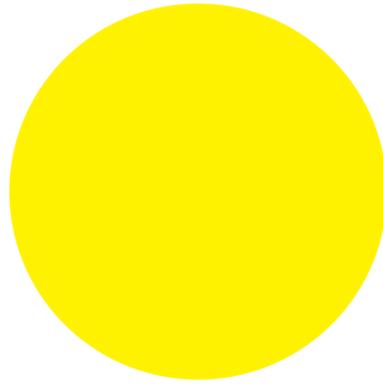


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US President Joe Biden blows a kiss as he walks by the menorah at a White House reception for the Jewish Hanukkah festival in Washington D.C., on December 11. UPI

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MKO trial launched in Tehran



National Desk

The trial of members of the terrorist cult Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) kicked off on Tuesday.

A court in the Iranian capital Tehran kicked off the hearing of charges of the crimes committed by 104 members of the terrorist group, Mehr News Agency reported.

In this case, the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization is mentioned as the first defendant. The court has identified Masoud Rajavi as the leader of the group and declared him the second-ranked accused. The Judiciary of Iran has accused Maryam Rajavi as the third-ranked defendant.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani announced on Monday that the legal grounds had been prepared for the trial by the Judiciary.

He said the trial is in line with measures to hold the criminals to account for killing nearly 17,000 Iranians in their terrorist attacks during the past four decades.

Kanaani also said that Iranian officials are following up on the legal complaint filed against assassins of top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq in 2020.

General Soleimani, the late commander of the Quds Force of IRGC, was assassinated in a US drone attack in January 2020 authorized by the then-president Donald Trump near Baghdad International Airport.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



West uses IAEA as a tool: AEOI

Eslami rejects Grossi's claim over inspectors



National Desk

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami said on Tuesday that Western powers use the International Atomic Energy Organization (IAEA) as a tool.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony of the achievements of his organization in the field of radiopharmaceuticals, Eslami dismissed the International Atomic Energy Agency chief's claims over Tehran's failure to work with the UN nuclear watchdog's inspectors, noting that "We act according to safeguards; when they introduce an inspector, we have the right to accept or reject."

On Monday, the IAEA chief Rafael Grossi alleged that Tehran has failed to answer questions about its past nuclear activities at three sites and has denied access to the sites for the nuclear agency's inspectors.

We do not have any activities other than safeguards and the NPT framework; the IAEA's report is based on JCPOA, Eslami said.

But when the parties did

not fulfill their commitments, pressure on Iran is not acceptable, the AEOI head added.

In early October, Iran announced it had barred from future activities in the country a few European IAEA inspectors, who have a history of "harsh and political behavior" against Tehran. Tehran has put the number of the delisted inspectors at "three or four," explaining that the number is a tiny fraction of the total 127 approved inspectors.

Regarding the sale of Iran's heavy water, Eslami said at the unveiling ceremony, "We sell our heavy water officially."

The US bought it once, and today we have requests from other countries, he further noted, stating that our strategy is to process heavy water and use its derivatives.

Regarding nuclear cooperation with Iraq, he noted that the country has reached an agreement with AEOI on radiopharmaceuticals according to which Iranian radiopharmaceuticals are being sent to the neighboring country.

"We are ready to extend our ties," Eslami said.

Tehran, Riyadh to resume direct flights in near future



The head of Iran Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) said that direct scheduled flights between Iran and Saudi Arabia will resume in the near future, adding that the Umrah pilgrimage flights to the Arab country will soon be launched by two domestic airlines.

Speaking at a news conference on Tuesday, Mohammad Mohammadibakhsh said direct scheduled flights between the two countries will be resumed soon, in line with bolstering bilateral ties in the field of aviation, Tasnim news agency reported.

He further said the country's air industry has provided four strategies for the development of the air fleet. Developing the air fleet and establishing consecutive relations between industry, knowledge-based companies and higher education centers seem necessary to present technological achievements and progress, Mohammadibakhsh highlighted. In this regard, the organization has invited prestigious foreign and international companies to organize an air industry show, he added.

Regarding the par-

ticipation of knowledge-based companies in the air industry show, the CAO chief added that 2,000 parts and equipment related to the air industry have been designed by competent domestic knowledge-based companies. Organizing the exhibitions in the field of aviation industry conveys a message to the world that Iran's aviation industry, despite cruel sanctions, has become more developed by relying on domestic capabilities and constructive relations with the academic centers and knowledge-based companies, he added.

Russia says it's working on major new agreement with Iran



Russian President Vladimir Putin arrives for Russian-Iranian talks in Moscow on December 7, 2023. SPUTNIK

Russia and Iran will speed up work on a "major new interstate agreement," the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.

It did not detail the scope of the agreement, which comes amid growing political, trade and military ties between Moscow and Tehran that the United States views with concern, Reuters reported. In a statement, Russia said the two countries' foreign ministers agreed

in a phone call on Monday to speed up work on the agreement, which was at "a high stage of readiness."

Last week President Vladimir Putin held five hours of talks in the Kremlin with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

The Kremlin last month said Russia and Iran were developing their relations, "including in the field of military-technical cooperation," but de-

clined to comment on a suggestion by the White House that Iran may be considering providing Russia with ballistic missiles.

Iranian authorities have said military cooperation with Russia is expanding day by day. Iran said last month it had finalized arrangements for Russia to provide it with Su-35 fighter jets, Mi-28 attack helicopters, and Yak-130 pilot training aircraft.

Iranian NTBFs export \$1b worth of products



The deputy head of the Innovation and Prosperity Fund of Iran put the

value of products exported by the country's new technology-based firms (NTBFs) at \$1 billion.

Talking to IRNA, Siavash Malekifar pointed to the high capacities and potentials of start-ups in various fields and the number of employees working for Iranian NTBFs at 266,000.

He also highlighted the activities of the fund, saying it was founded in 2010, and currently offers 78 types of high-quality services to applicants. The fund is ready to share experiences with other

countries to provide them with high technical know-how, he added.

The official also said that 41 events have so far been held in the country by the Innovation and Prosperity Fund.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has frequently expressed appreciation for the significant and outstanding role of around 150 domestic knowledge-based companies in the country, vowing that his administration will make its utmost efforts to support the activities of these firms.

Sarigol National Park: A natural haven in North Khorasan Province

Iranica Desk

Areas protected for conservation actually consist of buffer zones and ecosystem services areas, which are intended to preserve biodiversity and promote the continuation of ecological processes in completely natural conditions, under management control.

The use of these areas is allowed only under certain conditions, and measures should be taken to prevent any negative impact on the ecological processes of the ecosystems involved.

Sarigol National Park in North Khorasan Province is one of the most important protected areas in Iran. With an area of approximately 28,000 hectares (6,000 hectares for the national park and 22,000 hectares for the protected area), it is not only one of the most significant protected areas in

North Khorasan, but in Iran.

Some of the most important natural and tourist attractions in North Khorasan Province, such as Rudkhani River, Darreh-ye Erdgan, Sar Cheshmeh Dam Lake, and Sarigol Dam Lake, are located in this area.

Sarigol National Park was designated as a protected area by the Department of the Environment in 1974. The department has since upgraded the protected area's security zone to a national park. Sarigol National Park is one of the most beautiful and ecologically significant areas in North Khorasan Province. Its unique flora and fauna attract a large number of tourists. Visitors are required to obtain a permit for visiting this national park and should follow the environmental protection rules strictly. It is advisable to visit this national park for three to four hours.



Ganjan village



Eyzi waterfall

Moorlands

Moorlands form the largest area of pastures in Sarigol Valley and are among the best habitats for wild sheep, goats, and leopards.

Plain area

The plain area covers a small part of the total region (about 2,000 hectares). This area is the habitat of about 25 deer. The difference in altitude between the lowest point in the southern plain (1,250 meters) and the highest point in the mountains (3,050 meters) is estimated at about 1,800 meters. This difference in altitude has created

diverse ecosystems and added to the biodiversity of the region. Today, many plant species from both warm and cold regions can be seen in Sarigol.

The valley floors in the plain area are scattered with tree and shrub species such as barberry, willow, fig, and walnut, while in the mountainous areas, elm species can be seen scattered and dense.

Eyzi waterfall

Eyzi waterfall is located five kilometers from Eyzi village in the western foothills of the Shah Jahan Mountains, and 15 kilometers southeast

of Esfarayen. The Eyzi River is the source of the waterfall. This river irrigates some of the agricultural lands of Eyzi.

Ganjan village

Nestled in the protected area of Sarigol and surrounded by two other ancient villages, Ganjan village is cherished by the locals. A significant water source, Ganjan River, which is a part of Sarigol National Park, originates from this village and flows northward towards Qal'eh Sefid village. Rural people rely on the water from this river for their agricultural needs.



Sarigol National Park

Global registration of Sadeh Festival signifies importance of local cultures

Iranica Desk

Sadeh Festival was recently registered as the common intangible heritage of Iran and Tajikistan on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is an ancient Iranian ceremony that continues to be celebrated annually in certain regions of Iran, on the evening of the tenth day of the Iranian month of Bahman, corresponding to January 30th.

Fire, water, wind, and soil are considered sacred elements that play practical roles in numerous Iranian celebrations. Ancient Persians believed that the fire lit on this day symbolized the warming of the earth and the preparation for the arrival of spring.

Alireza Hassanzadeh, responsible for compiling and preparing the dossier for the global registration of the Sadeh Festival, told ISNA that this Zoroastrian-rooted ceremony is celebrated in several cities, including Kerman, Yazd, Shiraz, Isfahan, and part of Khorasan Province.

He added that the dossier was prepared in collaboration with communities and

groups responsible for safeguarding intangible elements, following the same approach used for other intangible heritage dossiers.

He noted that while the Sadeh Festival primarily belongs to the cultural domain of ancient Iran, it is also celebrated by the people of Tajikistan.

"The global recognition of this ceremony calls for increased support from governmental institutions to local communities and the organizers of this ritual. On the other hand, collaboration and assistance from local communities are essential to ensure the continued preservation of this cultural element," he said.

Regarding the revitalization and preservation of the Sadeh Festival, he highlighted the importance of taking certain actions, adding intangible heritage dossiers typically include precautionary measures aimed at preserving and promoting these elements.

He believes that it is the responsibility of governmental institutions to facilitate holding this celebration in various regions

of the country and provide support to the people and non-governmental organizations involved.

Hassanzadeh noted that the Sadeh Festival holds a significant place in Iranian culture and history, serving as a symbol of unity among ethnic groups throughout the centuries. He said it is deeply rooted in the literary and identity resources of the Iranian people, with references to the celebration found in the "Shahnameh". The festival is considered a national heritage with high cultural and identity value.

The demand for the global registration of Sadeh Festival as an ancient celebration reflects the desire for national solidarity and recognition of its importance. While the festival is primarily celebrated in Iran and Tajikistan, its significance extends beyond these borders.

He reiterated that it is important to distinguish Sadeh from other fire ceremonies held in various countries during spring celebrations, pointing out that Sadeh has its own unique definition and cultural significance.



Western culture disgraced in Gaza



By Ali Salaam
Journalist and researcher in the
field of American Studies

**EXCLUSIVE
OPINION**

The eyes of the world have opened to the emptiness of various platitudes often repeated by Western liberal regimes due to the sheer barbarity of the genocide of Gaza. This historical moment was uniquely recognized by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khamenei, on 29 November 2023 during a meeting with members of the Basij movement.

The crimes committed during the genocide of Gaza has not only exposed the leaders of the liberal West, according to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, but “have also disgraced Western civilization and culture” itself. “Western culture and civilization is a civilization that when 5,000 children are martyred with phosphorous bombs, the head of a certain Western country stands up and says that Israel is “defending itself,” Imam Khamenei added.

At times, the West purports itself to be the bastion of liberal values, of which the Gaza genocide has disgraced the hollow, hypocritical platitudes of liberalism. At other times, the West purports itself to be the bastion of Christian values, of which the Gaza genocide proves that the values of the religion of Christianity are nowhere to be found within the socio-political systems of the West. Their two great claims, to be both liberal and Christian (despite those two ideologies being contradictory), were fully disgraced and

exposed as hollow and hypocritical slogans by their full-fledged support for the Zionist occupation’s savagery in Gaza. Liberalism is an ideology that can best be summed up as rejection of God and submission to the ego. If we are to take the lofty slogans of liberalism at face value, then it should in theory be a social philosophy of tolerance and humanism. However, in practice, these slogans fall apart, showing an ideology that only tolerates various flavors of liberalism, and seeks to subjugate any

nation that does not share its values. “[The other front is] the deceptive front that calls itself ‘liberal democracy.’ But actually, it is neither liberal nor democratic! They are lying when they say they’re a liberal democracy. If you are liberal, why did you colonize others — [in the form of] traditional colonialism, modern colonialism, neocolonialism? What kind of liberals are you? What kind of freedom-seekers are you?” the Imam Khamenei said in regards to the false promises of liberalism. The ongoing genocide of Gaza further

disgraces liberalism’s slogans and exposes its hypocrisy. In their eyes, the people of Palestine are “terrorists” for engaging in their moral, legal, natural, and divine right to armed self-defense and resistance to a military occupation, while “Israelis” are considered “innocent civilians,” despite the fact that all men and women above age 18 are either active-duty army or army reservists, making them an active part of a violent military occupation. Humanitarian concerns and sympathies are not afforded to the Palestin-

ians who are oppressed, but rather to the military occupiers who do the oppressing. Over 7,000 children in Gaza have been killed so far. The spillover of the dehumanization of Palestinians has reached the West, where a six-year-old Palestinian child was stabbed to death by his own landlord in Chicago, USA. This dehumanization has been endorsed by the Western liberal regimes, which leads to further bloodshed. The liberal claims of “freedom of expression” have also been exposed to



the world. "Israel" has intentionally killed approximately 63 journalists in both Gaza and Southern Lebanon. Social media giants like Meta and Twitter/X have cracked down on social media users, suspending accounts in order to control the narrative and stop the truth from spreading, instead of allowing these platforms to serve as public forums undisturbed by the biases of the platforms' moderators.

This is in spite of the fact that Twitter/X owner Elon Musk promising to make his platform unlike the notoriously pro-censorship Meta platforms. However, when it comes to Zionist crimes, Musk's free speech absolutism is exposed for its hypocrisy.

Despite Musk's controversies with the Zionist lobby, in order to curry favor Musk repeats the myths that the Palestinian Islamic Resistance is motivated by hatred of Jews as a people, rather than fighting back against a ruthless military occupier. Islam is a religion which wholly rejects ideas of biological determinism and racism, therefore Palestinians only care about the actions of Jewish supremacist occupiers, not the happenstance of their birth. On the contrary, Musk has not said anything about the racially-motivated, genocidal claims of various Zionist officials — from Gallant's "human animals" to Netanyahu's references to Amalek — nor has he censored any famous pro-Zionist accounts from calling for genocide of Palestinians as a people.

It is worth noting that Musk's buyout of Twitter was organized by Ari Emanuel, the son of an Irgun terrorist, proving in practice that in liberal societies "free speech" comes secondary to moneyed interests.

This has spilled over into real life, where if people don't get canceled on social media, the viewpoints of Westerners on social media are dug up and sent to their employers or their university, and they are kicked out from their position in work or school with no way to regain what they have lost.

The US, which purports itself to be more pro-free speech than Canada or Europe, voted on a law to criminalize criticism of the Zionist regime, falsely equating it with "antisemitism." The only person to vote no was a Christian

congressman of European descent, Thomas Massie. Other members of Congress, including the Muslim American representative Ilhan Omar, voted yes.

The US is on track to having similar laws to Europe, in which one can face fines or jail time for simply engaging in academic review of the evidence surrounding the holocaust of World War 2.

If the slogans of liberalism were truly worth their salt, they would not seek to criminalize people for having the "wrong" viewpoints, while they hypocritically chastise other nations, such as Iran, for penalizing foreign-backed subversives who seek to make a repeat of the internal turmoil that happened to Libya and Syria as a result of NATO-backed insurgents.

On the contrary, criticism of Zionism does not threaten the stability of Western nations or seek to throw it into internal turmoil, and may even be to the benefit of the peoples of the West, as their tax dollars are siphoned to support an occupation regime while their own infrastructure falls apart, and the clandestine intelligence operations of the Zionist regime have contributed to the creation of terrorist proxies like ISIS, and much evidence points to the involvement of Mossad in the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy. In reality, liberalism only allows the freedom to pursue falsehood and corruption. The Western liberal regimes penalize those who follow the truth, from the least harsh punishment such as negative social stigma or firing from a job to the harshest such as large fines, jail time, or even assassinations, the latter of which was the price that was paid by Martyr Malcolm X, the leader of the Afro-American struggle in the US, or Martyr Edoardo Agnelli, the sole heir to the Italian Agnelli fortune who was murdered by elements of his own family after he converted to Shia Islam. The genocide and atrocities in Gaza also further demonstrate the false claim that Western liberal societies adhere to Christianity. In reality, the noble Christian faith and its moral values have been absent from Western social philosophy for centuries.

Liberal values of unlimited personal

freedom, separation of church and state, and more are contrary to the noble values that Christianity teaches to mankind. Unlimited personal freedom has enabled the wealthy plutocrats of the world to commit ungodly crimes in order to steal the resources of peoples of the world.

The noble values of Christianity reject the mass murder and pillaging of any peoples for the sake of worldly gain. Like Islam, Christianity also rejects biological determinism and views all human beings as creations of God worthy of dignity, rights, and respect. The genocide of Gaza is further proof that the West is run by godless liberal values, and not Christian values.

American support for Zionism based on Christian values is also being exposed for its hypocrisy and paradoxical nature, as Palestinian Christians continuously face harassment and threats from Zionist occupiers. Recently, "Israeli" National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir stated that it is not a crime for Zionist occupiers to spit on Christians, and had previously referred to such an act as an "ancient Jewish custom." The Zionist media in the West also keeps Western Christians in the dark about certain rabbinical texts which lewdly slander and blaspheme Jesus and the Virgin Mary (pbwt), which are likely to motivate fanatical Zionist occupiers to harass and abuse Christians.

There is no clear basis for American Christians to support the Zionist regime, as their own government operates on secular liberal values, and the Zionist regime views Jesus Christ in a negative light and abuses Christian Palestinians due to such beliefs. In the ongoing genocide against Gaza, an ancient Church was destroyed by the Zionist's criminal bombing.

In spite of this, many Westerners have realized the bankruptcy of liberalism and are beginning to turn towards a more authentic form of Christianity that rejects Zionism, which has put many of them under the microscope of FBI surveillance.

Large protest rallies across the West in support of Palestine have taken Western elites by surprise, while rallies in support of the Zionist's genocide are very small and often have to rely on

paying people to attend. Pro-Palestine rallies as well as online sentiment have spanned across the left-right spectrum, despite the left-right divide being a false dichotomy to begin with.

Western leaders have become fearful that their own populations have been disgusted by this bloody "mask-off" moment for the Zionist regime and their Western liberal enablers, mainly the US and UK.

In utter hypocrisy, French President Macron even condemned the extent of the barbarity in Gaza, only after hypocritically visiting occupied Palestine and giving his full support to the Zionist officials to carry out this bloodshed. In reality, they are not concerned with the bloodshed but concerned that a wider war would lead to the demise of the Zionist entity, which would contribute to the demise of their hegemony in the region and in the world.

As the world has been shocked by the full exposure of the hypocrisy of Western culture in this bloody genocide in Gaza, Western leaders may seek damage control by pursuing a more deceptive option to subdue to the Palestinian nation. The first Oslo accords created the collaborationist Palestinian Authority (PA), which serves as an organ of the Zionist occupation.

It seems as if the direction of the genocide is perhaps to weaken the people of Gaza and the resistance of Gaza enough to bring an end to the rule of the Palestinian resistance factions such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad to an end, and replace them with a PA-like authority which exists as an agent of the occupation. This way, they can eliminate Palestinian armed resistance in Gaza without risking a wider escalation with other resistance groups in the region. Additionally, they will gain public relations points by pretending to be the peacemaker, when in reality, through deceptive Oslo-like negotiations, they try to create a subservient Palestinian "state" that exists as an extension of the occupation is but another form of warfare, albeit softwar.

Those rightfully disgusted by the images of dead children in Gaza may even be tricked into supporting the softwar tactic of pseudo-negotiations just so the bloodshed can end, not realizing

that such a direction would seek the humiliation and erasure of Palestinians as a people, by making sure any independent political governance, such as Hamas, does not have any say in Palestinian statehood. But, just as the true face of Western culture has been exposed by this genocide, it will also be exposed again for its untrustworthy diplomacy that acts in bad faith and double-deals with the world.

Regardless of which route the Zionists and their Western liberal enablers choose, either continued genocide or softwar via so-called negotiations, the resistance will undoubtedly humiliate and thwart these plans of subduing and erasing the Palestinian people from the map. The Zionist entity is temporary and soon the Palestinian people will hold a referendum for their own future. Much of the world's evils will be eliminated or reduced as a result of the end of Zionist occupation of Palestine.

As an unintended consequence of the humiliation of Western liberal culture that this genocide has brought about, which even Western people are disgusted by, many people around the world, especially in the West, have begun flooding social media with stories of how they have started to read the Holy Quran as a result of the steadfastness of Palestinians that is derived from their faith. Some have accepted Islam as a result of this.

Westerners have realized that the liberal values that have dominated their society since the "enlightenment" age leave the human heart empty, life meaningless, and their political landscape rife with corruption and bloodshed. It is only natural for people who see the empty reality of a godless worldview to turn towards the divine, whether their own previously-held Christian values, or realizing that Islam is the divine truth that all of God's prophets — from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses to Jesus to Muhammad, peace be upon them all — came to disseminate to humanity.

Accordingly, the humiliation of Western culture through these barbaric actions in Gaza and elsewhere will speed up the process of humanity seeking divine values to replace materialistic values.



Turkish leagues halted after club president punches ref in face



MKE Ankaragucu president Faruk Koca reacts as the referee Halil Umut Meler lies on the ground at the end of their Super Lig home match against Caykur Rizespor in Ankara, Turkey, on December 11, 2023.
● REUTERS

REUTERS – The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) has suspended all leagues on a night of “shame” for the nation’s soccer after Ankaragucu’s president Faruk Koca punched the referee in the face at the end of their Super Lig home match against Rizespor. Koca entered the field and hit referee Halil Umut Meler when the final whistle blew after Rizespor scored a 97th minute equaliser in the 1-1 draw at Eryaman Stadium on Monday, footage from state broadcaster TRT showed.

Ankaragucu fans invaded the pitch after the game and Meler was also kicked when he fell, though it was unclear who his assailants were. Meler eventually made it to the dressing room with the help of the police.

“The Turkish Football Federation has decided to suspend all games in all leagues indefinitely,” the federation posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

“The related club, the club chairman, club officials and all those guilty of attacking referee Umut Meler will be punished in the strongest terms possible.”

A detention order has been issued for Koca, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said in a post on X, adding that two people have already been detained as part of a judicial investigation into the incident.

“Turkish football has been punched shamefully tonight. Everyone involved in this incident will pay the price,” TFF Chairman Mehmet Buyukeksi said, according to TRT.

A FIFA referee since 2017, 37-year-old Meler took charge of Lazio’s Champions League group game with Celtic on Nov. 28.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan tweeted: “Sport means peace and brotherhood. Sport is incompatible with violence. We will never allow violence to take place in Turkish sports.”

Referees in Turkey are often criticised by club managers and presidents for their decisions but are rarely the target of violent attacks.

Ankaragucu are 11th in the standings on 18 points, three places below Rizespor on 22 points after 15 matches.

Will Persepolis, Esteghlal go all out for bragging rights in Tehran derby?



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

When Tehran archrivals Persepolis and Esteghlal squared off in the Persian Gulf Pro League back in April, the result turned out to set the tone for the remainder of last season’s title race.

Issa Alekasir’s second-half strike was enough for Persepolis to walk away with the maximum points, which saw the Reds overtake their fierce rivals and Sepahan on the same matchday before winning the next three games for a sixth Iranian top-flight trophy in seven years.

The result also proved to be the beginning of the end for Portuguese manager Ricardo Sa Pinto, who parted ways with the Blues after a season in charge following another derby defeat in the Hazfi Cup final in May.

However, with the ongoing league campaign yet to reach the halfway mark, the outcome of the 102nd capital derby on Thursday is hardly going to be a season-defining result for either of the two sides, but the two head coaches, Yahya Golmohammadi and Javad Nekounam, could still have their own reasons to give it their best shot for the bragging rights.

Saturday’s narrow one-goal win against Havadar gave Persepolis a first victory in six matches across all competitions, bringing relief for the Reds boss Golmohammadi, who had sections of



● PAYAM SANI/IRNA

the home crowd chanting against him after the final whistle of the 2-1 home defeat against Al Duhail last week, one that saw the club crash out of the AFC Champions League group stage. The mood on stands on Saturday was in stark contrast with the one against the Qatari champion, but Golmohammadi, whose team has been plagued by injuries in recent weeks, knows a defeat on Thursday could easily lead to the fans turning against their head coach again.

For all the success Golmohammadi has enjoyed over the past four years with – featuring three league titles, a Hazfi Cup trophy, and a runner-up finish in the Asian elite clubs competition – Golmohammadi has thoroughly been blamed by the supporters and ex-Persepolis players for his ongoing rift with club chairman Alireza Darvish dominating the Reds campaign. On the opposite bench, meanwhile, Nekounam will be hoping to cement his sta-

tes as the right man for the Blues job with a first derby triumph in the league for Esteghlal since March 2018. The former Iranian skipper has beaten the odds to steer his team to the top spot of the table, despite a rather quiet transfer window in the summer as well as his own version of falling-out with the club hierarchy. Still, barely producing convincing performances, Esteghlal has been struggling with creating chances over the course of the 90 min-

utes – most reflected in Saturday’s goalless stalemate at Foolad Khuzestan, which saw Sepahan close the gap on top thanks to 4-1 thrashing of Mes Rafsanjan. Boasting the most formidable squad in the league, Sepahan did a great job to bounce back from a four-point deduction – due to a ‘budget cap violation’ – earlier in the season and is widely regarded as the favorite to lift the ultimate prize by the end of the campaign, but Nekounam

will be looking to build on a statement win on Thursday to establish his side as the only threat to the Isfahan-based side’s title quest. Persepolis and Esteghlal have occasionally received criticism for adopting a conservative approach in the Tehran derby over the years, but the prospect of what a massive victory could mean for both this time around could be tempting enough for the two managers to go all out for it on Thursday.

Duplantis, Kipyegon among six named Athletes of the Year



BBC – World-record pole vaulter Armand Duplantis was named one of six World Athletes of the Year for 2023.

This year’s edition of the World Athletics Awards changed from crowning a sole male and female winner to issuing awards across six categories.

World and Olympic champion Duplantis, Athlete of the Year in 2020 and 2022, took the inaugural men’s field award.

Other winners announced on Monday were Tigist Assefa, Faith Kipyegon, Yulimar Rojas, Noah Lyles and Kelvin Kiptum.

Following feedback during the voting process, in a year in which 23 world records were set, the awards were divided into three event categories for men and women: track, field and out of stadia.

Duplantis, Kiptum, Assefa and Kipyegon set world records in their respective events in 2023, while all six award winners secured world titles or major marathon wins.

“The depth of talent and the outstanding performances in our sport this year more than justify the expansion of the World Athletics Awards to recognise the accomplishments by these six athletes across a range of disciplines,” said World Athletics president Sebastian Coe.

“Our World Athletes of the Year

alone have achieved seven world records between them in 2023, as well as a host of world titles and major wins, so it is only fitting that they be recognised as the athletes of the year in their respective fields.”

Sweden’s Duplantis, 24, broke the world record twice in 2023 and defended his world title.

Ethiopia’s Assefa, 27, was awarded the women’s out of stadia trophy after winning the Berlin marathon with the biggest single improvement of the women’s world record for 40 years.

Women’s track winner Kipyegon set world records at three distances – 1500m, 5,000m and the mile – during a season in which the 29-year-old Kenyan achieved a golden double at the World Athletics Championships.

Women’s field winner Rojas claimed her fourth world triple jump title and the 28-year-old Venezuelan won her third consecutive Diamond League trophy.

American Lyles, 26, took the men’s track award after winning the 100m-200m double at the World Championships, as well as adding a 4x100m gold.

And finally, Kenya’s Kiptum, 24, claimed the men’s out of stadia award after becoming the first athlete to break two hours one minute in a record-eligible marathon in Chicago.

Israel pummels southern Gaza as UN labels strip 'hell on Earth'



Displaced Palestinians, who fled their houses due to Israeli strikes, sit in their makeshift shelter at a tent camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, on December 12, 2023. **REUTERS**

International Desk
Israeli tanks and warplanes pommelled southern Gaza on Tuesday as the UN called the war-torn strip "hell on Earth". In Khan Younis, southern Gaza's main city which Israel troops began storming last week, residents said tank shelling was now focused on the city center. One said tanks were operating on Tuesday morning in the street where the house of Yahya Al-Sin-

war, Hamas' leader in Gaza, is located. Further south in Rafah, which borders Egypt, health officials said 22 people including children were killed in an Israeli airstrike on houses overnight. Civil emergency workers were searching for more victims under the rubble. More than two months into the war sparked by the October 7 attack, the visiting chief of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, likened Gaza

to "hell on earth". Gaza's Hamas-run Health Ministry charged Tuesday that Israeli forces were raiding Kamal Adwan hospital in Gaza City, the biggest urban center, in the north of the coastal territory. The army did not immediately comment, but Israel has repeatedly claimed that Hamas resistance group uses hospitals, schools, mosques and tunnels beneath them as military bases - the charges that Hamas has

denied. The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said earlier that "the hospital remains surrounded by Israeli troops and tanks, and fighting with armed groups has been reported in its vicinity for three consecutive days". It said two mothers were killed in a strike on the maternity ward and that about 3,000 internally displaced people were trapped in the facility amid reports of "extreme shortages of water, food and power".

Starvation
An Israeli ground assault that had been confined to the north has expanded to the southern half of the strip since a week-long truce collapsed at the start of December. Residents and aid agencies say that means no place is now safe in a territory where bombing has already rendered the vast majority of people homeless and nearly all areas are entirely cut off from food, medicine and fuel.

Hunger is worsening, with the UN World Food Programme saying half of Gaza's population is starving. The OCHA said on Tuesday limited aid distributions were taking place in the Rafah district, but "in the rest of the Gaza Strip, aid distribution has largely stopped over the past few days, due to the intensity of hostilities and restrictions of movement along the main roads". Richard Peeperkorn, World Health Organization Representative for Gaza and the West Bank, said the WHO was considering a Gaza Health Ministry request for help with a potential evacuation of patients and staff from the hospital. The WHO said on Sunday the risk of disease in Gaza had grown while the health system had been reduced to a third of its pre-conflict capacity. UN officials say at least 1.9 million people - 85% of Gaza's population - are displaced, and describe conditions in the southern areas where they have concentrated as hellish. The health ministry in Gaza Strip said Monday the death toll of the war has risen to 18,205 in the Palestinian territory.

Reuters and AFP contributed to this report.

Biden says he's Zionist while Jews protest outside



Jewish elders chain themselves to the White House gate in protest of Israel's war in Gaza on December 11, Washington, D.C., United States. **JEWISH VOICE FOR PEACE**

International Desk
While US President Joe Biden openly voiced his "unshakable" support for Zionists in Israel and described himself as one, pro-ceasefire Jewish elders were arrested yards away outside the White House for saying "Not in our name". "You don't have to be a Jew to be a Zionist, and I'm a Zionist," Biden told invited guests Monday at the annual lighting of the White House menorah in the East Room, UPI reported. The president described his commitment to the security of Israel and the Jewish people as "unshakable," while stating that "were there no Israel, there wouldn't be a Jew in the world that was safe." In direct contradiction of his words, 18 Jewish elders were arrested on American soil for exercising their free speech and wearing matching T-shirts that said, "We're here to say: Not in our name. We won't stop until they stop." After being chained around their waists to the gate, the 18 women held up a sign that read: "Jewish elders to Biden: Stop the genocide. Ceasefire now." The number 18 is significant in Hebrew because it's the same word for life, according to The New Arab.

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Invitation for one stage Bidding
Islamic Republic of Iran
FARS Six Cities Sanitation Improvement Project
Invitation for Procurement, Construction, Test and commissioning of:
Trunk Mains, Interceptors and Laterals of Lots 1 & 2 of Fasa Wastewater Project
IsDB Financing No. IRN-0107

First Announcement

The Government of Islamic Republic of Iran has received financing from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) towards the cost of the Fars Six Cities Sanitation Improvement Project, and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this financing to payments under the contracts for Fasa wastewater networks implementations. The Fars Water and Wastewater Company (FWWC) now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for Procurement, Construction, Test and commissioning of: Trunk Mains, Interceptors and Laterals of Lots 1 & 2 of Fasa Wastewater Networks as described in the following table:

No	City	Section	Description of Package
1	FASA	Lot 1	Procurement, Construction, Test and Commissioning of 4.2 km of Trunk Mains, 59 km of Interceptors and Laterals as well as 5000 house connection of Zone 9,11,13 of Fasa Wastewater Project.
2	FASA	Lot 2	Procurement, Construction, Test and Commissioning of 69 km of Interceptors and Laterals as well as 8989 house connection of Zone 5,7,10 of Fasa Wastewater Project

Bidding will be conducted through the National Competitive Bidding (NCB) procedures using Post-Qualification as specified in the IsDB's Guidelines for the Procurement of Goods, Works and Related Services under IsDB Project Financing (April 2019), and is open to all eligible bidders applicants as defined in the guideline and Bidding Documents. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 1.18 -21 setting forth IsDB's policy on conflict of interest. Interested eligible Applicants may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents from the Fars Water & Wastewater Company (address below) during working hours.

A complete set of the Bidding document in English may be purchased by interested Applicants (a) on the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **25,000,000** Iranian Rials for each package. The method of payment will be direct deposit to Account No. **1528936404, Bank Mellat**, Moallem Square Branch (code 240008037112), in the name of Fars Water and Wastewater Company. Applicants can get the Bidding documents from Fars Water and Wastewater Company upon receipt of the cash deposit as indicated above.

Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before **January 16, 2024 at 11:00 a.m.** Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders' designated representatives and anyone who choose to attend at the address below on **January 16, 2024 at 11.00 a.m.**

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security for each lot as follows:

- For Lot 1: 52,000,000,000 (Fifty - two billion Iranian Rials)
- For Lot 2: 55,000,000,000 (Fifty - five billion Iranian Rials)

Fars Water and Wastewater Company (FWWC)
Address: Secretariat Office, First Floor, 4th Street (Sobhani St.), West Ghoddousi Blv, Shahid Mottahari Square, Shiraz
Postal Code: 71868-98465
Tel: +98 (71) 38435167
Facsimile: +98 (71) 38435162
Email: pmu.abfafars2023@gmail.com
Website: www.abfa-fars.ir

آگهی تدارک خصوصی

(فراخوان مناقصه یک مرحله‌ای)

جمهوری اسلامی ایران
پروژه بهسازی بهداشت ک شهر استان فارس
دعوت برای تهیه، ساخت، آزمایش و راه اندازی خط انتقال و خطوط اصلی و فرعی لاتهای 1 و 2 شبکه فاضلاب فسا
شماره اعتبار سرمایه بانک توسعه اسلامی: IRN-0107

دولت جمهوری اسلامی ایران اعتباری از بانک توسعه اسلامی (IsDB) جهت اجرای پروژه ارتقای بهداشت 6 شهر استان فارس دریافت داشته و در نظر دارد بخشی از این اعتبار را به منظور پرداخت‌های قراردادهای احداث خطوط انتقال، جمع‌آوری و فرعی فاضلاب شهرهای مربوطه به مصرف برساند. شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس هم اکنون از پیشنهادات لاک و مهر شده پیمانکاران واجد صلاحیت جهت تهیه، ساخت، آزمایش و راه‌اندازی خطوط اصلی و فرعی لاتهای 1 و 2 شبکه جمع‌آوری فاضلاب فسا که در جدول زیر تشریح شده است، دعوت می‌نماید.

ردیف	نام شهر	بخش	شرح کار
1	فسا	لات 1	اجرای 4 کیلومتر خط انتقال، 59 کیلومتر خطوط اصلی و فرعی و 5000 فقره انشعاب فاضلاب زونهای 9، 11، 13 شبکه فاضلاب فسا
2	فسا	لات 2	اجرای 69 کیلومتر خطوط اصلی و فرعی و 8989 فقره انشعاب فاضلاب زونهای 5، 7، 10 شبکه فاضلاب فسا

مناقصه از طریق فرآیند مناقصه رقابتی داخلی (NCB) با استفاده از روش پس ارزیابی تعیین شده در دستورالعمل تأمین تدارک کالا، کارها و خدمات مربوطه تحت تأمین مالی بانک توسعه اسلامی و اجرای کار بانک توسعه اسلامی (ماه آوریل 1401) صورت می‌پذیرد. کلیه مناقصیان واجد شرایط به نحوی که در دستورالعمل بانک و اسناد مناقصه مذکور تعریف شده می‌توانند در روند مناقصه شرکت نمایند. همچنین، لطفاً به پاراگراف‌های 18-21، قسمت چهارم در رابطه با اولویت‌بندی در صورت تناقض‌ها مر ارجعه نمایید.

مناقصیان علاقه‌مند واجد شرایط می‌توانند اطلاعات بیشتر و نیز اسناد مناقصه را از شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس به آدرس زیر در ساعات اداری از **8 صبح لغایت 15 کسب** نمایند.

مناقصیان می‌توانند مجموعه‌ای کامل از اسناد مناقصه به زبان انگلیسی را با درخواست کتبی در مقابل پرداخت **25/000/000 ریال** (غیر قابل برگشت) برای هر بسته خریداری نمایند. نحوه پرداخت به صورت واریز مستقیم وجه به حساب شماره **1528936404 بانک ملت**، شعبه میدان معلم (کد شناسه **980371123404**) به نام شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس می‌باشد. مناقصیان می‌توانند اسناد مناقصه را از شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس در قبال ارائه رسید پرداخت وجه یاد شده دریافت نمایند.

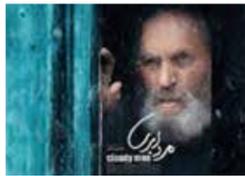
پاکت‌های مهوور پیشنهادات بایستی حداکثر تا ساعت **11 صبح روز 1402/10/16** به آدرس ذیل تسلیم شوند. پاکت‌هایی که بعد از این زمان ارائه شوند رد خواهند شد. بازگشایی پاکت‌ها به صورت عمومی خواهد بود و در حضور نمایندگان پیشنهاددهندگان یا کسانی که تمایل به حضور داشته باشند، در ساعت **11 صبح روز 1402/10/16** در محلی که در پایین اشاره می‌شود بازگشایی صورت می‌پذیرد.

تمام پیشنهادات بایستی حاوی تضمین شرکت در مناقصه برای هر لات به میزان زیر باشند:

لات 1: **52/000/000 ریال** (پنجاه و دو میلیارد ریال)
لات 2: **55/000/000 ریال** (پنجاه و پنج میلیارد ریال)

شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس
نشانی: شیراز- میدان مطهری- بلوار شهید قدوسی غربی- خیابان چهارم (سبحانی)، طبقه اول، دبیرخانه- کدپستی 71868-98465
تلفن: 071-38435167
نمابر: 071-38435162
پست الکترونیکی: pmu.abfafars2023@gmail.com
سایت الکترونیکی: www.abfa-fars.ir

Iranian actor Nazaralian awarded at Greek festival



Mahmoud Nazaralian, the lead actor in the short film, 'Cloudy Man,' written and directed by Shahin Jalali, received the Best Actor Award at the Short Film Section of the Athens Marathon International Film Festival.

The festival is an annual event dedicated to the competition of independent filmmakers, featuring categories for both short and feature-length films, IRNA wrote.

The short film tells the story of an elderly man who has lost the balance of his life and faces unpredictable events.

The film has already taken part at the 13th Baku International Short Film Festival, 26th Busan International Film Festival in South Korea, the 8th Iranian Film Festival in Zurich, Switzerland, and the 15th Grand OFF World Independent Film Awards in Poland, where it was nominated for best actor award in a short film.

Iran to stage theatrical play 'Nowruz' at Indian festival

The play 'Nowruz' is set to be staged at the 20th Rayan International Children's Festival in New Delhi, from December 13 to 17.

Written and directed by Mohammad Borumand, the theatrical production will be performed at the Ambedkar International Hall on December 15, Mehr news agency reported.

Teenagers aged 12 to 17, from 20 countries, including Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Paraguay, Canada, India, Zambia, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Iran, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Czech Republic will showcase performances in various categories such as performance art, musical theater, puppetry, and folk dance.

Representing Iran, the Simorgh Theater Group will present 'Nowruz,' featuring the traditions of the Persian New Year.

'Nowruz' offers a fresh perspective on the ancient tale of Uncle Nowruz and Naneh Sarma, exploring how their love keeps them youthful. The play introduces characters such as Uncle Nowruz, Naneh Sarma, Hajji Firouz, and the rituals of welcoming Nowruz in northern and southern Iran.

The performance will be presented in English.

The cast includes Parnian Babapour, Arnika Borumand, Parvin Kheradmand, Hasti Rahimifard, Mahsa Qadamyari, Hasti Qorbani, Saba Kianmanesh, with Bahareh Saahabi and Soheila Qeidi as the voice actors of the play.

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West Asia in need of a culture of peace



● FODASUN



Stefan Priesner, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iran



Mohsen Ghanei, the head of the Department of Development and Human Rights Treaties at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Amirsaed Vakil, an attorney and assistant professor at the University of Tehran's Faculty of Law and Political Science

Social Desk EXCLUSIVE

The 5th International Conference on the Future of Peace & Human Rights in West Asia commenced on Monday, December 11. Organized by the Foundation of Dialogue and Solidarity of the United Nations (FODASUN), the conference took place at Iran's Khaneye Andishe Varzan. Its primary objective was to encourage engaging discussions and provide insightful perspectives on the subject matter.

This conference aims to bring together influential speakers and experts in the field to deliberate on crucial issues surrounding peace and human rights in the region. The inaugural session of the conference featured distinguished speakers, including Stefan Priesner, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iran, Mohsen Ghanei, Head of the Department of Development and Human Rights Treaties at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Amirsaed Vakil, an Attorney at Law and Assistant Professor at the University of Tehran's Faculty of Law and Political Science.

At first, Masoud Ravankhah, the head of FODASUN, welcomed the guests and speakers, and then passed the floor to Priesner,

who began by acknowledging the significance of International Human Rights Day, and emphasized the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the progress made in establishing a comprehensive international framework for the protection of human rights. Priesner stated that, despite the current situation in Gaza, the state of human rights globally is much better than it was in 1948, "When the world just emerged from a catastrophic world war, with 50 million people dead; a time when countries came together searching for a common ground to establish a more permanent peace."

Priesner then emphasized the close link between peace and human rights, noting that human rights violations remain a challenge in many parts of the world. He discussed the ongoing efforts to develop and codify human rights laws, including debates on standards-setting in areas such as the right to the environment and human rights in the context of emerging technologies. Turning to the situation in Gaza, Priesner referred to the resumption of hostilities as "catastrophic" and echoed the sentiment of the UN, urging all influential states "to redouble their efforts immediately to ensure a ceasefire."

Priesner also emphasized the

importance of promoting sustainable development, inclusive societies, environmental protection, and access to justice as key elements in achieving stability and conflict prevention. He discussed the United Nations Country Team's work in Iran, emphasizing development and humanitarian priorities. Priesner highlighted the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which promotes collaboration between Iran and the UN in various areas.

Priesner concluded his speech by saying, "Let us all use today's event to step up our efforts to translate human rights into reality in the lives of every child, woman, and man around the globe and the region."

After a short break, Mohsen Ghanei followed Priesner's speech and continued the discussion on human rights, dedicating his speech to explaining the mechanisms of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the nature of Universal Periodic Reviews. He drew the attendees' attention to the dismal human rights records of Israel, which is the subject of item 7 in the council. This item is titled "Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories" and is defined by UNHRC Resolution 5/1 as en-

compassing "human rights violations and implications of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories." "Nine out of 36 UNHRC special sessions were about Israel's crimes," Ghanei said.

Then, Professor Amirsaed Vakil from the University of Tehran delivered a scholarly presentation on various aspects of Peace and Human Rights, with a specific focus on the West Asia region. He drew attention to the fact that the region, home to seven percent of the world's population and with a median age of 22, possesses major potential to shape the future of the world. However, the presence of unresolved fundamental issues within the region, coupled with its high ethnic diversity and more than 60 spoken languages, also creates a fertile ground for wars and armed conflicts. Nevertheless, by prioritizing a culture of peace rooted in democratic values, the West Asia region can effectively navigate these turbulent times and strive towards achieving lasting and sustainable peace. Lastly, the audience and speakers engaged in a brief period of Q&A, during which questions were raised about the UN's ability to safeguard human rights, the role Iran can play, and what the future holds for prominent countries in the region.

Iran's National Orchestra to perform 'Lady of Water' tone poem

Arts & Culture Desk

In commemoration of the mourning days of the martyrdom of Hazrat Fatima (PBUH), Iran's National Orchestra, under the auspice of Hamayoun Rahimian, is slated to perform the symphonic poem 'Lady of Water'. Seyyed Mahmoud Eslami, Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Acting Head of the Rudaki Foundation, stated, "This performance is the artistic tribute of musicians and performers to Hazrat Fatima."

According to the report, Safi Saffavi composed the 'Lady of Water' composed the poem, with lyrics inspired by the poems of Abdoljabbar Kakaei and words by Seyyed Mehdi Shojaei. Ali Amir-Qassemi is the vocalist for this piece, IRNA wrote.

The symphonic poem comprises eight sections: 'Offering,' 'Yas Fragrance,' 'Conqueror of Hearts,' 'Love and Moon,' 'Dear Father,' 'Night of Longing,' 'All This Loneliness,' and 'Celestial'. With over 270 musical pieces in its repertoire, this orchestra is a sub section of the Rudaki

Foundation and is currently working under the permanent leadership of Rahimian. The orchestra's debut autumn concert, titled 'Autumns,' took place on October 12, featuring enduring pieces by late composers in the Vahdat Hall.

On November 4, the orchestra, led by Rahimian, performed a solo tar composition titled 'Our Rainy Season'. In December, the Iran National Orchestra, conducted by maestro Majid Entezami, presented a selection of the composer's works under the title 'Accompanied by Memories' over



● TASNIM

five nights (December 5 to 9). Moreover, in September of this year, the orchestra, led by Rahimian, took to the stage at Vahdat Hall with the symphonic poem 'Farewell,' featuring

the vocals of late Hessameddin Seraj and the narration of Saeed Baqeri, a pioneering poet and researcher, to mark the occasion of the mourning season of Imam Hussein (PBUH).