

Raisi sounds alarm about 'high' abortion rate

National Desk

President Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday expressed concern about "high" and "alarming" rate of abortion in Iran, calling for measures to prevent "illegal abortion". "Iran's young girls and boys should know that illegal abortion is voluntary manslaughter under the Sharia law," Raisi told a major event on rejuvenating the population, ISNA reported. According to unofficial figures, each year between 300,000 to 500,000 abortions, most of them illegal, are carried out in Iran. Raisi called for more incentives to be granted to families and young

couples as part of national efforts to boost the birth rate. "Family is a key part of any society, which needs to be empowered partly through giving birth to children," Raisi said, adding that economic concerns, including housing, should be addressed as they discourage young people from getting married. He also said offering free of charge medical services to treat infertility as well as free healthcare for children under seven could also contribute to improving the birth rate. In recent years, Iran has launched various plans to increase the birth rate to slow down population ageing.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi speaks during a major event on rejuvenating the population in Tehran on May 18, 2024.

● president.ir



Palestinians prepared for 'long war of attrition' in Gaza



The military wing of Hamas said Palestinians are ready for a long war of attrition, pledging to stand up to Israel's ground invasion of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip and elsewhere. "Despite our full desire to stop the aggression against our people, we are prepared for a long battle of attrition against the enemy, dragging them into a swamp where they will gain nothing but the death of their soldiers and the capture of their officers," Qassam Brigades spokesman Abu Obeida said in a video message, Press TV reported.

"This is because we are the people of this land and are its rightful owners," he added.

His remarks come as fighting is raging in Gaza as Israel intensifies its ground invasion of Rafah despite international concerns for the hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians in the southern city.

In the past 10 days, Palestinian fighters have targeted 100 Israeli military vehicles, including tanks, armored personnel carriers as well as bulldozers, Abu Obeida said. They have inflicted heavy casualties on Israeli soldiers by blowing up tunnels, launching rockets and mortars, and through sniping and close-quarters combat.

The Israeli military, he said, does not announce the exact figure of its losses in Gaza.

"The Al-Qassam Brigades fighters inflicted severe blows on the Zionist enemy in the eastern flank of Rafah city," Abu Obeida said.

He said the Israeli military had made a big mistake by deciding to launch a ground invasion of Rafah, the Zaitoun neighborhood, and Jabalia refugee camp, rendering its troops easy targets for Palestinian fighters.

The Israelis, he said, thought that if they spent seven months burning everything to the ground, they would face little resistance, "but they were surprised to find that they were once again in hell, facing fiercer resistance than before".

On Thursday, major general in the Israeli Reserve Army Yitzhak Brik said the current war unfolding in Gaza is a "war of attrition". He warned that its prolongation "will lead to the collapse of the army and economy in Israel".

IRGC naval flotilla accomplishes 39-day mission in high seas



● IRNA

National Desk

A flotilla of military vessels belonging to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' Navy returned home on Saturday after accomplishing its 39-day mission in the high seas. The commander of the IRGC's Navy Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri welcomed the flotilla which has been named after the Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani - Iran's top anti-terror commander who was assassinated by the United States in Iraq in 2020. Tangsiri hailed the country's naval forces, especially the IRGC's Navy, saying that this is the first time that the IRGC Navy has managed to cross the equator and enter the southern hemisphere. He said that the country's naval forces using their advanced capabilities have become a nightmare for the enemies.

Earlier this month, the Iranian Navy also said it will deploy a team of researchers to the Antarctic. Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani unveiled plans for the Iranian Navy to dispatch a scientific and research delegation to the Antarctic with 100 percent preparedness to conduct scientific research.

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Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Zelensky: West 'afraid' of both Russian, Ukrainian defeat

International Desk

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky criticized the West for imposing a ban on using Western-donated arms to strike targets inside Russia, saying the West is "afraid" of both Russian and Ukrainian defeat. Zelensky told AFP in an exclusive interview that Ukraine's Western backers have left his country in a "nonsense situation" where it gets enough support to avoid total defeat, but not enough to achieve victory.

"The Russians can attack us on our territory, which is their biggest advantage, but we can't use Western weapons against their systems located in Russia. We have no right," the Ukrainian president said. "We want the war to end with a fair peace for us," while "the West wants the war to end. Period. As soon as possible. And for them, this is a fair peace," Zelensky added.

"They are helping Ukraine to keep going but not to win the war," Phillips O'Brien, a professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, told NBC News. "And they don't seem to actually want to give Ukraine what it needs to win the war." US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who visited Kiev earlier this week, said Washington has "not encouraged or enabled strikes outside of Ukraine, but ultimately Ukraine has to make decisions for itself about how it's going to conduct this war."



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky speaks during an interview with AFP at the Presidential Office in Kiev on May 17, 2024.
● ROMAN.PILIPEY/AFP

However, Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh on Thursday clarified that Washington's position that Kiev should not target Russia with US-supplied weapons remains unchanged. Such arms can only be used to "take back Ukrainian sovereign territory," Singh stressed.

Zelensky has repeatedly asked the West, particularly the US, for long-range missiles and advanced fighter jets to challenge Russia's air superiority and compensate for failure on the ground. Zelensky said he expects Russia to step up its offensive in the northeast and warned Kiev only has a quarter of the air defenses it needs to hold the front line.

Russian forces, which had made only moderate advances in recent months, launched a surprise assault in Kharkiv region on May 10 that has resulted in their biggest territorial gains in a year-and-a-half. Zelensky said Russian troops managed to advance between five to 10 kilometers (3-6 miles)

along the northeastern border before being stopped by Ukrainian forces, but added that the region could be the "first wave" in a wider offensive.

"I won't say it's a great success (for Russia) but we have to be sober and understand that they are going deeper into our territory," he said.

He doubled down on pleas to allies to send more air defense and fighter jets to combat Russia's air superiority as the war grinds through its third year.

"Today, we have about 25 percent of what we need to defend Ukraine. I'm talking about air defense," he said.

Ukraine needs "120 to 130" F-16 fighter jets or other advanced aircraft to achieve air "parity" with Russia, Zelensky said.