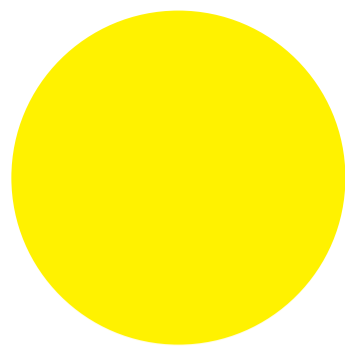


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Iran stresses as vital regional support for Syria, Iraq in anti-terror fight

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Push to oust Syria from Resistance Front

By Gholamreza Kahlaki
Middle East affairs expert

OPINION

Analyzing developments in West Asia requires considering multiple facets of the issues at hand. In other words, it is essential to examine whether regional developments to date have been solely driven by the people or if the crises in the region are simply based on the views of internal opposition groups. The reality is that the West sees the Middle East as a key player in international developments, effectively making it the heart of global affairs. As a result, it has always had a special agenda for this region.

Looking at recent developments in the Middle East that have unfolded at a rapid pace, we notice a significant connection between these events and the actions of the Zionist regime of Israel in Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and its conflicts with Yemen. After all, the Golan Heights remain the Achilles' heel of the Zionist regime, which has always been concerned that Syria, in collaboration with the Resistance Front, might establish a strong foothold there or set up a missile defense system there.

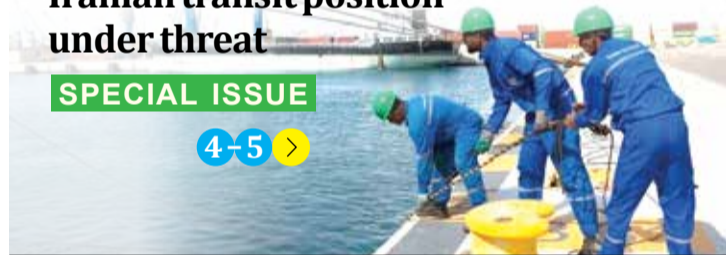
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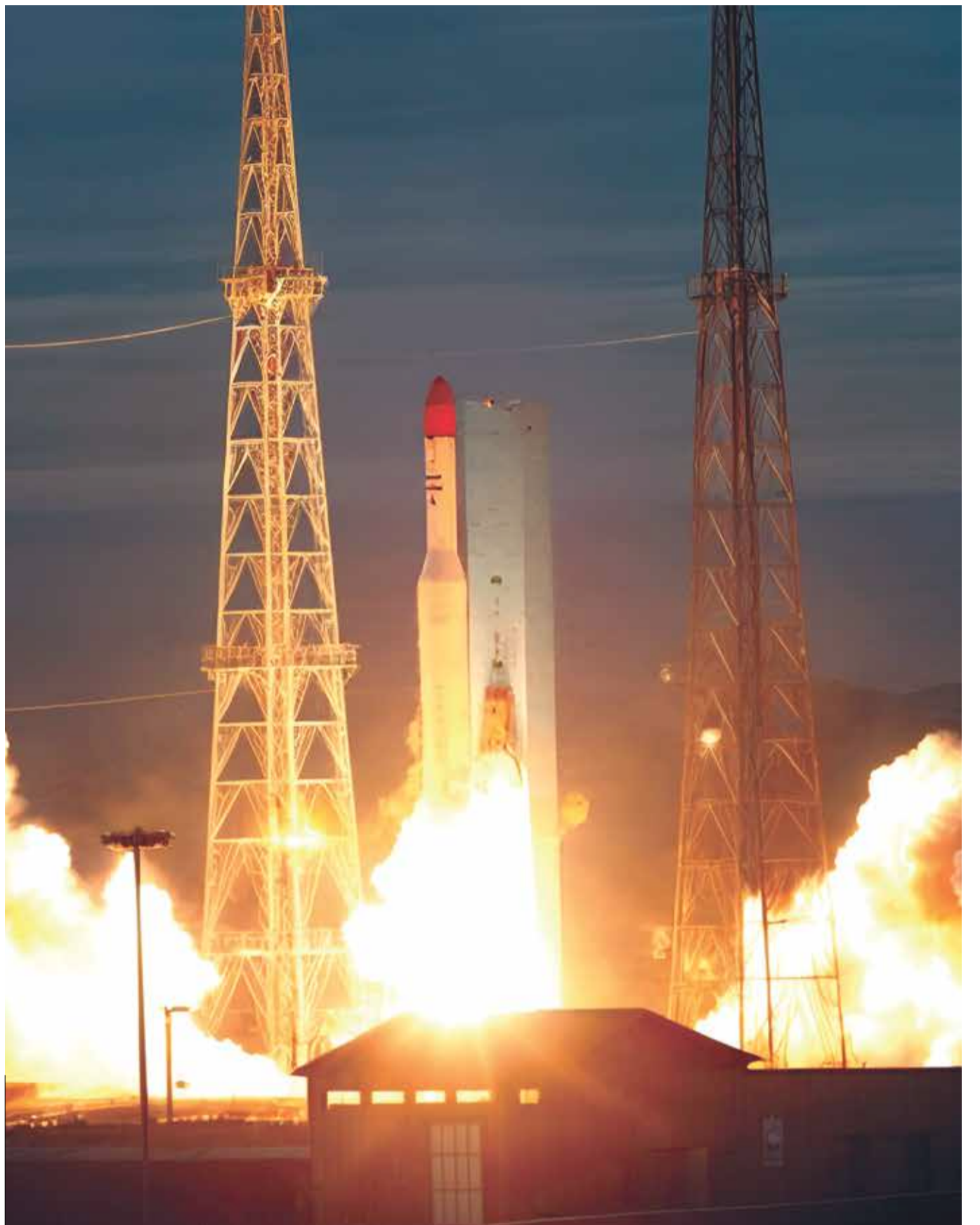
By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

OPINION

The considerable damage that Israel suffered during its wars on Gaza and Lebanon is now being avenged in Syria by using terrorists against Bashar al-Assad's government. The secret preparation of this plot reportedly involved the delivery of weapons from Ukraine and the assembling of terrorists from countries like Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and South Asian nations in Turkey's border towns.

This insidious operation went undetected by the intelligence agencies of three countries — Russia, Iran, and Syria. In this regard, Russia and Syria bear more responsibility than Iran due to the recent affinity of the former two. After admitting this intelligence failure, these three countries must change course to not rely solely on intelligence cooperation to prevent attacks on Syria's territorial integrity. They should establish a joint intelligence system just like how the intelligence centers of Israel, the United States, France, and Britain are already working together in the region.

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Iran Launches First Indigenous Space Tug, Nano-Satellite Into Orbit

In a milestone for Iran's space sector, a space tug, the Saman-1, along with a research payload, the Fakhr-1, were successfully sent into space from the Imam Khomeini Space Launch Terminal, southeast of Semnan, using the Simorgh launcher.

7 >

Putin hails growing economic cooperation with Iran



Russian President Vladimir Putin (l) attends a plenary session of the 15th VTB Russia Calling! Investment Forum at the World Trade Centre in Moscow, Russia, on Dec. 4, 2024.
● GRIGORY SYSOEV/SPUTNIK

Russian President Vladimir Putin described his country's trade and economic relations with Iran as stable and reliable, stressing that the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries will definitely see an increase in the future. Putin made the remarks during a plenary session of the 15th VTB Russia Calling! Investment Forum, themed "The Future of Capital and the Capital of the Future" and held in Moscow, according to IRNA.

"Currently, good projects in the fields of logistics, energy, industrial, and security cooperation between the two countries are being implemented," Putin said while referring to Russia's growing partnership with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Russian president also said the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is currently in operation, and the volume of transportation through this corridor is gradually increasing.

He also expressed hope that Russia and Iran will sign a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement during the upcoming visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Moscow.

Putin also mentioned Iran's request for observer membership in the Eurasian Economic Union and said, "Moscow welcomes Tehran's desire to interact more with this union."

Earlier on Monday, during a telephone conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Putin hailed bilateral relations between Moscow and Tehran and expressed hope that their cooperation will boost further after inking the Tehran-Moscow Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement.

The Kremlin spokesman also said on Tuesday that preparations for Pezeshkian's visit are underway, but the timing has not yet been fixed. Dmitry Peskov emphasized that Russia and Iran do not want to delay the signing of the bilateral strategic partnership agreement.

Ahead of 26th meeting of Gas Exporting Countries Forum in Iran

Tehran calls on GECF members to enhance synergy

Economy Desk

Iranian Minister of Oil Mohsen Paknejad highlighted the importance of strengthening collaboration among member states of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) ahead of the group's 26th ministerial meeting.

He pointed out that the presence of energy and oil ministers from the GECF in Tehran highlights Iran's resilience, stability, and high level of security under current conditions. He also maintained that Iran, with its enormous oil and gas reserves, has consistently been a major global energy player, Shana reported.

"Despite facing relentless unilateral sanctions from the United States in recent years, Iran has maintained its role, status, and credibility in the global energy sector through robust diplomacy and unique strategic approaches. This credibility is particularly significant as global demand for reliable and sustainable energy resources continues to rise."

Paknejad also stressed that as the world transitions from fossil fuels to

cleaner energy, natural gas — with lower emissions compared to oil and coal — plays a pivotal role in this shift. "Natural gas, as a clean and dependable energy source, is a strategic asset for GECF members," he added.

The Iranian official called on GECF members, as key architects of this energy shift, to collaborate by creating regional gas hubs, investing jointly, and transferring technology and expertise.

He reaffirmed Iran's role as a founding member of the GECF, committed to proposing initiatives, aligning with other members, and defending the shared interests of gas-exporting countries.

"Iran's energy policy, especially in the gas sector, centers on expanding economic and political cooperation, fostering mutual interdependence, and promoting natural gas as a clean and secure energy source," Paknejad emphasized.

He noted that despite facing internal challenges and unilateral US sanctions, Iran has remained committed to exporting gas to countries such as



Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad
● SHANA

Turkey and Iraq without leveraging it for political purposes, consistently viewing its gas resources as tools for enhancing regional and global cooperation.

The minister further stated that the establishment of organizations like OPEC and GECF is rooted in goals beyond market regulation, including increasing synergy and depoliti-

cizing energy. The 26th meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum will commence on Friday in Tehran with the participation of expert delegations.

The ministerial session of the forum will follow on Sunday, December 9, with Iran's Oil Minister chairing the meeting.

Paknejad announced that the 26th GECF Ministerial

Meeting in Tehran will primarily focus on topics such as gas trade and issues related to boosting gas production among member states.

He noted that among the 12 main GECF members, representatives from around six countries will attend at the ministerial level, while the others will participate at the deputy minister level.

Paknejad emphasized that the main members of the GECF collectively hold the world's largest gas reserves, with the eight observer members and one guest member also possessing significant gas resources.

INSTC freight train project via Iran to be piloted



Pakistan's Minister of Energy Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari (l) meets with his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Aliabadi, on the sidelines of the Third Belt & Road Ministerial Conference held in Qingdao, China, on October 24, 2024.
● APP

Pakistan's energy minister announced a trial launch of freight trains from Russia to Pakistan through Azerbaijan and Iran via the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) in March 2025.

In an interview with Russia Today (RT) on Thursday, Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari stated that there is a principled and shared perspective between Pakistan and Russia, indicating that their relationship is not directed against any other country or the interests of any third party.

He emphasized that Pakistan's significant relations with Russia benefit the people of both countries, and the aim of strengthening these ties is to achieve common

goals; therefore, any external concerns are unnecessary. Leghari also pointed out that Western countries should not be worried about Pakistan's relations and cooperation with Russia, adding that, given the current global situation, the partnerships of developing countries with major international powers — especially with the BRICS countries — are inevitable. Moreover, he mentioned that both countries are working to establish direct flights between their capitals.

Israel's proxies in...

Turkey's role in the recent terror attacks on Syria has come to the forefront at a time when the Turkish public openly opposes President Erdogan's actions. Erdogan previously refused to provide military assistance to Hamas in Gaza, and his stance during the Israeli aggression on Lebanon suggested support for Israel against Hezbollah.

Furthermore, Turkish intelligence allegedly began aligning Sunni Arabs and Maronite Christian factions in Lebanon who blamed Hezbollah for Lebanon's crisis, claiming Hezbollah's involvement in the Hamas-Israel war endangered Lebanon. They argue that if Hezbollah had not forced Israeli settlers to leave the Northern areas under Israeli occupation and halted their

attacks, Israel would not have launched a ground assault on Lebanon on October 1.

Contrary to tradition, Saudi Arabia and Egypt played a relatively positive role in backing the Resistance movements against Israel. Saudi Arabia, by conditioning the start of talks with Israel on the establishment of a Palestinian state, displayed considerable courage in front of pressures from the US and Israel. Evidently, the global balance of power is changing, and efforts are being made simultaneously on both military and economic fronts to end America's oppressive hegemony. The BRICS's ongoing effort to de-dollarize their economies and introduce a new currency highlights the imminent collapse of the imperialist order. In response, the newly

elected US President Donald Trump had no option but to make empty threats of imposing 100% tariffs on the group if they chose a new currency for transactions instead of the US dollar. Meanwhile, in Syria, a joint operation by Syria, Russia, and Iran is purging terrorist groups from areas in Aleppo. According to the latest figures, over 1,600 terrorists have been killed in Syria. During the Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon, Israel pressured Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to close the highway connecting Syria to Lebanon, through which, it argued, Hezbollah was receiving weapons. However, despite Israeli air strikes damaging the highway, President Assad refused to close it. Diplomats in Damascus state that the US and Israel repeated-



● AL-MAYADEEN

ly promised to cooperate with President Assad's government in exchange for shutting down the highway, but Assad's steadfastness and patriotism thwarted their plans. This is why Israel and its ally, the US, now

view Assad as an obstacle and aim to punish his government through terrorists. They know that the Damascus government is firmly entrenched and cannot be overthrown by a small terrorist force.

Significance of resumption of excavations at Konar Sandal Hill

Iranica Desk

The archaeological excavations that have resumed after a 16-year hiatus at the Konar Sandal Hill in Jiroft are of great significance to Iran's cultural heritage and should be viewed from a national perspective.

Mostafa Dehpahlavan, head of the Cultural Heritage Research Institute at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, highlighted during his visit to the site that Jiroft's potential in the realm of cultural heritage is so substantial that local communities can greatly benefit and actively engage in its protection and preservation. Therefore, it is essential to leverage the capabilities of non-governmental organizations and local entities and in-

volve them in administrative processes, IRNA wrote.

He noted that these excavations, led by Seyyed Mansour Seyyed Sajadi — one of our country's renowned and dedicated archaeologists — have resumed thanks to the continued efforts of the director of the Cultural Heritage Department of Kerman Province.

Dehpahlavan emphasized that the Research Institute is committed to ensuring the ongoing excavations at this remarkable and unique site, alongside its protection and restoration, while promoting its tourism potential. "We must join hands to ensure that excavations and cultural and historical studies of the ancient sites in Jiroft do not cease or suspend again."

He also mentioned that very

few museums around the world lack artifacts from Jiroft. A site with such global prominence requires sustained efforts and collaboration from all sectors of the country, including government support, to ensure that related research continues rather than halting after each resumption.

He stated that the foundation and potential of archaeology foster knowledge and awareness, contributing to enhanced community heritage literacy. Cultural heritage should be regarded as a cornerstone of national security, influencing domestic and foreign policy. Iran's civilizational heritage can foster soft power and influence while serving as a deterrent.

Dehpahlavan continued that the ancient site of Konar San-

dal and Jiroft represents a significant cultural and historical resource for the country — one that must be thoroughly excavated, protected, and promoted. This allows us to harness its material and spiritual potential for future generations.

He said that Jiroft can serve as an exemplary model of collaboration among provincial and local authorities in protecting historical and cultural assets, as there is a collective agreement on its importance and value.

"We must acknowledge that alongside urban development and national prosperity, we should not permit the destruction of our civilizational and national heritage. Cultural heritage must form the foundation of sustainable and resilient development," he concluded.



Enchanting underwater world of Bandar Anzali's Grand Aquarium

The Grand Aquarium of Bandar Anzali, located in Gilan Province stands as a breathtaking testament to marine life and architectural innovation, boasting the title of the largest tunnel aquarium in the country. Spanning an impressive 40 meters, this aquarium offers an immersive experience for visitors, allowing them to explore the enchanting underwater world from a uniquely engaging perspective. Situated in the picturesque port city of Bandar Anzali, the aquarium contributes significantly to the city's reputation as one of Iran's most stunning tourist destinations. Bandar Anzali is renowned for its remarkable urban planning, blending natural beauty with sophisticated infrastructure, making it a vital center for trade and tourism in northern Iran. The city's strategic position as a free trade-industrial hub further enhances its appeal, attracting visitors both locally and from around the globe. Known as the Funtastic Aquarium

which opened its doors in 2017, it has significantly increased the popularity of the region, bringing prosperity and attention to this previously overlooked gem. Constructed with cutting-edge facilities and funded by an investment of several million euros, the aquarium is divided into two main sections: the aquarium itself and a complementary reptile garden. This thoughtful design ensures that visitors can fully appreciate the diversity of life both in the water and on land.

Within the aquarium, guests can revel in an extraordinary atmosphere, especially aquatic enthusiasts, as they encounter over 350 rare species of aquatic animals. Additionally, the aquarium is home to 200 species from five continents, showcasing the vastness and variety of marine biodiversity.

The journey begins in the vibrant Amazon Rainforest section, characterized by stunningly designed rivers meandering through lush greenery. Here, visitors

will encounter various fish species typical of the Amazon, including freshwater eagle rays, parrotfish, and the striking Oscar fish. As you move through the exhibits, the next stop highlights the vivid colors and life of coral reefs, ultimately leading to an intriguing sea cave.

Continuing on, the aquarium features an impressive display of Caspian Sea fish, where visitors can observe fascinating species such as beluga and caviar fish. The adventure culminates in the thrilling section dedicated to carnivorous sharks, offering an up-close look at these magnificent predators.

The heart of the Grand Aquarium is undoubtedly its 40-meter tunnel, the largest water tunnel in Iran. This unique feature allows visitors to experience an extraordinary journey, where the first half showcases a variety of carnivorous fish, while the latter half reveals the graceful movements of herbivorous fish. On the second floor of the aquarium, a special space is dedicated to a diverse collection of birds and reptiles. Here, guests can observe various species such as crocodiles, bird-of-paradise, iguanas, and colorful macaws, adding another dimension to this already multifaceted attraction.

At the Grand Aquarium of Bandar Anzali, visitors can partake in the joyful experience of feeding fish, making their visit more interactive. The surrounding area is packed with additional recreational facilities, including a reptile garden, bowling alleys, multidimensional theaters, and commercial shopping zones. Furthermore, the aquarium features play areas and suites, providing



ample options for accommodation and entertainment.

For those seeking an adventurous escape, the virtual reality cinema offers thrilling experiences that transport visitors to distant, imaginative locales. Nearby, guests can browse a shop located close to the tunnel, where they can purchase unique souvenirs reflecting the charm of Bandar Anzali, including artisan marine handicrafts, souvenir oyster keychains, and delightful fish dolls.

The aquarium is also home to an amusement park, where visitors can engage with a variety of video games and rally simulators, ensuring there is something for everyone.

Photography is encouraged within the aquarium, though visitors are reminded that flash photography is prohibited. The use of flash can inflict serious harm

to the vision of aquatic animals and disrupt their natural behavior. The aquarium welcomes visitors every day from 11 A.M. to 10 P.M., with free admission for children under three years old, ensuring that family visits are accessible. Adjacent to the Grand Aquarium, a well-equipped restaurant serves an array of delicious seafood dishes, allowing guests to unwind and enjoy local culinary delights after their visit. If you find yourself in Bandar Anzali, taking the time to explore other attractions in this beautiful port city is highly recommended. Notable sights include the serene Anzali Lagoon, the historic Anzali Minare, the lush Bandar Anzali Forest Park, the culturally rich Bandar Anzali Museum Palace, and the bustling Anzali Fish Market, all of which contribute to the diverse and vibrant experience that this coastal city offers.



Iran's Chabahar Port vs. Iraq's Grand Faw Port

Iranian transit position under threat



Workers labor in Iran's southwestern Chabahar Port, located strategically on the Sea of Oman, on May 5, 2024.
● TASNIM

in transit networks as a key player leads to the recovery and stabilization of its position as an economic and geopolitical hub in the region, tying regional stability to Iran's stability. Given the above, developing Iran's transit and transport infrastructures is a vital priority for strengthening Iran's position in international arenas. Iran must adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach to develop ports and linking routes and engage with neighboring countries and international organizations to achieve a more prominent role in global corridors. This not only improves the country's economy but also enables Iran to resist and enhance its strategic resilience against geopolitical threats like the Grand Faw Port project and rival corridors.

By Navid Kamali
Foreign affairs expert

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

In the contemporary era, transport and transit corridors are increasingly recognized as vital infrastructures of the global economy. These communication networks are not only crucial for facilitating the

flow of goods and energy between countries but also serve as unparalleled geopolitical levers in international power relations. Nations that operate as key nodes in these transit networks gain strategic positioning and unique economic advantages.

Among these, Iran, with its unique geographical location, has always had the potential to act as a bridge between Asia, Europe, and West Asia in global transport corridors. However, sanctions, insufficient investment, and mismanagement in utilizing transport and transit infrastructures have led to various threats, one of the most significant being the threat of corridor isolation.

Corridor isolation, role of Grand Faw Port

One of the most significant projects threatening Iran's transit position is the Grand Faw Port megaproject in Iraq. This project aims to transform Iraq into an economic and transit hub in West Asia, with substantial investment and strategic planning underway. Faw Port, with direct access to the Persian Gulf and Europe's road and rail networks, is proposed as an alternative route to the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz. Thus, Iraq, leveraging the strategic position of Faw Port, seeks to establish a direct transit route between Asia and Europe.

If this plan reaches full operational capacity by 2025, Iraq will not only become a center for goods transit but will also challenge Iran's strategic position in global transit networks. In fact, neglecting the development and utilization of domestic capacities could hinder Iran from its transit position and strengthen Iraq's competitive advantage.

Developing Chabahar Port strategic necessity

Competing with the Faw Port project, Chaba-

har Port, as Iran's only deep-water and oceanic port, holds special potential for playing a significant role in international transit corridors. Due to its unique geographical location, Chabahar can become a connecting point between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean, enhancing Iran's geopolitical position in transit corridors. This port, with its direct access to open waters, offers unparalleled strategic and economic advantages and can become one of the region's main ports, allowing Iran to play a prominent role in competition with similar projects like Gwadar Port and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Besides its economic importance, the development of the Chabahar Port can act as a geopolitical tool for Iran, facilitating access to regional and international markets and creating new opportunities in economic, transit, and diplomatic fields. Therefore, the development and equipping of Chabahar Port should be considered a top national priority. Investing in port and transport infrastructures in Chabahar can create new economic opportunities, strengthen Iran's strategic

position in regional transit corridors, and improve its role in global value chains.

Weak transport infrastructure, lost opportunities

In past decades, a lack of investment in developing and equipping domestic transport infrastructures, particularly in the rail and road sectors, has delayed key national projects, reducing Iran's competitiveness in global transit networks. For instance, incomplete strategic projects like the Rasht-Ashtara and Chabahar-Zahedan-Sarakhs railways have hindered Iran's full utilization of the North-South Corridor, limiting trade and goods transit between Central Asia and South Asia.

Developing rail lines to connect ports to border areas and main roads can act as a geoeconomic lever and bring strategic advantages to Iran. For example, the Chabahar-Zahedan railway, by connecting to Iran's rail network and joining the North-South Corridor, can significantly reduce the time and costs of goods transport between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. This project can also transform Iran into an international

transit center, facilitating greater exploitation of geopolitical and economic advantages.

Geopolitical outcomes of lagging behind

Failure to develop and exploit geostrategic and geoeconomic capacities has kept Iran behind in competition with regional countries' transit projects, creating space for the growth and development of alternative corridors. For instance, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic (IMEC) Corridor, supported by regional countries and centered around Israel, is one of the projects that, if completed, could challenge Iran's transit role and position. Since our beloved Iran is a natural bridge between the East and West of the world, such projects deliberately aim to bypass Iran and diminish its geopolitical role.

Meanwhile, projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the development of Gwadar Port have enabled Iran's regional rivals to play roles in regional and international transit corridors and gain more economic and transit benefits. These projects can also serve as geopolitical tools to strengthen the influence of countries like Pakistan and China in the region, preventing Iran from participating in global value chains.

Importance of economic diplomacy, paradiplomacy

Developing transport and transit networks, especially in our country, requires active and multifaceted economic diplomacy. In this regard, economic diplomacy can effectively strengthen international cooperation in transit and transport. For example, Iran can solidify its

position in international corridors by signing multilateral and bilateral agreements to facilitate trade and reduce transit tariffs. Furthermore, paradiplomacy or interregional interactions of border provinces and areas is a novel and effective tool for establishing economic and transit relations between the border provinces of Iran and neighboring countries. This form of diplomacy allows border regions to directly expand their economic and trade collaborations with neighboring countries without the need for diplomatic intermediaries.

For instance, Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province, due to its border location and proximity to Chabahar Port, can develop its transit and trade collaborations with Pakistan's border provinces, thereby attracting investment and increasing the country's transport capacities.

Role of private sector, foreign investment

One of the challenges facing the development of Iran's transit corridors is the lack of financial resources and investment. Private sector investment and attracting foreign investment can serve as

effective solutions for developing the country's transport and transit infrastructures.

However, to attract international investors, Iran must create a suitable business environment and formulate regulations and incentive policies for investment in the transport and transit sector. For instance, establishing free trade zones and special economic areas around ports and border regions can increase investment attractiveness and aid in developing the country's transport and transit networks.

Impact of expanding transit networks

Expanding transit networks has significant economic, strategic, and security impacts on Iran's regional position. By strengthening transit infrastructures and actively participating in international corridors, Iran can play a central role in power dynamics and regional relations, achieving a superior position in global value chains. Moreover, developing transit corridors can strengthen regional alliances and reduce economic dependence on Western countries. In other words, Iran's presence



Besides its economic importance, the development of the Chabahar Port can act as a geopolitical tool for Iran, facilitating access to regional and international markets and creating new opportunities in economic, transit, and diplomatic fields. Therefore, the development and equipping of Chabahar Port should be considered a top national priority.



A drone view shows work in progress at the large commercial port of Faw as the building is finished at newly inaugurated docks, in Basra, Iraq, on November 11, 2024.

● MOHAMMED ATY/ REUTERS



Indian rise in Caucasus



By Gholamreza Mansouri
Political science researcher

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

After the Soviet Union fell in 1989, the Caucasus region was left with a power vacuum. Due to religious and racial affinities between Armenia and both Europe and Russia, and on the other hand, Islamic and cultural links between Iran and Azerbaijan, two fronts were formed in the region. However, the relations between domestic and foreign countries were highly volatile, which eventually changed the structure of relations. For example, the emergence of Putin in Russia and his keen interest in playing a key role in political affairs shook up the scene. Although Iran had been a major player in the region throughout history, the prolongation of that war opened up an opportunity for world powers to step in. Turkey, Iran's old rival, which has been building bridges with Azerbaijan through its cultural and religious ties, can now step into the Caucasus. On the other hand, Azerbaijan's secular policies drove a wedge between itself and Iran, bringing it closer to Israel, Iran's old adversary. Under the control of the pro-Western Pashinyan, Armenia increasingly distanced itself from Russia and turned to NATO, France, and the United States. With Turkey's entry into regional affairs, Pakistan also jumped into the fray. Now, India is seizing the opportunity to enter the Caucasus. From arms trade to building transport infrastructure, India has set missions for itself in the region.

The Indian newspaper New Indian Express announced on November 12 that India has shipped the first batch of the Akash air defense missile system to Armenia. The Akash system is an advanced surface-to-air missile developed by the Indian Defense Research and Development Organization and is capable of targeting fighter planes, cruise missiles, drones, etc. up to a distance of 25 km.

On the other hand, India is keen to play an active and strategic role in the global corridors that pass through the Caucasus. It has even invested in Iran's Chabahar to get its desired corridor. The monthly magazine The Diplomatist points out in this regard that the 10-year Chabahar port contract — signed with Iran in May this year — allows India to bypass maritime choke



Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev sits in the cockpit of the Pakistani JF-17 Block III aircraft presented to him at Heydar Aliyev International Airport, Azerbaijan, on September 25, 2024.
● PRESIDENT.AZ

points by moving goods through Iran to the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and the wider Eurasia. One of the immediate

beneficiaries of India's involvement in the Caucasus is Armenia, a small landlocked country, faces similar challenges

in its trade, and its neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan have maintained a border closure since the First Karabakh War in the

early 1990s. However, Armenia has retained access to maritime trade through Georgia and Iran and established close diplomatic, economic, and security ties, opening up a route for Indian goods.

The Persian-language Hamshahri newspaper also wrote in this context: In recent days, pictures of Iranian road construction in Armenia have been published. Considering that the war between Israel and Hamas in West Asia has jeopardized the future of the proposed Indo-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) has gained more importance. This has another aspect: Iran is trying to create new transit routes to strike a balance in the region. A path that can be created

with India's help.

The Indo-Iran-Armenia Corridor is as important to India as it is to Armenia as a major security player in the Caucasus. A tripartite meeting regarding the creation of the transportation corridor is going to be held with the presence of India, Iran, and Armenia. India does not want to miss this opportunity to compete with Pakistan.

Although many experts in the region consider this corridor too expensive, it seems that India has made up its mind. It should be noted that the presence of global players in the Caucasus region can be seen both as an opportunity for the development of the region and a threat to its future. The fact is that the Caucasus region is still volatile, and there are still territorial claims (albeit small)

between countries.

On the other hand, the expansion of relations between Azerbaijan and Israel has upset the balance of power in the Caucasus region to the detriment of Iran, which is seen as a problem for Iran. Meanwhile, Armenia has become a host to NATO, which is another problem for Iran. So, it seems that the presence of troops outside the region will complicate the situation further.

Of course, another important point is the inclination of foreign countries to participate in regional relations. For example, India's first target is Armenia, and Pakistan's first target is Azerbaijan. The sale of Pakistani fighter jets to Azerbaijan is a sign of Pakistan's serious will to actively participate in the Caucasus equations.



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (R) and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi shake hands on the sidelines of the Summit of the Future at UN Headquarters in New York on September 24, 2024.
● X

Iran's Jask, Pakistan's Gwadar: China's ports of power

Iran recently began exporting oil from its new terminal at Jask port on the Gulf of Oman, a move that allows it to bypass the Strait of Hormuz. This new route could benefit China, which may now rely on the Iranian port to secure steady oil supplies amid any potential closure of the strait due to the Iran-Israel conflict. In addition, Pakistan's Gwadar Port serves as another strategic asset for China in sustaining its oil imports from the Middle East.



By Syed Fazl-e-Haider
Columnist

OPINION



● NIKKEI ASSIA



● NIKKEI ASSIA

The Strait of Hormuz, a critical transit point for global oil shipments, has gained attention amid the escalating Iran-Israel tensions. About 20% to 25% of the world's oil supply passes through this narrow strait, which connects the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf. Any disruption here would have widespread implications, particularly for China, the world's largest oil importer.

Iran's Jask Port, located just east of the Strait of Hormuz, hosts an oil terminal

established three years ago as a safeguard for Iran's oil exports. A full-blown conflict between Iran and Israel could force a closure of the Strait, a scenario that would significantly impact China, which sources 60% of its oil from the Middle East. In 2021, Tehran and Beijing formalized a comprehensive strategic partnership involving China's \$400 billion investment in Iran in exchange for long-term oil supply at a discounted price. A key element of this deal is China's access to Jask Port, en-

abling it to receive oil imports from Iran and other Middle Eastern countries even if the Strait of Hormuz is blocked.

China also operates the port of Gwadar in Pakistan's Balochistan Province. Located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf and near the Strait of Hormuz, Gwadar is a crucial component of the \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a key element of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The CPEC project aims to create an energy corridor connecting Gwa-

dar with China's Xinjiang region through highways, railways, and pipelines, thus offering an alternative to the risky Malacca Strait for Middle Eastern oil shipments. However, to achieve this goal, Gwadar Port needs further development. Currently, with a depth of 14.5 meters, it cannot accommodate large crude oil tankers, and plans to construct an oil refinery and an oil pipeline to Xinjiang's Kashgar remain unfulfilled, largely due to security issues. Baloch insurgent groups have resist-

ed Chinese presence, viewing Beijing as complicit in exploiting local resources. Despite these challenges, China's strategic presence at Gwadar allows it to monitor the region and respond swiftly to changes around the Strait of Hormuz. Furthermore, Iranian oil could be transported overland from Iran to Balochistan, then onward to China via the Karakoram Highway.

China has long anticipated the need for alternative oil supply routes, signing a strategic partnership with Iran in 2021 and assuming

operational control of Gwadar in 2013. With Jask and Gwadar ports, Beijing is well-positioned to secure stable oil imports from the Middle East. These investments could also yield long-term strategic gains. In the future, China's military presence at both ports could provide its navy with a strategic advantage in the Indian Ocean, enabling it to monitor US naval operations, including those of the US 5th Fleet based in Bahrain.

Ultimately, Jask and Gwadar, situated outside current

conflict zones, have the potential to reshape Asia's trade landscape. Beyond their geopolitical significance, these ports should be developed as alternative shipping routes that benefit the entire Asian region. With a focus on regional trade, both ports could foster commercial growth across Asia under an open trade agenda, rather than serving merely as assets in the geopolitical maneuvers of global powers.

The article first appeared on Nikkei Asia.

Azmoun makes brace as Shabab Al Ahli beats Nasaf

Sardar Azmoun scored two goals in two minutes to lead Shabab Al Ahli to a 3-2 win over Uzbekistan's Nasaf in Dubai on Wednesday as the side from the United Arab Emirates claimed top spot in Group D of the AFC Champions League Two 2024/25. Azmoun's double came in the 32nd and 34th minutes after Nasaf's Akmal Mosgovoy had struck in the 30th minute to cancel out Mateusao's 23rd minute opener. Zoran Marusic was also on target for the visitors on the stroke of halftime in a goal-filled first period, The AFC reported. The win moves Shabab Al Ahli onto 13 points from their six games and confirms Paulo Sousa's side as winners of the group while Nasaf finish bottom of the standings on four points and are eliminated.

Marusic gave the hosts an early fright when he rattled the post after controlling Marko Stanojevic's pass into the area but Shabab Al Ahli went in front when Mateusao finished off a flowing attacking move, lifting the ball over Umidjon Ergashev after Azmoun's pass. The home should have doubled that advantage three minutes later but Yassine Boualam's weak header was off target and the lurking Mateusao was unable to apply a finishing touch from inside the six-yard box. By the half hour mark Nasaf had pulled level, Mosgovoy stroking home an unstoppable right-foot strike when he made a perfect connection with Walid Abbas' loose pass out of defence. But the goal provoked an immediate reaction from the hosts. It was Azmoun who did the dam-



age, working the ball onto his right foot inside the Nasaf penalty area after collecting Saeid Ezatollahi's pass from the right on his chest and hitting a powerful shot that took a decisive deflection to fly over Ergashev. The prolific Iranian pounced again two minutes later; this time calmly side-footing home when Ergashev had parried Yuri Cesar's centre from the left into the striker's path. Any thoughts Shabab Al Ahli had that they would cruise to victory from there were extinguished, however, as Marusic slotted in his side's second of the night after Murodbek Rahmatov's pass put him in position to convert from eight yards. After a goal-filled opening 45 minutes, chances were at a premium after the interval although Az-

moun almost played Boualam in for his side's fourth with 12 minutes remaining only for Ergashev to race out and block the Moroccan's attempt. That miss mattered little as Shabab Al Ahli completed the win that guaranteed they would do into the draw for the last 16 as Group D winners.

ACL Two knockout stage

Also, the lineup for the AFC Champions League Two 2024/25 Round of 16 was finalized following the conclusion of the group stage on Thursday. The 16 teams, including Tractor from Iran will now cast their eyes on the knockout stage draw which will be held at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on December 12. The West Zone saw Tractor FC

of the Islamic Republic of Iran finishing as the Group A winners with Qatar's Al Wakrah SC the runners-up. Saudi Arabia's Al Taawoun FC were the runaway winners in Group B, finishing with 15 points - three ahead of Bahrain's Al Khaldiya SC. UAE's Sharjah FC were the Group C winners, finishing on 13 points with Jordan's Al Wehdat two adrift in second place. Shabab Al Ahli are the second team from UAE who will be in the draw after winning Group D with 13 points, three clear of Jordan's Al Hussein. Ion City Sailors were the final team to book their spot and the Singaporean outfit did it in style, defeating Port FC 5-2 to finish top of Group F ahead of the Thai side. Thailand's Muangthong Unit-

ed also advanced after beating beat two-time AFC Champions League winners Jeonbuk Hyundai 1-0 to finish second behind the Korea Republic side in Group H. Japan's Sanfrecce Hiroshima and Sydney FC of Australia, who had both already confirmed their spots from Group E, concluded their campaigns with victories over Hong Kong's Eastern and Kaya FC-Iloilo respectively on Thursday. Bangkok United topped Group G ahead of Nam Dinh with the Thai side accumulating 13 points, two more than the team from Vietnam. The Round of 16 will be played in February 2025, followed by the quarter-finals in March and semi-finals in April. The single-leg final is scheduled for May 17, 2025.

Kyrgios, Bencic return to Australian Open with protected rankings



Former Wimbledon finalist Nick Kyrgios and Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Belinda Bencic will play their first Grand Slam after long absences at next month's Australian Open with protected rankings, tournament organisers said on Friday.

Kyrgios, who will play with a protected ranking of 21st, has not played in a Grand Slam since 2022 due to knee, foot and wrist injuries. Bencic, who gave birth to a daughter in April, will return with a special ranking of 15th, Reuters reported. "Kyrgios and Bencic are among six men and six women competing... using protected rankings, setting the main-draw entry ranking cut-off for both fields at world No. 98," the organisers said in a statement. Former world number four Kei Nishikori will also play with a protected ranking, making his first appearance in the Australian Open men's singles since 2021, the statement added. Defending champions Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka, who are at the top of the men's and women's rankings, will be the top seeds at Melbourne Park, with 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic eyeing a record 11th Australian Open title.

Iran U19, U21 teams learn rivals at FIVB Boys' World C'ship

The drawing of lots for the U19 and U21 events took place in Lausanne and the Iranian teams learned their rivals. The FIVB Volleyball Youth World Championships set to take place in 2025 started taking shape on Wednesday, when the drawing of lots for the tournaments were held in Lausanne, the Switzerland, determining the start of the journey of each of the 48 national teams set to compete for medals next year, reported Mehr News Agency. Each tournament will feature 24 national teams, which are now allocated into four pools of six. After the conclusion of pool play, the best four teams in each pool will move forward, advancing to the eighth-finals. Teams ranked fifth and sixth in their pools will continue in action, playing in the playoffs to determine the final positions



from 17th to 24th.

FIVB Volleyball Boys' U19 World Championship

The 2025 FIVB Volleyball Boys' U19 World Championship will be held from July 24 to August 3 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Pool A: Uzbekistan, Belgium, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Paki-

stan, Turkey
Pool B: France, Bulgaria, Japan, China, Algeria, Canada
Pool C: Iran, Italy, Egypt, Tunisia, Poland, Spain
Pool D: USA, Korea, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Finland

FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship

The 2025 FIVB Volleyball

Men's U21 World Championship will be held from August 18 to 31 in Jiangmen, China.
Pool A: China, Egypt, USA, Thailand, Morocco, Turkey
Pool B: Iran, Poland, Canada, Korea, Puerto Rico, Kazakhstan
Pool C: Bulgaria, Brazil, Czech, Colombia, Japan, Cuba
Pool D: Italy, Argentina, Tunisia, France, Ukraine, Indonesia

Dabir says federation eyes upgrading of Iranian wrestling

Sports Desk

The president of the Wrestling Federation announced that the primary objective of holding competitions is to elevate Iranian wrestling. Alireza Dabir made the remarks during a coordination meeting for teams participating in the final stage of the Premier League Freestyle Wrestling in Tehran, IRNA reported. The coordination meeting for the final stage of the Premier League Freestyle Wrestling was held Thursday at the league's head-



quarters. "The goal of the league is to advance and elevate Iranian wrestling, so everyone must work together to ensure the sport thrives." The session was attended by Hamid Yari, President of the Wrestling League; Mahmoud Farhang-Ranjbar, the League's Secretary and Final Competition Supervisor; Mohammad Moslaei-pour, Head of the Referees' Commission; and representatives and coaches from the Saipa, Setaregan Pas Sari, and Mo'eni Pour Food

Industries teams. Yari opened the meeting by thanking the participating teams and stating, "Wrestling has given us honor and dignity, so we must strive to uphold its prestige during these final matches. The primary purpose of teams joining the league is to support the sport in the country, followed by winning the championship. We, too, are always pursuing the progress and elevation of wrestling." Yari pointed out that this year's league final is different from previous seasons, with all four teams having a chance to

win the championship. The participation of 12 foreign wrestlers, alongside prominent and national team wrestlers, has significantly elevated the level of competition. He added, "We aim to hold these matches in accordance with the latest standards of the United World Wrestling organization, resembling global competitions. Only wrestlers and two coaches per team are allowed near the mat." The final stage of the Iranian Freestyle Wrestling League commenced on Friday at the 12,000-seat Azadi Sports Complex.

Iran stresses as vital regional support for Syria, Iraq in anti-terror fight

FMs of Iran, Iraq, Syria discuss resurgence of terrorism

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi emphasized during a meeting in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on Friday that the support of all regional countries for the governments of Syria and Iraq in their fight against terrorism is vital.

Araqchi, who was in Baghdad to attend a trilateral meeting of foreign ministers from Iran, Iraq, and Syria, met with Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, during which he stated that the failure of regional countries to address and eliminate terrorism in Syria will lead to the country becoming a hub and safe haven for terrorist groups throughout the region, as reported by IRNA. Foreign-backed armed groups led by the Hay'at Tahrir al-Shams Takfiri group carried out a surprise assault in Syria's Aleppo and Idlib countryside last month, and overran a number of villages and towns before entering Aleppo on November 27.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-sponsored militancy since March 2011, with Damascus saying the Western states and their regional allies are aiding terrorist groups to wreak havoc in the Arab country.

During the Friday meeting, the Iraqi prime minister also ex-

pressed his gratitude for Iran's support in promoting stability and security in the region, particularly in Iraq.

Sudani emphasized the significance of continuous consultations with Iran, particularly in light of the current volatile situation in the region, especially in Syria, and highlighted the necessity for both countries to collaborate closely.

"What is happening in Syria is inseparable from the events that took place in Gaza and Lebanon, which have threatened the security and stability of the region," he said.

The Iraqi prime minister emphasized the significance of stability and security in Syria for Iraq and the entire region, and reaffirmed his country's readiness to back the Syrian government and people in overcoming the current challenges and tackling terrorism. On Friday, the foreign ministers of Iran, Iraq, and Syria met in the Iraqi capital to discuss the latest developments in Syria.

Speaking to reporters, Araghchi said the unfolding developments in the Arab country necessitate protracted and serious negotiations.

He said the status quo in West Asia, particularly in Syria, is very sensitive, requiring consultations and coordination among all concerned countries.

Araghchi also conveyed his country's readiness to support the Syrian government, people, and army as needed.

In a separate meeting with his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein, Araghchi stated that the ongoing instability and insecurity in Syria pose a threat to the security of all regional countries "as terrorist groups backed by the Zionist regime and the United States have a long-term plan to create chaos and violence in the region."

Araghchi reiterated the importance of coordination and consultation with regional countries to prevent the spread of insecurity. Iraqi foreign minister also underscored his country's principled stance on supporting Syria's territorial integrity and national sovereignty, as well as its fight against terrorism.

Hussein acknowledged the tangible threat of terrorism to the Iraqi government and people, and revealed that Iraq has launched extensive diplomatic efforts at the regional and international levels to garner support for countering takfiri terrorism.

Astana Process

Meanwhile, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran and Russia will meet in Doha today as part of the Astana Process, established to seek a political solution to the



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) meets Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani in Baghdad, Iraq, on December 6, 2024.
IRNA

13-year-old Syrian conflict. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has announced that he will meet with his Turkish and Iranian counterparts in Doha to discuss the ongoing situation in Syria. The main focus of the meeting will be to address recent developments and work toward stabilizing the region.

Region is in a bind: Erdogan

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday he hoped Syrian rebels would continue their advance against President Bashar al-Assad's forces in Syria, but voiced concern about terrorist organizations in their midst, Reuters reported.

Erdogan told reporters after Friday prayers he was closely following the push which he said was heading to the Syrian capital. But he suggested he had mixed feelings, given some of the forces involved.

"The target is Damascus," he said. "I would say we hope for this advance to continue without any issues."

"However, while this resistance there with terrorist organizations is continuing, we had made a call to Assad," he added, referring to his approaches to Assad earlier this year to meet and normalize ties after more than a decade of animosity.

"These problematic advances con-

tinuing as a whole in the region are not in a manner we desire; our heart does not want these. Unfortunately, the region is in a bind," he said, without elaborating.

As insurgents pressed on with their offensive against government forces, a senior UN official warned on Friday that up to 1.5 million people could be forced to flee a surge in fighting in Syria.

The violence has already displaced 280,000 people since it erupted in late November; Samer Abdeljaber, the World Food Program's Director for Emergency Coordination, Strategic Analysis and Humanitarian Diplomacy, told reporters in Geneva.

Amnesty affirms Israeli genocide in Gaza



Displaced Palestinian children play next to tents set up on an area in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, on December 5, 2024.

ABDEL KAREEM HANA/AP

National Desk

Human rights group Amnesty International said Israel is committing genocide in the Gaza Strip amid its ongoing war in the region, adding that it has sought to deliberately destroy Palestinians by mounting deadly attacks, demolishing vital infrastructure, and preventing the delivery of food, medicine and other aid. In a report released Wednesday, the organization listed facts about the war,

which began Oct. 7, 2023, after Hamas struck the Israeli-occupied territories in a surprise attack and took more than 250 people as captives. In response, Israel vowed to eliminate the Palestinian resistance group and bring the captives back, AP reported.

However, the war has ravaged the Gaza Strip for a year and more than 44,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to local health officials. Extreme famine and disease have been rampant in the region as Palestinians grapple with the war and cease-fire talks have largely been stalled. "In isolation, these are serious violations of international humanitarian law or in-

ternational human rights law," Amnesty wrote. "But looking at the broader picture of Israel's military campaign and the cumulative impact of its policies and acts, the conclusion we came to is genocidal intent."

The group also argued that Israel's continued actions after Hamas's initial attack cannot be justified as a response or defense.

"Our damning findings must serve as a wake-up call to the international community: this is genocide. It must stop now," Amnesty Secretary-General Agnès Callamard said in the report.

Even after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other members of his hardline cabinet were issued warrants for arrest by the International Criminal Court last month over the course of the war, the regime has rejected Amnesty's report that it is committing genocide or violating international law.

Still, in the report, the human rights group analyzed the pattern of Israel's conduct over a nine-month stretch and reviewed official statements from the cabinet and military officials.

"Through its research findings and legal analysis, Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that Israel committed, during the nine-month period under review, prohibited acts," the report reads.

"The organization has also found sufficient basis to conclude that these acts were committed with the specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza, as such, who form a substantial part of the Palestinian population," the group wrote.

The organization called on Israel to "immediately stop" its killings, bodily and mental harm and what it called a deliberate conflict of poor conditions of life. Amnesty asked Israel to comply in good faith with the International Court of Jus-

stice's proceedings, and to participate and uphold an immediate, sustained cease-fire.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said Thursday that at least 44,612 people have been killed in nearly 14 months of war.

The toll includes 39 deaths in the previous 24 hours, according to the ministry, which said 105,834 people have been wounded in the Gaza Strip.

Israel has attacked the Kamal Adwan Hospital and several nearby residential buildings in northern Gaza, killing at least 39, Palestinian medics said, including at least 20 in an attack that set ablaze tents sheltering displaced families in a crowded camp in the south of the territory.

Also, the United Nations health agency has no indication that a warning was issued before Israel's bombing early on Thursday of north Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital, the World Health Organization's regional representative said on Friday.

Iran launches first indigenous space tug, nano-satellite into orbit

National Desk

Iran launched a space tug and a nano-satellite into orbit using a domestically-manufactured satellite launch vehicle (SLV) on Friday morning.

In a milestone for Iran's space sector, a space tug, the Saman-1, along with a research payload, the Fakhr-1, were successfully sent into space from the Imam Khomeini Space Launch Terminal, southeast of Semnan, using the Simorgh launcher.

The space tug domestically designed and manufactured by Iranian experts and technicians was launched into space aboard the homegrown SLV. The research payloads were also placed in an orbit around the Earth, with an apogee of 410 kilometers and a perigee of 300 kilometers. In its eighth launch, the Simorgh set a new record for the liftoff of

payloads. During this multi-phase mission, it successfully placed the Saman-1 orbital transfer block and two other research payloads, weighing nearly 300 kilograms, into orbit.

Designed and developed by technicians from the Iranian Space Research Center (ISRC), the Saman-1 system is designed to place satellites in higher orbits, reducing costs and eliminating the need for large launch vehicles with high fuel consumption. The space tug was test-launched in October 2022. Reflecting on the system, Hassan Salaryeh, chief of Iranian Space Agency said that the system "means a quicker and smoother process of obtaining the orbital point synchronized with the Earth once a satellite elevates its orbital height from the geostationary orbit to the operational one."

One of the payloads of today's launcher was, the Fakhr-1 communication satel-

lite. This satellite, developed by experts from the Ministry of Defense's Iran Electronics Industries, was placed into a 410-kilometer orbit, Press TV reported. The nano-satellite, named in honor of the martyred scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, has a 3U size and weighs less than 10 kilograms.

One of the goals of this space mission, according to Tasnim news agency, was to validate the multi-payload launch capability of the Simorgh launcher.

Key subsystems used in the Fakhr-1 include the central computer, power and energy management, radio communications, and flight dynamics. After separation from the launch vehicle, the satellite transmitted telemetry data, including information from its subsystems and sensors. During its first pass, the satellite correctly received and executed commands from ground stations.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran's Mehregan inscribed on UNESCO intangible heritage list

The millennia-old Persian Mehregan festival, also known as feast of harvest and abundance, was inscribed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the intangible heritage list, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman announced. Esmail Baghaei has hailed a recent decision by UNESCO to add Mehregan festival to its Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Press TV reported.

He made the remarks in an X post on Friday, two days after UNESCO named Mehregan, a celebration of the autumn harvest shared by Iran and Tajikistan, cultural heritage. "After Nowruz and Sadeh, Mehregan has been registered as the third Iranian ritual by UNESCO's

Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," he said. "Congratulations! Mehregan ritual is a symbol of the Iranian people's kindness and tolerance, as well as an example of coordination and cooperation between Tajikistan and Iran aimed at preserving and introducing their common historical, civilizational and cultural heritage."

Baghaei also stressed the importance of reviving ties and preserving cultural commonalities between regional nations. Mehregan, rooted in Zoroastrian traditions, is held every year from October 2 to November 2 that symbolizes the end of the harvest season and the start of autumn to express gratitude to God for granting livelihood.



'The Glory of Persia' tour continues in Xinjiang



Arts & Culture Desk

Following successful showcases in Beijing and Shanghai, Iran's renowned exhibition, 'The Glory of Ancient Persia', opened in Xinjiang, China.

The exhibition, which began on December 6, features over 211 artifacts spanning more than 3,000 years of Persian history, including treasures from prominent archaeological sites across Iran.

The event, organized by Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in cooperation with the Chinese government, aims to introduce the magnificence of Persian civilization to Chinese audiences and promote tourism to Iran. The collection includes artifacts from the National Museum of Iran, the Persepolis Museum, and regional museums in Rasht and Gorgan.

The exhibition is being held at the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum, also known as the Xinji-

ang Museum, in the city of Urumqi, Xinjiang Province. The museum is one of the largest in China, with over 40,000 artifacts on display.

Jebrael Nokandeh, Director of the National Museum of Iran, who attended the opening ceremony of the exhibition in Xinjiang, said, "211 historical artifacts and 5 recreated works of Iranian art and civilization, dating back to around 3,000 years ago to the Safavid era, are on display. The exhibition will run until March 3, 2025, to introduce the magnificence of Persian civilization to Chinese audiences and promote tourism to Iran.

He recalled that the exhibition had previously been held for three months at the Palace Museum in Beijing, the capital of China, and for four months at the Shanghai Museum, attracting many fans of Iranian culture, arts, and civilization.

Ali Darabi, Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, who trav-

eled to China for the opening of the exhibition, met with the head of cultural heritage of Xinjiang Province.

Darabi referred to the historical relations between Iran and China, calling them "strategic and based on peace." He noted that the Silk Road has been a symbol of peace and friendship between Iran and China throughout history.

The exhibition is a significant cultural event, marking the third stop of "The Glory of Ancient Persia" in China. The valuable historical collection of Iran was approved for temporary export by the Iranian government on December 13, 2023, based on Article 138 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The collection was initially approved for export for six months, and was displayed at the Palace Museum in Beijing. The permit was later extended for another six months, and the collection was sent to Shanghai for display. The collection is now being displayed in Xinjiang Province, and is expected to remain in China until the end of the year.

According to documents, China has insured the 211 historical artifacts from Iran for 114 million and 205 thousand euros. Most of the artifacts were borrowed from the National Museum of Iran. Nokandeh had previously said, "In 'The Glory of Ancient Persia', artifacts from over 60 archaeological sites across Iran, almost the entire country, are on display. Most of these artifacts were discovered through scientific excavations and archaeological research."

'Fargoon' visual arts exhibition underway in Tehran

First visual arts festival titled 'Fargoon', organized by Tehran Visual Arts Association, is being held at Iranian Art Forum's Bahar Gallery.

The exhibition, which kicked off on November 28, will run until December 9, showcasing the works of prominent painter and sculptor members of the association, the forum's official website announced.

The forum is closed on Saturdays.



The festival features an impressive lineup of 40 artists,

including Akram Afzali, Ahmad Habibi, Hossein Esmaeili, Abbas Amani, Saeid Emkani, and many more.

Push to oust ...

The West, which opposes the Resistance Front in Syria, has drawn an incorrect conclusion due to a strategic miscalculation, believing the Resistance Front is weakening. Consequently, it is attempting to sever Syria's ties with the Resistance Front to prevent it from serving as a reliable safety valve for it. Turkey is pursuing Neo-Ottomanism and seeking to regain the power of the Ottoman Empire. To achieve this, it aims to play a pivotal role in regional developments. Based on its traditional rivalry with Russia and threats

from Syria and the Kurds, Turkey intends to fan the flames of crisis in Syria through cooperation with Israel and its intelligence services. The assessment of the West and its allies in the region is based on the idea that by keeping Syria at arm's length from the Resistance Front, they can create a breathing space for the Zionist regime to rebuild after the Lebanon and Gaza wars. In other words, Israel has evil plans for Syria following the cease-fire. Structural reforms in the Syrian government require the authorities to take fundamental steps. Today, there is a fragile state, which,

despite achieving relative stability in recent years, has missed a critical opportunity for territorial consensus due to the lack of suitable tools. Bashar al-Assad has lost the chance to prevent the repetition of anti-government developments. He is the best person to address these crises.

Today, there is a succession crisis in Syria. Therefore, under current circumstances, speaking about groups that can create territorial consensus in Syria is shrouded in uncertainty and the Western and Turkish factions lack the capacity to achieve this.

A demotivated army

By Ata Bahrami
Syria affairs expert

OPINION

The armed groups that have been in control of the Syrian city of Idlib in recent years took advantage of one of the Syrian army's mistakes. The army neglected Idlib completely during this time, allowing the militants to launch attacks on Aleppo. In this period, the militants managed to mobilize between 100,000 to 200,000 fighters in Idlib and received substantial logistical support from Turkey and Israel. As a result, these groups were able to capture Aleppo in a matter of days, achieving a stunning victory.

Unfortunately, the Syrian army did not put up a good fight in Aleppo, and if they had mounted a stronger defense, it would have been impossible for things to unfold this way. The Syrian army's retreat was largely due to two major factors: firstly, there were widespread disruptions to communication between army units, and secondly, Syria's state infrastructure had been severely worn down after years of war. When a Syrian government employee earns a mere \$30 to \$40 per month, it is clear that they lack the resilience to withstand pressure, and the enemy can easily buy off many of the government's forces, which is exactly what happened. A number of Syr-

ian soldiers readily handed over their posts to the enemy. When a Syrian colonel is paid just \$50 a month, or a general earns only \$280 — equivalent to the salary of an average employee in Iran — it is unrealistic to expect miracles. Meanwhile, the enemy is splurging \$10,000 to recruit fighters. Some Arab states, Turkey, and Israel have all spent enormous sums of money in Syria.

The developments in Syria are, in a way, a continuation of the war the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Israel failed to achieve its objectives in Gaza, and the cease-fire in Lebanon added to its setbacks, prompting them to turn their attention to Syria.