Straight Truth

WWW.TEHRANTIMES.COM

TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 100,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 45th year | No. 14654 | Tuesday | December 5, 2023 | Azar 14, 1402 | Jumada al-Awwal 21, 1445

Leader in meeting with Cuban president:

Intl. Coalition Must Be Formed to Counter Western Bullying

Ayatollah Khamenei notes such coalition can take effective position on Palestine

khamenei.ir

▸ Page 3

Iran's military chief urges Iraq to take more action against KRG-based militants

TEHRAN- The Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces has urged Iraq to continue disbanding terrorist groups hostile to Iran in the country's Kurdistan region and drive them out of the border regions.

Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri made the remarks during a meeting on Sunday with Iraqi Interior Minister Abdul Amir al-Shammari on Sunday.

Iraq has already taken steps to relocate anti-Iranian terrorist groups away from the Kurdistan region's borders with Iran, a move that won Bagheri's appreciation.

The Baghdad government is anticipated to continue its actions until the terrorist groups are completely disarmed, the Iranian general noted, stressing that there are still worries and hints regarding the presence of a number of terrorist elements near the shared border.

"There is still evidence and concern about the presence of certain terrorist elements in the border region, and the Iraqi government is expected to keep up the border control job until the complete disarmament of those groups," the top Iranian general added. ▸ Page 2

Iran and Oman hold detailed talks on Gaza war

TEHRAN - Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi, the Foreign Minister of Oman, is in Tehran for discussions with high-ranking Iranian officials over regional and international matters, including Israel's cruelty in the besieged Gaza Strip that began on October 7.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Albusaidi arrived in the Iranian capital on Sunday, three days after the Israeli regime resumed its savage attacks on Gaza at the end of a seven-day ceasefire.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian greeted his Omani counterpart upon his arrival. The two talked about a variety of crucial matters of mutual interest.

Amir Abdollahian and Albusaidi also discussed the disastrous humanitarian situation in Gaza, the necessity for a lasting truce, and the delivery of humanitarian relief to the war-torn population.

The Gaza Strip is home to 2.3 million population. Iran has urged all Muslim nations to step up efforts to put an end to Israel's horrendous crimes in the coastal enclave.

Qatar served as the primary mediator in discussions between the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas and Israel, which resulted in the November 24 truce. The ceasefire allowed much-needed humanitarian goods to reach Gaza, while Hamas and Israel exchanged hostages and detainees. ▸ Page 2

Why Israel is not entitled to "self-defense"

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN - Since Israel initiated its devastating assaults on Gaza, Western governments have been fervently supporting the regime's actions under the pretext of "self-defense," turning a blind eye to the deliberate targeting of civilian facilities such as homes, hospitals, places of worship, and educational institutions.

On October 15, leaders of the European Union voiced unwavering support for Israel's "right to defend itself" within humanitarian and international law, disregarding the regime's deliberate strikes.

During U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Israel on Nov. 3, the West's unbridled support for Israel was further extended. Blinken not only declared support for "Israel's right to self-defense," but also said, "It is obligated to do so, and we strongly support it." ▸ Page 5

Human rights, a tool to cover up Israel's crimes in Gaza

By Ardalan Mohammadzadeh

TEHRAN - Some Western think tanks, providing invalid information about the issue of human rights in Iran, make bids to deflect public opinion from the realities in the Gaza Strip.

On December 2, the Guardian published a report, penned by Deepa Parent, accusing the Islamic Republic of failure to observe human rights.

Deppa, simultaneous with her report, tweeted, "The Islamic Republic has been executing prisoners at an alarming rate."

Deppa, by neglecting Iran's endeavor to uphold human rights, has based her report on unauthentic and unspecified sources and spared no effort to call Tehran's actions in the realm of human rights into question. ▸ Page 3

Support rather than intervention is the strategy of the resistance front

By Batool Al-Subeiti

An important concept raised during Sayed Nasrallah's first speech after October 7th is the unity of the resistance front, which he clarified does not negate the independence of the resistance in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, etc.

He stated that no entity receives direct orders from Iran and each front evaluates its own situation before carrying out operations. The Al-Aqsa Flood battle was highlighted as the decision of the Gazan resistance, without having consulted the wider resistance axis, therefore they are the entity that bears the consequences of the operation and the victories that ensued. ▸ Page 5

Making the seas unsafe for Israel and its supporters

By Ali Karbalaei

TEHRAN - In another major development in the Israeli war on Gaza, the regime's ships and those owned by the countries allied to Tel Aviv have come under attack in the Bab al-Mandab strait in the Red Sea by Yemen's Ansarullah forces.

According to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), four attacks took place against three ships on Sunday.

Answering distress calls, the Pentagon dispatched its navy destroyer, the USS Carney, to try and help three ships, but USS Carney itself became a target for Ansarullah.

A U.S. Navy destroyer came under attack in the Red Sea on Sunday, the Pentagon confirmed. ▸ Page 5

Report

Saving the cheetah requires a global effort

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – The shocking decline in Cheetah populations in the last decades, due to the expansion of human settlements, poaching, and habitat loss, stresses the need for a global effort to preserve these iconic cats.

Education and awareness campaigns are crucial, as fostering a sense of responsibility and understanding is key to securing the future of cheetahs.

Since 2010, World Cheetah Day has been celebrated on December 4 in different countries annually with the aim of raising public awareness about the menace of extinction the species faces.

Considering the fact that Iran is the last remaining habitat of the Asiatic cheetah, this species is of particular importance. ▸ Page 7

Anadolu

From north to south, nowhere safe in Gaza as 700 killed in 24 hours

One of the highest daily death tolls since the war began as Israeli army targets the Jabalia refugee camp for a second day. Israel's war on Gaza is escalating, leaving death and devastation across the besieged strip.

At least 700 Palestinians have been killed in the past 24 hours – one of the highest daily death tolls since the war began on October 7.

Tehran hosting 2nd EAEU exclusive exhibition

TEHRAN – The second exclusive exhibition of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which is a platform to showcase the capabilities of the EAEU members and their Iranian counterparts, was officially opened at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Monday, IRNA reported.

The opening ceremony of the exhibition was attended by senior officials including Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Abbas Aliabadi.

Speaking at the mentioned ceremony, Aliabadi said this exhibition creates a valuable interaction platform for business owners to witness prosperity, the development of commercial and economic cooperation, and the implementation of joint investment projects. ▸ Page 4

TEHRAN PAPERS

Isolation of the Zionist regime

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in the yesterday's Iranian newspapers.

In an analysis, Hamshahri discussed the isolation of the Zionist regime and Iran's leading role in managing the situation following Israel's war on the Gaza Strip. It wrote: The new wave of the crimes of the Zionist regime in Gaza continues in a situation in which Tel Aviv is experiencing a serious political-diplomatic isolation in the world. It is a situation that experts believe has been created through the crucial diplomatic activities of the Islamic Republic after the start of the war on Gaza. Despite the support of the American and European authorities and the continuation of the Zionist regime's genocide in Gaza, Tehran's extensive political-diplomatic activities at different levels have provided the basis for further isolation of Tel Aviv in various regional and international arenas. Also, Israel has faced a heavy failure in the case of «normalizing relations with Islamic states» and in the current situation, this project has been stopped. Although experts refer to this issue as the failure of Tel Aviv's political-diplomatic approaches, the anti-Zionist stances of some Arab governments that had normalized relations with Tel Aviv is another phase of the diplomatic isolation of the Zionist regime in recent months. It is an issue in which Tehran has played a tangible role.

Iran: Tehran-Riyadh trade is set to reach $2.5 billion

In a note, the Iran newspaper discussed the future of economic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and said: Developing trade and not limiting Iran's economy to European countries was one of the key policies that the 13th (sitting) government put on its agenda. After several rounds of negotiations, Tehran and Riyadh entered into serious and official talks and finally it was agreed that, along with reopening embassies, businessmen and economic activists would start their cooperation. But this process is going slowly due to the war in Gaza and the crisis in Palestine. With these words, economic activists believe that the cooperation will soon enter the operational phase. For Tehran and Riyadh to start their joint activities more quickly, the Trade Development Organization has asked the Iranian Chamber of Commerce to craft a comprehensive and operational plan for the establishment of a joint chamber. It is estimated that with the improvement of political conditions, the volume of trade between Iran and Saudi Arabia will reach 2 to 2.5 billion dollars.

Arman-e-Melli: America's fear of Iran's drone

In an article, Arman-e-Melli addressed CENTCOM's claim about the interception of an Iranian drone by the Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier. The paper said: The Eisenhower aircraft carrier has entered the waters of the Persian Gulf at a time that the capabilities of Iran's reconnaissance drones have turned into a nightmare for American forces. Iran has declared that the presence of the Eisenhower carrier not only will not bring a change in the security process of the region but will also cause tension and insecurity in the region. Tehran has always emphasized that the governments of the region have the necessary power to provide security in the region. CENTCOM's claim regarding the interception of an Iranian drone above the Eisenhower carrier once again made the name of the «Mohajer 6» drone the most successful export drone of Iran. CENTCOM has claimed that the Iranian drone was conducting a reconnaissance operation at a distance of 1,500 yards from the aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf. CENTCOM has also claimed that the Iranian drone ignored the warnings of the American ship. This is while U.S. regional military officials claim that they have emphasized that all drones must stay more than 10 maritime miles away from the aircraft carrier.

Shargh: A special journey in the middle of the war

In a commentary, Shargh analyzed the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Oman to Tehran. The newspaper said: Although the anti-Iranian atmosphere is not a new topic and has always existed in the field of foreign policy with intensity and weakness, some actions in recent days can bring the circle of tension in the region to a sensitive point. The resolution of the U.S. House of Representatives to refreeze Iranian assets in Qatari banks, although it has a long way to go, is a confrontational approach that will unfold a series of reactions. The visit of Sayyid Badr Albusaidi to Iran will be important in many ways amid the tense situation in the region caused by Israel's crimes in Gaza. Perhaps, in line with its traditional role, Muscat seeks to mediate between Tehran and Washington to control and manage the current conflicts. Or, on the other hand, due to the concerns over the spread of the war between Hamas and Israel to the entire Middle East region, the Omanis independently seek consultation with Tehran. But it must be acknowledged that the issue was so important that has brought the chief of Oman's foreign policy to Tehran.

Iran's military chief urges Iraq to take more action against KRG-based militants

From page 1 ▸ According to the commander, the 1,500-kilometer border between Iran and Iraq must be secure for fostering friendship, trade, and tourism.

To guarantee complete border security, he detailed measures for close collaboration between the border guards of Iran and Iraq.

For his part, the interior minister of Iraq praised the Iranian Armed Forces' joint efforts with Iraq to strengthen border security.

According to Shammari, Iraq prioritizes obtaining total control over all Iranian border crossings.

At the end of the meeting, General Baqeri toured an exhibition of Iraqi defense equipment.

Iraq conducted a series of operations to allay Iran's concerns after Tehran set a deadline of September 19 for the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to take action against militant separatists stationed along the common border.

In 2022, the IRGC initiated a series of military strikes on the locations of separatist groups in Iraq's Kurdistan Region.

Iran and Iraq inked a security deal in Baghdad on March 19, which included border protection coordination.

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri held talks with the Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid in Baghdad on Monday, December 04, 2023.

In accordance with the deal, the Iraqi government agreed to disband separatist and terrorist groups operating in the Kurdistan region by September 19, relocate them from their military barracks to camps run by the Baghdad government, and abandon their military barracks.

On September 23, Iraq's Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein declared that his nation had put the security agreement's terms into effect.

Bagheri arrived in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on Saturday night for a three-day visit. He was in Baghdad upon an invitation by his Iraqi counterpart. Baqeri was accompanied by a number of high-ranking military and political officials.

Upon arrival in the Iraqi capital, the commander and his accompanying delegation visited a site near Baghdad's international airport where General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis were assassinated in a U.S. drone attack in January 2020. Bagheri and his delegation paid tribute to the martyr commanders.

At a meeting with his Iraqi counterpart, Abdel Emir Rashid Yarallah, on Sunday, he said that Tehran signaled readiness to thwart any possible threats against Iraqi territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

Iran's top general cited the positive relations and shared experiences between the two neighbors as evidence that Iraq was moving toward peace and durable security.

In another meeting on Sunday, General Baqeri and Iraqi Defense Minister Thabet Muhammad Al-Abbasi talked about a range of issues.

The leading military figures from Iran and Iraq emphasized their nations' support for Palestine, stating that the two neighbors share similar opinions regarding the Gaza war.

The senior Iranian commander stated that the two Muslim neighbors also share similar opinions about Palestine and the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza, pointing to the same positions of the Iranian and Iraqi governments and religious leaders about significant regional and global events.

Iran and Oman hold detailed talks on Gaza war

From page 1 ▸ Israel resumed war on Gaza on Friday morning.

* The director-general of the Government Media Office in Gaza told Al Jazeera on Monday that more than 700 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza during the last 24 hours.

Prior to the Qatar-mediated peace, Israel's strikes killed more than 15,000, a large number of them women and children.

The attack began on October 7, only hours after Hamas launched an unprecedented military incursion into the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory bordering Gaza.

"U.S. should pay price for endorsing Israeli atrocities in Gaza"

In a joint presser with his Omani counterpart on Sunday evening, Iran's foreign minister said that America will have to pay a price for its unrestrained backing to Israel's atrocities against the Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip.

According to Iran's senior diplomat, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin attended the Zionist regime's war cabinet meeting, which sparked a fresh round of attacks by the Zionist regime on Gaza and the West Bank.

"On the one hand, the United States advises Israel through media to stop the massacre of women, children and civilians, but in practice it supports and greenlights Israel's genocide in Gaza. The United States must bear the consequences of this hypocritical behavior in support of Israel," Amir Abdollahian added.

Iranian foreign minister went on to stress, "We were told by the resistance leaders a day before that if the current situation in Gaza continues, the region will enter a new phase and further spread of the war across the region is quite conceivable. Therefore, we warn all warmongers to stop this massacre before it is too late."

Amir Abdollahian also noted that some documents collected by Hamas during Operation al-Aqsa Storm on October 7 show that the Israeli regime wants to relocate all Gaza residents to portions of Egypt and all West Bank residents to Jordan.

He expressed optimism that Egyptian officials will take action to prevent this Israeli scheme from taking place.

"Bringing the Zionist regime's officials to justice at an international tribunal is a public demand of the world and lawsuits are being filed by some governments, including Iran, in cooperation with a number of other countries. We hope we will witness the trial of war criminals who have killed nearly 16,000 people in the last two months," Iran's top diplomat said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir Abdollahian emphasized that Iran has never wished for unrest or conflict in the region.

Once again, he issued a warning, saying, "Those warmongers who seek to expand the scope of war in Gaza and the West Bank should cease their backing of Israeli criminals immediately."

For his part, the foreign minister of Oman said he had spoken with his Iranian counterpart about the most recent events in Palestine and the ongoing onslaught on people by the Zionist officials.

According to him, the two foreign ministers underscored the importance of the two nations' continuing political initiatives toward Palestine.

Albusaidi also called on the international community to carry out its obligations toward the Palestinian people in order to lift the Israeli siege of Gaza and restore security in the region.

Iranian firms invited to participate in Iraqi projects

In a meeting with Amir Abdollahian in Tehran on Sunday, First Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Mohsen Al-Mandalawi also invited Iranian companies to embark on various construction projects in his country.

Mandalawi also hailed the growing relations between the two neighbors.

The deputy speaker called for the fulfillment of prior cooperation agreements between Baghdad and Tehran and welcomed Iranian firms to participate in engineering and building projects in Iraq.

He also emphasized Iraq's unequivocal condemnation of Israeli atrocities in Gaza, stating that the Iraqi parliament has asked for an emergency conference of Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union at the lever of speakers to discuss the Gaza issues.

Amir Abdollahian, for his part, praised the Iraqi people, government, and parliament for their support for the Palestinian people. The foreign minister also insisted on Iraq's involvement in resolving the Gaza crisis and called for deeper collaboration between Iran and Iraq to achieve regional peace and stability.

"Al-Aqsa Storm turns Palestine into first issue of the Islamic world"

"Documents collected by Hamas show Israel plans to relocate Gazans to Egypt and West Bankers to Jordan," Iranian FM says.

Also, in a meeting with Muslin Lebanese scholars in Tehran on Sunday, Amir Abdollahian noted that the Al-Aqsa Storm has once again elevated Palestine to the top priority of the Islamic world.

He also praised the successful work done over the last 40 years by Muslim intellectuals in Lebanon in thwarting the plots of the enemies of the Islamic Ummah to sow discord between Islamic religions.

In addition, he praised the contribution of Islamic academics to informing the public and elucidating the reality of the Islamic world, including the current events in Gaza and Palestine.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir Abdollahian pushed for exerting pressure on the Zionist regime to halt its atrocities against children.

Meanwhile, Lebanese intellectuals focused on the institution's aims and operations in Lebanon and the region in the fields of Islamic unity and resistance, particularly in support of the Palestinian cause.

They recognized Iran's unique role in promoting unity in the Islamic world and the causes of the Islamic Ummah, as well as supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people against occupation, assault, and slaughter.

They emphasized that the Palestinian issue is the most significant issue in the Islamic world.

They also hailed the Al-Aqsa Storm operation as the Zionists' definitive defeat.

Tehran: US 'directly and undeniably' involved in Israeli war crimes in Gaza

TEHRAN – Iran has denounced the United States for its "undeniable" participation in the "war crimes" committed by Israel against the Palestinian people, asserting that Washington has given Tel Aviv additional weaponry to use in the "genocide" in the Gaza Strip.

Speaking on Monday at a weekly press conference in Tehran, Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said that the U.S. has essentially sided with the occupying regime, which has killed thousands of Palestinians to make up for its loss in the war on Gaza, rather than taking a stand to stop the catastrophe.

He also stressed, "The U.S. has a direct and undeniable role in the Zionist regime's war crimes against the Palestinian people. It is clear that Operation Al-Aqsa Storm was a legitimate and defensive action by the Palestinian nation against the occupiers and that it exposed Israel's fake claim to enjoy security capability."

"The new round of attacks started when U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was present at the Zionist regime's war cabinet... the U.S. has provided new weapons and equipment to the Zionist regime and has filled its hands to continue crimes," he added.

Additionally, Kanaani cited remarks made on Saturday by Lloyd Austin, who reiterated that Washington's commitment to Israel is "not negotiable." "Today, the U.S. government is a party to the war. However, it contradicts claims by Americans who say we do not want the expansion of the war and warned Israel not to kill civilians," he added.

"Action against Iran's military advisors in Syria will not go unanswered"

Also in his remarks, the top diplomat warned that action against Iran's interests and security, as well as the country's military advisors in Syria, will not go unanswered.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) announced in a statement on Saturday that two of its members, Mohammad Ali Ataee Shoorcheh and Panah Taqizadeh, were killed by the Israeli regime while on an advisory mission.

Speaking briefly about recent Western charges over Iran's missile program, Kanaani also said certain groups aim to mislead the people and conceal "the bitter reality in Palestine" by bringing up petty matters and baseless worries.

Iran received "guarantees" on unfrozen funds from the U.S.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman also commented on a bipartisan bill approved by the U.S. House of Representatives that would prevent Iran from obtaining $6 billion in cash that had been unfrozen and moved to Qatari banks a few months ago, saying, "The plan to block Iran's money needs the approval of the Senate and the signature of the U.S. president. The U.S. government must honor its commitments in the agreement with Iran. We got necessary guarantees in this regard as the U.S. has shown that it is not reliable."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Islamic Jihad warns Israel is seeking to push Gazans into Egypt

TEHRAN – The Islamic Jihad resistance movement's representative in Iran warned on Saturday that the Israeli regime has been making continuous efforts to drive out the 2.3 million people of the besieged Gaza Strip into the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula

"Egypt must firmly stand against these Zionist plans and declare war on Israel if such scenario takes place," Nasser Abu Sharif said during an interview with Iranian media.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has publicly stated that Egypt will not allow a displacement of Palestinians, as it would mean "the end of the Palestinian cause" and a potential threat to Egypt's national security.

Some reports however suggest that Israel might offer to pay off some of Egypt's vast public debt in exchange for allowing the forced displacement of people from Gaza into Sinai.

The Islamic Jihad representative also called on Islamic countries to show a more concerted effort and ramp up pressure on the Israeli regime. "We are grateful to Iran for its political, diplomatic, and spiritual support towards Palestinians. Other countries should follow in the footsteps of Iran and resistance groups, as the Zionist regime poses a threat to everyone in the region".

Abu Sharif further added that the Biden administration has not been able to retain Iran and other resistance groups similar to prior American presidents, saying that President Biden is under growing pressure for his impotence towards the resistance.

"Through normalizing relations and the Abraham Accords with Arab countries, America sought to contain Iran and the axis of resistance," the Islamic Jihad official explained.

The Palestinian representative said the crimes of the Israeli regime have caused steep a decrease in Biden's popularity and upped pressure on him. "America's green light for Israel's war on Gaza is now turning yellow".

Leader in meeting with Cuban president:

Intl. coalition must be formed to counter Western bullying

Ayatollah Khamenei notes such coalition can take effective position on Palestine

TEHRAN – The Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution has called for the formation of an international coalition to stand against bullying by the U.S. and other Western governments.

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei made the remarks during a meeting with the visiting Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel in Tehran on Monday.

He said Tehran and Havana can take a unified stance on important global issues, such as the Palestinian cause, due to their common interests and concerns. Such practice, he said, can be greatly influential.

Both Iran and Cuba have been targeted by crippling Western sanctions since the two countries overthrew U.S.-backed governments in the 50s and 70s.

The Leader stressed that both Iranians and Cubans possess qualities of honesty, steadfastness, and seriousness that arise from their revolutionary attitudes towards injustice.

"The two countries must strengthen their relations in various fields, including scientific cooperation, more than ever before," the Leader stated.

He also noted that the current positions of Cuba on important international issues, including Palestine, are in line with those of Iran.

"The issue of Palestine is not only related to the recent bombings in Gaza. The people of Palestine have always been subjected to various tortures, suffering, and massacres over the past 75 years. But now, the tragedy in Gaza is so great that it has become evident to masses around the world and cannot be concealed."

Cuban president calls Israeli war on Gaza "unacceptable genocide"

Díaz-Canel, for his part, considered the Islamic Republic's positions to be in line with those of Havana. "Iran-Cuba relations have been on the right track after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, and in our talks in Tehran, we have focused all our efforts on deepening these relations, especially in the economic and commercial fields," the president highlighted.

Díaz-Canel said the two countries can help each other in various fields, especially in confronting interventionist actions and sanctions by the United States and its allies.

He added: "Iran and Cuba can also increase their international cooperation and influence in important global issues such as Palestine."

The Cuban official slammed ongoing Israeli crimes in Gaza as an "unacceptable genocide".

"International organizations have turned a blind eye to the massacre of tens of thousands of people in Gaza, two-thirds of whom are children and women. What is astonishing is that those who always complained about the war in Ukraine are now silent in the face of the massacre of tens of thousands of people in Gaza," the president added, pointing to the West's double standards over Gaza and Ukraine.

Tehran, Havana forge closer ties in Cuban president's milestone visit

TEHRAN – In a landmark diplomatic rendezvous, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Cuban counterpart, Miguel Díaz-Canel, held a joint press conference on Monday.

Díaz-Canel highlighted the profound significance of their meeting, framing it as a continuation of discussions initiated during Raisi's visit to Havana back in June.

Díaz-Canel said such meetings and visits which are intended to diversify and expand relations are rooted in a history of respect and solidarity spanning over 40 years.

The Cuban leader highlighted the ties between Tehran and Havana, saying his visit to Tehran aligns with the continuity of friendly relations pursued during Fidel Castro›s era, reaffirming Iran as a friendly and brotherly country in West Asia.

The meeting symbolizes a pivotal moment, accentuating the significance of the Cuban president's visit, the first of its kind in 22 years.

Cuban President condemns U.S. intervention in Iran

President Díaz-Canel also voiced strong condemnation of U.S. interventionist actions in Iran during the joint press conference, declaring support for Iran›s legitimate rights in determining its destiny.

Expressing gratitude for Iran's backing against the unjust U.S. blockade of Cuba, he appreciated Iran›s support in international forums, such as electing Cuba as the head of the Group of 77 and membership in the UN Human Rights Council.

Raisi says Iran, Cuba united in resilience against external pressure

The Iranian president also praised Tehran-Havana resilience against power-hungry ruling regimes.

Praising Cuba›s commendable resistance against U.S. ambitions, he emphasized the united stand of the two countries against the excesses of certain Western regimes.

Noting that both nations faced U.S. sanctions for their resistance, Raisi debunked the notion that sanctions could force submission, calling it a miscalculation by the ruling regime. He advocated for strengthening cooperation and exchanging capabilities as effective strategies to neutralize sanctions, revealing decisions made during recent talks in both Cuba and Iran to enhance relations across various fields.

Importance of forming global coalition in solidarity with Gaza

During the press conference, Raisi also expressed profound sorrow over the Palestinians' plight, condemning Israel›s attacks in Gaza as "genocidal and crimes against humanity".

Also, during the talks with the Cuban president, Raisi underscored the imperative to support Palestinians in the face of Israel's cruelty.

The president criticized U.S. and Western support for Israel's actions, questioning their commitment to human rights.

Lamenting international organizations' inefficiency, Raisi also called for ending the unjust global system. Both presidents advocated for a fair system defending the oppressed and holding oppressors accountable.

The two leaders also agreed on forming a coalition with like-minded nations, standing against injustice, aggression, and tyranny, and backing Palestinians' rights on various continents.

They said it is urgent to put an immediate end to the war on Gaza, secure the rights of the Palestinians, and establish a sovereign Palestinian state.

Iran, Cuba sign 7 major cooperation deals

Raisi also highlighted the significant achievements in nanotechnology and biotechnology by both Iran and Cuba. Announcing the signing of cooperation documents, the official proclaimed his aim to enhance collaborations between the nations.

Highlighting the progressive relations since the Islamic Revolution, Raisi showcased joint vaccine production as a testament to strong scientific

cooperation. Underlining capacities in agriculture and mining, he called for an immediate activation of the joint commission to counter sanctions.

Díaz-Canel praised Iran's progress in medical and technological sectors, proposing innovative trade and advocating for continued healthcare collaboration.

High-ranking officials from both nations signed 7 agreements covering science, health, agriculture, energy, communications, and medicine.

Raisi and Díaz-Canel also issued a joint statement emphasizing deepening strategic relations.

Upon arriving at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport, the Cuban president, accompanied by a significant politico-economic delegation, was welcomed by Bahram Einollahi, Iran's Minister of Health and Medical Education.

During his visit, Díaz-Canel was set to have meetings with several Iranian authorities and explore an exhibition showcasing recent collaborative accomplishments in the medical and pharmaceutical fields between Iran and Cuba.

The Cuban president has also met with Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf to discuss the multifaceted collaboration between Iran and Cuba in the years ahead.

This reciprocal visit comes after the Iranian president's journey to Havana in June, during which both leaders signed six agreements aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation in economic, political, and judicial spheres.

Human rights, a tool to cover up Israel's crimes in Gaza

Frome Page **1** ▸ Deepa's report, void of authentic data, only pleases the Zionist lobby which, by controlling the media outlets and the narratives of the Gaza Strip, tends to downgrade the scope of the massacre taking place in the occupied territories.

It should be noted that journalists, with their unbiased stances, bear the responsibility to inform people. But, unfortunately, biased journalism has been alarmingly widespread, especially since the beginning of the Gaza war.

Rami G Khouri, a distinguished fellow at the American University of Beirut and a journalist, also criticized the "poor, biased, and shallow journalism" on November 28.

Pointing to the media coverage over the one-week truce between Hamas and the Israeli Army, Khouri said, "In fact, what I saw was less journalism aimed at informing audiences on current affairs across the world, and more reality television carefully designed and performed to entertain them."

Western media in no position to advise Tehran on human rights

Western media outlets have lost their credibility with their silence over the Israeli war crimes since the beginning of the Hamas operation on October 7.

These media took a step further and released biased information about the realities in the coastal enclave. In addition to the Gaza news boycott and the all-out support for the occupying regime, Western media outlets are said to be acting as puppets in the hands of Zionists. Tel Aviv leaders have fully supervised these media.

On November 1, Rami G Khouri shed light on Israel's scrambles to dominate the Western media narrative. He said that for years, right-wing pro-Israeli groups like CAMERA and the Canary Mission have tried to silence academics, activists, and journalists who offer Palestinian perspectives so that Israeli views prevail.

According to Khouri, a sinister new tactic tries to silence journalists not because of their reporting, but over social media opinions they posted, sometimes years ago.

Against the backdrop of controlling the narrative on Gaza, Omar Suleiman, an American Muslim scholar and activist for human rights, said on November 30, "It (the Israeli regime) does not hesitate to brand as "terrorists" and assassinate Palestinian journalists who work tirelessly to tell Gaza's truth to the world."

He reiterated, "Israel does not allow foreign journalists to enter Gaza and report on what they see freely either," quoting CNN's Fareed Zakaria who recently admitted that the Israeli military currently only allows into the Gaza Strip foreign journalists who agree to submit all materials and footage to the Israeli military for review before publication.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

SPORTS

Iran volleyball grapples with uncertainty

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN - It is almost two weeks since Mohammadreza Davarzani›s term as president of the Iran volleyball federation expired.

The veteran volleyball president has faced numerous obstacles over his two-decade tenure, but the focus now lies on the critical state of volleyball and the potential consequences of Davarzani›s separation of the federation›s leadership.

An extraordinary general meeting to appoint a supervisor or an interim president for the federation was prevented by the Iran Ministry of Sports and Youth.

Now, the appointment of a new head coach for Iran›s men›s volleyball team poses the biggest challenge for the Federation.

During Davarzani›s time as president, the contenders for Iran›s bench included coaches Vital Heynen from Belgium, Gianlorenzo Blengini and Roberto Piazza from Italy, Vladimir Alekno from Russia, and Peyman Akbari and Saeid Marouf from Iran.

The national team are heavily impacted by the current condition, as the volleyball federation lacks a president and faces uncertainty. Both Blengini and Piazza, the primary foreign choices for coaching the team, have either made agreements with other foreign teams or declined to become head coach of the national Iran team.

Consequently, the national team›s chances of qualifying for the Paris Olympics are diminishing.

The Ministry of Sports and Youth must act without delay to designate an interim president for the volleyball federation, and subsequently arrange elections in a timely manner. This will prevent further time loss for Iranian volleyball, particularly the national team.

Persepolis to meet Al Duhail in must-win match

TEHRAN – Persepolis FC have to defeat Al Duhail SC on Tuesday if Iran side are to stand a chance of advancing to the AFC Champions League 2023/24 Round of 16.

With Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia having already confirmed the Group E top spot, the only route open for Persepolis is by finishing among the three best second-placed teams from the West Zone.

Last week›s goalless draw with Al Nassr took two-time AFC Champions League runners-up Persepolis to eight points.

The Iranian champions know a win against Al Duhail may eventually prove not enough but with their fans roaring them on at the Azadi Stadium, Persepolis will be determined to take maximum points.

For Al Duhail, the tie is a chance to end a difficult campaign on a high note.

AFC Champions League semi-finalists for the first time last season, the Qatar side only have four points on the board and defeating Persepolis in Tehran will help soothe some of the pain they have endured in a tough 2023/24 season.

Manavinezhad undergoes foot surgery

TEHRAN – Saturnia Catania's Mohammad Javad Manavinezhad has undergone knee ligament surgery.

The Iranian outsider spiker underwent the operation in Rome, performed by specialist Professor Pierpaolo Mariani.

The player suffered an injury in the match against Verona in SuperLega and MRI showed that he has a complete tear of the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee.

Therefore, Manavinezhad will be out of action for more than six months.

The SuperLega is over for this Iranian star and he cannot even play in the Volleyball Nations League for the Iranian national volleyball team.

Azizi parts company with Iran coaching staff

TEHRAN - With just under 40 days to go until the 2023 AFC Asian Cup Qatar, Khodadad Azizi stepped down as a member of Iran national football team coaching staff.

The ex-Iran forward has said he has parted company with Team Melli for personal reasons.

Azizi ,52, had been appointed as consultant to Iran football team.

Three-time winners Iran are drawn along with the UAE, Hong Kong and Palestine in Group C.

The continental showpiece, scheduled for Jan. 12 to Feb. 10, 2024 promises to be a thrilling affair with seven former winners among the 24 teams - seeded in accordance with the latest FIFA World Ranking - divided into six groups.

The top two sides from each group and the four best third-placed teams will advance to the Round of 16 at Qatar 2023.

Azadi support to inspire Persepolis: AFC

TEHRAN - Persepolis has quietly gone about having a good group stage since falling to an opening-day defeat to Al Nassr at an empty Azadi Stadium. Since then, two wins and two draws have seen the team rises to second in the Group E standings as it eyes a return to the knockout rounds.

Away from home, Yahya Golmohammadi's side has been typically resilient, picking up a 1-0 win against Al Duhail on Matchday Two before claiming successive draws at FC Istiklol and group winner Al Nassr as it held a star-studded side that featured Cristiano Ronaldo and Sadio Mane goalless.

Persepolis now needs a win over Al Duhail on Tuesday to give itself a chance of reaching the last 16, the-afc.com reported.

The supporters at Azadi Stadium have witnessed – and, indeed, played their part – in many a memorable night in the AFC Champions League over the years, and they will look to roar their side on to yet another.

It will be a glorious day for Persepolis against Al Duhail: Golmohammadi

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team head coach Yahya Golmohammadi said that the match against Al Duhail will be a glorious day for them.

The Iranian giants will host Al Duhail in Group E of the AFC Champions League 2023/24 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

"We know that how strong Al Duhail are but we will have a great day with our fans in our home. The fans will push us forward against Al Duhail," Golmohammadi said.

With Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia having already confirmed the Group E top spot, the only route open for Persepolis is by finishing among the three best second-placed teams from the West Zone.

"We just think about winning the match. Regardless of the other results, we are determined to win the match. It will be a glorious day for our fans," he added.

Philippe Coutinho, Edmilson Junior and Nelson Semedo will be missing the match due to the injury. Golmohammadi said that Persepolis will also play without several key players.

"Persepolis will have a difficult task against Al Duhail because they are a star-studded team. I hope we can beat them in front of our supporters," the Persepolis coach concluded.

Iran, Cuba agree to expand agricultural co-op

Iran's Agriculture Minister Mohammad-Ali Nikbakht (L) and his Cuban counterpart Ydael Jesus Pérez Brito exchange primary documents on agricultural cooperation in Tehran on Sunday evening.

TEHRAN - Iranian Agriculture Minister Mohammad-Ali Nikbakht and his Cuban counterpart Ydael Jesus Pérez Brito met in Tehran on Sunday evening to discuss ways of expanding agricultural cooperation between the two countries, the portal of Iran's Agriculture Ministry reported.

In this meeting the two sides reached primary agreements to enhance cooperation in various agricultural fields.

Addressing the meeting, Nikbakht urged the need for more enhanced agricultural cooperation between Iran and Cuba which he said would benefit the interests of both countries.

Underlining Iran's huge achievements in the agricultural sector, the minister said that his country is ready to share these experiences with friendly nations.

Nikbakht noted that Iran produces a large part of its agricultural needs, adding that shrimp and fish farming, as well as production of horticultural products, are among Iran's points of strength.

The Cuban minister, for his part, referred to political and revolutionary commonalities of the two countries which he believed could pave the way for more increased cooperation, especially in the agricultural sector.

He said that his country welcomes making use of Iran's agricultural experiences and supports the presence of Iranian investors in Cuba.

Pérez arrived in Tehran on Sunday accompanying the Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel.

During the Cuban delegation's visit to Iran, the presidents and high-ranking officials of Iran and Cuba signed seven cooperation documents and memorandums of understandings (MOUs), and a joint statement.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Cuban counterpart Miguel Diaz-Canel signed the joint statement on deepening strategic and bilateral relations between the two countries.

Tehran hosting 2nd EAEU exclusive exhibition

From page 1 ▸ According to the official, the trade exchanges between Iran and the members of the EAEU have doubled since the two sides signed a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in 2019.

"With the signing of the free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union shortly and access to this market of 180 million people, we will witness more commercial cooperation with the member countries of this union," he added.

Having a population of more than 85 million people and possessing unique resources of energy, mines, abundant capacities of various industries, technical and engineering services with high technology and knowledge, significant geopolitical position in the region, access to rail, road, and international shipping lines and access to active highways and international logistics, Iran plays a key role in West Asia, Aliabadi stressed.

In the second EAEU exclusive exhibition, some of the capabilities of Iranian companies active in various fields including industry, mining, and agriculture are presented, he said, adding that investment laws in Iran offer many incentives and exemptions for investors, especially in free and special economic zones, and foreign companies can invest

in various industrial, mining, construction, petrochemical, scientific and technological sectors or cooperate with Iranian companies.

Underlining the significant role of the private sector in the development of cooperation between countries, the minister emphasized: "In this regard, the activity of joint chambers, the establishment of business centers, and participation in the exhibitions can greatly help the communication between the private sectors of the two sides."

He called on the governments of Iran and the EAEU members to follow up on the negotiations on resolving trade problems, including canceling business visas, solving transportation problems, establishing communication lines for companies, removing obstacles related to financial and banking transfers, especially creating a bartering mechanism and the use of the national currencies of the countries and the provision of the standards more seriously.

"It is expected that the holding of this exhibition and participation in the round tables will provide the opportunity to introduce the capabilities of the countries in the industrial, commercial, and economic fields and provide the opportunity for businessmen and entrepreneurs of the two sides to exchange views and expand cooperation," the official said.

Economic agreements with neighboring countries emphasized

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the exhibition, the head of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) emphasized the development of bilateral or multilateral trade and economic agreements with neighboring countries.

One of the main strategies of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the international dimension is the development of bilateral or multilateral economic and trade agreements with neighboring countries, Mehdi Zeyghami reiterated.

This exhibition has provided an opportunity for businessmen from different countries to fully understand each other's economic and commercial capacities and increase the level of their commercial relations after signing the free trade agreement with Eurasia, he noted.

The second EAEU exclusive exhibition is going to wrap up on December 7.

Iran and EAEU reached a preferential trade agreement in 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items are currently subject to preferential tariffs. The agreement came into effect on October 27, 2019.

Iran and the EAEU are now negotiating to turn the PTA into a FTA and the talks are in final stages.

The FTA between the two sides is expected to be signed and come into effect in 2024.

Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Committee meeting held in Tehran

TEHRAN – During the 19th Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Committee meeting which was held in Tehran on Sunday, the two sides stressed the need to increase annual trade exchanges to three billion dollars, IRIB reported.

The two countries Joint Economic Committee meeting was co-chaired by Iranian Agriculture Minister Mohammad-Ali Nikbakht and Kazakhstan Deputy Prime Minister Serik Zhumangarin, IRNA reported.

During the intergovernmental meeting, officials and business persons from Iran and Kazakhstan met and discussed various issues of common interest between the two countries including banking, transportation and cargo transit, agriculture, trade and energy.

Speaking to the press after the meeting, Nikbakht said this is the second meeting of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) which shows the two countries' determination to expand economic ties.

"Currently, the economic exchange between the two countries is not at a good level; But we have targeted the trade exchange between the two countries to reach three billion dollars," Nikbakht noted.

Zhumangarin for his part pointed to a meeting with Iranian businessmen and said the two countries of Iran and Kazakhstan have vast capacities to cooperate.

"In the 19th Joint Economic Committee meeting, two issues of transportation logistics and bank settlement were agreed upon," he added.

The 18th round of Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Committee meeting was held in the Kazakh capital city of Astana on January 24-25.

As reported, the value of Iran-Kazakhstan annual trade rose 20 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

During a meeting between the former Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie and Kazakhstan's Deputy Minister of Trade and Integration Kairat Torebayev, in late April, the two sides discussed the ways for the expansion of trade ties between the two countries.

In the meeting held at the place of ICCIMA, Shafeie emphasized the special position of Kazakhstan as a trade partner for Iran and said the presence of the two countries in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) pacts has opened new doors for the development of economic relations, and the private sectors of the two countries should take advantage of this opportunity.

Emphasizing that paying attention to rail, road and sea transportation infrastructure should be a priority of the two countries, the ICCIMA former head stated: "The most important problem in the way of improving the level of trade cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan is the issue of transportation. Solving this issue requires the will of the authorities of the two countries. The future of transit between the two countries can be bright due to Kazakhstan's connection to China and Iran's access to the open waters of Southeast Asia, provided that the infrastructure for exploiting this opportunity is available."

The Kazakh official for his part emphasized that his country is seeking to improve business relations with Iran as much as possible and said: "Iran is our main way to communicate with Turkey and West Asia. So far, we have had 20 million dollars in financial transactions, and these meetings aim to increase this amount to 60 million dollars."

"Our economies have a good overlap. We are looking for further development of relations between the two countries, especially in the field of vegetables, fruits and fisheries", he added.

Back in last November, Iran and Kazakhstan inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the expansion of cooperation in the agriculture and trade fields as well as industries, logistics, transportation and technology transfer in Tehran.

The MOU was signed by Javad Sadati-Nejad, the former Iranian agriculture minister, and Zhumangarin, who visited Tehran on top of a Kazakh delegation.

As reported, the effort of the two countries to increase the value of bilateral trade to about one billion dollars, based on the agreements of the presidents of the two countries, is considered in the MOU.

During a meeting between Kazakhstan Prime Minister Alikhan Ashanuly Smaiylov and Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber on the sidelines of the Second Caspian Economic Forum in Moscow in October 2022, the Kazakh side emphasized the importance of improving the level of cooperation between Tehran and Astana in the oil swap, as well as industry, agriculture, scientific and cultural sectors.

Mokhber, for his part, said that the level of trade between Iran and Kazakhstan can quickly reach three billion dollars, considering the existing capacities of the two countries.

The Kazakh prime minister welcomed the proposal of Iran's first vice president and stated that the necessary fields and capacities of the two countries are ready to raise the level of trade exchanges between Iran and Kazakhstan and reach three billion dollars a year.

Mokhber then announced Iran's readiness to send mining companies to Kazakhstan and added: "Tehran is ready to cooperate with Astana in port, dam construction, hydropower plant construction, knowledge-based and technical and engineering services."

Also, during an Iran-Kazakhstan business forum hosted by the ICCIMA in Tehran in mid-October last year, the two sides stressed the need for removing visa issuance and transportation obstacles, to realize a $6 billion annual trade target.

Iran's 8-month non-oil export exceeds $32b

TEHRAN - The value of Iran's non-oil exports exceeded $32 billion in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) data.

Based on the IRICA data, Iran exported 90.044 million tons of non-oil commodities worth $32.243 billion in the mentioned eight months, IRIB reported.

The non-oil exports in the mentioned period increased by 27 percent in terms of weight, and 1.6 percent in terms of value, year on year.

The average value of each ton of exported goods in the first eight months of the current year was $358 while the average value of each ton of exported goods in the previous year's same period was reported to be $462.

Liquefied natural gas, liquefied propane, methanol, petroleum bitumen, and liquefied butane were the five main exported goods in the period under review.

Iran's top export destination during this period was China with $9.158 billion worth of imports from the Islamic Republic, followed by Iraq with $6.023 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over $4.162 billion, Turkey with $3.028 billion, and India with $1.466 billion.

Meanwhile, some 24.709 million tons of goods valued at $42.199 billion were imported into the country in the said period, indicating a 12.36-percent rise in terms of value, and a 4.32 percent increase in terms of weight, year on year.

The average customs value of each ton of imported goods during this period was $1,708, which shows a 7.70 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

Corn, mobile phones, soybeans, automobile parts, sunflower seeds, and safflower were the five main items of imported goods in the mentioned eight-month period.

The country's top five sources of imports in the first eight months of the current year were the UAE with $13.054 billion, China with $12.191 billion, Turkey with $4.443 billion, Germany with $1.428 billion, and India with $1.244 billion worth of imports.

The value of Iran's non-oil export rose 10 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20), the spokesman of Trade Development Committee of the Iranian House of Industry, Mining, and Trade announced.

Ruhollah Latifi said that 122.056 million tons of non-oil commodities worth $53.166 billion were exported in the previous year.

China with the purchase of $14.584 billion of commodities (no change), Iraq with $10.238 billion (15 percent growth), Turkey with $7.459 billion (23 percent growth), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with $5.767 billion (28 percent growth), and India with $2.146 billion (18 percent growth) were the first five export destinations of Iranian goods in 1401, the official stated.

Latifi further announced that 37.18 million tons of non-oil commodities valued at $59.655 billion were imported to the country during the past year, with a 10 percent drop in weight, and a 13 percent rise in worth, year on year.

The UAE with sales of $18.395 billion (11 percent growth), China with $15.744 billion (24 percent growth), Turkey with $6.99 billion (15 percent growth), India with $2.019 billion (80 percent growth), and Germany with $2.019 billion (five percent growth), were the first five countries supplying goods to Iran in 1401, he stated.

The official went on to say that the country's non-oil trade reached 159.236 million tons worth $112.821 billion in the previous year, with an 11.2 percent growth year on year.

Commodities worth over $670m traded at IME in a week

TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 2,967,894 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than $676 million on its physical market.

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,353,072 tons of commodities valued at nearly $405 million.

On this floor the IME sold 1,248,560 tons of cement, 492,000 tons of iron ore, 440,527 tons of steel, 154,000 tons of sponge iron, 56,035 tons of zinc, 9,095 tons of copper, 7,600 tons of aluminum, 2,125 tons of cast iron, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 100 tons of lead.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 548,117 tons of commodities worth more than $233 million.

Commodities traded on this floor included 190,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 161,447 tons of bitumen, 95,910 tons of polymeric products, 51,900 tons of lube cut, 28,876 tons of chemicals, 8,485 tons of sulfur, 4,649 tons of oil, 1,000 tons of slop wax, 430 tons of feedstocks and 200 tons of waterproofing materials.

The IME also traded within the same week 10 tons of goods on its side market.

As previously reported, IME witnessed trade of 12,238,762 tons of commodities and 357 vehicles with a total trading value of nearly $3 billion on its physical market during the past Iranian calendar month (ended on November 21).

The exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor, trade of 9,870,000 tons of commodities and 357 vehicles valued at nearly $2 billion.

On this floor the IME sold 5,423,210 tons of cement, 2,091,000 tons of iron ore, 1,769,896 tons of steel, 540,000 tons of sponge iron, 97,220 tons of zinc, 39,325 tons of copper, 28,560 tons of aluminum, 2,000 tons of cast iron, 1,000 tons of coke, 800 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 250 tons of lead.

Moreover, the exchange saw trade of 2,160,633 tons of commodities worth more than $1 billion on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor.

Items traded on this floor included 639,750 tons of vacuum bottom, 652,735 tons of bitumen, 455,000 tons of polymeric products, 190,000 tons of lube cut, 135,628 tons of chemicals, 52,765 tons of sulfur, 27,655 tons of oil, 14,674 tons of petroleum products, 1,440 tons of feedstocks, 1,300 tons of waterproofing materials and 1,000 tons of slop wax.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

TEDPIX climbs 44,000 points on Monday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 44,029 points (2.08 percent) to 2,165,228 on Monday, which is the third day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

Making the seas unsafe for Israel and its supporters

Ansarullah attacks three more Israeli ships, U.S. Navy destroyer in response to war on Gaza

From page 1 ▸ A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Associated Press that the attacks began before 10am in the Yemeni capital Sana'a, and had gone on for as long as five hours.

Israeli media reports say one of the targeted ships has been severely damaged and is on the verge of sinking, adding that this ship has been targeted by a cruise missile and a drone.

The Ansarullah government in Sana'a said its forces used long-range drones and naval ballistic missiles to conduct the operation, saying it struck two vessels after they ignored orders.

One was hit by a missile and the second by a drone while in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

Ansarullah did not mention any U.S. warship being involved.

The vessels that have been reportedly targeted include a Panamanian-flagged large container ship called Number Nine, the Bahamas-flagged bulk carrier Unity Explorer, Sophie II, as well as the USS Carney.

In a televised statement, Ansarullah's military spokesman, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, claimed two of the ships without mentioning the USS Carney.

He said, «In implementation of the directives of Commander Abdul-Malik Badr al-Din al-Houthi and in response to the demands of our great Yemeni people and the calls of the free people of our Arab and Islamic nation to stand fully with the choices of the Palestinian people and their proud resistance. This morning, the naval forces of the Yemeni Armed Forces, with the help of God Almighty, carried out a targeting operation against two Israeli ships in Bab al-Mandab, namely the "Unity Explorer" ship and the "Number Nine" ship. The first ship was targeted with a naval missile and the second ship with a naval drone."

General Saree added, "The Yemeni armed forces continue to prevent Israeli ships from navigating the Red Sea until the Israeli aggression against our steadfast brothers in the Gaza Strip stops.

"The Yemeni armed forces renew their warning to all Israeli ships or those associated with Israelis that they will become a legitimate target if they violate what is stated in this statement."

The targeting operation came after the two ships rejected warning messages from the Yemeni naval forces.

Unity Explorer, a bulk carrier, is owned by a British company that includes Israeli/British Dan David Ungar, who lives in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories and is one of its officers.

Experts say Yemen has been conducting background checks on ships sailing through the Red Sea and has been careful to attack only Israeli-linked vessels.

Reading between the lines of the statement by Saree, he warned, "All ships associated with Israelis will become legitimate targets".

It outlines any ships that have links to the Israelis are targets. (This has been the initial position of Ansarullah toward Israeli ships since the Israeli war on Gaza started.)

It may set out a new development by Ansarullah, where countries who are staunch allies of the Israeli regime will also see their ships within the range of Yemeni missiles and drones.

Ansarullah has confirmed that the two ships it targeted are Israeli-linked. Reports suggest that Sophie II was also a target.

Sophie II is a British-owned ship and may have links to the Israeli regime or the attack on it may have come on the backdrop of the British government's announcement that it is assisting the indiscriminate Israeli war on Gaza with drone surveillance flights over the besieged Palestinian territory.

The UK Maritime Trade Operations agency, run by Britain's Royal Navy, confirmed it had received reports of a drone attack in the Bab al-Mandab strait. The agency also reported drone activity that originated from Yemen, as well as an explosion.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity «because of the sensitivity of the issue», have been cited by American media as saying USS Carney had observed a missile being flown in the direction of the Unity Explorer.

They also claim USS Carney managed to shoot down a drone heading towards it while in the southern Red Sea.

From day one, the U.S. has been complicit in the Israeli war on Gaza and is strongly "associated with Israelis".

One U.S. official said, "Multiple commercial vessels in the Red Sea were attacked by (Ansarullah) missiles" over several hours.

There are strong suggestions that the container ship Number Nine had suffered severe damage from a drone attack about 101 kilometers northwest of the northern Yemeni port of Hodeidah and is on the verge of sinking in the Bab al-Mandab Strait.

Earlier, it reported drone activity that originated from Yemen, as well as a possible explosion.

The Bab al-Mandab, which Yemen largely controls, is of utmost significance in the maritime trade route.

It is a very strategic waterway connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

And there is no secret that the tiny 32-kilometer strait is as important to the Israeli regime as it is to many in the Western community to import natural resources, in particular oil and gas as well as other vital commodities from West Asia.

Ansarullah controls most of Yemen's Red Sea coast.

It has previously fired ballistic missiles and armed drones at Israeli military sites inside the occupied Palestinian territories and vowed to target more Israeli vessels.

A series of attacks have been reported in the Red Sea waters since the Israeli war on Gaza broke out.

Last month, an Israeli-linked cargo ship was seized by Ansarullah's naval forces. A fortnight ago, Ansarullah released footage of its naval forces seizing the Galaxy Leader, an Israeli-owned cargo ship, after landing a helicopter on deck.

A week later, a U.S. Navy warship responded to a distress call from an Israeli-managed commercial tanker in the Gulf of Aden after it had been seized by armed individuals.

In the incident, two ballistic missiles were fired from Yemen toward the location of two ships.

Reports suggest the Israeli regime has sent several frigates and submarines to the Red Sea.

The Hebrew newspaper Ma'ariv reported that the regime has decided to send some frigates and submarines to the Red Sea region.

What's clear is that the heavy U.S. Navy presence in the Red Sea has been unable to prevent attacks from Yemen towards Israeli ships.

It is unlikely Israeli frigates can do the job.

Rather, they may offer Ansarullah more targets.

Why Israel is not entitled to "self-defense"

From page 1 ▸ Contrary to these claims, legal experts have underscored that Israel, as an occupying force, cannot genuinely claim a right to self-defense against Gaza.

During an international gathering in Istanbul which was initiated by Qatar-based Al Jazeera network, a prominent Jordanian lawyer and human rights activist further elaborated on why Israel cannot attack Gaza based on claims of self-defense.

"The right to self-defense applies to a state when it is attacked by another and its national security and existence are exposed to danger," said Hala Ahed Deeb on Saturday, adding that based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, the state which has come under attack first needs to inform the UN and then use force to defend itself. She however added that Israel cannot be considered a "state under attack" rather, it's an occupying force that first needs to leave the territories it has occupied before proceeding to engage in any form of fighting.

Over the years, international bodies have emphasized the notion that Israel lacks the right to claim self-defense. In 2004, the International Court of Justice decreed that Israel, as an occupying power, violated international law by erecting a separation wall in occupied al-Quds. The wall›s construction in 2002 inflicted devastation upon Palestinians in the West Bank, severing Palestinian communities, agricultural lands, and farmlands. While Israeli officials maintained that the wall served as a necessary security measure and defense against "terrorism", Tel Aviv disregarded the ruling and continued with its construction, with approximately 85% of the wall encroaching into the West Bank, deviating from the UN-recognized Green Line of 1967.

During the Saturday gathering, the lawyer further emphasized Israel›s violations of international law, characterizing its attacks on Gaza as a full-scale "genocide."

Israel usually denies committing crimes in Gaza and claims that it is defending itself, and it continued the same narrative after Hamas launched Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on Oct. 7. The regime has so far killed more than 16,000 civilians in the Palestinian territory, with 70% of the dead comprising of women and children. UNICEF has deplored the actions of the Israeli military, calling Gaza "a graveyard for children."

The Jordanian lawyer also highlighted the complicity of those who aid Israel in its actions and underscored the submission of a federal complaint against U.S. President Joe Biden and two of his cabinet members.

Hala Ahed Deeb

Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin have been sued by New York civil liberties group, the Center for Constitutional Rights, for their complicity in Israeli war crimes in Gaza.

Deeb, openly vocal about the regime›s egregious human rights infringements, was among the 100 journalists reportedly targeted by the Israeli spyware Pegasus. Despite persistent threats and intimidation, she remains committed to advocating for the rights of West Asian citizens.

She stands alongside myriad lawyers and activists calling for an end to Israel›s brutal assaults in Gaza. Moreover, she is demanding that international bodies take concrete action to hold the regime accountable for its war crimes perpetrated against Palestinians.

Support rather than intervention is the strategy of the resistance front

From page 1 ▸ If the Gazan resistance on its own can weaken the Israeli occupation entity, that is more powerful than if multiple fronts were to do this, as it further highlights the entity's fragility. The success and consequences of October the 7th, including reverse migration, the emptying of settlements around Gaza and the northern envelope, in addition to the collapse of the economy have shown the reality of this weak entity to the world.

Sayed Nasrallah highlighted the opening of the fronts as a flexible matter that will only occur upon necessity, to prevent the weakening of any front under pressure. To those who questioned why the fronts should expand, Sayed Nasrallah argued that if Gaza breaks, Lebanon will be next, and it is within this context that supporting the Gazan resistance is in the interest of Lebanon and the remaining nations in the resistance axis. To those who questioned the role of the Lebanese front thus far, he highlighted how it has relieved pressure off the Gazan resistance, with 3 of the military elite battalions absorbed on the Lebanese borders, that would otherwise have been strategizing to defeat the Gazan resistance. Therefore, the resistance axis's intervention is designed to support the original operation launch, as opposed to all the fronts simultaneously opening to intervene.

Here are three reasons the wider resistance axis did not open the war front at the start of October 7th:

1) Securing victory at the hands of the Gazan resistance is a greater defeat than at the hands of the resistance axis combined.

2) The extent of Palestinian resilience and steadfastness have been made clear to the world and served as a lesson.

3) Showing the real, ferocious face of the Israeli occupation entity.

If the wider resistance axis intervened with full force, the equation would have been a war between countries and 'interests', as opposed to the real face of the occupation showing itself. This war has made it clear that the axis was willing to intervene and expand the war under ripe conditions, and that unity of the fronts demands continual support for the entity under fire.

The blood of Gaza has resurrected and mobilized the world in a way never seen before; it has allowed the magnitude of Palestinian oppression to come to light. It has revealed the original historical shame of the world superpowers, who conspired to create this entity on the ruins of the ethnically cleansed Palestinian people. The patience of Gaza has led millions to question the secret of it and its source.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

WORLD HEADLINES

Corruption trial of Israeli PM Netanyahu resumes

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is facing the resumption of his long-running trial on numerous corruption charges, after a pause due to the war in Gaza.

A court in the occupied al-Quds started hearing the case on Monday, which is focused on several corruption charges against Netanyahu, according to reports by Israeli media. The trial was paused on an emergency order from the regime's justice minister following Hamas's attack on the occupied territories on October 7.

Netanyahu has been charged with fraud, bribery and breach of trust in three cases filed in 2019, known as Case 1000, 2000 and 4000.

In Case 1000, the prime minister, along with his wife Sara, is accused of receiving gifts, including champagne and cigars, from prominent Hollywood producer Arnon Milchan and Australian billionaire businessman James Packer in return for political favours.

Bribery charges carry a sentence of up to 10 years in jail and/or a fine. Fraud and breach of trust carry a prison sentence of up to three years.

Gaza death toll rises

In his latest update, Ashraf al-Qudra, spokesperson for the Health Ministry in Gaza, says at least 15,899 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks since October 7.

Israeli forces' violations against the health sector resulted in the deaths of 238 medical personnel since the war began and the destruction of 56 ambulances.56 medical facilities were destroyed, and 20 hospitals are out of service.

Israeli forces are still detaining 35 medical personnel, specifically the director-general of al-Shifa Hospital Mohammed Abu Salmiya, under very harsh conditions, including physical abuse.

al-Qudra called on the United Nations and the World Health Organization to pressure the release of medical teams from Israel.

The spokesperson also called for full-fledged makeshift hospitals to reach all parts of the Gaza Strip.

He says hospitals "flooded with an influx of dead bodies".

1.9 million people displaced in Gaza since October 7

The UN agency that provides relief to Palestinian refugees says the figure represents more than 80 percent of the population of the besieged coastal enclave.

"A staggering 1.2 million people are sheltering in 156 UNRWA installations across all five governorates – including in the North and Gaza City," it added.

Rights groups accuse Dutch gov't of complicity in Gaza war crimes

Human rights organizations say the Netherlands is violating international weapons treaties by sending spare parts of F-35 fighter jets to Israel.

They made an emotional plea in a court in The Hague [where they brought a case against the Dutch state].

Reports suggest that since October 7, one shipment of these spare parts has been supplied to Israel, even though people at the customs office and also legal experts had warned the government against it, saying it could face legal challenges.

The organizations are saying that these F-35s are being used against the civilian population in Gaza and that makes the Netherlands complicit.

The judges have not decided whether they will rule on this lawsuit in the next 10 days.

Opposition leader calls for BiBi to leave office

Yair Lapid says the time has come for the "one on whose watch the greatest calamity in the history of [Israel] occurred to leave us alone", adding, "those who fail like this cannot continue".

At the beginning of a meeting of the centrist Yesh Atid party, Lapid said: "It's time for this government to release us from its punishment."

Since the October 7 Hamas attack, Lapid has shared his disapproval of PM Benjamin Netanyahu and called for his replacement.

Last month, Lapid wrote on X: "We need to establish a national reconstruction government. Likud will lead it, Netanyahu and the extremists will be replaced, [and] over 90 members of the Knesset will be partners in the coalition for healing and reconnection."

Israel issues severe travel warnings to dozens of countries amid rising antisemitism

The regime in Tel Aviv has cautioned Israelis to exercise increased caution when travelling to certain countries.

Israeli authorities on Monday updated travel warnings for dozens of countries, amid rising antisemitism around the world as Israel fights the Hamas group in Gaza.

Several countries in Western Europe, including the United Kingdom, France and Germany; in South America, including Argentina and Brazil; along with Australia and Russia were raised to Level 2, which recommends that Israelis take additional precautions while there.

A number of countries in Africa, including South Africa and Eritrea, and in central Asia, including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, were raised to Level 3, which recommends postponing nonessential travel.

Iran-made artificial leg to bring back dream of Palestinian child

TEHRAN- Asif Abu Mahdi, a football player of the Al Wahda football club and a Palestinian child, will be sent to Iran to receive an artificial leg. Asif lost his leg due to Israel's ongoing bombing campaign against the besieged Gaza Strip.

According to a Hamas official, Asif will be transferred to Iran where an Iranian science-based company will provide him with an artificial leg. This will enable him to walk and exercise like before, bringing back his dream of playing football.

Tehran conference to explore UNESCO-registered Tchogha Zanbil

TEHRAN- The House of Humanities Thinkers in Tehran has organized a special session set to take place on December 13, with the purpose of shedding light on the lesser-known capacities of Tchogha Zanbil, a UNESCO-registered prehistorical site in southwest Iran.

The session will be attended by a number of scholars and archaeologists including Kamyar Abdi, Arash Nuraqai and Atefeh Rashnoi, Mehr reported on Monday.

A chief tourist destination in Khuzestan province, the magnificent ruins of Tchogha Zanbil is considered by many the finest surviving example of Elamite architecture in the globe. It was made a UNESCO site in 1979.

Construction of the ziggurat started in c. 1250 BC upon the order of the Elamite king Untash-Napirisha (1275-1240 BC) as the religious center of Elam dedicated to the Elamite divinities Inshushinak and Napirisha.

The ziggurat overlooks the ancient city of Susa (near modern Shush) in Khuzestan Province. Reaching a total height of some 25m, the ziggurat was used to be surmounted by a temple and estimated to hit 52m during its heyday. The ziggurat is located approximately 30 km southeast of Shush and 80 km north of Ahvaz.

UNESCO says that Tchogha Zanbil is the largest ziggurat outside of Mesopotamia and the best preserved of this type of stepped pyramidal monument.

Tchogha Zanbil was excavated in six seasons between 1951 and 1961 by Roman Ghirshman, a Russian-born French archeologist who specialized in ancient Iran. It bears testimony to the unique expression of the culture, beliefs, rituals, and traditions of one of the oldest indigenous communities of Iran.

Ziggurats, in general, are pyramidal stepped temple towers that bear architectural and religious characteristics of the major cities of Mesopotamia from approximately 2200 until 500 BC. They were usually built with a core of mud brick and an exterior covered with baked brick. Approximately 25 ziggurats are known, being equally divided among Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria, according to Encyclopedia Britannica.

Clusters of ancient qanats discovered in Diyala

An archaeological survey has identified three clusters of ancient qanats in the Diyala Province of Iraq.

A qanat, also known as a kariz, is a system for transporting water from an aquifer or water well over long distances in hot dry climates without losing water to evaporation.

Qanats use a sequence of vertical shafts resembling wells, linked by a gently inclined tunnel that serves as a conduit for channeling water. Qanats efficiently transport substantial volumes of underground water to the surface without requiring pumps.

The water naturally flows downhill by gravity, with the endpoint positioned at a lower level than the origin. When the qanat is still below ground, the water is drawn to the surface via water wells or animal driven Persian wells.

Some Qanats are divided into an underground network of smaller canals known as kariz, functioning similarly to qanats by staying beneath the surface to prevent contamination and evaporation. In certain instances, water from a qanat is stored in a reservoir, usually with nighttime flow reserved for daytime usage.

The technology for qanat's first emerged in ancient Iran around 3,000-years-ago and slowly spread westward and eastward.

A recent survey within the Diyala Province has discovered three clusters of qanats stretching between the areas of Jalulaa and Kortaba. Initial studies date the clusters to around AD 1000, a period known as the "Iranian Intermezzo", when parts of the region were governed by a number of minor Iranian emirates.

The first cluster consists of 25 wells on a linear alignment connected to an adjacent 10-meter-deep water channel. The second cluster also has 25 wells and is connected to a 13 km long hand dug channel, while the third cluster consists of 9 wells connected to water canals dug on both sides.

(Source: Heritage Daily)

American Airlines passenger claims he was forced to hide 'Palestine' sweater on flight

A passenger has claimed he was forced to hide a Palestine sweater on board an American Airlines flight.

The man, who was travelling on American Airlines flight 2829 from New York JFK to Phoenix, took to social media to condemn the airline for the alleged incident, accusing the company of being "complicit in the murders of innocent Palestinian children in Gaza".

The man said he was wearing his sweater with the word "Palestine" emblazoned on it. He said that the clothing did not feature any "offensive or profane" material.

But, when he boarded the plane, he claims he was asked by flight attendants to flip his sweatshirt inside out – and warned that he would be removed from the flight by law enforcement if he did not comply.

The flight crew allegedly told him that passengers are barred from wearing anything political and expressed concerns about how other passengers might feel about the sweatshirt.

"What about my feelings?" he said he replied.

The man said that he "decided to comply" with the flight attendants because he "didn't know" his rights.

According to American Airlines' policy on passenger attire, passengers are required to "dress appropriately".

"Bare feet or offensive clothing aren't allowed," it states.

The policy does not mention that political clothing is not allowed.

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) condemned the airline over the alleged incident, saying it is "deeply troubled".

"This action taken by American Airlines is not only discriminatory but also contributes to the broader context of prejudice against Palestinians and their right to self-identification," a statement published on its website read.

(Source: Independent)

Health tourism revenue triples that of regular tourism, official says

TEHRAN- Health tourism could generate three times more revenue than regular tourism, a tourism official has said.

Health tourists typically spend between $3,600 and $7,600 and this expenditure exceeds that of regular tourists, making health tourism a lucrative sector for the economy, Mohammad Jahangiri who presides over a national center for developing health tourism explained on Monday.

Estimates from reputable international institutions indicates that the economic prospects of health tourism are set to soar, he added.

By 2032, it is projected to increase by more than three times, with an impressive annual growth rate of 11.6 percent, he noted.

He also highlighted the efforts neighboring countries such as India, Turkey, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates have made in the health tourism sector and said: "These countries have meticulously planned and invested in this thriving industry, reaping substantial benefits in return."

A notable example is Turkey, which experienced a remarkable growth of over 66 percent in health tourists in 2021 compared to the previous year, he added.

This surge has not only benefited the healthcare and treatment sector, encompassing areas such as cancer, fertility, neurology, and psychiatry, but has also had a positive ripple effect on various segments of the tourism industry, he explained.

"Sectors like transportation, accommodations, hospitality, retail, and restaurants have all experienced significant growth as a result and these advancements have stimulated economic growth across multiple sectors of the country's economy."

Addressing the issue of economic diplomacy and international healthcare tourism services, Jahangiri also highlighted the extensive scope of the health economy.

He underlined the significance of public health, the market for conventional and complementary medicines, proper nutrition, physical fitness, brain and nervous system health, thermal and mineral water treatments, spas, personal hygiene, preventive tourism, beauty, anti-aging measures, and body protection.

"These aspects collectively contribute to a sector that holds an estimated value of nearly $4.5 trillion, illustrating its vast potential for growth and development," he stated.

Furthermore, Jahangiri addressed the market potential prevalent in Iran's surrounding region, consisting of around 250 million people. He pointed out that this presents a remarkable opportunity for Iran to tap into the market and reap the economic benefits.

In addition, Jahangiri stressed the importance of offering international healthcare tourism services across various domains.

"These include market segmentation, pricing strategies, advertising initiatives, and making provisions for convenient payment methods," he explained.

By focusing on these areas, Iran can effectively position itself as an attractive destination for healthcare tourism, catering to the needs and preferences of an international clientele, he concluded.

Over the past couple of years, the Islamic Republic has emerged as a significant destination for medical tourism, attracting individuals from various parts of the world seeking high-quality healthcare services at affordable prices.

The country's medical tourism sector has experienced substantial growth due to its advanced medical facilities, skilled healthcare professionals, and cost-effective treatments. The country boasts a robust healthcare infrastructure with modern hospitals, specialized clinics, and state-of-the-art medical equipment.

Major cities like Tehran, Shiraz, and Isfahan house internationally accredited medical facilities offering a wide range of medical treatments and procedures.

Iran was ranked 46th destination for medical tourism [within the 2020-2021 Medical Tourism Index]. According to available data, patients from neighboring countries, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Oman, Bahrain, Armenia, and Tajikistan, constitute the lion's share of medical tourists arriving in the Islamic Republic.

Experts say medical tourism in Iran is a win-win opportunity both for the country and foreign patients, as they are offered affordable yet quality treatment services and the country gains considerable foreign currency.

The number of medical tourists visiting Iran revolves around one million per annum, an official with the Health Ministry has said. "Every year, one million foreign patients are treated in Iran," said Mohammad-Hossein Niknam, who presides over the ministry's department for international cooperation.

As mentioned by the council, "the free zones of Iran play an important role in the prosperity of the national economy. They have been established to help improve comprehensive social welfare and competition in global markets..."

The Islamic Republic is branded globally as an affordable destination for health and medical tourism. Credible surgeons and physicians, cutting-edge medical technologies, high-tech medicine and diverse specializations, affordable procedures, and finally, its hospitable people, are considered Iran's trump card when it comes to medical tourism.

Gereh-chini revived in Hamedan

TEHRAN- Gereh-chini, an emblematic Iranian craft renowned for its intricate decorative elements and practical applications, has been revived in west-central province of Hamedan

The art, once on the verge of fading into oblivion, has been meticulously resurrected by an artisan couple, Mehdi Pashai and Azadeh Aqajani, within their workshop nestled in Asadabad city, ISNA reported on Monday.

With unwavering determination and unmatched creativity, this talented duo has breathed new life into the ancient art of "Gereh Chini," resurrecting its glory, the report added.

The ancient Iranian art of Gereh-chini, which literally translates to "arranging the knots," is a traditional form of decorative and functional handicraft. It involves skillfully arranging finely cut pieces of wood onto a surface, following a specific design.

Gereh-chini primarily utilizes beautifully repetitive geometric knots. Its birthplace is Isfahan, and it is believed to have originated during the time of the Seljuk dynasty. However, the exact date of its inception remains uncertain. This art form experienced its peak during the Safavid era, adding to its historical significance.

In Gereh-chini, the pieces of wood are used in their natural color without any paint application. Masters of this craft recommend using plane trees to achieve the best results. However, other types of wood like walnut, beech, morus, almond, silverberry, zelkova, pear, and jujube are also used to create shrine doors, pulpits, doors, frames, decorative dividing panels, and more.

There are seven distinct types of knots, or Gereh, in this art form - Tond, Kond, Shol, Kond o Shol, Pili, and Doroodgari. Each knot variation possesses its own unique history and design.

Gereh Chini can be categorized into three main types: 1. All wood, where only wood is used; 2. Moshabbak, involving lattice trelliswork; and 3. Orosi or Sash window. Orosi windows, created using Gereh and colored glass, are particularly captivating and were commonly found during the Zand and Qajar dynasties. They hold immense artistic value.

In Gereh-chini, each knot consists of interlocking pieces of wood meticulously combined to form intricate designs. The finer the wood pieces, the higher the value of the final product.

Gereh-chini pieces are specially crafted to withstand the diverse climatic conditions in different regions of Iran. They are constructed using tongue and groove joints, ensuring their durability. As a result, Gereh-chini artworks can be found adorning numerous historical buildings across the country.

Remarkably, several of these structures still stand today, including the exquisite Chehel Sotoon and Hasht Behesht Palaces, as well as historic houses like Alam and Shekh ol-Islam in Isfahan. Additionally, architectural gems such as the House of Tabatabai in Kashan, Abbasian, Boroujerdi, and the majestic Golestan Palace, among others in Yazd and Tehran, boast the intricate beauty of Gereh-chini.

Even today, Gereh-chini workshops continue to operate in Tehran, preserving and practicing this traditional craft.

Safavid-era caravanserai restored to former glory

TEHRAN-A restoration project on the Safavid era (1501-1736) Sharifabad caravanserai in the city of Mayamey in north-central Semnan province, has come to an end, a local tourism official has said.

The project involved repairing the damaged parts, strengthening the structure and restoring its rooftop and flooring, Seyyed Mohammad Sadeq Razavian explained on Monday.

The historical structure has been inscribed on the national heritage list.

Earlier in September, a selection of 54 centuries-old roadside inns won a UNESCO label under the name: The Persian Caravanserai. The registration was made at the 45th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh, after carefully examining the proposed caravanserais located in 24 provinces across the country.

Caravansary (also Caravanserai or Caravansaray) is a building that served as the inn of the Orient, providing accommodation for commercial, pilgrim, postal, and especially official travelers.

According to Encyclopedia Iranica, from the number of surviving caravansaries and their sizes, it is clear that in Safavid and Qajar times there was a state architectural department that was specifically concerned with the construction of caravansaries and stations on the overland routes. Furthermore, in the cities, several caravansaries were erected as lodging houses, depots, and commercial offices in the vicinity of the bazaars.

A typical caravansary consists of a square or rectangular plan centered around a courtyard with only one entrance and arrangements for defense if necessary. Whether fortified or not, it at least provided security against beasts of prey and attacks by brigands.

The earliest caravanserais in Iran were built during the Achaemenid era (550 - 330 BC). Centuries later, when Shah Abbas I assumed power from 1588–to 1629, he ordered the construction of a network of caravanserais across the country.

For many travelers, staying in or even visiting a centuries-old caravanserai can be a wide experience; they have an opportunity to feel the past, a time travel back to a forgotten age.

Such roadside inns were once constructed along ancient caravan routes in the Muslim world to shelter people, their goods, and animals. The former Silk Roads may be the most famous example dotted by caravanserais.

Cozy chambers that are meticulously laid out around a vast courtyard may easily evoke spirits of the past. It's not hard to fancy the hustle and bustle of merchants bargaining on prices, recounting their arduous journeys to one another while their camels chewing hay! You can also conceive the idea of local architectural style and material in its heyday.

It is not hard to fancy the hustle and bustle of merchants bargaining on prices, recounting their arduous journeys to one another while their camels chewing hay!

Passing major roads in the country, one may see crumbling caravanserais, many of which were abandoned for ages. In the Information Age, such guest houses have largely lost their actual usage.

However, a couple of years ago, the Iran tourism ministry introduced a scheme to keep them alive and profitable; tens of caravanserais are ceded to private investors for better maintenance. Now, some are exclusively renovated and repurposed into boutique hotels and tourist lodgings.

They often had massive portals supported by elevated load-bearing walls. Guest rooms were constructed around the courtyard and stables behind them with doors in the corners of the yard.

Establishing National Steering Committee, AI Center on the agenda

TEHRAN – President Ebrahim Raisi issued an executive order on Sunday for the establishment of the 'National Steering Committee and the National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Center'.

Creating a complete and stable chain of ideas to market in AI, benefiting from AI for the economic progress of the country, planning to achieve a leading and sustainable position among the countries of the world, as well as identifying and nurturing talents in the field of AI are among the most important tasks of the national AI center, IRNA reported.

"Iran ranks 17th in artificial intelligence in terms of scientific production and publication of articles in the world, while ranks 78th in terms of its application in the world," Rouhollah Dehqani-Firouzabadi, Vice President for Science, Technology and Knowledge-based Economy, said.

Plans to develop AI

The Vice Presidency has prepared three comprehensive plans to develop artificial intelligence in different sectors.

Currently, artificial intelligence is the first priority for the development of technology and is pursued with three programs, IRNA quoted Firouzabadi as saying

Artificial intelligence is a comprehensive technology and affects all

other areas of technology, he highlighted.

"The plans in the field of artificial intelligence include scientific development programs that are mostly pursued in universities. The second plan is technology development programs that are pursued in companies that work in the field of artificial intelligence. And the third plan is the creation of a national technology hub in the field of artificial intelligence."

Iran to become a leading country in AI

In January 2022, Shahram Moein, head of the innovation and development center of artificial intelligence at the Research Institute of Information and Communication Technology, said, "Iran will be placed among the top 10 countries in artificial intelligence (AI) by 2032 based on the national document on artificial intelligence strategy."

The study of the national artificial intelligence development roadmap started two years ago at the Research Institute of Information and Communication Technology and was officially completed by the end of November 2021.

"To draft this document, strategic documents of 23 countries in the field of artificial intelligence were evaluated so that areas such as environment, health, transportation, online education, energy, robotics, industry, agriculture, and security development are among the priority areas of AI.

Among the goals of this document are 80 percent of research to meet the needs of the country, the use of 45 percent of artificial intelligence in industries, $8 billion investment in artificial intelligence, and a 12 percent share of AI in the GDP," he explained.

AI potential for human development

In July, the UN Secretary-General addressed the Security Council, emphasizing the potential of artificial intelligence to accelerate human development while also cautioning against the malicious use of what is revolutionary new technology.

Antônio Guterres said that if AI became primarily a weapon to launch cyberattacks, generate deepfakes, or spread hate speech, it would have very serious consequences for global peace and security. "Look no further than social media.

Tools and platforms that were designed to enhance human connection are now used to undermine elections, spread conspiracy theories, and incite hatred and violence," he said.

"Malfunctioning AI systems are another huge area of concern. And the interaction between AI and nuclear weapons, biotechnology, neurotechnology, and robotics, is deeply alarming."

Lessening the blow of climate-related loss and damage

By Qu Dongyu, FAO Director General

As the impacts of the climate crisis continue to surpass the limits of adaptation, countries are urgently searching for ways to redress the losses and damages to agriculture. This op-ed discusses ways to limit loss and damage through various means, including increased climate finance and Anticipatory Action.

Growing up on a small rice farm in China in the 1960s, my family was keenly aware that any single adverse weather event could wipe out a year's worth of effort.

The climate and weather patterns are something a farmer feels in his bones, but changes in these patterns and the extremity of events have, in recent years, shocked rural communities.

We never imagined seasons might alter at the pace and scale we see today, bringing losses and damage that undermine years of hard-won rural development.

The changing climate has become a food and agriculture crisis. Small-scale farmers are increasingly at the mercy of climate-induced disasters and extreme events.

Given the total reliance on weather patterns and natural resources for healthy yields and produce, the agrifood sector is on the frontline of the climate crisis.

Climate change is affecting our capacity to produce food, altering the availability, accessibility, and affordability of food, as well as the quality of water, soil, and biodiversity, increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, and shifting the patterns of pests and diseases.

These impacts increase food insecurity, reducing crop yields, livestock productivity, and the potential of fisheries and aquaculture as food producers.

Over the last 30 years, an estimated USD 3.8 trillion worth of crops and livestock production has been lost due to climate and other disaster events, corresponding to an average loss of USD 123 billion per year, or 5 percent of annual global agricultural GDP.

These disaster events have also been increasing, from around one hundred per year in the 1970s to a current average of four hundred per year.

As agriculture, including crops and livestock production, forestry, fisheries, and aquaculture, is one of the main economic activities in developing countries, the implications are profound.

Farmers are resilient and have for centuries adapted to changes in their environments. They are the best investment in building resilience and adapting to climate change. But what they are experiencing today goes beyond their ability to adapt.

Support in dealing with both the economic and non-economic losses and damage caused by extreme and slow onset events is becoming a lifeline for farming communities and countries.

Getting the loss and damage funding up and running and, most important of all, distributing finance for loss and damage will be a litmus test for success at the United Nations COP28 climate summit.

Our latest report on Loss and Damage in Agrifood Systems, which will be launched at COP28, reveals that over a third of countries' climate commitments or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) explicitly refer to loss and damage. For those countries referring to loss and damage, agriculture is overall found to be the single most impacted sector.

FAO is committed to supporting countries to assessing the extent and magnitude of loss and damage caused by the impacts of the climate crisis on the agrifood sectors; mobilizing adequate and predictable financial resources to support the implementation of loss and damage actions in the sector; assessing climate risks; reducing loss and damage in agriculture; and developing new technologies and practices that can reduce the exposure and vulnerability of food producers and consumers to climate risks, such as drought-tolerant crops, water-efficient irrigation systems, early warning systems, crop insurance and social protection schemes.

The climate and food crises are inseparable. Investing in agrifood systems solutions to climate change will bring big rewards for people and for the planet. But not even the most resilient farmers can adapt to all the effects of the climate crisis.

Small-scale farmers and agriculture-dependent developing countries must be at the forefront of our collective efforts to address the consequent loss and damage.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

'Climate change impact on Iran doubles world average'

The effect of climate change on Iran has more than doubled on average compared to other parts of the world, Mohammad Darvish, the secretary of environmental policy at the center for strategic studies affiliated to the presidential office has said.

He made the remarks in line with data released by the Meteorological Organization and the Ministry of Energy.

"The Hoomand-Absard station in Damavand County in northeast of Tehran experienced a temperature increase of 2.7 °C over the past 50 years, while over the past 100 years, the temperature rise was about 0.76 °C," ISNA quoted Darvish as saying.

تغییرات اقلیمی در ایران دو تا سه برابر جهان

دبیر سیاست محیط‌زیست مرکز بررسی‌های استراتژیک نهاد ریاست جمهوری گفته، ایران با تاثیرات تغییر اقلیمی دو تا سه برابر بیشتر از تاثیرات ایجاد شده در کره زمین روبرو شده است.

محمد درویش، در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایسنا با اشاره به گزارش‌های منتشر شده توسط سازمان هواشناسی و وزارت نیرو اظهار کرد: کشورمان با تاثیرات تغییر اقلیمی دو تا سه برابر بیشتر از تاثیرات ایجاد شده در کره زمین روبرو شده است.

او افزود: ایستگاه هومند آبسرد در دامنه‌های کوه دماوند طی نیم قرن اخیر افزایش دمایی حدود ۲.۷ درجه سیلیوس را نشان می‌دهد و این مسئله در حالی رخ داده است که در ۱۰۰ سال گذشته، حدود ۰.۷۶ درجه سلسیوس افزایش دما داشته‌ایم.

Saving the cheetah requires a global effort

From page 1 ▸ The Department of Environment has focused on breeding in captivity, and maintaining the cheetah population in the habitat.

Stating that in the last two years, many good things have been done to revive the cheetah population, Hasan Akbari, deputy head of natural environment and biodiversity of the DOE went on to say that the situation of the cheetah in general is concerning in the country, but it does not mean to give up hope for the increase in Asiatic cheetah population.

Efforts to save Asiatic cheetah

The battle to save Asiatic cheetahs and prevent their extinction, complicated by various natural and human-induced threats, is in full swing in habitats across Iran.

In 2007, Iranian wildlife experts decided to mark August 31 as 'National Cheetah Day' in a bid to encourage and promote the idea of preserving the last remaining population of Asiatic cheetahs on Earth — in Iran.

The Asiatic cheetah is relatively smaller than its African cousin. It has distinctive black tear marks running from its eyes down the side of its nose, fawn-colored fur that is paler on the sides, and small black spots scattered on its body.

Also known as the 'Persian cheetah', the species became extinct in virtually all countries in Asia and only a small population continues to live in Iran. It is categorized as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

They inhabit desert-like mountain areas in central, eastern, and southeastern parts of the country, in wildlife refuges located in the provinces of Semnan, Yazd, Kerman, and north, south, and Razavi Khorasan.

Camera traps installed by environmental bodies in their habitats monitor the endangered species' population to evolve ideal strategies for protecting them.

However, serious threats primarily posed by habitat fragmentations, drought spells, prey loss, persecution by livestock herders and their dogs, road accidents, and illegal poaching are shrinking the vulnerable population of the world's fastest mammals.

Roadkill, a main threat

In July, a two-year-old cheetah was killed on the Abbasabad-Mayami road in the central Iranian province of Semnan. This is where most Asiatic cheetahs have over the years been hit by vehicles and lost their lives.

In March, another cheetah, pregnant with three cubs, was killed in an accident on the same road, which links Tehran to Mashhad.

Since 2010, at least 10 cheetahs have been killed in car collisions on this 'killer' road, an almost 40-kilometer area with the highest rate of animal-vehicle collisions.

Hassan Akbari, deputy head of the natural environment and biodiversity wing at Iran's Department of Environment, after his visit to the area on Wednesday morning, told the Press TV website that some notable progress has been made to reduce wildlife mortality on this road.

Akbari also told the Press TV website that speed enforcement cameras will be installed along the road to monitor drivers' compliance with speed limits in the region.

The official explained that as per a new law adopted by the Iranian parliament, the speed limit on the Abbasabad-Mayami road is 90 kilometers per hour for a one-year test period.

The newly adopted law is waiting for approval by the transport ministry, he said.

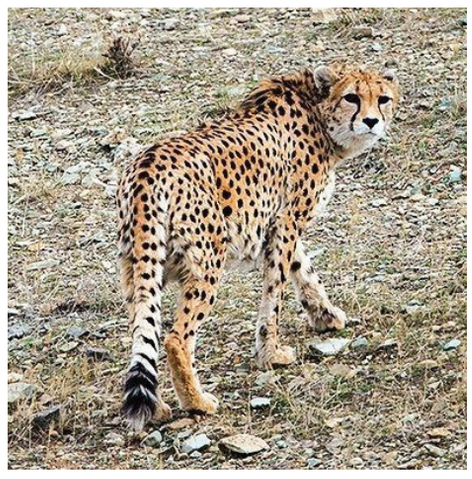
"While the aforesaid measures will to some extent ensure the safety of cheetahs on the road, the measures are yet to be fully implemented and we are still worried about the endangered animals as busy traffic is expected on the road as the end of the summer season is approaching," he stated.

Conservation efforts

Cheetah conservation projects have been underway in Iran since 2001, backed by the United Nations.

In line with plans to revive the declining population of Asiatic cheetahs, experts decided to experiment with captive breeding of the species.

First attempts to fertilize female cheetahs failed for years, but in May 2022, "Iran," a female Asiatic cheetah, with a high chance of pregnancy, who had mated with "Firouz", a male cheetah, gave birth to three cubs.



Two of the cubs died within the first two weeks of their birth but one of them named "Pirouz," which translates into "victorious" in Persian, managed to survive despite heavy odds.

Sadly, in February, Pirouz also died of acute kidney failure.

After the unfortunate death of the cubs, many experts began to question the idea of captive breeding and its implications for the cheetah's viability.

However, Akbari told the Press TV website, the captive breeding project will continue.

"The project will help in setting up an animal gene bank for future use," he said.

According to the Veterinary Information Network, preserving the genetic resources of endangered wild species and the creation of genetic resource facilities and banks will help in conserving the genetic diversity of remnant populations, and the survival of the endangered species.

Recent advances in assisted reproductive technology (ART), cryopreservation of cells and tissues, and emerging molecular cell biology techniques offer means whereby genetic resources represented by these species can be saved for future generations, says the network.

Akbari explained that in case they fail to save the species in their natural habitats their genes will hopefully help them revive the species.

How many cheetahs are left in Iran?

According to Nazanin Hosseini, M.Sc. of environmental science engineering, it is virtually impossible to cite an exact number of remaining cheetahs who are still breeding across millions of hectares of their habitats.

"All numbers announced by officials or other environmental experts are not exact and lack a scientific basis," she said in a conversation with the Press TV website.

"For one, we may have not installed enough camera traps in areas where some cheetahs, especially female ones, live, so they are not included in our estimates," she added.

Hosseini said with the dwindling population of cheetahs in Iran, recognizing threats facing them and coming up with strategies to save them is of great significance.

"Saving cheetahs' natural habitats, preventing habitat fragmentation, an integrated planning for all habitats, and increasing the number of rangers patrolling the habitats could help save the species," she asserted.The Department of Environment has formed four ad hoc committees for the preservation of imperiled animal species.

"Various specialized committees are formed for animal conservation, including aquatic animals, bear, great bustard, and cheetah," Gholamreza Abdali, the Director General of the Bureau of Wildlife Protection and Management of the Department of Environment, said, ISNA reported.

Referring to the development of a conservation action plan for 23 species of wildlife indicators, he added, "In the last few years, protecting animal species in their original habitat has been considered as one of the main tasks of the Department of Environment."

He went on to say, "Herbivores such as native goats (Capra aegagrus), The urial (Ovis orientalis vignei), deer, birds, and some amphibians are among the important species in the census program. These animals' preservation depends on these censuses."

Several meetings and consultations have been held with some other countries to benefit from their scientific and experimental capacities in the preservation of species such as the Asiatic cheetah, the great bustard, the leopard, and houbara bustard.

TEHRAN TIMES

www.tehrantimes.com

Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**

Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
Email: info@tehrantimes.com
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79

No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran **P.o. Box:** 14155-4843 **Zip Code:** 1599814713

DECEMBER 5, 2023

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The elderly are the sources of mercy and divine blessing.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times » Noon:11:55 Evening: 17:11 Dawn: 5:30 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:59 (tomorrow)

Guangzhou hosting 5th World Media Summit

TEHRAN-The 5th World Media Summit (WMS) opened on Sunday in Guangzhou, capital of south China's Guangdong Province.

More than 450 participants from 101 countries and regions, including representatives of 197 mainstream media outlets, think tanks, government agencies, diplomatic missions to China, UN agencies and international organizations attended the 5th WMS.

Mohammad Mehdi Rahmati and Mohammad Sarfi, the Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of the Tehran Times respectively, are also attending the event.

Co-hosted by Xinhua News Agency and the provincial governments of Guangdong and Yunnan, the summit, themed "Boosting Global Confidence, Promoting Media Development," will continue until December 8 in the cities of Guangzhou and Kunming.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Hu Heping, executive deputy head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, called on media outlets to stay unbiased, promote mutual learning between civilizations, and deepen pragmatic cooperation to contribute their wisdom and strength to building a community with a shared future for humanity and building a better world.

Fu Hua, executive chairman of the WMS and president of Xinhua News Agency, called on media outlets to build consensus and boost confidence in development, uphold objectivity and truth to enhance media's credibility, and deepen exchanges and collaboration to contribute to building an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity.

UN Undersecretary-General Melissa Fleming and other guests also delivered speeches to the ceremony. They agreed that as humanity is facing a lot of global challenges, only by deepening communication and strengthening cooperation can we boost confidence and build a shared future.

A document titled "Joint Statement for the 5th World Media Summit" was released at the opening ceremony. During the summit, attendees will hold discussions on human development and security, new technological opportunities and challenges, media and market in the new era and other topics. They will also visit a number of places in the provinces of Guangdong and Yunnan and hold exchanges.

Comedy "Liar Wanted" at Arghavan Theater

TEHRAN-The play "Liar Wanted" written by the Greek satirist and playwright Dimitris Psathas (1907-1979) and directed by Ramin Dowlatabadi is on stage at Arghavan Theater in Tehran.

The political satire is about Theofilos Ferekis, the new minister of Health and Welfare, who has to own up to all his promises made during his pre-election. He decides to hire the professional liar Theodoros Parlas known as "Lying Theo" to become his right-hand man.

One lie leads to another and several more as they find themselves unravelling in hilarious situations.

Written more than 50 years ago, it is a comedy that pokes fun at Greek political life. Several films and theatrical adaptations have been made based on this timeless and universal story of politics, lies and corruption.

Jalal Ahmadpour, Arash Nayebi, Negar Azizi, Saman Tandis, Niloufar Mashhadi, Mohammad-Ali Zouqi, Kimia Akbari, Kamand Ilanlou, Saeed Nikoukar, Maedeh Adami-Mokarami, and Ali Khakbaz perform in the play.

"Liar Wanted" will run through December 20 at the Arghavan Theater located at Ziba Dead-end, Neauphle-le-Château St., Hafez Ave.

Cartoon of Day

Resuming fighting in Gaza
Cartoonist: Ahmed Rahma from Turkey

Iranian actors honored at Tunisian festival

Elham Hamidi and Amin Zendegani receiveing accolades in Tunisia on December 2, 2023.

TEHRAN-Iranian actors Elham Hamidi and Amin Zendegani were honored at the opening ceremony of Carthage Theatre Days Festival in Tunisia on December 2.

They received accolades for their performances in Iranian religious TV and cinema productions made about the life of prophets, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Actress Elham Hamidi was honored for playing the role of Asenath, Prophet Joseph's wife, in the TV series "Prophet Joseph". And actor Amin Zendegani received the accolade for his role as Prophet Solomon in the feature film "The Kingdom of Solomon".

Based on the Islamic account of Prophet Joseph from Quran and Islamic traditions, "Prophet Joseph" is written, directed, and produced by Farajollah Salahshoor. It was originally broadcast in 2008.

Directed by Shahriar Bahrani, "The Kingdom of Solomon" tells the life story of Prophet Solomon, the King of Israelites. A 2010 production, it is mostly based on the Islamic accounts of Solomon's prophetic life extracted from the Quran but it also draws upon parallels found in some Jewish texts.

Hamidi, 46, has appeared in more than 30 TV series and films since two decades ago. Zendegani, 51, has played in over 40 series and movies in about 30 years.

At this year's edition of Carthage Theatre Days Festival, a total of 110 groups from 38 countries attend, including Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, Russia Australia, the United States, South Africa, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria.

The play "Horse of Murders" directed by Mohammad Hadi Hashemzadeh represents Iran at the event. It has earlier won the first directorial work and the best pay at the 41st Fajr Theater Festival.

Pahlevani and zourkhaneh rituals is another program performed by an Iranian group at the event. is a traditional system of athletics and a form of martial arts originally used to train warriors in Iran (Persia). It combines martial arts, calisthenics, strength training and music. It contains elements of pre-Islamic and post-Islamic culture of Iran.

A workshop titled "Theater and People" with the presence of the veteran theater director Ghotbeddin Sadeghi will also be held at the festival.

Holding a Ph.D. in dramatic arts from Sorbonne University, Sadeghi, 71, is also a playwright, stage and film actor, and arts instructor. He is also known as a prominent scholar of Iranian arts and culture. He established Honar Theater Group in early 80's which is referred to as one of the most serious and artistic theater groups in Iran.

Taking place every two years, the Carthage Theater Days is a theatre festival hosted by the government of Tunisia that was started in 1983.

Carthage Theatre Days Festival is known as one of the most important film festivals in North Africa and the Arab world. This year's edition of the festival will run through December 10.

Over 100 Gaza cultural heritage sites damaged or destroyed by Israeli attacks

In the weeks since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip have killed more than 15,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry, and destroyed thousands of homes in the territory.

And there have also been tremendous losses to the region's ancient and globally significant cultural heritage. The region was a hub for commerce and culture under Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine rule. It remained influential for centuries thereafter, NPR reported.

A recent survey by the group Heritage for Peace details the damage done so far to more than 100 of these landmarks in Gaza since the start of the present conflict.

The casualties include the Great Omari Mosque, one of the most important and ancient mosques in historical Palestine; the Church of Saint Porphyrius, thought to be the third oldest church in the entire world; a 2,000-year-old Roman cemetery in northern Gaza excavated only last year; and the Rafah Museum, a space in southern Gaza which was dedicated to teaching about the territory's long and multi-layered heritage — until it was hammered by airstrikes early on in the conflict.

"There were priceless items from coins, precious stones, copper plates, clothes," said Rafah Museum director Suhaila Shaheen, speaking in Arabic in a video interview posted on the museum's Facebook page amid the rubble of the destroyed space. Shards of white plaster littered the floor. The wall behind her had completely collapsed. "The Museum of Rafah is in God's care now."

In the Heritage for Peace report's introduction, the Catalonia-based nonprofit describes itself as maintaining "a neutral stance, with our programs focused on empowering heritage specialists to

Palestinians search the destroyed annex of the Church of Saint Porphyrius, damaged in a strike on Gaza City on October 20, 2023.

confront unique challenges, such as safeguarding artifacts, sites, museums, and libraries during times of armed conflict." It added the survey was generated in response "to the requests and desires of numerous concerned individuals, researchers, and local residents to shed light on the status of cultural heritage."

"If this heritage be no more in Gaza, it will be a big loss of the identity of the people in Gaza," said Isber Sabrine, president of Heritage for Peace, in an interview with NPR.

Sabrine said his organization plans to continue the work of surveying and monitoring the status of cultural landmarks in Gaza over the coming months, both on the ground in collaboration with locals, as well as using satellite imagery.

"The people in Gaza have the right to keep and to save this heritage to tell the history and the importance of this land," he said.

The 1954 Hague Convention, agreed to by Palestinians and Israelis, is supposed to safeguard landmarks from the ravages of war. But landmarks in Gaza have been destroyed by Israeli strikes in earlier rounds of fighting. Dozens of sites, including the now-obliterated Great Omari Mosque, suffered damage in 2014. A report by UNESCO, the United Nations body that designates and protects World Heritage sites, cites further destruction to cultural and historic sites in Gaza in 2021.

"UNESCO is deeply concerned about the adverse impact of the ongoing fighting on cultural heritage in Palestine and Israel," said a UNESCO spokesperson in a statement sent to NPR. "Our organization calls on all parties involved to strictly adhere to international law. Cultural property should not be targeted or used for military purposes, as it is considered to be civilian infrastructure."

UNESCO has as yet been unable to survey the extent of the damage to the area's cultural heritage. "Due to the ongoing fighting and the impossibility of accessing the area, UNESCO is not in a position to assess the damage itself on site," the agency's statement said. "At this stage, our experts can only monitor the situation remotely, using satellite data and information transmitted to us by third parties. This information must then be scrupulously verified."

Locals are only now starting to take stock of the damage caused by the present fighting. "When we move around Gaza, we feel very angry and very sad as well," said Gaza City Mayor Yahya al-Sarraj in a video report by Al Jazeera. "We can discover now how much damage has been inflicted on the infrastructure of the city, on the cultural centers, on the main libraries of the city, and on the public."

Africa's greatest living filmmaker Souleymane Cissé will hold session at Cinéma Vérité

TEHRAN- Malian filmmaker Souleymane Cissé, who is regarded as one of the first generation of African filmmakers, will participate in the 17th edition of Iran International Documentary Film Festival Cinéma Vérité, which will be held in Tehran from December 18 to 23.

Cissé is set to hold a session at the event, where he will speak about the African film industry, ISNA reported on Monday.

The 83-year-old director has been called Africa's greatest living filmmaker while his film "Yeelen" (AKA Brightness) (1987) has been called conceivably the greatest African film ever made,

Born in Bamako and raised in a Muslim family, Cissé was a passionate cinephile from childhood. His film career began as an assistant projectionist for a documentary on the arrest of Patrice Lumumba. This triggered his desire to create films of his own, and he obtained a scholarship at the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography, the Moscow school of Cinema and Television.

In 1970 he returned to Mali, and joined the Ministry of Information as a cameraman, where he produced documentaries and short films. Two years later, he produced his first medium-length film, "Five Days in a Life".

In 1974, Cissé produced his first full-length film "The Young Girl". His second movie "Work" was released four years later and won the Yenenga's Talon prize at Fespaco in 1979.

In 1982, Cissé produced "The Wind", which tells the story of dissatisfied Malian youth rising up against the establishment. This earned him his second Yenenga's Talon, at 1983's Fespaco.

Between 1984 and 1987, he produced "Yeelen," a coming-of-age film that won the Jury Prize at the 1987 Cannes Film Festival, becoming the first African film to win a prize in the festival's history. Often cited as his greatest work, Cissé stated in an interview for Cahiers du Cinéma that it was "in part made in opposition to European ethnographic films" and that he "wanted to make a response to an external perception, a perception by white technicians and academics, an alien perception."

In 1995, he produced "Time," which also competed for the Palme d'Or at the 1995 Cannes Film Festival.

Being the president of UCECAO, the Union of Creators and Entrepreneurs of Cinema and Audiovisual Arts of Western Africa, Cissé is one of the most recognized African filmmakers of the 20th century, and his work exemplifies the development of social realism in African cinema, including its eventual movement towards the recovery of tradition.

Cissé has also been called "a master of complex storytelling, preserving the mysterious in the mundane." His films have been known for their uncompromising depictions of military violence, abuse of money and power, trade unionism, and the enduring stranglehold of patriarchal traditions over Bamako's women and youth.

The 17th Cinéma Vérité will be organized by the Documentary & Experimental Film Center (DEFC). It aims to represent the history and culture of Iranian Islamic society and present a real picture of what human is facing today in his/her individual and social life through documentary films.

With this objective, the special focus of this edition of the festival is on two national and international challenges: the water crisis and population issues.

A total of 2,454 documentaries from around the world have been submitted to the event including 615 works are from Iran and 1,839 foreign documentaries from Turkey, China, the U.K., Russia, Poland, Spain, Egypt, Argentina, Indonesia, and Germany among others.