

TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 100,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 45th year | No. 14696 | Wednesday | January 24, 2024 | Bahman 4, 1402 | Rajab 12, 1445



Ayatollah Khamenei to heads of Islamic countries: 'Agree on Something You Can Do: Cutting Off the Zionist Regime's Lifeline'

Iran calls Israel 'helpless' in war, attacking Syria, Lebanon to offset 'disgraceful' loss to Gaza

TEHRAN- Israel's latest strikes on Syria and Lebanon, according to Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, are an attempt to deflect attention away from the regime's "disgraceful defeat" in the Gaza conflict.

Amir Abdollahian criticized the unlawful Israeli bombings, which have intensified over the past several months, as a "vicious attempt" by the occupying entity to promote regional instability during a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in New York on Monday.

The senior Iranian diplomat emphasized the oppressed people of Gaza's perseverance over the course of more than 100 days, as well as Israel's inability to fulfill its proclaimed aims during the murderous assault on the besieged Palestinian territories.

"The Zionist regime's recent acts of aggression against Syria and Lebanon are an attempt to divert the attention of the international community from the regime's disgraceful defeat as well as its frustration and helplessness in the battlefield. They are also viciously attempt to spread instability and insecurity in the region," he added. ▶ Page 2

Iran's exports to China rise 30% in December 2023

TEHRAN - The value of Iran's exports to China increased by 30 percent in December 2023 as compared to the same month in 2022, according to China's Customs data.

Iran exported \$404 million worth of products to China in December 2023, while the figure was only \$311 million in December 2022, Tasnim News Agency reported.

As reported, the trade between Iran and China reached \$14.65 billion in 2023, registering a 6.2-percent decline, year on year.

According to China's Customs data, the value of annual trade between the two countries had risen seven percent to \$15.5 billion in 2022.

Based on the released data, China's export to Iran increased 8.6 percent to \$10.07 billion in 2023 from \$9.27 billion in 2022.

The country's import from Iran fell 27 percent to \$4.58 billion in 2023 from \$6.23 in 2022.

The two countries' trade balance was about \$5.5 billion in favor of China in the past year.

In late December, 2023, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced that the country exported commodities valued at \$10.3 billion to China during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2023).

According to Mohammad Rezvani-Far, China was the top export destination of Iranian goods in the mentioned nine-month period. ▶ Page 4

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Only criminally insane minds can cause so much panic in Gaza

By Soheyla Zarfam

TEHRAN- Israeli rulers, even those considered rather moderate, have been seeking a plan to depopulate Palestinians from their motherland. Probably the October 7 attack by Hamas on southern Israel provided the ill-wishers in Israel with an excuse to go ahead with the plan more speedily and more cruelly.

Punishing an entire 2.3 million people in the Gaza Strip for the October 7 attack has no justification. Only mad persons and those who formulate vicious plots in their minds can cause so much tragedy for hundreds of thousands of people.

Words fail to describe the sufferings of the Palestinians in Gaza. It is even difficult to imagine the tragedies that the Gazans have suffered since October 7.

Imagine more than two million people who are being ruthlessly attacked from the air, land and sea; denied water and food; seeing dear ones caught under demolished buildings; not being given the time to grieve the family members killed in incessant bombardments; being denied to sleep; forced to leave their cities or camps and take shelter in schools, mosques, churches, UN headquarters, or hospitals and even dropping bombs on them while taking refuge there. ▶ Page 5

Israel says 24 soldiers killed in Gaza in deadliest day since war began

Israeli forces suffered their most deadly day since the start of the ground offensive against Hamas in Gaza, with 24 Israeli soldiers killed, most of them in a single incident.

Reservist units were clearing houses in central Gaza on Monday when two buildings exploded and collapsed, killing 21 soldiers, according to the Israel Defense Forces. Three additional officers were reported killed during fierce fighting in the southern city of Khan Younis, bringing the IDF death toll during the ground operation to 219.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the death toll made it "one of the most difficult days since the outbreak of the war". He also said that "in the name of our heroes, for the sake of our lives, we will not stop fighting until absolute victory."

The premier has come under mounting pressure over his handling of the war, including from inside his own war cabinet and from the families of the remaining hostages seized during the surprise Hamas attack on Israel on October 7.

Israeli forces had laid mines inside the buildings in central Gaza, about 600 meters from the border with Israel, ahead of a planned demolition. The mines are thought to have been set off by a rocket-propelled grenade fired at a nearby tank, although the cause of the explosion was still being investigated, said Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, the chief IDF spokesperson, on Tuesday.

Are US-UK attacks on Yemen effective?

By Ali Karbalaei

TEHRAN- The United States and Britain have staged another joint bombing campaign on Ansarullah targets in Yemen in response to the movement's embargo against Israeli and Israeli-affiliated ships sailing the Red Sea.

It is the second major wave of airstrikes carried out by American and British forces on Ansarullah sites in Yemen in under a fortnight, raising questions about their deterrence power as the Israeli regime's economy suffers.

Although the strikes are the second time British forces have joined in, for U.S. forces, it is the eighth wave of attacks in response to Ansarullah's military operations against Israeli shipping in a crucial commercial maritime route.

About 12 days ago, American and British warships and fighter jets struck more than 60 targets in 28 locations in Yemen.

The Americans and the British had hoped the initial attacks would be enough to stop further naval military operations by Ansarullah against Israeli-linked shipping in the Red Sea. ▶ Page 5

Why was Mohammad Ghobadloo put to death?

TEHRAN - A 23-year-old man was hanged on Tuesday after being found guilty of killing one police officer and injuring five others during the unrest that shook Iran in September 2022.

Iran's judiciary announced on Tuesday, "The death sentence of Mohammad Ghobadloo was carried out this morning following 487 days of legal proceedings."

Family members of Ghobadloo contended that he should not face the death penalty as he had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and had not been adhering to his medication in the months leading up to the incident. However, the court was unable to find any medical records for the prisoner or confirm any mental illness upon further examination. "After deliberately running over multiple police officers with a pick-up truck, Ghobadloo fled the scene, demonstrating an awareness of the gravity of his actions and a lack of mental dysfunction," stated the court's psychiatrist, highlighting that the individual had no history of hospitalization despite his claims. ▶ Page 2



Iran storm to 2023 AFC Asian Cup knockout stage with perfect record

TEHRAN - Iran national football team defeated the UAE 2-1 and advanced to the 2023 AFC Asian Cup knockout stage as Group C winners. Team Melli had previously defeated Palestine 4-1 and Hong Kong 1-0 in the group.

In the match held at the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan, Qatar, Mehdi Taremi scored twice in each half.

The Porto striker opened the scoring for Iran in the 25th minute, moving behind the Emirati defense to take advantage of an intelligent Sardar Azmoun pass before coolly slotting home.

Iran's star duo Azmoun and Taremi combined again to make it 2-0 in the 65th minute when the AS Roma forward cut inside and fed his teammate with a well-weighted pass and Taremi emphatically converted into the roof of the net to double Team Melli's advantage. The UAE could reduce the deficit in the 64th minute but Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand saved Yahya Al Ghassani's penalty kick.

Al Ghassani pulled a goal back in the added time. Iran will meet Syria on Jan. 31, while the UAE face Tajikistan three days earlier.

FITUR highlights: Iran's pavilion set to wow spectators with traditional performances

TEHRAN - Visitors to Iran's pavilion at the International Tourism Fair FITUR in Spain will be treated to a captivating display of traditional performances this year.

A special artistic group, alongside representatives and industry stakeholders, will bring the richness of Iranian culture to life at the prestigious fair which takes place in Madrid from January 24 to 28.

Dressed in stunning traditional attire representing various regions of the country, the group will showcase the traditions and ceremonial rituals of different Iranian backgrounds, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

In addition to the live performances, the pavilion will feature special video programs, live Iranian music, and workshops on handicrafts, calligraphy, and other traditional Iranian arts. ▶ Page 6

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American support of the assassination of Iranian advisors

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

In a conversation with Seyed Reza Sadr al-Hosseini, an expert on regional issues, the Iran newspaper discussed the Gaza war and America's support for the Zionist regime and wrote: The West Asia region is very important for Americans. They had already announced that they would not leave this area completely. This decision of the Americans is not unrelated to the predicament that Israel got involved in. There is no limit to the military and intelligence cooperation between the two sides, and in fact, based on the level of support it receives from the United States, Israel has also put the assassination of Iranian advisors in Syria on its agenda. While the Americans intend to reduce the strength of the resistance groups against Israel, they also want to reflect the message that instead of staying in West Asia and different countries including Iraq and Syria, they will cause serious damage to the people who are effective in expelling their forces in the fields of defense and security.

Vatan-e-Emrooz: A thoughtful response to Israel's struggling

In a commentary, Vatan-e-Emrooz addressed the deplorable situation of the Zionist regime in its long battle with resistance groups and said: Netanyahu's government is under severe political pressure from inside the occupied territories due to heavy defeats in this battle and the failure to achieve its goals. Due to the proximity of the presidential elections in the U.S., Biden is not willing to directly enter the conflict. Perhaps, from this point of view, it is possible to analyze Israel's purpose in assassinating Iranian commanders in such a way that Israel has used all its efforts to drag Iran to a direct conflict. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has responded to these actions of the Zionists in some cases, it has avoided entering the playground designed by this regime. This approach is completely rational and forward-looking. In any case, in the hybrid war started against Iran and the resistance front these days, paying attention to public opinion, maintaining the country's prestige, and above all, maintaining deterrence power should not be neglected.

Ettelaat: Iran will not be indifferent to national security

In an article, Ettelaat dealt with Iran's missile attack on the Mossad headquarters in Erbil and quoted Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani as saying: Unfortunately, for many years, there have been direct threats to the national security and security of Iranian

citizens from this region. Iran cannot be indifferent to threats to its national security and citizens. National security, border security, and the security of Iranian citizens are a red line, and the government and the armed forces of Iran will not be indifferent to providing security and defending the security of their citizens, as they have always done. Iran's action against the headquarters of the Mossad terrorist organization affiliated with the Zionist regime was an action in line with punishing the aggressors and those who take action against Iran's security and was not an action against Iraq, the Iraqi government, and the Kurdistan Region, or an attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of this country. Israel should know that threats and rhetoric will be absurd from Iran's point of view and Iran will not leave any anti-Iranian action of the Zionist regime unanswered. Also, these statements should receive the attention of the international community and the Security Council, and they should react to any statements and actions against peace and regional and international security of this regime and take the necessary legal action.

Shargh: Diplomacy is the best way

In an analysis, Shargh discussed the mutual attacks of Iran and Pakistan. It wrote: After these attacks, we witnessed an unprecedented speed in the "de-escalation" of tensions between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan as well as an unprecedented speed of escalation of tensions between the two countries. According to Dawood Moeini, a senior analyst of subcontinental issues, two countries- Iran and Pakistan- are struggling with the issue of insecurity and terrorism, especially after the Taliban regained power. Considering these commonalities, these mutual attacks indicate that the situation was drawn towards unprecedented tension, but the political, economic, livelihood, and security commonalities of the two countries put Tehran and Islamabad on the de-escalation route in less than 72 hours. Although Tehran and Islamabad are now on the path of de-escalation and normalization of relations, there are still problems and challenges arising from the issue of facing terrorism and insecurity in the common borders, which can provide the platform and space for the repetition of tension. Therefore, from now on, in the shadow of diplomacy, a new chapter of coordination and bilateral security cooperation between Tehran and Islamabad will be formed to control and fight terrorism.

Iranians 'patient, pragmatic' to follow initiatives: ex-Israeli official

TEHRAN- According to a former chief of Israel's military intelligence, Iran is "pragmatic" and has "patience" in spades to carry out its objectives in the West Asia region, including the annihilation of Israel.

In an interview with Israeli media, Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash stated that the Israeli regime lacks a "strategic policy" to deal with Iran and thwart the Islamic Republic's future objectives, including its nuclear program.

Conversely, Iran has a distinct "prospect" and feels that "Israel must be wiped off" the face of the region, according to the former Israeli official.

He emphasized, using a geographical reference to the region between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, that the Islamic Republic "knows that it is not a matter of one or two days, or one year or two, which makes a tremendous difference as opposed to some who believe in Israel from the river to the sea."

He went on to add, "Iran believes in a West Asia region where Shia Muslims are dominant and Israel has vanished. Iran knows that this issue requires what is called patience. Ample patience and perseverance are what Iranians have more than us."

Ze'evi-Farkash also complimented Iran's pragmatic and innovative approach to future planning.

"I reckon that they are pragmatic, they plan for the long time and know when to pursue their interests," he noted, adding, "They say if it does not happen in my tenure, it will happen in another."

Ze'evi-Farkash stressed, "I have no doubt that Iranians act practically. They train, educate and work so that such things will happen and Israel is gradually enfeebled."

Since its violent colonization of the Palestinian territories more than seven decades ago, the Israeli regime has been the primary source for issues throughout the West Asian region.

With support from the West, Israel has been trying to establish its illegal existence by carrying out orders from Washington and committing multiple acts of terror against the countries in the region.

Analysts and experts within the regime argue that these efforts have been ineffective and have only made the occupying regime closer to its inevitable downfall.

The unlawful regime has descended considerably farther into an unsalvageable maze while being plagued by a number of internal challenges, including those in the political and economic spheres, since the regime initiated a genocide against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip in early October.

Despite killing more than 25,000 people in Gaza, Israel has not met any of its goals there.

Ayatollah Khamenei to heads of Islamic countries:

'Agree on something you can do: Cutting off the Zionist regime's lifeline'

TEHRAN- In a meeting with the organizers of the National Congress for the Commemoration of the 24,000 Martyrs from Tehran, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, criticized the officials of Islamic countries for their poor conduct regarding the highly crucial situation in Gaza.

According to khamenei.ir, during the meeting, which took place in the Imam Khomeini Hussainiyah on Tuesdays, the Leader underlined, "Sometimes the positions and statements of the officials of the Islamic countries are wrong because they talk about an issue such as the ceasefire in Gaza, which is beyond their control and is in the hands of the evil Zionist enemy. The officials of Islamic countries should focus on matters that are



within their control."

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed the importance for officials in Islamic countries to sever all ties with the Zionist regime in order to cripple its power.

"That which is in the hands

of the officials of the Islamic countries is to cut off the lifeline of the Zionist regime. Islamic countries should cut off their political and economic relations with the Zionist regime and they should also refrain from

supporting this regime," he said.

He also noted that, "Despite the inadequate conduct of the officials of Islamic countries and despite all the difficulties, as stated in the Quran, 'God is with the righteous people and wherever God is, there is victory.'"

Ayatollah Khamenei further remarked that the victory of the people of Gaza is inevitable, adding that, "the Almighty God will show this victory to the Islamic Ummah in the not-too-distant future, and it will bring joy to the hearts of Muslims, especially the people of Palestine and Gaza."

The complete statements of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution during this meeting will be made available concurrently with the Congress for the Commemoration of the 24,000 martyrs from Tehran.

Iran calls Israel 'helpless' that attacks Syria, Lebanon to offset 'disgraceful' loss to Gaza

From page 1 ▶ The Iranian foreign minister asked Russia to take a more active role in ending the Gaza war, citing Russia's permanent membership in the UNSC.

Along with expressing pleasure with the advancement of ties between Iran and Russia, he also expressed optimism that during Russian President Vladimir Putin's next visit to Tehran, the two nations will sign an agreement for long-term collaboration.

For his part, Lavrov expressed satisfaction with bilateral ties and emphasized the implementation of the agreements already signed.

He also chastised the United States for obstructing a UN Security Council resolution on the Gaza truce and called on Arab countries to work together on the Palestinian issue.

Amir Abdollahian also posted on social media on Tuesday, "The martyrdom of more than 25,000 Palestinians, the wounding of tens of thousands and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as the expansion of regional instability, are the result of the genocide by the Israeli regime and its supporters."

In a separate meeting with Lebanon's Foreign Minister, Abdallah Bou Habib, the Iranian foreign minister lambasted the horrors of the Zionist regime as a blatant example of war crimes, genocide, and crime against humanity.

Additionally, he reaffirmed Iran's support for Lebanon's stability and security, stating that these

factors will impact regional security as a whole.

Amir Abdollahian also conferred with Geir O. Pedersen, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Syria.

In addition to calling for united action in the fight against terrorism, Amir Abdollahian emphasized the necessity of the international community making genuine measures to stop the Israeli regime's violations of Syria's territorial integrity.

For his part, Pedersen praised Iran for its positive contributions to the fight against terrorism and the resolution of the Syrian issues.

He also lamented the negative and damaging consequences on regional peace initiatives induced by the ongoing situation in Gaza and Palestine.

Amir Abdollahian has travelled to New York to attend a UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting on "the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

Upon his arrival in New York, he noted that Tehran has sternly notified the United States that their choice to launch joint strikes on targets in Yemen with the United Kingdom is "a strategic mistake."

"We sent out a strongly-worded message and stern warning to Americans. The decision by the United States and the United Kingdom to jointly attack areas in Yemen poses threats to regional peace and security, and expands the scope of Gaza war," he added.

The foreign minister of Iran pointed out

that satellite photos indicate that over 230 oil tankers and trade ships were cruising in the Red Sea when the United States and the United Kingdom launched their operations against Yemen.

He continued, "This means that Americans and Britons have well understood Yemen's point that only ships heading towards ports operated by the occupying Israeli regime will be blocked."

In a letter to the United Nations Security Council on Monday, Amir Abdollahian warned that the Zionist regime of Israel "must face the consequences" of assassinating the Iranian military advisors in Syria.

"This regime must be forced to set aside its destabilizing behavior," Amir Abdollahian insisted. In a part of his letter, Abdollahian said the Israeli regime's "illegal resort to force and military provocations will seriously jeopardize peace and security in the region and the world."

He added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran unequivocally and strongly condemns this heinous and cowardly terrorist act which is done with the purpose of deflecting attention from the crimes of the Zionist regime against the people of Gaza, especially in Gaza."

The minister said Iran is legally entitled to respond to these crimes.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, based on international law and the UN Charter, keeps the right to give decisive and proper response to these actions in proper time and place."

Why was Mohammad Ghobadloo put to death?



From page 1 ▶ During one of his hearings, Ghobadloo confessed to seeking out a group of police officers in the city of Parand, just outside Tehran, prior to carrying out his plan. "I intended to eliminate them all. There were approximately 20 police officers on bikes," he admitted.

In September 2022, a 22-year-old Iranian woman, Mahsa Amini,

passed away in a Tehran hospital three days after collapsing at a police station. An investigation attributed her death to a pre-existing medical condition, refuting allegations of abuse by police forces. In a video released several weeks after her death, Amini's father can be seen above her hospital bed, confirming to a judiciary official that he sees no injuries on his daughter's body. Also, in recordings subsequently released by intelligence forces, Amini's brother can be heard telling his mother on the phone that his sister had fainted "again". It was also revealed that Amini had received brain surgery when she was younger.

Following her passing, protests erupted in parts of Tehran, which, with the direct involvement of

Western states and Israel, quickly devolved into violent riots and spread to other parts of the country. The unrest resulted in the tragic loss of at least 200 lives, including 75 police officers.

Social media emerged as a critical factor in exacerbating violence that year. Some Western-based Iranian medical professionals, who initially accused the government of perpetuating harm to Amini based on medical scans, later admitted after the riots subsided that they had not observed any indications of injury in the scans. However, they chose to conceal the truth to avoid "disrupting the protests."

Some rioters who ended up in custody admitted that they had been heavily influenced by celebrities-turned-Mossad

agents to harm civilian infrastructure and security forces. "When you go out and kill police officers don't forget to take their weapons. They will be used in the future," an underground rapper linked to the notorious Mojahedin-e-Khalq terror organization wrote on X amidst the unrest.

Meanwhile, Western states embarked on an extensive propaganda campaign against the Iranian government, accusing it of infringing on the rights of its citizens. Notably, approximately a year later, these same Western powers declined to condemn Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, instead persisting in levying unsubstantiated allegations against Iran.

Raisi to arrive in Turkey on Wednesday

TEHRAN- On Wednesday, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will pay an official visit to Turkey to talk about measures to strengthen ties.

Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Raisi will leave Tehran for Ankara on Wednesday at the invitation of his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Turkish president will publicly greet his Iranian counterpart, and the two leaders

will meet privately.

Raisi and Erdogan will co-chair the 8th meeting of the Iran-Turkey High-Level Cooperation Council and hold a joint news conference.

Additionally, the two presidents intend to take part in a joint gathering of entrepreneurs and traders from their respective nations. Raisi is scheduled to speak with Iranian nationals who live in Turkey as well.

Following a terrorist incident in

the southeast city of Kerman on January 3 that claimed the lives of 94 people and injured 211 more, the president of Iran called off his scheduled trip to Turkey.

Erdogan originally said in November that "President Raisi is coming to us on the 28th of the month" to focus on developing a coordinated response to Israel's assault of Gaza, but the visit did not take place owing to conflicting schedules of their foreign ministries.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan stated over the phone with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Thursday that his nation is prepared to welcome President Raisi soon, despite the trip being postponed twice due to various circumstances.

Iran and Turkey both vigorously denounce the ongoing Israeli slaughter against the Palestinian people and cast aside the U.S. illegitimate involvement in Syria.

Yemen's actions in Red Sea are independent: IRGC

TEHRAN – The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Navy has affirmed the independent actions of Yemeni armed forces in their military operations in the Red Sea.

Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri highlighted that the Yemeni Resistance group's attacks on ships with Israeli connections are in solidarity with the Muslim population in Gaza who are enduring daily trauma due to the atrocities done by the Zionist regime.

He, in an interview on Monday, expressed how the Yemenis showcased their intolerance for witnessing the martyrdom of Muslim families in Gaza. Speaking to Al Alam news channel, Tangsiri emphasized Yemen's status as an



independent nation with a strong army and leadership unaffected by external influences.

"The attacks on Israeli-linked ships by Yemenis came in response to the Israeli regime's aggressive military campaign on Gaza in

early October. These attacks subsequently expanded to include ships owned by the U.S. and Britain following their military actions on Yemeni soil, ostensibly aimed at securing shipping routes in the Red Sea and surrounding waters," the

IRGC commander added.

Addressing the Gaza conflict, Tangsiri denounced the unjust war against the people in Gaza and condemned the brutal child killing that is carried out by the Zionist regime. The IRGC commander underscored Yemen's maritime operations as a show of solidarity with Muslims, urging a re-evaluation of views on the Gaza situation and reiterating Yemen's independence.

Concerning the security issues in the Persian Gulf, Tangsiri emphasized the meaninglessness and security risks of foreign military presence in the region. He underscored Iran's extensive coastline, safeguarding entrance and exit routes through the Persian Gulf.

Army incorporates new home-grown drones

TEHRAN – In a momentous development, new home-grown drones, meticulously crafted through collaboration between the Iranian Ministry of Defense and the Iranian Army, have been officially incorporated into the Armed units at multiple sites across the nation.

In a ceremony on Tuesday, attended by the Iranian defense minister and the Chief commander of the Iranian Army, a diverse array of strategic combat, reconnaissance, and radar drones were officially integrated into the country's Armed Forces.

These drones include Ababil-4, Ababil-5, designed for a spectrum of missions such as reconnaissance, surveillance, electronic warfare, signal gathering, and combat. Additionally, the integration encompasses Arash and Bavar drones, equipped with capabilities for destructive, long-range, and point-strike missions, along with Jet Karrar drones tailored for target, combat, and aerial tracking missions.

Speaking at the ceremony, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza

Ashtiani addressed the significance of fortifying the national defense. He underscored that the integration of these drones will substantially augment the combat prowess of the Islamic Republic of Iran's army.

Brigadier General Ashtiani reassured the public, emphasizing the defense ministry's unwavering commitment to bolstering deterrence power and enhancing the combat capability of the Armed Forces, thereby instilling a sense of hopelessness in potential adversaries.

During the ceremony, Chief Commander of the Iranian Army Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi also delivered a speech. He highlighted the distinctive combat power introduced to the Armed Forces through the presence of home-grown drones. He accentuated the reliance on internal capabilities and the expertise of the country's young scientists in the design and deployment of these drones.

Acknowledging the undeniable efficacy of drones across various domains, including identification, combat, destruction, electronic

warfare, and radar surveillance in land, air, and sea environments, the Chief Commander emphasized the global significance of drones in augmenting combat power.

Major General Mousavi noted the substantial progress in drone development and deployment in recent years, with hundreds of diverse drones contributing to the capabilities of the Iranian army.

In conclusion, the Chief Commander expressed unwavering confidence that the assimilation of numerous strategic combat, reconnaissance, and radar drones will significantly elevate the combat capabilities of ground forces, air defense, air force, and navy, empowering them to execute their missions with unparalleled success.

Iranian authorities have consistently stated their commitment to enhancing the country's military capabilities, particularly its missile prowess, with a clear focus on defensive purposes. They have asserted that Iran's defense capabilities are non-negotiable and will not be subject to discussions.

Israel turns to criminal acts out of desperation: government

TEHRAN – Iranian government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi says the assassination of Iranian military advisors in Syria by Israel indicated the regime's desperate acts due to its continued failures.

Speaking at a weekly press conference in Tehran on Tuesday, Bahadori Jahromi conveyed condolences and attributed these events to the ongoing confrontation with Israel that also illustrates an alliance between Daesh and the Zionist regime.

In a statement on Saturday, the IRGC said that five of its members serving on a military advisory mission in Syria were assassinated

in an Israeli airstrike on a residential building in the tightly guarded Mezzeh neighborhood, west of Damascus.

Bahadori Jahromi also denounced the attacks on Yemen by the United States, the Zionist regime, and Britain, expressing an expectation of appropriate responses from Arab and Islamic countries.

In reference to the upcoming visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Turkey, the spokesman noted the preparations for his trip with a high-ranking delegation scheduled for Thursday.

Bahadori Jahromi continued by stating that the trip is taking place

at the invitation of the Turkish counterpart, aiming to provide an opportunity to discuss various documents of cooperation in economic, transportation, trade, media, and transportation sectors.

He emphasized the substantial increase in trade volume between Iran and Turkey, indicating that the trade volume reached \$9.5 billion in the first ten months of this year, marking a 40% increase compared to the same period in the previous year.

Bahadori Jahromi acknowledged the numerous capacities for cooperation between Iran and Turkey, asserting that these



trips will undoubtedly contribute to promoting these capacities. Additionally, he noted that regional issues, particularly the cessation of Zionist regime attacks on Gaza, will be discussed with Turkish party during this trip.

List of Assembly of Experts' candidates to be unveiled on Wednesday

TEHRAN - The Ministry of Interior is set to unveil the list of qualified candidates for the upcoming Assembly of Experts election on Wednesday.

Candidates who face disqualification have a three-day window to submit objections.

As part of the election timeline, the Ministry of Interior or governorates will notify disqualified candidates on Wednesday and Thursday.

The Secretary for Iran's Election Headquarters confirmed that the names of Assembly of Experts candidates will be dispatched by the Constitutional Council tomorrow. Once received,

the candidates will be promptly informed through the governorates.

Those who are disqualified can appeal the decision within a three-day period, starting from January 26 and concluding on January 28. The Constitutional Council's jurists will then reevaluate the qualifications of these candidates within 10 days and communicate the results to the Ministry of Interior. On February 8, the finalized list of approved candidates from each province, along with the names of election candidates, will be made public.

Article 17 of the Expert Elections Law stipulates

that advertisements for the election candidates will be permitted from February 14 to 28. Importantly, advertising is prohibited on February 29 and March 1A crucial phase in this process involves the option for candidates to withdraw, an action accepted until February 27, at least 72 hours before the commencement of voting. This is under Note 5 of Article 5 of the Assembly of Experts Law.

A total of 510 candidates had initially registered for this election, with eligibility criteria including a minimum age of 40 and possessing a fourth seminary degree.

IRGC offers satellite launch services to neighboring nations

TEHRAN- The Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force's Space Division has stated that it is prepared to launch satellites for neighboring countries, provided that the government can facilitate the necessary negotiations.

Speaking on Monday night, General Ali Jafarabadi noted that the IRGC's expertise extends to launching research satellites weighing less than 100 kilograms. He also emphasized the recent successful launch of the Sorayya satellite, marking the first collaboration between the government and the IRGC in the realm of satellite launches. "We are ready to conduct multiple launches for the Iranian government," General Jafarabadi declared, highlighting the successful launch of the Qaem 100 satellite carrier and the Sorayya satellite, which successfully entered orbit.

The Sorayya satellite, launched into a 750-kilometer orbit on Saturday, has since transmitted its first signal to Earth, further

demonstrating the IRGC's capabilities.

Earlier this week, General Jafarabadi announced the development of the next-generation Qaem 105 satellite carrier, signaling the IRGC's continued commitment to advancing Iran's space exploration endeavors. Following the successful launch of the Qaem 100 satellite carrier on Saturday, General Ali Jafarabadi hailed the action, calling it a "brilliant page" in the nation's history.

He noted that its successful deployment, using entirely Iranian solid fuel, marked a new milestone in Iran's space exploration capabilities. Furthermore, he highlighted the satellite's ability to place spacecraft in a 750-kilometer orbit, a feat that further solidified Iran's growing mastery of space technology.

"While the IRGC has previously launched its satellites, including the Noor series, today we have successfully provided a service to the government by launching a satellite on behalf of the state,"

General Jafarabadi remarked, emphasizing that the IRGC's commitment to supporting the government's space endeavors extends beyond this launch and that such collaborations will accelerate Iran's space program.

Discussing the IRGC Aerospace Force's plans in the space domain, General Jafarabadi outlined the next phase of development. "Our immediate goal is to integrate the Qaem-100 carrier into the operational cycle, allowing our scientists and experts to focus on the next step," he stated.

"The next leap forward in our space program involves the Qaem-105 satellite carrier, which boasts more powerful engines and an advanced structural design," he continued. "We intend to conduct test and research launches of the Qaem-105 carrier next year." General Jafarabadi concluded by projecting that within the next three years, Iran will embark on the research phase for launching satellites using the Qaem 120 carrier.

Aziznia becomes first Iranian to conquer Vinson Massif

TEHRAN - Elite Iranian climber Andrew Aziz (Amin Aziznia) has achieved a remarkable feat by becoming the first Iranian man to climb Vinson Massif, the highest peak in Antarctica, which stands at 4,892 meters (16,050 feet).

According to the organizers, this challenging expedition was led by the experienced Nepali climber and expedition leader, Jangbu Sherpa. With the support of Alpine Ascent International, the duo successfully summited Vinson Massif.

This mountain is known for its daunting challenges, including a remote location in Antarctica, high winds, and extreme cold temperatures, reaching as low as -60°C (-76°F).

Andrew Aziz, an Iranian-Canadian high-altitude climber, previously climbed Everest in 2023 with the support of Kaitu Expedition and Lhakpa Nuru Sherpa. A leading figure in the third generation of Iranian elite climbers, Andrew has been focusing on summiting high-altitude mountains outside Iran, particularly in the Himalayas and South America.

Residing in Vancouver, he moved there to pursue a Ph.D. in chemical engineering. Besides his climbing pursuits, he is an investor, trader, author, and the managing director of Peak Capital Trading. He is currently being trained for the 7 summits.

Dedicating this historic summit to all Iranians, Andrew aims to highlight their potential as adventurous explorers beyond the Middle East and Asia and more in areas that are less climbed by Iranians, such as the Andes range in South America and Antarctica. In a social media video, he also expressed admiration for his role model, Azim Gheychisaz, one of Iran's best mountaineers.

Gheychisaz has conquered all 14 peaks above 8,000 meters, many without supplemental oxygen, including Everest. He is a prominent figure among Iranian Himalayan climbers, often referred to as the second generation of adventurers, thehimalayantimes.com reported.

With this ascent of Vinson Massif in Antarctica, Andrew Aziz has now climbed some of the most significant mountains across all seven continents. He plans to complete the Seven Summits challenge by 2024, with climbs scheduled for Elbrus and Denali within the year to become the first Iranian man to complete the Seven Summits challenge.

It's noteworthy that the first Iranian woman to climb Vinson Massif in Antarctica is Sara Safari, an Iranian-American climber who completed the Seven Summits challenge in 2023.

Iran sixth at 2024 Asian Handball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran were edged by South Korea 27-26 at the 2024 Asian Handball Championship on Monday to come in sixth place.

Team Melli defeated New Zealand, China and the UAE in this edition but lost to South Korea (twice), Japan and Qatar.

The 2024 Asian Men's Handball Championship is the 21st edition of the championship started on Jan. 11 in Bahrain, under the aegis of Asian Handball Federation (AHF), and will run until Jan. 25.

It's the third time in history that the championship is organized by the Bahrain Handball Federation.

It also acts as a qualification tournament for the 2025 World Men's Handball Championship, with top four teams from the championship directly qualifying for the event.

Iran beach soccer defeat Belarus

TEHRAN – Iran national beach soccer team defeated Belarus 7-2 in a friendly match on Monday.

Movahed Mohammadpour (two goals), Amir Hossein Akbari, Mohammad Moradi, Ali Mirshekari, Mohammad Ali Mokhtari and Ivan Kanstantsinav (own goals) scored for Team Melli.

The match was held as part of preparation for the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup.

Iran will open the World Cup on February 15,

2024, with a match against Spain in Group B. Tahiti and Argentina are also in the group.

The 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup will be held in Dubai, UAE, from February 15 to 25.

Marcos Paqueta nominated to lead Persepolis

TEHRAN – Brazilian coach Marcos César Dias de Castro, known as Marcos Paquetá, has been nominated to take charge of Persepolis football club.

The 65-year-old coach, who currently leads Algerian team CR Belouizdad, has been also linked with a move to Egyptian giant Zamalek.

Italian coach Gianni De Biasi, Portuguese Jose Vitor dos Santos Peseiro as well as Bosnian-born Swiss professional football coach Vladimir Petkovic had been also shortlisted to lead the Iranian team.

Persepolis have parted company with their head coach Yahya Golmohammadi in early January and are going to hire new trainer as soon as possible.

Persepolis complete signing of Issa Alekasir

TEHRAN – Issa Alekasir became second January signing of Persepolis football club.

Iran Persian Gulf Pro League holders had signed Qatari left-back Abdelkarim Hassan on Monday.

The 33-year-old striker joined Sepahan at the end of the last season but failed to meet expectations in the Isfahan based team.

Alekasir has penned an 18-month deal with Persepolis.

Alekasir joined Persepolis in 2020 and scored eight goals in 37 matches for the Reds.

Saeid Daghighi parts company with Shams Azar: IPL

TEHRAN – Saeid Daghighi stepped down as head coach of Shams Azar football team.

The 37-year-old coach announced he is no longer the Qazvin-based side coach.

Iranian media reports suggest that he will likely take charge of Mes Rafsanjan.

Former Malvan coach Maziar Zare is the main candidate to lead Shams Azar.

Under leadership of Daghighi, Shams Azar secured promotion to the 2023-24 Iran Professional League (IPL).

Shams Azar currently sit ninth in the 16-team IPL table.

Roma close door on Azmoun amidst interest

TEHRAN - Roma don't want to lose Sardar Azmoun and have turned down multiple approaches in recent days, Fabrizio Romano reports.

The 29-year-old Iranian striker joined the Giallorossi from Bayer Leverkusen in the summer on a loan deal with a €12.5m buy option attached. He struggled for regular playing time under Jose Mourinho, seeing just 235 minutes of action across 13 league matches, failing to make a single start.

Azmoun is currently at the Asian Cup and scored in their opening game against Palestine. He's been prolific at international level, scoring 50 goals in 76 games, but hasn't managed to show his best at club level outside of Russia.

As reported by Romano, a handful of clubs came forward for Azmoun in recent days, but Roma rebuffed all their approaches, making it clear that they don't want to lose the Iranian striker this month.

Coach Daniele De Rossi believes the 29-year-old can be an important part of the squad in the second half of this season, especially as Fiorentina eye up a move for Andrea Belotti.

Tanzania inks agreement to pay its debts to Iran

TEHRAN- Based on an agreement signed between Tanzania and Iran, the African country will pay its debts to Iran, an official with Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran announced on Monday.

Ali Fekri, the director-general of the foreign investment-making office of the mentioned organization, said by signing this agreement on the payment of the country's debts, Tanzania pays seven million dollars of its debts to Iran per month, IRIB reported.

After signing the mentioned agreement, Fekri told IRIB that this agreement is about the payment of debts that the government of Tanzania had to the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the past, which is related to several decades, but because the 13th government follows the policy of developing cooperation and investment with different governments, it was decided that the existing obstacles to facilitate relations should be removed, and Tanzania, considering its long-standing relations with Iran, was among the countries that were interested in this policy.

It was decided that the Tanzanian government would pay seven million dollars of its debts in the form of the first installment to start the cooperation, so that the rest of the debts would be paid to Iran every month based on the agreed schedule, the official further announced.

Tanzania is considered one of the most important countries in East Africa and Iran is taking new measures to expand economic ties with this country.

In late November 2022, Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held the first exclusive exhibition of Iranian products and services in Tanzania in collaboration with the Iranian Trade Center in the African country to showcase the Islamic Republic's trade and export capacities.

According to Ra'ed Mousavi, the head of the Iranian Trade Center in Tanzania, this exhibition was the most appropriate platform to increase the knowledge of East African countries, especially Tanzania, about the products, services, and technological

advancements of Iranian companies.

According to Mousavi, companies active in various fields including the agricultural sector, mines and industrial machinery, construction, as well as medicine and medical equipment participate in the first exclusive exhibition of the export capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tanzania.

In mid-July 2023, President Ebrahim Raisi also took a visit to three African countries of Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Economic experts believe that the president's visit to Africa provided the basis for increasing Iran's presence in the 60-billion-dollar economy of the African continent and will increase the level of activity of Iranian traders and businessmen in this continent.

Over the past 40 years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has never given up on its principled policy towards Africa due to political and cultural commonalities, despite the sanctions, pressure and disruptions of the West, and has always maintained itself alongside the people and countries of Africa.

As reported, during the Iranian calendar years 1384 and 1385 (March 2005-March 2007), the relations between Iran and the African continent increased in terms of trade, but since 1386, the economic relations between Iran and Africa have decreased due to the economic crisis and cruel sanctions against Iran.

Surveys show that in the past years, due to the lack of restoration of economic relations with Africa, the amount of trade with the countries of this continent has remained at the level of \$1.2 billion, but according to Mohammed-Sadeq Qanadzadeh, the director general of the Africa Department of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), facilitating the trade route with Africa is happening now and it is expected that the trade figure with this continent will reach \$10 billion in the next three years.

In fact, good steps have been taken to use Africa's capacity, and Africa can be a suitable market for Iranian goods, Qanadzadeh stated.

First exclusive exhibition of Iranian products and services was held in Tanzania in November 2022.

'Expert consensus in solving economic challenges is least expensive path'

TEHRAN- The deputy head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) said the expert consensus in solving economic challenges is the least expensive path.

In a message, while appreciating the participation and trust of the ICCIMA board of representatives, Hossein Pir-Moazen, the elected deputy head of the chamber, wrote: "The least expensive way to get out of the abnormal economic conditions is the consensus of the elite, intelligent and expert."

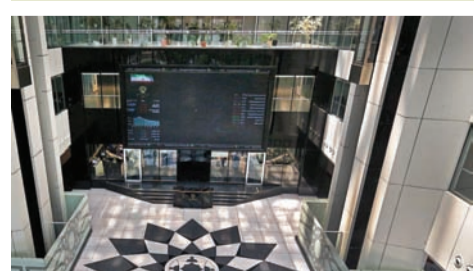
In this message, referring to the

abnormal conditions of the economy and the accumulation of economic challenges, Pir-Moazen wrote: "To get out of these special conditions, the least expensive way is the consensus of elites, wise and experts in solving economic challenges, and the Iran Chamber is considered an important and effective security for this movement."

Pir-Moazen was elected as the ICCIMA deputy head in the extraordinary meeting of the ICCIMA board of representatives held at the place of the chamber on Sunday (January 21).

(IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

Head of Iran's Securitas and Exchange Organization (SEO) Majid Eshqi has said that using the capacities of the country's private sector in the stock market has been one of the main strategies of the organization over the past year: "One of the main approaches of the Securitas and Exchange Organization during the past year has been to use the power of the private sector, because government entities and the public sector do not have the necessary characteristics for economic prosperity, so we must increase the share of the private sector in the capital market," Eshqi said in a conference in Khorasan Razavi Province.



TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 26,527 points (1.24 percent) to 2,120,035 on Tuesday, which is the fourth day of 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

Iran's exports to China rise 30% in December 2023

From page 1 ▶ Also, exporting commodities valued at \$13.7 billion to Iran, China was Iran's second source of imports in the first nine months of the present year, the IRICA head announced.

China is one of Iran's main trade partners that has maintained strong trade ties with the Islamic Republic despite the strict U.S. sanctions.

Iran's Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi said the 25-year strategic partnership plan between Iran and China has entered a new phase with new agreements being reached between various ministries of the two countries.

According to Khandouzi, the mentioned agreements have been reached between the two sides during the visit of Iran's delegation to the 6th China International Import Expo (CIIE).

"Specific projects were defined between the government departments of the respective ministries of Iran and China, and agreements were reached on the details of the implementation of the mentioned projects," Khandouzi said.

Regarding the private sectors of the two countries, some Iranian companies operating in China and some large Chinese companies operating in Iran faced obstacles, which were discussed and resolved by the relevant authorities, he explained.

"We are going to witness a significant growth in economic cooperation and investment between the two sides with the implementation of these projects," the minister noted.

Headed by Iran's First Vice President, Mohammad Mokhber, a senior delegation comprised of Economy Minister Ehsan Khandouzi, Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Abbas Aliabadi, as well as the deputies of various ministries and the economic deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited China in early November, 2023 to attend the 6th CIIE.

Iran and China officially signed the document for 25-year comprehensive cooperation in March 2021.

The document was signed



between Iran's former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Back in December 2022, Iran and China finalized 16 memorandums of understanding (MOU) under the framework of the two countries' strategic 25-year agreement.

The MOUs were signed in an Iran-China comprehensive cooperation program summit which was held in Tehran on December 13 in the presence of Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber and China's Vice Premier Hu Chunhua.

The summit was focused on four areas explored by four committees between the two countries with the aim of paving the way for the implementation of the 25-year agreement.

Iran and China also signed 20 memoranda of understanding in the presence of the presidents of the two countries in Beijing in mid-February, 2023.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi was on a three-day state visit to China starting February 14, 2023.

During President Raisi's visit to China, Tehran and Beijing signed a number of bilateral cooperation documents in the fields of agriculture, trade, tourism, environmental protection, health, disaster relief, culture, and sports.

The documents include agreements in the field of transportation and industry worth \$12 billion and \$3.5 billion, respectively; the agreements cover various joint projects like the high-speed rail link

between Tehran and Mashhad, and investment in the Imam Khomeini Airport City.

Investment in Iran's southeastern Mokrann Coast and the purchase of Iranian oil were also mentioned in the documents.

Raisi's visit served as an example of the high level of mutual trust between China and Iran, as well as a milestone for bilateral ties.

Then in mid-July, 2023, the agreements signed between Iran and China during President Raisi's trip to Beijing in mid-February were turned into specified projects during the two countries' joint cooperation committee meeting, the Iranian finance and economic affairs minister announced.

Ehsan Khandouzi left Tehran for Beijing on July 12, 2023 to attend the Iran-China Joint Cooperation Committee meeting, which was held after four and half years.

"With the constructive atmosphere of the committee, we will soon witness good events in the fields of business and investment", the official wrote on his Twitter account on July 16, 2023.

Khandouzi further announced that Iran and China are going to begin the execution of some joint projects agreed upon in February by the presidents of the two countries, as of the following month.

According to the minister, the necessary follow-ups regarding the mentioned projects have been made over the last five months and the final decisions for the start of their implementations were made

during a joint business event on July 13, 2023.

"President Raisi had an important trip to Beijing last winter and good agreements were made with the president of China; in this regard, the necessary follow-ups were made by various ministries during the last five months, and on Thursday (July 13) the first joint committee between Iran and China was held after 4.5 years," Khandouzi said.

"China is Iran's largest trading partner and the most important destination for the export of Iranian goods and an important part of our imports are also from China. Last year, China's share in Iran's (non-oil) trade was 24 percent," the minister added.

Back in early April, 2023, the Chinese ambassador to Tehran said: "This year is a good year for Iran-China relations."

Chang Hua made the remarks in a meeting with the members of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and a number of Iranian traders and businessmen, who conduct trade with China, held at the place of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in Tehran.

Referring to China's growing economy, the envoy said this year is a good year for Iran-China relations, adding that during the meeting between the leaders of the two countries, important agreements were made, including the implementation of the 25-year cooperation agreement between the two countries, and a number of bilateral cooperation documents were signed in the fields of agriculture, tourism, culture, relief, and rescue, etc.

Majid-Reza Hariri, the head of the Iran-China Joint Chamber, also emphasized the desire of Iran's private sector to develop business relations with China and said there are obstacles in this direction. Among other things, issuing visas for Iranian businessmen, especially for their presence at trade fairs in China, is associated with problems, and facilitating it will definitely help the development of relations between the two sides.

Commodities worth over \$731m traded at IME in a week

TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 3,908,033 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$731 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 3,281,397 tons of commodities valued at nearly \$464 million.

On this floor the IME sold 1,480,000 tons of iron ore, 1,191,076 tons of cement, 429,975 tons of steel, 189,000 tons of sponge iron, 9,730 tons of copper, 7,650 tons of aluminum, 2,210 tons of zinc, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 18 tons of precious metals concentrate.

Moreover, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 546,578 tons of commodities worth almost \$252 million.

Commodities traded on this floor included 160,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 158,224 tons of bitumen, 108,642 tons of polymeric products, 68,500 tons of lube cut, 33,527 tons of chemicals, 10,710 tons of sulfur, 5,807 tons of oil, 500 tons of slops wax and 320 tons of feedstocks.

The IME also traded within the same week 80,058 tons of goods on its side market

As previously reported, IME witnessed trade of 13,986,385 tons of commodities, 29 vehicles and four apartment units with a total trading value of nearly \$3 billion on its physical market, during the past Iranian calendar month (ended on January 20), logging growths of 16.7 percent in volume and seven percent in value of trades compared with the month before that.

The exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor, trade of 11,144,000 tons of commodities and 29 vehicles valued at almost \$2 billion.

On this floor the IME sold 4,900,284 tons of cement, 4,249,500 tons of iron ore, 1,725,807 tons of steel, 520,500 tons of sponge iron, 69,725 tons of zinc, 36,206 tons of copper, 32,835 tons of aluminum, 800 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 600 tons of coke, 200 tons of cast iron, 175 tons of lead, 57 tons of precious metals concentrate and 29 vehicles.

It's worth noting that the IME also traded four apartment units on its real estate and housing trading floor.

Moreover, the exchange saw trade of 2,361,184 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 754,131



tons of bitumen, 737,400 tons of vacuum bottom, 419,600 tons of polymeric products, 223,500 tons of lube cut, 152,463 tons of chemicals, 46,500 tons of sulfur, 17,819 tons of oil, 9,612 tons of petroleum products, 1,860 tons of feedstocks, 1,148 tons of waterproofing materials and 500 tons of slops wax.

Last was the IME's side market on which the exchange traded 122,990 tons of goods.

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).

Iron ore pellet production up 10% in 9 months on year

TEHRAN- Production of iron ore pellet in Iran rose by 10 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar

year (March 21-December 21, 2023), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to the data released

by the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA).

The ISPA put the iron ore pellet output at 44.843 million

tons in the first nine months of this year, and at 40.838 million tons in the first nine months of the previous year.

Are US-UK attacks on Yemen effective?

America and Britain wage second round of joint attacks on Yemen

Very few believed that this would be the case.

And Ansarullah proved it wasn't to be so with the movement expanding its targets to Israeli and American ships sailing off Yemen's waters.

As bombs rain on Yemen, the Sanaa government has conducted more military operations, rendering the American-British aggression ineffective.

On Tuesday, just one day after the American-British aggression, a UK military agency reported an incident, 46 nautical miles south of Yemen's port city of Mokha on the Red Sea coast. Ansarullah's naval forces targeted another cargo vessel, which it struck with a missile.

Just before the latest joint attacks on Monday, Ansarullah announced it had successfully targeted a U.S. military support ship. The movement said it had attacked the American military cargo ship, Ocean Jazz, in the Gulf of Aden.

Yemeni military sources have told regional media that the latest raids targeted sites that had already been struck dozens of times and were of no significance as they did not house any weapons or equipment.

A statement from Ansarullah's military spokesperson, Yahya Saree, said, "The Yemeni armed forces continue to retaliate to any American or British aggression against our country by targeting all sources of threats in the Red and Arab Sea."

The government in Sanaa can, and most likely will, continue launching locally made drones and missiles at Israeli and U.S. vessels as well as U.S. warships whilst Britain and America will be compelled to strike back with expensive ordinance.

It appears the two Western powers are being drawn into something they are unable to finish it.



In a post on social media, Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, a senior political official and spokesman for the government in Sanaa, reacted to the latest strikes, saying, "The American-British aggression will only increase the Yemeni people's determination to carry out their moral and humanitarian responsibilities towards the oppressed in Gaza."

Al-Bukhaiti added, "The war today is between Yemen, which is helping to stop the crimes of genocide in Gaza, and the American-British coalition to support and protect its perpetrators."

Posting a video that showed Palestinian children dying, he added "Thus, every party or individual in this world is faced with two choices that have no thirds: either to preserve its humanity and stand with Yemen, or to lose it and stand with the American-British alliance. Who do you stand with as you watch these (Israeli) crimes (against Gazan children)?"

Mohammed al-Houthi, the head of Ansarullah's Supreme Revolutionary Committee, has also issued a warning to Washington and Britain.

"We say to the American and the British... Trust well that every

operation and every aggression against our country will not pass without a response, and expect a response every minute, if not every second, then every minute it must," Mohammed al-Houthi said.

Israel relies heavily on maritime trade. Ansarullah's military operations against Israeli vessels pose a major threat to the regime's economy, and experts say it could take a greater toll if they continue.

The Israeli seaport of Eilat sits on the Red Sea and has seen an 85 percent drop in shipping activity, its chief executive told Reuters.

The Israeli seaport of Eilat sits on the Red Sea and has seen an 85 percent drop in shipping activity, its chief executive told Reuters. He also told Israeli media that without a reversal of Ansarullah's embargo on Israeli shipping in the Red Sea "unfortunately we will likely have to furlough workers".

Whilst the Israeli port of Haifa handles the largest volume of trade, Eilat also plays a crucial role in the regime's economy.

According to Israeli media, Eilat is a key entry point for imports from East Asia, including vehicles, which make up most of those sold inside the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. Fewer cars arriving is contributing to rising prices.

Vessels that used to pass through the Suez Canal to reach the regime's busier ports on the Mediterranean are also feeling the economic ripple effects.

Many top shipping agencies have stopped traffic in or out of the corridor, which essentially starts at Bab el Mandeb off Yemen's waters, followed by the Red Sea, and ends at the Canal. This is despite a U.S.-led coalition in the regional waterway seeking to provide safe passage for Israeli ships.

Even minor changes to Red Sea shipping cause a major challenge for the entry of medical supplies to the regime amid an "unprecedented number" of Israeli war casualties, according to Moshe Cohen, chief executive of Yad Sarah, the largest non-governmental medical supplies lender in the occupied territories.

Delays caused by Ansarullah strikes directed at vessels heading to the regime's ports could "pose a life-endangering delay of critically needed supplies" for Israeli soldiers, he said in an emailed statement to the Wall Street Journal.

The risk now facing America and Britain is that they will be drawn into a military conflict with Ansarullah, which they cannot stop amid no practical plans by the two Western allies for an end game.

Meanwhile, Ansarullah has proven to the world that they are the ones supporting Gaza by taking on the two big Western powers.

Only criminally insane minds can cause so much panic in Gaza

From page 1 ► All these crimes are taking place for more than two million population in just 365 square kilometers. There is no safe place for them to go. They are being targeted while being forced to leave from one place to another.

Richard Falk, an international law and international relations scholar who taught at Princeton University, describes such a situation as "a nightmare beyond even Kafka's darkest imagining".

Michael Fakhri, the UN special rapporteur on the right to food, has told Al Jazeera, "We've never seen 2.2 million civilians made to go hungry within weeks. We have never seen this degree of hunger used as a weapon so quickly and so completely, ever."

"It doesn't happen by chance. Starvation, wherever it happens, is always the result of political choices and this is the same case here," Fakhri said.

Alex De Waal, executive director of the World Peace Foundation at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in the U.S., also says the speed at which "starvation" has been brought about among Gaza's population is "unprecedented".

"I've been studying this for 40 years and I've never seen a population reduced [to this level of hunger] with the same speed and rigor and ruthlessness," De Waal told Al Jazeera.

It is amazing why more than two million Gazans are being subjected to such a degree of horrific death, terror, starvation, grief, displacement, etc.

under the eyes of the world in the first quarter of the 21st century.

Extremist religionists, who formulate "greater Israel" in their mind, openly say they seek to force Palestinians to leave Gaza.

However, evil persons like Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant are deceptively claiming that they are only seeking to "eliminate" Hamas militants. If it is really so why so far more than 25,000 people, mostly children, have been killed and more than 63,000 injured?

Persons such as Bezalel Smotrich Itamar Ben-Gvir are straightforward. Smotrich says 70% of Israelis support "voluntary emigration" from the Gaza Strip.

Smotrich has also said Israel must reestablish a Jewish presence in the coastal Gaza enclave because "if we won't be there and there will be 2 million Nazis (Palestinians) who want to annihilate us every morning when they wake up, we won't exist, period."

Nissim Vaturi, Knesset Deputy Speaker and far-right Likud Party member, said in a post on X in November that Gaza must be burned. "All of this preoccupation with whether or not there is internet in Gaza shows that we have learned nothing. We are too humane. Burn Gaza now no less!" Vaturi said, according to the Hebrew TV Channel 12.

The project of depopulating Palestine from the Palestinians is being pushed forward in two ways: genocide in Gaza and annexing the remaining Palestinian lands in the West Bank.

Hezbollah again targets Israel's Meron base

The Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah has once again targeted a strategic Israeli airbase in the north of the occupied territories in response to the regime's genocidal war in the besieged Gaza Strip and its recent assassinations in Lebanon and Syria.

Hezbollah said in a statement that Israel's Meron air traffic control base

on Mount al-Jarraq was struck by the resistance movement's missiles on Tuesday "in support of steadfast Palestinian people in Gaza and their valiant and honorable resistance" against the Israeli occupation.

"The Meron air traffic control base was attacked for the second time with a large number of appropriate missiles, and they achieved direct hits, in response to the recent

assassinations in Lebanon and Syria, and the repeated attacks on civilians and homes in our villages," the statement added.

Israel's Meron base, which was also targeted by Hezbollah earlier in the month, is the sole air management, monitoring and control center in the north of the occupied territories, to which there is no major alternative.

Lebanese media reported that Tuesday's strikes were "more focused," and hit the base "accurately."

The Israeli occupation army confirmed the latest retaliatory attack by Hezbollah and said the base had been hit, stressing that Meron's infrastructure was "damaged as a result of being targeted by bombing from Lebanon."

WORLD HEADLINES

Gaza death toll rises to 25,490

Attacks by the Israeli army since the start of the war have killed at least 25,490 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, according to the latest figures by the enclave's Health Ministry.

It said 63,354 people have also been injured since October 7.

Attacks in the latest 24-hour reporting period killed at least 195 Palestinians and wounded 354 with more victims believed to be under the rubble and unreachable.

UK claims attacks on Yemen not connected to the ongoing war in Gaza

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has told the House of Commons that the UK-US overnight attacks on Yemen were part of a wider response to the Houthi threat and claimed that they were not connected to the ongoing war in Gaza.

He added, "We're going to use the most effective means at our disposal to cut off the Houthis' financial resources, where they are used to fund these attacks."

Yemen's army, who have said its Red Sea attacks are in response to Israel's war on Gaza and to show their support for the Palestinians, said the UK-US attacks would not go unpunished.

US and British forces with support from other allies conducted strikes Monday against eight Houthi targets in Yemen, according to a joint statement.

"The militaries of the United States and United Kingdom, at the direction of their respective governments with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada and the Netherlands, conducted an additional round of proportionate and necessary strikes against 8 Houthi targets in Yemen in response to the Houthis' continued attacks against international and commercial shipping as well as naval vessels transiting the Red Sea," the statement said.

Contrary to such claims, Yemen has been only attacking ships destined to and from Israel because of Tel Aviv's genocidal war on the Palestinians in Gaza. Yemen has said it will stop attacks if Israel stops its war on Gaza. However, it has been targeting American ships since the U.S. launched attacks on the country along with Britain nearly two weeks ago.

New Zealand to deploy troops to Red Sea

New Zealand on Tuesday announced that it will deploy a six-member defense team to the Middle East region to uphold maritime security in the Red Sea.

In a joint statement with New Zealand's Foreign Minister Winston Peters and Defense Minister Judith Collins, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said the troops will not enter Yemen.

Amnesty urges EU to call for 'immediate ceasefire'

Amnesty International has written a letter directed to the EU's Josep Borrell and the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs, urging the body to call for an immediate ceasefire and to apply public pressure on Israel to immediately lift its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip.

"We are horrified by the magnitude of the man-made human rights and humanitarian crisis in Gaza," the letter said.

"We share the view of 153 states and majority of UN bodies that a ceasefire is the only way to save lives, address the humanitarian crisis and facilitate the return of civilian hostages currently held in the Gaza Strip."

UAE funded political assassinations in Yemen, BBC unmasks

The most recent political assassinations in Yemen, as reported by Yemeni human rights lawyer Huda al-Sarari, occurred just last month, involving the killing of an imam in Lahj using the same method.

The UAE has reportedly financed politically motivated assassinations in Yemen, as revealed by a recent investigation conducted by the BBC.

The revelations surface amid the heightened global focus on Yemen following recent ship attacks in the Red Sea in support of the Palestinian people in light of the ongoing Israeli genocidal war.

Emirati officers in Yemen have utilized "counter-terrorism training" offered by US mercenaries to instruct locals for covert operations, leading to a significant increase in political assassinations, as per information provided by a whistleblower to BBC investigations.

The BBC investigation revealed that contrary to the stated objective of US mercenaries to eradicate groups like al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS) in southern Yemen, the UAE has, in reality, enlisted former al-Qaeda members for a security force formed on the ground in Yemen to combat Ansarullah movement and other Resistance factions.

The UAE government has refuted the accusations made in the investigation, claiming that the accusations of assassinating individuals without ties to terrorism are "false and without merit."

The wave of killings in Yemen, comprising over 100 assassinations within a three-year span, is just one facet of a persistent and contentious global war on the country involving various international powers in the Middle East's most impoverished nation.



Mazandaran province maps out visionary tourism plan



TEHRAN – The northern Mazandaran province, which is bounded by the Caspian Sea and the towering Alborz range, is in the process of formulating a comprehensive tourism plan.

On Tuesday, Hossein Izadi, the provincial tourism chief, revealed that the comprehensive tourism plan is currently being drafted, with its preliminary outline undergoing preparation.

Mazandaran, often hailed as one of Iran's natural and cultural jewels, beckons millions of domestic travelers with its diverse landscapes and rich heritage.

According to the official, the initiation of this comprehensive tourism plan signals a commitment to enhancing the tourism experience for both domestic and international visitors.

The plan is designed to focus on elevating the quality of tourism services in Mazandaran while preserving and showcasing the region's cultural and historical treasures. These include upgrading accommodation facilities, estab-

lishing active and engaging tourist centers, promoting local arts and handicrafts, and offering diverse tours to explore the unique attractions.

The picture-perfect province has long been a highly popular destination for domestic travelers. Its varied nature features plains, prairies, forests, and rainforests stretching from the sandy beaches of the Caspian Sea to the rugged and snowcapped Alborz sierra, including Mount Damavand, one of the highest peaks and volcanos in Asia. More than 800 registered historical and cultural sites, 338 km of shoreline, mineral springs in jungles and mountains, waterfalls, and caves are among the major tourist attractions in the province.

Goal of attracting two million foreign tourists per annum

Last September, Mazandaran's governor general announced a development program to attract more foreign tourists, saying "We have set a goal to host two million foreign tourists per annum by the end of the current Iranian administration [of President Ebrahim Raisi]."

In terms of having diverse and numerous capacities in the historical, natural, and cultural fields, Mazandaran is the center of the presence of millions of travelers from within the country, but the fact that these capacities have remained unknown for potential foreign travelers, Seyyed Mahmoud Hosseinipour explained.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites

Kathmandu Valley

The cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley is illustrated by seven groups of monuments and buildings that display the full range of historic and artistic achievements for which the Kathmandu Valley is world famous.

Located in the foothills of the Himalayas, the seven include the Durbar Squares of Hanuman Dhoka (Kathmandu), Patan, and Bhaktapur, the Buddhist stupas of Swayambhu and Baudhanath and the Hindu temples of Pashupati and Changu Narayan.

According to UNESCO, the religious ensemble of Swayambhu includes the oldest Buddhist monument (a stupa) in the Valley; that of Baudhanath includes the largest stupa in Nepal; Pashupati has an extensive Hindu temple precinct, and Changu Narayan comprises traditional Newari settlement, and a Hindu temple complex with one of the earliest inscriptions in the Valley from the fifth century CE.

The unique tiered temples are mostly made of fired brick with mud mortar and timber structures. The roofs are covered with small overlapping terracotta tiles, with gilded brass ornamentation. The windows, doorways, and roof struts have rich decorative carvings. The stupas have simple but powerful forms with massive, whitewashed hemispheres support-

ing gilded cubes with the all-seeing eternal Buddha eyes.

As Buddhism and Hinduism developed and changed over the centuries throughout Asia, both religions prospered in Nepal and produced a powerful artistic and architectural fusion beginning at least from the 5th century CE, but truly coming into its own in the three hundred year period between 1500 and 1800 CE.

These monuments were defined by the outstanding cultural traditions of the Newars, manifested in their unique urban settlements, buildings, and structures with intricate ornamentation displaying outstanding craftsmanship in brick, stone, timber, and bronze which are some of the most highly developed in the world.

As mentioned by the UN cultural body, the authenticity of the property is retained through the unique form, design, material, and substance of the monuments, displaying a highly developed traditional craftsmanship and situated within a traditional urban or natural setting. Even though the Kathmandu Valley has undergone immense urbanization, the authenticity of the historic ensembles as well as much of the traditional urban fabric within the boundaries has been retained.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran in frames



A foreign cyclist couple captures an essence of geological wonders sculpted by millions of years of wind and water erosion during their excursion to the UNESCO-designated Lut Desert in the heart of Iran.

Do we have to go to Mars to see the Martian Mountains?

TEHRAN – In fact, you don't have to go to Mars to experience the breathtaking beauty of the Martian Mountains! Instead, you may plan a trip to explore a similar mesmerizing destination in southeast Iran!

The Martian (or Miniature) Mountains of Chabahar belong to the category of less-explored and brilliant attractions on Earth, as opposed to the imaginary landscapes often seen in movies.

"I've seen this in movies," may be a common sentiment among tourists setting foot for the first time on the route from Chabahar to the Martian Mountains in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province.

According to Visit Iran, a journey to the Martian Mountains may present a diverse landscape with many ups and downs in the road. Descending the darkish blue hues of the Gulf of Oman and its golden beaches on one side and the multidimensional greyish-white mountains on the other, travelers may find it challenging to decide which side to favor.

As you navigate the twists and turns, the Miniature Mountains come into close view. Positioned at the base of a hill, they may seemingly step away, disappearing behind an area of cleft



soil like a mirage. Suddenly, you find yourself surrounded by a cracked desert, under a vast blue sky, with short and high wrinkled mountains in the distance. These mountains, characterized by numerous edgy slits resulting from rapid erosion due to exposure to wind and rain, create a surreal and captivating landscape.

The mountains have also become a source of income for locals who offer camel rides to tourists in exchange for money.

Just minutes away from the Martian Mountains lies Ramin village, featuring an ecotourism residence. The village's beach

hosts a surfing club. For those seeking a tranquil pause, a straw hut near the Martian Mountains offers a cool respite, with the scent of straw enhancing the connection to the natural atmosphere. If planning an overnight stay, accommodations in Ramin Village are recommended for a complete and immersive experience.

According to the Sistan-Baluchestan province's tourism department, locals still refer to these formations as Kolani or Aryan mountains. However, owing to their distinctive shape, undulating terrain, and captivating beauty, they are also commonly

known as Miniature or Martian mountains.

Ranging from five to 100 meters in altitude, the mountains exhibit a highly resistant texture, resembling hard rock when touched. Despite this, few attempts to climb these geological wonders, as the sheer pleasure of the visual spectacle surpasses that of ascending. The grooves on the mountains bear no vegetation, adding to the otherworldly ambiance.

It is interesting to know that similar mountains can be found in the regions of South Khorasan, Bandar Abbas, Khuzestan, and Qeshm Island, contributing to the unique geological diversity of the region.

Geologists offer varying explanations for the formation of these Martian mountains. Some posit that they are a continuation of the Zagros Mountains, a range extending into Pakistan, while others believe they were once buried under tons of soil, gradually revealing their true facade over time due to climate change and seasonal rains washing away the soil cover. Locals also believe that the wide horizon in the region offers an ideal spot for observing the infinite space and stars.

West Azarbaijan invests \$130 million in tourism projects

TEHRAN – In a bid to boost tourism infrastructure, Iran's West Azarbaijan province has allocated an investment of 65 trillion rials (some \$130 million) for the execution of 50 tourism projects, the provincial tourism chief said on Tuesday.

Morteza Safari highlighted that the ongoing projects include the construction of 11 hotels, eco-lodge accommodations, traditional dining establishments, and recreational and tourist complexes, IRIB reported.

The official noted that these initiatives aim to strengthen the tourism infrastructure in the

province, offering a diverse range of facilities for visitors.

Emphasizing the priority placed on the development and enhancement of tourism infrastructure, Safari stated that creating accommodations and recreational facilities is a key focus to increase the duration of tourists' stays at historical sites.

He elaborated further, saying, "To promote tourism development and provide essential recreational centers for tourists, plans include the establishment of recreational and tourist complexes, amusement parks, prestigious

museums, and suitable markets for visitors to benefit from."

West Azarbaijan province, whose capital and largest city is Urmia, is bordered by Turkey, Iraq, and Azarbaijan's Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, as well as the provinces of East Azarbaijan, Zanjan and Kurdistan.

Permanent settlements were established in the province as early as the 6th millennium BC as excavations at sites such as Tepe Hasanlu, yielded a famous golden vase of the same name in 1958.

FITUR highlights: Iran's pavilion set to wow spectators with traditional performances

From Page 1 ▶ In addition, the pavilion's programs for this edition of FITUR draw inspiration from tourism symbols, creating an interactive space designed to engage and educate participants. Moreover, special sessions will be held to provide insights and education to attendees.

Iran is home to various nomadic tribes, each with its own distinct traditions and artistic expressions. Nomadic performances, characterized by energetic dances and tribal music, encapsulate the nomads' nomadic way of life.

The country's vast geographical expanse has given rise to a plethora of regional performanc-

es, each infused with the unique flavors of local culture.

From captivating folk dances to rhythmic music, these performances often narrate tales of love, heroism, and cultural pride. The performers, adorned in exquisite traditional attire, bring to life the essence of Iranian identity, allowing spectators to connect with the roots of the nation.

As mentioned by organizers, the 44th edition of the International Tourism Trade Fair, FITUR, is set to reflect the growth experienced in recent months by the national and international tour-



ism industry and lays the foundations for the consolidation of the sector during 2024.

China's travel economy is slowly coming back. Here's where it stands

Over a year after China opened its borders following the pandemic, international trips are still lagging, although domestic travel is more popular.

Since China reopened its borders in 2023 after three years of Covid isolation, domestic travel has thrived and high-speed rail has grown increasingly popular. But international trips in and out of the country are lagging, and flight capacity is still just a third of pre-pandemic levels.

The economic stakes are high. Before the pandemic, Chinese travelers were the world's biggest spenders, accounting for 20 percent of global tourism spending, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

In the past year, the Chinese authorities have tried to spur more inbound travel. Among the changes: China has waived travel visas or agreed to extend the length of visa-free travel for visitors from eight countries, including Germany and France.

The main factor holding back international travel by Chinese will

continue to be China's economy. Growth has bounced back from the pandemic, but the weight of a severe real estate downturn has dampened consumer spending and confidence inside China. And global geopolitical tensions remain a wild card. China is engaged in trade disputes with the United States and Europe, home to many major multinational companies. As they think twice about their business in China, travel suffers.

Here's what to know about the state of China's travel economy.

Travel to China ground nearly to a halt in the pandemic. It won't fully recover until 2025.

Throughout the pandemic, China enforced some of the strictest travel rules in the world. Overseas travelers who managed to enter the country sometimes had to quarantine at their own expense for as long as two months.

As of December, international flight capacity — essentially the number of available seats on flights coming from and going to China — was only 62 percent of what it was in December 2019, according to

OAG, a flight data analytics firm. But domestic travel has picked up, with the number of those travelers exceeding prepandemic levels by nearly 10 percent.

At the start of last year, there were only about 500 international flights every week in China, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China, the aviation regulator. Now there are about 4,600, and that number is expected to increase to 6,000 by the end of the year — about 80 percent of prepandemic levels.

A big test will come next month during the spring festival around the Lunar New Year, typically a heavy travel period when millions of workers travel to their hometowns. Chinese airlines will schedule 2,500 additional international flights to accommodate spring festival visits, China's aviation regulator said last week.

China's transport officials said they expected 480 million rail trips to be made during a 40-day travel surge around the spring festival in the weeks before and after the Lunar New Year, a nearly 40 percent increase from last year.

High-speed rail has become a more popular way to travel within the country. China State Railway Group, the national rail operator, said rail trips exceeded 20 million at the start of the Golden Week holiday in October, a high, and the average daily number of passenger trips throughout the year exceeded 10 million.

Most analysts said they believed that the full recovery of international travel wouldn't happen until 2025.

In a January research note, economists at Nomura, a Japanese bank, said the pace of the sector's recovery would largely be determined by how much Chinese travelers were willing to spend. Pandemic-era problems like delays in issuing visas and passports that lasted through 2023 have been addressed.

"While supply-side constraints eased, the demand-side drag is now starting to kick in, and sizable headwinds remain for China's outbound tourism recovery in 2024 and possibly 2025," the Nomura economists wrote.

(Source: The New York Times)

Iran ready to assist Cuba for ICT growth

TEHRAN – Iranian companies are ready to enter the Cuban market and transfer their experiences in the field of information and communications technology, ICT minister Issa Zarepour has said.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Cuba's First Deputy Minister of Communications, Wilfredo González Vidal, in Tehran on Monday, IRIB reported.

"It is important for Havana to develop strategic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran in all fields," IRIB quoted the Cuban official as saying.

Underscoring Tehran's experiences and capabilities in areas related to ICT, González Vidal went on to say that boosting cooperation between the two countries is of more importance. "Cuba is eagerly waiting for the presence of Iranian companies in the country to expand the information and communications technology."

He further noted that since the ICT industry has a special place in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development of the country, the expansion of communication networks and electronic governance are the top priorities for cooperation.

Referring to Iranian companies' capabilities in the ICT sector, Zarepour, for his part, said that the companies are ready to cooperate with Cuba in different fields such as developing the communications infrastructure, launching various platforms, and implementing optical fiber projects.

They can also help Cuba with the generational transition of the communication network from the second and third to the fourth and even



provide the ground for entering the fifth generation, he added.

"Moreover, Iran's experiences in e-governance can be shared with Cuba."

Co-op in smart e-governance

Iran and Cuba have also announced readiness to exchange knowledge and experience in electronic governance and related fields.

The agreement was reached following a memorandum of understanding signed in June and the subsequent signing of the joint action plan between the two countries.

In this line, Iran's Deputy Minister of Information and Communications Technology, Mohammad Khansari, met González Vidal virtually on December 13, 2023, Mehr news agency reported.

Khansari, referring to the history of cooperation between the two countries and the recent visit of Cuban President, Miguel Díaz-Canel, to Iran, emphasized, "Iran is ready to

exchange experiences in communication fields, especially smart electronic governance.

While enumerating the records of cooperation between Iran and Cuba in various fields, including vaccine production during the Coronavirus pandemic, Khansari announced Iran's readiness to expand cooperation in sharing knowledge and technology.

For his part, Javad Movahhed, the deputy head of the Information Technology Organization, explained the implementation of the electronic and smart governance project in Iran.

He went on to enumerate the conceptual model of the electronic government, the most important projects being implemented, and the development of the organization, including the smart government unit window, the national license portal, the national information exchange center, and the land management window. He also listed achievements in this field. González Vidal, welcoming the issues raised in the meeting,

stated that Cuba is interested in using Iran's experiences in the field of smart e-governance, especially in the field of education, and also using the capacities of Iranian companies in order to meet Cuba's technological needs.

Tech-ties

On the sidelines of the Cuban president's visit to Tehran on December 5, 2023, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Iranian Vice Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of the Republic of Cuba.

The main objective of this agreement was to promote and expand scientific and technological cooperation based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit, in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations, through the development of joint cooperation projects in the fields of science and nanotechnology, biotechnology, climate change, and other areas agreed by the parties.

The agreement also included the exchange or designation of scientists and researchers to carry out joint projects and share experiences, transfer, or exchange technology in the fields of science, technology, and innovation.

Moreover, it involved organizing or providing support to hold symposia, conferences, forums, seminars, workshops, and training courses in areas of mutual interest.

Establishing a joint working committee and a joint science and technology center were other goals of the agreement.

IRCS to strengthen cooperation with Libya, Tajikistan

TEHRAN –The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has announced readiness to enhance ties with the Red Crescent societies of Libya and Tajikistan.

The Libyan Red Crescent Society's president, Abdel Salam Mohammad Gheith, in a meeting with the head of the IRCS, Pir-Hossein Kolivand, in Tehran on Monday, asked Iran to share its managerial and practical experiences with Libya, IRNA reported.

"We want to acquire comprehensive and practical management techniques and gain operational experiences from the Iranian Red Crescent Society," Gheith said.

Saying that Libya would like to follow IRCS's extensive and diverse activities, he went on to ask the IRCS to open a hospital in Libya in order to benefit from Iran's medical services.

Kolivand, for his part, stated that the IRCS is willing to share its experiences in various fields including textile and pharmaceutical products, herbal medicines, artificial organs, training specialized teams, and rescue groups.

He went on to say that the IRCS is ready to cooperate with the Libyan Red Crescent Society and set up a clinic or hospital there, as it has already established 14 medical centers in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Ivory Coast, and Kenya.

Meanwhile, the secretaries general of the Red Crescent Societies of Iran and Tajikistan in a meeting discussed ways to enhance collaboration.

During a meeting held between Yaqoub Soleimani and Bahodur Kurboniyon Bobojon, the officials highlighted cooperation on training young volunteers and the establishment of a medical facility in Dushanbe.

Soleimani said the IRCS is ready to transfer knowledge and experiences in the fields of relief and education to Tajikistan by signing a memorandum of understanding.

Intl. Humanitarian Conference to help Gaza

On January 21, in an address to the International Humanitarian Conference to Support Palestine which was held in Tehran, Kolivand suggested setting up a joint fund with other countries to provide aid to people in Gaza.

Referring to the crimes committed by the Zionists in the Gaza Strip in the last one hundred days, he stated that the activities of the international organizations have become ineffective due to the barriers made by the Zionist regime. "If we fail to do something to help, history will judge us," IRNA reported.

Appreciating South Africa for suing Israel to the International Court of Justice, he added, "We will also declare a war crime against the Zionist regime."

Killing civilians, attacking hospitals, and targeting medical staff are part of Israel's war crimes.

Exploring possible avenues to provide humanitarian aid, using humanitarian diplomacy to stop the war permanently, creating a joint financial fund, and declaring crimes against the Zionist regime were among the axes of the conference.

During the conference, the vice president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Manuel Bessler, for his part said aid groups and relief organizations should be coordinated and united to help Gaza.

Elaborating on Israel's crimes, Bessler stressed the need for a ceasefire.

Delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza needs to be increased. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as global actors focus on three main issues: providing vital assistance to civilians, saving their lives, and safety based on international laws.

Women, children and the elderly are looking for safe places, and the frontline actors providing aid to Gaza must fulfill their duty in this regard, he added.

Bessler went on to say that, relief organizations in Gaza are in difficult and dire situations; Gaza needs more humanitarian aid. The shortage of fuel and lack of ambulances have made it much more difficult to provide aid in Gaza.

Stressing the importance of finding an immediate response to the situation in Gaza, he said this is not a political issue, but political solutions can be used to address the problems.

ICRC, IRCS co-op

In September 2023, The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) welcomed signing a five-year memorandum of understanding in order to give a boost to bilateral ties.

Within the framework of ICRC duties, the memorandum could be greatly helpful in better responses to crises, ISNA quoted Robert Mardini, ICRC director general, as saying.

"IRCS and the ICRC can play a complementary role in many fields," he added.

He made the remarks in a meeting in Geneva on September 13 with Soleimani.

All activities relating to the principles of the International Red Cross, international humanitarian rights, and its promotion are the basis of this cooperation, Mardini noted.

Referring to the IRCS as a reliable partner in West Asia, the ICRC official emphasized: "Our cooperation and partnership with IRCS is very important and valuable because of its vast and extensive knowledge and experience in dealing with immigrants, refugees, and victims of war."

Soleimani, for his part, welcomed the signing of the five-year memorandum of understanding and considered it to be a roadmap for more cooperation and interaction between the Iranian Red Crescent Society and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

He stressed IRCS's capabilities and capacities to serve the immigrants including over five million Afghan immigrants who have access to necessary facilities in education and health.

He pointed out, "Despite the problems caused by sanctions, IRCS has made great efforts to promote immigrants' well-being."

Iran is IRCS's strongest member in region

In July 2023, Hossam Elsharkawi, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), referred to Iran as the strongest member in the region.

"Among the 192 national Red Crescent and Red Cross societies around the world, the Red Crescent of the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been one of the most important and strongest societies and a reliable member of the Federation."

Elsharkawi made the remarks in an online meeting with Raziheh Alishvand, the Iranian Red Crescent Society's director for international affairs, Mehr reported.

The quick and effective presence of the Iranian Red Crescent Society in the rescue operations and then providing relief to earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria last winter shows the good preparedness of the IRCS in response to natural disasters, the IFRC official highlighted.

In February, IFRC appreciated the Iranian Red Crescent Society for its services during the recent devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

"I praise the leadership and commitment of the Iranian Red Crescent Society," IFRC President, Francesco Rocca, wrote in a letter to IRCS Head Pir-Hossein Kolivand.

"I assure you that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies stands by your side in carrying out humanitarian missions," Rocca added, IRNA reported.

"Words cannot express my gratitude to the volunteers and staff of the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who worked tirelessly to save people's lives and support the needy from the very beginning of the emergency."

"Undoubtedly, your efforts are all the more meaningful when you consider the humanitarian response that the Iranian Red Crescent Society is making nationally in the Khoi region and in several provinces affected by climate problems," the IFRC president highlighted.

Iran, Pakistan to further expand scientific ties: official



Need for boosting sci-tech ties

"Iran is ready to cooperate with Pakistan in technological fields. Information and communication technology, agriculture, and health are among the fields in which the two countries can boost cooperation," Amir-Hossein Mir-Abadi, an official with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology said in a meeting with Mukhtar Ahmed, ISNA reported.

Ahmed, for his part, said that Iran and Pakistan are confronting similar problems and challenges; these common issues can lay the basis for boosting mutual relations and cooperation. "Pakistan is interested in cooperating and interacting with Iran in scientific and technological fields."

The Pakistani official went on to say that the sanctions have made Iran more successful in scientific fields.

Exchanging academic staff including professors and students and conducting joint projects can be among other options of cooperation between Iran and Pakistan, he added.

Talking about setting up national pavilions in different countries, Ahmed said Pakistan is ready to hold Iranian pavilions, too.

He hoped that the bilateral cooperation would be extended into regional cooperation including other countries such as India and Bangladesh.

Universities to form a consortium

In October 2023, the D-8 International University signed a memorandum of understanding and a memorandum of cooperation with five Malaysian universities.

D-8, also known as Developing-8, is an organization for development cooperation among eight Islamic nations, namely Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.

While attending the meeting of the board of trustees of D-8 universities in Hamedan, Ahmed met with science minister Mohammad Ali Zolfogol.

During the meeting, they agreed to form a consortium of Iranian and Pakistani universities consisting of 25 universities from both countries to meet annually to boost cooperation.

The first meeting of the consortium is supposed to be held in Iran by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Iran exports medical equipment to 55 countries

Some 105 medical equipment produced by 23 Iranian companies are exported to 55 countries including Russia, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Croatia, Reza Masaeli, an advisor to the health minister said on Sunday.

"Currently, a total of 280,000 medical equipment is produced in the country," Fars quoted Masaeli as saying.

"In recent years, the production of medical equipment in Iran has increased by 9 percent," he added.

One of the main strategies of the Health Ministry is to boost exports, he said, adding that the ministry has signed an MOU with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization to grant subsidies to Iranian medical equipment companies participating at international trade fairs such as MEDICA, Oman Health, Arab Health and Brazil.

تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی به ۵۵ کشور دنیا صادر می‌شود

مشاور وزیر بهداشت گفت: در حال حاضر ۱۰۵ محصول تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی که توسط ۲۳ شرکت ایرانی تولید می‌شود، به ۵۵ کشور جهان از جمله کشورهای روسیه، آلمان، ایتالیا، بلژیک، هلند و کرواسی صادر می‌شود. به گزارش گروه اجتماعی خبرگزاری فارس، رضا مساعلی، اظهار داشت: در کشور بیش از ۲۸۰ هزار قلم تجهیزات پزشکی در کشور وجود دارد و در سال‌های اخیر، تولیدات تجهیزات پزشکی در جمهوری اسلامی ایران، ۹ درصد افزایش داشته است. وی توجه به صادرات را یکی از مهمترین راهبردهای اساسی وزارت بهداشت در راستای حمایت از تولیدات داخلی دانست و افزود: به منظور حضور تولیدکننده‌های تجهیزات پزشکی ایران در نمایشگاه بین‌المللی مدیکا، عمان هلت، عرب هلت و برزیل با سازمان توسعه و تجارت، تقاضای نامی به منظور اعطای یارانه برای این شرکت‌ها، امضا شده است.



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Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737



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

JANUARY 24, 2024

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The mind of a wise man is the safest custody of secrets; cheerfulness is the key to friendship; patience and forbearance will conceal many defects.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:16 Evening: 17:41 Dawn: 5:43 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:10 (tomorrow)

Santa Barbara International Film Festival picks three Iranian movies



TEHRAN-The Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF) has picked up two films and an animated movie from Iran for its upcoming 39th edition due to be held in February.

"Achilles" directed by Farhad Delaram, "Cold Sigh" by Nahid Azizi Sedigh, and "In the Shadow of the Cypress" by Hossein Molayemi and Shirin Sohani are the Iranian works that will take part in the event, ILNA reported on Monday.

Having its U.S. premiere, the 2023 drama "Achilles" tells the story of a young filmmaker who currently works in a hospital and takes a mental patient out for a short ride to find out who she really is. Now he has to decide whether to run away with her or take her back to the hospital.

A joint production of Iran, France, and Germany, Delaram's feature debut has been shot on various locations; it takes the audience from the capital Tehran to the dried-up Lake Urmia in the northwest of the country, to the Caspian Sea in the north, and to Maku, near Turkey's border.

Mirsaeed Molavian, Behdokht Valian, Roya Afshar, and Neda Aghighi play in "Achilles" that had its international premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival last September.

In "Cold Sigh," Baha, a young man from a border town, learns that his father, Bahram, has been released from prison after 20 years. Bahram killed his wife -- Baha's mother -- having accused her of cheating on him. Baha,

who has never coped with this and is still full of anger and resentment decides to revenge to end his suffering.

The 72-minute drama, which will have its U.S. premiere at the festival, is a production of 2023 and has Iman Sedigh and Ali Bagheri in the cast.

"In the Shadow of the Cypress" is a 20-minute animation from Iran, which will also have its U.S. premiere at the festival.

It is about a former captain, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, who lives with his daughter in a house located by the sea, where they live an isolated and harsh life. Despite the captain's deep desire to be a devoted father, he finds himself unable to connect with his daughter in the way that he longs to. One morning, their lives change forever when an unforeseen event occurs. Whether it proves to be a newfound source of hope or an additional burden remains to be seen.

SBIFF is proud to present a diverse slate of more than 200 films to over 100,000 film enthusiasts, including attendees, and a large student population.

The festival has devoted sections for documentaries that address social justice issues, nature and oceanography, food, and the performing arts. Additional sidebars highlight contemporary world cinema from Nordic countries, Eastern Europe, Asia and Spain/Latin America.

In addition to showcasing a diverse spectrum of films, tributes and galas, SBIFF also offers seminars with industry professionals including directors, writers, and producers in the business panels, as well as Q&A sessions with a diverse selection of filmmakers.

The 39th edition of the festival will take place from February 7 to February 17 in Santa Barbara, California, the U.S.

"Hospital Is Not a War Zone" cartoon exhibit opens in Tehran

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN-A cartoon and caricature exhibition dedicated to the theme of Israeli forces bombing hospitals in Gaza was opened during a ceremony at Tehran's Art Bureau on Monday.

Titled "Hospital Is Not a War Zone," the exhibition features 51 artworks by 35 artists from 24 different countries.

Jorge Snchez Amas from Cuba, Sameh Samir from Egypt, Luc Descheemaeker from Belgium, Carlos Latuff from Brazil, Naji Banaji from Morocco, Jose Antonio Rodriguez Garcia from Mexico and Rosa Cerruto from Italy are among the participants in this exhibition.

The head of North Khorasan's Art Bureau, Akram Sediqi, who organized the event, emphasized that hospitals are not considered as war zones globally and should not be subjected to bombing or attack according to human rights laws.

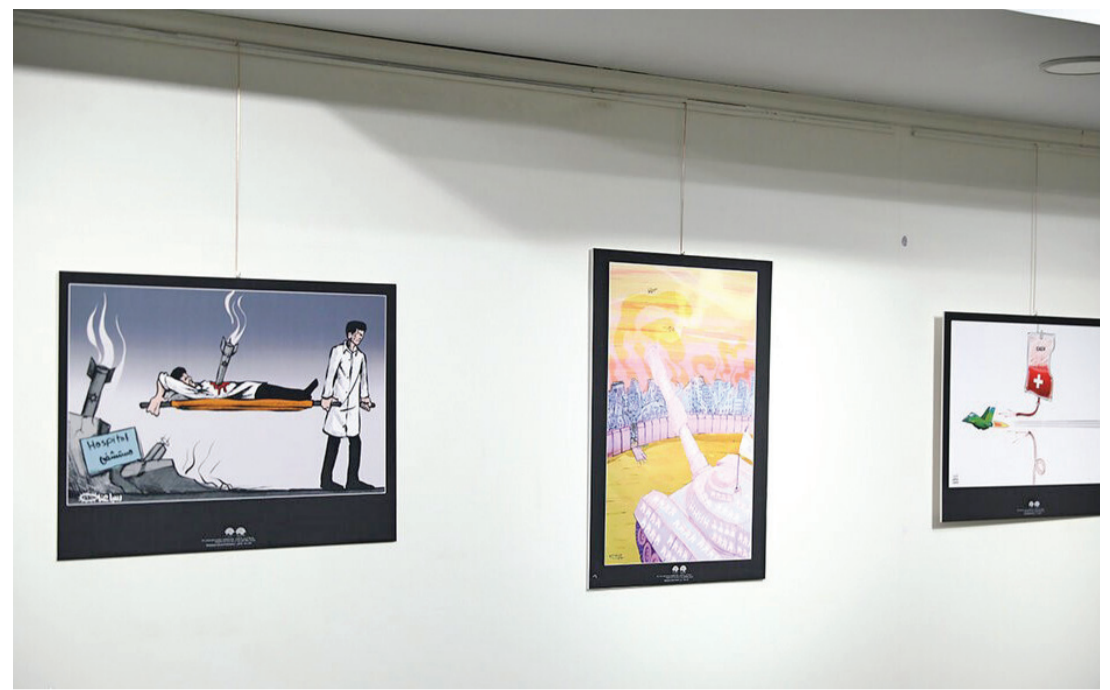
"However, the Zionist regime bombed Gaza hospitals with various excuses," she said and added: "As a response, cartoonist artists were swiftly invited to express their perspectives on this issue through their works."

Curator Abbas Nasser, a cartoon artist from Bojnord, successfully gathered international artists to contribute their works to shed light on the Zionist attack on hospitals, she explained.

Sediqi mentioned that the exhibition's next goal is to be showcased in other countries alongside the participation of international artists.

Iranian and foreign cartoonist artists have refused to remain silent about the horrifying events of the bombing of hospitals in Gaza, according to Abbas Nasser, the curator of the exhibition.

"After the incident, we witnessed the creation of many works on this topic. On the other hand, since I am cautious about



doing repetitive work, I found this subject unique despite being unpleasant and tragic," he explained.

The exhibition features original and first-hand works from international artists and aims to shed light on the Zionist regime's crimes against non-military establishments, particularly hospitals, and the merciless killing of innocent people, including children, in Gaza, he noted.

Nasser expressed that some may perceive such initiatives as a waste of capital and money, but he reassured that the artworks in this exhibition were created sincerely, with the artists investing their credibility into the cause. Moreover, the names of the artists involved in the exhibition are enough to unsettle Zionists, Nasser asserted.

For his part, Mohammad Zaru Nasrabad, the director of the Visual Arts Center of the Art Bureau, emphasized that the current global conflict is an unequal and media-driven battle.

Drawing a comparison between cultural warfare and military warfare, he noted the effectiveness of artistic tools as

forces that can provide influential and swift responses.

Nasrabad highlighted the significance of visual arts, particularly cartoons and graphics, as long-range weapons and points of attack. He stressed the importance of utilizing the language of art in order to make an impact.

He considered the presence of international artists as a distinguishing aspect of the exhibition. He stated that not only were special works created specifically for the event, but international artists also participated, highlighting the global perspective adopted for this exhibition.

This perspective raises thought-provoking questions and conveys a message that Iranians are not the only ones who are unresponsive to the war-mongering of the Zionists. Artists from diverse backgrounds have reacted to this situation, considering it a humanitarian issue, and have sent their works as a response.

He emphasized the duty of supporting artists, with the Visual Arts Center eagerly embracing this responsibility in the realm of

promotion and support.

The bombing of Gaza hospitals by Israeli forces is a flagrant violation of all principles of war and human laws. Hospitals are considered protected areas under international humanitarian law, and targeting them not only poses a grave threat to the lives of innocent civilians but also undermines the fundamental principles of medical neutrality and the right to access healthcare during armed conflicts. Such attacks on hospitals demonstrate a disregard for the principles of humanity, impartiality, and the duty to protect civilian populations.

Moreover, these bombings exacerbate the already dire situation in Gaza, where the healthcare system is already struggling to cope with limited resources and a high population density. Targeting hospitals not only destroys critical infrastructure but also denies innocent civilians access to life-saving medical services. These actions not only violate the rights of the Palestinian people but also erode the trust and impartiality necessary for healthcare workers to carry out their duties.

Iranian painter's works at group exhibition in London

TEHRAN-A group exhibition at October Gallery in London titled "Transvanguard: Free Style Cipher" is underway, in which Iranian painter Golnaz Fathi's works are also included.

The exhibition also showcases new works by Sokari Douglas Camp CBE, Alexis Peskine and Govinda Sah Azad, as well as selected works by Susanne Kessler, Tian Wei, Jukhee Kwon, Elisabeth Lalouschek, and Romuald Hazoumè, amongst others, Gallery Info reported on Monday.

Based on the hip-hop notion of an interactive, freewheeling exchange of contrasting ideas and styles, the exhibited works will focus on the visual language particular to each artist, helping to decode the various layers of meaning and shed revealing light on each artist's individual practice in conversation with and in relation to their peers.

Fathi, 52, is a contemporary artist, recognized for her reinterpretations of traditional Persian calligraphy. While most known for her pen-on-acrylic-on-canvas works characterized by intricate lines and gestural brush strokes, she also engages with other media, including

LED light and video installations. She is noted for her artwork in the hurufiyya tradition.

The hurufiyya movement is an aesthetic movement that emerged in the second half of the 20th century amongst Muslim artists, who used their understanding of traditional Islamic calligraphy within the precepts of modern art. By combining tradition and modernity, these artists worked towards developing a culture specific visual language, which instilled a sense of national identity in their respective nation states, at a time when many of these states were shaking off colonial rule and asserting their independence. They adopted the same name as the Hurufi, an approach of Sufism which emerged in the late 14th-early 15th century.

While studying Graphic Design at Azad University in Tehran, Fathi, always fascinated by the expressive potential of traditional Persian calligraphic forms, immersed herself in a sustained six-year study of traditional calligraphy. She then became one of only a tiny handful of women trained to the highest level within that discipline. Despite this Fathi felt the need to expand her practice and developed an idiom of her own with large, bold abstractions. In 2003, she travelled to France and spent three months at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, on a scholarship.

Her hand movements form uncompromised gestures, emerging out of the deep layers and attempt to capture a thought, emotion, or sound. Undertaken with the

same consideration, each work is densely inscribed with potential meanings allowing unrestrained imaginative possibilities.

Fathi's work is inspired by Iranian cultural heritage, most notably architecture and the traditional art of calligraphy. Her canvases often combine bold areas of primary colors (particularly red, a color that the artist associates with energy) and black (representing completeness). Fathi's considerable technical expertise in the art of beautiful writing means that she can experiment and play with the possibilities of calligraphy. This is exemplified by her technique of 'invisible writing', which sees Persian script rendered in an abstracted, almost incomplete hand.

Her first solo exhibition at October Gallery, "Liminal-Subliminal," took place in 2010, followed by a second solo show "Dance Me to the End of Night" in 2014. Her work can be found in collections around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA; Carnegie Mellon University in Doha, Qatar; Islamic Art Museum, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; the British Museum, London, UK; Denver Art Museum, Denver, USA; Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove, UK; Asian Civilization's Museum, Singapore; and Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, India.

Having launched on January 18, the exhibition "Transvanguard: Free Style Cipher" will run until March 2 at October Gallery.

Sobh Intl. Media Festival to shine spotlight on Palestine cause

TEHRAN-The upcoming Sobh International Media Festival will dedicate a special section to the Palestine cause, the organizers have announced.

This edition of the festival will center on Gaza conflict, with a particular

emphasis on the October 7 Operation, Mohsen Yazdi the secretary of the event said during a press conference held in Tehran on Tuesday.

Organized by the IRIB World Service, the festival will cover various categories such as television

and radio production, as well as podcasting and social media, the official added.

The second edition of Sobh International Media Festival will be held in the Iranian capital during April.

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