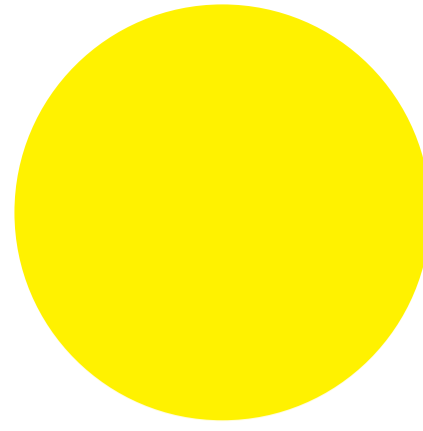


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# Iran Daily



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## Iran to turn into major trade partner for EAEU: Minister

Iran will become one of the most important trade partners of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with the inking of a free trade agreement (FTA) between the two sides, said the union's minister in charge of trade. Andrey Slepnev made the remarks in a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali, IRNA reported. He also called the agreement the most important cooperation document between the two sides. Jalali, for his part, said the FTA is the result of intensive negotiations and the will of the two sides to develop bilateral relations. In 2018, Iran and the EAEU inked a preferential trade agreement (PTA), which came into effect on October 27, 2019. The two sides later began negotiations to upgrade the PTA to FTA, after the success of the former. The EAEU was established in 2015 at the initiative taken by the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. Afterward, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined the union.

# Raisi: Fiber optics key infrastructure for smart services development

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said on Friday that fiber optics are an important infrastructure for the development of smart services.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of a national plan to bring a fiber optics network to homes, businesses, and schools in the northern province of Golestan, he added, "Today, we witness the development of one of the most important communications and information technology infrastructures in this province," according to president.ir.

The president stated, "All aspects of human life are reliant on the Internet, in economic, educational, personal and social life, businesses, banking communications and other services depend on the Internet, as without it life would be disrupted."

Considering the problems that copper cables suffer and its limitations, fiber optics can guarantee Internet communications and services, said Raisi, adding, "This important infrastructure should not be neglected."

During his two-day visit to Golestan Province, which ended on Friday, the president was accompanied by ministers, who discussed problems and issues.

Inaugurating a 600-bed hospital, several water supply projects, and a project for the dredging of Gorgan Bay were among the major projects inaugurated during president Raisi's visit to Gorgan.



## Annual exports to Iraq to hit \$12b: Official

Iran's exports to neighboring Iraq will reach \$12 billion by the end of the current Iranian year (March 19, 2024), said a member of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce. Talking to Fars news agency, Hamid Hosseini said Iran's exports

of products to Iraq in the first eight months of the current Iranian year showed a 35 percent growth compared to the same period last year.

Iran and Iraq enjoy high potential to boost the level of bilateral trade, he said, adding that

Iran has been the third exporting country to Iraq, after China and Turkey, over the past three years.

Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has embarked on setting up an office in Iraq to boost bilateral trade.

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran exported more than \$32 billion worth of products from March 21 to November 22, 2023, over \$6 billion of which was destined to neighboring Iraq.

# Iran, a pioneer in nanotechnology



Iran has made nanotechnology a priority in recent years, achieving remarkable success. The nanotechnology research website StatNano has ranked Iran as fourth in the world in nanotechnology publications. The number of scientific articles is deemed a significant parameter for measuring and comparing scientific development, according to StatNano that provides the global and regional ranking of the main indicators of nano science, technology, and industry. China was atop the rankings, followed by the United States and India, wrote Press TV. International entities have acknowledged Iranian contributions to the field. In February 2022, the American Institute of Physics published a scholarly article on the use of nanomaterials for cancer treatment by Iranian scientists. Among Iran's nanotechnology products, 42% are related to construction, 17% to petroleum, and

13% to automobile manufacturing. Nanotechnology refers to industrial production from atomic and molecule-sized matter. It leverages the properties of nanoparticles into a wide range of applications spanning a vast number of industries. Key accomplishments in the field of nanotechnology can be seen across a wide variety of engineering, energy and medical sectors. The field is important because it is changing the world. It is a broad discipline that includes diverse scientific fields such as surface science, molecular biology, molecular engineering, organic chemistry, energy storage, and semiconductor physics. Many experts believe that nanotechnology will bring about a new era of productivity and wealth, and this is reflected in the growth in public investment in technologies and research over the past two decades. Nanotechnology has become one of the pillars

of modern scientific research. The evolution of nano-based products and nanomaterials in the past few years has immensely benefited the entire economy and society.

Over the last two decades, the world has observed a steady increase in the number of industries producing nano-based products and the number of countries promoting nanotechnology. There is a continuous increase in the number of patents registered under nanotechnology worldwide. More importantly, the ratio of nanotechnology to nominal GDP has increased significantly, suggesting that the contribution of nanotechnology to World GDP has increased. Nanotechnology has also played a key role in new job creation.

Many developing nations such as Brazil, India, the Philippines, Chile, Mexico, and South Africa are emerging as frontrunners in nanotechnology research. Iran is a success story, having established government-funded programs and research institutes to push the envelope of nanotechnology. The Islamic Republic initiated its national nanotechnology development plan referred to as "Future Strategy" in 2005, after being advised by several scholars about the impact that the technology could have on its wealth and economy. State planners decided that developing nanotech-

nology could help Iran address its chronic economic woes resulting from US sanctions and mismanagement.

Nanotechnology can help Iran renovate the industries which are using old tech-

nologies and make them competitive. The field is also best placed to halt the emigration of professionals from the country. High efficiency, convenience, and the low price of nanotechnology products can boost

demand and create a high level of satisfaction. Nanotechnology is also crucial to sustainable economic development.

Over the past few years, doctoral courses related to nanotechnology have been

established in 23 Iranian universities in such fields as nanochemistry, nanophysics, nanomaterials and nanomedicine. Also, 66 universities accept students for a master's degree program in nanotechnology.

Date: 1402/10/02 - No.: 55/02/24482

**INVITATION TO ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER**  
First Announcement  
**AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY**

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, affiliated to Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad of I.R of Iran, is considering the purchase of the below items of technical, through one step international tender.

NO	Name	PACKING	Quantity/ KG
1	Deltamethrin Tech Min 98.5 pct.	50 kg drums	1800
2	Cypermethrin Tech Min 90 pct.	50 kg drums	13500

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from **Saturday** dated 23/12/2023 until **Wednesday** dated 27/12/2023 (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of IRI. Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 35803978226350065000000000000006.

The bidders are requested to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on **Saturday** dated 27/1/2024 (during official working hours) to our security office located on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on **Sunday** dated 28/1/2024 at 14:00 with the presence of bidder's representatives at our purchasing committee (9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, Fourth Alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

We would like to emphasize that the value of the bid bond amount must be only submitted by the bidders in bank guarantee as follows:

- ① € 6487 for Deltamethrin Tech Min 98.5 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 1986653102
- ② € 8566 for Cypermethrin Tech Min 90 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 2623192411

- ▶ The bid bond value for each of the items should be in Euro or in equal value of any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on the exchange rate of Telegraphic Transfer of the basic and essential commodities on CBI's ETS website, [www.fxmarketrate.cbi.ir](http://www.fxmarketrate.cbi.ir), on 9/12/2023
- ▶ The bidders are also permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial.
- ▶ After approval of ASSC's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as the bid bond.

For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

Public relations and international affairs of agricultural support services company

1626644-3720



# Art of Giveh-making is fading in Mahallat

## Iranica Desk

The production of handicrafts is a high-return small business. With the addition of new ideas, it has the potential to attract a large number of customers and generate a suitable income. Because these art forms intertwine with history and originate from past generations, they are deeply rooted in the identity of the people of each region. Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to preserving and reviving these traditional crafts.

The city of Mahallat in Markazi Province is renowned for its flowers, stones, and recreational attractions, making it a popular destination for travelers and tourists. While visitors often purchase sweets and yogurt as souvenirs of their journey, in the past, the range of souvenirs available in Mahallat was much more diverse. According to numerous sources and books dedicated to the region, the craft of *Giveh*-making, a type of traditional Iranian footwear, was once a common occupation in the city. Many tourists would buy *giveh* as a memento of their trip or as a valuable souvenir.

Although currently the production of *giveh* in Mahallat is not as extensive as it used to be, many families depend on this craft for their livelihood. *Giveh* was once commonly worn by a significant portion of the population, including villagers, tribespeople, farmers, and even urban communities.

Unfortunately, with changing fashion trends and the introduction of modern shoe designs, the demand for *giveh* has gradually declined. As a result, many *giveh* artisans have abandoned this art form in favor of other occupations.

However, the cultural significance and historical value of *giveh* should not be overlooked. Efforts should be made to preserve and revive this unique craft. By doing so, we can ensure that the heritage and traditions of Mahallat are preserved for future generations to admire and appreciate.

In the winding alleys of the city's old bazaar, surrounding the main square, where the old-world charm still lingers, one can find small, traditional workshops dedicated to knife-making, samovar craftsmanship, and lamp artistry. However, amidst this nostalgic backdrop, there is a noticeable absence of *giveh*-making shops.

Ismael Qorbani, an esteemed veteran shopkeeper in the city, reminisced about the past when many of the artisans along a particular neighborhood street were *giveh*-makers. He recalled how, with the streets less altered and the water streams more abundant, these skilled craftsmen would sit outside their shops, immersing their feet in the water as they skillfully sewed the intricate *givehs*. Sadly, with the passing of that generation the art has dwindled.

Qorbani explained that in earlier times, due to the absence of modern footwear, people predominantly chose felt *givehs*, which were meticulously hand-sewn, leading to a high demand for the craft. Jaber, a veteran artisan with a long history of *giveh*-making and shoe repair, reflected on his 50 years of dedication to crafting shoes. However, he lamented that the diminishing availability of essential raw materials such as leather, coupled with declining consumer interest, has rendered *giveh*-making unviable in today's market.

Another craftsman, Reza Ebrahimi, sat amidst his modest shop filled with an assortment of bags, shoes, shoe straps, and repair supplies. Recounting the golden age of *giveh*-making, he fondly remembered the days when eager customers would queue up to acquire *givehs*, often placing orders in advance. Ebrahimi attributed the decline of this traditional craft to the scarcity of raw materials and diminishing investments.

"I have dedicated over 50 years to *giveh*-making but, regrettably, I had to relinquish the craft eight years ago. My father was also part of the hat-making profession, which, like *giveh*-making, has faded into obscurity," he rued.

Highlighting the durability of *givehs* as an advantage, Ebrahimi emphasized how these shoes, crafted from high-quality materials, proved resilient even when worn all day by farmers and nomads immersed in difficult labor. Recalling the thriving era of *giveh*-making, he noted that in the past there were over a hundred skilled artisans scattered across the neighborhoods, each bustling with activity.

"During the prime of *giveh*-making, numerous people improved their craft in every neighborhood. Multiple workshops dotted this street, to the extent that when *giveh*-makers journeyed to Isfahan in pursuit of raw materials, this street lay deserted," he concluded wistfully. Speaking about the tremendous effort required to make *givehs*, Ebrahimi explained: "It was a laborious process to sew and prepare just one pair of *giveh* in a day. Typically, *giveh*-making was a winter activity, with customers coming to purchase them in the spring and summer.

This ancient art is at risk of disappearing, and if current trends continue, not only will *giveh* production decline, but the traditional knowledge and skills associated with it will also be lost. It's important to recognize that traditional *giveh*, lacking innovation, may struggle to compete with modern shoes. Therefore, it's crucial to reconsider the color and design of *givehs*, and providing good support, while maintaining their traditional structure to appeal to a wider audience, particularly the younger generation.

Revitalizing and modernizing *giveh* production could provide opportunities for small businesses in this sector. Additionally, highlighting the health benefits of *giveh*, particularly for foot health, could further drive demand for them. While *giveh*, as a handmade product, may not be suited for mass production in the shoe industry, it can still thrive as a practical and valuable item within the realm of handicrafts."



## Visit harmony and history in Isfahan Music Museum



alibaba.ir

Music speaks for souls. No matter where you come from, you will understand the joy, fear, bravery, happiness, and sadness of music as it's an international language for all.

The Isfahan Music Museum is a perfect place to get to know how Persians have spoken in this unique way by their very own musical instruments throughout history. It is an absolute must-visit destination for music enthusiasts and individuals captivated by Persian culture.

Nestled in the city of Isfahan, which is renowned for its artistic and cultural richness, this museum boasts an extensive collection of traditional Iranian instruments, many of which are over 150 years old. Founded by two prominent musicians, Mehrdad Jeihooni and Shahriar Shokrani, the museum's collection comprises more than 300 instruments from various regions of Iran and other countries. The museum is divided into five sec-

tions, commencing with the Hall of National Instruments, which showcases a diverse array of traditional instruments commonly used throughout Iran. Visitors can learn about the characteristics and history of these instruments, some of which are the predecessors of modern musical instruments, such as the violin and guitar, surfiran.com wrote.

The second section, Hall of Reginal Instruments, showcases instruments which are less well-known but specific

to particular regions of Iran. Another section, the Home of Iranian Traditional Music, highlights famous Iranian musicians, with a particular focus on masters from Isfahan.

The fourth unique part of the museum is called the Instruments Factory, where visitors can observe how traditional instruments are crafted, from materials to assembly techniques. The final section is Home of Music, in which experienced musicians perform live,

and visitors can try playing some of these instruments themselves.

After exploring the museum, visitors can unwind in the courtyard cafés or browse through the gift shop for souvenirs. They can also take photographs with traditional Persian clothes and instruments. The Isfahan Music Museum is a testament to Iran's rich musical heritage and an outstanding opportunity for both novices and experts to immerse themselves in this captivating culture.



# Young Americans endorse end of Israel: Poll

## Your sons, your daughters are beyond your command



Two Columbia University student groups recently banned from campus for their support of Palestine march through New York, US.  
GETTY IMAGES

By Reza Raadfar  
Political analyst

### EXCLUSIVE

The months-long brutal war that rages in Gaza has been expanding for some time now, not to new battlefronts in the region but to the public spheres of almost every society around the world, and it should not be overlooked. The topic of Israel, once a subject that demanded uniformity in response, now pits children against their parents. Every Western, especially American parent, expects a bit of a rebellious phase in their adolescent children, but no one expected the strongest Western conviction, that there should be a state of Israel, to be shaken. However, this is actually what is happening.

A survey, conducted this week by Harvard-Harris polling, found 51% of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 said they believed in a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict was for "Israel to be ended and given to Hamas and the Palestinians." Only 32% said they believed in a two-state solution, and just 17% said other Arab states should be asked to absorb Palestinian populations, the New York Post reported. The figure was in stark contrast to other age groups, which all dramatically preferred a two-state

solution. Just four percent of Americans 65 and over said they felt Israel should be ended. While they are a minority in this case, decades of living on this planet have reinforced a belief in them that was summed up perfectly by a 78-year-old Iranian, "If a land is occupied, there can be no peace unless the occupier leaves the land."

What has divided American youths from their older fellow citizens? What has led them to call for an end to an occupying regime, the supporting of which has been a cornerstone of US policies for decades? Democrats and Republicans have come and gone, but no US president, however powerful and popular, has dared to even raise his voice against Israel over the years lest he meet a much harsher and definitely non-partisan backlash from his people.

The most obvious and easily substantiated answer is that Israel has shown its true colors in recent weeks. A previous poll conducted soon after the Hamas attack on October 7 found that only 26% of those asked held the view that Israel as a political entity should be eradicated. What has changed since then? Israel launched the most vicious attack on civilian lives that American youths have most likely ever seen, documented in heart-wrenching photos and videos. This was followed by a series of bigoted, supremacist talks

from Israeli political figures that raised doubts about the morality of letting such an entity be free from oversight, above international laws, and unconditionally backed by the most powerful countries in the world.

These have all been laid bare to be seen and judged by all. Long gone are the times when the masses could only see what statesmen wanted them to see in the mainstream media. This is arguably the age when the masses are becoming more aware that they have the power to force their statesmen to rally behind them, and it doesn't have to be the other way around.

It should be noted that American youths are in an advantageous position that is not shared with many, especially if we search around the world. They have greater access to news as everything gets translated into English — even though some social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have chosen to crack down hard on pro-Palestinian content since October 7. In addition, their freedom of speech is supposed to be protected, and it is in many cases, but there have been countless cases where even liking a pro-Palestinian post on a platform has ended a career.

More importantly, despite not having the same ethnicity or religion as Palestinians, many young Americans

side with the oppressed Palestinians because they do not feel they owe anything to the side they clearly see as the oppressor in the Gaza war — a full 67% of 18- to 24-year-olds said they believed Jews "should be treated as oppressors". When asked if "Israel is committing genocide against those in Gaza, or is it just trying to defend itself and eliminate Hamas," 60% of Americans aged 18–24 said Israel was committing genocide — a view held by just 37% of Americans overall.

Many senior citizens of Europe and the US feel that they owe the Jews the state of Israel on account of the Holocaust, and that this is the reason why they stand by Israel through all of its atrocities. Mark Penn, the chairman of the Harris Poll that was mentioned here, is one such senior. He says, "Young people are far removed from the horrors of the Holocaust and even 9/11. They don't understand Israel's history and its creation by a United Nations vote of two-thirds of members nearly 75 years ago, and so they parrot empty catchphrases about decolonization." To him, the necessity of supporting Israel because of the Holocaust is one of "the most basic facts" that American "high schools and universities have failed to teach our young people".

These are bold claims. Let's see how they stand against what we know of

Mark Penn. This will be a short case study of senior Americans, who, according to the recent poll by Penn's company, side overwhelmingly with Israel.

Mark Penn was born to a Lithuanian immigrant father in New York in 1954, some 10 years after the latest date that is associated with the Holocaust and six years after the infamous creation story that he told. He used to poll classmates about sex and drugs. "I'm the only person that almost got thrown out of school for a poll," he told Adage website with a chuckle. Once a prominent adviser to both Bill and Hillary Clinton, he has changed tune, defended Donald Trump, and now backs the controversial Republican presidential candidate Ron DeSantis.

So, he himself remembers neither the Holocaust nor the UN vote that partitioned Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state. It can be deduced that those who "parrot empty catchphrases" are Penn and others of his generation who criticize the open-mindedness of the pro-Palestinian youths. They are too tied down to their upbringing to stand on the right side of history.

On his last statement on the Israel-Palestine war on January 31, 1970, philosopher Bertrand Russell aptly observed, "To invoke the horrors of the past to justify those of the present is gross hypocrisy."



# The moral bankruptcy of US policy in Palestine

By M. Reza Behnam  
Political scientist

Among the many memories I have of growing up in Tehran are of my elementary school days in Najji's class. On one occasion, she assigned a poem by the celebrated 13th century Iranian poet and mystic, Saadi Shirazi. Our class was asked to write our reflections on Saadi's poem from his book, the Gulistan (flower land). Little did I know then of the relevance of his poem to our world today; he wrote (in translation):

*"Human beings are members of a whole,  
In creation of one essence and soul.  
If one member is afflicted with pain,  
Other members uneasy will remain.  
If you have no sympathy for human pain,  
The name of human you cannot retain."*

Saadi's poem, which speaks to our common humanity, graces the entrance to the United Nations building in New York. His words are more poignant than ever as the world bears witness to the inhumanity of the "war" being waged in the Gaza Strip by the US-backed Israeli regime. Israel's slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza has exposed the glaring need for moral leadership from Washington and a change in policy toward Palestine and Israel.

It will be impossible to return to the status quo that existed before Hamas commandos broke free from their Israeli-constructed prison on 7 October.

Returning to "normal" won't work, because "normal" was the problem. For over 55 years, the United States has invested monetarily, militarily and morally in a morally bankrupt Israeli regime. Its unwavering support for it has created disorder and chaos in the Middle East.

The Palestinian fight for survival and quest for freedom and self-determination can no longer be suppressed and ignored; accords between Persian Gulf Arab dictatorships and apartheid Israel cannot go forward and Israel cannot continue to be given free rein to brutalize Palestinians and annex all of Palestine. The political landscape Washington has envisioned for the region, with Israel as its anchor, has been shattered by the devastation Israel has created in Gaza under the false flag of security. Joe Biden, who promised if elected president to "restore the soul of America," showed no shame when he resumed "business as usual" with the anti-Palestinian, supremacist far-right regime that Benjamin Netanyahu had assembled to become prime minister in December 2022. In doing so, Biden helped mainstream Netanyahu's regime and signaled America's continued support regardless of its racist ideology.

With his embrace of Prime Minister Netanyahu in Tel Aviv on 18 October, Biden has given his, and thereby America's, imprimatur to Israel to carpet bomb, conquer and carve up Gaza. The administration further implicated the United States in genocide by its veto on December 8 of a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza after more than

two months of destruction. This is the second time the United States has been the only opposing vote on such a resolution.

Ironically, in an October 20 letter to the US House of Representatives requesting funds for the war in Ukraine, the White House stated that the United States must send an unmistakable message that in the 21st century, "a dictator cannot conquer or carve up his neighbors' territory." In the 21st century, Russia may not, but Israel is allowed.

While the administration urges Israeli leaders to minimize civilian harm, it has provided them with thousands of weapons, including 15,000 bombs – over 5,000 with 2,000 pound warheads – 57,000 artillery shells and 2,000-pound bunker bombs to drop on the people of Gaza.

Israel has dropped more than 22,000 US-supplied bombs on Gaza in the first month and a half of the "war." Additionally, with Palestinian deaths at more than 20,000 and a reported 49,500 injured, on December 9, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, invoking emergency powers, approved the transfer of nearly 14,000 high explosive tank rounds to Israel at an estimated cost of \$106.5 million. In addition to bypassing Congress to supply the munitions, the administration has neglected continual assessments of whether Israel has been committing war crimes in Gaza.

Israel learned long ago that it could carry out its destructive policies, as it is doing today, with little fuss or repercussions from Washington. Its future immunity from punitive action was firmly established on June 8, 1967, during the Six-Day War.

On that date, off the Sinai coast, Israeli fighter jets and torpedo boats ferociously attacked the USS Liberty, killing 34 American servicemen and

wounding 171. Although the vessel was in international waters and flying a highly visible American flag, it was deliberately assaulted. Two Navy fighters who were on their way to help were ordered by then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to stand down, because in his words "President Johnson is not going to go to war or embarrass an American ally over a few sailors."

In his 1979 book, *Assault on the Liberty: The True Story of the Israeli Attack on an American Intelligence Ship*, Lt. Commander James M. Ennis, Jr., who survived the attack, stated that the cover-up and efforts to protect Israel began immediately. He recounted that a total news blackout was quickly imposed and surviving crew members were threatened with court martial, prison or worse if they ever repeated what happened. Interviewed in 1983, Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Chief of Naval Operations (1967-70) and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1970-74), stated, "I've never seen a President – I don't care who he is – stand up to them [Israelis]. It just boggles the mind.... If the American people understood what a grip those people [Israelis] have on our government, they would rise up in arms."

After 36 years of foot-dragging, in 2003, an Independent Commission of Inquiry, chaired by Admiral Moorer, concluded that Israel had committed an act of war against the United States, and that the initial official US Navy Court of Inquiry was a "cover-up without precedent in American naval history."

George Ball, Undersecretary of State and US Ambassador to the United Nations in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, astutely understood the consequences of Washington's failure to act, when he later wrote:

"The ultimate lesson of the Liberty

attack had far more import for Israel than the US, [because] Israel's leaders concluded that...if America's leaders did not have the courage to punish Israel for the murder of American citizens,...then their American friends would let them get away with almost anything."

And America has. George Ball's words are especially significant and relevant today. The question for US officials is what price they are willing to pay, domestically and internationally, to continue guaranteeing Israel's exemption from sanctions and international law.

Israel has shifted its brutal bombing attack into southern Gaza. Their goal appears to be to kill as many Palestinians as they can, forcing the rest into Northern Sinai.

A leaked document from the Israeli Intelligence Ministry explicitly states that the Israeli regime's desired outcome of the "war" is the transfer of all Palestinians from Gaza. It also points out the necessity of enlisting the United States in the process.

While Palestinians are struggling to stay alive under Israeli bombing, Biden administration officials, have been working to engineer the future of Gaza, demonstrating as it has in the past America's insular approach to the region.

Biden, Blinken and Brett McGurk, a senior official in Biden's Security Council, and the man chosen to lead the planning process for post-governance in Gaza, continue in the colonial mindset of Sykes-Picot – the imperious belief that external powers, in this case, the United States not Britain and France, have the right to decide the future for Palestinians.

Ironically, McGurk served as senior Director for Iraq during the Bush administration. As lead negotiator from 2005 to 2009, he played a key role in restructuring Iraq; policies

which eventually led to the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and to the chaos that has followed.

Since mid-October, McGurk and his team have been meeting with Palestinian Authority, Israeli and Arab representatives to plan for an "acceptable" Gaza, without Hamas. They envision a "revitalized" or "reformed" Palestinian Authority – opaque terms signifying a US-Israeli controlled PA – to ultimately take over Gaza.

The Biden administration has again raised the specter of the two-state solution in its "planning" for Gaza. For 56 years, Washington and Tel Aviv have used the mythical two-state solution to ensure that the Palestinians never realize their rights.

Biden has supported Israel's objective of eliminating Hamas; seen by Washington as an obstacle to their misguided two-state solution strategy. Administration officials have assumed that Hamas will be defeated, knowing full well that it cannot be destroyed without razing all of Gaza, which Washington seems willing to see happen.

Creating a Palestinian state made up of non-contiguous Bantustans – which was the core of past US-Israeli "peace" proposals – is not the solution. There is only one resolution to the historical injustices that Palestinians have endured for over 75 years. It is the complete dismantling of the Israeli apartheid regime and creation of a real democracy, with full equal rights and privileges for all. Israel is a dangerous and destabilizing force in the Middle East. It was formed in war and has lived and survived by perpetual warfare since its "declaration of independence" in 1948.

Militarism and war are embedded in and have shaped Israel's political culture. Without a constitution to establish fixed borders, it has been able to continue its ruthless "settler" colonial project in Occupied Palestine, Syrian Golan Heights, and in southern Lebanon from 1982, until expelled by Lebanon's Hezbollah in 2000.

The United States has had no qualms in financing and shielding a militaristic Israel. American dollars are the sinew of Israel's occupation and wars. And in Gaza today, without US support, Israel would be fighting a war of survival on two or three fronts.

Gaza has concentrated our attention, like it or not, on who we are as a people. In service to Israel, the United States has mortgaged the country's moral and ethical values. Its politicians have instead become dependent on florid and empty human rights rhetoric.

The Biden administration has forfeited America's political and moral standing on the world stage when it threw its full weight behind Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinian people. It is doubtful that America's international image and stature can be restored until we come to understand and act upon the words of the poet written centuries ago – all humans are members of a whole, of one soul and the pain of one is the pain of all.

*This is a lightly revised version of an article that first appeared in the Palestine Chronicle.*





## Nassaji to name Spanish Alcaraz as new manager

### Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Nassaji Mazandaran will unveil Lucas Alcaraz as the new head coach in the coming days after an agreement with the Spaniard over a year-and-a-half contract.



Ex-Nassaji manager Seyyed Mahdi Rahmati stepped down from his role in the aftermath of last Tuesday's 4-0 away loss to Esteghlal – a seventh defeat in 12 top-flight outings, which left the northern Iranian club second from bottom in the table with nine points.

The domestic cup champion in 2022, Nassaji was one of the three Iranian clubs in this season's AFC Champions League but a third-place finish in Group D saw Rahmati's men fail to progress to the last-16 round in their debut campaign.

A former manager of a number of teams in his home country – including Granada, Racing Santander, Levante, and Almeria – Alcaraz was last in charge of Unión Deportiva Ibiza before parting ways with the Spanish third-tier club in June after 26 games on the bench.

"Nassaji is a top team in Iran and I'm so excited for the new job in this team and country," Alcaraz told Spanish newspaper GranadaDigital.

The 57-year-old coach was appointed to the Algeria role in April 2017 but four defeats in seven matches and the failure in qualifying for the 2018 World Cup brought his reign to an end in October that year.

LALIGA

## Asian Youth Chess Championships: Iranian boy Kakavand crowned under-10 champion



ASIAN CHESS FEDERATION

### Sports Desk

Iran's Ramtin Kakavand grabbed a second gold medal at the Asian Youth Chess Championships in Al Ain, the United Arab Emirates, on Thursday, walking away with the ultimate prize of the boys' under-10 standard contests. Having claimed the blitz title of

the age class earlier in Al Ain, Kakavand shared the spoils with Syrian Talab Rami in the ninth and the final round to finish atop the standard table with 7.5 points.

Russian Arseny Kleschevnikov – representing the FIDE team – and Mazen Fandi of Syria finished equal on seven points but were separated by the tie-

breaks to take the silver and bronze medals of the event respectively.

Kakavand's triumph took Iran's medal haul to six at the 25th edition of the tournament – held across six age groups in the standard, rapid, and blitz categories.

Iranian boys Mohammad-Taha Arkak (under-8), and Seyyed

Kan'an Pourmousavi (under-12) settled for a couple of blitz bronzes, while Niusha Mohammadi won a girls' bronze in the under-14 class of the event.

In the rapid chess contests, Roshia Akbari won another bronze for the country, standing on the third podium of the girls' under-12 competitions.

## 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

Second Announcement نوبت دوم

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 and 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: 72,500,000,000 (seventy two billion five hundred million Iranian Rials)
- For Lot 2: 75,000,000,000 (seventy five billion Iranian Rials)

Fars Water and Wastewater Company (FWWC)

Address: Secretariat Office, First Floor, 4<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:pmu.abfafars2023@gmail.com)

Website: [www.abfa-fars.ir](http://www.abfa-fars.ir)

## آگهی تدارک خصوصی (فراخوان مناقصه یک مرحله‌ای)

جمهوری اسلامی ایران

پروژه بهسازی بهداشت 6 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 بیمانگار ان واجد صلاحیت جهت تهیه، ساخت، آزمایش و راه اندازی 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 2، 4 کیلومتر خط انتقال 59 کیلومتر خطوط اصلی و فرعی و 5000 فقره انشعاب فاضلاب زونهای 9، 11 و 13 شبکه فاضلاب فسا
2	فسا	لات 2	اجرای 69 کیلومتر خطوط اصلی و فرعی و 8989 فقره انشعاب فاضلاب زونهای 5، 7 و 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 2019) صورت می‌پذیرد. کلیه متقاضیان 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 مراجعه نمایید.

متقاضیان 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.

متقاضیان 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 8037112) به نام شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس می‌باشد. متقاضیان می‌توانند اسناد مناقصه را از شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس در قبال ارائه رسید پرداخت وجه یاد شده دریافت نمایند.

پاکت‌های مهیور پیشنهادات بایستی حداکثر تا ساعت 11 صبح روز 1402/10/26 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 11:00 صبح روز 1402/10/26 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: 72,500,000,000 ریال (هفتاد و دو میلیارد و پانصد میلیون ریال)

لات 2: 75,000,000,000 ریال (هفتاد و پنج میلیارد ریال)

شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس

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# Amir-Abdollahian to Lavrov: Iran does not compromise with any party on its territorial integrity



This file picture shows an aerial view of Iran's Abu Musa Island in the Persian Gulf. ● REUTERS

## National Desk

The Iranian foreign minister, in a phone call with his Russian counterpart, emphasized that respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries is a fundamental principle in international relations, adding that Tehran does not compromise with any party on these issues.

In a reaction to a joint statement from several Arab countries and Russia about Iran's three Persian Gulf islands, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb are an integral part of Iran, IRNA reported.

Alluding to the positive and growing relations between Moscow and Tehran, he stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran rejects any claims in this regard from any party.

Sergei Lavrov regarded

Moscow-Tehran relations as strategic and emphasized that Russia has always respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He asserted that this official policy of Moscow should never be called into question.

He said that Russia explicitly highlighted respecting Iran's governance and territorial integrity in the final statement of the Morocco summit.

The remarks came two days after the sixth Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum in Morocco concluded with a statement reiterating the UAE's claim over the islands. The Russian delegation to the forum was led by the Russian foreign minister.

"The statement supported peaceful solutions and initiatives aiming to resolve the conflict through bilateral negotiations or the In-

ternational Court of Justice, according to international law and the UN Charter," the UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced.

Moscow had previously voiced its support for UAE's claim back in July during a joint summit between the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Russian Federation.

## Statement rejected as baseless

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman also dismissed the final statement of the forum on the three Iranian islands as "baseless and unacceptable," Press TV reported.

"The Iranian islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb, located in the blue waters of the Persian Gulf, eternally belong to Iran and are an inseparable part of the Islamic Republic of Iran's land," Nasser Kanaani stressed.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran does not consider its territorial integrity and sovereignty over the three islands negotiable and rejects any claim by any side on the issue and will not back down from its sovereignty and territorial rights in any way," he added.

The spokesperson underlined the policy of promoting ties with the neighboring countries and the need to respect the principle of good neighborliness.

He said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran asks all its northern and southern neighbors to take the actual and potential capacities at the bilateral and regional levels into account and take steps to boost ties and refrain from making and repeating certain rejected claims."

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will not hesitate to preserve its territorial integrity."

## Interference in Iran's affairs

In a separate message, Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, said on Thursday that the claims on the three Iranian islands was regarded as interference in Iran's internal affairs.

"The meeting was held in the presence of some Arabs, who are ignoring the fate of the Palestinians, and Russian experts in Morocco and issued a statement that has various flaws, the most important of which is interference in Iran's affairs," he said, condemning the statement.

The UAE, which has taken a "regrettable" stance on the Palestinians and backed Israel's killing of the oppressed people of Gaza, keeps bringing up this "baseless claim" of the three islands instead

of implementing practical measures to stop the Israeli onslaught in Gaza, he said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the rightful owner of the three islands, will closely watch the actions of those who wish to harm the national and regional interests and will respond accordingly," he said.

Velayati added that the islands' ownership "will not be affected by such poor meetings."

Calling on Russia to pay further careful attention to its stances regarding the Islamic Republic, the senior adviser said, "The strategic and friendly relations between Iran and Russia have not been achieved easily."

"In circumstances in which Russia is in a complex international situation, some positions of the Russian Foreign Ministry are regrettable," he

said, acknowledging that "although, some political pressures on Russia in the current complicated situation will cause it to damage its reputation in order to obtain a worthless point."

The three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs have historically been part of Iran, proof of which can be found and corroborated by countless historical, legal, and geographical documents in Iran and other parts of the world.

However, the United Arab Emirates has repeatedly laid claim to the islands.

The islands fell under British control in 1921, but on November 30, 1971, a day after British forces left the region and just two days before the UAE was to become an official federation, Iran's sovereignty over the islands was restored.

## International Desk

The Israel-Hamas war is pushing Gaza towards famine, the United Nations warned ahead of an expected Security Council vote Friday on a resolution to boost aid to the Palestinian territory but not call for a cease-fire.

Separate diplomatic efforts were also underway for a fresh pause in the worst-ever Gaza war, which was triggered by an unprecedented attack by Hamas fighters on Israel in October.

The entire population of Gaza faces "an imminent risk of famine", according to a UN-backed global hunger monitoring system on Thursday.

# UN warns war pushing Gaza to famine



"We have been warning for weeks that, with such deprivation and destruction, each day that goes by will only bring more hunger, disease and despair

to the people of Gaza," UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths posted on X, formerly Twitter.

The UN estimates 1.9 million Gazans are now dis-

placed, out of a population of 2.4 million.

On Friday, Israeli forces signaled they were widening their ground offensive with a new push into central Gaza.

As hopes faded for an imminent breakthrough in talks this week in Egypt aimed at getting warring Israel and Hamas to agree to a new truce, air strikes, artillery bombardments and fighting were reported across the Palestinian enclave.

Israel's military on Friday ordered residents of Al-Bureij, in central Gaza, to move south immediately, indicating a new focus of the ground assault that has already devastated the north of the Strip and made a series of incursions in the south.

## No functional hospital

The World Health Organization said on Thursday that northern Gaza has been left without a functional hospi-

tal due to a lack of fuel, staff and supplies.

Only nine out of 36 health facilities were partially functional in the whole of Gaza, according to the WHO. All these facilities are concentrated in the enclave's south. "There are actually no functional hospitals left in the north," Richard Peepers, WHO representative in Gaza, told reporters via video link from Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

## Soaring death toll

The war began on October 7 when Hamas fighters broke through Gaza's militarized border and killed around 1,140 people in Israel, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures. Palestinian fighters also abducted about 250 people.

But the soaring death toll during the Israeli military campaign of retaliation has drawn increasing international criticism, even from staunch ally the United

States. In its latest update on casualties, Gaza's Health Ministry said 20,057 Palestinians had been killed and 53,320 wounded in Israeli strikes since Oct. 7.

With aid workers running out of words to describe conditions in Gaza, the UN Security Council has been locked all week in negotiations over how to phrase a resolution about the war.

The latest draft seen by AFP calls for "urgent steps to immediately allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access, and also for creating the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities".

It does not call for an immediate end to fighting. Backed by its ally the United States, Israel has opposed any reference to a "cease-fire".

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US ambassador to the UN, told reporters that Washington would support the resolution if it "is put forward as is". Meanwhile, in phone call with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas, Russian President Vladimir Putin promised Friday to continue to supply the Gaza Strip with humanitarian aid and urged a peaceful resolution to fighting between Israel and Hamas.

The Kremlin said that Putin urged the "importance of a quick cessation of the bloodshed and the resumption of the political process".

With homes destroyed, people are living in crowded shelters and struggling to find food, fuel, water and medical supplies. Diseases are spreading, and communications

have been repeatedly cut.

After weeks of pressure, Israel approved the temporary reopening of the Kerem Shalom crossing on December 15 to enable aid deliveries directly to Gaza, rather than through the Rafah crossing from Egypt.

On Thursday, an Israeli strike hit the Palestinian side of Kerem Shalom, the crossings authority and the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory said.

The UN secretary-general's spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said aid movement via the crossing had been temporarily suspended following the "drone strike".

Dujarric's comments came after Israeli President Isaac Herzog said Israel could enable as many as "400 trucks a day" of aid and blamed the UN for failing to bring more. According to the UN, the number of aid trucks entering Gaza is well below the daily pre-war average.

On Thursday, military spokesman Daniel Hagari claimed Israeli troops have killed more than 2,000 Palestinian fighters since a one-week cease-fire ended on December 1. He did not elaborate on the basis of his figures.

According to Israel's military, the deaths of two more soldiers in Gaza brought to 139 the number killed since it began its ground assault on October 27. Hamas authorities said overnight strikes claimed several more lives across the territory.

Reuters and AFP contributed to this report.

**Mohammad Ali Rajabi**  
Cartoonist





## Iran, China strengthen cultural ties through museum collaboration



Hadi Mirzaei  
XINHUA

IRNA – In a bid to enhance cultural diplomacy and deepen historical ties, Iran and China signed a comprehensive agreement to boost cooperation in the field of museums and cultural exchanges.

The agreement was formalized during a meeting between Hadi Mirzaei, the director general of the General Office of Museums in the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, and China's Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Li Qun, who is also head of the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

The meeting facilitated discussions on fostering mutual understanding and collaboration in cultural heritage.

Mirzaei expressed gratitude for the efforts of Li Qun in organizing the event, emphasizing its significance in establishing a comprehensive collaboration between the two nations.

The agreement encompasses 24 joint projects aimed at promoting research, educational initiatives, and cultural exchanges to strengthen diplomatic ties, Mirzaei noted.

"The visit of our delegation to China aligns with Iran's cultural diplomacy policies and regional engagement strategies, promoting the ancient civilizations of the two nations," Mirzaei remarked.

Li Qun underscored the profound historical connections between Iran and China, dating back to thousands of years ago.

He highlighted the Silk Road as a historical route that not only facilitated trade but also fostered cultural exchange, leading to the development of unique artistic and technological achievements.

Li Qun further emphasized the importance of the upcoming museum delegation from Iran, set to visit China in January 2024.

He noted that the collaboration would focus on innovative digital museum displays, digital cultural products, and creative cultural methods within the museum sector. The expected exchange of ideas with Chinese experts is anticipated to enhance opportunities for the development of cultural organizations in both countries.

Moreover, Li Qun revealed that Iran has been designated as one of the four tourist destinations for Chinese travelers. He encouraged the Iranian delegation to witness the rich cultural and historical landmarks in Beijing and Chongqing, reflecting the longstanding friendship between the two ancient civilizations.

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# FM urges Ancient Civilizations Forum to address Gaza crisis

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian called upon the Ancient Civilizations Forum to utilize its potential to halt the ongoing crisis in Gaza.

Speaking at the seventh edition of the forum, Amir-Abdollahian condemned the atrocities in Gaza and the West Bank as a "great disgrace" in human history.

Amir-Abdollahian urged the Ancient Civilizations Forum to condemn these crimes and use all available resources to address the critical situation, emphasizing the need for the establishment of a war crimes tribunal.

He listed one of the missions of ancient civilizations to fight the discourse of supremacy, dominance, exclusivity and racism, and emphasized that the world today continues to suffer from the effects of the discourse of domination and violence, instrumental use of international principles and norms, and double standards. He underscored the significance of the forum's role in fostering a more cultural and peaceful world, considering inter-civilizational cooperation as a crucial element of soft power for member states. The foreign minister criticized the silence of some nations regarding the prolonged occupation of Gaza, emphasizing the importance of holding the "fake Israeli regime" accountable for its actions.

He condemned the killing and displacement of over tens of thousands people in Gaza and the

destruction of Islamic cultural and civilizational monuments by Israel.

He also condemned the insulting of holy books and the Holy Qur'an, urging responsible governments to play their roles in maintaining civilized, cultural, and religious interactions.

Also present at the forum, Iran's Deputy Tourism Minister Ali Darabi highlighted Iran's rich cultural heritage, spanning over 7,000 years and being among the top 10 countries on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Darabi spoke about the symbolic representation of Iranian heritage, such as the 54 Iranian caravanserais registered as world heritage, which depict art, architecture, environment, nature, seas, mountains, caves, valleys, urbanization, and civilization throughout different eras, from ancient Persia to the Qajar period.

The deputy tourism minister expressed hope that the forum would contribute to the development of international relations through cultural diplomacy.

Darabi stressed that culture is the best way for countries to engage with each other, and the cultural aspect takes precedence over other factors in bringing countries and civilizations closer.

He highlighted the unique role of ancient civilizations in interacting with all cultures, emphasizing cultural and natural diversity as integral to their existence. The Iranian representative ad-



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (c) speaks at the seventh edition of the Ancient Civilizations Forum held in Tehran on December 21, 2023.  
IRNA

vocated cultural dialogue to promote peace, democracy, tolerance, resilience, and sustainable development.

He noted that cultural heritage could unveil historical artifacts to prevent distortions and present the truth correctly, fostering peace and avoiding conflicts. Darabi concluded by stating that cultural heritage is linked to the identity and roots of every nation and society, and introducing it to the global community is a crucial mission of the Ancient Civilizations Forum.

He proposed the initiation of a project titled, "Countries' Meet-

ings Through Cultural Dialogue" to elevate the discourse and cultural flow in the global community.

Highlighting Iran's successful efforts in repatriating historical artifacts, Darabi expressed hope that member countries would collaborate on education, sharing successful experiences, archaeological exploration, museum management, and other aspects of cultural heritage.

He encouraged joint efforts in compiling and registering shared tangible and intangible heritage on the UNESCO World Heritage List, fostering collaboration be-

tween Iran and other Ancient Civilizations Forum members.

The seventh edition of the Ancient Civilizations Forum was held on December 21.

The forum, held under Iran's chairmanship, was attended by representatives of its members, including China, Greece, and Egypt, according to a statement by Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Ancient Civilizations Forum was jointly launched by Greece and China in April 2017, with 10 members, namely, China, Iraq, Egypt, Iran, Greece, Italy, Peru, Bolivia, Armenia, and Mexico.

## Excavations at 8,000-year-old site in Iran's Ardebil Province

Iranian historians shed light on the enigmatic origins of Ardebil, revealing a 1,500-year-old history that traces back to the reign of the Sassanid ruler, Firouz.

Situated as the administrative hub of its province, Ardebil's historical tapestry intertwines with pivotal eras, flourishing notably during the Sassanians, Abbasids, Great Seljuks and Safavids. Despite the veil of uncertainty shrouding its exact founding date, the city's rich heritage unravels a story that transcends time and civilizations, inviting exploration into its profound historical roots, Daily Sabah wrote.

While information about the ex-

act founding date of the ancient city Ardebil is not certain, there are many resources suggesting that Zarathustra, the founder of Zoroastrianism, lived there.

It is believed that Zarathustra wrote the Avesta on Mount Sabalan, located between Ardebil and Meshginshahr. Therefore, Mount Sabalan is considered sacred by Zoroastrians.

In this case, it is possible to trace the history of Ardebil, formerly known as Artavil, back to 2,500 years.

The city settlement of Shahar Yeri, located near Ardebil in Meshginshahr and dating back to approximately 8,000 years ago, is known as the oldest set-

tlement in the region.

The large stone structures in this historical area, reminiscent of tombstones, feature prominent owl figures.

In general, some of the stones depicting an owl landing on a tree branch also use the sign of a cross instead of a tree branch. Although the cross symbol on some of the stones seems to have been made later in terms of structure and shape, a closer examination reveals that some of them were originally like this. When viewed from above, the stones that initially seem randomly arranged follow a systematic order and are not randomly placed.

While the main outlines remain in the original form as discovered in excavations, stones found in the vicinity and transported to the area for preservation purposes are also displayed in the same area.

Excavation work is being conducted in the historical area. Archaeology expert Mesud Nakili, who spoke to an Anadolu Agency (AA) reporter about the historical site, stated that the Shahar Yeri archaeological site consists of 400 hectares.

Nakili explained that excavations began in 2003 when this area was discovered by a foreign

archaeologist, and they have been conducting excavation work on an area of approximately 1,000 square meters (10,760 square feet).

He explained: "We concluded that these stones were used for sacred and religious rituals due to their shapes and postures. We found about 500 stones with human figures on them and in front of these stones there are stones for placing offerings."

Nakili mentioned that they found pottery, jewelry and bones during the excavation and concluded that this location was a temple or a sacred area.

Regarding the absence of mouth structures in the human figures on the stones, Nakili said: "This signifies silence as an expression of respect. Therefore, it is an indication that this place is sacred."

Pointing out that some figures on the stones hold swords and that some of these swords lack scabbards, Nakili suggested that these figures may represent warriors.

Nakili mentioned the presence of a cave-like area just below the historical site and commented, "They would first cleanse themselves by performing ablutions in this area, then enter the temple to perform their rituals."

Nakili mentioned that there are two similar sites based on the positioning of the stones, located in France and Türkiye. However, he noted that the stones in those places are relatively few. Assessing the arrangement of the stones and the shapes of the corridors, Nakili said: "If we look at this, we see that they benefited from astronomy, and we understand that the movements of the large stone served as a sundial."

Nakili highlighted that approximately 500 similar sites exist in the region; however, unauthorized excavations have led to the destruction of the majority of them.

He also noted that their findings from the excavations led them to conclude that this region dates back to the Iron Age.

He mentioned that some of the historical artifacts found in the excavation area date back to the Chalcolithic period, around 4,000 to 5,000 years before the Common Era, and these artifacts are preserved in the Meshginshahr museum.

Historian Hadi Pejuhan, visiting the site, also stated that the oldest name for this historical area is "Pirazmiyan," indicating its ancient origins dating back to pre-Christian times.

