



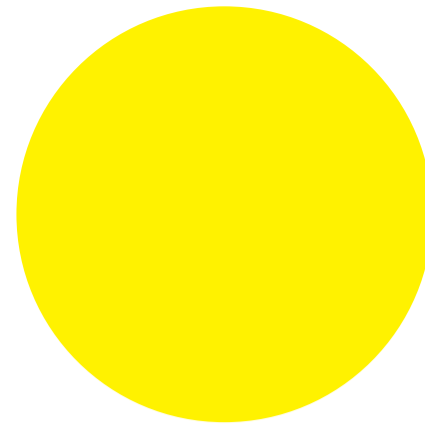
Iran calls on BRICS to play role in stopping Israeli crimes

7 >



Tehran's age-old bicycle repair shop keeps tradition rolling

8 >



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Emerging Economies Link Up

Raisi hails growing ties with Africa

Iran ready to share capabilities with African states

2 >



The photo shows a general view of the 2nd Iran & Africa International Economic Conference held in Tehran on April 26, 2024, as Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi addresses the event. president.ir

African markets await Iranian business ventures

PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE

Africa has ample untapped opportunities, with Iranian businesspeople seemingly missing out on the vast agricultural and commercial potential of the continent. Given its equatorial location and favorable climate, Africa has excellent agricultural prospects. Therefore, by not only exporting agricultural machinery, seeds, fertilizers, and animal vaccines but also sharing technical know-how, Iran could improve its value proposition by establishing agricultural processing industries in African nations.

The concept of extraterrestrial cultivation is not far-fetched. While some agreements have been inked with certain countries, there is a pressing need for streamlined and transparent laws and regulations in this arena. The mineral wealth of Africa stands as another lucrative commercial asset. With abundant resources spanning Mendeleev's periodic table and substantial reserves of precious metals and gems like gold and diamonds, African nations offer plenty of opportunities for sourcing minerals crucial to Iran's mining sector, including iron ore, copper ore, manganese, cobalt, lithium,

chromite, uranium, bauxite and more. Joint extraction ventures or outright mine ownership could significantly bolster Iran's industrial sectors. Despite the continent's mineral bounty, inadequate infrastructure, including roads and railways, poses challenges in transporting extracted resources to seaports. African nations, often in a phase of development, present a ripe environment for carrying out infrastructure projects, offering a gateway for Iranian technical and engineering firms to export expertise and construction materials. Iranian companies with a rich history in oil and gas exploration,

extraction and processing stand to benefit from Africa's energy sector woes. As African countries grapple with energy deficiencies, Iran's proficient energy firms could lend their expertise in electricity production and power plant development. Addressing the healthcare deficit in Africa presents yet another avenue for Iranian knowledge-based entities. Venturing into hospital construction, medical equipment exports, and dispatching medical professionals could bridge the healthcare gap in these nations. The Iranian Red Crescent is already active in some African countries.

In terms of commodities, opportunities abound for exports in sectors like iron, steel, bitumen, automobiles, auto spare parts, agricultural machinery – including combines, tractors and sprayers – drones, plastic and polymer products, carpets and rugs, construction materials, household appliances and more. Contrary to prevailing perceptions, many countries in Africa are safe for economic ventures and investments, presenting a conducive environment for fostering economic ties. The Islamic Republic of Iran appears to be hell-bent on securing an economic foothold in this continent.

Yazdani back to training in a bid for Olympic glory



Iran's Hassan Yazdani made his long-awaited return to the wrestling mat this week in a bid to win a third successive Olympic medal in the upcoming Paris Games.

6 >

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tehran,
Ashgabat to
foster energy
cooperation

Iran and Turkmenistan will expand their cooperation in the fields of electricity and energy. A high-ranking delegation from Turkmenistan has arrived in Tehran to pursue the development of cooperation in the electricity and energy industries, the director general of the foreign trade office of Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (TAVANIR) said. Mehrdad Eqlimi added that an expert-level meeting was held at the venue of the company with the aim of expanding relations between the two countries in the relevant fields. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged their views regarding the expansion of the common capacities and the process of facilitation of financing the joint venture project for the construction operation of 3rd electricity transmission line between the two states, he said. Once the said electricity transmission line is launched, the electricity connection capacity between the two neighbors will increase threefold, Eqlimi emphasized.

Annual
imports of
coffee hit
\$148m: IRICA

The Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced that 49,000 tons of coffee beans, valued at \$148 million, were imported into the country in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 2023-March 2024), showing a 48.55 percent hike compared to a year earlier. In this period, Iran imported coffee beans from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Vietnam, India, Indonesia and Uganda, among others, the report said, reported Tasnim News Agency. About 95 percent of the coffee beans were imported into the country from these five countries, it added. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) exported \$78 million of coffee to Iran, accounting for 52.89 percent of Iran's coffee imports share in value, IRICA added. About 82 percent of coffee was imported into the country via Shahid Rajaei Customs Office, followed by Mashhad, Bushehr, Bandar Lengeh and Tehran customs, Mehr news agency reported.

Raisi hails growing ties with Africa

Iran ready to share capabilities with African states

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi says the Islamic Republic and the African nations are keen to strengthen ties between the two sides, noting that enhanced ties can form a complementary economy.

Raisi made the remarks during the 2nd Iran & Africa International Economic Conference on Friday at Tehran's International Conference Center.

"This meeting is a symbol of the will of African nations and Iran to expand economic ties," he told the gathering that hosted representatives from 30 African countries.

Raisi hailed the conference, which opened on Thursday, as an opportunity for both Iran and the African nations to get familiar with their mutual capacities. "Despite threats and sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made good progress. The Islamic Republic can be called an advanced and technological country," he said, stressing that getting familiar with the achievements of Iran in the field of emerging technologies is of "great importance."

The president said Iran seeks to maintain ties with Africa based on mutual interest, unlike many Western countries that have "plundered" Africa's resources. "Westerners want Africa for themselves but we want Africa for Africa."

Tehran believes that Africa has skilled labor forces and can achieve progress in many fields, including emerging technologies, he stressed. Raisi stressed the importance of formulating roadmaps for cooperation between Iran and the African continent and for cooperation between Iran and each African nation, with defined timelines.

He also emphasized the necessity of removing obstacles that hinder the two sides from expanding ties, including the problem of transfer of funds.

If Iran's and Africa's capacities are combined, "a complementary economy will be formed," he stressed.

Pointing to the necessity of knowing the capacities in African countries, the existence of extensive mines and resources in these countries along with the technology to exploit the mines in Iran, Raisi added extraterritorial cultivation and supplying resources for production and



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi speaks during the 2nd Iran & Africa International Economic Conference in Tehran on April 26, 2024.
● president.ir

industrial centers at reasonable prices are another area of cooperation with Africa.

Senior officials, including economy ministers, are taking part in this edition of the conference that will wrap up its activities on Monday.

Mutual interests with
Burkina Faso

Iran seeks mutual interests of the Iranian and the African nations, Raisi said in a meeting with Prime Minister of Burkina Faso Apollinaire Joachim Kyélem on the sidelines of the conference on Friday.

He emphasized the need to speed up the establishment of mechanisms to strengthen relations between Iran and Burkina Faso, including the activation of the joint commission of the two countries.



The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to cooperate, interact and exchange its capabilities with African countries, including Burkina Faso, he said, adding that the development of these relations will benefit the nations of the two countries.

The prime minister of Burkina Faso, for his part, referred to the Western media's attempt to present a false and distorted image of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Contrary to Western propaganda, Iran is an independent, developing and advanced country, which relies on the attractiveness of this country to develop and strengthen relations with it in all fields, he said.

The PM also emphasized his country's interest in expanding cooperation and interaction with the Islamic Republic of Iran

in communications, mining, agriculture, animal husbandry, transportation, scientific and cultural, knowledge-based, and energy fields.

Implementation of
Tehran-Harare pacts

In another meeting with Zimbabwean Vice President Constantino Chiwenga on the same day, Raisi said Iran's view of Africa is a strategic one based on collective interests noting that Tehran and Harare enjoy very good relations as the high officials of the two countries to improve the level of cooperation.

Speaking for his part, Chiwenga noted that his country and Iran are seeking to expedite the implementation of the economic cooperation signed last year amid rising interest from the

Middle East economic powerhouse to invest in Africa.

VP Chiwenga told journalists after the meeting that Zimbabwe is following up on the operationalization of the 12 agreements signed when President Raisi visited the southern African country last year.

"Firstly, we were congratulating President Raisi for hosting the Iran-Africa International Economic Conference which will mutually benefit the parties involved," said Chiwenga.

"Iran has advanced economically and its cooperation with Africa will bring growth impetus to the economies involved.

"We are the builders of our own economies and we really want to see development. From our end, we are following up on the implementation of the agreements signed last year," said the VP.

Exports of techno-engineering
services bring in \$1.8b
in two years

The chairman of Board of Directors of the Iran Water Industry Federation said the country exported \$1.8 billion worth of technical and engineering services over the past two years. Stressing the importance of exporting technical and

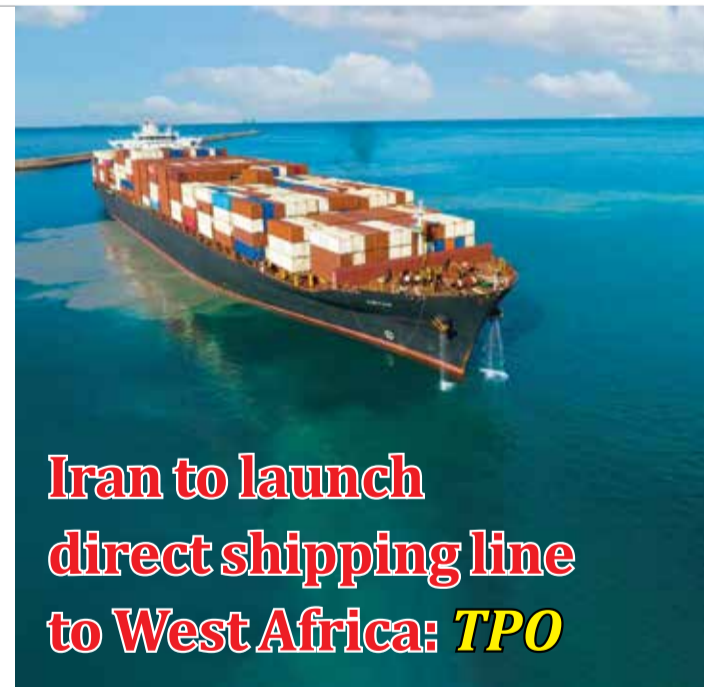
engineering services, Reza Haj Karim said giant steps have been taken in the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi in the field as compared to the previous years, wrote Tasnim News Agency. Domestic knowledge-based

companies have high potential to export technical and engineering services and can do even better with due support from the government, he underscored.

Haj Karim further noted that Sri Lanka, Indonesia and East Asian countries are among those whose their economic growth is higher than the world average, so this Asian market can be a lucrative market for Iranian domestic companies.

As a leading country in the water and electricity industry, Iran stands in the first rank in the region in the export of technical and engineering services in this industry, and this shows the high technical and engineering knowledge and ability of Iranian specialists and companies.

Thanks to the efforts of the country's specialists in the years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran is now among the top five power plant turbine manufacturing countries in the world.

Iran to launch
direct shipping line
to West Africa: TPO

Iran will launch direct a shipping line to West Africa, announced the head of the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) on Friday adding that his organization has plans to increase the number of commercial attachés in the African continent from three to 14 during the current Iranian year (to end March 20, 2025). Speaking at the Second International Economic Conference of Iran and Africa in Tehran, Mehdi Zeyghami noted that Iran hosts representatives from over 30 African states, ISNA reported. "The economy of Iran and many African countries complement each other, so it is possible to

make a leap in trade relations through free bilateral trade," the TPO head said.

The two sides lack information on trade potentials of trade markets of Iran and Africa, he criticized expressing his hope to eliminate the barriers through the Tehran meeting and the Iran Expo 2024 exhibition as well as other planned meetings.

Iran has launched a regular shipping line to East and North Africa, Zeyghami said noting that according to a directive by President Ebrahim Raisi during his visit to Algeria, the establishment of a shipping line to West Africa has also been put on the agenda.

Rostam Castle, a timeless fortress in Sistan and Baluchistan Province

Rostam Castle is one of the most valuable historical monuments and places of interest in Sistan and Baluchistan Province. With a history of 500 years, this castle is attributed to the legendary warrior of Iran and its clay and mud facade shows its historical grandeur and grandeur in the desert.

Rostam Castle is one of the famous places of Zabol and its vast construction dates back to the Seljuk to Safavid eras. The area where the castle is located is known as the historical area of Hozdar. There are remains of an ancient city with brickwork, numerous buildings, an entrance gate, a guard tower and 15 defense towers in the Hozdar area. Rostam Castle belongs to the Sistani khans during the Safavid period; those who ruled under the names of Rais Rostam, Rais Bahman, etc. in Hozdar region. This castle is considered the biggest and most magnificent castle of the Islamic era of the region. The greatness of Hozdar has bestowed a legendary historical aspect upon this castle, naming it after the most famous figure of Sistan, Rostam. There is also a collection of about 15 prehistoric hills in this area. Archaeologists have discovered several silver coins related to Sassanid King Purandakht in this area.

Due to its distance from the main road, Rostam Castle is less visited by the people of the region and by travelers and tourists. Despite factors such as weather conditions, the change of the Hirmand River, and the lack of human and financial resources, this historical building is being demolished, and unauthorized excavations have accelerated its destruction.

In general, taking into consideration the historical texts as well as the surviving works of the architecture of Rostam Castle and the accuracy of surface pottery, the construction of this castle can be attributed to the middle of the Islamic era. Rostam Castle was used until the Safavid period. It is believed that this castle was abandoned four to five hundred years ago. So far, no scientific archaeological research has been done in this castle; but the pieces of glazed and unglazed pottery found tell a tale of a long history. The main elements of the castle's architecture are the entrance gate on the eastern front, the guard and defensive towers of the castle fence, the moat, the *yakhdan* (a place that people used to keep their food).

Also, other internal residential facilities are among the other constituent elements of Rostam Castle, which have been

destroyed to some extent.

The awe and strength of the entrance gate and 15 defensive towers surrounding the magnificent castle still shine against the adversities of nature. The beams inside the wall and the towers and congresses of the fence clearly show the defense status of the castle.

Shahneshin: The main elements of *shahneshin* include the central courtyard, north and south porches, a series of different rooms around the central courtyard and the ruler's building, which is connected to the above complex and the security building. In some rooms, by placing bricks next to each other, they have created beautiful lattice-like windows, which is one of the architectural features of the region.

Fence: The fence or rampart of the castle is built using the natural position of the castle from east to west, with an irregular polygonal plan. According to the existing plan, the castle was built based on a predetermined plan; so the northern side of the castle is a very suitable wind-breaker against the 120-day

winds of Sistan.

Yakhdan: It is located in the eastern part of the castle and faces shahneshin, which includes a relatively large circular space five meters above the ground.

Stable: It is located a short distance from the shahneshin. Behind it, there is a long building with rows of mangers on its sides.

Moat: Currently, a moat with a width of 7.5 meters surrounds the castle. Due to the accumulation of soil, the depth of the ditch is not very deep.

The climatic conditions and the strategic location of the region have prompted architects and builders to create a strong fortress for military-residential operations. For this purpose, raw clay has been used, and in some cases, plaster traces can also be seen in the rooms.

Radkan Tower drawing visitors with historical and architectural marvels

Radkan Tower is a captivating historical and architectural attraction of Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province, drawing visitors from near and far. Situated in Chenaran, this iconic structure stands at an impressive height of 25 meters, boasting a cylindrical body and a cone-shaped dome. Believed to date back to the Ilkhanan period, the tower's exterior features a striking 12-sided design, tran-

sitioning into 36 semi-cylinders leading up to the dome, while the interior is octagonal.

The tower's construction is often attributed to Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, although there is some debate among scholars regarding its origins. Some suggest it may have been built during the Daylamite period. The tower's construction date is a subject of contention as well, with some

sources suggesting it was built in 680 BCE.

The tower is thought to have had astronomical significance. Some believe it was used for astronomical observations, while others argue it may have served as a tomb due to its resemblance to Daylamite era tombs.

The precision in the placement of doors and vents, as well as the presence of Kufi and Pahlavi in-

scriptions, adds to the intrigue surrounding the tower's purpose and history.

While the exact function of Radkan Tower remains a mystery, its unique architectural features and potential astronomical significance continue to fascinate historians and visitors alike, offering a glimpse into the rich history and scientific advancements of its era.



Why war in Palestine will continue



By Ejaz Haider

Journalist

PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE

"Where did you come from?"

"From Poland."

"When?"

"1948."

"When exactly?"

"March 1, 1948."

A heavy silence prevailed. All of them began to look around at things they had no need to look at. Said broke the silence, saying calmly: "Naturally we didn't come to tell you to get out of here. That would take a war..."

"I mean your presence here, in this house, our house, Safiyya's and my house, is another matter. We only came to take a look at things, our things. Maybe you can understand that."

She said quickly: "I understand, but..."

Then he lost his composure. "Yes, but! This terrible, deadly, enduring 'but'..."

Returning to Haifa by Ghassan Kanafani

"Your Majesty, the image given of me in the Arab press is that I am very hard. It's not true. I have lived my life dreaming of a nation and a state, so I can understand the Palestinians. If you are angry over what we are doing to face the Palestinian uprising, it is not that we do not understand. We understand their dreams very well, but unfortunately here we have a conflict between two dreams... we agree to the Palestinians having a dream, but they should understand that it is impossible."

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to the King of Morocco — quoted by Mohamed Heikal in *Illusions of Triumph: An Arab View of the [Persia] Gulf War*

"The obstinate fact is this: the Israelis don't understand any language but force," he said. "This is history — without force, they will give you nothing."

Veteran PLO fighter Mahmoud Ajrami in the *Financial Times*, May 24, 2021

"Talk to whom? That's the kind of conversation between the sword and the neck."

Ghassan Kanafani responding to a question about why Palestinians don't just talk to Israelis

Now that some of the euphoria has lifted, it is possible to re-examine the Israeli-PLO agreement with the required common sense. What emerges from such scrutiny is a deal that is more flawed and, for most of the Palestinian people, more unfavourably weighted than many had first supposed. The fashion-show vulgarities of the White House ceremony... only temporarily obscure the truly astonishing proportions of the Palestinian capitulation.

Edward Said, 'The Morning After', *London Review of Books*, October 21, 1993

The proximate

The latest iteration of Palestinian armed resistance against Israel's colonial-apartheid state began on October 7, 2023, with an attack on Israelis by Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fighters on land occupied by Israel. The many battles, kinetic and non-kinetic, in this long war have entered the seventh month.

Israel's response has been brutal and genocidal. The Israeli targeting strategy — bombing homes, tall buildings, hospitals, bakeries, prayer places, people moving to safer zones or collecting aid packages, aid workers, civil defence personnel, paramedics, journalists — and a very high tolerance threshold for civilian casualties have already been discussed at length by several international media outlets, including Israeli publications such as +972 and Local Call. That account, in granular detail, cannot be bettered and is widely available to readers and viewers around the world.

At the time of writing this, the talks to obtain a ceasefire have stalled. There were and are many proposals on the table, but Hamas and Israel are sticking to their positions: Hamas wants a permanent ceasefire and complete Israeli withdrawal; Israel wants a temporary ceasefire, return of Israeli captives and the freedom to continue its war to "destroy" Hamas' fighting capability, a euphemism for exterminating and expelling Gazans and occupying Gaza to make way for illegal Israeli settlements.

Then, on April 1, Israel attacked Iran's consulate building in Damascus, killing seven Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps officers, including two generals. That action, illegal under relevant provisions of international law, threw the region in a tizzy. Iran promised a response and delivered one on the night of April 13 with an unprecedented attack on Israel from Iranian soil, using direct attack munitions and land-attack cruise and ballistic missiles.

The recent military conflict between Iran and Israel only diverts attention from the real crux of the problem — the brutal Israeli occupation of Palestine and its ongoing genocidal actions in Gaza. Ejaz Haider explains why it is important to look at the wider picture of Zionism's plans in the region and the place of Palestinian resistance to it.

The attack generated fears around the world about a likely Israeli response, resulting in vertical and horizontal escalation across the region. The Israeli war cabinet meetings, at the time of writing, had agreed on a response but have remained divided over when and how.

During this episode, news about ongoing violence in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) was pushed to the sidelines. That violence continues unabated, though with a spike in attacks on the Palestinians in the OPTs by illegal Israeli settlers, who are always protected by Israeli security forces.

But this is just the immediate or proximate, if you will. This war did not begin on October 7. It has a much longer trajectory. Consider:

The longer context

Look again at the quotes above. They are there for a reason. Juxtapose what Kanafani, Ajrami

and Said are saying with what Shamir said to the King of Morocco: Palestinians have a dream but that dream is impossible. What dream is that, especially since Resolution 181 of the United Nations passed on November 29, 1947 and the war that followed it?

That dream, shattered multiple times through subsequent wars in 1967 and 1973, is to have a Palestinian state, where Palestinians can exercise the right to return, a state which is not just an administrative authority but a sovereign state. It is this dream that Shamir told the King is impossible.

For most of the world, Oslo I (1993) and Oslo II (1995) were to take care of this problem. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) had been recognised as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Authority was to govern the affairs of its people and all would be well. There would be talks about a final settlement after five years of Oslo II.

That was not to be. As Said and many others at the time — and many since — pointed out, the Oslo Agreements effectively ended Palestinians' right to resist. They also entrapped the Palestinians into perennial subjugation by a settler-colonial state.

Why and how? The agreements didn't address Israeli violence or incursions into Palestinian towns and camps, Israeli illegal settlements, Palestinian refugees' right to return and Israel's control of land, sea and air.

As Said wrote in the LRB article: "In his September 13 press conference, [Yitzhak] Rabin was straightforward about Israel's continuing control over sovereignty; in addition, he said, Israel would hold the River Jordan, the boundaries with Egypt and Jordan, the sea, the land between Gaza and Jericho, Jerusalem, the settlements and the roads. There is little in the document to suggest that Israel will give up its violence against Palestinians."

This is also clear from Rabin's speech to the Knesset on October 5, 1995, where he presented the Oslo II Agreement: "We would like this [Palestinian Municipal Authority (PA)] to be an entity which is less than a state and which will independently run the lives of the Palestinians under its authority."

He then went on to explain how the arrangement would work: "The first stage of this redeployment of [Israeli Defence Forces (IDF)] will be carried out in three areas...: Area A — or the 'brown' area... will include the municipal areas of the six cities — Jenin, Nablus,

Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Ramallah, and Bethlehem. Responsibility for civilian security in this area will be transferred to the Palestinian Authority. "Area B — or the 'yellow' area includes almost all of the 450 towns and villages in which the Palestinians of the West Bank live. In this area, there will be a separation of responsibilities. The Palestinians will be responsible for managing their own lives, and Israel will have overall responsibility for the security of Israelis and the war against the terrorist threat. That is, IDF forces and the security services will be able to enter any place in Area B at any time.

"The third area, Area C, or the 'white' area is everywhere that is not included in the areas that have been mentioned until now. In this area are the Jewish settlements, all IDF installations, and the border areas with Jordan. This area will remain under IDF control.

"Areas A and B constitute less than 30 percent of the area of the West Bank. Area C, which is under our control, constitutes more than 70 percent of the area of the West Bank."

Thirty days after this speech, on November 4, 1995, Rabin was assassinated. He is widely known as someone who wanted peace. That might be true, but not even he believed in allowing an independent, sovereign Palestinian state. The quotes from his speech make the situation clear.

They should also make clear



how and why Israel has created disjointed Palestinian towns through checkpoints and roadblocks; how Palestinian movement is entirely dependent on Israel; how and why the IDF and Israeli police can raid and enter any area, including Area A, with impunity. But most importantly, how these “interim” agreements have (a) become the status quo, (b) turned the Palestinian Authority and its security forces into Israeli collaborators, and (c) put a nail in the coffin of any final settlement.

The Israeli rightwing was opposed to the accords. After Rabin’s assassination, Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu rose to power. Neither had any intention of following up on the interim arrangements to a final settlement. Israel continued to expand its illegal settlements, created a strong chokehold on areas under nominal PA control, and increased its military and intelligence activities in Palestinian towns.

On the Palestinian side, Hamas and the PIJ were opposed to the accords and “warned that a two-state solution would forgo the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the historic lands seized from them in 1948 when Israel was created.” Said in his LRB article called it “an instrument of Palestinian surrender, a Palestinian Versailles.” Today’s Israeli cabinet comprises people who believe in expelling Palestinians from Eretz Yisrael [Greater Israel]. Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel’s current national security minister, had threatened to kill Rabin. Along with Bezalel Smotrich, the far-right current finance minister, he is also an illegal settler.

This is of course a very sketchy account. But the essential point is simple: Israel, artificially created as a Jewish state, simply cannot exist alongside a sovereign Palestinian state. This has been made clear by a number of Zionists. Their argument: “If we allow Palestinians to return, what will become of the Jewishness of the Jewish state.”

Neither one state nor two states works for Israel. As discerning observers have noted, given what happened to the Oslo Accords, the two-state solution only

lives in sham bureaucratic platitudes. There were and are many proposals on the table, but Hamas and Israel are sticking to their positions: Hamas wants a permanent ceasefire and complete Israeli withdrawal; Israel wants a temporary ceasefire, return of Israeli captives and the freedom to continue its war to “destroy” Hamas’ fighting capability, a euphemism for exterminating and expelling Gazans and occupying Gaza to make way for illegal Israeli settlements.

Some history is important

The idea of political Zionism is credited to Theodor Herzl’s 1896 pamphlet *The Jewish State*. But Herzl, a Jewish journalist and essayist who was born in Budapest in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and is considered the father of Israel, was not the first Jewish writer to have presented this idea. Zionism predated Herzl.

The idea in several forms was gestating among European Jews who were actively a part of European socio-political turmoil in the 18th and 19th centuries. As German historian Michael Brenner describes it, “Nationalism was a characteristic trait of life in 19th century Europe, and Jews were right in the middle of it.” They had “witnessed and often participated in the struggles for unity and independence of European nations, from the Polish rebellions against the Czarist Empire to the Italian Risorgimento and the struggle over German unification.”

It was “no coincidence that the most significant precursors of Zionism came from the much-contested border areas of Europe or explicitly mentioned the fight for sovereignty of European nations as an inspiration of their own (proto-) Zionist writings.”

Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai (1798–1878), born in Sarajevo, and Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874), born in West Prussian Thorn, were two contemporaries who believed that Jews could not passively await the arrival of the Messiah. Their approach was very different from many ultra-orthodox Jews (including rabbis) who were to later oppose Herzl’s political Zionism.

Alkalai, in fact, came up with a novel interpretation and pointed to “a precedent in the traditional Jewish idea of a first, temporary, Messiah from the house of Joseph, who would lead a militant struggle to open the way for the final arrival of the real Messiah from the house of David.”

This two-stage interpretation looked at Zionism, in terms of a return to the Biblical idea of Eretz Yisrael, as the form of a collective Messiah of the house of Joseph, which would then lead to the arrival of the real Messiah. As Brenner puts it, “He thus legitimised the return of the Jews and the establishment of their state in Israel by his quite original theological interpretation.”

Kalischer, while not going for a novel exegesis, however, argued in his 1862 treatise *Seeking Zion* (German: *Drishat Tzion*) that Jews could not passively wait for the Messiah. “Instead, he called for human intervention to hasten the coming of the Messiah. The colonisation of the Land of Israel was one measure he suggested.”

Speaking with me, American policy scholar Barnett Rubin, who is known here because of his work on Afghanistan and Central Asia, talked about false messiahs. That account is contained in a long article he wrote for the Boston Review titled, “False Messiahs: How Zionism’s dreams of liberation became entangled with colonialism.”

But a little known and often forgotten fact is that Jewish political and religious Zionism came much later. It was preceded by Christian (later, Protestant) Zionism. Jordanian-Palestinian Professor Joseph

Massad takes the idea back to Christian millenarianism during the crusades. British Reverend Dr Stephen Sizer argues this point in his book *Christian Zionism: Road Map to Armageddon?* and says that, “Christian Zionism is the most dominant and destructive expression of Zionism today.”

Meanwhile, Donald E Wagner, author of *Anxious for Armageddon* and who teaches at North Park University in Chicago, notes that, “Christian Zionism...views the modern state of Israel as the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy, thus deserving our unconditional economic, moral, political and theological support.”

What we are witnessing today is a coming together of Jewish Zionism, which has now transformed into Religious Jewish Zionism, and modern Protestant millenarianism that is pegged on the Second Coming of Christ.

This is where theology, politics and geopolitical interests intersect. The ‘return’, essentially the stealing of Palestinian land, not only fulfilled a promise for the Jews but also provided them the support of Christian millenarians and, presumably, secular, democratic Western governments.

Why is this important?

This sketchy background of a very complex history should give the reader some idea about why, despite the Oslo Agreements, no solution to the Palestinian colonisation is in sight; why Israel continues to insist on keeping Gaza as an open prison and the OPTs as areas that are effectively controlled by Israeli military and intelligence services; why Israel can, at will, curtail freedom of movement, raid, arrest and kill Palestinian men, women and children; and why Israel continues to expand illegal settlements in the face of UN resolutions by destroying Palestinian properties and land. Most importantly, it explains why Israel will never agree to a sovereign Palestinian State.

The two-state solution, as noted above, is a red-herring. Take, for instance, the US position: first in 2011 and now several weeks ago, the US has killed Palestine’s application in the UN Security Council for a full state status. The US insists that, until a final settlement, Palestine cannot have full status.

But while mouthing the two-state bromide, it has failed to force Israel into moving towards final settlement talks or stop it from expanding its illegal settlements. Last September, when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu went to the UN with a map of Israel that showed Gaza, OPTs, Galilee and the Syrian Golan Heights as part of Israel, the US never objected to his brandishing of that map.

That map is Eretz Yisrael. Israel cannot openly show Jordan and parts of Syria and Lebanon in that map because of geopolitical sensitivities, but there’s more to Eretz Yisrael than the ‘River to the Sea’ slogan. When a reporter once asked Menachem Begin about the borders of Israel, Begin responded by saying, “But they are given in the Bible.”

As Rubin wrote in an article for the website *Mondoweiss*, titled ‘Redemption through Genocide’: “In the wake of the 1967 War, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook’s teaching that the commandment to ‘conquer and settle’ the Land of Israel was equal to all the other commandments, inspired [ultranationalist Jewish settler movement] Gush Emunim. Fulfilling that commandment is the greatest tikkun [acts of repair] and will hasten the footsteps of the Messiah. ‘The army of Israel,’ Kook taught, ‘is the army of Hashem [God].’ Expansion, repair, the promised land, the return of the Messiah, the army of God — none of this squares with a settlement with the Palestinians.”

The place of violence

This is where the Palestinian armed resistance comes in. International humanitarian law legitimises wars of national liberation. The Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 describes such resistance as a protected, univer-

sal and essential right of occupied people. This is further corroborated by UNGA’s 1974 Resolution 3314, which not only prohibits states from “any military occupation, however temporary” but also affirms the right “to self-determination, freedom and independence [...] of peoples forcibly deprived of that right, [...] particularly peoples under colonial and racist regimes or other forms of alien domination.” The resolution also recognises the right of the occupied to “struggle... and to seek and receive support” in that effort. This is further corroborated by UNGA resolution, A/RES/37/43 of December 3, 1982 which “Reaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples...all available means, including armed struggle;...”

International Law is very clear. The rest is geopolitical baloney. Hamas’ October 7 attack, despite the very high cost to Gaza and Gazans, has served to sharpen focus on Israel’s real objective: expel Palestinians from occupied territories and create Eretz Yisrael from the River to the Sea.

Ajrami, who trained hundreds of Hamas and PIJ fighters, advised them to be patient and bide their time: “Let the beast sleep until you are ready,” he said. But when the time is ripe, “Bring the beast to me, and we will slay it together.”

Hamas knew how Israel would respond: brutally and vengefully. In strategic terms, begetting the expected Israeli response was key to creating an international public relations disaster for Israel. That is precisely what has happened.

For the first time in its artificial history, Israel has lost the support of not only a number of states but people around the world. It is in the International Court of Justice dock on the charge of committing genocide and its actions have also put Germany in the dock.

The United States, its strongest ally, is in a quandary — it is stretched in geopolitical terms, from Ukraine to the South China Sea to the Middle East. The Global South, to use a loose term, no longer considers it an honest broker.

This does not mean that Israel will relent. It won’t. It also retains the capabilities to put up a fight and it will. A mix of political and religious Zionism means it cannot have a single, inclusive state in Palestine; nor can it allow a sovereign Palestine as part of a two-state solution — unless, the US and its Western allies develop some basic moral compass.

In the interim, Israel will become even more brutal. It is locked in a paradox of its own creation: such are the very conditions of the problem that the solution to the problem is rendered impossible. American author Joseph Heller called it *Catch 22*.

Equally, as the Hamas attack and subsequent horizontal escalation have shown, the rules of engagement in the Middle East have changed. To quote the IDF spokesperson Lt-Col Peter Lerner, the Axis of Resistance has created a “ring of fire” around Israel.

Resistance groups are in this war and its many battles for the long haul. They have seen how this iteration has created second- and third-order effects for Israel and the US. With the growing commodification of weapon systems, platforms and associated technologies, capabilities are becoming diffused and spreading laterally. That fact has consequences for more iterations of this war.

There are two ways of dealing with this: either the Western world leans heavily and decisively on Israel to deliver a sovereign Palestinian state or the war will continue. Its continuation will have unintended and catastrophic consequences.

As TS Eliot said in *East Coker*:
*“Our only health is the disease
 If we obey the dying nurse
 Whose constant care is not to please
 But to remind of our, and Adam’s curse,
 And that, to be restored, our sickness
 must grow worse.”*

The article first appeared on Dawn.



Yazdani back to training in a bid for Olympic glory

Sports Desk

Iran's Hassan Yazdani made his long-awaited return to the wrestling mat this week in a bid to win a third successive Olympic medal in the upcoming Paris Games. Yazdani had been ruled out of action for more than six months after a surgery on his injured shoulder, with his latest appearance coming in last October's Asian Games, where he cruised to the free-style 86kg gold. Yazdani was to join the national team training camp in Tehran this week but decided to continue his recovery in his home town of Juybar in northern Iran and a video on his Instagram account on Thursday showed him in training with sparring partner Mahdi Yegane' Ja'fari. A winner of a national-high nine world and Olympic medals, Yazdani secured the Olympic 86kg quota for the country through last year's World Championships in Bel-

grade, where he fell to a fifth defeat in six meetings with familiar foe David Taylor in the final showpiece. However, Yazdani is yet to be guaranteed a place in the Iranian Olympic squad as there have been doubts over his fitness levels with three months to go until the opening ceremony of the Games in the French capital. Alireza Dabir, the chairman of the Iranian Wrestling Federation, was first to question the future of Yazdani's career weeks after his surgery. "No wrestler in Iran has ever fully recovered from a shoulder injury over the past 20 years," said Dabir, whose illustrious career came to a premature end with the same problem when he was 25. Standing between Yazdani and a place in Paris will likely be fellow-Iranian Kamran Qasempour, who has been dealing with his own injury setbacks over the past 12 months.

Two-time world 92kg champion Qasempour missed out on the title defense last year before moving up the 97kg Olympic class for the start of the new year, though his failure in January's Zagreb Open left young prodigy Amir-Ali Azarpira as the frontrunner to represent the country in the weight division. Iran head coach Mohsen Kaveh said last week that Yazdani would be sent to a tournament in Hungary or Armenia before the Olympics to have his fitness assessed, while the Iranian 86kg slot could be on the line in a highly-anticipated head-to-head featuring him and Qasempour. Having lost the final to Taylor in the Tokyo Olympics, Yazdani will be eager to add the Paris gold to his Rio 2016 triumph after the 34-year-old American was stunned by Aaron Brooks in the U.S. Olympic trials last Saturday and will play no part in Paris showdown in July.



● IWF



● IRNA

Iranian shooting duo wins WSPS World Cup silver

Sports Desk

Iranian pair of Nasrin Shahi and Mohammadreza Mirshafiei bagged a silver medal in the World Shooting Para Sport World Cup in Changwon, South Korea. Representing the country in the mixed team 10m air pistol SH1 event, Mirshafiei

dominated the qualification round with 288 points, with Shahi fourth in the table on 282, but the duo still had to settle for the runner-up finish after a final defeat against the Indian pair of Bhakti Sharma and Nihal Singh. This is the second WSPS World Cup of the year following the season open-

er in New Delhi in early March. Elsewhere in Changwon, Roqayyeh Shojaei took part in the women's 10m air rifle standing SH1 contest but was left empty-handed after an eighth-place finish in the final with a total 122.3 points. Indian Mona Agarwal grabbed the gold thanks

to a 250.8-point tally, with Slovakian Veronika Vadovicova and Anna Benson of Sweden on the following podiums respectively. A total of 125 shooters from 27 countries will be competing in Changwon until May 1 in part of their preparation in the buildup to the Paris 2024 Paralympics - starting August 28.

Feyenoord boss Slot confirms interest in Liverpool job

BBC - Feyenoord head coach Arne Slot has said he hopes to take over from Jurgen Klopp as Liverpool manager at the end of the season. Liverpool opened talks with Feyenoord on Wednesday about Slot's potential appointment. The Dutchman confirmed his interest in the job to ESPN before Feyenoord's 3-1 league victory on Thursday against Go Ahead Eagles. "It seems clear to me that I would like to work there," Slot said. "All I can say about it is that the clubs are in ne-

go-tiations. I'm in the waiting room." He added that he was "confident" Liverpool and Feyenoord would be able to reach an agreement. Slot, 45, led Feyenoord to the 2022-23 Eredivisie title and this season's Dutch Cup, and he has previously been linked with Tottenham Hotspur and Leeds United. Liverpool will have to negotiate a fee with Feyenoord if Slot is appointed, as he does not have a release clause for this summer. On Wednesday, Reds captain Virgil van Dijk said that Slot's playing philosophy would suit the club, describing him as

"one of the better Dutch coaches at the moment". It is believed that the attacking style of Slot's teams, his personality and his ability to develop players are key factors in making him Liverpool's preferred candidate.

He took over as Feyenoord manager in 2021 and confirmed his interest in managing in the Premier League when he was linked with Spurs in 2023. Xabi Alonso was linked with the Anfield vacancy but announced in March that he would remain with Bayer Leverkusen, while Sporting Lisbon's Ruben Amorim was also rumoured to be of interest.



● AAP

American Coleman believes Bolt's 100m record could fall soon

REUTERS - American sprinter Christian Coleman believes that Usain Bolt's 100-metres record of 9.58 seconds that has stood for 15 years is within reach and said there are several athletes fast enough to break it. "It seems like the times being run, 9.58 is obviously an extraordinary time but honestly I feel like it's a lot of guys who are competing today who are not that far off, if the track gods see fit for it to happen," Coleman told reporters on Friday ahead of today's Shanghai Diamond League meet. "But it has to be perfect conditions, on the right

physis or thought on it. I try to just focus on the next practice, the next rep, the next me and just trying to improve and get better and better and the times will come." Jamaica's Bolt set his 100m record in Berlin in 2009. American Tyson Gay is the second quickest after Bolt with a time of 9.69 set in Shanghai the same year.

Christian Miller, a 17-year-old from the U.S., ran 9.93 - the fastest time in the world this year - at a high school meet in Florida last weekend. Coleman, a five-times world champion who has a 100m personal best of 9.76 set in 2019, takes on U.S. rival Fred Kerley for the first time this outdoor season at the Shanghai Diamond League meet. The 28-year-old Coleman raced to gold in the 60m at the world indoor championships earlier this season in Glasgow.



day, the right competition and the right venue ... if you're focusing on running properly, like executing a good race, I feel like those type of magical moments happen. "I feel like it's in my wheelhouse, but I don't try to put too much em-

● TINGSHU WANG/REUTERS



Iran calls on BRICS to play role in stopping Israeli crimes

Iran called on the BRICS group of emerging economies to play a role in putting an immediate stop to Israeli crimes against the

Palestinians. The call by Iran's deputy foreign minister Ali Baqeri Kani in Moscow on Thursday came as his counter-

parts and special representatives of BRICS nations met to discuss the latest developments in the Middle East and North Africa region.

"The manner and quality of role-playing of individual countries and international organizations in relation to the Israeli regime's crisis mongering and the position they adopt in this regard is effective and will be recorded in history," he said. "Therefore, the members of the BRICS organization should show their political and practical will to completely stop attacks on people and civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip," he said. Baqeri Kani called on the BRICS nations to help with the quick sending of humanitarian aid, especially food, medical equipment and medicine to the Gaza Strip and the complete withdrawal of the occupying forces and the reconstruction of the besieged territory. "At the moment, our focus should be on achieving a complete and permanent halt to the attacks of the Zionist regime in order to reduce the humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip, expand the sending of international humanitarian aid to Gaza, and provide firm support to the activities of humanitarian organizations, especially UNRWA," he said.

Iran's delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri Kani (3rd L) attends a BRICS meeting to discuss the latest developments in the Middle East and North Africa region, in Moscow, Russia, on April 25, 2024. **IRNA**

"Only taking a position and making a statement is not enough, and effective and decisive operational measures must be put on the agenda for the Zionist regime to comply with the wishes of the international community." The senior Iranian diplomat thanked South Africa for taking Israel to the International Court of Justice for genocide in the Gaza Strip. He asked BRICS members to strongly support the case and provide necessary legal solutions to deal with the crimes. Meanwhile, Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations denounced Israel's destabilizing activities in the Middle East, urging the UN Security Council to hold the Israeli regime accountable for its atrocities in Gaza and elsewhere. "Israel's ongoing destabilized and irresponsible actions and atrocities against the nations in the region are a real threat to regional and international peace and security," Amir Saeid Iravani said as he addressed a UN Security Council session in New York on Thursday. He noted that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seeks to expand and escalate the conflict in the region to stay in power, emphasizing that the members of the Security Council must not allow the body to be held hostage to the ambitions of such a "belligerent regime."

Iran DM discusses cooperation with China, Russia



IRAN'S DEFENSE MINISTRY

International Desk

Iran's Defense Minister held talks with his Russian and Chinese counterparts on the sidelines of a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Kazakhstan. According to the Russian state news agency RIA, the goal of the meeting between Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Iranian counterpart Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani was to strengthen the commitment of both nations and bolster military and technical collaboration. Shoigu reportedly conveyed Moscow's readiness to deepen ties with Tehran in the realm of military and technical cooperation. Shoigu emphasized the importance of fostering closer strategic alignment between the two nations. The Iranian official also held a separate meeting with Chinese counterpart Dong Jun.

During the meeting, both sides discussed ways to enhance military cooperation, also conferring on regional issues. Ashtiani hailed China's stance on the ongoing developments in the region and its condemnation of Israel's airstrike against Iran's diplomatic premise in the Syrian capital of Damascus earlier this month. It is necessary for Iran and China to boost cooperation and convergence to solve security issues in the region and across the world, the Iranian defense chief said. On April 1, the Israeli regime carried out terrorist airstrikes on the consular section of Iran's embassy in the Syrian capital, which killed two generals of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as well as five of their accompanying officers.

In retaliation, the IRGC targeted the occupied territories on April 13 with a barrage of drones and missiles. The retaliatory strikes, dubbed Operation True Promise, inflicted damage on Israeli military bases across the occupied Palestinian territories. The Chinese defense minister, for his part, slammed Israel's attack on Iran's diplomatic premises in Syria, which he said violated international law. China supports Iran's legitimate right to respond to Israel, Dong added. In recent years, geopolitical shifts and the emergence of new security threats have prompted Moscow, Tehran and Beijing to reassess their strategic priorities and explore avenues for collaboration.

Hamas officials say group ready to disarm if Palestinian state established

A top Hamas political official said the resistance group is willing to agree to a truce of five years or more with Israel and that it would lay down its weapons and convert into a political party if an independent Palestinian state is established along pre-1967 borders. The comments by Khalil al-Hayya in an interview Wednesday came amid a stalemate in months of talks for a cease-fire in Gaza. But it's unlikely Israel would consider such a scenario. Israel's current leadership is adamantly opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state on lands Israel occupied in the 1967 Mideast war. Al-Hayya, a high-ranking

Hamas official who has represented the Palestinian group in negotiations for a cease-fire and hostage exchange, struck a sometimes defiant and other times conciliatory tone. Speaking to the AP in Istanbul, Al-Hayya said Hamas wants to join the Palestine Liberation Organization, headed by the rival Fatah faction, to form a unified government for Gaza and the West Bank. He said Hamas would accept "a fully sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the return of Palestinian refugees in accordance with the international resolutions," along Israel's pre-1967 borders. If that happens, he said, the

group's military wing would dissolve. "All the experiences of people who fought against occupiers, when they became independent and obtained their rights and their state, what have these forces done? They have turned into political parties and their defending fighting forces have turned into the national army," he said. Basem Naim, an Istanbul-based member of Hamas' political bureau, also told CNN on Thursday that the group would agree to disarm if an independent Palestinian state was established. "If an independent state with its capital in Jerusalem [Al-Quds], while preserving the

right of return for refugees, (is created) Al-Qassam could be integrated into (a future) national army," he said, referring to the group's armed wing. Mustafa Barghouti, President of the Palestinian National Initiative, said he wasn't aware of Hamas offering to lay down its arms before, but said it would be a significant move if true. Hamas is currently fighting Israeli army which has launched a devastating war on the Gaza Strip since October 7 when the resistance group attacked the occupied territories and killed nearly 1,200 Israelis. Israel's ensuing bombardment and ground offensive have killed more than 34,000 Palestinians, most of



CHRIS MCGRATH/GETTY IMAGES

them women and children, according to local health authorities, and displaced some 80% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million. Nearly seven months into the war in Gaza, cease-fire negotiations have also stalled. Israel is now preparing for an offensive in the southern city of Rafah, where more than 1 million Palestinians have fled to. Al-Hayya said such an offensive would not succeed in destroying Hamas. He said

contacts between the political leadership outside and military leadership inside Gaza are "uninterrupted" by the war and "contacts, decisions and directions are made in consultation" between the two groups. Israeli forces "have not destroyed more than 20% of (Hamas') capabilities, neither human nor in the field," he asserted. "If they can't finish (Hamas) off, what is the solution? The solution is to go to consensus."

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Pro-Palestinian US campus protests grow as police crack down

Pro-Palestinian protests spread to more college campuses in the United States on Thursday as authorities appeared to be running out of patience and police began to push back forcefully. Riot officers used chemical irritants and tasers at one university as administrators at some of the country's most prestigious institutions battled to prevent occupations taking hold, AFP reported. Staging sit-ins and mounting boisterous demonstrations, the activists are call-

ing for a cease-fire in Gaza, as well as for colleges to sever ties with the Israeli regime and with companies they say profit from the conflict. "For 201 days, the world has watched in silence as Israel has murdered over 30,000 Palestinians," organizers of a protest at the University of California, Los Angeles said in an online message. "Today, UCLA joins students across the country in demanding that our universities divest from the companies which profit off of the occupation, apartheid and

genocide in Palestine." More than 200 protesters were arrested Wednesday and early Thursday at universities in Los Angeles, Boston and Austin, Texas, where around 2,000 people gathered again on Thursday. The spreading protests began at Columbia University in New York. Meanwhile, students in Paris protested again on Friday after police broke up a pro-Palestinian solidarity demonstration Wednesday night at Sciences Po, one of France's most prestigious universities.

ISCARSAH to cooperate with Natanz to restore monuments



NGO, conducts assessments and researches historical artifacts to ensure the precision of restoration efforts. During their visit, two representatives from Turkey and Mehrdad Hejazi, the vice president of ISCARSAH, inspected the Sasanian Fire Temple, the Jameh Mosque, and the Shrine of Sheikh Abdolsamad.

The chief of Natanz's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department highlighted ISCARSAH's involvement in devising a plan for the restoration and construction of the dome of the Sasanian Fire Temple. Yazdanmehr also noted that ISCARSAH will conduct research on the Sheikh Abdolsamad Mosque, while the Jameh Mosque of Natanz, adorned with Kufic script inscriptions on brick, awaits ISCARSAH's proposal for its preservation.

The collaboration between ISCARSAH and Natanz authorities signifies a concerted effort to safeguard and revitalize the rich cultural heritage of the region, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

Arts & Culture Desk

An international group specializing in the restoration of historical buildings, ISCARSAH, joined hands with local cultural heritage authorities in Natanz, Iran.

Hossein Yazdanmehr, the chief of Natanz's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, said that ISCARSAH visited the historical sites of the county on Thursday night and agreed to collaborate

with the local heritage authorities in the restoration of several monuments, IRNA wrote. Yazdanmehr further explained that ISCARSAH, operating under the auspices of UNESCO as an active



Tehran cherry blossoms festival draws 8,000 tourists

A total of 8,000 tourists attended the Kan cherry festival, marking a 50% growth compared to last year, the district governor of Tehran's Kan area announced. Morteza Mohammadnejad, during the third Kan cherry festival held in the four villages of Sangan, said, "We witnessed the presence of 8,000 tourists at this festival, indicating a 50% growth compared to last year," ILNA wrote. He highlighted the potential of the villages in the Kan district and added, "These potentials have led to the organization of four festivals throughout the year, including the cherry festival in April-May, the

black mulberry festival in late summer, the persimmon festival in late autumn, and the seasonal festival attended by various ethnic groups." He emphasized the importance of holding these festivals to support rural productions and promote organic products, stating, "These festivals in Kan district aim to boost tourism, introduce the region's villages, products, and mountainous capabilities, diversify rural productions, increase public participation in promoting a healthy lifestyle, strengthen family bonds, protect the environment and promote recycling, preserve natural resources, enhance social

activities, and promote universal sports throughout the year." Mohammadnejad added, "Alongside these exquisite products, three ancient sites, including a 4,000-year-old plantain tree, a historical waterfall, and a 250-year-old historical caravanserai, are among the other attractions that attract eager tourists to this beautiful mountainous region." The Kan cherry festival not only celebrates the cultural richness of the region but also serves as a platform for economic growth and sustainable tourism, drawing visitors to experience the beauty and heritage of Kan's villages.

Pedaling through time: Tehran's age-old bicycle repair shop keeps tradition rolling



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

In the heart of Tehran's historic Shapour neighborhood, settled along Zafar al-Dawla Street (near Shapour Square (Vahdat Square)), lies Hassan Hatef's bicycle repair shop, a relic of a bygone era. At 56, Hassan reflects on nearly a century of family tradition, recounting tales of resilience amidst changing times. If you've ever strolled around the Shapour neighborhood, part of Tehran's historic fabric, you've likely come across its ancient alleys and passages, resonating with names of prominent figures of the past like Mostofi Lane, Vazir Daftar Lane, Qavam al-Dawla Bazaar, and Moti al-Dawla Alley, among others. Zafar al-Dawla Street takes its name from a dynasty that became part of the Qajar administration. Fat'hollah Khan Zafar al-Dawla was one of its descendants, a high-ranking military commander during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi, who, despite the government's ceasefire order, confronted and immobilized British forces.

The Hatef family, residents of the Shapour neighborhood and Zafar al-Dawla Street, has a long-standing connection with this area. Hassan and his father spent nearly 90 years working as bicycle makers in this very room. Reflecting on the neighborhood's past, Hassan says, "Don't judge Shapour solely as a lower-middle-class neighborhood; historically, it was among the elite neighborhoods of the capital. Notable figures from the Qajar and Pahlavi eras resided here. The intersection of Vahdat Square, or Shapour as it was known, used to be a significant city square, adjacent to Tehran's main bazaar, attracting merchants and dignitaries." "My father was born here in 1924, and this has been our family shop since then. He bought the shop's goodwill from his father. All the wooden shelves you see inside were made by my grandfather around 1936. Before owning the shop, my father worked as an apprentice under the auspice of a master here. After returning from military service, he became a master himself and took over the shop," he adds. Describing the shop's structure,

Hassan explains, "This room is part of a large ancient building, once considered a caravanserai and later converted into a garage. One of Tehran's oldest theaters operated here, and remnants of its stage and stairs remain inside the garage. In fact, this shop was part of that building; initially, it served as a tobacco warehouse before being transformed into rooms and shops." Regarding the evolution of his business, Hassan mentions, "In the past, bicycles were crucial means of transportation, driv-



ing demand for bicycle repairs. However, people's circumstances were different; not everyone could afford a new bicycle, so my father rented bicycles by the hour. He used to say that back then, tubes for all bicycle sizes weren't available; mostly, tubes for old 28-inch bicycles were in the market, and he would cut and fit them for smaller bicycles using various tricks." Asked about his entry into the family business, Hassan says, "It wasn't a matter of choice; I've been working alongside my father since childhood because he was alone. After my military service, I continued his path. Now, after 40 to 50 years in the bicycle business, my physical abilities have diminished, but I continue due to necessity. Years of sitting and standing repairing tires have worn me out; I suffer from arthritis in my knees and back and have hand pain." Regarding his income, he remarks, "It was decent once, but not anymore. People now prefer fancy stores and tend to replace rather than repair items immediately. It's more about replacement than repair. Even bicycle riding isn't as popular among children anymore. Par-



● IRAN DAILY

ents buy electric cars for them as they grow older. Previously, adults also used bicycles for daily commuting. Those who have shifted to repairing new motorbikes have good earnings, but as a bicycle repairman, I struggle to make ends meet. Occasionally, I repair old Honda motorcycles, but I avoid new ones." Pointing to a wooden box beside him, Hassan says, "This box is filled to the brim with old magazines from before the revolution and the past years. Some of them have decayed. During the big flood of 1988 in Tajrish, water flooded all along Valiasr Street and its surroundings. The floodwater seeped into our shop, leaving half a

meter of mud and silt on the floor. At that time, the Iran-Iraq War hadn't ended, and I was on the southern and western fronts. When I returned, I found that half of the magazines had been destroyed by the flood. I disposed of them, but some still remain in the box." Asking about the future of his shop and his profession, he says, "It's unclear how many more years I can continue. I've tried to involve my son in the business several times, but he showed no interest. For now, I'll keep working as long as I can, and I won't alter the appearance of the shop, which is a legacy from my father and grandfather, until I see what the future holds."