

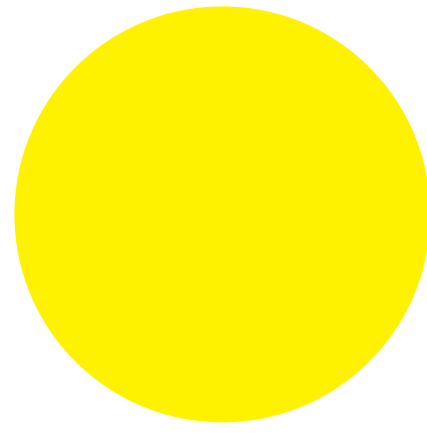
Oil minister: Six contracts worth \$14.5b signed on joint fields' development

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Arab countries need to settle their arguments with US



By Hassan Beheshtipour
International Relations Expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

A delegation comprising diplomats from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Indonesia, Palestine, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation met with Wang Yi, a senior Chinese diplomat, in China on Tuesday. The aim of this diplomatic mission was to bring an end to the war on Gaza, establish a ceasefire, and provide humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. The delegation is also planning to travel to other permanent member countries of the United Nations Security Council.

While diplomatic efforts to end the war and establish a ceasefire are commendable, it appears that the Arab-Islamic delegation may have the wrong address. China fundamentally lacks influence over Israel to exert pressure and has limited connections with Hamas or other resistance groups in Palestine. Despite China's coordination with Russia in the UN Security Council on blocking the unilateral resolutions proposed by the United States that condemn Hamas without emphasizing a "ceasefire", it seems beyond China's reach to intervene in the Gaza conflict on behalf of either side. Apart from China, the other permanent members of the Security Council — England, France, and Russia — also lack significant influence over Israel. The only country among the permanent members with influence over Israel is the United States, which is incidentally its main supporter. Therefore, the Arab-Islamic diplomatic delegation should have initiated their diplomatic journey not from Beijing but from Washington. Previously, the US Secretary of State had meetings with authorities in some Arab countries, but none proved fruitful and did not lead to a ceasefire. What matters most in Gaza is the establishment of a ceasefire and the cessation of Israel's atrocities. The level of destruction and the killing of non-combatant civilians are unjustifiable.

France, and Russia — also lack significant influence over Israel. The only country among the permanent members with influence over Israel is the United States, which is incidentally its main supporter. Therefore, the Arab-Islamic diplomatic delegation should have initiated their diplomatic journey not from Beijing but from Washington. Previously, the US Secretary of State had meetings with authorities in some Arab countries, but none proved fruitful and did not lead to a ceasefire. What matters most in Gaza is the establishment of a ceasefire and the cessation of Israel's atrocities. The level of destruction and the killing of non-combatant civilians are unjustifiable.

Benefits of railroad development in Iran for regional growth

The expansive and ambitious railroad development initiatives in Iran are proving to be a game-changer not only for the country, but for the entire region. As Iran has plans to invest in expanding and modernizing its railway network, the ripple effects are positively impacting neighboring nations in various strategic and economic ways.



EXCLUSIVE

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NEWS IN BRIEF

ECO experts to convene in Tehran



TASNIM – Tehran will host the fourth meeting of experts of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member states on November 26-29 in order to investigate the reduction of risk of disaster in the region. Manager of the Public Relations Department of the Geological Survey of Iran (GSI) for International Affairs Hanieh Bakhshaei made the announcement, saying sharing ideas on solving the problems of geological hazards are among the most important goals of the meeting.

Iran is 13th biggest wheat producer in the world



IRNA – Iran is the world's 13th biggest wheat producer in 2023, producing 14 million tons of wheat, according to the statistics of the US Department of Agriculture.

In its latest report on the situation of grain production in the world, the department said Iran produced over 14 million tons of wheat in the 2023 Crop Year, showing an 800,000-ton hike compared to the same period last year.

Iran's wheat production in 2023 registered a six percent growth compared to last year's output, the report added.

TPO to launch FTA with EAEU in 2024

IRNA – The deputy head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) for international affairs said a free trade agreement (FTA) between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union's (EAEU) member states will come into effect at the beginning of the next Iranian year (starting March 20, 2024).

Mohammad Qannadzhadeh made the comment on Tuesday, adding that the Eurasian Economic Union is composed of five countries, namely Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

Oil minister: Six contracts worth \$14.5b signed on joint fields' development

Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji said that six contracts have been signed in the joint oil and gas fields, which are mostly related to joint fields in the west of Karun in southwest Iran, such as Azadegan and Yaran, adding that the value of the contracts is about \$14.5 billion.

Owji made the remarks during Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to the Oil Ministry on Monday, in which Raisi was briefed about the oil industry's plans for the current Iranian year, IRNA reported. "The country's oil production will reach 3.6 million barrels per day (bpd) by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (ending March 19, 2024)." Referring to the fact that Iran has 163 billion barrels of proven reserves, Owji added that Iran aims to reach 5.7 million bpd of oil production by the end of Iran's Seventh National Development Plan, in 2026.

Owji said that in the Forouzan Oil Field, oil production was 24,000 barrels per day in 2021, adding that the amount has currently reached 30,000 barrels, and will increase to 40,000 bpd by the end of September 2025.



Iran, China finalizing \$2b investment for developing IKIA: CAO

The head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) said a \$2-billion investment by Iran and China as a joint venture (JV) for the development of Phase 2 of Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) will be finalized soon.

The Chinese side will export materials to Iran needed for manufacturing plane parts and equipment, Mohammad Mo-

hammadibakhsh said, Tasnim news agency reported.

The joint investment by Iran and China for the development of Phase 2 of the airport will be finalized in the current week, he added.

The investment will be made for increasing cargo and passenger transport capacity and also equipping the runway and Airport Traffic Control Tower

(ATCT).

In September 2021, the deputy roads minister put the number of planes active in the air fleet of the country at about 100, adding that the number has now increased to 190.

According to the scheduled program, the number of active passenger planes will increase to 250 by year's end (March 19, 2024), CAO chief stated.



Benefits of railroad development in Iran for regional growth



By Reza Abesh Ahmadlou

Staff writer

OPINION

The expansive and ambitious railroad development initiatives in Iran are proving to be a game-changer not only for the country, but for the entire region. As Iran has plans to invest in expanding and modernizing its railway network, the ripple effects are positively impacting neighboring nations in various strategic and economic ways.

One of the key advantages of Iran's railroad development is the enhancement of regional connectivity. The efficient transportation of goods and people across borders is vi-

tal for economic growth, and a well-connected railway network serves as a lifeline for trade.

Iran's strategic location, at the crossroads of the Middle East and Central Asia, positions it as a natural hub for regional connectivity. As the country continues to expand its railroad infrastructure, it facilitates smoother and more cost-effective trade routes for neighboring nations. Additionally, improved rail connectivity fosters economic integration among regional countries. The efficient movement of goods by rail reduces transportation costs, making regional products more competitive in global markets. This economic integration can lead to the creation of a more robust regional economy,

with increased trade, fostering cooperation and understanding among nations.

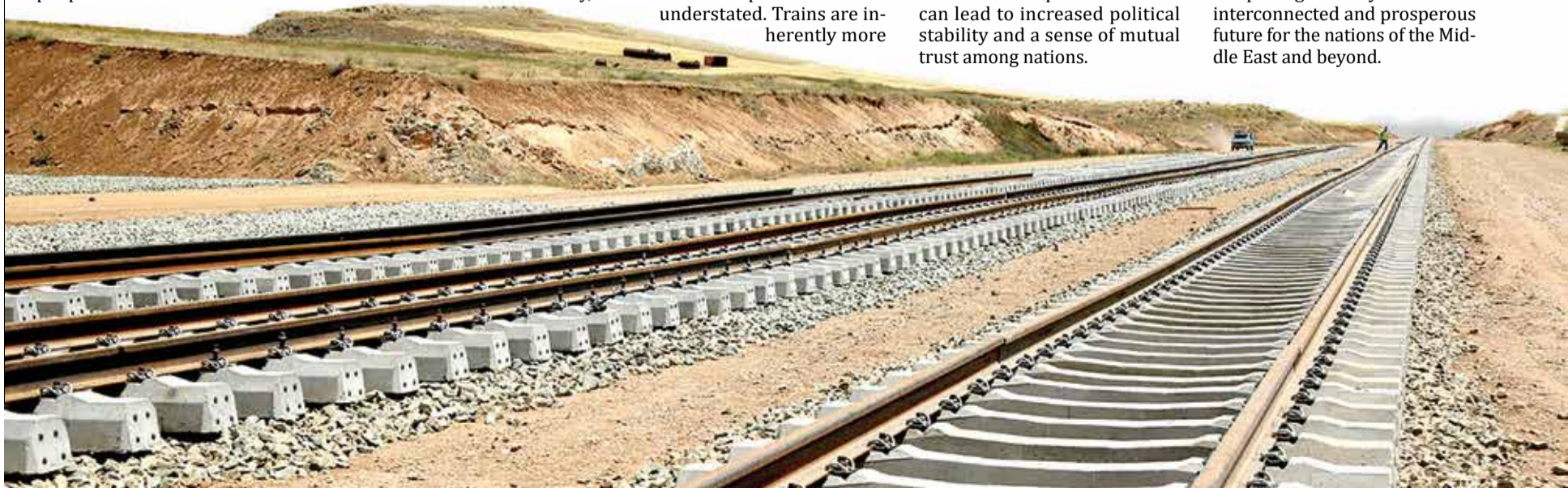
Furthermore, railroad development in Iran contributes to the development of regional transit corridors. These corridors not only facilitate trade but also serve as a strategic asset for landlocked countries in the region. For instance, the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which includes Iran, connects South Asia to Europe and Russia via rail. The INSTC not only reduces transportation time but also provides landlocked countries like Afghanistan and the Central Asian states with access to international markets.

The environmental benefits of railroad development cannot be understated. Trains are inherently more

environmentally friendly compared to other modes of transportation. As Iran expands its railway network, there is a potential reduction in carbon emissions from freight and passenger transportation. Neighboring countries, by collaborating with Iran on these rail projects, can collectively contribute to mitigating the environmental impact of transportation in the region. Another crucial aspect is the geopolitical significance of enhanced rail connectivity. A well-developed railway network makes Iran an even more important player in the geopolitics of the region. It strengthens diplomatic ties and fosters collaboration between neighboring nations. The shared infrastructure creates interdependencies that can lead to increased political stability and a sense of mutual trust among nations.

Moreover, the railroad development in Iran opens up opportunities for joint ventures and economic partnerships. Neighboring countries can collaborate on railway projects, share technological expertise, and invest in the development of associated infrastructure. This not only accelerates the pace of development but also promotes a spirit of cooperation that extends beyond the realm of transportation.

The benefits of railroad development in Iran for regional countries are multifaceted. From fostering economic integration and environmental sustainability to enhancing geopolitical influence, the strategic implications are significant. The rails laid today are paving the way for a more interconnected and prosperous future for the nations of the Middle East and beyond.



Craftsmen bringing lak-tarashi back to life

Iranica Desk

Lak-tarashi, a unique form of wood carving, has been an integral part of the artistic heritage of Mazandaran Province for centuries. Skilled men and women have perfected their craft by using wood, logs, and branches to create stunning structures that seem to breathe life back into the lifeless wood. This beautiful and innovative art comes from the authentic industries of the people. The local villagers, living near the forests, have mastered the necessary skills to procure their tools and instruments from the forest wood and create exquisite works of art with their utmost talent and skill. Also known as *chutashi*, *lak-tarashi* requires more than just the skills of a carpenter or ordinary wood carver. The artisan involved in *lak-tarashi* combines their knowledge of wood and nature to create an unparalleled fusion of cultural and historical treasures.



participate in occasional provincial and national exhibitions to promote their products. This lack of market access remains a significant challenge faced by artists in this industry, hindering their growth and potential success in the broader marketplace.

Kolvani noted that the popularity of wood industries is on the rise, but the scarcity of raw materials remains another critical obstacle. He believes that using high-quality, durable wood is essential in producing exquisite pieces that can withstand the test of time without harming the environment.

As someone who has dedicated his life to preserving this ancient craft, Kolvani expressed regret that many artists in the leather and wood industries have been forced to leave the country due to insufficient support.

He stressed that providing adequate support to artists and craftsmen will help reignite their hope and enable



With a history of more than 8,000 or 11,000 years, *lak-tarashi* is an ancient art form. Master craftsmen in the past used the roots and trunks of forest trees, without the use of modern tools, to produce wooden vessels adorned with mythical patterns inspired by the surrounding nature, using tools such as chisels. Reviving this majestic art form is crucial for preserving the rich cultural heritage of Mazandaran Province. It is an opportunity to celebrate the skilled artisans and their contributions to the community while also promoting sustainable industries and tourism. For many years, the art of *lak-tarashi* was on the brink of extinction in Mazandaran Province. Only a handful of people continued to engage in this beautiful

art, cherishing their ancestors' profession by delicately carving wood within the corners of their homes. However, a shift has occurred among the younger generation, who recognize the disadvantages of plastic containers and materials. They have returned to the use of wood, which is both environmentally friendly and safe for humans. Among those dedicated to preserving this ancient craft, Maqsood Kolvani stands out as a renowned wood carver. With over 20 years of experience, he has honed his skills under the guidance of his father, passing down this treasured art form to fellow enthusiasts. His works range from intricately carved chests to intricately designed forks and water spinners, captivating audiences

at numerous handicraft exhibitions. When Kolvani immerses himself in the process of carving wood, it's as if he forgets the world around him. His skilled hands, guided by special tools, pour their creative energy into each masterpiece, driven solely by the desire to bring another piece of art to life. Today, he is esteemed as one of the greatest wood carvers in Mazandaran Province, specifically in Nowshahr.

In a recent interview with ISNA, Kolvani reflected on his journey, stating, "I learned this art from my father, a skilled wood carver, and I dedicated myself to its preservation so that this beautiful industry would not be forgotten. For the past 20 years I have been actively involved in this field." He expresses his gratitude for the support provided by Nowshahr's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicraft Department, along with other officials who have recognized the significance of reviving this precious art form. Thanks to Kolvani's efforts, the art of *lak-tarashi* has found new life, and several enthusiasts have successfully obtained licenses in this beautiful art and are actively practicing it. Together, they are working towards both preserving their cultural heritage and ensuring the continuity of this remarkable craft. Through the dedication of artists like Kolvani and the support of local authorities, the revival of *lak-tarashi* is becoming



ing a reality in Mazandaran Province. This resurgence not only preserves a rich artistic tradition but also contributes to the promotion of sustainable industries, cultural tourism, and the overall well-being of the community. When we look at the hands of Kolvani, we can see the marks of wood carving tools etched on all his fingertips - a testament to his dedication to the art of *lak-tarashi*. Over the years, he has left behind a trail of stunning creations that have captivated audiences at numerous exhibitions. Despite his impressive body of work, Kolvani emphasizes the need for a permanent market serving handicraft artists. Unfortunately, Nowshahr lacks such a market, forcing artists to par-

them to continue pursuing their passion. The biggest desire of an artist is to sell and exhibit their creations.

In conclusion, Kolvani noted that negligence towards our craftsmen, particularly in the field of wood carving, which is experiencing a revival, will inevitably cause it to decline.

Delayed support will ultimately lead to the art being forgotten once more. Therefore, it is crucial to provide the necessary support to these talented individuals and ensure the survival of their craft, which carries not only cultural and historical significance, but also contributes to the promotion of sustainable industries, cultural tourism, and the overall improvement of society.

Ancient road from Hamedan to Rey: Traversing history and culture

The ancient road from Hamedan to Rey (that is, from Ekbatana to Raga), coincided with the present road and passed through Zarand; the Arab geographers write about a roundabout way, via the town of Saveh.

The shortest route from Hamedan to Rey is reckoned to measure 49 farsakhs. Although this road crosses some mountains, no single pass presents serious obstacles to pack transport except for the 50 versts-long section between Kushkan and Mazdakan, which is sometimes blocked by snowdrifts, even to wheeled transport.

The roundabout way, according to the Arab geographers, was 61 farsakhs long. Noteworthy on this road was the village of Mashkuya, some eight farsakhs from Saveh and 15 farsakhs from Rey. Ibn Rosta, a tenth-century Muslim Persian explorer and geographer, mentions the existence, in this village, of an interesting palace of pre-Islamic date,



with figures carved from wood and a gift roof; the palace had a park with a spring

from which a stream issued and watered the neighboring fields. Between

Mashkuya and the next station, the road to Rey came to a river now called Ab-e

Shur; the road crossed it on a bridge made of brick, with arches; from this bridge one could see Mount Damavand. The "roundabout road" thus must have originated not because of some real obstacles on the main road but as a result of the importance of the city of Saveh; the district of Zarand, which lies on the main road, is subordinate to it even now. Here one of the roads to southern Persia branches off. In the political sense, Saveh was subordinate to Rey rather than to Hamedan; the customs-house of the ruler of Rey was located, somewhat further west of where the roads to Saveh and to Zarand bifurcated, a little distance east of the village of Pusta, which already existed at that time. Saveh was said to have been built in the Islamic period; it does not seem to have had great importance before the Ilkhanids, although narratives about the Mongol conquest mention the burning of a rich library.

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.

ישראל ביי ביי

'Bye bye Israel'

How do pseudo-journalists like Edy Cohen attempt to cover up Israel's defeat on October 7 on media with fictional scenarios?

Israel was built on three pillars: lies, war, and terrorism. That goes for its preferred strategy for survival, too. In its 75-year history, Israel has never taken responsibility for its crimes and consistently distorted realities.

Following Hamas's surprise operation on October 7, Israeli warlords turned to the dissemination of false or misleading information to divert public attention, complementing their war crimes. The spread of fake news by the Israelis in the Israel-Gaza war served several purposes, including undermining factual information, manipulating public opinion, and diverting attention away from their crimes in Gaza. It also aimed to demonize and delegitimize Palestinians and their resistance against the occupation and occupiers. This was done by resembling their resistance to Daesh to evoke sympathy for Israel as the supposed victim.

Lies to cover up a major defeat

The disinformation spread by Israel, initially revolving around themes such as beheading infants, assaulting women, or burning some of the victims alive, and more recently, around discovering a military base beneath hospitals, continues to be echoed by many Western politicians and mainstream media. One such example was the contradictory, distorted images that were published by the IDF after the bombardment and massacre at Al-Ahli al-Arabi Hospital in Gaza.

Lies abound regarding the Re'im Festival as well. Yasmin Porat, an Israeli settler who was captured and subsequently freed by Hamas, talked in a radio interview on This Morning Show hosted by Aryeh Golan about Hamas's humane treatment of captives, revealing that the settlers were killed by Israeli forces.

numerous fake news pieces by the Israeli army, politicians, and media have been published and sometimes repeated by Western politicians and mainstream media.

Apart from the dissemination of fake news, since the October 7 operation,

the abundant use of negative and biased language by Israel's allies and mainstream media soon became evident to all. We have also witnessed the removal and restriction of voices that were critical of Israel's crimes in mainstream media. For example, Steve Bell, a cartoonist for The Guardian English newspaper, was fired after 40 years of collaboration for drawing a cartoon of Netanyahu. Anchors of the American TV network MSNBC Mehdi Hasan, Ayman Mohyeldin, and Ali Velshi were "quietly taken out of the anchor's chair" as well. The BBC has launched an urgent investigation into six of its journalists, including Sally Nabil and Nada Abdelsamad, working for its Arabic service after they allegedly liked or published posts on social media. There is also evidence of the removal of some content or blocking of user accounts that stood in solidarity with Palestine on some social networks, including YouTube and Instagram.

Israel has shown that it does not distinguish between military and non-military targets, repeatedly targeting schools, universities, mosques,

churches, homes, hospitals, emergency centers, and ambulances.

Israel repeatedly claimed Hamas had built tunnels under non-military centers, including hospitals, and demanded their evacuation, ignoring the fact that patients and displaced persons seeking refuge in hospitals had nowhere else to go. Israel did not stop there and launched a series of brutal attacks on hospitals. Immediately after each attack, Israel's propaganda machine went into action.

Edy Cohen, an Israeli journalist and analyst, tweeted about the killing of dozens of Hamas leaders who were hiding near the Al-Ahli Hospital, then immediately deleted his tweet. Hananya Naftali, a social media adviser for Benjamin Netanyahu, also claimed in a tweet that the Israeli Air Force attacked a Hamas base in a Gaza hospital, killing some "terrorists". However, this tweet was deleted minutes later and replaced with a new tweet, stating: "The mysterious explosion in Gaza. Hamas blames Israel for this." Afterwards, Naftali released a clip from August 2022 as evidence of the false

claim that a misfired missile by Islamic Jihad had hit the hospital. This tweet was also later edited by Naftali, who added a video from Al Jazeera to prove their new claim.

The Israeli security and military personnel also published a recorded file of an allegedly intercepted conversation between two Hamas fighters, one of whom says that the hospital was hit by a rocket from Islamic Jihad. However, the fabricators of this file did not notice that after the Palestinian leaders were tracked by phone and assassinated, resistance fighters do not use mobile phones anymore. Also, the proximity of the cemetery to the hospital, with the direction and height of the rockets launched in the Al Jazeera video that the Israeli authorities cited, does not match. Furthermore, the accent, tone, and dialect, and the ignorance of one of the alleged fighters about the hospital and cemetery's locations are other factors proving the forgery of this file. New analyses indicate that the recorded audio file was from two separate and independent channels, and, after editing, these two sounds were com-

bin in a digital audio workshop.

The Al Jazeera investigative team concluded that Israel targeted the Al-Ahli Hospital four times in the hour leading up to the explosion. It further declared that the missile launched from Gaza by Islamic Jihad was tracked and completely destroyed in the air by an Iron Dome missile before the hospital was hit.

In the past, Israel repeatedly denied and blamed others for its assassinations and crimes or deferred them to future investigations at an unknown time. However, considering the unprecedented scale of the massacre and destruction and its attacks on non-military centers in Gaza, including 51 hospitals and health centers, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people since October 7, there is no room for doubt who committed this crime. Israel's withdrawal of its initial claims, resort to old videos or fake files, deletion of flimsy evidence, and contradictions in its official documents support this claim. It seems that Israel has failed in its propaganda war, and its lies are not finding buyers.





Who is Edy Cohen?

Edy Cohen is an Israeli journalist who became infamous among Iranians for his hostility towards Iran. He strives to support Israel and portray it as legitimate and just. He uses the Holocaust as his main theme to depict Jews as victims and attempts to justify the Israeli occupation of Palestine through this narrative.

He has close ties to the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, and uses that to manipulate media narratives in line with Israel's security goals. At times, he releases pieces of news that Israeli authorities do not want to officially publish themselves. These are often untrue stories aimed at media manipulation and spreading the Zionist regime's propaganda. His main platform is X — formerly Twitter.

His brothers have served in the Mossad. One of his brothers, Eli Cohen, was an Israeli spy in Syria who was executed. His other brother served as the Minister of Intelligence in Israel. Edy Cohen's father, Haim Cohen, was kidnapped on March 29, 1985, and later murdered on December 25, 1985. Cohen's father, at the time of his death, was 39 years old and held an Iranian passport.

It is suspected that the entire Cohen family has been involved in Israeli intelligence and espionage services. It is possible that his father's Iranian passport and his residence in Lebanon were related to such missions. Al-

though he is known as a journalist in the media, Cohen maintains constant communication with Mossad and promotes Israel's media policies. Informed sources state that during the war on Gaza, Edy Cohen was linked with bloggers and online activists, presenting various scenarios to overcome Israel's defeat on October 7.

Among these scenarios are unfounded claims of a misfired missile attack on Al-Ahli Hospital by Islamic Jihad and the existence of military facilities under Gaza hospitals. All these claims were proven false. Posing as a blogger, Cohen supported Israel with the hashtag #HamasiSIS during the war, which later became one of the most trending hashtags in Israel on X. Another influencer, Yoseph Haddad, who is an Arab defender of Israel, conducted numerous interviews with foreign media and uploaded several videos on social networks, attempting to portray Hamas as criminals. Celebrities like Gal Gadot, Sacha Baron Cohen, and the Olympic medalist Avishag Semberg also shared pro-Israeli content on social networks.

The events of October 7 were not just a defeat, but a media and field disgrace for Israel. However, it seems that and its propagandist men have not learned from the embarrassment of spreading fake news and continue to miserably cover up their failures.



Nuggets pull off late win over Pistons



USA TODAY SPORTS

REGGIE JACKSON had 21 points and six assists as the visiting Denver Nuggets overcame the ejection of center Nikola Jokic to beat Detroit 107-103 on Monday, handing the Pistons their 12th straight loss.

Denver coach Michael Malone was ejected with 1:21 remaining in the first quarter for arguing with the officials. Jokic was tossed with 1:22 left in the first half after picking up his second technical. Jokic finished the game with nine points, five rebounds and five assists.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope supplied 20 points for the Nuggets, who snapped a four-game road losing streak. Christian Braun contributed 15 points and six rebounds, and Michael Porter Jr. tossed in 14 points and grabbed 11 rebounds. Aaron Gordon added 11 points, nine rebounds and seven assists. Cade Cunningham led the Pistons with 27 points and nine assists. Marvin Bagley III had 18 points and eight rebounds, Jaden Ivey added 17 points and Isaiah Stewart chipped in 11 points and 11 rebounds. The Nuggets had a 56-55 halftime lead. All 10 of their players who saw action scored, as they shot 53.7 percent from the field. Detroit was led by Ivey, who had 13 points. Denver clung to the lead until Ivey made a layup to give Detroit a 66-65 edge. The Nuggets answered with 3-pointers from Braun and Porter.

A 7-0 Pistons spurt, capped by a Cunningham 3-pointer, allowed the Pistons to regain the lead. Jackson scored with 24 seconds left in the third quarter to give Denver an 81-79 lead entering the fourth.

Stanley Umude scored eight consecutive Pistons points to give Detroit an 87-84 edge. Porter's 3-pointer with 6:57 left put Denver back on top, 92-91.

Free throws by Stewart gave Detroit a 95-94 lead with 5:02 to go. After Jackson tied it at 97-all with a three-point play, neither side had more than a two-point advantage until Gordon's three-point play with 1:25 left.

That made it 106-103. Both sides had empty possessions until Denver sealed the contest on a Jackson free throw with 11 seconds remaining.

Relieved Italy pledge to 'repeat something fantastic' at Euro 2024

AFP - A relieved Italy midfielder Davide Frattesi said the European champions will try and "repeat something fantastic" in Germany next year after Monday's 0-0 draw with Ukraine in Leverkusen secured qualification for Euro 2024.

The result means Italy, who failed to qualify for both the 2018 and 2022 World Cups either side of their Euro 2020 triumph, avoid another embarrassing tournament miss.

The two nations finish level on 14 points behind England in Group C, but Italy have the better head-to-head record having won 2-1 in Milan in September. "We knew if we were unable to break the deadlock in the first hour, it would become really tough. Ukraine then made it a more physical match," Frattesi told RAI Sport.

"We were under pressure, but overall it was a good performance. What mattered was that we qualified... "We suffered, but it was important to get through. Now we'll try to repeat something fantastic."

The final score belied the true nature of the match, with Italy's high-octane attack and Ukraine's counter-attacking threat creating several chances for both teams. Ukraine had a late penalty appeal turned down, despite Italy midfielder Bryan Cristante looking to have made contact with Mykhailo Mudryk's foot in injury time. "From my point of view that was a penalty, but again I was not there and it's only about my emotions," Ukraine coach Serhiy Rebrov told a post-match press conference.



Italian players celebrate qualifying for the Euro 2024 after a goalless draw against Ukraine in Leverkusen, Germany, on November 20, 2024. LEONIEGELN KER/AFP

Italy travelled to Leverkusen knowing they would progress by avoiding defeat, while Ukraine knew only a win would suffice. New Italy coach Luciano Spalletti has only been in charge for three months after Roberto Mancini surprisingly left for the Saudi Arabia national team job. "We had to keep attacking - but Ukraine proved they are a very good team who gave us a lot of problems," Spalletti, who led Napoli to

their first Serie A title since 1990 last season, said. Italy will go into either pot three or four for the tournament draw, which will take place on December 2 in Hamburg. Spalletti added his team would "have a moment to pat ourselves on the back" before turning their focus to the finals in Germany, the site of their 2006 World Cup triumph. "Now, the level will step up. Now, the fun begins."

Midfielder Nicolò Zaniolo said his side's nervy qualification campaign, which included two losses to England and a draw with North Macedonia, would not dampen their hopes of defending the title. "We had the right motivation. Italy must go to the Euros not just to take part, but to compete as reigning champions."

Ukraine into play-offs Ukraine, forced to take the fixture to Germany due to

the ongoing conflict with Russia, can still qualify, but will need to navigate the play-offs in March 2024. Mudryk was lively down the left for Ukraine and crafted a number of half-chances early, with his side denied by poor finishing. Italy's dominance of possession started to tell after half an hour, Federico Chiesa sliding a smooth pass across the face of goal which eluded a desperate

Davide Frattesi. Italy continued to attack early in the second half but as the game wore on the increasingly nervous Italians sat back, allowing Ukraine more space up front. Mudryk was always a threat and appeared to have been brought down in the box after contact from Cristante, but the referee waved his team's desperate pleas for a spot-kick away.

Mendy to sue Man City over unpaid wages



PHIL NOBLE/REUTERS

BBC - Benjamin Mendy is taking former club Manchester City to an employment tribunal over millions of pounds he claims he is owed in unauthorised wage deductions. France full-back Mendy, 29, left City at the end of his contract this summer. He was cleared of a series of rape and attempted rape charges made

against him. It is alleged City stopped paying Mendy in September 2021 after he was initially charged and held in custody. In a statement, it was confirmed leading UK sports lawyer Nick De Marco is handling Mendy's case, which amounts to a "multi-million pound claim" and it is expected

the case will be heard in 2024.

Mendy joined Ligue 1 club Lorient at the start of this season and he has so far made three substitute appearances for the French side.

He joined City from Monaco in a £52m deal in 2017 and won Premier League titles in 2018, 2019 and 2021. His final appearance for the club came in the Premier League on 15 August 2021.

Mendy was remanded in custody for five months before being released on bail in January 2022, and then went to trial for the first time in August 2022. In January he was cleared of six counts of rape and one count of sexual assault.

He was then cleared of raping a woman and attempting to rape another in July at a retrial. City did not comment when approached by BBC Sport.

Khatibi sacked as Paykan head coach

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Paykan sacked head coach Rasoul Khatibi after a poor run of results in the Iranian top-flight campaign.

The decision comes less than five months after the former Iranian international striker took charge of the Tehran-based club. Paykan has managed only a single victory - a 1-0 away win against Esteghlal Khuzestan in mid-October - across 10 matches in the Iranian league this season, suffering four defeats, and is struggling in the bottom half of the table with eight points - two clear of the relegation zone.

Khatibi is the second coach in the Iranian league to be shown the exit door this season following Alireza Mansourian's dismissal from the Foolad Khuzestan job. "Khatibi's efforts to introduce young talents to the Iranian Pro League are undeniable. We want to wish him

success for the rest of his professional and personal life," the club said in a statement on Tuesday, adding the new head coach will be announced soon.

Paykan has the youngest squad among the 16 teams in the Iranian league with an average age of 24.1 years, while it had to part ways with some key players in the summer transfer window - including goalkeeper Rashid Mazaheri, who joined Nassaji Mazandaran, as well as Iranian under-23 international center-back Saman Fallah, who left for Golgozar Sirjan. The Persian Gulf Pro League will resume after the international break on Thursday, with Paykan playing away to Iralco on Friday.

AMIN BAHRAMI/IRNA



Extraordinary BRICS summit

Raisi: Gaza symbol of West's moral decline

South Africa's Ramaphosa accuses Israel of war crimes, 'genocide'

International Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, in an extraordinary summit of the BRICS group of nations on Tuesday, made proposals to stop Israel's crimes in Gaza, stating that the United States has made all international organizations ineffective.

Upon a proposal by Iran, South Africa on Tuesday hosted a virtual meeting of BRICS on Gaza, during which its president, Cyril Ramaphosa, accused Israel of war crimes and "genocide" in the besieged strip. A group of major emerging economies – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – hold the summit aimed at drawing up a common response to the Israel-Hamas conflict. Addressing the meeting, the Iranian president considered Gaza a symbol of the West's moral decline, saying, "Comprehensive support from the US and the West for genocide and child killings in Gaza is worse than anything."

As of Monday, more than 13,300 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, more than 5,600 of them children, according to the territory's Hamas-run Health Ministry.

Referring to the inability of the United Nations Security Council to fulfill its mission of promoting peace and security and the failure to issue a binding resolution for a cease-fire, Raisi said it is necessary for the BRICS member states to adopt a binding resolution in the General Assembly within the framework and mechanism of the alliance for peace, and to halt the crimes against the people of Gaza.

Emphasizing his second proposal, he highlighted, "The continuous attacks by the Zionist regime on hospitals, medical centers, religious sites, and the massacre of women, children, doctors, nurses, and journalists are all acts of terrorism, and this fabricated regime should be identified as a terrorist regime, with its military

recognized as a terrorist organization".

Raisi also said that his country supports the actions of some countries in taking Israel's crimes of occupation in Gaza to the International Criminal Court.

In another proposal, he said, "Collective action by BRICS members to break the siege of Gaza and establish a permanent and secure path for sending humanitarian aid to Gaza is essential".

Pointing to the ongoing crimes and racist nature of Israel, Raisi said free nations expect all governments, especially BRICS members, to swiftly prioritize complete cessation of their political, economic, and military relations with the Zionist regime.

"The continuation of interactions with the regime in the military and economic fields means helping to continue the crime and killing of women and children, which is the subject of condemnation and



blame of all nations," he added.

Meanwhile, as the South African president chaired the summit, he said, "The collective punishment of Palestinian civilians through the unlawful use of force by Israel is a war crime."

"The deliberate denial of medicine, fuel, food and water to the residents



of Gaza is tantamount to genocide," he said.

Putin for political settlement

In televised comments to the virtual BRICS summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin also called for a political solution to the conflict and said regional states and members of the BRICS group of coun-



Palestinians walk at the site of Israeli strikes on houses, in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, on November 21, 2023.
● ABED SABAH/REUTERS

tries could be involved in efforts to reach such a settlement.

Putin once again blamed the Middle East crisis on the failure of US diplomacy

in the region.

"We call for the joint efforts of the international community aimed at de-escalating the situation, a cease-fire and finding a political solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. And the BRICS states and countries of the region could play a key role in this work," Putin said.

He said it was "terrible" that Palestinian children were dying in large numbers, adding that the sight of operations being performed on children without anaesthetics "evokes special feelings".

"Due to the sabotage of UN decisions, which clearly provide for the creation and peaceful coexistence of two independent and sovereign states – Israel and Palestine – more than one generation of Palestinians has been brought up in an atmosphere of injustice towards their people, and the Israelis cannot fully guarantee the security of their state," Putin said.

'Perfect storm for tragedy'

Also, the United Nations warned on Tuesday that fuel shortages and worsening sanitation in the Gaza Strip are shaping up to be the perfect storm for tragedy through the spread of disease.

UNICEF, the UN children's agency, said there was a serious threat of a mass disease outbreak in the besieged Palestinian territory.

"Without enough fuel, we will see the collapse of sanitation services. So, we have then, on top of the mortars and the bombs, a perfect storm for the spread of disease.

"It's a perfect storm for tragedy," UNICEF spokesman James Elder told a press briefing in Geneva. Speaking via video-link from Cairo, Elder said the potential for wider loss of life in Gaza was being significantly exacerbated because an estimated 800,000 children in the enclave are displaced from their homes.



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi addresses an extraordinary virtual summit of the BRICS group of nations on November 21, 2023.
● president.ir

Truce deal is 'close'

Meanwhile, the chief of Hamas said on Tuesday that the Palestinian resistance group was near a truce agreement with Israel, even as the deadly assault on Gaza continued and rockets were being fired into Israel.

Hamas officials were "close to reaching a truce agreement" with Israel, and the group has delivered its response to Qatari mediators, Ismail Haniyeh said in a statement sent to Reuters by his aide.

Mediator Qatar also on Tuesday confirmed that negotiations to free prisoners seized in Hamas' October 7 attacks on Israel are at their "closest point" to a deal and have reached the "final stage".

**Arab countries need ...**

Arab countries also have the potential to pressure Israel and the US, but they do not utilize this potential. A better approach would have been for the Arab countries' delegation to travel to Washington, present their case to the US government, and issue a warning that Israel must accept a ceasefire. If the US declines to take

the required action, Arab countries have to take practical measures and exert pressure on Israel and the US. Unfortunately, Arab countries do not even verbally threaten Israel and the US. The threat of oil and economic sanctions and the reduction or severance of political ties with Israel could be impactful and disrupt global oil markets.

However, Arab countries seem unwilling to take practical actions to pressure Israel and the US. Such trips to China and other countries apart from the US will not yield any results for the Palestinian people. The correct destination for diplomatic efforts is Washington, albeit with a serious agenda and a warning.

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Slow-wave sleep critical for reducing dementia risk



The risk of getting dementia may go up as you get older if you don't get enough slow-wave sleep. Over-60s are 27 percent more likely to get dementia if they lose just 1 percent of this deep sleep each year, a new study has found.

Slow-wave sleep is the third stage of a human 90-minute sleep cycle, lasting about 20-40 minutes. It's the most restful stage, where brain waves and heart rate slow and blood pressure drops, Science Alert report.

Deep sleep strengthens our muscles, bones, and immune system, and prepares our brains to absorb more information. Earlier this year, research discovered that individuals with Alzheimer's-related changes in their brain did better on memory tests when they got more slow-wave sleep.

"Slow-wave sleep, or deep sleep, supports the aging brain in many ways, and we know that sleep augments the clearance of metabolic waste from the brain, including facilitating the clearance of proteins that aggregate in Alzheimer's disease," says neuroscientist Matthew Pase from Monash University in Australia.

"However, to date we have been unsure of the role of slow-wave sleep in the development of dementia. Our findings suggest that slow-wave sleep loss may be a modifiable dementia risk factor."

Pase and colleagues from Australia, Canada, and the US examined 346 Framingham Heart Study participants who had completed two overnight sleep studies between 1995 and 1998 and between 2001 and 2003, with an average of five years between testing periods.

This community-based cohort, who had no record of dementia at the time of the 2001-2003 study, and were over 60 years old in 2020, gave researchers a chance to look into the link between two factors over time by comparing the datasets from the two in-depth polysomnography sleep studies, and then monitoring for dementia among participants up until 2018.

"We used these to examine how slow-wave sleep changed with aging and whether changes in slow-wave sleep percentage were associated with the risk of later-life dementia up to 17 years later," says Pase.

In the 17 years of follow up, 52 dementia cases were recorded among the participants. Participants' slow-wave sleep levels recorded in the sleep studies were also examined for a link to dementia cases.

Overall, their rate of slow-wave sleep was found to decrease from age 60 onward, with this loss peaking between the ages of 75 and 80 and then leveling off after that.

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● Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 84711171
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Memorable 'No Bag Day' resonates with children



By Ali Amiri
Staff writer

On Monday, November 20, Avisa, a 12-year-old sixth-grader, along with all her schoolmates at an elementary school in Tehran received good news: "You don't need to bring your bags to school tomorrow."

"They told us not to bring our bags," Avisa says, lighting up as she remembers, "It made me really, very happy."

The idea of a "No Bag Day" for elementary students, however, had been in the works for a long time. The introduction of such a day in Iran's public education dates back to about 10 years ago. At that time, the administration was planning to close schools on Thursdays.

The country's Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, along with the Deputy Ministry of Education, were working on a program to replace the traditional elementary schools curriculum on Thursdays with a joyful one for a bag-free day at schools.

At that time, the purpose of planning such a day in elementary schools was for students to attend school on Thursdays without their bags, and instead of reading their textbooks, they would engage in other activities.

The plan was supposed to be implemented on a trial basis in a number of schools in the country starting from 2014, and given that it yielded positive results, to be extended to other schools from 2015 onwards.

While the plan had its supporters and opponents, with some believing that it would be impossible to run a classroom without books and bags, the Ministry of Education announced in June 2015 that the matter would be referred to the council of deputies, and the implementation of the plan would depend on its decision.

In other words, the plan's implementation was put on hold, until, in line with the goal of providing com-



● ISNA

prehensive education to students and enhancing productivity in the teaching-learning process, April 23, 2023 was designated as No Bag Day. That day, elementary students in Tehran went to school without their bags and textbooks for the first time ever.

The official news regarding yesterday's No Bag Day was announced on Sunday, November 19. Avisa, relieved of the burden of a heavy backpack that typically contains up to seven textbooks and notebooks, along with a pencil case, lunchbox, and water bottle, went to school on Tuesday.

Her younger brother, Abtin, a seven-year-old first-grader, was also excited about the bag-free day. "They told us not to bring books, and that we're just going to play," he says.

However, education did not come to a halt on Tuesday. According to the educational authorities, students were provided with more space for playing, learning, developing various skills, and gaining new ex-

periences.

The siblings' experiences corroborate this, as both of them immensely enjoyed the No Bag Day – even though Abtin had no complaints about the weight of his backpack. However, instead of sitting through their regular classes, Avisa and her classmates "made handicrafts and read books."

Similarly, Abtin and his peers participated in various activities, including playing, drawing, making handicrafts, and, to top it all off, preparing and enjoying a fruit salad together.

"It was such a fun day," he says. Fortunately, the No Bag Day was a resounding success among children and parents alike, and was celebrated with great enthusiasm. Each child chose a specific skill and, based on that, they collaborated with their classmates in group and individual activities including crafting, cooking, and sewing small clothes. After engaging in these activities, they proceeded to play group games in the school yard.

Some students went the extra mile to entertain their classmates by donning traditional and local attire, reciting passages from the Shahnameh, performing folk songs and poems, and even staging theatrical performances.

Above and beyond that, some parents actively participated in this ceremony and brought various foods to enhance the students' celebration.

Avisa, who is already an avid reader, had the opportunity to enjoy reading storybooks and educational magazines under the guidance of her teacher.

"It was different, it was fun, and to sum it up, it was good," she says, expressing her desire for the day to be repeated. The communal enjoyment and camaraderie she experienced with her classmates resonated with her childhood spirit.

Abtin shared the same opinion, expressing his wish for such days to be frequent. When asked how often he would like to have No Bag Days, he answered, "Once a week would do."



Fortunately, the No Bag Day was a resounding success among children and parents alike, and was celebrated with great enthusiasm.

New translations of Imam Khomeini's works

The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works has released new translations of his works in French, Italian, Spanish, Urdu and Arabic. 'Imam Khomeini, A Global Audience', a collection of letters written by foreigners and dignitaries to Imam Khomeini from all around the world, was recently published in French, Urdu, Italian and Spanish languages. The collection was previously compiled and published in English and Arabic.

The institute has translated and edited more than 10,000 letters for this volume. Also, an eight-volume collection of Imam Khomeini's writing and speech was compiled, translated and published in Urdu according to the needs of the audience of the subcontinent.

The original 22-volume collection of Imam Khomeini's Sahifah consists of historic speeches, messages, interviews, edicts, Sharia permits and letters by the late founder of the Islamic Republic.

It contains letters received by Imam in more than a half century until his passing in 1989. The collection is thought to be the most complete work that has been compiled and published in the field.

In addition, during Iran's National Book Week, a collection of Imam Khomeini's poetry is published in Arabic.

The collection of Imam Khomeini's poems is one of his outstanding literary-mystical works on the subject of real and genuine love for a true lover, that is, God Almighty.

Imam Khomeini's poetry also includes other mystical and moral subjects, and these poems were written at different times before and after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

His poetry is not only full of mystical terms and romantic points, but also reflects his feelings, emotions, ideals and thoughts, and has been closely associated with moments of solitude and intimacy with the merciful God.

