzhou, with the men's side taking the silver after a controversial defeat against India in the final, having beaten them for the gold five years ago. "Fifteen members of the Iranian men's team play in the Indian Pro Kabaddi League, which is a top-level competition, though it unfortunately does not feature female players. I wish I can play in the Indian league one day, if they decide to run the women's event," said Karimi, who believes the double achievements in the 2018 Asian Games "brought significant publicity for the sport among the Iranians." Karimi's time in kabaddi has just been a part of an adventurous journey in the sports over the years, she says. "I started with the athletics and volleyball when I was a kid and even spent some time in roller-skating and badminton. I embarked on a karate career when I was 10 and won several national medals and an Asian bronze during six years in the sport, before eventually becoming a kabaddi player. I've been a member of the national team for the past nine years," said the Iranian girl, who is also a fitness and swimming coach.

Marouf in contention as Iran names 4+2 shortlist for volleyball team job

Sports Desk

Former Iranian captain and world-class setter Saeed Marouf is a surprise candidate for the national team job after the Iranian Volleyball Federation unveiled a list of six coaches on Monday. The position has been vacant since Behrouz Ataei stepped down from his role in the aftermath of a 3-1 defeat against the Czech Republic midway through the FIVB Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Rio de Janeiro. Iran finished second from bottom in the eight-team table of Pool A, failing to secure direct qualification for next year's Paris Olympics, though the Asian powerhouse will have a second chance to seal a quota through the FIVB Men's World Ranking by the end of the preliminary phase of 2024 Volleyball Nations League.

"I spoke with Saeed last week and asked him to help the national team," Mohammadreza Davarzani, the chairman of the federation, said after Monday's Technical Committee meeting, adding: "He said he has no intention of re-summing his international career after his retirement in 2021, suggesting we stick with the rebuild project within the squad, but he would be thrilled to help the team in other capacities." Marouf played an integral role during the so-called 'golden era' of the Iranian volleyball, leading the national team to double Asian Championships trophies as well as the gold medal at the Asian Games in 2014 and 2018. He was also a part of the team during the impressive campaigns at the 2014 World League, in which Iran finished fourth, and



FIVB

the Volleyball Nations League in 2019, when Iran made it to the Final Six in Chicago. Also on the list is Russian Vladimir Alekno, who steered his country to a famous five-set victory over Brazil in the London 2012 final but has been without a team since parting ways with Iran after the Tokyo Olympics, as well as. Gianlorenzo Blengini is believed to be Davarzani's favorite candidate, but Iran still faces a tough task in securing the 51-year-old Italian's services as he is under contract with Volley Lube club in his home country. Blengini's fellow Italian Roberto Piazza, the Netherlands' coach in the Olympic qualifiers, is also in the list but, like his compatriot, is committed to club duty with All-

anz Milano in the Italian league. Payman Akbari is the other Iranian shortlisted, though few would fancy the 46-year-old - a decorated coach in domestic and continental club competitions - to be eventually handed the job. High-profile Belgian Vital Heynen is probably the most exciting name in the list for many Iranian fans. Heynen, 54, led Germany to the bronze medal at the 2014 World Championships before his storied three-year spell on Poland's bench inspired the volleyball heavyweight to the world title in 2018, as well as a silver and a bronze at the Volleyball Nations League. The Iranians, however, would best remember the Belgian for coaching Poland in some thrill-

ing matches against Iran over the years - including a five-setter won by Alekno's men in Tokyo. With Germany, Brazil, Poland, Canada, USA, and Japan having already joined host France, and Egypt likely to take the African slot for the Olympics, only four quotas remain up for grabs. As it stands in the FIVB ranking, third-placed Italy, Argentina (sixth), Slovenia (seventh), and Serbia (ninth) are the favorites to book a ticket for the French capital, with Iran lagging behind in the 15th place. Davarzani, however, insisted that the new head coach, whoever that might be, will have to devise "a five-year strategy with the ultimate goal being a podium finish at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics."

Messi not thinking about long-term future after claiming eighth Ballon d'Or

Argentinian Lionel Messi holds the men's Ballon d'Or at the Chatelet Theatre, Paris, France, on October 30, 2023.

STEPHANIE LECOQ/REUTERS



AFP - Lionel Messi said Monday he was not thinking about his long-term future as he sought to enjoy winning the eighth Ballon d'Or of his storied career. Messi, 36, succeeded Karim Benzema as winner of the prize, awarded on the back of his performances last season, when he inspired Argentina to glory at the World Cup in Qatar. "The last one I won was also thanks to what we achieved with the Argentine national team in the Copa America (in 2021), but this one is much more special because it comes after we won the World Cup," Messi told various media including AFP after collecting his award at a ceremony in Paris.

"That is the trophy everyone wants to win the most, and it was a dream come true for me, my teammates and my country." He dragged Argentina to a victory in Qatar that crowned his remarkable career and allowed him to see off stiff competition for the Ballon d'Or from Kylian Mbappe and Erling Haaland in particular.

Haaland came second in the final voting, with Mbappe third and Kevin De Bruyne in fourth place. Former Barcelona superstar Messi scored seven times at the World Cup and was named the tournament's best player after Argentina beat France on penalties in the final in Doha. Yet Messi, who won his first Ballon d'Or in 2009, also had an underwhelming final season at Paris Saint-Germain, before leaving to play for Inter Miami in Major League Soccer. He played down suggestions he could come back for another Ballon d'Or, possibly after the next World Cup in 2026, when he will be 39. "I am not thinking about the long-term future. I am just enjoying the day to day at the moment," he said. "We have a Copa America coming up in the United States, where I am now, in which we are the holders, so I am looking forward to coming into that in good shape and then just see how I am getting on from there." Messi admitted on his return to the French capital that his two-year stint at PSG had not turned out the way he imagined upon signing from Barcelona in 2021. "Things didn't turn out as I hoped but I enjoyed the city a lot, and my kids liked it a lot and found it hard to leave," he said. "It is a spectacular city and I was lucky to live here. Football-wise it did not go the way I hoped but I prefer to remember the many good things."

Students of Sistan and Baluchestan and challenges they face

Social Desk

The vast southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, despite having immense capacity for growth and development, remains one of the most underdeveloped provinces in Iran.

It's a widely recognized fact that education plays a key role in encouraging development. The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow, and with a well-rounded education and adequate preparation for the challenges they may encounter, there is no limit to what they can achieve. Unfortunately, one of the primary reasons for the lack of progress and development in Sistan and Baluchestan is the inadequate facilities and shortage of human resources in the education sector. It is evident that without proper educational opportunities for local communities, social mobility, and overall progress for the entire province would be curtailed.

On January 13, 2022, the then-governor of Sistan and Baluchestan, Hossein Modarres Khiabani, announced that the province is facing a shortage of 18,000 classrooms, which is a significant number by any measure.

The existing education infrastructure in Sistan and Baluchestan includes *kapari* (tent) schools, where students typically study between the ages of 7 and

12. These schools are constructed using local materials, but they do not provide suitable learning environments. The interior tends to become excessively hot, and there are safety concerns due to the presence of insects and dangerous animals such as scorpions and snakes.

Another consequential educational challenge in most villages and towns in Sistan and Baluchestan Province is the lack of educational opportunities beyond primary school, specifically from seventh grade onwards. In most villages and towns, schools only offer classes up to the sixth grade, and the teachers who come to these villages can only teach up to this level. As a result, students must travel to schools located mainly in the district center or city to continue their education. These journeys are long and taxing, making it impractical for students to commute on a daily basis. Due to some of the ethnic and tribal considerations, girls of the province can only attend coeducational schools until the completion of primary education. After that, they require separate schools. While this issue also affects boys, they have more flexibility in attending other schools located further away. On the contrary, girls are not granted the same freedom.

Furthermore, the distance between villages necessitates

the construction of boarding schools or dormitories in these areas, which, again, due to the underdeveloped nature of the province, faces many challenges. Another critical issue across the schools in these regions is the presence of teachers who are assigned to teach there as their military service duty. They often arrive in Sistan and Baluchestan without financial or even professional motivation, resulting in limited effort to enhance students' academic growth.

All of these factors severely affect the quality of education that students receive, limiting their opportunities for progress. It is truly disheartening to see students who should excel academically being forced to engage in dangerous activities like fuel smuggling on treacherous dirt roads, risking their lives in the process.

The vastness of the province and the presence of difficult-to-cross paths pose logistical challenges in providing educational facilities in Sistan and Baluchestan. Additionally, underdevelopment is a significant contributing factor, which gives rise to socio-economic factors which also come into play. Sistan and Baluchestan is among the poorest provinces in Iran, with a majority of its population facing economic hardships. In such circumstances, many families prioritize having their children



assist with overcoming financial hurdles rather than ensuring their continued education.

Fortunately, the current administration recognizes the importance of educational spaces in less developed and underprivileged areas, with a particular focus on Sistan and Baluchestan. They have made it a priority to allocate resources for the provision of educational

facilities, aiming to eliminate deprivation in the region. Additionally, various charity organizations and generous individuals have taken up the responsibility of constructing schools throughout the province. However, despite these efforts, there are still deficiencies in facilities and shortages of human resources that need to be promptly addressed.



Although the government and various charity organizations have prioritized school construction in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, many students across the province study within *kapari* (tent) schools, shown in the photo above.

● TASNIM

Iran ready to set up blood transfusion center in Palestine

An official with the Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization (IBTO) has said that the organization is prepared to set up a standard blood transfusion center in Palestine in cooperation with the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS).

IBTO spokesman Bashir Haji Beigi also condemned the Israeli regime's attacks on the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, declaring that the organization has

received many requests from the Iranian people, who are keen on donating blood for the war-stricken nation of Palestine, according to IRNA.

Pointing to the fact that the process of shipping blood to Gaza would be time-consuming due to the need for international permissions, Haji Beigi said that the IBTO in coordination with the head of IRCS announced its readiness to set up a blood transfusion

center in Palestine with a daily blood donation capacity of 200 units.

It is worth mentioning that the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza declared on Monday that the number of Palestinian martyrs exceeded 8,300 people, 70 percent of them children and women, who lost their lives as a result of the Zionist regime's relentless attacks on the Gaza Strip over the past 23 days of bombardments. The



number of the wounded is also estimated more than 20,000 people, plus 2,000 still missing.

● IRNA

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IRCS reopens clinic in Afghanistan

Social Desk

The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has recently announced the reopening of its clinic in Zaranj, a city located in southwestern Afghanistan. This development comes as a result of a collaborative effort between key stakeholders, including the head of the IRCS, the representative of the president for Afghanistan affairs, and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul. Peyman

Namdar, the head of the Afghan Red Crescent, revealed on Tuesday that the clinic's reactivation was meticulously coordinated among these parties, IRNA reported. Namdar further elaborated that preliminary measures are currently underway to prepare for the imminent reopening of the health center. Once operational, the clinic will provide specialized examinations and conduct general surgeries, catering to the healthcare needs of the local community.

Iran, Afghanistan engage in productive talks over Hamun water share

Social Desk

Iran's VP and the head of the country's Department of the Environment has announced that Tehran and Kabul have recently engaged in fruitful talks concerning Iran's International Hamun Wetland and its water share. Ali Salajeghe revealed that Afghan officials have made a commitment to release the water share of the Hamun Wetland once Afghanistan receives sufficient precipitation, according to IRNA.

These discussions between Tehran and Kabul are still ongoing, with both parties working towards a resolution. Emphasizing the Iranian government's commitment to ensuring the well-being of its citizens and meeting their water needs, Salajeghe stated that even if precipitation conditions worsen in the Sistan and Baluchestan Province, there is no cause for concern. The official assured that the government will not tolerate any hardships faced by the people in accessing water resources.

Semnan becomes Iran's 'Book Capital'

Arts & Culture Desk

IRNA – Semnan, the capital city of Semnan Province in northern Iran, was selected as the eighth Iran's Book Capital in a special ceremony held at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Tehran, on Tuesday. The announcement was made in the presence of Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister, Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili.

The decision to honor five specific cities for their significant contributions to the promotion of reading and books was a key aspect of the event.

The cities of Evaz in Fars Province, Semnan, Sabzevar, Shahin Shahr in Isfahan, and Karaj have all been recognized for their distinct characteristics in fostering a culture of reading, receiving exclusive titles in this year's Book Capital program.

Evaz in Fars Province stood out for the considerable public engagement and public efforts in promoting reading.

Shahin Shahr was praised for its effective city management in the field of books, and for making maximum resources available for related organizations. Sabzevar was recognized for its efforts in promoting the discourse of the Islamic Revolution and introducing high-quality books of the city.

Karaj was acknowledged for its active efforts in enhancing literacy skills and designing creative programs in the field of reading skills.

Semnan, on the other hand, secured its place as Iran's Book Capital through its exemplary management and the creative programs and initiatives offered by its active city management and local residents.

The city's commitment to encouraging reading and its cultural atmosphere played an important role in its selection.

First Persian language course in Kyrgyzstan

IRNA – An open Persian language course kicked off in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, for the first time in years, with 18 students.

The course began at the National Library of Kyrgyzstan's Ferdowsi Center for Iranian Studies, with the efforts of Iran's Cultural Center and representatives of the Sa'di Foundation Abuzar Toqani.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Toqani said the positive reception from Persian language and literature enthusiasts has been promising.

"I encourage the students attending this course to pass different levels with perseverance and seriousness so that they would be able to benefit from the huge literary and scientific treasure of the Persian language," he said.

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Latin American artists to shed light on Gaza's oppression

Arts & Culture Desk

An art fair entitled the 'Latin America Cartoon and Caricature Exhibition' is set to take place at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, featuring works from 400 Latin American artists, with a focus on themes of anti-Zionism, anti-imperialism, and the Gaza conflict.

The exhibition's press conference was held on October 31 and attended by cultural figures, including Mohammad Khorasani Zadeh, the director-general of Visual Arts and acting director of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art; Seyyed Amir Javid, the deputy of the International Art Department; and Masoud Shojai Tabatabai, the exhibition's curator, IRNA reported.

Khorasani Zadeh spoke about the ongoing struggles of the oppressed Palestinian people, who have endured more than 70 years of injustice, crimes, and human rights violations by the Zionist regime. He mentioned the more than 8,500 Palestinians who lost their lives in these attacks, with half of them being children and over a thousand being women.

He expressed his admiration for their resilience and their pursuit of freedom. He highlighted the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art as a key cultural institution in Western Asia, emphasizing its commitment to contemporary art.

The museum will host this unique exhibition from November 2 until November 19, showcasing works from leading Latin American artists in the field of

cartoon and caricature. It will host artists from 15 countries including Argentina, Mexico, Cuba, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, The Dominican Republic, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and Nicaragua.

Khorasani Zadeh stressed the importance of the museum's active role in the art world and its responsibility to reflect current global events.

He described the 'Latin America Cartoon and Caricature Exhibition' as a significant step in this direction.

Khorasani Zadeh pointed out that cartoons are not limited by language; they represent a form of art that resonates with people on a universal level, bridging cultural gaps and promoting mutual understanding.

He also highlighted the significance of this exhibition, which occupies all nine galleries of the museum, as a departure from the biennial cartoon exhibitions. He mentioned that this time, the exhibition is a comprehensive event, featuring a wide array of works from Latin American artists, while assuring that Iranian artists will receive due attention in future events.

Seyyed Amir Javid emphasized the importance of cultural exchange with Latin America in the context of Iran's international missions.

He cited the shared cultural values, especially the spirit of resistance and the fight against imperialism, as the main factor behind the heightened interest in Latin America.

Javid acknowledged the



increased cultural and artistic interactions between Iran and Latin American countries in recent years, with a focus on cartoons and caricatures.

He mentioned the presence of prominent Latin American artists and events related to this art form, underlining the significant role of Masoud Shojai Tabatabai in these initiatives.

Javid mentioned a recent highlight of cultural exchange during Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to some Latin American countries, where a statue of the martyr, Qassem Soleimani, created by Iranian artist Nader Qashqai, was unveiled in Nicaragua, further enhancing cultural ties.

Shojai Tabatabai, the curator of the exhibition discussed the long histo-

ry of cultural exchanges between Iran and Latin America, especially in the field of cartoons.

He noted that these interactions started in 1992, with renowned Latin American artists such as Carlos Latuff and Ares during the cartoon bienales.

He highlighted the participation of Aris, a prominent Latin American artist, in the exhibition as a valuable addition.

He also emphasized the main theme of the exhibition, which revolves around anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism, with a significant focus on the Gaza conflict. Over 60 works related to these themes will be showcased. Shojai Tabatabai said that the exhibition's book would be published; the exhibition poster is de-

signed by Masoud Nejabati, based on the work of Aristides Hernandez, known as "Ares," a renowned Cuban cartoonist.

At the end of the press conference, the official poster of the exhibition was unveiled, signifying the upcoming exhibition's significance.



Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art hosts the press conference of the oncoming art fair 'Latin America Cartoon and Caricature Exhibition' on October 31, 2023. The exhibition is slated to be held from November 2 to 12 at the museum. jamejamonline.ir



jamejamonline.ir

France to pay tribute to late filmmaker Mehrjui

The Forum des images in Paris is slated to commemorate the late Dariush Mehrjui by screening his renowned film 'Hamoun,' made in 1989, and regarded as one of the most significant works in the history of Iranian cinema.



According to ISNA, the Forum des images, in collaboration with the Iranian Cinema Society, saddened by the loss of Mehrjui and his wife on October 14, has chosen to pay homage to the acclaimed director through a special evening event.

Mehrjui had previously been an honorary guest of the Forum des images in 2003 as part of a unique program, "Portraits of Tehran."

The program, scheduled for November 6 in Paris, will commence with a discussion about Mehrjui's contributions to cinema. The panel will feature the participation of Fabien Gaffez, director of art at the Forum des images, Agnès Devictor, a lecturer and Iranian cinema specialist, and Nader Takmil Homayoun, director and head of the Iranian Cinema Society.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
 Cartoonist

