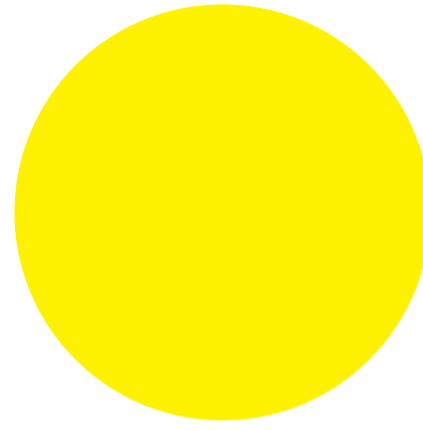


Leader: Hamas upended US agenda in region



Iran Daily

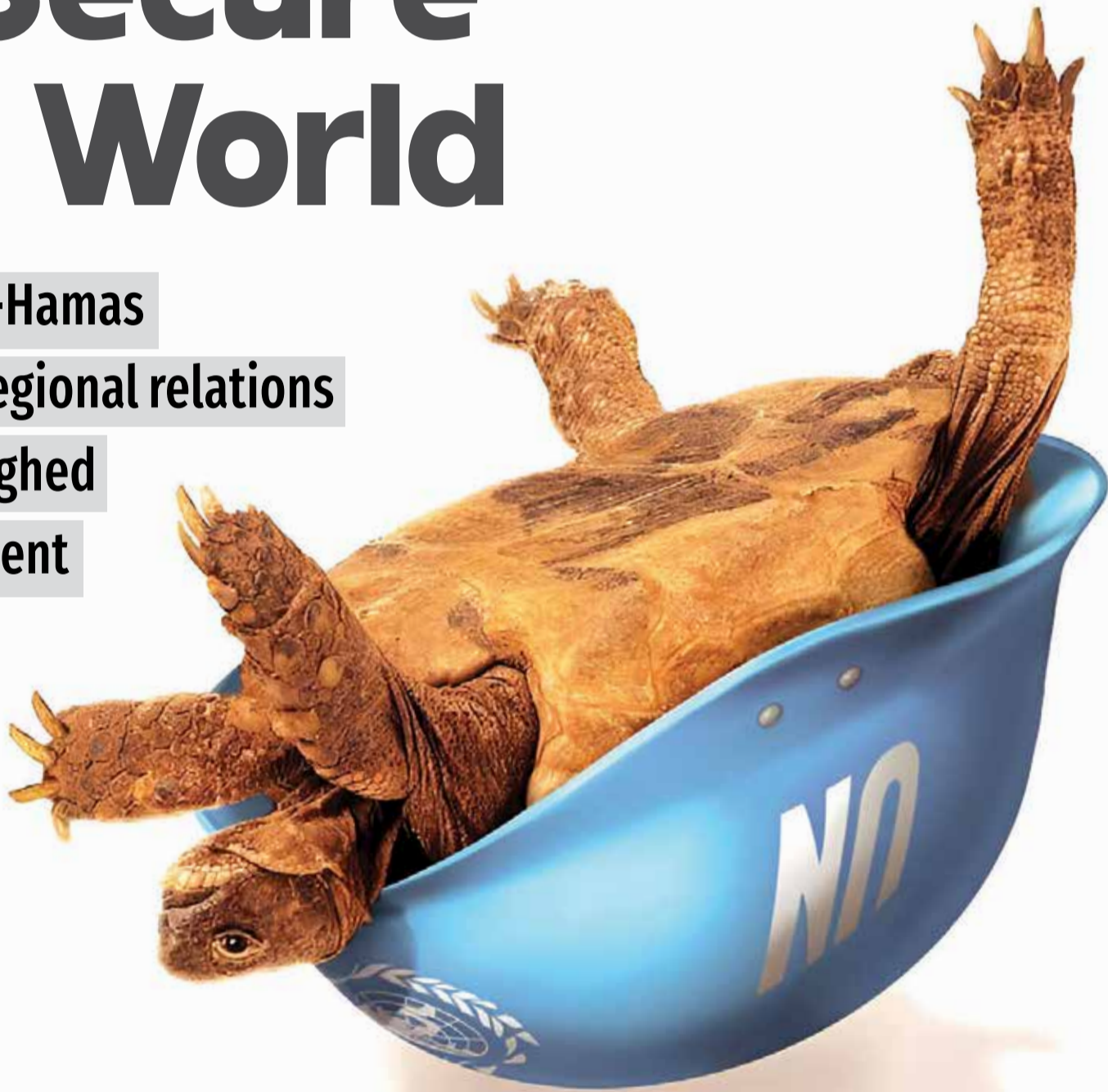


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Vol. 7448 • Thursday, November 30, 2023 • Azar 9, 1402 • Jumada al-Awwal 16, 1445 • Price 40,000 Rials • 8 Pages

UNable to Secure the World

In the Israel-Hamas cease-fire, regional relations have outweighed UN involvement



Yossi Lemel

In recent days, the Gaza Strip has experienced a temporary cease-fire aimed at the mutual release of Israeli captives and Palestinian prisoners. In the meantime, relief efforts have been limited to Gaza. The cease-fire did not result from respect for the General Assembly of the United Nations or Security Council resolutions but rather from political maneuvering.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi expressed in a domestic session his belief that international organizations have lost their effectiveness. He stated that emerging organizations and nations must take action to support Palestine.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune also declared that the Security Council is nearly paralyzed, with the occupying regime paying no attention to the United Nations. He described the Security Council's paralysis as a severe crisis during the fifteenth meeting of the Group of 10 affiliated with the African Union, which was focused on Security Council reforms. The Security Council is currently witnessing crises and consecutive conflicts without real and purposeful political action. Tebboune expressed that Palestinians face a real tragedy, worsened by the incompetence of UN institutions and global entities in deterring the occupier regime from committing crimes.

He also mentioned that the Zionist regime ignores the United Nations, disregards its decisions, and neglects all duties and commitments imposed on it. In the conflict between Israel and Hamas, the United Nations has taken almost no action beyond media posturing. At the peak of its impotence, the organization could only acknowledge some unprecedented events in this war. For example, Médecins Sans Frontières figures show that during a 50-day period in Gaza, 100 UN staff, 60 journalists, and over 60 medical and healthcare workers were killed. The failure of various UN bodies, as well as the Arab and Islamic worlds, to end the humanitarian catastrophe inflicted by Israel in Gaza raises important questions that legal experts and political analysts should address. What stands out is the disappearance of old mechanisms of international consensus and the emergence of new regional alliances, a strong indication of a new international order, evident even in the war between Hamas and Israel.

Iran increasing shipping lines from Chabahar to int'l ports: **MP**

2 >



Mr. Musk! Don't lavish your reputation, capital on Bibi

EXCLUSIVE

7 >



Iran's oil output hits 3.1 mbd in October: **EIA**

2 >



Lasjerd Caravanserai, a magnificent Safavid architectural gem on Silk Road

3 >



Israel lacks a nation-state, democracy, or secularity

SPECIAL ISSUE

4-5 >



'Lack of experience' cost Nassaji in ACL debut, Rahmati says

6 >



Iran, Syria to soon ditch dollar in bilateral trade: CBI governor



The governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced the sidelining of the US dollar in trade-economic exchanges between Tehran and Damascus.

In a meeting with Syrian Prime Minister Hussein Arnous in Damascus on Wednesday, Mohammadreza Farzin pointed to the development of banking and monetary relations between the two countries and emphasized the removal of the American Greenback in mutual trade, reported Tasnim news agency.

During his visit to Damascus, Farzin also held talks with his Syrian counterpart Muhammad Issam Hazima to discuss bilateral ties and issues of mutual interest.

In the meeting, the two sides emphasized enhancing monetary-banking relations and joint investment between Tehran and Damascus.

Turning to the development of e-banking services, he stressed that using the national currencies in monetary-banking ties and increasing the volume of trade-economic exchanges are among the main strategies of Iran in the expansion of trade cooperation with neighboring and friendly states.

The governor of the Central Bank of Iran emphasized the need for developing monetary-banking cooperation between Tehran and Damascus, in tandem with increasing trade and economic ties as well as solving the problems related to banking relations between traders of the two countries in the short term.

He further pointed out that a branch of an Iranian bank will start its activity in Syria in the near future.

The governor of the Central Bank of Syria, for his part, stressed the need to increase trade exchanges between Tehran and Damascus, and added that the removal of the US dollar from bilateral trade-economic exchanges and the use of national currencies will certainly change the trade balance between the two countries.

Highlighting Iran's achievements in the field of electronic banking, Issam Hazima called for setting up a joint working group between the two countries in order to enhance technological cooperation in the area of communications and banking cooperation.

Iran increasing shipping lines from Chabahar to int'l ports: MP



By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou

Staff writers

Iran has plans for the development of direct shipping lines between Chabahar port in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchistan and other international ports, announced an MP.

Talking to Iran Daily, Moeinoddin Saeidi explained that such measures will lead to an increase in the volume of trade through Chabahar port, but we have a long way to go in using the main capacities of the port. "In the recent two years, the Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran has

taken a good step in the development of direct shipping lines with other countries, as during this period, a regular shipping line between Iran and India and a direct shipping line from China to Chabahar have been launched." He pointed to the Rimdan border, between Iran and Pakistan, which has been activated recently, saying that Rimdan can boost Iran's trade along with forming a commercial corridor in the region. Talking about a sea-based economy, the lawmaker noted that it was expected to witness more planning on exploiting the capacity of ports.

The economy of countries that have access to oceans and seas mostly depends on sea-oriented economic issues, he said, adding that in our country we could not use the capacity properly because the process of developing ports and increasing their capacities progress at a low speed. "If the process of developing ports and using the country's transit capacities does not speed up, we will lag behind in the field of competition with neighboring countries, as we will suffer losses." Chabahar port enjoys a very high transit capacity, but so far it has not been

fully activated, and despite the emphasis of the Leader on the development of the Makran coast, we see that the economic capacities of the port, whether in terms of transit, logistics, tourism and agriculture, have not been used completely. Chabahar is the only oceanic port of the country, and the closest way for Iran and Central Asian states to access other international ports, the lawmaker said, noting that some incorrect approaches have prevented the increase of the capacity of Chabahar port in terms of transit. Some approaches have

caused us to not be able to use these capacities well. Better government policies are needed, so that our people can benefit from the unique capacities of the Makran coast. Due to sanctions, we could not attract foreign investment in our ports, the MP said, pointing to India's investment in Chabahar port, which despite the news about New Delhi's big investment in Chabahar, only about \$20 million have been invested by Indians in the port. In terms of attracting foreign investment, we should not limit ourselves to one or two countries, the MP concluded.



Iran's oil output hits 3.1 mbd in October: EIA

In its latest report, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said Iran produced 3.1 million barrels of oil per day (mbd) in October 2023, stabilizing its third place in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Iran's oil production volume increased by 50,000 barrels in October 2023, compared to a month earlier, Shana reported. Iran had produced 3.05 mbd in September 2023. The report added that Iran's oil output has been on an upward trajectory since the beginning of 2023, with the country's oil production increasing by more than 500,000 barrels per day.

By increasing its oil output volume, Iran managed to regain its position among major OPEC producers. Iran managed to overtake Kuwait in the production of oil in April 2023. In addition, Iran's oil production volume exceeded that of the United Arab Emirates in August 2023. Saudi Arabia and Iraq stood in the first and second places in OPEC by producing 9 mbd and 4.32 mbd, respectively, the administration added. OPEC's total crude production volume decreased by 70,000 bpd in October 2023 compared to September. OPEC's member states managed to produce 27.77 mbd in October 2023, the report added.

Flaring falls 27% in southern Iranian refinery

Fajr Jam Gas Refining Company in Iran's southern province of Bushehr reported a 27 percent reduction in flaring intensity.

Managing Director Seyyed Mohammad-Mehdi Hashemi said the volume of gas flaring declined thanks to the company's effective technical measures, showing 14 percent and 27 percent cuts from one and two years earlier, respectively, the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) reported.

"Acid compositions are inseparable parts of gas extracted from wells and reservoirs," underlined the CEO, adding, "These constituents are removed

in the sweetening process and reshaped in incinerators and transformed into less-dangerous and nonpolluting gases." Last week, Oil Minister Javad Owji said around 400 billion cubic meters (mcm) of associated petroleum gas (APG) were gathered per day in 2011, adding the amount reached 2.3 mcm/d when the 13th administration took over in August 2021, while it stands at 11.5 mcm/d now, and will soar to 18 mcm/d by the end of winter 2024.

He pledged that the volume of collected flare gas will rise to 32 mcm/d and 62 mcm/d in mid-March 2025 and 2026, by investing \$5.5 billion in 54 projects.



Lasjerd Caravanserai, a magnificent Safavid architectural gem on Silk Road



● ISNA

Iranica Desk

Caravanserais have been integral to the infrastructure of trade and travel routes throughout history, providing essential resting places for weary travelers and a safe haven for their animals. Lasjerd Caravanserai stands as a testament to this tradition, showcasing the skill, creativity, and artistic vision of the Safavid architects. It is a remarkable example of how architectural styles can evolve, incorporating influences from the past while maintaining their own distinctive identity.

Located in Lasjerd village, 13 kilometers from Sorkheh in Semnan Province, on the Silk Road's east-west pilgrimage route, Lasjerd Caravanserai has become one of the prominent tourist attractions

in Semnan. Its significance is recognized, as it was registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 1998. As visitors explore this historical site, they are transported back in time, witnessing the prosperity and secure travel conditions that characterized the Safavid era. Lasjerd Caravanserai was built during reign of Shah Abbas I, a period when Iran had one of its most powerful governments.

During the Safavid period, architects meticulously crafted the vaults of Lasjerd Caravanserai for both structural stability and aesthetic appeal. The pattern creates a mesmerizing visual effect, enhancing the overall grandeur of the caravanserai. Drawing inspiration from the architectural styles of the Timurid and Ilkhanid periods, the Sa-

faavid architects incorporated graceful curves and intricate patterns into the domes of Lasjerd Caravanserai.

The result is a breathtaking display of architectural beauty. Every corner of Lasjerd Caravanserai is filled with intricate detailing and thoughtful design choices, highlighting the meticulous craftsmanship of the Safavid era. The efficient use of space ensures an environment is not only aesthetically pleasing but also functionally efficient.

Stepping into Lasjerd Caravanserai is like stepping back in time, immersing oneself in the rich history and architectural grandeur of the Safavid period. The beauty of the design, the attention to detail, and the harmonious cohesion of the different elements all contribute to the awe-inspiring experience of visit-

ing this historic structure.

The caravanserai boasts a rectangular shape and is constructed using an array of materials including stone, brick, gypsum mortar, and *sarooj*, with the outer walls made entirely from stone. Its expansive courtyard measures an impressive 36 meters in length and 31.5 meters in width.

The caravanserai features two stunning *ivans* located on the eastern and western sides of the building. While the eastern *ivan* has been beautifully renovated, the western *ivan* remains in its original form. These tall and spacious *ivans* are connected to the four corridors via short gateways and stairs. The eastern *ivan* is slightly taller than its counterpart and is linked to a *hashti*, the space behind the doorway, through a staircase.

Accommodating weary travelers, the caravanserai's two sides have six rooms each. Four entrances can be found on all sides of the structure; each entrance features arched vaults that connect the corridors through the courtyard. For the convenience of merchants, areas that are 0.35 meters higher than the courtyard level are designated for unloading goods.

Located on the east-west corridor, this caravanserai has long been on a pilgrimage route due to the presence of the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH) in the city of Mashhad. As such, this spectacular structure draws thousands of tourists each year. In addition, the Cultural Heritage Organization of Semnan Province offers stargazing tours for astronomy enthusiasts in this caravanserai.



● alibaba.ir

Architectural design of Amiriyeh Mansion reflects indigenous traditions of Bushehr

Iranica Desk

Indigenous architecture and historical significance intertwine beautifully in the mesmerizing Amiriyeh Mansion, a true gem of the city of Bushehr, southern province of Bushehr.

Nestled in the heart of this coastal city, the mansion stands as a testament to the rich heritage and vibrant culture of Iran. Dating back to the Qajar period, the Amiriyeh Mansion served as the municipality building, witnessing the ebb and flow of history within its walls. Recognizing its importance, it has been rightfully designated as a national heritage site.

The architectural design of the mansion reflects the indigenous traditions of the region. Spread across two floors, the central courtyard acts as the heart of the structure, with rooms gracefully encircling it. Ascending to the upper floor, one is greeted by a wooden balcony that offers a panoramic view of the surroundings.

The rooms themselves boast spaciousness and elegance, their windows framing picturesque scenes of the outside world.

It is not hard to envision these rooms being utilized for hosting guests or holding important gatherings in the past. To access the rooftop, a staircase resides in the eastern corner of the building, inviting visitors to explore

even further.

Every detail has been carefully crafted, showcasing the artistry and expertise of the time. Teak wood, adorned with intricate carvings, shapes the doors and windows, adding a touch of sophistication. The ceiling, a masterpiece in itself, is adorned with sandalwood, a rare and cherished material from India.

As the mansion is near the sea, measures were taken to protect it from the potentially harmful effects of moisture. Strips made from the skin of coconut trees were ingeniously wrapped around the columns and plastered over, creating a protective barrier against the elements.

Further exploration reveals additional ornate decorations throughout the mansion. Carved woodworks grace the ceilings and windows, enhancing the overall grandeur of the interior spaces. Plasterworks draw attention to the arches, adding a touch of elegance, while elaborate carvings embellish the entrance gate, welcoming visitors with a sense of awe and reverence.

The Amiriyeh Mansion stands as not just a historical artifact, but as a living testament to the beauty, resilience, and creativity of the people who once inhabited it. It invites all who enter to immerse themselves in the rich history and storied past of Bushehr, leaving them captivated and inspired.



Israel lacks a nation-state, democracy, or secularism



By Mahdi Fadaei
Mehrabani
University
professor at UT

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

When we talk about the government of Israel, which government are we talking about? It is commonly said that we are dealing with a secular government, and this secular government has little to do with the ancient Jewish teachings. However, if we look at it through the perspective of the political theology, we might actually be dealing with a theocratic government where all elements of Jewish theology can be observed in the foundations of Israel's structure.

In general, a fundamental feature of Jewish theology is a theological principle known as exclusivism or "chosenness," which is not seen to the same extent in any other religion as it is in Judaism. In contrast to this approach, there is inclusivism, which encompasses other religions and beliefs and forms the main basis of faith. However, in this approach, there is a kind of sectarianism that seems to indicate a special privilege for being Jewish, and this is very pronounced in Judaism. From this perspective, Judaism faces a crisis that is also observed in Israel.

When we talk about a Jewish person, what are we referring to? This is an important theological question, and many Jewish philosophers discuss it. The difference Judaism has with Islam and other religions is that Judaism is based on a culture, while it is also based on blood. In other words, un-

til recently, there was a debate among Jewish scholars about whether it is possible for someone to convert to Judaism. Judaism is not a matter of faith; it is a blood-related and exclusive relationship with God. These debates are very contemporary in Israel.

One of the researchers who have worked on Jewish theology is Israel Shahak. He says that being Israeli in the contemporary era has replaced being Jewish in theological texts. When we talk about an Israeli, it is as if we are talking about a Jewish person in a theological context, and the same exclusivity is imposed on the Israeli person, and the country Israel replaces the people of Israel.

This is the same theme that we are looking for in political theology. In political theology, we are interested in how modern political concepts in the new era have transformed traditional theological concepts.

This is an important point that we pay less attention to.

Shahak even says that the term "Jewish government" indicates that we are facing a situation in Israel that is distinct from all other places in the world. The idea of a Jewish government becomes prominent from Herzl to the present day. Shahak says that when we talk about the Jewish government, it seems that we are not dealing with a national government; rather, we are dealing with a government whose identity is distinct from all other governments in the world. Therefore, Israel always has problems with the concept of "citizenship" in its domestic politics. A Palestinian is never a first-class citizen in Israeli society and is always considered secondary because the theological foundation of Judaism is based on exclusivity. I have a book titled 'Political Theology of Jews' that will be

published, but this is not the time to discuss its topics at length. However, where we smell violence in theological texts is exactly where the superiority of the Jewish race is discussed. Despite the claim that the government of Israel is secular, this exclusivity is precisely transferred to the citizens of Israel in these texts. The term used for non-Jewish humans, other than the children of Israel, is "goyim," translated as "trash."

In other words, in the view of a radical Jewish believer, essentially, a non-Israeli human is not entitled to citizenship rights. This issue is also observed internationally. For example, Israel does not want any country to be closer to the United States than itself. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in an interview with the Iranian TV show, Shokaran, posited that [in retrospect] during the reign of Iran's former Shah, it

was not feasible for Iran and Israel to get along. Israel never wanted another lover for the United States. It was as if there was a marital relationship between Israel and the US that no other country could enter. I want to say that this issue is also very pronounced in the theology of Judaism.

One of the chapters of a book I wrote is about the theology of sex, which is a very important issue. But apart from the discussions that Jews have in this regard, they believe that the people of Israel are like the spouse of God, and even if they betray, God must return to them. You know that the history of the Jewish people is full of disobedience and return. Therefore, according to their theology, if a Jew betrays, God returns to them because if He does not return and has no jealousy for this rebellious wife, He is without honor. These interpretations are





somehow transferred to the contemporary period; that is, the government of Israel is endowed with the same sanctity that the people of Israel had. "Another factor is geography. Geography also has a theological interpretation. Israel's geography, according to their theology, is the geography of the Promised Land. French philosopher Roger Garaudy says that the God of Israel has transformed into the government, and the Promised Land has become the land of Israel. Even the Exodus from Egypt and the events of the journey from Exodus to migration to Israel become sacred and find a holy aspect. Let's ignore that in Zionist and evangelical interpretations of Christianity, the story becomes entangled in

Armageddon, and this matter is crucial for them. So, Israel is the only earthly government that adheres to a kind of sacred history, sacred geography, special people, and a sacred government. These four pillars are exactly in conflict with the principles of the nation-state; that is, the four pillars of people, land, government, and sovereignty. When we talk about the concept of the state in the modern era, these four pillars, except for the people's aspect, are among the most obvious principles. These four principles do not exist in Israel, so it cannot be a nation-state because when it comes to the people, there is no inclusivity. In a nation-state, people can be Jewish or have another religion, but Israel is

in crisis over shaping a contemporary national identity and looks entirely ideological. So, Israel is neither secular nor a nation-state; Israel has an ideological political system. But how has Israel formed a theological system? Part of it goes back to how Israel's politics is. There is a text known as the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion', famous among Zionist scholars, which they call a hoax; that is, all attributed to them. Inside these protocols, they have planned everything; the economy, cinema, and so on, and its basis is that Zionism must take over the world. But unfortunately, the policies that Israel implements are based on this hoax. Two books can help clarify this discussion. One is a book by

French theorist Jacques Attali called "The Economic History of the Jewish People." This book explains what Jews have done throughout history. The issue goes back to several hundred years, from the Middle Ages to this day. They somehow shape economic and banking systems in the medieval period, and from a certain point on, all kings have been indebted to Jews. Another book is 'An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood' by Neal Gabler. In conclusion, I think it is very wrong to say that Israel is a secular government or has created democracy. At least based on political theology, this cannot be accepted. Hegel said history repeats itself. Marx said, "He forgot to add: the

first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." Žižek also addressed this issue in a book called 'First as Tragedy, Then as Farce'. This proposition is worth discussing. In the second time when history repeats itself as a farce, it is actually more terrible than the first tragedy. The irony of history is right here; the first time its name is tragedy, but it is not as terrible as its comedy state. My assumption is that the government of Israel has launched a farcical and horrifying show by repeating history and exclusivity. The level of violence is also much higher than what is claimed. Horrific accounts are recorded, such as tearing the stomach of a pregnant woman or taking the head of a fetus. Susan

Sontag says only a dogmatic religious foundation can do such things. Israeli terrorist groups like Haganah, Irgun, and Etzel are all made up of radical extremist individuals. "We do the same thing with Palestinians that David did with Nabal," they say to those who lie in front of bulldozers and say you mustn't destroy Palestinian homes and those who fight against the government of Israel, asking why are you using live ammunition against Palestinians. That story is a twisted and erotic one that is not expressible here. These groups come from a dogmatic theology known as the Iron Fist, which is why talking about the existing secular order is laughable.



Woods will play until he can 'no longer win'



● GETTY IMAGES

BBC – Tiger Woods has said he will continue to play for as long as he thinks he can still win as he prepares to return to professional golf.

Woods will play in the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas having not played since injury forced him to withdraw from the Masters in April.

The 15-time major winner then had fusion surgery on a bone in his ankle.

"There will come a time when I can no longer win. When that time comes, I will walk away," Woods said.

"I love to compete. I love the camaraderie, being around the guys."

The 47-year-old American said earlier this month he had "zero issues" with his surgically repaired right ankle, which was done to address post-traumatic arthritis following the 2021 car crash that sidelined him for nearly 14 months. However, he indicated that other injury problems remain.

"The only way to fix that was to replace it or have it fused," Woods said of his ankle. "The next part is the hard part. The six months of doing nothing. The first couple months were really rough - I'm here on the good side now."

The five-time Masters champion has struggled to walk 18 holes since but, after he was seen caddying for his son Charlie at the Notah Begay III Junior Golf National Championship earlier this month, he has decided the time is right to return to action.

"I was hitting golf balls a lot trying to get Charlie ready for the event. Then, post-event, I thought, 'I can probably do this,'" Woods said.

"I've played a lot of holes. I haven't used a pencil and a scorecard."

"My game feels rusty. I haven't played in a while. I'm excited to compete and play. I'm just as curious as all of you are to see what happens."

"I can tell you this, I don't have any of the pain I had in Augusta in my ankle. Other parts are taking the brunt of the load. But that surgery was a success."

The tournament, a 20-player invitational event which will also include Justin Rose, Scottie Scheffler, Matt Fitzpatrick and Viktor Hovland, begins on Thursday in Albany, The Bahamas.

Woods said he hopes to play one tournament per month in 2024 and that this event will help to determine his schedule for next season.

'Lack of experience' cost Nassaji in ACL debut, Rahmati says

Sports Desk

Nassaji Mazandaran head coach Seyyed Mahdi Rahmati said the "lack of experience" in the AFC Champions League kept the Iranian top-flight side from progressing to the knockout phase of the competition.

Nassaji walked away with a 2-0 victory over Indian club Mumbai city at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Tuesday – in what was a dead-rubber in Group D, with Saudi giant Al Hilal and Uzbekistan's Navbahor having already secured a top-two finish in the table with one game to spare.

Mohammadreza Azadi bagged his fourth goal in the group stage, firing home from a tight angle in the 14th minute, before center-back Halen Nongtdu's back pass to the keeper found the back of his own net on the half-hour mark in a repeat of the result in September's reverse fixture.

The northern Iranian club had to finish the game with 10 men after Amir-Mahdi Janmaleki received his marching orders for a reckless challenge midway through the second half.

"We've played five games in the group and went down to 10 men in three of them. Every red card has a two-match suspension, which cost us dearly," Rahmati said after the game, adding: "What my team needed in this competition was the experience.

We deeply suffered from the players' naivety as we didn't get the results we wanted."

Nassaji's Amirmohammad Houshmand was sent off in the first half of the 3-0 home defeat against Al Hilal, though Rahmati said Saber Hardani's 52nd-minute dismissal – for two bookable offences – in the 2-1 defeat at Navbahor on Matchday Three proved even more costly for his side.

"I truly believed in myself and my team as being capable to qualify from the group, but our descent started in the first game against Navbahor. We were in front when we lost two players to injuries and then had one red-carded. The team had to play with 10 men for nearly 50 minutes in the vociferous atmosphere [of the Markazi Stadium]," said Rahmati, whose team was left heartbroken by Mehrdad Abdi's own goal deep into stoppage time against the Uzbek club in October.

"We would have had a chance to progress if we had left the pitch with a point against Navbahor, but the defeat increased pressure on us. We have a short-handed squad and were involved in hectic schedule [in recent months]," added the Iranian.

"I still believe six points so far has been quite an achievement for our young team."

Nassaji, second from bottom in the Iranian league table, will finish its debut campaign at the Asian elite clubs' competition with a visit to Riyadh to take on Al Hilal on Monday.

Brazilian Malcom and Saudi international Salem Al-Dawsari found the net late in the second half to steer Al Hilal to a 2-0 win at Navbahor on Tuesday, helping the four-time champion move three points clear on top of the group standing.

Navbahor – on 10 points – remains in pole position to book a last-16 berth as one of the three best runners-up across the five West Zone groups.



● MOHAMMADREZA ALIMADADI/IRNA

'Group of death' delivers as PSG, Newcastle and Milan all stay in hunt

REUTERS – When the Champions League draw was made Group F always looked like being too close to call and it will duly go right down to the wire with French aristocrats Paris St Germain still in control of their destiny, but only just.

Manager Luis Enrique was breathing a massive sigh of relief on Tuesday as Kylian Mbappe struck home a penalty in the eighth minute of stoppage time to earn a 1-1 draw at home to Newcastle United who had been on the brink of a memorable double.

The visitors were desperately defending the lead given to them by Swedish striker Alexander Isak midway through the first half but suffered heartbreak when Tino Livramento was harshly-adjudged to have handled as an Ousmane Dembele pass bounced off his chest and against his elbow.

Mbappe netted from the spot to earn a point which left PSG in second spot with seven points, three behind already-qualified Borussia Dortmund who they face in their final group match.

PSG, who have reached the last-16 at least for the last 11 seasons, know that only a win in Dortmund will guarantee a last-16 place,



● Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring PSG's equalizer against Newcastle United in Parc des Princes, Paris, France, on November 28, 2023.
● STEPHANE MAHE/REUTERS

but such is the complexity of a high-octane group they could also lose and still progress.

Newcastle must beat seven-time European champions Milan in their last game and hope PSG do not win if they are to grab second spot, while Milan

could also still reach the last-16 with a victory at St James' Park.

"The most important thing is to focus on ourselves. If we win, we're going to finish first, but even if we lose, we can go through to the next phase," Luis Enrique, whose side lost

4-1 away to Newcastle, said. "It's so complicated, but I hope we can make it easier by winning against Dortmund."

His side had 31 goal attempts against Newcastle on Tuesday but contrived to miss chances galore. "I think we deserved to win,

we created a lot of clear chances and, at times, it was difficult to get the ball in," the Spaniard said. Newcastle were crestfallen as they trudged off the Parc des Princes pitch with a burning sense of injustice. They have a long injury

list and were out on their feet but had heroes all over the pitch including keeper Nick Pope and 17-year-old midfielder Lewis Miley, the third-youngest English player to start in the Champions League and the unlucky left back Livramento, another young Englishman with a bright future.

Manager Eddie Howe was admirably restrained about the penalty awarded by referee Szymon Marciniak after VAR instructed him to view a pitchside monitor, more so than former Newcastle striker Alan Shearer who described the decision as disgusting.

"I thought the referee was having a good game up until this moment. He had been strong," Howe said. But he was not too downhearted and said Newcastle will go into the home clash against Milan with high hopes of reaching the last 16 on their long-awaited return to the competition.

"We're still in it. That's another thing we can't forget. We could easily have come here and have not been in the competition anymore," he said. "We still believe. As much as it's a huge, deflating feeling – it could be another story in our season."

Leader: Hamas upended US agenda in region

International Desk

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Hamas' historic Operation Al-Aqsa Storm was mainly against the Zionist regime but was able to disrupt American policies in the region and will hopefully erase the "agenda".

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with hundreds of members of Iran's Basij volunteer forces in Tehran on Wednesday on the occasion of National Basij Week, Press TV reported.

He said the United States failed to hatch its plots for the formation of a "New Middle East," adding that the so-called "two-state solution" in the Palestinian territories was part of the same hostile policy that failed miserably.

"In the case of Lebanon, Americans said they are after the formation of a new Middle East. They said that they want to give this region a new political and geographical map based on the US's illegitimate needs and interests," the Leader said. "Of course, what they sought did not happen. On their

new map, they intended to destroy Hezbollah, but Hezbollah became 10 times stronger. They wanted to devour Iraq, but they failed. They wanted to take over Syria. So, they inflicted their proxies under the names of Daesh and al-Nusra on the Syrian government, and for seven to ten years, they continuously supported and provided them with money and equipment, but again they failed," the Leader added.

Underlining that Western plots against the region had entirely fallen flat, the Leader said, "One of the components of this New Middle East was to finalize the Palestinian issue in favor of the usurping Israeli regime so that nothing called Palestine would be left at all. They reneged on the treacherous 'two-state' solution that they had earlier approved." He also underlined, "The Islamic Republic believes in a referendum in Palestine that reflects the opinion of the Palestinian public. The Islamic Republic is not of the view of throwing Zionists and Jews into the sea."

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that the issue of Palestine is moving towards



resolution, which secures Palestinian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"There are several million Palestinians. They can express their opinion, which is a globally-favored, acceptable, and civilized logic for the administration of Palestine," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that the Israeli atrocities in Gaza disgraced not only the Israeli regime

but also the United States, certain European countries, and Western culture and civilization.

"When 5,000 children were killed with phosphorus bombs, the regime of a certain Western country said Israel was defending itself. Is this self-defense? This is Western culture, which has been discredited," he added. The Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution said the Israe-

li atrocities in Gaza over the past 50 days epitomize the regime's decades-long crimes against Palestinians. "The tragedies of the last 50 days are a small part of the 75-year-long crimes of the Zionist regime in Palestine," Ayatollah Khamenei noted. "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm will not run out of steam, and they should know that the current situation will not continue."



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses members of Iran's Basij volunteer forces in Tehran on November 29, 2023, on the occasion of National Basij Week. khamenei.ir

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mediators push to extend Gaza cease-fire



FOX - Negotiators are pushing Israel and Hamas to extend their cease-fire for a second time Wednesday as the brief pause agreement enters its sixth and final day.

Israel and Hamas have so far agreed to one more exchange of Israeli captives for Palestinian prisoners, having extended the cease-fire for two days beyond its original end date of Monday.

As of Wednesday, Hamas had released 60 Israeli women and children and 21 people of other nationalities. In exchange, 180 Palestinians detained in Israeli jails have been released.

Hamas not using captives as leverage: US

AA - The White House said Tuesday there is no evidence to suggest that Hamas is attempting to use any form of leverage to hinder the departure of Americans from Gaza.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters that the pool of Americans in the hands of Hamas is "pretty small".

"We can't just assume that Hamas has ready access to everybody at a moment's notice, or that all the Americans are being held by Hamas, and certainly not that they're in the same place," he added.

Netanyahu's son dodges enlisting again



THE NEW ARAB - A son of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reportedly volunteered for ambulance service after facing weeks of criticism for failing to join Israel's military in its war on Gaza.

Israelis questioned why the 32-year-old Yair Netanyahu was not among the hundreds of thousands of Israelis called up to serve in the war on Gaza or joined those citizens who had flown into Israel to sign up for the military.



Mr. Musk! Don't lavish your reputation, capital on Netanyahu

situation.

In a post on his X account, he stated, "Seems a bit dangerous there right now, but I do believe that a long-term prosperous Gaza is good for all sides." In a conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Musk confirmed the goal of the Israeli government to destroy Hamas, saying, "Those that are intent on murder must be neutralized. The propaganda must stop that is training people to be murderers in the future. And then, making Gaza prosperous. And

if that happens, I think it will be a good future."

In his statements, Musk has spoken of striving for prosperity and a better future for the people of Gaza, but apparently he forgot or did not realize who destroyed Gaza in the first place. For his information, it should be reminded that Gaza has been under siege by the Israeli regime since 2007, and the restrictions imposed on the people living in the strip have become so severe at times that this area is referred to as the "world's largest open-

air prison."

Even if Musk is not happy with Hamas, it would be good for him to visit the Gaza Strip to see what Israel has done to the place and its people. It would be good to know that from his point of view, whether sacrificing 14,000 lives, two-thirds of whom women and children, is necessary to build a better future for Gaza. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has warned the world that Israel has turned Gaza into a "graveyard for children." Mr. Musk! It would be

wise for you not to hide behind Hamas attack like Netanyahu. During the past few decades, which Palestinian region has Israel made prosperous so that now you want to see Gaza's prosperity with the help of this regime? Is the West Bank, which was not under Hamas control, immune from Israeli attacks and damage, and is it a prosperous and advanced region? Netanyahu and prosperity are in no way mutually inclusive. Mr. Musk! Do not lavish your reputation and capital on Netanyahu.

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

Elon Musk, the American multi-billionaire and owner of the social network, X (formerly known as Twitter), recently visited one of the kibbutzim that was

targeted by Hamas on October 7, during his trip to Israel. Despite Hamas extending an invitation for him to visit Gaza "to see the extent of the massacres and destruction committed against the people of Gaza," Musk declined, expressing concerns about the current volatile

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran not involved in any attack against US: UN envoy

The Iranian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN rejected the US's baseless accusations against Tehran, saying that Iran has never carried out any action against US military forces in Syria or anywhere else.

Addressing the meeting of the United Nations Security Council regarding the situation in the Middle East and Syria, Amir Saeed Irvani said, "These baseless accusations appear to be part of a deliberate attempt by the United States



Amir Saeed Irvani, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations. [IRNA](http://irna.ir)



to divert attention from the serious violations of international law and the UN Charter in the Syrian Arab Republic," according to Mehr news agency.

The senior diplomat of the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasized, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has never been involved in any action or attack against the American military forces in Syria or elsewhere. Iran has always adhered to its commitments to promote peace and security in the region."

India to host Iran's globetrotting 'Scent of Wind'

ILNA - Iranian film 'Scent of Wind', directed by Hadi Mo-haqeq, will be screened at the 21st Chennai International Film Festival in India. The festival will run from December 14 to 21.

The film has participated in several international festivals, having been screened in film festivals such as Busan in South Korea, Nantes in France, and Shanghai in China, where it received several accolades.

Following its success in many festivals in France, the film enjoyed a five-month screening, debuting in 106 cinema halls. The demand for the film increased, prompting its screening in an expanded network of 387 cinema halls, attracting over 32,000 viewers throughout France.

The story is set in a distant Iranian village where a paralyzed man collects herbal medicine in the mountains for making his living with his sick child. The electricity goes off in his house and an electrician comes to fix it. Unfortunately, the problem is bigger than what was anticipated and may take days to be resolved. When he sees the child on the sickbed, he feels committed to doing whatever he can to bring the electricity back. However, he has a tough job ahead with facing nature and some unexpected events.

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- & Email: irandaily@iranagahiha.com
- Website: www.irandaily.ir
- Email: newspaper.irandaily.ir
- Printing House: irandaily@icpi.ir
- Iran Cultural & Press Institute



irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Vol. 7448 ● Thursday, November 30, 2023 ● Price 40,000 Rials ● 8 Pages

Two Iranian films shine in Albanian festival

Iranian animated films, 'The Lovely Sky' and 'Being Ten,' won awards at the 14th International Film Festival for children and teenagers, known as AniFestROZAFa, held in Albania.

'The Lovely Sky,' directed by

Amir Mehran, won the Best Film Award in the eight-year-old age group. In addition, the animation, 'Being Ten,' directed by Fatemeh Ja'fari, received the Special Prize for Best Animated Film at the Albanian festival, IRNA reported.



Both films, produced in 2021 and 2023, belong to the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults.

Organizers of the children and youth film festival believe that through cinema, young audi-

ences can recognize their rights and enhance their cultural curiosity.

In this edition of the AniFestROZAFa, only short films for children and youths were selected and judged. A panel of 23 judges, aged eight to 12, ap-

pointed by the European Children's Film Association, evaluated the films in competition. Previously, the animation, 'What With,' directed by Mahin Javaherian, had participated in the 11th edition of the festival in 2020.

Comedies in Iranian cinema: Opportunity or cause for concern?

Arts & Culture Desk

After some figures were published on the success of Iranian comedies in cinemas, Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili, Iran's minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, said in a recent interview that some would like to suggest that only comedies are successful in Iran. Despite the success of comedies like 'Fossil' this year, Esmaili's statement raises eyebrows, according to an article published on asriran.com, an Iranian news website.

The minister acknowledged the success of 'Fossil,' stating that the film was a great success and had nearly \$6 million in sales over nine months of public screening. Although

other Iranian films that broke the record of over \$2.4 million were also comedies, the minister stressed that we had successful works "on children and social issues" as well. However, some wish to imply that only comedy films attract movie lovers, the minister highlighted.

Elsewhere, recently, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ezzatollah Zarghami highlighted the importance of joy in people's lives, stating, "One of our losses is the issue of joy."

The current top five grossing films in Iranian cinema are 'Fossil,' 'Hotel,' 'Shahr-e Hert,' 'Smart Kid,' and 'Three Puffs.' Looking at previous years, there has been a similar trend of suc-

cessful comedy films.

What is essential, and the message that the community conveys through the success of comedy films, is that not only do people prefer comedy, but they also feel the necessity of entertainment, joy, and laughter.

Iranian audiences, dealing with tight household budgets and economic pressures due to foreign sanctions, desire an escape from the nerve-racking world, even if only for two hours, to enjoy and distance themselves from the crises around them. Considering the current economic challenges, rising living costs, and income gaps, going to the cinema has become the most accessible and affordable



form of entertainment for all walks of life.

It's crucial to be reminded that in the real world, considering various factors ranging from production costs to return on investment, comedy films are collective serendipity; they

not only sell well but satisfy both the audience and the film industry.

Comedy films worldwide share the characteristic of being well-received, but not to the extent seen in Iran. The highest-grossing film in a country for years

in a row is rarely a comedy, but in Iran it is.

The point that the audience prefers comedy films to other genres must be taken seriously because it signifies both an opportunity and a cause for concern.

Almost 1,000,000 children in the UK do not own a book



Almost a million children in the UK do not have a single book of their own at home, according to new research conducted by the National Literacy Trust (NLT).

Some 91.4% of children aged five to 18 who were surveyed said that they had a book of their own, meaning that 8.6% (one in 12) did not, the Guardian wrote.

The study also found that twice as many children aged eight to 18 who received free school meals did not report owning a book (12.4%) compared with those who did not receive free school meals (5.8%).

The gap in book ownership between children who did receive free school meals and those who did not is at its largest in a decade. "Pressure on household budgets due to

increasing food and energy prices has a direct impact on families' ability to support reading at home," states the report.

NLT research published earlier this year found that 36% of families who felt that they were struggling financially with increases in the cost of living said they were spending less on books for their children.

Book ownership was lower among the five to eight age bracket (80.8%) compared to the eight to 18 group (92.9%). The NLT said that lower book ownership among younger children is "concerning" because "foundational reading skills, behaviours and attitudes are often being established" at this age.

Girls reported own books at slightly higher rates than

boys. In the five to eight age group, 83.7% of girls reported book ownership, compared to 77.5% of boys. This gap is the highest it has been for five years.

London-based children aged eight to 18 owned books at a slightly higher rate than other regions, with 94.6% of children in Greater London reporting that they had a book of their own. The lowest ownership was reported in the north-west (91.2%) and the East Midlands (91.3%).

The report urged that support for book ownership be targeted at younger children and children from lower-income backgrounds, "allowing them the same opportunities as their peers to enjoy reading their own books at home".

The NLT is also launching a Christmas fundraising cam-

paign to give books to children. "Christmas is a time for family and sharing stories, so it is devastating to think almost a million children might not have books to read and enjoy with their loved ones this year," said Jonathan Douglas, CEO of the NLT.

The NLT surveyed 71,351 children in two questionnaires distributed to schools. One survey was for the five to eight age bracket (Year 1 to Year 4, or Primary 2 to Primary 5 for Scotland) and the other was designed for the eight to 18 group (Year 4 to Year 13, or Primary 5 to Secondary 6 for Scotland). The surveys contained similar questions, but the survey for younger children was shorter and more pictorial. Teachers decided which of the surveys their Year 4 pupils completed.