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Tehran-Moscow ties remain on track



By Shuaib Bahman
Russia affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The presidents of Iran and Russia met for the first time since the new Iranian government took office in August on the sidelines of an international conference in Turkmenistan, where they held talks and emphasized the importance of bilateral and regional cooperation. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the current state of relations and underscored the need to further develop ties.

Over the years, Iran-Russia relations have evolved to the point where changes in government have not significantly impacted their policies toward each other. The two countries collaborate on various key issues, including regional and international files, technical, military, and security cooperation. Moreover, both nations are subject to Western sanctions, which has created a fertile ground for expanding Tehran-Moscow cooperation.

The meeting between Masoud Pezeshkian and Vladimir Putin is a case in point, as the new Iranian government has made it clear from the outset that it will continue the Islamic Republic's overall foreign policy. Pezeshkian has repeatedly said that Iran will not forget its friends in times of hardship, specifically mentioning Russia and China.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (l) shakes hands with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of a regional forum in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on October 11, 2024. president.ir

Putin: Ties with Iran 'high priority' for Russia

VP welcomes proposals to solve energy shortages

Economy Desk

ISNA - Iran's First vice president stated the government is open to well-researched proposals that address shortages, especially in the energy sector, while considering the country's resources.

Mohammad Reza Aref emphasized the importance of avoiding slogan-like statements, stating that the advancement and development of the country is the primary goal of all concerned Iranians.

Iran is expected to face a 25,000-MW power shortage next summer if no measure is taken, said the head of the Niroo Research Institute (NRI) in early October, adding that the figure hit 19 MW during the hot days of the summer.

The projected winter gas shortage in Iran is expected to be 250 million cubic meters per day, which represents 25% of the country's total daily gas demand. Iran produces approximately 110 million liters of gasoline daily, but this output is insufficient to meet its daily consumption needs, resulting in a shortfall of around 15 million liters. As a result, the country has been reliant on gasoline imports since 2021 to bridge the gap, with estimates suggesting that imports valued at around \$3 billion will be required this year.

Iran, Tajikistan discuss regional stability

Economy Desk

The Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf held talks with the Chairman of the National Assembly of Tajikistan Rustam Emomali to expand political, economic, cultural, and parliamentary cooperation on Thursday.

"In the negotiations, important issues such as ensuring stability and security in Afghanistan, the fight against drugs, and arms trafficking were brought up," Qalibaf told journalists after arriving back from Tajikistan.

To break free from Western dominance

BRICS economic chiefs chart course

Economy Desk

Top economic policy officials from BRICS member states held talks Friday to outline proposals to be reviewed by leaders at a summit later this month as Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov called for the creation of an alternative to the Western-dominated global financial system.

Head of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Mohammad Reza Farzin attended the meeting along with finance ministers from Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, while other member states sent more junior officials, according to Reuters.

BRICS, originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, and China, has expanded to include South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

Russia, heavily sanctioned by the West over its war in Ukraine and cut off from international capital markets, is trying to woo BRICS partners with initiatives such as the creation of the BRICS Bridge international payment system.

"The creation of a cross-border payment initiative is our main task," Siluanov told the officials. Russia is also pushing for the creation of a BRICS clearing centre, a rating agency, a reinsurance company, and a commodities exchange.

Siluanov has also proposed setting up a joint investment platform based on the group's New Development



Bank. The platform will use a new digital form of transactions, he said, without elaborating.

Siluanov, who hosted the meeting, said the global financial system is controlled by Western countries and that the group, which represents 37% of the global economy, needs to create an alternative.

"The IMF and the World Bank are not performing their roles. They are not working in the interests of BRICS countries," Siluanov said at an event on the first

day of the meeting. "It is necessary to form new conditions or even new institutions, similar to the Bretton Woods institutions, but within the framework of our community, within the framework of BRICS," he added.

The summit is scheduled for October 22-24 in Kazan, the capital of Russia's Tatarstan region. President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy aide, Yuri Ushakov, said nine of the 10 BRICS states would send their leaders, though

Saudi Arabia would send its foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud. The Saudi delegation was absent from the Friday meeting.

Farzin outlines vision

Mohammad Reza Farzin, the governor general of Iran's central bank, addressed the Moscow meeting, saying, "The aim should be to set up a settlement platform for cross-border payments based on real-time gross settlement systems (RTGS) and to ad-

dress the issue of digital currencies of BRICS member central banks (CBCDs)." According to IRNA, he also touched on the necessity of harnessing artificial intelligence in electronic banking and Iran's readiness to share its expertise with the BRICS members.

"We believe that by tapping into the political will that exists in the BRICS group and making technical and infrastructural investments, we can move forward with financial communication systems



Head of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Mohammad Reza Farzin (3rd-R) poses for a family photo alongside finance ministers and central bank governors of the BRICS bloc in Moscow, Russia on October 11, 2024.

IRAN NEWSPAPER

specific to BRICS, facilitate cross-border payments in the group, and ultimately pick up speed, bring down costs, and gain more comprehensive access to an international payment system, thereby creating a more competitive environment."

Tehran-Moscow ties...

It is expected that the long-term cooperation document between Iran and Russia, which is in its final stages, will be signed in the near future. The signing of such a document can bring new dimensions to the bilateral relationship and deepen cooperation. It appears that Pezeshkian and Putin discussed not only bilateral issues but also pressing regional

and international matters during their meeting. Regional and international issues have always been on the agenda of high-level talks between the two countries. Currently, the Gaza war, which has affected West Asia, has directly involved Iran and simultaneously impacted Russia's interests in the region. Therefore, it is natural that the two presidents would have consulted on how to ease

tensions in the region. It is only natural that both sides would leverage their capacities to weather the current turbulent situation in West Asia. As a global power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia has the ability to work with Iran to prevent the escalation of tensions through its influence in the top body. There have been criticisms of Russia in the Ira-

nian media and society. However, it is essential to note that media feedback on an issue often differs from reality. For instance, regarding Moscow's recent stance on the Zangezur corridor, which Iran opposes, there was widespread reproach to Russia in the Iranian media. However, during a visit by the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council to Russia, where he met with Putin,

the Russian side explicitly stated that it would not take any action that would harm Iran's interests and security. This does not mean that there are no differences of opinion between Iran and Russia; however, what matters is that both countries are trying to ensure that these disputes do not negatively impact their relations and cooperation. They are working to resolve

these differences through dialogue. Iran and Russia are not currently inclined to change the trajectory of their relations and cooperation. The statements made by Pezeshkian and Putin during their meeting in Turkmenistan reflected this, especially since the ground has been laid for increased economic cooperation between Tehran and Moscow.

Notice of tender for export sale No.17/1403/Z

Golgohar Mining and Industrial Company

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export **70,000 metric tons of Iron Ore pellet** (%Fe:65.00) on basis of F.O.B at Barco Jetty Bandar-Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: www.geg.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 9:00 A.M. on 22nd Oct. 2024 to the Golgohar complex in Sirjan. (50 km in Shiraz road) Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 9:00 A.M. on 22nd Oct. 2024 at the office of the Seller.

Analysis %		
Fe	65.00	Min
FeO	1.0	Ave
P	0.05	Max
S	0.01	Max
SiO2	3.5	Max
Al2O3	0.7	Max
CaO	0.9	Max
MgO	2.5	Max
CCS (kg/p)	Ave 250	
8-16 mm%	Min 90	
-6 mm%	Ave 5	
A.1%	Max 3.8	
T.1%	Min 95	
Prososity%	19-24	
Reducibility%	Min 90	

GOLGOHAR MINING & INDUSTRIAL CO.

Chabahar railway to neutralize Zangezur corridor: Official

ISNA - The secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council stated that completing the railway lines from the southeastern port of Chabahar as well as the Jolfa-Cheshmeh Sorayya route could render many perceived threats, including the Zangezur corridor, economically unviable. "Strengthening and stabilizing the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially its free zones, in transit corridors can generate foreign currency for the country and mitigate the effects of economic sanctions," Reza Masrouf added. Highlighting that one billion tons of goods are transported from East Asia



to Europe, he maintained, "We must be able to transit three to four percent of this volume through our country."

Evolution of rural communities in Iran



Filband village, Mazandaran Province

Iranica Desk

The history of rural communities over the past fifty years, including the significant transformations in the lives of rural inhabitants and the evolving importance of villages, has long been a subject of discussion and research. National Village and Nomad Day (October 6) serves as a timely opportunity to once again highlight the significance of rural society.

According to the 1976 census, approximately 51.6% of Iran's population lived in rural areas, with 34% engaged in agriculture or livestock farming. At that time, government policies contributed to a widening social and economic gap between

urban and rural regions. The struggling rural economy, combined with the growing appeal of urban centers due to their thriving economic and service sectors, accelerated the migration of rural populations to cities during the later years of the Pahlavi era. The concentration of health, economic, and educational facilities in large cities significantly influenced this migration trend, according to chtn.ir.

After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran placed a strong emphasis on the development and prosperity of Iranian villages. Various programs were introduced to enhance village conditions, including retirement plans for villagers over 65 years of age

and agricultural aid such as interest-free bank loans, subsidies for necessary supplies, and low-cost animal feed. The Construction Jihad Organization played a pivotal role in these efforts, focusing on meeting the basic infrastructural needs of villages, including road construction, school and clinic building, and providing drinking water and electricity. The achievements of the Construction Jihad Organization are notable; while only 4,300 villages had access to electricity before the revolution, this number skyrocketed to over 39,000 in villages with populations exceeding 250 within twenty years. Similarly, rural road construction expanded from 8,000 kilometers



Abyaneh village, Isfahan Province

before the revolution to 67,000 kilometers in recent months. These statistics reflect the progress made in rural areas since the victory of the Islamic Revolution. However, despite these efforts, the economy and income of rural inhabitants continue to face significant challenges that require ongoing support and attention. Unfortunately, the average per capita income of the rural community in Iran is one-third that of their urban counterparts. The promotion of rural tourism presents a potential avenue for economic improvement, allowing a portion of urban income to be spent in rural areas and ultimately increasing local income. Currently, one of the major

issues confronting rural inhabitants is the lack of stable employment, exacerbated by persistent droughts and weaknesses in the mechanized agricultural system, which have accelerated rural-to-urban migration.

In addition to agriculture, handicrafts and local industries have historically served as vital foundations for job creation in rural areas. However, with the increasing migration trend, many handicrafts are at risk of extinction. For instance, carpet weaving, once a crucial job-creating industry in villages and small towns, now faces serious threats. If rural tourism is developed, these industries could be revitalized and regain their former significance in the eco-

nomical and cultural landscape of villages.

Tourism-related jobs have the potential to create employment opportunities tailored to local women's circumstances. With rising literacy rates and a new generation of educated women emerging in rural areas, the development of rural tourism can effectively leverage this opportunity.

By implementing such strategies, the active rural population can grow, leading to enhanced financial circulation in the region. The advancement of this industry, starting from villages, has the potential to propel cities — and ultimately the entire country — toward sustainable economic prosperity.

Notable innovations in Darougheh House of Mashhad

Darougheh House in Mashhad, the capital city of Khorasan Razavi Province, is one of the Qajar historical houses and a significant tourist attraction in the Khorasan Razavi Province. It was registered on Iran National Heritage List in 2002. This house served as the residence of the last darougheh (darughachi, a Mongol word for governor) of Mashhad, Yusuf Khan Herati, built by his order. Notably, it was designed to be self-sufficient, relying on solar, wind, and water resources.

Unique features

One of the key historical values of Darougheh House is its inclusion of the first private bathroom and fireplace in Mashhad. At the time of its construction, no other houses in the city had a private bathroom or fireplace. Residents had to use public bathhouses, making the existence of a private bathroom in this house particularly significant.

Historical background

Constructed at the end of the Qajar period under Yusuf Khan Herati's orders, he not only served as the last darougheh but was also elected as the first head of nazmiyeh (urban police) after the Constitutional Revolution. He intended the Darougheh House to serve as a venue for official receptions and lived there for several years.

Ownership changes

Following Yusuf Khan Herati's death, the house was passed down to his heirs. In 1987, a religious congregation from Yazd purchased it, and it was used as a venue for religious gatherings for some time. Eventually, Mashhad Municipality bought



the property and initiated restoration efforts in collaboration with a company, which commenced in 2012 and concluded in 2015.

Recognition

After its restoration, Darougheh House became one of 13 projects to win UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. It is important to acknowledge that the municipality allocated a significant budget for the restoration.

Architectural design

Darougheh House is situated in Darougheh Alley, with its entrance on the south side. Upon entering, visitors notice that the house's courtyard is 75cm lower than the surrounding alley. The courtyard features a beautiful fountain and several small gardens.

The two-story structure of the Darougheh House is framed by two diagonal staircases on either side. It employs a design known as "three-sided construction," enclosing the eastern, western, and northern sides of the yard. The house consists of two living quarters and an ambulatory, connected in a style common among Iranian historical homes.

Architectural influences

The terrace design and two-sided stairs reflect inspiration from Russian architecture, with several decorative features resembling that style.

Porches: In the western section, a pillar-supported porch is adorned with octagonal and oval tilework. Names of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the phrase 'Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim' – In the Name of God, the Most Gracious,



the Most Merciful" are intricately engraved on this porch, surrounded by floral designs.

Another porch featuring four pillars is located in the northern section, with beautifully decorated brickwork and diagonally splayed staircases featuring delicate metal railings.

Seasonal living quarters

Darougheh House contains two distinct sections, the winter and summer dwellings, each designed for comfort during different seasons. The winter dwelling is oriented to face the sun, facilitating warmth during colder months. In contrast, the summer dwelling is designed to remain cooler by being situated away from direct sunlight.

The lower floor of the winter dwelling includes heating equipment to maintain warmth throughout the winter. The kitchen's location in this area also contributes to the house's overall warmth, complemented by heaters and double-glazed windows. A room in the eastern part of the house features a fireplace. The summer dwelling showcases a charming traditional fountain and wind-catcher rooms, which enhance ventilation and keep the house comfortable during warmer months.

A must-see attraction

A trip to Mashhad to visit the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), the eighth Imam of Shia Muslims, should also include a stop at various historical houses, with the Darougheh House being particularly noteworthy. Its remarkable architecture makes it one of Iran's most significant tourist attractions, drawing both domestic and international visitors each year.

'Death sentence': Asbestos released by Israel's bombs will kill for decades



By Nils Adler
Journalist

ANALYSIS

Israel's relentless bombardment of Gaza has unleashed yet another deadly, but silent enemy on the people there – asbestos.

A mineral that poses little risk to humans when undisturbed but that is highly carcinogenic when dispersed and released into the atmosphere, asbestos is present throughout much of Gaza's structures. Over the past year, Israel's bombs have caused vast amounts of it to be broken into tiny, airborne particles, which can potentially cause cancer in those who breathe it in, leading experts to say cases of cancer will likely be reported "for decades" in Gaza.

According to United Nations estimates, some 800,000 tonnes of the bombed-out debris across Gaza may be contaminated with asbestos.

This is a "death sentence" for Palestinians trapped in Gaza, leading asbestos expert Roger Willey told Al Jazeera.



An injured Palestinian woman covered in dust and blood hugs an injured girl at the hospital following the Israeli bombardment of Khan Yunis on November 15, 2023.

GETTY IMAGES

'A tragedy that will unfold in years ahead'

The asbestos exposure of people caught in the aftermath of each of Israel's bombing raids can be compared to that around the World Trade Center when it collapsed in New York City on September 11, 2001, Willey said.

Years later, it became apparent that toxic chemicals, including asbestos, were in the dust clouds.

"I made a prediction then [in 2001] that more people would die from the asbestos-related diseases than were killed in the September 11 attacks," Willey said.

According to the World Trade Center Health Program, 4,343 survivors and first responders have died from related illnesses since the attack compared to the 2,974 people who died on September 11.

"It's going to be exactly the same in Gaza," Willey continued.

"[A]irborne concentrations

[of asbestos] ... will be enormously high, and that is guaranteed mesothelioma," Willey said, referring to a cancer that commonly forms in the lining around the lungs or abdomen.

Asbestos exposure can also result in cancers of the lung, larynx and ovaries as well as asbestosis, which the US National Cancer Institute describes as an "inflammatory condition affecting the lungs that can cause shortness of breath, coughing and permanent lung damage".

Marcy Borders survived the WTC attack and was considered lucky to be alive. But it can take decades for asbestos-related cancers to emerge.

The Dust Lady died of stomach cancer in 2015.

"The rescue crews on September 11 ... were exposed to asbestos particles for 10 to 12 hours before continuing the next day," Willey said.

"That's a death sentence... that's going to be the same for the people in Gaza."

The comparison to September 11 is important as that was one of the only incidents in which it was possible to study asbestos exposure after an explosion, said Liz Darlison, CEO of the charity Mesothelioma UK.

"It's very easy to be preoccupied with the immediate aftermath" of the destruction, she said. Immediate dangers posed by ground fighting and aerial bombardments always take precedence over long-term hazards, she noted.

However, the long-term effects of asbestos exposure will constitute a "tragedy that will unfold in the years ahead", Darlison said.

In 2016, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said occupational asbestos exposure had caused an estimated 209,481 deaths – more than 70 percent of all deaths from work-related cancers.

Ubiquitous asbestos, in refugee camps

Due to its insulating and fireproofing qualities, asbestos was widely used in construction until the late 1980s, when countries worldwide began introducing restrictions. Israel fully banned the use of asbestos in buildings in 2011.

Since its war on the besieged enclave began, Israel has routinely bombed Gaza's refugee camps where, UNEP told Al Jazeera, asbestos was found "in the older buildings and temporary sheds and extensions found in the refugee camps".

In December, 90 people were killed and more than 100 injured in an attack on Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza.

In June, Israel killed more than 270 Palestinians and injured around 700 others in a raid on Nuseirat refugee camp.

In 2009, UNEP said it found one of the most dangerous types of asbestos, blue asbestos (crocidolite), in the same damaged buildings and sheds in the refugee camps of Gaza, as well as in sewage pipes, treatment stations and livestock facilities.

No escape, no 'safe' level of exposure

The best thing to do if asbestos is disturbed and becomes airborne is to "get in a car and drive as far away from it as

possible", Willey said.

A solution that is simply not possible for the more than two million Palestinians crammed in the enclave of about 365 square kilometres (141 sq miles) of which, the UN has warned, only 11 percent remains considered a safe zone.

Furthermore, adequate clean-up processes can take years and must be carried out by professionals, Willey said. In Gaza now, he said: "You've got smashed asbestos pieces on the ground, in the air from the explosion, and people are walking through it and kicking it up all the time, so it'll never come back to a safe environment until it's all cleared away".

Darlison said after an explosion that releases asbestos, there would simply be no "safe level of exposure".

"What you need is a big sign with a skull and crossbones saying 'Do not enter', and only specialists wearing full decontamination equipment allowed near the exposure," she said.

Acutely aware of the damage asbestos can cause, Darlison said she "cannot bear" to watch the smoke billowing from the explosions in Gaza.

"It's heartbreaking to know that the legacy of this war will continue for many years," she said.

The report was first published on Al Jazeera.



People in Gaza are exposed to airborne particles released as Israel destroys the enclave. Inhaled, it can cause cancers.

✓ Palestinians rescue Mahmoud al-Ghol from under the rubble of a house with asbestos ceilings that was struck by Israel F-16s during Israel's 2014 war on Gaza in Rafah.
● IBRAHEEM ABU MUSTAFA/
REUTERS



From ethnic cleansing to genocide

By Salman Abu Sitta*
Author

PERSPECTIVE

I am a survivor of Al Nakba of 1948. Since then, for the last 76 years, I spent my life pondering over this tragedy, documenting it, telling people around the world about it, and making plans to reverse it by implementing the Right of Return. Little did I know that a bigger and more bloody event was waiting us in the yearlong campaign of Genocide in Gaza.



A Palestinian man sits on the rubble of a destroyed house after Israeli warplanes in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, on November 4, 2023.
● ABED RAHIM KHATIB/DPA

How do these two events compare for someone like me who lived to see both?

Both events lasted a year, at least so far. Al Nakba of 1948 started in March 1948 when the Haganah, the Zionist militia, started to invade Palestine before the state of Israel was declared. It was concluded by signing armistice agreements with Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, who sent forces to save Palestinians but failed. Syria signed the agreement four months later.

It was an uncontested campaign. Haganah forces, consisting of 120,000 soldiers, some of whom were WWII veterans, formed nine brigades and carried out 38 military operations. On the defending side was a motley group of Arab forces, not exceeding 10,000 fighters operating under different commands.

The result is clear. The Zionist forces occupied 20,500 km², or 78% of Palestine, depopulated 530 cities and villages of its people, and made two-thirds of Palestinian refugees until today.

At the time, Israel had a small air force and negligible navy. It relied on foot soldiers to occupy and gain territory.

Israel lost 6,000 soldiers. It killed 15,000 Palestinians, mainly unarmed villagers, and took a similar number to forced labor camps where they were used as slave labor for years.

The equation between the number of soldiers and the size of occupied territory is

clear. Relatively few soldiers occupied a very large territory against marginal resistance.

Fast forward 76 years. The descendants of the 1948 refugees were crammed in refugee camps in Gaza at a density of 8,000 persons per km². This has now been doubled since October 7. They created a resistance force of about 15,000 fighters as some say. They dug themselves into underground tunnels.

Over 12 months, Israel unleashed its force on them, over half a million soldiers, a formidable tank force, and a lethal advanced air force. Israel pulverized the landscape in the Gaza Strip and killed and injured over 200,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom were women and children. It was a massacre unprecedented in modern history.

The ethnic cleansing of 1948 was elevated into a full Genocide in 2024.

But the defenders never surrendered. They are still fighting.

Israel failed to occupy one kilometer of the land permanently.

The contrast between 1948 and 2024 is bewildering.

In 1948, the Israeli occupation of the land was carried out by soldiers. In 2024, Israeli soldiers were almost absent. If they venture out of tanks, they are hit by resistance fighters, emerging out of the rubble, carrying only their handheld weapons. We saw on TV that if one Israeli soldier was hit, the others ran away. We saw Israe-

li soldiers being dragged to the front in Gaza, refusing to enlist or deserting.

This was the difference between soldiers defending their country even if they were in refugee camps and others who were brought in to occupy another land and kill another people.

Sitting behind computer screens, as Israelis do, selecting a bank of targets, sending drones, or flying deadly F35s may cause unbelievable devastation and indiscriminate deaths among women and children, but it does not gain an inch of land.

The land belongs to the people who die for it, in the face of unbelievable adversity, not only death under the rubble but starvation, disease, and the loss of all means of life.

There is another difference between 1948 and 2024. On May 14, 1948, we were attacked in Al-Ma'in, my birthplace, by 24 Israeli armored vehicles. They destroyed every structure and killed anyone they found. On that day I became a refugee. On that same day, Ben-Gurion declared his settler state of Israel.

Nobody in the West knew about us. There were celebrations of victory in Tel Aviv and New York, hailing the triumph of the minority of fighting Jews defending themselves against the majority of savage Arabs trying to kill them.

Nobody cared about us except the devoted few. I recall members of the American Friends

Service Committee (AFSC or the Quakers) who came to help us. They built the refugee camps, whose names you know today, in Bureij, Nuseirat, Jabalia, and others. One of their officers wrote to his Philadelphia HQ on October 12, 1949, describing the state of mind of the refugees,

Above all else, they desire to go home—back to their lands and villages which, in many cases, are very close. Apparently, they do not hesitate to go back to the changed culture which is growing in Israel. This desire naturally continues to be the strongest demand they make; sixteen months of exile has not diminished it. Without it, they would have nothing for which to live. It is expressed in many ways and forms every day. "Why keep us alive"—is one expression of it. It is as genuine and deep as a man's longing for his home can be. In the minds of refugees, resettlement is not even considered.

But the West did not listen or even wish to know. All the major news agencies were busy declaring the victory of the Righteous Jews. Their Middle East correspondents were invariably Zionists. Talking about Palestinian refugees was an unforgivable sin. No more.

In 2024, young people on hundreds of campuses in the United States and Europe saw the light where justice was to be. They fought against their rulers, their elders, and their providers to speak a word of justice and declare, "Palestine is free from the river to the sea." People around the world heard about us, and saw our tragedy on TV screens. Some dared to speak out, defying the sword on their necks.

It has been an unbelievable historical correction, paid for by the blood of Palestinians. But will this bring to life hundreds of thousands of those killed or bring to life the parents of 18,000 orphans? More importantly, will the blood of victims enforce international law to punish war criminals? Will it give the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice the power to implement their verdicts? Will justice be made and refugees, the true hostages,

return home?

I may not live to see this happen, but I am certain it will happen. For evil, however powerful, has a short life. When justice is made and we, Palestinian refugees, return home, our long struggle will be rewarded and the hundreds of thousands who were murdered will not have died in vain. That is because our grandchildren will live at home once again and the waiting from 1948 and 2024 will be over. Let all free people make this happen.

The article first appeared on *Mondoweiss*.

***Salman Abu Sitta** is the founder and president of the Palestine Land Society, London, dedicated to the documentation of Palestine's land and people. He is the author of six books on Palestine, including the compendium "Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966," English and Arabic editions, the "Atlas of the Return Journey" and over 300 papers and articles on the Palestinian refugees, the Right of Return, and the history of al-Nakba and human rights. He is credited with extensive documentation and mapping of Palestine's land and people over 40 years. His widely acclaimed memoir "Mapping My Return" describes his life in Palestine and his long struggle as a refugee to return home.

“

I am a survivor of the 1948 Nakba who lived to witness the 2024 genocide. I may not live to see justice be made, but I am certain our long struggle will be rewarded. Our grandchildren will live at home once again.

People attend a pro-Palestinian rally in front of the Danish parliament Christiansborg in central Copenhagen, Denmark, on December 10, 2023.
● EMIL HELMS/EFE



Palestinians bury the bodies of 110 people killed by Israeli attacks in a mass grave in the Khan Younis cemetery, on November 22, 2023.
● MOHAMMED TALATENE/DPA



Goalless draw for Iran, Uzbekistan in 2026 World Cup qualifier

The face-off between Group A pacesetters Uzbekistan and Islamic Republic of Iran ended in a goalless draw, with both teams moving to seven points. Uzbekistan and Iran settled for the draw in their AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to 26 Group A tie on Thursday.

The Central Asian derby saw Iran going down to 10 men in the second half following Saleh Hardani's sending off but there was to be no winner in the evenly-matched contest as the two sides moved up to seven points, the-afc.com reported. Forward Mehdi Taremi and Eldor Shomurodov, who both play their club football in Italy, had a subdued first half with neither seeing much of the ball.

The match took a turn in the 57th minute after Australian referee Shaun Evans referred to the pitchside monitor, which led to a straight red card for Hardani for a studs up challenge on Shomurodov.

Uzbekistan seized the opportunity to increase their tempo with two chances just after the hour mark, Abbosbek Fayzulaev dragging his shot just wide before Masharipov ballooned his attempt over the bar after being teed up by Shomurodov. There was drama in stoppage time when Evans awarded a penalty to Iran after the ball seemed to have struck Rustam-



jon Ashurmatov's hand but upon a VAR review, the decision was reversed as the sides shared the spoils.

Ghalenoei, Radmanovic content with stalemate
Uzbekistan's Vlado Radmanovic and Amir Ghalenoei of the Is-

lamic Republic of Iran were both satisfied after seeing their sides played to the draw. Radmanovic, who took charge as head coach as Srecko Katanec was indisposed, was pleased to see Uzbekistan navigate what he considered the toughest match in the group, with their

sights now set on the upcoming games. "It was a difficult match as Iran are one of the strongest in Asia," said Radmanovic. "There are not many chances in such matches. We have passed another game with seven more matches ahead of us.

"One of our main players, Oston Orunov, was injured. He was able to play at first, but as kickoff approached, he wasn't ready as his leg was hurting. "We don't have many attacking players like that. We could have made changes in the centre of

the field and in the centre of defence, but the plan we prepared for today's match did not work well."

"We attacked even after being a man down and won a few corners," said Ghalenoei. "The goalkeeper of Uzbekistan also saved his team in many situations. "We witnessed a good game today. I think it was the best game in the group. We have to think about the next meeting. We proved that we can defend well in today's match. I congratulate Ali Nemati on his national team debut. I hope that he will play a lot more for Iran in the future."

Uzbekistan will host the United Arab Emirates next on Tuesday while Iran will meet Qatar.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has confirmed that the AFC Asian Qualifier - Road to 26 Group A match on October 15, 2024, between Iran and Qatar will be played at a neutral venue, in the United Arab Emirates.

The decision to host the match in a neutral venue was taken after careful consideration of the prevailing security situation and in consultation with FIFA and the relevant stakeholders. The match will kick off at 20:00 hour local time and details regarding the specific venue in the UAE will be updated on the fixtures section.

● AFC

'King of Clay' Rafael Nadal to retire from Tennis in November

Rafa Nadal will call time on his illustrious but injury-plagued career after next month's Davis Cup Finals, the 22-times Grand Slam champion announced on Thursday, as one of the greatest players in the sport prepares for an emotional farewell.

Nadal, who won a record 14 French Open titles during his 23-year career, had previously said he expected to retire this year after a hip injury that required surgery and limited his appearances in 2023, Reuters reported.

The 38-year-old was a surprise selection for the Nov. 19-24 Davis Cup Final 8 in Malaga, after last competing at the Paris Olympics in July and subsequently missing the U.S. Open and Laver Cup over fitness concerns.

"It's been some difficult years, these last two especially," Nadal

said in a video posted on social media.

"I'm very excited that my last tournament will be the Davis Cup representing my country. It's closing the circle because one of my first joys was the final in Sevilla in 2004."

Nadal has been no stranger to injuries and he sustained the hip problem at the Australian Open in early 2023 and missed the French Open later that year before having surgery.

He has played only 23 matches in the last two seasons.

Nadal returned to his favourite hunting ground this season but was beaten in the opening round by German Alexander Zverev and politely refused a celebratory farewell in the hope of a final hurrah next year.

Dubbed the 'King of Clay' for his jaw-dropping 112-4 win-loss record at the

Paris major, Nadal's last Roland Garros triumph came in 2022.

Nadal will hang up his racket two years after great rival and Swiss maestro Roger Federer, leaving record 24-times major winner Novak Djokovic of Serbia as the only member of the 'Big Three' still active.

Federer led the tributes to Nadal on social media, saying that he hoped the day his friend announces his retirement would never come.

"What a career, Rafa ... Thank you for the unforgettable memories and all your incredible achievements in the game we love. It's been an absolute honour!" the Swiss great said.

Nadal thanked his family and his team for his stellar career, with a special word for his uncle Toni, who was his coach for most of his time on court.

"I believe that thanks to him, I have also been able to overcome many situations that have been difficult in my sporting career," he said.

To his fans, Nadal said: "I can't thank you enough for what you have made me feel. Everything I have experienced has been a dream come true."

"I leave with the absolute peace of mind having given my best," he added.

Nadal is now expected to receive what promises to be an emotional tribute at Roland Garros next year, with a similar celebration of his career expected at the Davis Cup on home soil.

● REUTERS

Bam Khatoon eyes first win in AFC Women's Champions League

Bam Khatoon football team is going to earn its first win in the AFC Women's Champions League.

The Iranian side has collected just one point from its two previous matches against Melbourne and Kaya, reported Tasnim News Agency.

Khatoon is scheduled to meet College of Asian Scholars of Thailand on Saturday at the Pathum Thani Stadium.

The AFC Women's Champions League 2024/25 Group Stage comes to a close on Saturday but still with a lot at stake as teams chase down the remaining quarter-final berths.

Following Wednesday's matches, five spots have already been filled with four matches still to be played in Groups B and C that will decide progression or elimination for the teams, with the two best third-placed teams to join the three group winners and runners-up in the knock-out stage.

In Group B, Melbourne of Australia will be looking to end their campaign in style, having already achieved wins over Iran's Bam Khatoon (2-1) and Thailand's College of Asian Scholars (3-0).

Top spot is assured for the Australian side with head coach Michael Matricciani possibly looking to give playing minutes to those



● INSTAGRAM

who didn't feature much in the opening two matches.

The Philippines' Kaya fought back in the dying embers of their match against Bam Khatoon on Wednesday to secure a valuable point, thanks to Joyce Onrubia's stoppage time equaliser.

That means that with two points, a win for Kaya will assure them their spot in the quarter-finals but they will certainly need to raise their performance to stand a chance.

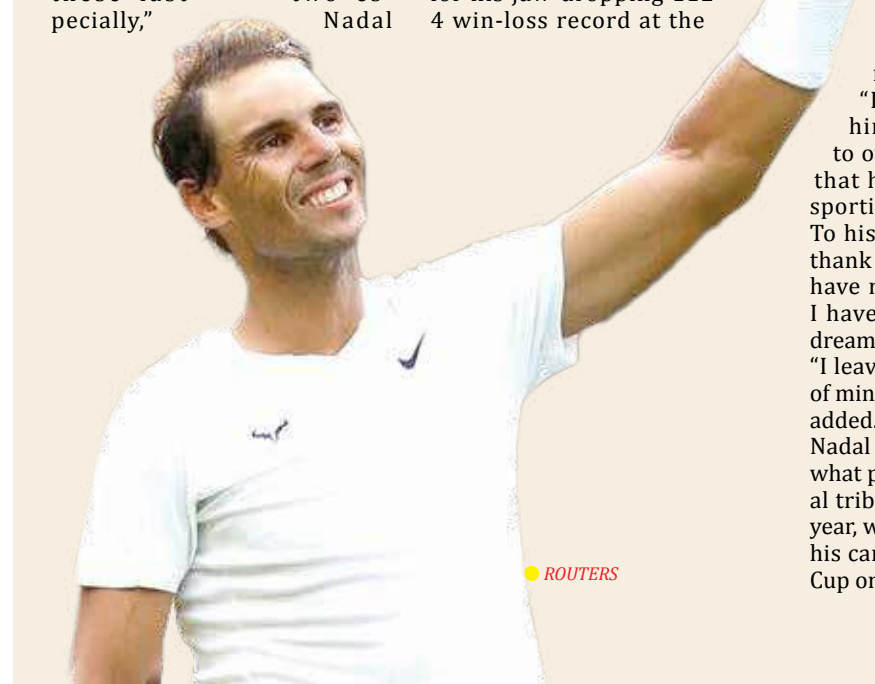
College of Asian Scholars will fancy their chances against Bam Khatoon as they go in search of a first win that

could potentially earn them a quarter-final spot.

Head coach Nuengrutai Srathongvian will have to ensure that her players put the defeat to Melbourne behind them as they also look to prolong their stay in the competition.

Similarly, Bam Khatoon head coach Marziyeh Jafari will be eyeing a first win after collecting just a point from their opening matches.

The Iranian side will rely on the fact that they have managed to score in each of those two games, something which the Thai side has not achieved thus far.



Putin: Ties with Iran 'high priority' for Russia

International Desk

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that relations with Tehran remained a "high priority" for Moscow as he met President Masoud Pezeshkian for the first time. "Bilateral cooperation is a high priority for us and relations between the two sides are moving forward well, with trade volume expanding," Putin told Pezeshkian on the sidelines of a forum in Turkmenistan's capital of Ashgabat, IRNA reported. "We work together on the international stage and our global assessments and approaches are in sync," he added. Putin also invited Pezeshkian to Russia to take part in a summit of the BRICS group of major

emerging economies – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – scheduled for October 22-24. Pezeshkian, for his part, expressed hope that Tehran and Moscow would ink a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement during his upcoming visit to Russia this month. Pezeshkian echoed Putin's stance on the two countries' growing economic ties as well as similar views on global affairs. "Our relationship with Russia is cordial and strategic," the Iranian president said, adding that "Iran and Russia have good complementary capacities that they can use to help each other." "Our stances in the world are much closer to each other than other countries," he added.

Israeli atrocities

During the meeting, Pezeshkian also touched on the developments in the region, including Israeli attacks against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples. "The Zionist regime (of Israel) does not respect any international legal and humanitarian framework, and the situation in the region is critical," he said. Israel launched a military offensive against the Gaza Strip in October last year after the Palestinian resistance group Hamas carried out Operation Al-Aqsa Storm in response to the regime's decades-long campaign of bloodletting and devastation against Palestinians. Since then, more than 42,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli strikes in the coastal ter-



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian meets with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of a regional conference in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on Friday, October 11, 2024. president.ir

ritory.

Israel also intensified its attacks on Lebanon in recent weeks on the pretext of targeting Hezbollah's strongholds which has been exchanging fire with the Israeli military in support of Palestinians in Gaza since last October 2023.

Spread of extremism

Addressing a ceremony in commemoration of Turkmen poet Magtymguly Pyragy, Pezeshkian warned against the spread of extremism globally and urged Muslim countries to unite



in countering violence. "The pursuit of unity is not limited to Islamic societies alone as the need for peace, deepening brotherhood, and fostering a dialogue of consensus is a requirement for the inter-

national community today," he said. "However, many elements of unilateralism continue to disrupt the coexistence of the human society in this journey," the president added.

The ceremony in Ashgabat was attended by other regional leaders including Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and the heads of the other Central Asian nations, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Iran FM urges collective efforts to stop Israel's atrocities



Abbas Araghchi

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called for collective diplomatic efforts to stop the Israeli regime's atrocities against the innocent people of

Gaza and Lebanon, secure a cease-fire and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. Araghchi made the comment in letters he sent to

his counterparts around the world on Thursday, Press TV reported. He pointed to the ongoing Israeli brutalities against ordinary people in Gaza and Lebanon, which have resulted in the death, injury and displacement of a large number of innocent individuals as well as international aid workers, and large-scale destruction of residential and public buildings. The top Iranian diplomat stated that the criminal actions of the Zionist regime pose a serious

threat to regional and global peace, and represent a clear example of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. "The unlimited impunity the Israeli regime enjoys has prompted it to expand the scope of its attacks on Lebanon, and specifically launch massive airstrikes on residential areas using US-made bunker busters," Araghchi wrote, noting that the failure of the UN Security Council to fulfill its duties has emboldened the warmongering leaders of the Zionist entity to

continue their crimes. The Iranian foreign minister also highlighted that his country's recent massive missile strikes on Israeli military positions in the occupied territories, dubbed Operation True Promise II, were carried out following weeks of self-restraint to pave the way for a ceasefire in Gaza. He underlined that the operation attests to Iran's responsibility for international peace and security. "If need be, the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully

prepared to take more and stronger defensive measures against any act of aggression, and will have no hesitation in this regard," Araghchi stressed. Also on Thursday, the Iranian foreign minister sent letters to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi and President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, voicing his grave concern over worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza and Lebanon.

"Not only have the Israeli regime's strikes targeted peoples, places and civilian infrastructure, but also all humanitarian principles," Araghchi stated. He said international humanitarian organizations are expected to adopt effective, prompt, meaningful and appropriate measures to address the humanitarian crisis in West Asia, mobilize international assistance, and remove obstacles to the delivery of aid to the areas affected by Israeli atrocities.

Global outrage as Israeli attacks injure UN peacekeepers in Lebanon

International Desk

The United Nations peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon confirmed on Friday that its headquarters in Naqoura was hit by explosions for the second time in 48 hours, a day after Israeli forces struck the same position.

Two peacekeepers from the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) were injured after two explosions occurred close to an observation tower, the UN mission said in a statement on Friday. "This is a serious development, and UNIFIL reiterates that the safety and security of UN personnel and property must be guaranteed and that the inviolability of UN premises must be respected at all times," it added. "Any deliberate attack on peacekeepers is a grave violation of international humanitarian law." Lebanon's Ministry of Foreign Affairs earlier said the attacks were on watchtowers and



AFP

the main UNIFIL base in Naqoura and on the Sri Lankan battalion's base. Lebanon's official National News Agency reported that artillery shelling from an Israeli Merkava tank wounded members of the Sri Lankan battalion. Speaking at a news conference in Beirut, Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said Israel's actions were a "denounced crime". He added that he had discussed efforts to reach a cease-fire in Lebanon with United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The incident sparked condemnation from European members of the

mission, the UN as well as China and Russia. Human Rights Watch on Friday called for a UN inquiry "on Israeli attacks on peacekeepers" in Lebanon. "Any targeting of UN peacekeepers by Israeli forces violates the laws of war and dangerously interferes with UNIFIL's civilian protection and aid work," HRW's Lama Fakih said. UNIFIL, which has about 10,000 peacekeepers stationed in south Lebanon, has called for a cease-fire since an escalation between Israel and Lebanese militant group Hezbollah on September 23, after a year of cross-border fire.

Date: 1403/07/21 - No.: 55/03/16318

INVITATION TO RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER
First Announcement

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

The Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Jihad-Agriculture of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 3×50000±5% MTS of Granular Di Ammonium Phosphate (GDAP) through renewal of one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from **Saturday** dated **12/10/2024** until **Wednesday** dated **16/10/2024** (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran). The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of IRI. Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30-character identification code of 339039782263500650000000000008

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on **Saturday** dated **16/11/2024** (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on **Sunday** dated **17/11/2024** at 14:00 with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

1- The bid bond value should be at **€ 545001** or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on the Telegraphic Transfer rate of the basic and essential commodities on CBI's ETS website, www.fxmarketrate.cbi.ir, on 2/10/2024 for each lot of 50000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

2- The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 50000 MTS ± 5% will be **IRR 171,900,281,075** which must be only submitted by the bidders.

3- After approval of ASSC's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as the bid bond.

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

Public relations and international affairs of agricultural support services company

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Iran's president calls for promoting literary treasures shared with Turkmenistan

Pezeshkian: Eastern literature demonstrates knowledge, ethics

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the need to introduce the common literary treasures and outstanding figures between Iran and Turkmenistan, highlighting the significance of cultural exchange in fostering peace and sustainable development.

Speaking at an international conference in Ashgabat commemorating the 300th birthday anniversary of renowned Turkmen poet Magtymguly Pyragy, Pezeshkian praised the poet's contributions to the Turkmen language and literature, drawing parallels with the impact of Persian poet Ferdowsi on the Persian language. Pezeshkian noted that the literary works of Magtymguly Pyragy, which encompass moral, political, social, and cultural themes, serve as a manifestation of the poet's emphasis on spirituality, morality, justice, and freedom.

He added that distancing oneself from spirituality has created numerous problems in the contemporary world. The Iranian President expressed hope

that strengthening cultural cooperation and holding similar ceremonies would facilitate the introduction of "shared literary treasures", underlining the importance of cultural exchange in promoting mutual understanding and peace. Pezeshkian also highlighted the long-standing amicable relations and friendship between Iran and Turkmenistan, which he described as "constructive" and based on mutual interests.

He emphasized that the two nations have a growing and balanced trend in all fields, despite having diverse languages and cultures. Pezeshkian pointed out that the cultural heritage of Iran and Turkmenistan serves as a foundation for peace and sustainable development, showcasing the unique aspects of knowledge and ethics in Eastern literature.

He emphasized that the cultural structure of the region, which encompasses various ethnic groups and languages, has been shaped by a shared cultural foundation, resulting in similarities in arts, literature, and culture.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (8th L) poses for a family photo while attending an international conference in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on October 11, 2024, to commemorate the 300th birthday anniversary of Turkmen poet Magtymguly Pyragy. president.lir

Pezeshkian explained that the vast geographical area, which includes Iran and Turkmenistan, has been home to people living in peace and harmony, despite their diversity in ethnicity and language.

The Iranian President praised the role of literary figures, including Ferdowsi, Rudaki, Saadi, and Khayyam, in introducing the rich culture of the East, and hailed Magtymguly Pyragy as a champion of Turkmen culture and language.

He acknowledged that the poet's works have had a profound impact on the growth of valuable human concepts and have enriched the literary heritage of the region. Pezeshkian emphasized that the exchange of ideas and cultural interactions

between human groups have taken place outside of government control and have transcended borders.

He noted that the works of great poets and writers have played a significant role in introducing the rich culture of the East, and that Magtymguly Pyragy's poetry has been a "shining example" of this cultural phenomenon.

The Iranian President also acknowledged that many of the reasons for the endurance of Iranian customs, traditions, and languages are due to the efforts of great individuals who have made sacrifices for their preservation.

He noted that the Persian language owes a debt to great poets such as Ferdowsi,

just as the Turkmen language and literature owe a debt to poets and writers such as Magtymguly Pyragy.

Pezeshkian concluded by emphasizing the importance of cultural exchange and the need to recognize the shared cultural foundation of the region, which has been shaped by the interactions of various ethnic groups and languages over time.

Hafez' legacy beacon of hope for more harmonious world: *Minister*

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, emphasized the significance of Hafez thought in achieving peace and friendship, calling on the world to tap into the Persian poet's philosophy to overcome today's turmoil.

Speaking at a ceremony commemorating Hafez at his mausoleum in Shiraz on Thursday, Salehi Amiri said, "We have gathered here once again to loudly proclaim that we have Hafez, and as long as literature remains, we will remain."

He described Hafez as a "treasure trove of ethics and sincerity," whose thought is essential for today's generation and a necessity for the future, IRNA reported.

The minister highlighted Hafez' significance as Iran's greatest cultural

asset, stressing that in an era where material wealth is often prioritized, the country must turn to Hafez and another renowned Persian poet, Saadi, to "breathe life into society."

Salehi Amiri warned that a society without cultural heritage is merely a lifeless body, citing the numerous social ills and family problems plaguing Iranian cities as evidence of the country's detachment from its cultural roots.

He emphasized that revisiting Hafez thought is a return to dignity and humanity, ensuring a vibrant life. The minister also praised Shiraz as a cultural hub, not only for Iran but for the world, and expressed gratitude to scholars who keep Hafez's legacy alive.

Salehi Amiri noted that Hafez's po-



etry has a universal appeal, with his divan being a staple in Iranian homes and major libraries worldwide, making his verses a remedy for all ages and a source of life for humanity throughout history.

The minister concluded by expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to visit the Hafez mausoleum, vowing to remove obstacles and strive to make the site shine like a gem globally.

Curtains down on 36th Int'l Children, Youth Film Festival

The 36th International Children and Youth Film Festival came to a close in Isfahan, Iran, with a ceremony honoring the winners of this year's competition.

The event, held at the Isfahan International Conference Center, was attended by Iranian film industry officials, including Mohammad Khazaei, head of the Cinema Organization of Iran, and Majid Zeinolabedini, director of the Farabi Cinema Foundation.

In his speech, Zeinolabedini praised the festival's success, saying it had attracted over 24,000 viewers and featured 496 films from around the world.

He also expressed hope that next year's festival would be even more successful, ILNA reported. The ceremony also paid tribute to the late Iranian actor Houshang Harirchian, who was remembered for his contributions to Iranian cinema.

The winners of the festival's national section

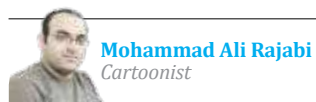
were announced, with 'Bambolak', directed by Arash Mo'ayerian, taking home the award for best film.

In the International Section, the Mexican film 'The Dog Thief' won the award for best film, while a Serbian film took home the award for best director.

The festival also honored several Iranian filmmakers, including Mohammad Reza Aliqoli, who was recognized for his contributions to Iranian cinema.

In his speech, Khazaei praised the festival's role in promoting Iranian cinema and encouraged filmmakers to continue producing high-quality films for children and youth.

The ceremony concluded with a call to action from Khazaei, who urged Iranian filmmakers to create more films about the struggles of the Palestinian people and to raise awareness about the importance of cinema in promoting social justice.



South Korean author Han Kang wins 2024 Nobel Prize in literature

South Korean author Han Kang has won the 2024 Nobel Prize in literature "for her intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life".

Mats Malm, permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy's Nobel Committee, announced the prize in Stockholm on Thursday.

Han, 53, is the first South Korean writer and 18th woman to win the Nobel Literature Prize.

Malm said he was able to talk to Han by phone after announcing her as the winner. "She was having an ordinary day it seemed - had just finished supper with her son. She wasn't really prepared for this."

"I'm so surprised and honoured," Han said, adding, "I'd like to have tea with my son. I'll celebrate it quietly."

Nobel committee chairman Anders Olsson praised her "physical empathy for the vulnerable, often female lives" of her characters.

"She has a unique awareness of the connections

between body and soul, the living and the dead, and in her poetic and experimental style has become an innovator in contemporary prose," Olsson said.

Anna-Karin Palm, a committee member, said Han writes about "trauma, pain and loss", whether individual or collective, "with the same compassion and care" and called her lyrical prose "both tender and brutal".

The 2023 prize went to Norwegian author and dramatist Jon Fosse, who was honoured for "his innovative plays and prose, which give voice to the unsayable".

The literature prize has long been male-dominated. The last woman to win was Annie Ernaux of France, in 2022.

The prize carries a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (\$1m) from a bequest left by the award's creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel. Alongside the cash prize, the winners will be presented with a medal on December 10.

