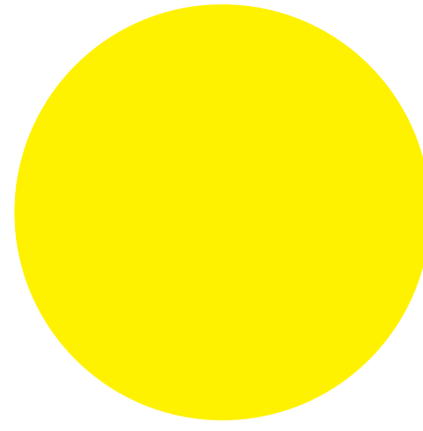


Iran's FM calls UN inaction on Gaza 'catastrophe of diplomacy of the century'

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# Iran Daily



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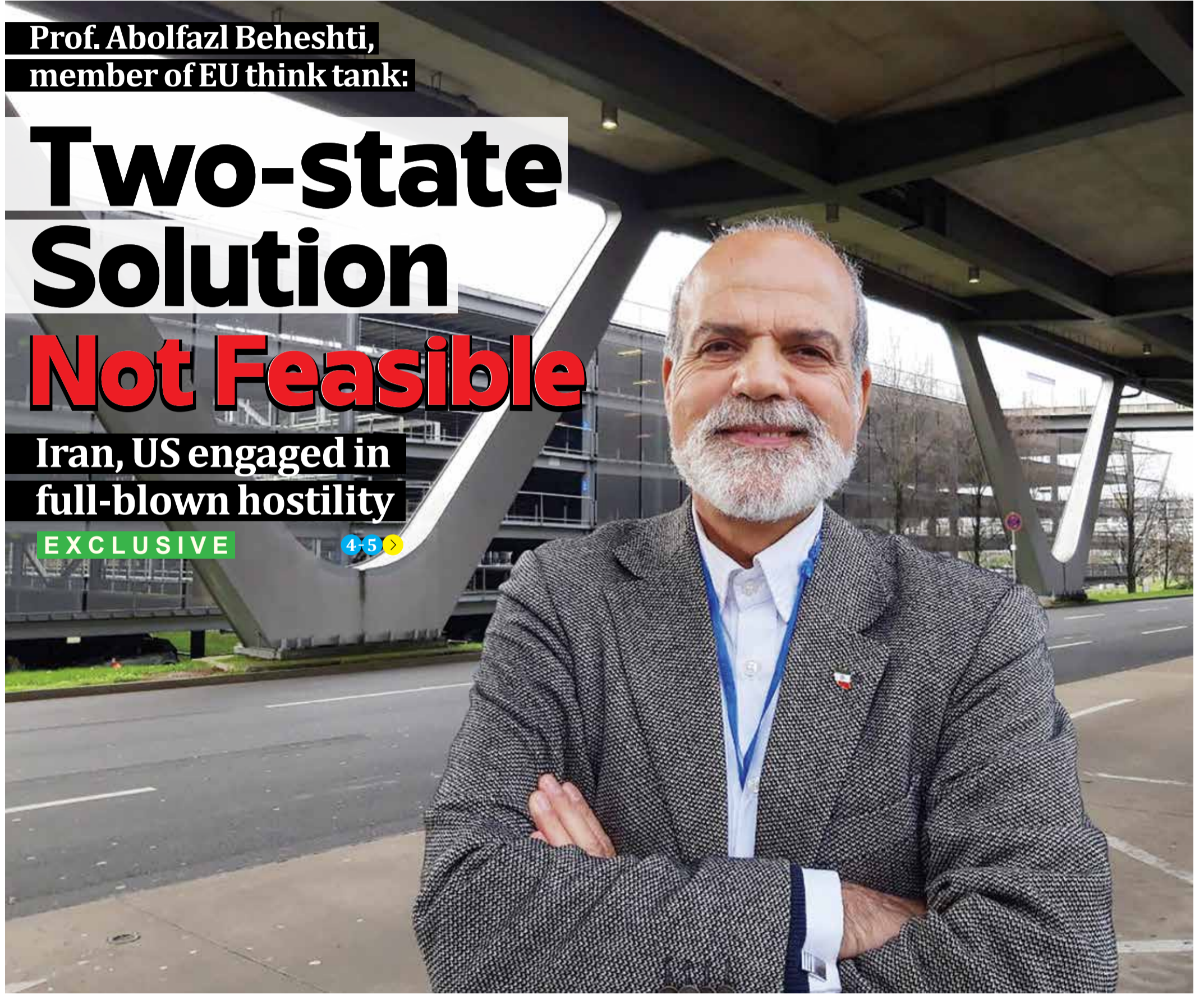
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Hamas, Israel downplay Biden's cease-fire remarks as 'premature', 'optimistic'

Hours after US President Joe Biden expressed hope that a cease-fire in Gaza could start by the beginning of next week, officials from Israel and the Palestinian resistance group slammed his comment as "premature" and "optimistic." Biden said on Monday he hoped a cease-fire in Gaza could start by next Monday, adding that Israel was ready to halt operations during the Muslim month of Ramadan as part of any deal.

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## Iran welcomes enhanced economic ties with countries: Minister

Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Abbas Aliabadi said Tehran welcomes the expansion of economic, commercial and industrial cooperation with countries.

Aliabadi made the call on Monday during separate meetings with his counterparts and officials from different countries, including Serbia, China, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq, Oman and Lebanon, on the sidelines of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 13th ministerial conference (MC13) held in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, Press TV wrote. In a meeting with the Chinese minister of commerce, Aliabadi hailed China as Iran's largest trade partner, and emphasized the importance of further expansion of relations in the economic sector.

The Chinese minister, for his part, welcomed promotion of economic ties with Iran and said Beijing has always supported and will continue to support Tehran's bid to join the World Trade Organization.

Iran has an observer status at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The country has officially submitted an application to join the international organization.

In the meeting with his Serbian counterpart, Aliabadi said as the chairman of the joint committee of Iran-Serbia cooperation, he is ready to play a role in the continuation of mutual cooperation.

The Serbian minister, for his part, invited Aliabadi to travel to his country to hold further talks about enhanced cooperation.

The WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference started in Abu Dhabi on Monday, with the participation of ministers from different countries across the world. The participants are scheduled to review the functioning of the multilateral trading system and take action on the future work of the WTO.



# Iran's oil sector economic growth doubles despite sanctions

Iran's oil sector witnessed a two-fold increase in its annual economic growth in autumn 2023, said the government's economic spokesman on Tuesday.

Seyyed Ehsan Khandouzi, who made the statement in a press conference, added the oil industry's growth reached 21.8 percent in the season, from 10.8 percent registered in autumn 2022, showing the country has largely succeeded in overcoming sanctions, reported Shana. The incumbent government has made

great efforts to neutralize sanctions since it took office in August 2021, the official underlined, praising the incumbent government's economic diplomacy and attention to foreign investment. Last week, Iran's Plan and Budget Organization (PBO) head, Davoud Manzour, said the country's economic growth in autumn 2023 stood at 5.1 percent if the oil sector's growth is included, and 2.5 percent if excluded. According to Khandouzi, Iran's non-oil trade with 15 neighboring states during

the 11 months of the current Iranian year (starting March 21, 2023) hit \$55 billion, 2.5 percent higher than the figure during the corresponding period in the preceding year.

Foreign investments made since the current administration took over has exceeded \$11 billion, said the spokesman, adding the oil sector has attracted \$4.8 billion, the industrial sector \$3.8 billion, the services sector \$617 million, and the agricultural sector \$580 million.

## Tehran-Moscow gas cooperation planned: Ambassador



Iran-Russia cooperation in the gas sector has been planned and could come to fruition, said Iran's ambassador to Moscow, in remarks carried by Shana News Agency on Tuesday.

Kazem Jalali said Iran could turn Iran into a gas hub in partnership with Russia thanks to the two countries' top global positions in terms of gas reserves and production.

Jalali said the in the past there were doubts that Tehran and Moscow could ever work together in the economic fields but this turned out to be wrong in recent years.

"When I was departing for Moscow to begin my diplomatic mission, some people told me that Iran and Russia could never cooperate in the economic areas as energy is the pillar of their economy and the two states are rivals. To me, this is a wrong notion as economic cooperation is not limited to the energy sector and the two countries can cooperate in many fields," he said.

The theory proved wrong in practice, underlined the ambassador, referring to the current cooperation between Iran and Russia in various sectors.

"If the two countries had not faced the five barriers of marketing, transit, logistics, monetary and banking, and customs problems, bilateral relations would have expanded in many areas."

As per the Economy Ministry, Russia made the highest investments in Iran in 2023, said the envoy, adding that the investments had been mainly attracted by the oil industry.

## Owji calls for gas conservation as cold weather persists

Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji on Tuesday asked people to conserve gas as a cold spell continued to grip the northern parts of the country. The minister said provinces in the northern half might experience a drop in gas pressure over a surging demand for fuel in the wake of the extreme cold

wave, calling for customers to save energy by turning heating systems down a few degrees, wearing warm clothes at home and in the workplaces, and using thick curtains, Shana News Agency reported.

He added the government had already ordered the ministries and public organizations to optimize energy consumption.

Owji noted that all Oil Ministry offices had set the thermostats between 18°C and 21°C.

### Record high gas consumption

Gas consumption in Iran's household and commercial sectors reached 665 million cubic meters on Monday, setting a daily all-time high, according to the head of the Gas Network Management Center.

Gholamreza Koushki said on Tuesday that during the coming days daily gas consumption would hit 680 million cubic meters due to ongoing cold snap.



# Bitcoin scorches past \$57,000 as big buyers flock in

Bitcoin hit a two-year high on Tuesday, on track for its biggest two-day rally this year, as signs large players were buying the cryptocurrency, while smaller rival ether topped \$3,200 for the first time since 2022.

Bitcoin has rallied more than 10% in two sessions, helped by Monday's disclosure from crypto investor and software firm MicroStrategy, opens new tab that it had recently purchased about 3,000 bitcoins for an outlay of \$155 million, Reuters reported. The original and largest cryptocurrency by market

value has also been buoyed recently by the approval of bitcoin-owning exchange-traded funds (ETFs) in the United States. On Monday, trading volumes in several of the funds spiked and crypto-linked firms rallied too, in contrast to nervous broader markets.

Bitcoin rose by as much 4.3% to \$57,036, its highest since late 2021. It was last up 3.6% at \$56,636, while ether rose by as much as 2.7% to \$3,273, its highest since April 2022.

"There's only so much supply ... but the demand un-

leashed by the US spot ETFs seems to be relentless," said Justin d'Anethan, head of partnerships in Asia at Keyrock, a digital asset market maker.

A major incentive right now is the bitcoin halving event in April. This process is designed to slow the release of bitcoin, whose supply is capped at 21 million - of

which 19 million have already been mined - by cutting the reward for producing the tokens in half.

Bitcoin has gained 32% in value so far in February, heading for its largest one-month gain since January 2023, and momentum is building beyond the investment community.

Social media platform Reddit, which on Feb. 22 filed to list its shares on the New York Stock Exchange, said it had invested a small portion of its excess cash reserves in bitcoin, opens new tab, ether and matic, the native

token of the Polygon network, as a form of payment for sales of certain virtual goods.

Ether has risen at an even faster pace this month, heading for a 41% gain.

Anticipation is growing among market participants over the possible regulatory approval of spot ether ETFs, which has helped this latest rise in price.

"The prospect of a spot ethereum ETF is a further development for traders and investors alike after the recent launch of a variety of bitcoin ETFs," DailyFX se-

nior strategist Nick Crawley said in a note.

"It represents a further maturation of the cryptocurrency market and a recognition of ethereum's role in the future of cryptocurrencies within the financial system." Shares of crypto exchange Coinbase, opens new tab rose 5.2% in U.S. premarket trading, while bitcoin miners Marathon Digital, opens new tab and Riot Platforms, opens new tab climbed 8.3% and 4.5%, respectively. The largest bitcoin ETF Grayscale Bitcoin Trust, opens new tab rose 4.3%.



Iranica Desk

*Dar ul-Funun - nestled in the vibrant heart of Tehran, amidst bustling streets and iconic landmarks, stands a former institution that holds profound significance in the history of Iran's modernization. Translating to "Abode of Sciences," Dar ul-Funun was the pioneering educational cornerstone of Persia, a visionary endeavor aimed at bridging the gap between traditional Islamic teachings and the rapidly evolving knowledge of the Western world. Established in 1851 during the Qajar dynasty, Dar ul-Funun was the brainchild of Nasser al-Din Shah, and his trusted adviser Mohammad Taqi Khan Amir Kabir. Recognizing the imperative to modernize and fortify the nation, they envisioned an institution that would introduce Persia to the latest advancements in science, technology, and modern thought, while safeguarding the rich cultural heritage and Islamic traditions that defined the country, amazingiran.media wrote.*

From its inception Dar ul-Funun broke new ground with its innovative curriculum and educational approach. Unlike traditional *madrasas* (Islamic schools) that focused predominantly on religious studies and classical texts, Dar ul-Funun introduced a diverse array of subjects, including mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography, military sciences, and foreign languages. The institution's faculty comprised a remarkable blend of Persian scholars and European instructors, fostering a unique environment where East and West converged. This cross-cultural exchange nurtured an atmosphere of intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness, encouraging students to challenge conventional wisdom and embrace new ideas. The physical embodiment of Dar ul-Funun's progressive vision was its remarkable architecture, a harmonious fusion of traditional Persian styles and European influences. The main building, designed by Russian architect Nikolai Shchilin, boasted an imposing neoclassical façade, adorned with intricate tilework and arched entrances, reflecting the grandeur and ambition of the institution. Beyond the main building, the



IRNA

## Dar ul-Funun, beacon of knowledge and progress in Iran



darolfonoon.oerp.ir



IRNA

Dar ul-Funun complex comprised a rich tapestry of architectural styles, each element contributing to the overall harmony and functionality of the institution. Traditional Persian gardens, with their intricate water features and lush greenery, provided a serene oasis for contemplation and study, while the modern classrooms and laboratories were equipped with the latest technological advancements of the time. This seamless integration of traditional and modern elements symbolized the very ethos of Dar

ul-Funun - a harmonious fusion of the old and the new, a celebration of Persia's rich cultural heritage while embracing the progressive ideals that would shape the nation's future. The impact of Dar ul-Funun extended far beyond its physical boundaries, serving as a catalyst for social, cultural, and intellectual transformation in Persia. The institution's alumni played pivotal roles in shaping the country's modernization, contributing to diverse fields such as diplomacy, journalism, medicine, and engineering.

Many influential figures who later shaped Iranian history were educated at Dar ul-Funun, including renowned writers, poets, and intellectuals such as Mirza Fat'hali Akhundzadeh, Mirza Malkom Khan, and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani. These visionaries, inspired by the progressive ideals encountered at Dar ul-Funun, challenged traditional norms and advocated for social and political reform, laying the foundation for modern Iran. Moreover, Dar ul-Funun played a crucial role in the development of Iran's modern education sys-

tem until 1978, serving as a model for subsequent institutions that embraced a blend of traditional and modern curricula. Its influence can be traced in the establishment of universities and specialized colleges throughout the country, cementing its legacy as a pioneering force in the pursuit of knowledge and progress. Now a museum, Dar ul-Funun stands as a cherished cultural and historical landmark, a testament to the resilience of the Iranian people and their enduring quest for knowledge and progress. While the institution

has evolved over the centuries, adapting to the changing needs of society, its essence remains rooted in the pioneering spirit that gave birth to it. Recognizing the immense significance of Dar ul-Funun, concerted efforts have been made to preserve and restore this architectural and educational gem. In collaboration with international organizations and expert conservationists, the Iranian government has undertaken a comprehensive restoration project, meticulously reviving the intricate tilework, carvings, and structural elements that have withstood the test of time. Additionally, educational initiatives and public programs have been implemented to raise awareness about the historical and cultural importance of Dar ul-Funun, fostering a sense of pride and appreciation among Iranians and international visitors alike.

As you step through the gates of Dar ul-Funun, you will be transported back in time, enveloped by the echoes of intellect and curiosity that once resonated within its walls. This iconic institution stands as a testament to the enduring power of knowledge and the indomitable human spirit that continuously seeks to push boundaries and embrace progress.

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and globalization, Dar ul-Funun serves as a timeless reminder of the importance of embracing change while preserving cultural identity. Its legacy challenges us to strike a delicate balance between tradition and modernity, to seek wisdom from diverse sources, and to foster an environment where intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness can thrive.

As you wander through the corridors and courtyards of Dar ul-Funun, you will be inspired by the visionaries who walked these very paths, their footsteps echoing through the ages as a reminder of the transformative power of education and the pursuit of knowledge.

Whether you are a student seeking inspiration, a scholar delving into the rich tapestry of Iranian history, or a traveler in search of cultural enrichment, Dar ul-Funun promises an unforgettable and enlightening experience. So come, step into this hallowed institution, and let the timeless wisdom of its halls guide you on a journey of discovery, enlightenment, and personal growth.

## Preserving heritage of East Azarbaijan Province's, a path to prominence

Iranica Desk

East Azarbaijan Province is a cold region located in the northwest of Iran. This land has a history intertwined with revolutionary figures like Sattar Khan and Baqer Khan, who are revered by the local community. The cuisine in East Azarbaijan is known for its robust, intricate, and vibrant flavors. The province gets its name from "Azar," which means fire, symbolizing the necessity of warmth to survive the harsh winters in this rugged terrain.

It is an ancient region, centered around the historic and picturesque city of Tabriz, which has proudly served as Iran's capital for an extended period, renowned for its cultural heritage and the plethora of historical buildings and houses within the



Constitution House of Tabriz  
wikipedia.org

province. Ahmad Hamzehzadeh, the director general of East Azarbaijan Province's Cultural Heri-

tage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, noted that there are over 4,000 historical monuments dating back



Hariri House of Tabriz  
balad.ir

to Tabriz's 500-year history. However, due to budget constraints within the Cultural Heritage Ministry, the pro-

vincial administration alone cannot adequately protect and restore these structures. The involvement of the private sec-

tor in the reconstruction, restoration, and transformation of historical sites into diverse tourist attractions plays a crucial role in establishing this ancient province as a prominent tourism destination in the region.

He said that utilizing the beauty and historical significance of the houses of East Azarbaijan Province, which enjoy a well-established global reputation, is crucial for promoting all aspects of tourism in the region, including handicrafts, intangible cultural heritage, and diverse tourism sectors.

"We are committed to effectively showcasing East Azarbaijan Province and contributing to the transformation of this historic area of our beloved Iran into a prominent tourism destination in the region."

**Prof. Abolfazl Beheshti,  
member of EU think tank:**

# Two-state solution not feasible

**Iran, US engaged in  
full-blown hostility**



By Ebrahim Beheshti  
Staff writer

**INTERVIEW  
EXCLUSIVE**

Almost five months have passed since the war in the Gaza Strip broke out and Israel started committing genocide in the enclave, and there's still no clear outlook on the future of Palestine and the war-torn strip.

Despite numerous international efforts and negotiations, even achieving a cease-fire has proven elusive. Amidst this, the United States has thrown its support behind the so-called two-state solution, which envisions the formation of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. But is this plan achievable? Would there be enough pressure on Israel to stomach an independent Palestinian state? What impact has the Gaza war had on the tumultuous relationship between Iran and the US? What is the reasonable option for reducing tensions between Washington and Tehran? These are some of the questions that were discussed with Abolfazl Beheshti, who is a professor of International Relations and Energy Economy and a member of a European Union think tank in Brussels, Belgium. Years of study, tutorship, and residence in Europe have made Professor Beheshti's analyses of the assessments of Europeans and Americans from the Middle East crisis more concrete and accurate.



Abolfazl Beheshti, a professor of International Relations and Energy Economy and a member of a European Union think tank in Brussels, Belgium  
IRAN DAILY



The Jewish West Bank settlement of Psagot (foreground houses with red roofs) adjacent to the West Bank city of Ramallah, in 2000  
EYAL WARSHAVSKY/AP

**The recent months-long war in Gaza seems to have put West Asia on the brink of new developments. Where do you think these developments will take us?**

The reality is that previously, events used to occur once every ten years, but in recent years, we have witnessed a major upheaval almost every year. In 2022, we saw the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and in 2023, we witnessed the Israel-Gaza war. I am

confident that after the end of this war, the situation in Gaza will not return to what it was before, and Palestinian forces will undoubtedly establish a new form of governance in Gaza. The more significant transformation is that if the war ends up weakening Israel's position and replacing Netanyahu and his cabinet, the formation of a Palestinian state will naturally be pursued with more momentum.

It should be noted that the weakening

of Israel's position effectively destabilizes the normalization process with Saudi Arabia unless a Palestinian state is established, which has its own specific challenges. If the war concludes in favor of Hamas, the position of resistance forces will also be strengthened. If, on the other hand, the Israelis get their wish and Hamas gets destroyed — which is highly unlikely — the position of resistance forces in the Middle East would be weakened.

**Do you think a path toward resolving the decades-long issue between Israel and Palestine will emerge out of these recent developments?**

The path to achieving this goal is highly remote and fraught with challenges. This is primarily because in reality, 500,000–700,000 individuals are settled in approximately 30,000 settlements in the West Bank and East Al-Quds (Jerusalem), making it unclear where

exactly these two states would be established.

The Zionists adamantly oppose the formation of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Al-Quds. They will not even entertain the idea of Ramallah as the capital of a Palestinian state. This is because practically, the entire West Bank has been fragmented into settlements, resembling pieces of a Swiss cheese block, and all connections have been severed by these settlements. As such, the

two-state solution is practically unattainable. Moreover, the question arises of how a state can be formed and administered without possessing any land.

Another crucial point is that Israeli extremists, who comprise at least half of Israeli public opinion, will oppose the formation of a Palestinian state or even its recognition by Israel, even if Netanyahu is not in power. This fact will further exacerbate the existing conflicts.

**The United States and the United Kingdom have said that they would recognize an independent Palestinian state if it is ever established. Does this imply their willingness to settle the Israel-Palestine issue? What would a Palestinian state that is desirable to the US and the UK looklike?**

All signs suggest that the United States and the United Kingdom are genuinely pursuing the recognition of an independent Palestinian state. The fact that they see the solution in a two-state

framework shows that this is not mere words. However, the issue is twofold: first, the two-state solution is not feasible, and second, due to the entanglements I mentioned in response to your previous question, nobody can evacuate Jews currently residing in settlements such as the ones in Ramallah. The state that the US and the UK want to recognize is merely on paper. Only Gaza can serve as a suitable land for such a state, but, according to United Nations Security Council resolutions, Gaza, alongside the West Bank and East Al-

Quds, is part of occupied Palestinian territories. As you know, during the Trump era, the Americans declared the entire Al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "eternal and undivided" capital, and Biden has not altered this decision either. But even assuming a Palestinian government is formed and then recognized by the United States and the United Kingdom, it would only be on paper, and its coordinates would be limited to Ramallah and Gaza because practically, Al-Quds is completely under Israeli occupation and control.

**How do you evaluate the position of the European Union in this regard? Do Europe's interests also necessitate easing or ending the Middle East crisis?**

Indeed, it is generally perceived that the European Union is not genuinely seeking tension in Gaza or Palestine. However, the Zionist lobby is strong and influential in France and its senate, newspapers, and elsewhere,

easily shaping public opinion. Nevertheless, the European Union's interest lies in easing themselves from the burden of Jews and keeping them in Israel. Therefore, they support the two-state solution.

Furthermore, it seems that as long as Israel does not accept a cease-fire, the Houthis will continue their attacks and cause tension in the Red Sea. This is more detrimental to

Chinese, Indian, and European companies than to Americans, although they have also suffered losses. Regardless, it can be said that they have found more excuses for further intervention in the region.

In any case, all signs indicate that not only the European Union does not benefit from the conflict between Israel and Hamas, but also the tension in the Middle East is detrimental to the EU.

**Where do you think the Islamic Republic of Iran stands in terms of mediation efforts for a cease-fire in Gaza and resolving the Palestinian issue? Will the US involve Iran in mediation or benefit from Tehran's influence to resolve the issue? See, Americans are currently focused on Qatar and Turkey as mediators because both are aligned with the**

Muslim Brotherhood and have close ties to Hamas. While they are aware of Iran's influential role as a leader in the resistance movement, I haven't seen any indications that Americans are considering Iran in this context. Nevertheless, since they take the resistance seriously and view Iran as its leader, in issues related to Palestine, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Leba-

non, they see Iran as the other side of the coin. Even in their scenarios, they are squaring off against Iran. However, they strive to ensure that this engagement is not direct but rather proxy-based. They have employed various methods to achieve this, including terrorist acts, attacks on ships, seizure of Iranian oil, and many other actions.



# Why US, Saudis want two-state solution, Israel doesn't

By Hussein Ibish  
Senior scholar

## OPINION

Amid the war in Gaza, a major crisis has been brewing, largely behind the scenes, between the United States and Israel over the need for a Palestinian state. The two countries' positions have long diverged — except during the administration of Donald Trump, whose peace proposal envisaged Israel annexing an additional 30 percent of the occupied West Bank and enveloping a conditional Palestinian state in an even more empowered Greater Israel. Now, that divergence has a harder, sharper edge than ever: Washington's strategic goals in the region require a Palestinian state in the long run and Israeli acknowledgment of that aim in the short run; the Israeli cabinet is having none of it.

Much expectation attends a purportedly comprehensive peace proposal that the US and its most important Arab partners have reportedly been working on, soon to be unveiled and then implemented as the Gaza war winds down. The centerpiece of the plan would be a firm commitment to, and timeline for, the creation of a Palestinian state — a process that President Joe Biden has already mapped out in remarks. This agenda is especially important to Saudi Arabia, whose foreign minister has made clear that a commitment to the two-state solution is a prerequisite for normalizing relations with Israel. The plan for a new postwar dispensation that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu released on Friday made no such commitment, though it left just enough ambiguity about a possible "permanent arrangement with the Palestinians" not to foreclose that scenario.

withdraw from the West Bank or agree to a formula for the creation of such a state. Instead, what Saudi Arabia and many Western states, possibly including the US, want to avoid is any repetition of the Oslo framework's failures: the lack of an explicit Israeli acceptance of a Palestinian state as an agreed goal, and the overreliance on purely bilateral talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The Biden administration has registered all of this and its implications for US interests. The war has been devastating for the Palestinians in Gaza, but it has very much strengthened Iran's position in the region. This success has led the Iranians to caution their allies to exercise restraint now, to avoid dragging the region into a broader conflict that would put its gains at risk. (The Houthis in Yemen, however, seem not to be listening too carefully.) For its part, the Biden administration has

**What direction do you think the disagreement or semi-hostility between Iran and the US will take? Will hostilities be reduced, contained, or escalated?**

The current situation is not semi-hostile; it is full-blown hostility.

Perhaps what you mean is that it's not a full-scale war, but in reality, hostility is one of the stages before war. We are indeed witnessing serious tensions in Iran-US relations in the region. Although both sides have shown that they are seeking

to control the crisis, I highly doubt that a direct confrontation between Iran and the US will occur before the presidential elections in the United States, as neither Iran nor the American side is eager for such a confrontation.



A monument in the West Bank town of Jenin bears the outline of Mandatory Palestine, a geopolitical entity that existed between 1920 and 1948 in the region.  
● JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP

**According to some experts, the US seeks to alleviate tensions between Arabs and Israel by pressuring Israel or determining the fate of Palestine so that it can focus more on Iran and China. Do you concur?**

Look, I really think this perspective is flawed. The United States isn't seeking to pressure Israel. Because if they wanted to exert pressure, the first step would be to cut off arms sales to Israel, which simply isn't feasible in the United States. Neither Republicans nor Democrats are interested in pressuring Israel due to the extensive influence that Israelis have on the US Senate, the House of Representatives, and the US government. In fact, they are seeking crisis management, and crisis management has various avenues.

supporters of Hamas and, on the other hand, intervened militarily in the region and received assistance from Turkey and Qatar. What is more, they constantly maintain that this war has dreadful dimensions and is "over the top," but I haven't seen any practical measures from them that would force Israel to reconsider.

To say that their intention is to settle the Palestinian issue so that they can deal with Iran and China is really something. Surely, America is at odds with China, just as it is with Iran. However, this issue is part of a set of disagreements they have with Iran or China, meaning that even if Hamas wasn't an issue, they would still be at odds with Iran. Therefore, I really think this question is fundamentally flawed, especially its first part concerning America's pressure on Israel.

**In any case, what would "dealing with Iran" mean to Americans? Does it entail pursuing diplomacy, managing tensions, increasing the pressure to isolate Iran, or even contemplating regime change?**

Americans have always stated that their primary goal is to change the behavior of the Islamic Republic of Iran

and if that's not possible, to pursue regime change in Iran. The reality is that America's policy towards Iran involves maximum pressure tactics, leveraging crises resulting from sanctions, supporting protesters and dissidents, and engaging in psychological and propaganda operations, all of which they have advanced in recent

years. Serious blows have been dealt in this regard, particularly following the Israel-Gaza conflict, where they have also leaned towards assassination. They have carried out several terrorist actions, either through Israelis or directly by Americans, in Iraq, Syria, and other places in the region.

**Do you imagine that anything significant will happen between Iran and the US before the US presidential elections, or will any decision by both parties be postponed until after the elections?**

From my perspective, the likelihood of a war between Iran and the United States until next November, which marks the presidential election in the

US, is less than 10 percent. This means that there is a 90 percent chance that such a war will not occur. However, the issue is that they haven't deferred these differences until after the elections, and something "significant" is happening right now. By that I'm referring to the fact that relations between Iran and the United States are at their highest level of tension possi-

ble in recent years, with the difference being that the hot water that Washingtonians have been sitting in is on the brink of boiling. Currently, there is significant tension in Iran-US relations, which is clearly not war and will not lead to a war either because both sides do not want war, albeit with different motivations.

**What's your recommended strategy for confronting the US in a manner that best serves the country's interests?**

The best solution is negotiation and dialogue. Truly, why has the door to dialogue and negotiation been closed? From my perspective, we

should engage in dialogue. We currently have a good enough hand. Right now, we have everything we need to negotiate. So, I really don't understand why the two sides aren't negotiating. Besides, a thousand hours of negotiation is better than an hour of war, and adopting any other

solution apart from diplomacy is not reasonable. Unfortunately, in Iran, diplomacy seems to imply compromise, which they consider as tantamount to betrayal, but this neither conforms to international rules nor to the principles of international relations.



US President Joe Biden (L) greets Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in July 2022.  
● BANDAR ALGALOU/REUTERS

This contradiction between US and Israeli policies raises troubling quandaries. The Biden administration appears to be working to confront Israelis with the stark choice they face: security through an agreement with Palestinians and normalization with Saudi Arabia (and other Arab and Muslim countries), or inviting further conflict by clinging to occupied Palestinian lands at a heavy cost of antagonized regional relations and declining American sympathies.

But if confronting Israel with that scenario is not enough to move its leaders, will Washington be prepared to make Israeli cooperation with Palestinian statehood a demand rather than a hint? Before the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas, Washington had ironed out most of their differences with Riyadh over defense and nuclear issues, while simultaneously negotiating with the Israelis over a package of benefits for the Palestinians that could make normalization possible for Saudi Arabia and win the backing, however grudging, of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

The October 7 attack froze this diplomacy. Saudi Arabia quickly announced that it had "paused" all discussion of normalization, until early January, when officials indicated that the kingdom was still interested. Predictably, however, the price Israel would have to pay appears to have gone up. Riyadh now insists that no normalization of relations with Israel can occur without full Palestinian statehood. Nobody expects Israel to immediately

similarly cautioned Israel against attacking Hezbollah in Lebanon. Netanyahu has repeatedly taken credit for having "for decades blocked the establishment of a Palestinian state," and he knows that, on this point at least, he enjoys solid domestic backing. Last week, Israel's cabinet, followed by the Knesset, rejected any additional Western recognition of Palestinian statehood or other such "international dictates" — regardless of the fact that Israel's own establishment in 1948 was achieved by such recognition.

The bear hug of support that Biden has provided for Israel over Gaza, at times with no international backing, cannot be gratis. The US has a right, indeed a responsibility, to demand Israeli cooperation on this indispensable priority. Failing that, Washington will have to reevaluate the merits of America's special relationship with Israel.

That is unlikely to happen before the US election, but Biden might be more willing to apply the full weight of American influence on Israel if he wins a second term. Historically, second-term presidents — freed from the domestic political constraints of seeking reelection — tend to take on such issues with more determination. And if Biden really believes that US interests — and ultimately Israel's future — rest on the creation of a Palestinian state and normalization with Saudi Arabia, he could act decisively.

The full article first appeared on [The Atlantic](#).

## South Korea picks Hwang Sun-hong as interim coach



● REUTERS

The Korea Football Association (KFA) said on Tuesday it has picked Hwang Sun-hong, coach of the under-23 team, as temporary head coach of the national side to prepare for the upcoming 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

The National Team Committee, a KFA advisory body, had been looking for a replacement after sacking Juergen Klinsmann in the wake of the national side's semi-final exit at the Asian Cup and amid criticism of his leadership, Reuters reported.

Hwang, 55, steered the under-23 national team to gold in the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games, and was a member of the 2002 World Cup squad that reached the semi-finals on home soil under Dutch coach Guus Hiddink.

Hwang was the "No. 1 choice" given his experience and he will resume his role with the under-23 team after leading the national side through two 2026 World Cup qualifiers against Thailand in March, said Jung Hae-sung, who heads the committee.

"Our committee, in the meantime, will hold in-depth discussions to appoint a full-time coach, reviewing what kind of football we want to pursue and which style of the coach we need," Jung told a briefing.

The KFA dismissed Klinsmann following South Korea's stumble at the semi-final stage at the Asian Cup which extended their 64-year wait for a third title and rekindled criticism of the German coach's leadership.

Hwang will double as coach of the national team and also prepare the under-23 squad for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Asian Cup to qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympics, starting in April in Qatar.

He will also have to contain infighting in the national squad after a well-publicised quarrel between captain Son Heung-min of Tottenham Hotspur and team mate Lee Kang-in of Paris St Germain.

Fans of teams whose coaches were in the rumor mill for the national team job condemned the KFA's lack of respect for the league. Among the coaches being bandied about were Hong Myung-bo of Ulsan HD FC and Kim Hak-bum of Jeju United.

## FIBA Asia Cup Qualifiers:

# India go down fighting against Iran

Iran defeated India 86-53 at the FIBA Asia Cup 2025 Qualifiers Window 1 on Monday at the K.D. Jadhav Indoor Hall in New Delhi. Five players finished in double figures in the lopsided win, with lead swingman Behnam Yakhchali leading the way with a game-high 15 points, reported Tasnim News Agency.

Ranked 81st in the FIBA rankings, India were the underdogs against 27th-ranked Iran but the hosts started with a lot of gumption as the packed stadium cheered them throughout the hour-long match.

Iran took time to get into their rhythm but moved ahead, using their superior physicality to get past the Indian defence but the hosts were definitely in the game, trailing by just three points at the end of the first quarter.

The Indians tried to counter Iran with fast-paced runs and converted over 40% of their two-pointers but struggled to content Iran on the rebounds and paid the price for the same. India, who had lost their Group opener away to Kazakhstan, trailed 32-42 at half time.

For Iran, Behnam Yakhchali scored 15 points while Mohammad Amini and Salar Monji added 14 points each for the team.

Salar Monji and 18-year-



● FIBA

old forward Mohammad Amini produced identical numbers of 14 points and 9 rebounds, with the former netting a game-best efficiency of 23. Sajjad Mashayekhi, the hero in their overtime escape of Qatar last game, supplied

11 points. Meisam Mirzaei flirted with a double-double with 10 points and 9 boards.

Team Melli was holding a slim three-point lead late in the second period until Mirzaei led a 9-2 run that gave it a 42-32 lead heading into

halftime.

Commenting on the team's performance, Serbian Vaseline Matic, who is head coach of Indian team said, "India has talent, we need more experience. We have some gap now before the next qualifier in Novem-

ber and the national team will be participating in club championship and multiple other exposure trips. We are confident that we can give a winning performance."

When asked which Indian player impressed him the

most and in response to Iranian Coach, Hakan Demor spoke highly about the young Indian side. He said he was really impressed by the Indian forward Pranav Prince.

Iran had defeated Qatar 76-74 in Tehran on Friday.



● TASNIM

## Georgian defender Chabradze joins Zob Ahan

Georgian defender Grigol Chabradze joined Iran's Zob Ahan football club. Chabradze, 27, has joined the Iranian top-flight club from Georgian club Dinamo Batumi, reported Tasnim News Agency.

He has played in Georgia's national team nine times.

Zob Ahan will host Persepolis today in Isfahan in the 2023-24 Iran Professional League (IPL) and the player will most likely play in this match.

Chabradze's compatriot Giorgi Gvelesiani is a key player of Persepolis.

## Andy Murray nets 500th career hard-court win

Three-time major champion Andy Murray from Great Britain won his 500th career hard-court match when he beat Canadian Denis Shapovalov 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-3 in the first round of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships.

Murray - who joined Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic, Andre Agassi and Rafael Nadal in the 500 club - said in a post-match interview that he "probably

(doesn't) have too long left but I'll do the best that I can these last few months," a possible hint that the 36-year-old is considering retirement, reported AFP.

No. 2 seed Andrey Rublev of Russia rallied past China's Zhizhen Zhang 6-7 (4), 6-2, 6-4, while Polish third seed Hubert Hurkacz outlasted German Jan-Lennard Struff 7-6 (5), 6-7 (4), 7-6 (6).

No. 7 seed Alexander Bublik also needed three sets to top Czech qualifier Tomas Machac 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 (5), and Dutchman Botich van de Zandschulp upset French sixth seed

Adrian Mannarino 7-6 (3), 7-5.

American Sebastian Korda knocked off Russia's Pavel Kotov 6-0, 6-2 in 54 minutes, and Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands led 7-5, 2-0 when Jordanian opponent Abdullah Shalbayh retired.

### Abierto Mexicano Telcel

Two seeded U.S. players lost their first-round matches at Acapulco, Mexico.

Great Britain's Jack Draper needed just 86 minutes to oust seventh-seeded Tommy Paul 6-0, 6-4, and Italy's Matteo Arnaldi stunned fourth-seeded Taylor Fritz 6-4, 4-6, 6-3.

Draper never dropped his serve, shaking off three break points while converting four of his five break opportunities.

Arnaldi wound up with a 39-22 edge in winners, while he and Fritz each committed 16 unforced errors.

Third-seeded Alex De Minaur of Australia sailed into the second round with a 6-2, 6-1 blowout of Japan's Taro Daniel. The United States' Ben Shelton rallied past Great Britain's Daniel Evans 2-6, 7-5, 7-6 (5), and Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic

came from behind to defeat Argentina's Diego Schwartzman 4-6, 6-3, 6-1. Austria's Sebastian Ofner edged Mexico's Ernesto Escobedo 6-7 (7), 6-4, 7-6 (4).

In late matches, Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka overtook Portugal's Nuno Borges 3-6, 6-2, 6-4, and Italy's Flavio Cobolli eliminated Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime 2-6, 6-3, 6-2.

### Movistar Chile Open

Sixth-seeded Facundo Diaz Acosta prevailed in an all-Argentine first round, rallying past Pedro Cachin 5-7, 6-3, 7-6 (2) on clay at Santiago, Chile.

In a match that lasted 3 hours, 8 minutes, Diaz Acosta won the last five points of the third-set tiebreaker. Cachin had 18 break chances in the match but converted just three of them.

Another Argentine, Federico Coria, registered a 6-1, 7-6 (1) win over Slovakia's Alex Molcan. French qualifier Corentin Moutet upset seventh-seeded Roberto Carballes Baena 6-3, 7-5, 6-2, and Spain's Pedro Martinez got past Italy's Francesco Passaro 6-4, 6-1.



# Iran's FM calls UN inaction on Gaza 'catastrophe of diplomacy of the century'

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian denounced the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) inaction vis-à-vis the Israeli regime's genocide against the Palestinians.

"What we are witnessing today in [terms of] the UN Security Council's inaction concerning the genocide in Gaza amounts to the catastrophe of diplomacy of the century," Amir-Abdollahian said.

He made the remarks at a meeting of his counterparts from various countries, which was being held on the sidelines of the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva on Monday, Press TV reported.

Beyond doubt, this period of time would pass, despite all the travails and sufferings that it has afflicted on the oppressed and resilient people of Palestine, the top diplomat said. However, the attitude that is adopted concerning this genocide by each country or international organization "will go down in history," he asserted.

The Israeli regime launched the war following Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on October 7, a surprise operation staged by Gaza's resistance movements against the occupied territories.

As part of its consistent political patronage for the Israeli regime, the United



States, which is Tel Aviv's main benefactor, has so far vetoed three UNSC resolutions that have called for implementation of an immediate cease-fire in the Israeli onslaught.

So far, nearly 30,000 people have died in the Israeli aggression that also enjoys unreserved military and intelligence support on the part of Washington.

Amir-Abdollahian was reminding that women and children comprised around 70 percent of the deaths, saying the child fatalities

"amount to the most horrific rate of infanticide throughout human history."

### 'Slow death'

Amir-Abdollahian noted that, apart from those who were being killed directly during the onslaught, a whopping number of Palestinians were also suffering "slow death" as a result of a simultaneous siege that the regime was employing against the coastal sliver.

The regime's "direct and intentional" attacks on health care facilities had, mean-

while, come to deprive the Palestinians of the medical equipment and drugs that were needed by tens of thousands of injured Gazans, he said.

"The wounded and even children are being operated on, without anesthetics," the foreign minister noted. He also reminded that "as a result of unsanitary conditions, infectious diseases have come to threaten the lives of more human beings every day."

Amir-Abdollahian, meanwhile, warned about the

expected dire consequences of a potential ground invasion of the southern Gaza city of Rafah, which has come to host more than half of the territory's 2.3-million-strong population, who have fled there from the ravages of the war.

He considered arming the regime amid the aggression to be an "unforgivable wrong," advising the international community to sever all their economic and commercial ties with the apartheid regime.



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (c) meets his counterparts from various countries, in Geneva on February 26, 2024 on the sidelines of the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

● IRNA

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### No anti-Iran resolution to be passed in IAEA meeting: Report

#### International Desk

No resolution against Iran will be passed in the upcoming meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, an informed source told ISNA.

According to a confidential report seen by AFP, the agency said that Iran's estimated stockpile of enriched uranium had reached more than 27 times the limit set out in the 2015 accord.

In the report, IAEA head Rafael Grossi said, "Public statements made in Iran regarding its technical capabilities to produce nuclear weapons" have only increased "concerns about the correctness and completeness of Iran's safeguards declarations".

Ahead of an IAEA Board of Governors meeting next week, Grossi reiterated his call on Tehran to "cooperate fully and unambiguously with the agency".

### Kremlin warns of conflict with NATO if alliance troops fight in Ukraine

The Kremlin warned on Tuesday that conflict between Russia and the US-led NATO military alliance would be inevitable if European members of NATO sent troops to fight in Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine has triggered the worst crisis in Russia's relations with the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and President Vladimir Putin has previously warned of the dangers of a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia, Reuters reported.

French President Emmanuel Macron opened the door on Monday to European nations sending troops to Ukraine, although he cautioned that there was no consensus at this stage.

"The very fact of discussing the possibility of sending certain contingents to Ukraine from NATO countries is a very important new element," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about Macron's remarks. Asked by reporters about the risks if NATO members sent their troops to fight in Ukraine, Peskov said: "In that case, we would need to talk not about the probability, but about the inevitability (of a direct conflict)."

Peskov said that the West should ask themselves if such a scenario was in the interests of their countries and their peoples.

# Hamas, Israel downplay Biden's cease-fire remarks as 'premature', 'optimistic'

### International Desk

Hours after US President Joe Biden expressed hope that a cease-fire in Gaza could start by the beginning of next week, officials from Israel and the Palestinian resistance group slammed his comment as "premature" and "optimistic."

Biden said on Monday he

hoped a cease-fire in Gaza could start by next Monday, adding that Israel was ready to halt operations during the Muslim month of Ramadan as part of any deal.

Amid a spiraling humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territory, representatives from Egypt, Qatar, the United States, France and others have acted as

go-betweens for Israel and Hamas, seeking a halt to Israel's onslaught on the Gaza Strip.

Asked during an election campaign trip to New York when such an agreement might start, Biden replied, "I hope by the end of the weekend".

"My national security adviser tells me that we're close, we're close, we're

not done yet. My hope is by next Monday we'll have a cease-fire," Biden told reporters.

Downplaying Biden's remarks, a senior unnamed Israeli official told Ynet News that he "does not know what Biden's optimism is based on".

According to Reuters, a Hamas official also reacted to Biden's comments, saying that Biden's statement on Israel and Hamas agreeing on a cease-fire deal is premature and "does not match the situation on the ground."

The Hamas official added that there are "big gaps that still need to be filled" in the cease-fire negotiations. Mediators have been hoping to get a deal in place before the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in about two weeks.

Biden has firmly supported Israel despite the soaring death toll in its offensive in Gaza following the Hamas attacks on Israel on October 7.

Israel's military operations have killed at least 29,878 people in Gaza, most-



ly women and children, according to the Gaza health ministry.



Palestinians inspect the damage at the Al-Maghazi refugee camp in the Gaza Strip after an overnight Israeli strike on December 25, 2023.

● MAHMUD HAMS/AFP

### Israel 'systematically' blocking aid access

The United Nations said on Tuesday Israeli forces are "systematically" blocking access to people in Gaza, complicating the task of delivering aid in what has become a lawless war zone. It has become nearly impossible to evacuate the sick or wounded and deliver aid in northern Gaza and increasingly difficult in the south, said Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA.

All planned aid convoys into the north have been denied by Israeli authori-

ties in recent weeks. Even convoys cleared in advance with Israeli authorities have been blocked or come under fire.

Laerke pointed to an incident on Sunday, when a convoy to evacuate 24 patients from the besieged Al Amal hospital in the southern city of Khan Yunis -- jointly organized by the WHO and Palestinian Red Crescent (PRCS) -- was blocked for seven hours and paramedics detained.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



# Iran prioritizes preservation of southern islands' traditions: *Minister*

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad-Mehdi Esmeaili highlighted the government's commitment to preserving the rich cultural heritage and enduring traditions of the southern islands. Speaking at the 816th session of the National Cultural Council, Esmeaili stressed the need for a cultural transformation in the Persian Gulf region, with a focus on maritime economy while prioritizing the preservation of cultural balance and traditions in the southern islands and regions, IRNA wrote. He emphasized that the unique islands, such as

Qeshm, boast a diversity of clothing, cuisine, music, and melodies, making them central cultural hubs in the northern and southern Persian Gulf. However, he criticized an unwise perspective that attempts to reduce these regions to mere showcases for lifestyle and cultural representation. Esmeaili announced the initiation of a policy to establish cultural regions in three areas: West Azarbaijan, the central region including Hamedan and Zanjan, and Khorasan Razavi. He provided recommendations for Nowruz (Persian New Year) travel, stating that while

people are fully committed to religious practices such as fasting during the month of Ramadan, measures should be taken to facilitate travel for individuals during this period. He underscored the importance of cultural and artistic programs tailored for those observing religious practices or choosing not to travel during specific times, emphasizing the need for regional colleagues to prepare special cultural and leisure activities. Esmeaili concluded by announcing that a Qur'an exhibition would be held in Tehran and various provinces from March 20.



## Iran's Saket, Japan's Tsumuzi to stage joint concert

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian musician Keivan Saket will perform a joint concert alongside Japanese composer and violinist Tsumuzi in a unique cross-cultural concert. The concert featuring Keivan Saket, Siavash Saket, and Tsumuzi is scheduled to take place at Libra Hall in Japan from March 7 and 8, ISNA wrote. Tsumuzi, renowned for his dis-

tinctive musical style, often referred to as the 'Mr. 5 beats' is a Japanese violinist residing in Tokyo. His musical journey began while studying at a medical school, and he released his debut studio album, 'Devilish Waltz of A Soul - The Tango of February 26th' in 2013 after completing his medical degree. Living up to his unique monikers, Tsumuzi has released four more albums to date, including 'The Guernica Dogma' (2015),

'Libertango My Own' (2016), 'Japan Neo Soul 2020' (2019), and 'Quintuple Meter's Bible' (2022), along with 'Five Beats on the Border' (2023). The collaborative concert promises a harmonious fusion of Iranian and Japanese musical influences, showcasing the diverse talents of Saket and Tsumuzi. Music enthusiasts can anticipate an evening filled with cross-cultural melodies at Libra Hall this March.



## Japan's new births fall to record low in 2023 as demographic woes deepen

The number of babies born in Japan fell for an eighth straight year to a fresh record low in 2023, preliminary government data showed on Tuesday, underscoring the daunting task the country faces in trying to stem depopulation. The number of births fell 5.1% from a year earlier to 758,631, while the number of marriages slid 5.9% to 489,281 – the first

time in 90 years the number fell below 500,000 – foreboding a further decline in the population as out-of-wedlock births are rare in Japan, Reuters reported. Asked about the latest data, Japan's top government spokesperson said the government will take "unprecedented steps" to cope with the declining birthrate, such as expanding childcare and promoting wage hikes for young-

er workers. "The declining birthrate is in a critical situation," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters. "The next six years or so until 2030, when the number of young people will rapidly decline, will be the last chance to reverse the trend." Mindful of the potential social and economic impact, and the strains on public finances, Prime Minister

Fumio Kishida has called the trend the "gravest crisis our country faces", and unveiled a range of steps to support child-bearing households late last year. Japan's population will likely decline by about 30% to 87 million by 2070, with four out of every 10 people aged 65 or older, according to estimates by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research.

## Iran welcomes Singapore travelers with no visa requirements

Singapore nationals can now enter Iran for tourism without the need for a travel visa, and remain in the destination for no more than 15 days for every 180 days. The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Singapore said

the move was enforced on February 4 this year, ttgasia.com reported. Iran has been working to raise the profile of its tourism industry, and had hosted the 17th International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition from

February 12 to 15 this year. Minister of cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts, Ezzatollah Zarghami, told the media during the event that Iran has plans to develop areas for tourism, launch tourism campaigns, and facilitate urban investments.

## Iran pledges scholarships, tourism collaboration with Afghanistan

The Islamic Emirate's Ministry of Information and Culture reports that the Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kabul committed to collaboration on scholarships and the exchange of tourism and cultural experiences between Afghanistan and Iran. Maulvi Saad Al-Din Saeed,

Finance and Administrative Deputy of the Ministry of Information and Culture, discussed solutions for issues in the air and land visa sector and the facilitation of processes during the meeting, avapress.com reported. Ruhollah Hosseini, the cultural attaché of the Iranian Embassy in Kabul, assured the resolution of existing

problems and pledged cooperation in the areas of scholarships and the exchange of tourism and cultural experiences between Afghanistan and Iran. This aligns with previous statements from various Iranian officials expressing their commitment to cooperation across different sectors with Afghanistan.