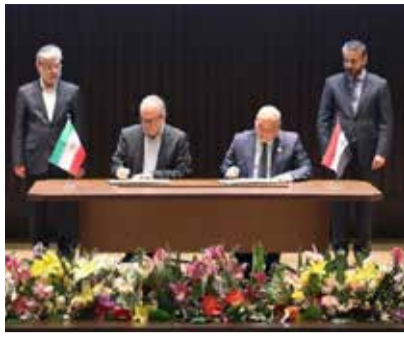
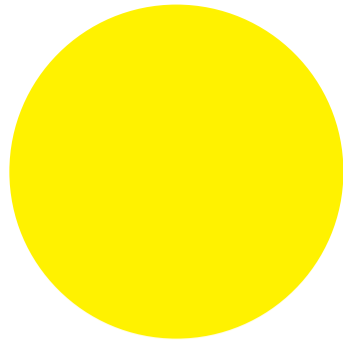


Iran, Iraq sign deal for scientific cooperation



8 >



Iran Daily

Vol. 7750 • Monday, January 20, 2025 • Bahman 1, 1403 • Rajab 19, 1446 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



> irandaily.ir

newspaper.irandaily.ir

IranDailyWeb

Pezeshkian accentuates heed to urban development standards in Makoran

2 >

Resistance's blows forced Israel to accept cease-fire

By Mosadegh Mosadeghpour
Regional affairs expert

O P I N I O N

The stance taken by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his faction about the administration of Gaza post-cessation is just a demand from the Palestinian Authority. The fact is that the PA has not exactly been embraced with open arms in the Gaza Strip. This suggests that Hamas still holds considerable sway in the coastal enclave. Interestingly, the PA and Abbas did not take a hardline stance against Israel and its actions against civilians during the 16-month war on Gaza and now they are angling to take the reins of Gaza's governance. Meanwhile, Hamas officials, despite expressing a desire for Palestinian unity, might find themselves in a situation where such ongoing disputes become a substitute for war in Gaza.

If the Palestinian factions remain divided over the Gaza Strip, it will play right into the hands of the US and Israel, who have been playing a strategic game regarding the territory. Historically, Israel has sought to drive a wedge between Hamas and the PA. The future of post-war Gaza is a hotly debated topic and Israel might revert to its old playbook of targeted killings and military actions.

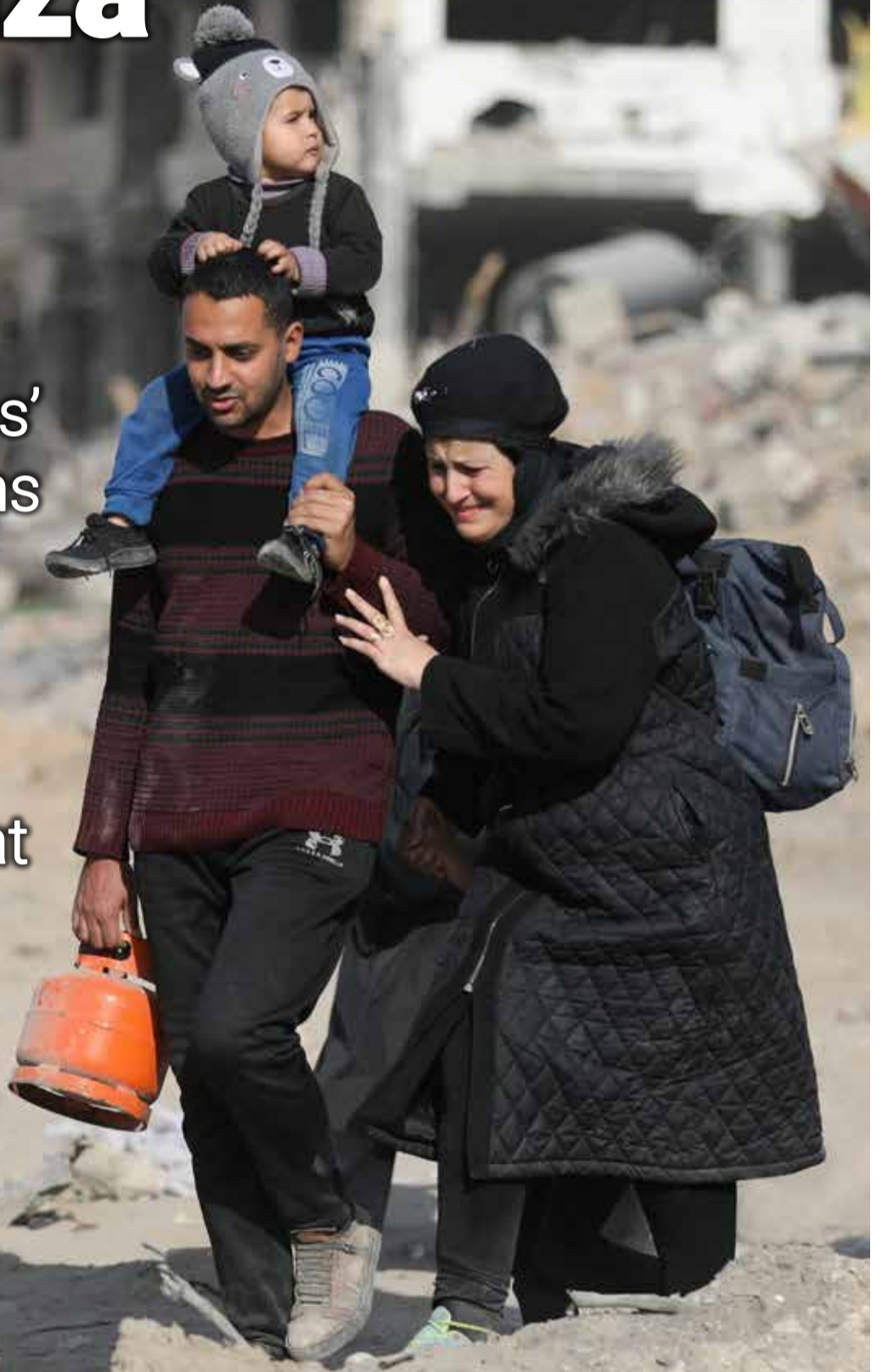
Page 7 >

Serenity Descends on Gaza

Hamas: Cease-fire 'result of legendary steadfastness' of Palestinians

Gen. Qa'ani calls truce agreement biggest defeat for Israel

7 >



Displaced Palestinians walk past the rubble as they attempt to return to their homes in the northern Gaza Strip, January 19, 2025.
● DAWOUD ABU ALKAS/REUTERS



Why are Asians less concerned about 'Trump 2.0'?

O P I N I O N

5 >

Trump's Middle East doctrine;

War or peace

By Hoda Yousefi
Mideast affairs expert

O P I N I O N E X C L U S I V E

During his first term, Donald Trump's administration took an unconventional stance in the Middle East, deviating from the well-worn path of US policy. Eschewing the traditional focus on power balance and regional stability, Trump crafted new policies: unconditional support for age-old allies, squeezing rivals to the max, and cutting back on direct military involvement. The strategy hinged on the belief that economic and military alliances between Arab nations and Israel, sans the Palestinian issue, could birth a new regional order. The Abraham Accords and the ramped-up pressure on Iran were the byproducts of this vision.

A cornerstone of Trump's doctrine was the preference for economic and diplomatic levers over direct military interventions. The 2018 withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and the ensuing "maximum pressure" campaign on Tehran epitomized this tactic. Trump also aimed to nudge regional players to shoulder their security responsibilities, thus lightening the financial burden of US military presence. During his first term, Trump, wielding sanctions and economic pressure as his main tools, tried to coax Iran to the negotiating table while simultaneously propping up support for Israel unprecedentedly. With Trump's comeback to the White House on January 20, these strategies are poised to be revived and possibly ramped up.

Page 5 >



Exploring Iran's majestic ice waterfalls

3 >



Minister: Gov't to offer aid package to production units

2 >



Persepolis makes bid for ex-Fenerbahce coach Kartal: Report

6 >



President favors direct talks with US: Iranian MP

7 >

NIOC to resume offshore exploration after five-year hiatus



The head of exploration at the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) announced that the company will resume offshore exploration activities after a five-year pause, beginning with seismic surveys at the Nosrat field.

Mohyeddin Jafari stated that the exploration department has not conducted any offshore drilling since the Iranian year of 1398 (2019) but will now restart operations following the signing of contracts to supply drilling rigs, a first under the current administration, Shana reported. Speaking at a ceremony on Saturday to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) and two contracts with North Drilling company for onshore and offshore rigs, Jafari emphasized that the NIOC exploration department's scope of activity spans the entire geographical area of the country.

He noted that due to past limitations in securing drilling rigs, the focus had been on onshore operations for geological, geophysical, and drilling studies. Jafari highlighted that since the 2nd Development Plan, the exploration department has averaged six drilling rigs per year. However, with the support of the NIOC CEO, this number is expected to increase significantly by next year. The MoU with IOOC aims to facilitate joint exploration activities, including seismic surveys at the Nosrat field, leveraging existing infrastructure. Jafari added that the exploration department plans to utilize the capabilities of NIOC subsidiaries to expand exploration efforts, aiming to double the number of drilling rigs to 12. This increase, he said, will accelerate the discovery of new fields both onshore and offshore, reducing the time needed to identify new reserves. Jafari also mentioned that Sina Energy Holding will soon begin offshore exploration drilling in the Persian Gulf.

He expressed hope that the company, given its financial, equipment, and human resources capabilities, will also enter the geophysics sector, fostering greater collaboration and success in the field. During the event, Jafari signed the MoU with Ahmadreza Rasti, CEO of IOOC, to conduct joint exploration activities, including drilling, seismic surveys, and geophysical studies. Additionally, two contracts for offshore drilling rigs and an amendment to increase the number of onshore rigs were signed between Jafari and Rouhollah Abdi, acting CEO of North Drilling company.

Pezeshkian accentuates heed to urban development standards in Makoran

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian underscored the importance of adhering to urban development standards in the development of the Makoran region and southern coasts.

Speaking at a meeting on maritime-based development on Sunday, he called for all agencies active in these areas to focus on the development vision for the region, stating that development plans must be carefully reviewed and implemented based on thorough documentation. Without a clear vision and an institution to oversee the overall development of the southern coasts, the development process cannot be effectively managed, the president said. Pezeshkian highlighted the need to upgrade and standardize infrastructure for maritime-based development.

He urged all ministries and organizations developing infrastructure in the southern coastal cities to comply with the highest environmental and urban development standards. The president specifically addressed road infrastructure, directing the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development to ensure that land acquisition for rail corridors and highways in the south is carried out in a way that allows for the widest possible roads. This, he said,



would prevent the need for future land reacquisition for highway expansion.

Pezeshkian also stressed the importance of developing rail transport in the region, noting that the transfer of many products should be conducted by train. He called for the standardization and strengthening of rail infrastructure in southern ports.

Regarding the construction of factories and power plants in Makoran, the

president stated that potentially polluting facilities must be built at an appropriate distance from cities to avoid future urban pollution and emphasized the need to adhere to these standards now to prevent problems later.

On the topic of population settlement in southern cities, Pezeshkian suggested that institutions such as the armed forces, which have maritime missions, could relocate their bases and personnel to the south.

During the meeting, the Navy chief presented a report on maritime-based development, including a proposal to issue fuel bunkering licenses for ships.

The president ordered the Navy to review and issue the necessary permits, adding that one way to boost economic development in southern ports is to issue licenses for mini-refineries.

He described mini-refineries as a suitable alternative to combat fuel

smuggling, sanctions, and to support the local economy, calling for an operational plan to be prepared. Proposals for developing maritime tourism, including tours to Antarctica, were also discussed, with Pezeshkian instructing that these proposals be carefully reviewed and presented at the next meeting for appropriate decision-making.

The meeting was attended by Mohsen Haji-Mirzaei, the president's chief of staff, Hamid Pourmoham-

madi, the head of the Plan and Budget Organization, Abdolnaser Hemmati, the minister of economic affairs and finance, Mohammad Atabak, the minister of industry, mine and trade, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi, Ahmad Meydari, the minister of labor, Gholamreza Nouri-Qezelgeh, the agriculture minister, as well as commanders of the Army and IRGC Navy, who shared their views on the matters discussed.

Minister: Gov't to offer aid package to production units



Economy Desk

Industry, Mine, and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak stated that a support package would be provided to production units affected by gas and electricity shortages, emphasizing that the initiative is practical and not merely symbolic.

Speaking at a meeting of the government-private sector council in Yazd Province, Atabak said the package aims to mitigate losses incurred by production units due to energy deficits, ILNA reported. Atabak noted that energy shortages are a major concern for the country's economic actors, adding that heated discussions have taken place in gov-

ernment meetings with officials responsible for energy infrastructure.

He revealed that initial proposals by some officials called for a complete cutoff of gas and electricity to industries, but after extensive negotiations, the current measures were adopted.

"The support package is being implemented for the first time this year and is not symbolic. Its goal is to prevent further damage to industries," Atabak said. He added that the current administration prioritizes the industrial sector and has sought to support industries through facilities and aid packages to minimize the impact of energy shortages.

The minister also addressed the activation of domestic letters of credit (LCs), acknowledging that the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade faces many of the same challenges as economic actors in the stock market.

He said the ministry is holding numerous meetings with relevant officials to address these issues.

Atabak highlighted that the administration has finalized agreements with Eurasian countries, as well as Uzbekistan and Pakistan, in various fields. He also stressed the need to collect mining royalties to ensure that regions with mining activities benefit from these resources. Regarding environmental concerns, Atabak pointed to the undeniable pollution in Ardakan and called for measures to reduce it, including preventing the establishment of units that contribute to increased emissions in the region.

Special committee on agenda to address shortages

Meanwhile, Samad Hassanzadeh, head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), announced the formation of a special government committee to address electricity shortages, with a focus on renewable energy capacity.

The committee includes the heads of the National

Development Fund, the ministers of industry and economy, the heads of the Plan and Budget Organization and the Central Bank of Iran, and a representative from the ICCIMA. Hassanzadeh said the committee has been tasked with presenting a report by next Sunday on obstacles to renewable energy projects and potential solutions.

He added that the government is prioritizing the resolution of energy imbalances, including allocating resources from the National Development Fund for investments in the electricity sector and securing land for projects. "The president has emphasized that the country's electricity issues must be resolved by the summer of 2025," Hassanzadeh said.

The committee will examine challenges in establishing wind and renewable power plants, identify suitable regions for energy production, and explore the purchase of solar cells from China, among other issues.

Exports of farmed caviar rise 112% in nine months: IFO



A senior official at the Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO) reported a 112% increase in exports of farmed caviar from the country in the first nine months of the Iranian calendar year starting on March 20, 2024, compared with that of in the last year.

Nasser Karami-Rad, the director general of the Office for Conservation of Aquatic Genetic Resources at the IFO, made the remarks on Sunday, IRNA reported.

The increase came after the exports of over 5.3 tons of the farmed caviar worth \$3.2 million, he said.

The official added that during the mentioned period, Iran's farmed caviar was exported to 28 countries.

He further referred to the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Belgium as the three countries that imported Iran's caviar the most.

The official highlighted the high quality of the country's farmed caviar, describing it as a reason for the export hike.

Gilan and Mazandaran in northern Iran and Fars in the south of the country are respectively the three Iranian provinces that are pioneers in producing farmed caviar, he noted.

Exploring Iran's majestic ice waterfalls

Iranica Desk

Iran, a land of diverse and breathtaking nature, is home to a treasure trove of natural attractions. For those seeking winter recreation and the beauty of icy phenomena, Iran offers numerous wonders. Among these unique attractions are the stunning ice waterfalls, which enhance the mountainous regions of Iran during the winter season.



Damavand Ice Waterfall

Damavand

The Damavand Ice Waterfall is one of the most remarkable natural phenomena in Iran and the entire Middle East. Located at an altitude of approximately 5,100 meters above sea level on the southern face of Mount Damavand, this stunning feature is nestled within one of the region's dormant volcanoes. It remains frozen for most of the year, with only brief periods in summer when a thin stream of water flows beside it. During the summer months, temperatures can rise above freezing around noon, allowing for a small amount of runoff. However, by around 4 p.m., temperatures drop again, causing the melted ice to refreeze and resulting in a perpetually frozen cascade. At the top, a depression covered in snow can be found year-round, IRNA wrote.

Reaching this icy marvel requires mountaineering experience, technical equipment, and high physical fitness. The access route branches off from the main southern path of Damavand, necessitating navigation through rocky and icy terrain. Despite the challenges, the stunning views of Mount Damavand, natural glaciers, and the ice formation create a unique and unforgettable experience for climbers and nature enthusiasts.

Nava

The Nava Ice Waterfall is situated at an altitude of about 2,500 meters above sea level in Larijan, Mazandaran Province, and is notable for being frozen year-round. Located near the Damavand Ice Waterfall, it remains ice-covered despite its lower elevation. This site is popular for specialized ice climbing programs.

To access the location, take the Haraz road. Approximately 200 meters past the Larijan and Rineh exit, you will see the turnoff for the village of Nava. Travel for five kilometers along this road, which includes both dirt and paved sections. After this distance, you will reach a secondary road that passes through orchards, leading you to the icy formation. The hike from the village of Nava takes about an hour.

Akhlamad

Akhlamad Waterfall is one of the most beautiful cascades in Iran, located in Khorasan Razavi Province, near Chenaran. Nestled in the pristine mountainous nature of Akhlamad village, this stunning site showcases its unique beauty throughout the year, with its charm particularly enhanced in winter. As the cold season arrives, the falls freeze, creating a dreamy, snowy landscape. Icicles hanging from the rocks and the frozen cascade add captivating appeal to the area, making it a popular destination for tourists.

Notably, Akhlamad features not just one waterfall but a series of cascading displays situated in a deep valley within the Binaloud Mountain range. In winter, all these features freeze, creating an unparalleled view. Walking alongside these frozen cascades and enjoying the serene, untouched nature of Akhlamad is an unforgettable experience. In addition to its natural beauty, the region also boasts historical and cultural sites that enhance its appeal.

Khor

The Khor Ice Waterfall, approximately 50 meters high, is located in the village of Khor in Alborz Province, near the Chalus Road. As winter approaches, the water freezes, creating a stunning display of icicles and ice formations. The access route is relatively easy, with a short walk leading you there. The path passes through fruit orchards, showcasing the pristine beauty of the area. Facilities around this natural wonder include parking, restrooms, and gazebos for resting. If you're looking for a peaceful escape from the hustle and bustle of the city, this site is an excellent choice.

Hamellon

The Hamellon Ice Waterfall is located along the route from the Meygun Gorge to Shamsak, Tehran Province, and is a popular destination for climbers and nature enthusiasts. Due to its shaded location, the cascade completely freezes during the cold seasons. In addition to ice climbing, visitors can enjoy walking around the stunning site and experiencing the area's pristine nature.

In the summer and spring, Hamellon Valley offers a lush landscape and clean air, providing a calm escape from city life. Furthermore, the presence of the Meygun International Ice Climbing School nearby has made this area an important hub for

ice climbing training and development in the city. If you're seeking a unique and exciting winter experience, we highly recommend visiting this natural site.

Sangan

The Sangan Ice Waterfall is located at the end of Sangan village, approximately 20 kilometers northwest of Tehran, nestled in the foothills of Pahneh Hesar Peak in the stunning Alborz Mountains. During the cold seasons, it offers breathtaking views. Activities such as ice climbing, hiking, and photography are commonly enjoyed in the vicinity, which remains active during moderate seasons, providing another natural attraction.

To access this location in winter, park your vehicle near Sangan village and proceed on foot, equipped with appropriate gear for the remainder of the journey. The steep roads in this area can freeze quickly, making them hazardous. The Sangan Waterfall is recognized as one of the tallest in Tehran Province and is the first natural site in the province to be registered on Iran's National Natural Heritage List.

Ganjnameh

Hamedan, one of Iran's historical provinces, boasts not only rich cultural attractions but also numerous natural wonders. The Ganjnameh Waterfall is one such attraction, named after one of Iran's exquisite historical artifacts. Located at the foot of Mount Alvand, it sits alongside the ancient Ganjnameh inscriptions, which date back to the Achaemenid era.

The combination of nature and history enhances the visual appeal of this site. In the cold season, it transforms into an ice formation, making its appearance even more spectacular. The best time to visit the Ganjnameh Ice Waterfall is in late autumn and winter. The site was registered on Iran's National Heritage List on January 5, 2008.

Abarsaj

The Abarsaj (or Abarsij) Ice Waterfall is an extraordinary and lesser-known attraction located 10 kilometers north of Shahrud in Semnan Province, within the eastern Alborz Mountains. This area is ideal for winter visits, as icicles adorn the cold slopes of Shahvar Peak.

Locals can easily guide you to the access route for this gem. After reaching the Egbaliyeh area, it takes about an hour of walking to arrive at this beautiful location. The best time to see the icicles of the waterfall is from early December to late March, as it does not remain frozen year-round and only forms ice during the cold seasons.

Margoon

Margoon Waterfall in Fars Province is often regarded as one of the most beautiful cascades in Iran. With its unique features, it is an important attraction in the spring and summer; however, its beauty in winter is truly unparalleled. When the water cascading down from the mountain freezes due to the cold, it adds even more grandeur to the scenery. Unlike many others, the waterfall does not originate from a river; instead, its flow comes from thousands of springs that emerge from the rocks.

Due to its twists and turns, the formation is often likened to a snake, which is how it got its name (*mar* in Persian means snake). The cool winter climate, combined with the snow-covered mountains, makes this area appealing to those who enjoy the colder seasons. Additionally, the icicles hanging over the falls further enhance its beauty.

Abnik

The Abnik Waterfall in Tehran Province is another popular site for ice climbing and winter sports enthusiasts. The collection of attractions in this area, including a river, Abnik village, and the waterfall itself, holds significant appeal for residents of Tehran. During the cold seasons, it freezes, providing an opportunity for winter travelers. The path to reach this natural wonder in winter is challenging, requiring approximately three hours of hiking and climbing.

It's crucial to remember that winter poses specific dangers, and visiting Abnik without proper equipment can be hazardous. Besides winter sports and ice climbing, this area offers beautiful and unique landscapes for exploration and photography. If you have the necessary gear, don't miss the chance to experience this stunning icy formation.



Sangan Ice Waterfall



Ganjnameh Ice Waterfall



Abarsaj Ice Waterfall



Margoon Ice Waterfall



Abnik Ice Waterfall



Nava Ice Waterfall



Akhlamad Ice Waterfall



Khor Ice Waterfall



Hamellon Ice Waterfall

A call that could change history

Trump-Pezeshkian's moment to forge peace



By Seyed Hossein Mousavian
International affairs analyst

OPINION

The incoming Trump administration has expressed support for a negotiated solution with Iran on all outstanding issues. When asked about a message to the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, President-elect Trump simply said, "I wish him luck." During his 2024 presidential campaign, Trump indicated that his Iran policy in the second term would be "very different" than that in his first. He rejected the "regime change" policy and reiterated that he wants Iran to be successful, but also that he opposes the country's acquisition of nuclear weapons. In September 2024, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian stated that Tehran is ready for "constructive" dialogue, "ready to engage" with the West about nuclear power, and has expressed willingness to improve relations with the US.

Nevertheless, the gaps between Washington and Tehran will be difficult to bridge. If Trump wishes to break the deadlock by negotiating with Iran, he will face fierce opposition within the US, in Iran, and in the region.

If Trump's main objective is to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear bomb, however, he needs a plan that would permanently block the acquisition of nuclear bombs not only by Iran but also by other ambitious countries in the region. As President Biden warned, "If Iran gets the bomb, then Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt will follow."

Here are the elements of such a plan:

First, as in the Obama administration's Iran nuclear deal, Iran would agree to complete transparency of its nuclear programs and the most stringent level of International Atomic Energy Agency verification measures.

Second, the key principles of the agreement would be that it applies to all the countries in the region, making it possible to make permanent the main non-proliferation limitations of the deal, including limiting uranium enrichment to below 5 percent and no separation of plutonium from spent fuel.

Third, following the implementation of a new nuclear deal, Washington and Tehran would need to engage in discussions about regional security. Both countries should temporarily suspend all threats and hostilities as a first step and goodwill gesture.

Some years ago, Robert Einhorn, then a US nuclear negotiator told me that "when we raise the necessity of regional talks, some Iranians mistakenly believe that we mean the dismantling of Iran's missile and defense capabilities. All



Then-US president Donald Trump hangs up following a phone conversation in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, D.C., US, on August 27, 2018. The inauguration of Trump as the US president for the second time takes place today.

AL DRAGO/BLOOMBERG

countries including Iran have the right to the defense capabilities they need. We understand that Iran, like us, has its own security concerns. Both sides must therefore engage in a serious and fair dialogue to address each other's legitimate and lawful concerns and find a balanced solution." Ayatollah Khamenei is the ultimate decision-maker regarding Iran's relations with the United

States. On January 8, 2024, he said that the US is fundamentally hostile to the Iranian nation and the Islamic Republic, wishing for the destruction of Iran. Based on the several decades of understanding I have of his views, I believe that the essence of his concerns regarding the relations with the US can be summarized in three key points: the threat to Iran's independence through interference in internal affairs, the "regime change" policy, and the lack of respect for and recognition of Iran's national interests. On the other side, during 15 years of research at Princeton University on US-Iran relations, I believe that "challenging and threatening the US interests

in the region" is the most important concern the US has regarding Iran's policies after the 1979 revolution.

If there is going to be a fair and balanced deal, both capitals should acknowledge each other's legitimate regional interests and commit to not threatening those interests. This would require some realignment of their regional security and diplomacy strategies, especially with their key allies.

Moreover, it would require a credible and sustainable model for regional stability and peace. Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf Cooperation Council countries in the Persian Gulf could achieve such an arrangement through a new col-

lective security and economic framework modeled on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The arrangement would facilitate establishing balanced and normal relations with the Western and Eastern blocs; regional arms control arrangements including a nuclear weapons-free zone; and the reduction of US military forces and expenditures in the region. The agreement could also link a cessation of military conflict between Iran and Israel with a just and durable solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as required by multiple UN resolutions.

Finally, the deal could also include significant economic

cooperation between the US and Iran, potentially involving projects worth hundreds of billions of dollars in sectors such as petrochemicals, aviation, and clean energy. This would create major economic stakes in the agreement within both countries, making the new arrangements more robust.

On his first day in office at the White House, President Trump could agree in a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart, President Pezeshkian, to have special envoys from both countries quickly initiate direct talks for such a fair, sustainable, and historic agreement.

The full article first appeared on The Hill.

“

Some years ago, Robert Einhorn, then a US nuclear negotiator told me that "all countries including Iran have the right to the defense capabilities they need. We understand that Iran, like us, has its own security concerns. Both sides must therefore engage in a serious and fair dialogue to address each other's legitimate and lawful concerns and find a balanced solution."



Workers build a stage in the US Capitol Rotunda in Washington on January 17, 2025, for the 60th presidential inauguration, which was moved indoors.

MORRY GASH/AP



US president-elect Donald Trump (front-L) takes the oath of office during the 58th presidential inauguration in Washington, D.C., US, on January 20, 2017. He takes the oath for the second time today.

ANDREW HARRER/BLOOMBERG

Why are Asians less concerned about 'Trump 2.0'?



By Ali Mahmoudi
Journalist

OPINION

Since Donald Trump announced his candidacy, various think tanks have been analyzing the potential repercussions of his return to power, and these analyses have taken on a more practical dimension as the inauguration approaches. As we draw closer to Trump's second inauguration as President of the United States, concerns among countries worldwide — especially among the US' Western allies — about the resurgence of his non-liberal policies have intensified. Numerous Western nations anticipate increased friction with the United States, particularly in the private sector. These anxieties have been exacerbated by the aggressive responses of American business leaders, such as Elon Musk. Within the United States, reactions to this situation have also emerged, along with proposed solutions. The journal *Foreign Affairs*, affiliated with the Council on Foreign Relations, suggests that Western countries could learn from the approach of Asian nations by examining the historical context of US relations with Asian countries. According to this publication, the United States' minimal interventionist policy in Asia, which has led to a redefinition of economic and political relationships based on mutual interests rather than shared values, could serve as a model for Western nations.

Taiwan's enigma

After the failure of the decades-long policy of "strategic ambiguity," Biden announced four times that the US would defend Taiwan against Chinese aggression, but Trump did not make such a statement. Throughout the 2024 election, Trump's views on Taiwan have shown that the issue falls within the framework of his broader views on allies and trade. He has set Taiwan at arm's length, stating that it should pay more for US support.

He has accused Taipei of stealing America's semiconductor industry, but the risk is that Trump may see Taiwan merely as a pawn in a larger game with China. If he mixes trade and security by including Taiwan in any potential deal with China, he will greatly increase the risks.

Trump has promised to bring an end to the war in Ukraine, a development closely watched by Asian countries, especially China. However, the geopolitical circumstances of Ukraine and Taiwan are not similar,

and China has made this clear. Taiwan is at the heart of the Chinese Communist Party's narrative of legitimacy, and any unsuccessful or stalled military action against Taiwan would be fatal to the party's rule. On the other hand, Biden's explicit support for Taiwan has created a sense of righteousness in Taipei and reinforced the idea that the US and its allies have no choice but to defend Taiwan. This has also led Taiwan to overestimate its strategic position in the global economy and overemphasize the role of TSMC in chip production. Although the company plays a significant role in the semiconductor industry, it is just a contractor, and there are others. However, the company has moved some of its operations to the US, Japan, and other regions, which may reduce Taiwan's long-term economic importance.

If Trump pulls out of Ukraine or takes steps to improve semiconductor production in the US, Taipei will realize it cannot rely on unlimited support from Washington. Such actions may prevent Taiwan's domestic politics from moving towards destabilizing independence, an action that could make Chinese military exercises around it or aggressive actions on the island of Taiping more likely. However, the regional impact of the Ukraine war should not be exaggerated. Countries like Australia, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea have taken a strong stance against Russia, but much of the region, especially Muslim-majority Southeast Asia, is ambivalent. These countries have seen Washington's double standard, condemning Russia's war while supporting or enabling wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Gaza. Many Asian governments are trying to weigh the costs and benefits of maintaining their national interests against the US, but China is the biggest problem. Even non-aligned countries like India, Indonesia, and Vietnam have moved closer to Washington due to concerns about China. This trend began during Trump's first term and expanded during Biden's.

Such actions may prevent Taiwan's domestic politics from moving towards destabilizing independence, an action that could make Chinese military exercises around it or aggressive actions on the island of Taiping more likely. However, the regional impact of the Ukraine war should not be exaggerated. Countries like Australia, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea have taken a strong stance against Russia, but much of the region, especially Muslim-majority Southeast Asia, is ambivalent. These countries have seen Washington's double standard, condemning Russia's war while supporting or enabling wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Gaza. Many Asian governments are trying to weigh the costs and benefits of maintaining their national interests against the US, but China is the biggest problem. Even non-aligned countries like India, Indonesia, and Vietnam have moved closer to Washington due to concerns about China. This trend began during Trump's first term and expanded during Biden's.

Such actions may prevent Taiwan's domestic politics from moving towards destabilizing independence, an action that could make Chinese military exercises around it or aggressive actions on the island of Taiping more likely. However, the regional impact of the Ukraine war should not be exaggerated. Countries like Australia, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea have taken a strong stance against Russia, but much of the region, especially Muslim-majority Southeast Asia, is ambivalent. These countries have seen Washington's double standard, condemning Russia's war while supporting or enabling wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Gaza. Many Asian governments are trying to weigh the costs and benefits of maintaining their national interests against the US, but China is the biggest problem. Even non-aligned countries like India, Indonesia, and Vietnam have moved closer to Washington due to concerns about China. This trend began during Trump's first term and expanded during Biden's.



● KLAWE RZECZY/GETTY IMAGES

In search of leader

Asia's primary concern about Trump's return is his trade policy. Trump has repeatedly stated that "tariffs" are his favorite word, and foreign governments should take it seriously, especially if hardliners like Jamie Greer take key roles in US trade policy. Trump will likely impose new tariffs on China, which may also include countries like Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Beijing will retaliate in some way, but domestic economic problems, including declining confidence in economic management and a real estate crisis, will limit China's ability to respond. This could create a vicious cycle that further weakens China's economic growth and increases trade tensions with the West.

Alongside these challenges, the increasing competition between the US and China will

continue, although nuclear deterrence makes military conflict almost impossible. Many Asian governments will try to insure themselves against the uncertainties of China's economic policies and Trump's return by strengthening cooperation. However, the lack of strong leadership in the region is a significant challenge. Trump's decision in 2017 to pull out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership was a major shock to US allies, but Japan under Shinzo Abe's leadership managed to keep the pact alive. Today, the leaders of Australia, Japan, and South Korea have weak political bases, and the Indonesian president has yet to establish himself in a region that clearly needs strong leadership but lacks an obvious candidate.

It's always been America first

Asia's long experience with Washington shows that Trump is not a unique phenomenon. Large countries like the US tend to look inward more than outward. Trump's reluctance to engage in foreign commit-

ments reflects a current of thought that has existed in US foreign policy since George Washington's warning against permanent alliances in 1796. Before World War II, the US only intermittently engaged in foreign affairs, and it was the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Soviet threat after the war that drew Washington into sustained foreign engagement. However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and despite the presence of China and Russia, the US has not faced a similar threat. Therefore, instead of searching for imaginary shared values, US allies and partners should view the second Trump administration as a return to America's natural position. They should learn to deal with Washington not as a superpower with unlimited willingness to defend them, but as an offshore balancer that selectively uses its power to advance its own interests.

The article first appeared in the Farsi-language newspaper *Vatan-e Emrooz*.



Presidential candidate Donald Trump (l) speaks about the threat of China to US agriculture at the Smith Farm in Smithton, Pennsylvania, on September 23, 2024. ● WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

War or peace ...

Gaza-Israel flashpoint

Trump's Middle East policies will reclaim the spotlight upon his return to the White House. A key and sizzling issue in the region, influenced by Trump's maneuvers, is the Gaza-Israel conflict and the simmering tensions between Israel and Palestinian factions. Trump's first term saw a staunchly pro-Israel stance, characterized by the 2018 relocation of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Al-Quds (Jerusalem) and the 2019 recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights. Yet, before his return to power, Trump played a pivotal role in defusing tensions and setting a deadline for a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. However, the resulting cease-fire fell short of meeting all of Israel's expectations, provok-

ing discontent among certain Israeli extremist factions. This led to the resignation of Israel's Minister of Internal Security Itamar Ben-Gvir. Trump's White House comeback is likely to bolster support for Israel, but this may not necessarily fulfill the desires of all Israeli political camps.

Domino effect of normalization

A standout achievement of Trump's first term was the Abraham Accords, which paved the way for Israel's normalization of relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco. These agreements, a departure from the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, sidestepped the Palestinian issue and rights. The architects of these accords believed that regional stability could be at-

tained even without addressing the Palestinian issue. However, events since October 7 have exposed the potential pitfalls of overlooking the Palestinian issue.

As Trump is set to begin his second term, he is expected to pick up where he left off, pushing for further normalization between Israel and Arab nations. Saudi Arabia, a prime target of this policy, is likely to witness intense diplomatic efforts aimed at fostering Riyadh-Tel Aviv relations.

Iran conundrum

Trump's Iran policy had two primary objectives: thwarting what he called Iran's nuclear ambitions and reining in Iranian-backed proxy forces in the region. In recent months, Iran has made huge strides in its nuclear capabilities, fueled

by direct tensions with Israel. Trump is likely to dust off the maximum pressure strategy to coerce Tehran back to the negotiating table and extract further concessions.

But this strategy might not bear the desired fruit. The new Iranian government, while keen on negotiations, has consistently maintained that it will only sit down for "dignified talks." Furthermore, Iran, well-versed in withstanding the so-called maximum pressure, is unlikely to cave in. If the maximum pressure strategy fails, calls for US military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities could grow louder, particularly from Israel and hawkish voices in Congress.

Persian Gulf Arab states, having learned from past experiences, also lean toward a negotiated settlement of the Iran-US

crisis. The 2019 Houthi attacks on Saudi oil facilities and the 2022 strikes on the UAE, which drew limited US response, have convinced these countries that their security relies on de-escalation with Iran. Hence, Arab states are eager to prevent Iran from going nuclear and are pushing for a diplomatic breakthrough between Washington and Tehran.

Shifting sands in Levant

Trump's policies will directly influence developments in Syria and Lebanon. In Syria, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which toppled Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, seeks to woo the US and attract Western support by establishing relative stability in Syria. In Lebanon, General Joseph Aoun, the former army chief, aims to strengthen military and security ties with the US,

curb Hezbollah's influence and secure more military aid. These shifts could disrupt the regional power balance and intensify the rivalry between pro-Iran groups and US-aligned factions.

Bottom line

Trump's return to the White House promises major shifts in US Middle East policies. His strategies could fuel rivalries, ratchet up pressure on Iran, rekindle the Israel-Arab normalization process and alter the power dynamics in Syria and Lebanon. The Middle East's trajectory during Trump's presidency may either witness continued maximum pressure on Iran, escalating regional conflicts, or a push for new diplomatic deals, each with its unique ramifications for regional security and stability.

Persepolis makes bid for ex-Fenerbahce coach Kartal: Report



● tgrthaber.com

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League champion Persepolis has made a move for former Fenerbahce head coach Ismail Kartal, according to Iranian sports website Varzesh3.

Kartal, 63, has been without a job since parting ways with the Istanbul-based club last June, making way for Portuguese Jose Mourinho ahead of the ongoing Turkish Süper Lig season.

Kartal took charge of the Fenerbahce bench for a second spell by the start of the 2023/24 campaign and led his team to 31 wins in 38 outings as the Yellow Canaries finished second to city rival Galatasaray despite a remarkable 99-point tally.

Persepolis hierarchy has been desperate to appoint a new head coach after sacking Spanish Juan Carlos Garrido in late December, with several

high-profile names, including former Napoli boss Walter Mazzarri and Spanish Rafael Benitez, lined up for the role in the Iranian media over the past four weeks.

Varzesh3 added that the Reds' negotiations with Kartal could fall through as the club is reluctant to meet his massive salary demand of \$3.5 million per season.

Karim Baqeri, an assistant to Garrido, took over from the Spaniard as the interim coach and led the Reds to back-to-back home wins against league strugglers Khaybar (2-1) and Havadar (5-0) before his team suffered a 1-0 loss to Sepahan in the Iranian Super Cup match on Friday.

Baqeri insisted after the Sepahan loss that the game was his last in the caretaker role, urging the club to hire the new manager ahead of a hectic fixtures list.

"I have already said that I

wouldn't be the head coach under any circumstances after the Super Cup game. The club is working hard on it and I just hope the new manager is unveiled as soon as possible," said the Persepolis great, who has been tipped by former teammates and the club veterans to remain at the job until the end of the season.

Chasing an eighth domestic league crown in nine years, Persepolis is third in the table at the halfway point of the campaign with 29 points – three points adrift of Tractor and Sepahan on top.

The Tehran Reds will visit Zob Ahan on return to top-flight action on Tuesday, before taking on Tractor, in the league, and Sepahan, in the Hazfi Cup last 16, as well as Saudi giants Al Hilal and Al Nassr in the AFC Champions League Elite, during a seven-game schedule over the next 30 days.

Iranian Mesigar calls time on international beach soccer career

Sports Desk

Iranian beach soccer great Moslem Mesigar brought the curtain down on an illustrious international career during a friendly victory over Belarus in Bushehr, southern Iran, on Saturday.

Movahed Mohammadpour and Ali Nazem were on the scoresheet as Iran came out 2-1 winner in the first part of the double-header against the European opponent in

Mesigar's home town.

Having made his international debut in 2006, Mesigar, 40, was on target to help Iran beat Italy 5-3 to the World Cup third place in Bahamas in 2017, and then captained Team Melli to the same feat in the United Arab Emirates last year – thanks to a 6-1 win against Belarus.

He won three Asian Cup titles with the country in 2013 and 2017, and 2023, claiming the Most Valuable

Player prize in the latest occasion in Thailand.

Mesigar was also an integral part of the squad when Iran lifted the Beach Soccer Intercontinental Cup trophy in 2013, 2018, 2019, and 2022.

Iranian Moslem Mesigar is thrown up in the air by teammates after his final game for the national team in Bushehr, Iran, on January 18, 2025.

● AFP



Alcaraz through to quarter-finals after Draper retires

Carlos Alcaraz reached his second Australian Open quarter-final on Sunday when his opponent Jack Draper retired injured when trailing 7-5 6-1.

The third-seeded Spaniard was well on top in the afternoon match at Rod Laver Arena against the Briton, who exited the court for a long medical time-out between the sets. "This is not the way that I want to get through to the next round. I'm just happy to play another quarter-final here in Australia," Alcaraz said on court.

"But really sorry for Jack. He doesn't deserve to get injured. He couldn't prepare the start of the season well."

It was the second time Draper retired injured against Alcaraz, having cut short their 2023 match at Indian Wells due to an abdominal strain.

Alcaraz will meet the winner of 10-times champion Novak Djokovic and Jiri Lehecka, who play in the evening session, as he bids for a first semi-final at Melbourne Park.



● REUTERS

Draper, the 15th seed, came into the match after winning three five-setters in the opening rounds.

A hip problem had hampered his preparations for Melbourne Park, forcing him to cancel plans to train with Alcaraz in Southern Spain during the off-season and to pull out of the United Cup team event.

Yet he would still have hoped to give Alcaraz a proper match, having proved a handful for the Spaniard previously.

Draper upset Alcaraz on

grass at Queen's in the lead up to Wimbledon last year and took a set off him in their first meeting at Basel in 2022.

The 23-year-old Briton dropped serve in the sixth game on Sunday but broke back to 5-4, leaving a frustrated Alcaraz ranting at the chair umpire about towels and serve clocks.

But while Alcaraz was still in search of his best tennis, Draper gifted him two set points with a wild forehand error.

The Briton saved one with a rush to the net and a

volley into the corner but was picked off on the second as a sprinting Alcaraz whipped a forehand passing shot down the line.

The Spaniard's momentum was stalled briefly when Draper called for a trainer and exited the court for a long medical time-out.

When play resumed, however, Alcaraz roared through the second set in just 38 minutes.

"I had already said before the match that this team has grown a lot. Don't forget that just over two months ago, Atalanta put three goals past us at home," Conte told re-

porters. "I think if we'd had even more time to go through the process, we'd have done even better. The team has above all grown in dealing with difficulties, that is what I want to underline."

Conte acknowledged the challenges his side faced with key player Khvicha Kvaratskhelia having left for Paris St Germain and defender Alessandro Buongiorno sidelined due to injury.

"We are facing some situations, both in terms of injuries and most recently the transfer market, situations that would kill a bull,

but we are still standing," he said. "We don't complain, we keep working and I always say that I have a group of players who are eager to work hard. The improvement of each individual player then allows us to improve collectively too."

Conte declined to talk about finding a replacement for Kvaratskhelia. "I leave the decision to the club. I don't get into the transfer market," he said. Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini took the defeat in stride. "I maintain we emerge stronger from games like this. We now have the Champions League, then Serie A and the Coppa Italia, we are playing every three days, so we do not have time for regrets over a result that didn't go our way," Gasperini told Sky Sports Italia. "It's fine, we have to focus on our journey and perhaps today we paid a heavy price, in other games we were luckier, but overall I saw a great performance."

Conte highlights Napoli improvement after Atalanta win

Napoli manager Antonio Conte praised his side following a narrow win over Atalanta at Saturday, highlighting the significant growth the team has shown over the past few months.

Romelu Lukaku's late header secured a 3-2 victory for Napoli, boosting their Scudetto hopes and avenging their 3-0 home loss to Atalanta in November.

"I had already said before the match that this team has grown a lot. Don't forget that just over two months ago, Atalanta put three goals past us at home," Conte told re-



● REUTERS

Serenity descends on Gaza

Hamas: Cease-fire 'result of legendary steadfastness' of Palestinians

Gen. Qa'ani calls truce agreement biggest defeat for Israel

International Desk

A cease-fire between Israel and Hamas took hold in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, ushering in an initial six-week period of calm and raising hopes for an end to the Israel's devastating 15-month war on Gaza and the release of dozens of Israeli hostages.

The truce finally took effect after a three-hour delay, during which Israeli forces pounded Gaza from the air in a final blitz that killed 13 people, according to Palestinian health authorities. Even before the cease-fire came into force, celebrations erupted across the territory and thousands of Gazans carrying tents, clothes and their personal belongings were seen heading back to their homes, after more than 15 months of war that displaced the vast majority of Gaza's population, in many cases more than once.

Israel, meanwhile, announced the release of the three hostages later Sunday, in exchange for the planned release of 90 Palestinian prisoners.

The truce, which started at 11:15 a.m. local time, is the first step toward ultimately ending the conflict and returning nearly 100 captives held by Hamas since Oct. 7, 2023.

Israel's hardline national securi-

ty minister, meanwhile, said his Jewish Power faction was quitting the cabinet in protest at the cease-fire agreement. Itamar Ben-Gvir's departure weakens Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition but will not affect the truce.

The cease-fire deal was announced last week after a year of mediation by the United States, Qatar and Egypt. The outgoing Biden administration and President-elect Donald Trump's team had both pressed for an agreement to be reached before the inauguration on Monday.

Netanyahu on Saturday warned that he had Trump's backing to continue fighting if necessary.

The 42-day first phase of the cease-fire should see 33 captives returned from Gaza and hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and detainees released. Many displaced Palestinians should be able to return home. Under the deal, Israeli forces will also withdraw from densely populated areas of Gaza and allow displaced Palestinians to return "to their residences," Qatari said.

Humanitarian aid

There is also supposed to be a surge of humanitarian aid, with hundreds of trucks entering Gaza daily, far more than Israel had earlier allowed. The United

Nations' World Food Program said trucks started entering through two crossings after the ceasefire took hold.

This is just the second cease-fire in the war, longer and more consequential than a weeklong pause in November 2023, with the potential to end the fighting for good.

Negotiations on the far more difficult second phase of this cease-fire should begin in just over two weeks. Major questions remain, including whether the war will resume after the first phase and how the rest of the captives in Gaza will be freed.

Hamas fighters appeared at some celebrations in Gaza where crowds chanted slogans in support of them.

Gazans return home

In the southern city of Rafah, residents returned amid massive destruction. Some found human remains including skulls in the rubble.

The toll of the war has been immense, and new details on its scope will now emerge.

Over 46,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's strikes, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the fatalities.

The war erupted after Hamas launched an operation on Isra-



Displaced Palestinians return to the war-devastated Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip on January 19, 2025.
OMAR AL-QATTAA/AFP

el's positions in the occupied territories and killed over 1,200 people and held captive around 250 others. More than 100 hostages were freed during the weeklong cease-fire in November.

Some 90% of Gaza's population has been displaced. The United Nations says homes, the health system, road networks and other vital infrastructure have been badly damaged.

Thousands of displaced, war-weary Gazans set off across the devastated Palestinian territory to return to their home areas on Sunday.

Hamas said the cease-fire was the "result of the legendary steadfastness of our great Palestinian people and our valiant resistance in the Gaza Strip for over 15 months."

'Biggest defeat' for Israel

The commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps lauded the cease-fire agreement as the biggest defeat for the regime.

Brigadier General Esmail Qa'ani said on Sunday that the cease-fire was the "biggest defeat" the Tel Aviv regime had experienced in its "miserable life" as it failed

to achieve any of its goals. "The bloodthirsty, child-killing butchers of the Zionist regime, after 15 months of unrestrained crimes they committed against the oppressed people of Palestine, Lebanon and the region, were forced to accept a cease-fire today at the pinnacle of humiliation; this cease-fire was imposed on the Zionist regime," Qa'ani said.

The Quds Force chief underlined that the cease-fire deal was the same as what had been proposed in the previous round of negotiations, but Israel had rejected it.

Military chief to discuss border issues, defense ties during Pakistan visit

International Desk

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri, who arrived in Pakistan's capital on Sunday, said the most important topics of his two-day visit would revolve on the border and the expansion of relations between the two countries' armed forces.

General Baqeri said Iran and Pakistan share a long border and both countries are trying to resolve security issues at the border and expand economic ties. Referring to the growing military and security relations between the two countries, he emphasized that Tehran and Islamabad have a common position on most issues and that this coordination will be strengthened in the regional and international forums.

He said that Iran and Pakistan are locat-



ed in the sensitive regions of West and South Asia that have seen major events over the past year.

"Fortunately, relations between the armed forces of the two countries have been developing in recent years and we have reached good agreements," he said. Baqeri is scheduled to hold talks with high-ranking Pakistani military and political officials.

This is Baqeri's third visit to Pakistan since he was appointed in June 2016.

President favors direct talks with US: Iranian MP

International Desk

An Iranian lawmaker said President Massoud Pezeshkian favors direct negotiations with the United States to put an end to long-standing differences, including Iran's nuclear issue. Ahmad Bakhshayesh, a member of Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said on Sunday that Oman has traditionally mediated between the two nations, but direct talks would be more effective.

Bakhshayesh stressed that Pezeshkian coordinates with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on various matters, including negotiations with the West. He also mentioned the possibility of initiating discreet negotiations with Western countries, explaining that since Pezeshkian took office in August last year, there have been plans to sign a long-term agreement with Europe, akin to deals with China and Russia.

The lawmaker also suggested that the president consults with the

parliamentary committees before negotiating with other countries, explaining that any agreement must be approved by the parliament, according to Iran's Constitution.

Since taking office in July, the Iranian president has repeatedly announced his government's readiness to hold talks with the Western countries to resolve their disputes over Iran's nuclear program.

In 2015, Iran and world powers - including France, Britain and Germany - reached an agreement that saw the easing of international sanctions on Tehran in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program.

But the United States unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 and reimposed biting economic sanctions.

The European parties to the deal also failed to live up to their commitments under the deal.

In recent months, Iran and the three European powers have held two rounds of negotiations to resolve issues over Iran's nuclear program. Tensions between Iran and Europe-



Ahmad Bakhshayesh

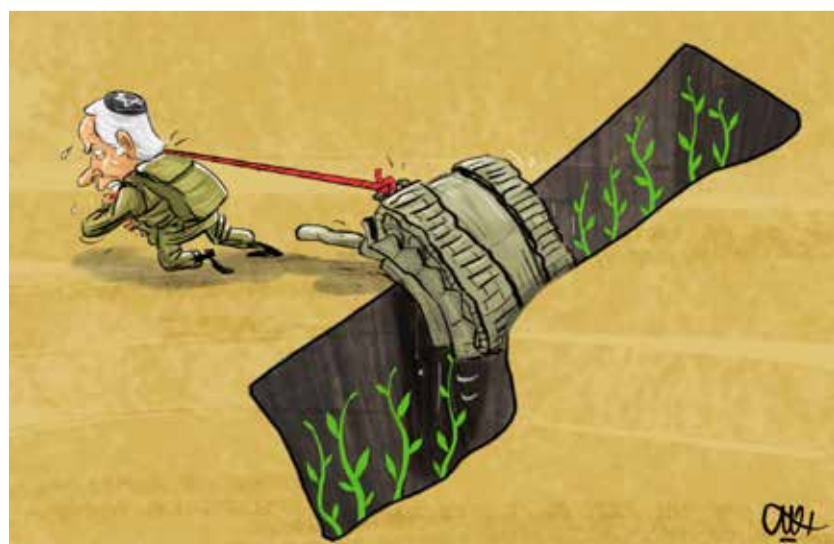
an countries escalated over the past two years due to European accusations of Iran's uranium enrichment as well as delivery of missiles and drones to Russia.

The European countries and the United States have also sanctioned several Iranian individuals and institutions over the issues.

European countries claim that Iran has supplied ballistic missiles to Russia for use in the Ukraine conflict, an allegation that Tehran has categorically rejected.

Despite tensions between Tehran and the European countries, the Pezeshkian administration has repeatedly called for talks with the West to settle differences.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Resistance's blows forced ...

Politically speaking, the future of Hamas is a bone of contention. Some argue that Hamas should lay down its arms and operate as a political force while others believe it should keep up the resistance. Despite claims that Palestinian resistance has weakened, Hamas has recently fired rockets toward the Gaza envelope, proving it is still very much in the game. Hamas remains an active player with its members operating both on the ground and underground, despite Israel's advanced capabilities.

As the war in Gaza draws to a close and a cease-fire is declared, it is crucial

to note that many Israeli political and military officials are trying to wriggle out of their security and judicial responsibilities as well as the political and military orders they issued over the past 16 months. These individuals, aware of the looming threat of criminal prosecution, are quick to shift the entire blame for the war onto Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. On the flip side, outgoing US President Joe Biden has pumped tens of billions of dollars into Israel since the Israeli war on Gaza broke out, and this, coupled with Democratic support for Israel's atrocities, could become a political weapon for incoming President

Donald Trump and the Republicans to bash the Biden administration. This is why the US president-elect has made it clear that he will not let the Israeli prime minister take unilateral military action against Gaza without Washington's green light, as has been the case in the past.

While some might attribute the Gaza cease-fire agreement to Trump's threats, the reality is that Hamas and other resistance groups have been hitting back hard against Israel over the past year, exacting a heavy toll. However, both Biden and Trump are eager to take credit for brokering the cease-fire deal.

Iran, Iraq sign deal for scientific cooperation

Arts & Culture Desk

A significant agreement aimed at enhancing scientific collaboration between Iran and Iraq was officially signed on Sunday, coinciding with the inaugural day of Iran-Iraq Science Week. The agreement was endorsed by Iranian Minister of Science, Research and Technology Hossein Simaei Saraf and his Iraqi counterpart, Naem al-Aboudi. The signing ceremony took place in the Iraqi city of Karbala, with both ministers emphasizing the importance of this initiative for fostering educational ties, ISNA reported. The agreement was signed by Omid Rezaeifar, head of the Center for International Studies and Cooperation (CISS) of the

Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, and Haidar Abdul Zaid, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education in Iraq. Simaei Saraf arrived in Iraq on Wednesday evening to attend the second Iran-Iraq Science Week event. He was welcomed by Mohammad Kazem Al-Sadeq, the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Baghdad.

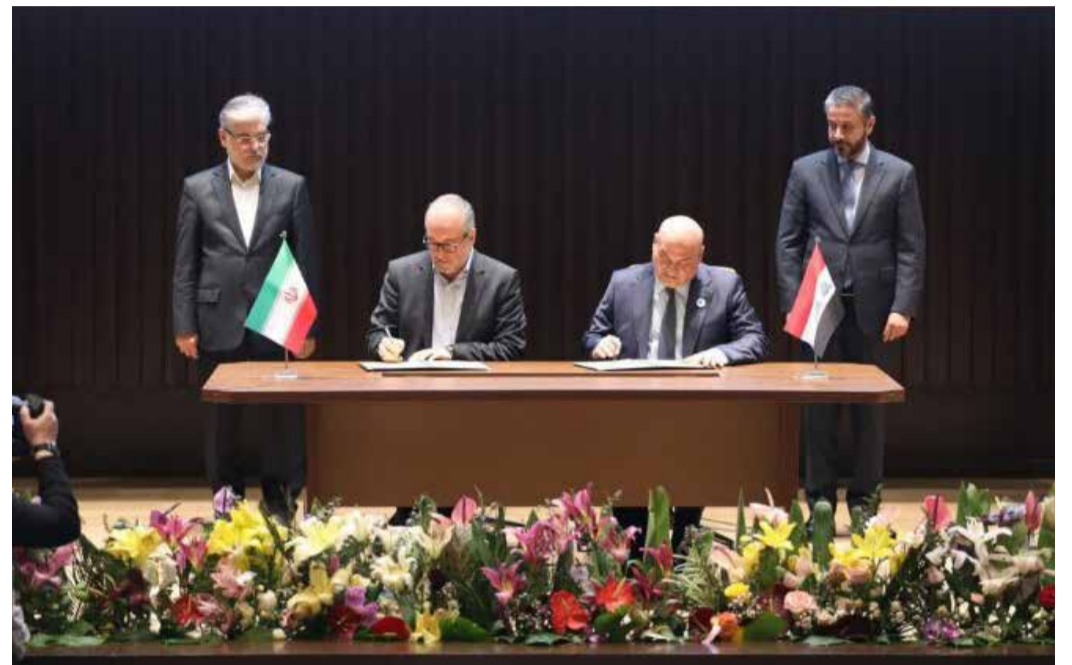
Key components of the plan include strengthening joint scholarship programs for undergraduate and graduate studies, particularly under the initiative titled "Study in Iraq." The agreement also outlines the organization of training workshops for faculty and students, encouragement of collaborative scientific guidance, and provi-



Iranian Minister of Science, Research and Technology Hossein Simaei Saraf (L) and Iraq's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Naem al-Aboudi (R) oversee the signing ceremony of a plan aimed at boosting bilateral scientific cooperation on January 19, 2025.

● ISNA

sions for the exchange of university professors to conduct joint research and deliver lectures in their respective fields. In his remarks at the ceremony, Simaei Saraf expressed that the Iran-Iraq Science Week represents "an excellent opportunity for planning and a significant step towards deepening the long-term scientific cooperation" between the two nations. He highlighted the shared re-



ligion, language, and civilizational heritage as a robust foundation for enhancing bilateral relations. "This occasion provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on the shared history, rich scientific heritage, and

limitless potential for collaboration between the two great nations of Iran and Iraq," he stated. The agreement also includes plans for the development of a joint science and technology

park in Iraq, which will be managed by the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, further solidifying the commitment of both countries to advancing their scientific endeavors.

Resistance film festival to promote solidarity, cultural diplomacy



Arts & Culture Desk

The 18th Resistance International Film Festival is set to expand its reach by screening selected works in various countries worldwide, Israfil Kaliji, the head of the festival's international committee, made the announcement during a recent meeting held in Qom. Kaliji emphasized the essential role of international artists in conveying messages of resistance and advocacy for the oppressed, particularly highlighting the plight of the Palestinian

people. "Artists have a crucial role in conveying the important concept of resistance and defending the oppressed," he stated.

He added that the festival aims to utilize the talents of open-minded artists globally to communicate a powerful message against oppression and for lasting peace, resistanceiff.com reported.

The festival's international screenings are viewed as a means to foster solidarity among nations that support the resistance front, according to Kaliji. "These screenings can amplify our collective voice," he asserted.

Zahra Babanejad, head of the festival secretariat, shared plans to establish an international network of committed artists. "This network will facilitate experience exchange, joint productions, and the long-term

promotion of the culture of resistance," she explained.

Masoumeh Afrasiabi, head of the festival's regional desk in Qom, discussed the importance of cultural diplomacy in countering adversarial narratives. She noted, "Screening resistance films internationally raises public awareness and strengthens the cultural front of the Islamic Revolution. International artists possess the ability to effectively convey the message of resistance through the universal language of art."

The meeting concluded with discussions among committee members on enhancing artist participation, engaging the media, and outlining strategies for the international screening of selected works. The festival aims to not only entertain but also educate and inspire global audiences on the themes of resistance and solidarity.

Rabab rooted in eastern Iran: *Official*

Arts & Culture Desk

The globally recognized musical instrument Rabab/Rubab has deep historical roots in eastern Iran, particularly in Sistan and Baluchestan and among the Baluch people, the Director General for the Registration of Cultural Heritage and Preservation of Intangible and Natural Heritage at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage announced.

In a press conference on Sunday, Alireza Izadi stated, for the first time, the National Council for the Registration of Intangible Heritage will convene, hosted by the Cultural Heritage Department of Sistan and Baluchestan in Chabahar."

He expressed appreciation for the efforts of those involved in the department, IRNA reported.

Izadi noted that a primary reason for holding this council in Sistan and Baluchestan is to celebrate and unveil the global registration plaque for the traditional crafting and playing techniques of the Rabab. This element of intangible heritage was inscribed on the global list during a meeting in Paraguay earlier this year.

He emphasized the Rabab's significant historical and cultural value in eastern Iran, stating, "Due to its closeness to neighboring countries, especially Afghanistan, and shared playing and crafting techniques, the global registration file



for the Rabab was developed in collaboration with Afghanistan."

After approximately three years of expert evaluations, it was ultimately recognized as a valuable artistic and cultural element representing Iran and registered as a joint file in Paraguay. Izadi concluded by highlighting the importance of safeguarding the Rabab, expressing hope that the recognition of such cultural elements would not only enhance the country's international image but also boost the tourism industry. "We aim to further introduce this culturally rich region and its ancient music to the world," he added.

Iran reports increase in birth rates across 15 provinces: *Lawmaker*

Social Desk

The birth rate in Iran has seen a notable increase in 15 provinces, according to Amir Hossein Bankipour, vice president of the Parliament's Cultural Committee.

He attributed this rise to the implementation of the Family

Support and Youth Population Law, which has successfully halted a previous downward trend in national birth rates. "In the past, the birth rate was declining annually, but with the use of this law, we managed to stop that decline last year," Bankipour stated at the fifth "Young

Iran" conference focused on promoting the youth population law.

According to him, the law has already had significant effects on Iran's birth rates. Births of third children increased by 9%, fourth children by 28%, and fifth children and above by 51% over the past two years.

This comes despite a decrease of 400,000 mothers in the 25 to 40 age group during the same period. "We have seen that the number of mothers exiting this age group is 400,000 fewer than those entering it," he said, attributing the demographic shift to family planning policies implemented 30 years

ago. Despite economic pressures, Bankipour emphasized that the youth population law has managed to stabilize the population curve.

He remarked, "With only 50% of its implementation, the law has prevented the population curve from falling and increased the rates of third, fourth, and fifth child births." He further called for a shift from one or two-child families to larger families, stating, "This is the exact policy targeted by the youth population law, which has yielded positive results."

The law also aims to improve perceptions of mothers over 35, who are increasingly en-

couraged to bear more children. Notably, the birth rate for women in this age group has risen by 15%, particularly among those aged 35 to 45. Bankipour noted that the gap between marriage and the birth of the first child has decreased from over six years to four years.

Bankipour also addressed the issue of unnecessary sterilizations, stating that such procedures will only be allowed if medically justified. He noted that the distribution of free contraceptive supplies has ceased under the new policies, aimed at controlling resource use and preventing misuse. While acknowledging some

criticisms of the new family support policies, Bankipour assured that essential items remain available in public centers, although no longer provided for free. He reiterated that aligning these policies with demographic goals is crucial to prevent past planning inconsistencies.

In terms of childbirth practices, the new policies promote natural births and aim to mitigate the unnecessary rise in cesarean sections, which officials argue conflicts with population health objectives. "Specialists are now required to encourage natural childbirth unless medically necessary," he emphasized. He concluded by addressing



the anxieties mothers face regarding childbirth and raising children.

He mentioned that concerns about natural birth and the possibility of disabilities in children create stress for many mothers. To mitigate these concerns, policies such as educational leave for student mothers and financial scholarships for children up to 25 years of age are being introduced.

Saipa Wheel Manufacturing Company
General Tender for Tire Valves
 Saipa Wheel Manufacturing Company intends to purchase Tire Valves. Interested companies are requested to offer their quote based on the specifications mentioned in the attached files on: www.kswco.com. Please receive the tender form and send your PI to commercial2@kswco.com by Jan 24 2025.
 For further information please contact Mr.Zanganeh: +989123162409