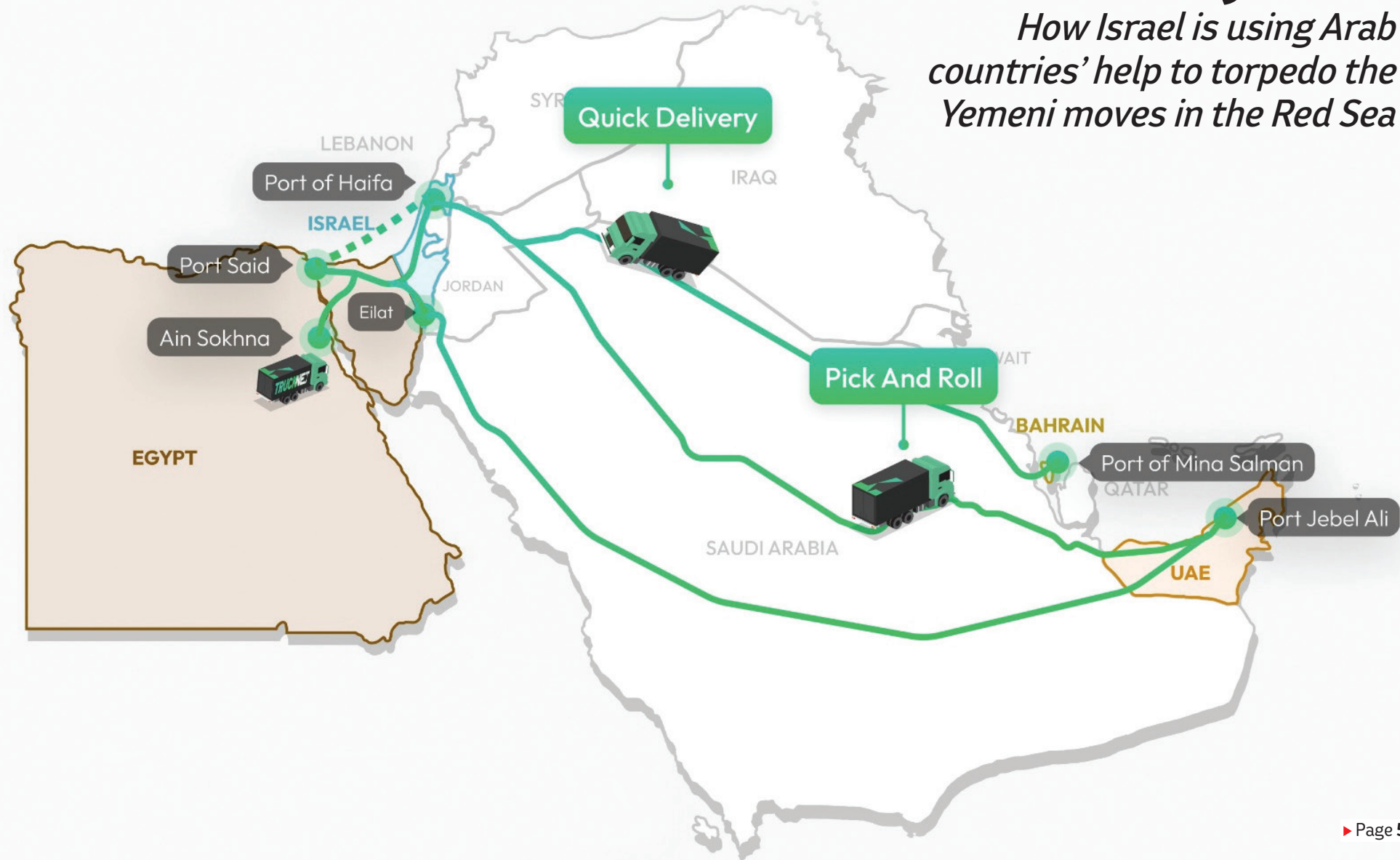


The Corridor of Betrayal

How Israel is using Arab countries' help to torpedo the Yemeni moves in the Red Sea



► Page 5

MSF 'very worried' over unfolding situation in Gaza's Nasser hospital

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) on Wednesday voiced deep concern about the situation in the Nasser hospital in Khan Younis, south of the Gaza Strip, as the Israeli army continues its siege and shelling of the health facility.

"We are very worried about the situation unfolding at the Nasser hospital in Khan Younis," said MSF in a statement on X, according to Tukey's Anadolu News Agency.

It called on the Israeli army "to ensure that all medical staff, patients and displaced people are unharmed."

MSF added that the Israeli army ordered all displaced people inside the hospital to evacuate it, while only allowing medical staff and patients to stay "with a limit of one caretaker per patient." "People are afraid to leave the hospital because they hear reports of people being shot at. Those who wish to leave must be granted safe passage out," MSF concluded.

On Tuesday, the Health Ministry in Gaza said a number of Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army while trying to exit the hospital.

Hamas, for its part, also warned that the Israeli army "intends to commit a crime" against those inside the hospital.

Tel Aviv spins more media lies

By Ali Karbalaee

TEHRAN- The sole path of access to information on the atrocious crimes being committed in the entirely besieged Gaza Strip to the outside world is through the heroic role of local Palestinian journalists, risking their lives on the ground.

The question that has regularly sprung up in the Western world is that if the Israeli regime claims to be abiding by international law in its war on Gaza, why has it banned Western journalists from entering Gaza to ascertain Tel Aviv's claims?

The Israeli occupation has already killed a record number of reporters and media crew in Gaza in the history of any war zone around the globe and is now embarking on a campaign to discredit their extremely difficult work.

Tel Aviv claims a few journalists have been linked to the armed wing of Hamas and even accused one reporter, which the Israeli army recently killed, of being a Hamas commander.

By trying to harm the reputation of a few Palestinian journalists, the regime is seeking to distort the reality on the ground, where the Israeli military has committed the most heinous of war crimes, which include the killing of at least 12,300 children and the orphaning of 17,000 others. ► Page 5

Israel carries out fresh attacks in southern Lebanon

The Israeli military said Wednesday its fighter jets had "begun a series of strikes in Lebanon," raising fears of a war between the two sides after months of cross-border fire and increasing tension fueled by the regime's war on Gaza.

The regime said its warplanes struck several Hezbollah targets in response to rocket fire from Lebanon.

Lebanese media said three villages were hit, CBS News reported. The strikes came hours after fire from Lebanon wounded multiple people in northern Israel, according to medics.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said Tuesday that fire from southern Lebanon would end when the attack on Gaza stops and a cease-fire is established.

"If they (Israel) broaden the confrontation, we will do the same," Nasrallah warned in a televised address.

Fears have been growing of another full-blown conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. The cross-border fire has already forced tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border to be evacuated. Since Israel launched its onslaught in Gaza on October 7, at least 243 people have been killed in Lebanon, including civilians, according to an AFP tally.

On the Israeli side, nine soldiers and six civilians have been killed, according to Israeli official figures.

Futile sabotage

By Ardalan Mohammadzadeh

TEHRAN- The recent sabotage in gas pipelines serves as another piece in the broader puzzle of U.S. actions aimed at disturbing Iran, blending overt and covert maneuvers while shirking accountability for its reprehensible deeds.

On Wednesday, February 14, the Borujen gas pipeline was rocked by an explosion, fortunately causing no casualties, as confirmed by local authorities.

The incident, transpiring at 12:50 am, involved two critical national gas lines responsible for transporting gas from the southern to the northern regions of Iran. Flames engulfed the ruptured pipelines, prompting swift response efforts from rescue and fire-fighting teams dispatched to the scene by the Borujen governor.

Emphasizing the gravity of the situation, the governor highlighted the proximity of the pipelines to a crucial north-south transit route, necessitating the closure of the area for drivers' safety within two hours of the blast.

Another powerful explosion disrupted a second gas pipeline in Fars Province.

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji, addressing the acts of sabotage, revealed that the explosion in Borujen occurred around 1:00 am, targeting a segment of Iran's national gas transmission network with multiple points of detonation. ► Page 3

The slanted approach of IAEA toward Iran

By Alireza Akbari

TEHRAN- The International Atomic Energy Agency, under Grossi's leadership, adopts an ineffective approach towards Iran, fostering a sense of mistrust between Tehran and the UN nuclear watchdog.

In a recent report by The Associated Press, the head of the UN's nuclear watchdog sounded the alarm over Iran's alleged lack of transparency regarding its nuclear program. Speaking at the prestigious World Governments Summit in Dubai, Rafael Mariano Grossi emphasized that Iran's disclosures are insufficient, marking a concerning trend in the global effort to monitor nuclear activities.

Iran is "presenting a face which is not entirely transparent when it comes to its nuclear activities. Of course, this increases dangers," Grossi added.

Grossi's remarks followed a significant statement from Ali Akbar Salehi, the former head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, who asserted Iran's capability in nuclear endeavors. Salehi's words, coupled with Grossi's concerns, underscore a critical juncture in international nuclear diplomacy.

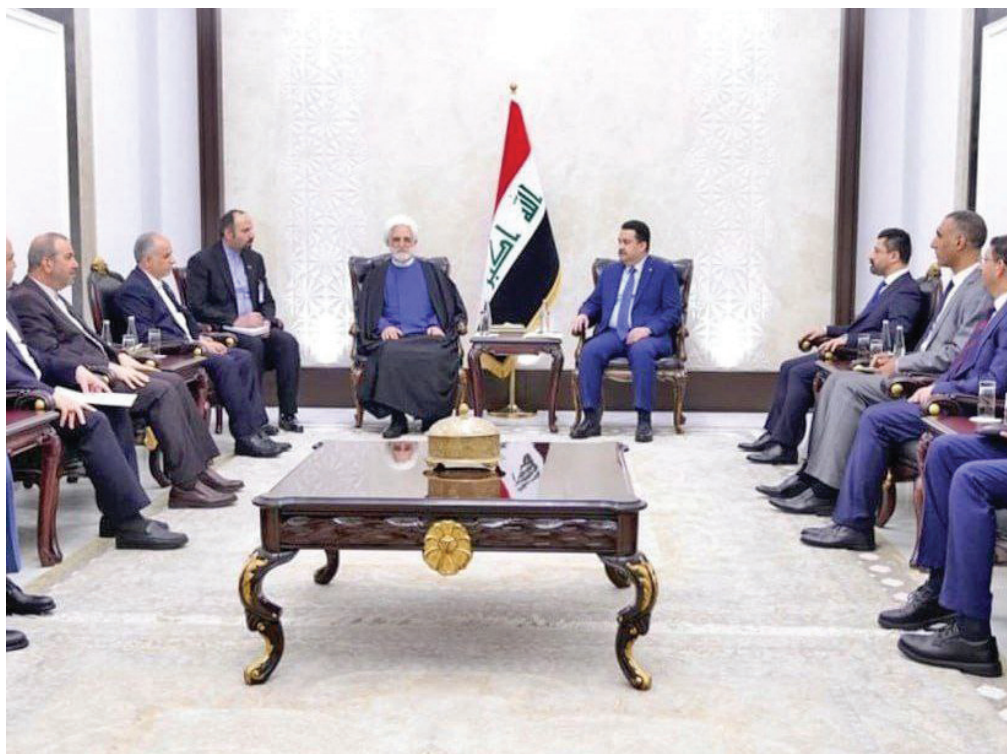
Grossi's assertions come at a time when Iran, a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, ► Page 2

Indian, Tajik, Uzbek musicians perform on 2nd day of 39th Fajr International Music Festival

TEHRAN-Vahdat and Roudaki halls in Tehran hosted performances by Indian, Tajik, and Uzbek musicians as part of the international section of the 39th Fajr Music Festival on Tuesday, February 13.

On the second day of the festival, internationally acclaimed musician Rahis Bharti from India, founder and director of DHOAD Gypsies of Rajasthan, performed with his band at Vahdat Hall.

In his first concert in Iran, he performed a repertoire of pieces from Rajasthan, a state in northern India, "where Muslims and followers of other religions live peacefully beside each other". ► Page 8



Iran main supporter of Iraq stability, security, development: Judiciary chief

TEHRAN- Iranian Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei has said that Tehran is the main sponsor and supporter of stability, security, and developments in Iraq.

On the second day of his official visit to Iraq, in a meeting with the Iraqi Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani, in Baghdad on Wednesday, Iran's head of the judiciary praised the desirable and strong positions of the government and people of Iraq in supporting the people of Gaza, stressing the need to level up political pressure from the Islamic world on the U.S. and the Zionist regime to end the massacre of the people of Gaza. ► Page 2

Iran's 10-month trade with SCO members rises 5.5%

TEHRAN - Iran's 10-month trade with the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has increased by 41 percent in terms of weight and 5.5 percent in value compared to figures reported in last year's corresponding period.

Iran has exchanged some 64.3 million tons of non-oil products valued at \$37.1 billion with the SCO member states in the first 10 months of the current Iranian year (March 21, 2023-January 20, 2024), according to Ruhollah Latifi, the spokesman of the International Relations and Trade Development Committee of Iran's House of Industry, Mining, and Trade.

During the mentioned period, Iran exported 54.5 million tons of goods worth \$18 billion to the SCO members, registering a slight 1.0 percent rise year-on-year. ► Page 4

TEHRAN PAPERS

From confrontation strategy to de-escalation strategy

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

In a note, Shargh discussed the continuation of U.S. actions to seize and steal Iranian assets and wrote: Following U.S. actions in seizing and stealing Iranian assets, from oil to airplanes, Tehran's reaction can be analyzed on four levels; first, a complaint in the American courts. Second, complaints in competent international fora. Third, Iran's countermeasure and finally the fourth reaction will be de-escalation. Yousef Molaei, an international lawyer, believes that no authority can force America to return Iranian property. Using its political, diplomatic, economic, commercial and military bullying, Washington practically refuses to comply with any vote of competent international assemblies. Therefore, the final solution is diplomatic de-escalation, which can provide Iran with a soft power that, on the one hand, prevents the United States from taking actions such as sanctions and seizing Iranian assets, and on the other hand, even if such decisions are made, Tehran can form a front against Washington through its soft power, which will increase Washington's political and diplomatic pressures.

Etemad: America's strategic confusion in the region

In an article, Etemad discussed America's strategy in the region and said: America is in strategic confusion in West Asia, especially after the Al-Aqsa storm operation. In the Gaza war, on the one hand, America sends a message to Iran to prevent Hezbollah from entering the Gaza war, on the other hand, Netanyahu's government intensifies the fire in the northern fronts against Hezbollah. The same contradiction exists for Iran. America is not ready for a direct war with Iran in the current situation and has no plan for a direct conflict with Iran, but Netanyahu is blowing the flames of a direct conflict between Iran and America. From their point of view, Iran is a destabilizing actor that must be restrained, and the way to restrain is to avoid direct conflict and increase economic and political pressures so that Iran's internal and external costs will increase. Now the problem is this, if Iran cooperates with the Palestinian two-state plan, then it must create a major revision in its foreign policy, and if it opposes, then the front against Iran will go beyond America and Europe and will include the countries of the region as well.

Iran main supporter of Iraq stability, security, development: Judiciary chief

From Page 1 ► Mohseni Ejei went on to continue that all Islamic nations must rise against the war machine of the Zionists, and it is essential that they activate all mechanisms to stop the massacre and savagery of the Zionists in the Gaza Strip.

Referring to the numerous commonalities between the two nations of Iran and Iraq and the high volume of interactions and agreements in various fields between the two parties, he further stated in this meeting that Iran has always been a supporter of stability, security, and development in Iraq and is ready to help the Arab nation overcome its issues and challenges in various spheres.

The head of the judiciary also emphasized that Tehran is eager to strengthen and formalize relations with Iraq in all areas and will embrace any initiative to scale up the level of relations between the two sides.

Mohseni Ejei pointed out that there is a pressing need for full implementation of security agreements between Iran and Iraq and comprehensive confrontation with terrorists who have been tasked by the enemies of both Iran and Iraq to threaten and undermine the security of both countries.

In the meeting, he expressed appreciation for the hospitality and actions of the Iraqi government regarding the welfare and facilitation of pilgrims, especially during the days of Arbāeen.

Lauding the principled and continuous support of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Palestine, al-Sudani, for his part, also said that Baghdad appreciates the continuous support of the leadership and president of Iran towards the government and people of Iraq.

He elaborated on some measures taken regarding ongoing projects between the two countries while expressing Iraq's readiness to

Javan: America's anger against the will of the Iranian people

In an analysis, Javan discussed America's opposition to the will of the Iranian people and said: In the mind of the leaders of the White House, neither the people of Iran nor any other independent nation has the right to think and make decisions without the permission of the United States, and this is what they say, "The only capital in which there is no coup is Washington because there is no American embassy there." In the past 45 years, the most important focus of the Americans in the case of Iran has been the restraint of the will of the Iranian nation by separating the system from society. Today, the defensive deterrence power and the coherence of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran are such that the realization of traditional coup plans is no longer possible. Their main goal is for the Iranian people to separate from their political system, which seeks to restore Iran's power. America's hybrid war against Iranians and all kinds of sanctions and media pressures are aimed at restraining the power of the Iranian people, and only in this way will America's 45-year dream come true.

Ham Mihan: Ending the Gaza crisis is a way to reduce the tension between Iran and America

In a commentary, Ham Mihan dealt with a way to prevent the escalation of tension between Iran and the United States and wrote: From the very first days, radical supporters of Israel in the United States accused Iran and sought the root of the Al-Aqsa storm operation in Tehran. According to Ahmad Dastmalchian, the former ambassador of Iran to Jordan and Lebanon, the first effective measure to reduce tension is to stop the crimes of the Zionist regime. The boiling point of the crisis in Palestine must be removed. Both America, Europe and the countries of the region agree on the fact that a ceasefire should be established. If the countries of the region, Iran, the United States and other countries can work together to calm Netanyahu and make the Gaza crisis finish, other issues between Iran and the United States will be investigated and an agreement may be resumed in the same JCPOA form.

expand and strengthen relations with Iran in all areas.

The Prime Minister of Iraq mentioned that "the security of Iran is the security of Iraq, and we will not allow any action against Iran's security from within Iraq."

Ejei underscored the need to boost coordination between Iran and Iraq and other countries supporting Palestine in regional and international forums and human rights.

Speaking in a meeting with members of Iraq's Coordination Framework late on Tuesday, Mohseni Ejei stressed the importance of cooperation between Iran and Iraq to establish security in the Islamic world.

He said that the U.S., and the Zionist regime are carrying out malicious actions against Islamic countries, including against Iran and Iraq.

Ejei went on to stress that there is a need for unity and cooperation between the two countries more than ever.

He expressed optimism that the two countries would use their common capacities to augment security and to resolve issues serving the interests of whole Muslim world.

Referring to the Zionist regime's crimes against the people of Gaza and their recent actions in Rafah, he noted that Iran and Iraq should be concerned about the Israeli regime's crimes against the oppressed but strong people of Gaza.

The head of the judiciary remembered martyr General Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units, who were assassinated by the U.S. military in a drone strike outside Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

The slanted approach of IAEA toward Iran

From page 1 ► has committed to granting the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) access to its nuclear facilities, a move aimed at verifying the peaceful nature of its program.

In addition to signing the 2015 nuclear deal, Tehran committed to welcoming further oversight from the IAEA. This agreement underscored Iran's willingness to adhere to monitoring measures aimed at ensuring the peaceful nature of its nuclear program.

By consenting to enhanced scrutiny, Tehran demonstrated its commitment to transparency and compliance with international regulations regarding nuclear activities.

IAEA's approach

In the realm of technical and safeguard activities overseen by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran has consistently upheld its commitments. Tehran has demonstrated utmost cooperation with the IAEA, underscoring its dedication to maintaining a peaceful nuclear program.

The IAEA's safeguard activities serve as a vital mechanism for ensuring that states adhere to their international obligations, particularly concerning the prohibition of nuclear weapons development.

Mandated by the global Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other anti-nuclear proliferation agreements, the IAEA serves as the primary nuclear inspectorate worldwide. Presently, the IAEA conducts safeguard operations in collaboration with over 140 states.

These safeguards hinge on the meticulous evaluation of a state's declared nuclear material and related activities, with verification measures encompassing on-site inspections, visits, and continuous monitoring and assessment.

The approach entails two distinct sets of measures tailored to the nature of the safeguard agreements in place with a state. One set revolves around verifying the accuracy of state-reported nuclear material and activities, while the other incorporates additional measures to bolster the IAEA's inspection



capabilities.

Within the intricate landscape of Iran's nuclear endeavors, complexities emerge within the political realm. These challenges, standing at the intersection of the West and Iran, serve to further complicate an already thorny issue.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), once hailed as a milestone agreement, was abruptly abandoned under U.S. then-President Donald Trump in 2018. His decision to withdraw from the deal was underscored by his assertion that terminating the JCPOA represented the paramount action Washington could take in support of Tel Aviv's interests.

Subsequent to the U.S. withdrawal, Europe's efforts to salvage the agreement proved insufficient in fulfilling the promised commitments.

The economic tool, Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), created in January 2019 to sidestep U.S. sanctions and enable trade with Iran, fell short of its promised advantages. Former Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif expressed disappointment with Europe's unmet commitments, noting that none of the "11 promises" had been fulfilled.

The reports from IAEA have exacerbated the political divide between the West and Iran regarding Tehran's nuclear program. These reports, often perceived as biased and closely aligned with Western media

narratives, have facilitated a wave of media propaganda portraying Iran's nuclear activities as a global threat.

Moreover, the situation is compounded by instances where IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi has publicly cited Iran's stockpiles, issuing warnings to the JCPOA signatories regarding potential non-compliance by Iran. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that the JCPOA lies beyond the scope of the IAEA's mandate and responsibilities.

The perceived bias of the IAEA in certain cases, coupled with the release of sensitive Iranian nuclear information to Western media outlets, has had a negative impact on Tehran's willingness to cooperate with the agency. This has further strained the already fragile relationship between Iran and the IAEA regarding Tehran's nuclear program.

The consistent release of confidential reports from the IAEA, particularly highlighted in early February 2023, has emerged as a longstanding tactic over the past two decades, utilized to exert political pressure on Tehran's peaceful nuclear endeavors.

Speaking at a Chatham House think tank meeting, Rafael Grossi acknowledged the regrettable nature of these leaks. However, he emphasized that the Agency lacks the necessary mechanisms to control and prevent such occurrences.

Despite Grossi's remarks, the leakage of these reports prompted a joint political statement from the

United States, along with England, France, and Germany, reiterating concerns about Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

If Rafael Grossi seeks answers regarding the perceived lack of transparency from Iran, he must examine the actions of the IAEA that have compromised professionalism and confidentiality.

Should the IAEA demonstrate impartiality and uphold standards of confidentiality and professionalism, Tehran may be inclined to enhance transparency regarding its peaceful nuclear activities.

The concerns surrounding the IAEA extend beyond its lack of confidentiality and professionalism to include occasional biased reports and statements made by its Director General, Rafael Grossi.

Grossi's recent interviews have raised alarm regarding Iran's nuclear program. For instance, in a late 2023 interview with the Wall Street Journal, he proposed the idea of a new initiative, JCPOA 2. This suggestion was met with criticism from Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), who argued that Grossi lacked the authority to propose such an initiative.

Moreover, the timing of Grossi's interviews has raised eyebrows. Whenever Iran has made progress in its nuclear industry, Grossi has reiterated concerns about Tehran's activities. For example, shortly after Iran began construction on a new nuclear site in Isfahan on February 5, Grossi accused Iran of lacking transparency in its nuclear activities in an interview with the Associated Press.

Also, a glaring issue with the IAEA is its double standards regarding nuclear activities. While Iran has consistently complied with the agency's regulations, its actions are often labeled as concerning. Conversely, the IAEA shows leniency towards the nuclear activities of the Israeli regime, which has not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and operates uninspected sites.

Ultimately, if the IAEA aims to foster greater cooperation and transparency from Tehran, it must reassess its approach toward Tehran.

Regional stability lies in collective action in security sphere: diplomat



TEHRAN- Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Iran's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, has noted that security and stability in the region is premised on carrying out the collective action in the domain of security.

During an interview with the private Shamshad TV at the Iranian Embassy in Kabul, he added that "we have good cooperation in the security domain with both Pakistan and Afghanistan."

Qomi also underscored the need for vigilance of regional countries against anti-security and destabilizing schemes of enemies.

Given the recent border incidents in the region, he stated, "Security is not fun for any country or establishment, and it is the undeniable right of any system to defend its land, people, and national security."

The Special Envoy for Afghanistan went on to add that "from an international law perspective, the goal of securing any point of a land and its people falls under legitimate defense, and it is the right of that system to confront any threats against it, so what happened in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and Pakistan was within the framework of self-defense and in accordance with international law."

"It is possible that a region may not be under the control of a central government, and then what happened was essentially a response against a threatening point," Kazemi Qomi continued.

He also underlined that "foes have gone to great lengths to foment challenges for the region and its countries, namely Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, so our interests lie in serious cooperation."

"Today we have no doubt that Americans are seeking to exploit the lands of neighboring countries for terrorist and anti-security activities and intelligence schemes. Therefore, the necessity of security cooperation among neighboring countries including Tehran, Islamabad, and Kabul is inevitable."

Qomi averred that "today, security cooperation is one of the goals that we pursue in the regional contact group on Afghanistan, so one of the consequences of forming regional contacts is not only economic and trade development with Afghanistan but also how we can shape security cooperation between neighboring countries and Afghanistan; we are following this path."

The Iranian diplomat highlighted that "recent events at the shared borders with Pakistan were not unexpected. Regional stability and security lie in a collective movement towards security, this is a desire and necessity for all regional countries, and we must defeat the desires of enemies who seek to create conflicts between countries, insecurity, and instability in the region."

He warned, "The military invasion by America faced defeat, but their mischief has not ended. Today, the aim of America's proxy forces, meaning Daesh terrorists, is to disrupt security in the region."

Last year, Kazemi Qomi held talks with senior Pakistan officials during an official visit to Islamabad on regional developments, bilateral cooperation, and the situation in Afghanistan.

Earlier, during an interview with Iranian TV, he described Afghanistan as a component of the Resistance Axis.

"There is tremendous potential in these

countries, notably Afghanistan, where individuals are willing to lay down their lives for the sake of Al-Quds. They possess martyrdom and Jihadist forces," he remarked.

Back in January, he expressed the Islamic Republic's willingness to deepen ties with the neighboring nation.

During a meeting with Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting foreign minister of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban government, Kazemi Qomi stated that Iran is prepared to strengthen its cooperation with Kabul and support the Afghan people.

In another meeting between Kazemi Qomi and the deputy prime minister of the Taliban for political affairs, Mohammed Abdul Kabir, the Taliban political leader referred to the terrorist Daesh group as the common enemy of Iran and Afghanistan.

Last month in a meeting with an Iranian media delegation in Kabul, Muttaqi characterized relations between Kabul and Tehran as progressing.

In a meeting with Muttaqi in Tehran, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the Foreign Minister of Iran, said that Afghanistan has to take practical steps to address the current issues, such as water sharing and border security, between the two nations. He pointed out that Tehran and Kabul have established significant ties in a number of areas and expressed hope that the acting Taliban government in Afghanistan would work with Tehran to find practical solutions to some of its current issues.

The senior Iranian diplomat also pointed to a recent meeting in Tehran in favor of Palestine and praised the Afghan delegation, led by Muttaqi, for its active involvement in the gathering. He also discussed developments in the besieged Gaza Strip and encouraged all Muslim and freedom-seeking countries to assist the Palestinian people in the face of the genocidal atrocities committed by the occupying Israeli regime.

Futile Sabotage

Frome Page 1 ▶ Immediate countermeasures were deployed to mitigate the impact of the attack, underscoring Iran's preparedness to thwart sabotage attempts on its oil and gas infrastructure.

Attributing the incident to nefarious forces, Minister Oji denounced attempts by adversaries, saying that by people's massive participation in the National Day and the great Bahman 22 rally on Friday, it was predictable that foes would carry out sabotage in the country.

Despite these hostile actions, he affirmed Iran's resilience, assuring that the enemy's objectives to disrupt gas supply in major provinces had been thwarted and normal transmission operations would resume promptly.

In the aftermath of the attack, residents of Isfahan received purported messages of gas flow disruptions. The move was seen as supplemental psychological warfare to the explosions.

The messages were dismissed as "fake" by Governor Abolghasem Asgari.



He urged citizens to rely on official sources, such as IRIB News, for accurate information regarding the province's gas supply.

The Tehran Times previously shed light on the U.S. government's clandestine and overt strategies, signaling a retaliatory stance of the White House dating back to January 31 in a report titled Covert and Overt Operations.

In the wake of the attack on U.S. logistic hub in Jordan called Tower 22, the White House found itself at a crossroads, grappling with a range of unrealistic options in its quest to

restore lost prestige.

Despite widespread speculation among various media outlets regarding a potential direct U.S. military attack on Iranian soil, spurred by critiques from U.S. senators and politicians regarding President Biden's approach to West Asia, the Tehran Times emphasized the formidable international obstacles Washington would encounter.

Furthermore, Iran's robust deterrence capabilities and the United States' entanglement in multiple global conflicts served as

additional deterrents to any direct assault on Tehran's interests.

In an exclusive report, the Tehran Times highlighted the current lack of conducive conditions for a blatant and overt military operation within Iran's borders from the American perspective. The perceived high risk associated with such an endeavor contributes to the unlikelihood of immediate direct action.

However, the absence of overt aggression does not negate the existence of plots for covert operations designed to inflict damage while allowing plausible deniability.

The report underscored the potential for U.S. response, indicating a window of approximately one week, during which cyber attacks could be employed as part of a broader retaliatory strategy. This assessment sheds light on the intricacies of U.S. decision-making to carry out malicious plans and evade responsibility.

Since then, Iran has incurred cyber attacks and, most recently, acts of sabotage against gas pipelines, which highlight the current state of play between Iran and the West.

Qalibaf also stated that the Iranian nation cherishes tireless efforts of the IRGC and is really appreciative of the origination's priceless services.

Appreciating the glorious presence of the proud Iranian people in the February 11 rallies and the celebration of the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, he expressed gratitude to the people in all cities and villages who were more enthusiastic than ever in supporting Iran's security and peace with unity and solidarity.

Qalibaf emphasized that "the magnificent perseverance of the people for the ideals of the Islamic Revolution once again reminds officials that we must show our gratitude to the people in action by making double efforts to fulfill their demands and expectations for their rights and improving their lives."

seize more than a dozen hostages for several hours on a train in western Switzerland.

Vincent Derouand, a spokesperson for the Vaud prosecutors' office, said an investigation was underway in part to determine the man's motive.

Speaker calls IRGC paragon of resistance against world oppressors



TEHRAN- Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has referred to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as an epitome of full resistance against oppressors and hegemonic powers in the world.

In an open session on Wednesday, he said that "the organization has been able to become

a successful model for standing up against power-hungry forces."

He went on to add that "today, the IRGC has become a symbol of resistance against the world arrogant and has successfully transformed into a model for the resilience of the people against power-hungry entities."

Alluding to the teachings of the late Imam Khomeini, he described the power of belief in God and the Iranian nation's self-belief in a way that led ordinary young people, farmers, workers, and students in cities and villages to nurture heroes like martyrs Soleimani, Hemmat, Bakri, Baqeri, Kazemi, and Shushtari and to establish a strong fortress called the IRGC of the Islamic Revolution, which guarantees the security, peace of the Iranian people, and protection of the land and soil, and gives hope to the helpless and oppressed people of the world.

Tehran calls on Switzerland to provide clarification over killing of Iranian citizen

TEHRAN- In a meeting on Wednesday with the Swiss Ambassador to Tehran, the Director-General of Consular Affairs at Foreign Ministry demanded an official explanation from the country regarding the spread of news about the killing of an Iranian national by the Swiss

police.

The Iranian official emphasized the necessity for all governments, including the Swiss government, to respect the rights of Iranian citizens, adding that Tehran expects precise information in this regard to be provided to the country by the Swiss government.

The Swiss Ambassador stated that they will follow up on the matter with their relevant authorities and will announce the outcome.

Swiss police purportedly said that a 32-year-old Iranian asylum-seeker was killed by police after he allegedly used an axe and a knife to

Book Review Part 6:

Social media: an important tool of Western politicians in cognitive warfare

TEHRAN - Mehdi Mohammadi, in Chapter 6 of 'Mirage of Shadows', sheds light on the primary strategy adopted by the West and Israel to incite and sustain the riots that unfolded within Iran in 2022.

The author delineates the perpetual existence of grounds for protest within every nation, including Iran. The Iranian populace grapples with diverse social, economic, and financial challenges, providing a fertile breeding ground for discontent. However, the spontaneous eruption of protests in Iran wasn't the sole cause behind the intensity of the 2022 riots. What transpired that year was a calculated manipulation by the West and Israel, leveraging the existing unrest and molding it into a profound and unmanageable upheaval through the means of cognitive warfare.

Cognitive warfare represents a sophisticated and intricate strategy designed to exploit the vulnerabilities inherent in human cognition and communication systems to achieve specific strategic objectives. By leveraging an understanding of how individuals process information and formulate decisions, those engaging in cognitive warfare can effectively

manipulate perceptions and influence outcomes, often in ways that remain subtly concealed from the target audience's immediate awareness.

This form of warfare integrates a blend of cyber, informational, psychological, and social engineering capabilities to exert influence over perceptions, often in tandem with other instruments of power. In essence, cognitive warfare involves the weaponization of public opinion by external entities to shape public and governmental policies, destabilize institutions, and exert control over societal narratives. At its core, cognitive warfare heavily relies on emerging communication technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, to orchestrate its operations and achieve its objectives.

Central to cognitive warfare is the deliberate fostering of discord and the erosion of cooperation within targeted populations. Techniques employed include accentuating divisions, fostering polarization, and exploiting emotional vulnerabilities through adept manipulation. The ultimate aim of cognitive warfare encompasses delegitimizing institutions, discrediting authorities, instilling distrust, desanctifying societal values, fostering disillusionment, and undermining

social cohesion. It is crucial to differentiate between cognitive warfare and cyber warfare, as these domains often exhibit overlapping characteristics. While cyber warfare typically targets data, information, and software, cognitive warfare directs its focus towards influencing beliefs, values, norms, and modes of thinking.

This modern form of warfare represents an evolved variant of soft power that leverages contemporary cyber media channels to mount strategic attacks on critical thinking and rational decision-making processes. Whether pursued offensively or defensively, the overarching goal of cognitive warfare remains consistent: to shape perceptions, sow doubt in official information sources, and diminish public trust.

With the pervasive expansion of the Internet and its advanced iterations, coupled with the rapid development of social networks and mobile-accessible media platforms, the battleground of cognitive warfare extends to the very fabric of human consciousness. The contemporary individual finds themselves immersed and entangled within the digital realm, reflecting a global landscape where billions of individuals were Internet users as

of July 2023.

The majority of people in Iran are social media users. Iranians are most active on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter), both of which are owned and controlled by Western entities.

Mohammadi previously explained that the group of Iranians the West and Israel were the most adamant on influencing was the Gen Z. People aging from 15 to 24 years old, apart from being easier to sway, also have a large presence on social media and spend a significant amount of time surfing the Web each day. The masterminds of the 2022 riots were especially successful in plaguing the cognition of Gen Z'ers in 2022 and making them believe that they were on the verge of a grand "revolution" because of their close contact with this group of citizens through social media.

While the West and Israel managed to plague Gen z's perception of the reality on the ground, they also began to lionize violent rioters and encourage others to follow on the footsteps of such "national heroes." The enemy's successful use of social media eventually led to many of the tragic and disturbing events that shook Iran in fall of 2022.

To be continued...

Iran water polo discover rivals at Asian Age Group C'ship

TEHRAN – Iran water polo team discovered their opponents at the 11th Asian Age Group Championship.

Iran are drawn in Group B along with Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka and Singapore. Group A consists of Japan, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, China and Thailand. The 11th Asian Age Group Championships will include four aquatic disciplines, namely swimming, diving, water polo, and artistic swimming.

The competition will be held from Feb. 26 to March 9 at the New Clark City Aquatics Center in Capas, Tarlac, the Philippines.

The Asian Age Group Championship is a highly anticipated and prestigious swimming event that brings together young swimmers from across Asia. Held under the patronage of Asia Aquatics (formerly known as the Asian Swimming Federation or AASF), the championship showcases the immense talent and potential of the region's emerging swimmers.

More than 1,000 athletes from 25 countries are expected to compete at the tournament.

2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup the most competitive yet: Octavio

TEHRAN - Marco Octavio, head coach of the Brazil beach soccer team, has expressed his belief that the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in the United Arab Emirates is being held at the absolute pinnacle of quality and excellence.

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

"The level of competition in this edition of the World Cup is incredibly high and in my opinion is the most competitive yet," said the Brazilian coach in his exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

Iran are drawn in Group B along with Spain, Tahiti and Argentina. Team Melli will face Spain in their opening match of the prestigious campaign on Feb. 15. Octavio has coached the Iran beach soccer national team during multiple time periods. Beginning in 2007, he took charge of Iran, with subsequent stints in 2010, 2012, and 2017. Under his guidance, Iran reached the quarterfinals of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in 2013 and 2015.

When asked about the main favorites of the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup, Octavio said, "In my opinion, there are at least 10 teams that have the potential to become champions in the upcoming World Cup.

"These teams include Iran, Spain, Italy, Brazil, Senegal, Japan, and many others. All of these teams are incredibly strong and will undoubtedly put up a tough fight to secure the victory," he added.

A number of the best players in the sport, including Rodrigo, Edson Hulk, Catarino, Mauricinho, and Filipe, are coached by Marco Octavio in Brazilian beach soccer.

"The preparations made by us in Brazil have been exceptional, and we are confident in our readiness for the matches. Although we highly respect our opponents, our complete attention is currently directed towards our first match against Oman, slated for Friday," he concluded.

Sepahan to relish chance against Al Hilal in ACL Round of 16

TEHRAN - Sepahan will relish the chance of taking on Al Hilal in the AFC Champions League 2023-24 Round of 16 on Thursday.

Sepahan are the only team from Iran who advanced from the group stage and will have to be at their best against an Al Hilal side determined to make up for losing in last season's final.

Sepahan had to work hard to confirm their knockout stage spot, with the Isfahan-based side finishing second in Group C.

Their haul of 10 points saw them finishing five

behind Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad but it was enough for the 2007 runners-up to advance as one of the three best second-placed teams.

Al Hilal will be confident of their chances of not only advancing to the quarter-finals but also picking up a third AFC Champions League title.

They have been firing on all cylinders on the domestic and continental fronts and Sepahan can expect a tough test from one of Asian club football's giants.

The match will be held in Isfahan's Naghsh-E-Jahan Stadium.

Iran volleyball determined to choose coach: Afshardoost

TEHRAN – Mahmoud Afshardoost, member of the Islamic Republic of Iran Volleyball Federation (IRIVF) technical committee, says that the federation is determined to select new head coach on Sunday.

Team Melli are without a head coach since parting company with Behrouz Ataei in October 2023. The Federation has not yet succeeded to find the new head coach for the National Team.

Vahid Moradi, caretaker of the federation, has a daunting task ahead for finding the best option since the sport is very popular in the country and the expectations are high.

"The federation has held many meetings so far to find the best replacement for Ataei but has failed to do that due to many issues," the former coach of Iran volleyball team said in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

"The well-known coaches are currently working in the clubs and timing has been a serious problem for the federation. They are busy right now but after the volleyball leagues finished, they are eligible to negotiate for leading Team Melli," Afshardoost added.

The member of technical committee hopes that the head coach of the national team will be chosen in the Sunday's meeting.

"The officials of the federation, members of advisory council and the volleyball fans are unanimous that the next head coach must be among the best and it makes the job tough," he stated. "The national team will hold a training camp in mid-April and then will travel to Brazil for taking part at the 2024 Volleyball Nations League (VNL). I think it could be a good time for the team's preparation for VNL," Afshardoost concluded.

Iran take on Spain at 2024 Beach Soccer World Cup opener

TEHRAN - Iran men's beach soccer team will take on Spain on Thursday at the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup.

Iran are drawn in Group B along with Spain, Tahiti and Argentina. Team Melli will face Argentina on Feb. 17 and meet Tahiti on Feb. 19.

The top two teams of each group advance to the quarterfinals.

Dubai has become a beach soccer hub in recent years. Its marquee tournament, the Intercontinental Cup, has grown into one of the sport's most prestigious, with UAE 2024 participants Iran and Brazil having won four and three titles apiece.

Sixteen nations take to the sand to decide who'll be beach soccer's new world champions.

The FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup will be staged in Dubai from Feb. 15 to 25.

Foolad beaten by Gol Gohar: IPL

TEHRAN – Foolad football team lost to Gol Gohar 1-0 in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Wednesday. Saeid Saharkhizan scored the winner in the before the halftime in Ahvaz's Foolad Arena.

Gol Gohar moved up to fifth in the table, six points behind leader Esteghlal.

On Thursday, Aluminum will host Persepolis in Arak, Paykan meet struggling Nassaji in Tehran, Zob Ahan host Malavan, Shams Azar play Esteghlal Khuzestan in Qazvin and Mes face Havadar in Rafsanjan. Esteghlal will play Sanat Naft in Tehran on Friday.

Iran's 10-month trade with SCO members rises 5.5%



From page 1 ► Latifi noted that Iran's exports to the bloc accounted for 48.2 percent of the weight and 44.4 percent of the value of the country's total exports in the said 10 months.

China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Russia were the top five destinations for Iranian export products in the mentioned period, followed by

Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Mongolia.

Iran also imported 9.7 million tons of products at a value of \$19.1 billion from SCO in the said timespan, registering 17.9 and 10.5 percent rises in weight and value, respectively.

He highlighted that the imports from SCO members accounted for 29.7 percent of the weight and 35.2 percent of the value of Iran's total imports in the period under review.

China, India, Russia, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan were the first five countries supplying the goods needed by Iran in the first 10 months of the current year.

Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Afghanistan, Mongolia, and Kyrgyzstan were also among the top exporters to Iran.

Iran-India annual trade exceeds \$1.8b

TEHRAN- The value of trade between Iran and India reached \$1.836 billion in 2023, according to India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The trade exchange between the two countries declined by 26 percent in 2023 compared to its previous year, the figure was reported to be \$2.499 billion in 2022.

According to the Indian Ministry data, Iran exported commodities valued at \$699 million to India during the past year, registering no significant change from 2022.

Petroleum products were the top goods imported by India from Iran in 2023, and India imported \$221 million worth of such products from Iran this year. The import of Iranian oil products by India in 2023 increased by 26 percent compared to the previous year.

Raw materials for dye production and various fruits were also among the top exported goods to India in 2023.

India's exports to Iran in January-December 2023 experienced a 35 percent decrease and reached \$1.187 billion. In the previous year, India had exported \$1.847 billion worth of goods to Iran.

Rice was the top export product of India to Iran in 2023. India's rice exports to Iran decreased by 34 percent in 2023, falling from \$1.98 billion in 2022 to \$723 million.

India's tea export to Iran also declined by almost a third, from \$86 million in 2022 to \$30 million in 2023. The country's fruit exports to Iran however increased by 14 percent and reached \$55 million and spice exports decreased by 28 percent to \$15 million.

Bank loans to economic sectors increase nearly 27%

TEHRAN- Iranian banking system has paid 43.08 quadrillion rials (about \$86.16 billion) of facilities in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023-January 20, 2024), registering a 26.9 percent rise from the figure in the same period of the previous year, the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced.

As IRNA reported, of the total facilities, 3.508 quadrillion rials (about \$70.16 billion) equivalent

to 81.4 percent, was paid to the business owners (real and legal), and 8.0 quadrillion rials (about \$16 billion) equivalent to 18.6 percent, to the final consumers (households).

During the said period, the share of facilities paid in the form of working capital in all economic sectors was 26.53 quadrillion rials (about \$53.06 billion), equivalent to 75.6 percent of the total facilities paid to business owners.

He named aluminum alloy, labeling machine parts, production line equipment, filters and compressors as the main imported products.

As previously announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran exported 113 million tons of non-oil goods valued at \$40.5 billion during the first 10 months of the present year.

Mohammad Rezvani-Far said that the 10-month non-oil export indicates a nine percent growth in weight, but an 11 percent fall in value, year on year, IRIB reported.

The official also said the country exported \$29.9 billion of crude oil in the mentioned 10 months, registering a 10-percent rise, year on year.

Rezvani-Far further announced that Iran has imported 32.7 million tons of goods worth \$54.8 billion in the first 10 months of the present year, which indicates an 11.6 percent rise in value and six percent growth in weight.

He named China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, and India as the major export destinations of Iranian goods in the said period, and the UAE, China, Turkey, Germany, and India as the main sources of import.

Gold, car parts and accessories, and smartphones were the main imported items during this period, according to the official.

TEDPIX drops 11,700 points on Wednesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 11,787 points (0.56 percent) to 2,078,530 on Wednesday, which is the fifth day of the Iranian calendar week.

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

50 knowledge-based production units established at industrial parks since Mar. 2023

TEHRAN – The deputy head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) said 50 knowledge-based production units have been established in the country's industrial parks and zones since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (late March 2023).

According to Tahmourth Lahouti, currently, 780 knowledge-based production units are based in the industrial parks and zones of the country and 420 units are also in various stages of establishment, IRIB reported.

“Also, 2,869 industrial units capable of becoming knowledge-based have been identified in the industrial parks and zones of the country, of which 179 have been identified in the first half of this year,” Lahouti said.

“So far, we have helped 1,123 industrial units to become knowledge-based,” the official added.

In late January, ISIPO Head Farshad Moghimi said the government has put it on the agenda to help increase the production capacity of 3,300 industrial units across the country in the next Iranian calendar year (begins on March 20).

“Stabilizing and increasing the capacity of active production



units with the approach of helping production growth and preventing stagnation is on the agenda,” Moghimi stated.

He announced the reactivation and increase of the capacity of 8,910 industrial units with the implementation of support measures and added that the implementation of the mentioned support measures has created employment for 92,500 people in the industry sector.

“The implementation of a monitoring plan for reviving idle industrial units, with a focus on small industries active in industrial parks, has led to the reactivation of 4,010 industrial units to the production cycle since the beginning of the 13th government and increased the capacity of 4,900 industrial units,” he said.

According to Moghimi, some 1,192 units have been revived since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023) which has created employment for 23,262 people.

“When the current government administration took office (in August 2021), 17 percent of the industrial units located in the country's Industrial parks and zones were inactive, and now the figure has been reduced to 13 percent with the measures taken,” the official added.

According to the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's latest statistics, more than 59,000 industrial units are active in the industrial parks and zones of the country, which have created jobs for about 1.3 million people.

Over the past few years, many of the production units across

Iran have been wrestling with financial issues as well as the problem of supplying their raw materials, so that, many have been forced to shut down or decrease their activities.

The Industry Ministry's program for reviving such units has tried to identify major problems and issues that the production units are facing to bring them back into the production cycle by resolving such problems.

Back in November 2023, Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Abbas Ali-Abadi inaugurated 20 industrial, infrastructure, and development projects valued at 294.8 trillion rials (over \$58.9 million) in industrial parks and zones across the country through video conferencing.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by the acting head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) Farshad Moghimi.

Put into operation in 11 different provinces, the mentioned projects were inaugurated on the occasion of the national day of supporting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

The projects were carried out in the provinces of Kermanshah, Markazi, Zanjan, Yazd, Alborz, Lorestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Golestan, Isfahan, Qazvin, and East Azarbaijan.

Tehran hosting Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee meeting

TEHRAN- The 18th meeting of Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee began in Tehran on Wednesday.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the mentioned meeting, Masoud Mirzaei, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, while welcoming the Armenian delegation, described the political relations between Tehran and Yerevan as good and added: “We believe that the level of economic relations between the two countries should be improved commensurate with the political relations.”

He said the Islamic Republic of Iran is looking for an operational roadmap to expand

economic relations in all areas with the Republic of Armenia, and all capacities will be used to expand these relations.

In late October 2023, Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash traveled to Armenia to meet the country's senior officials and discuss ways of expanding trade and transit ties between the two countries.

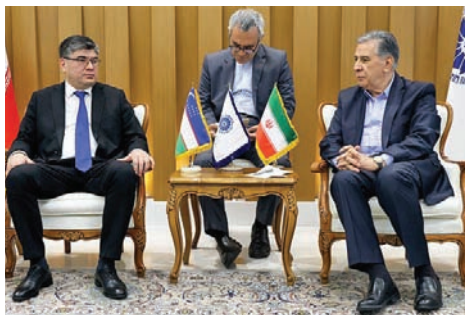
Speaking to the press prior to the visit, Bazrpash emphasized Iran's readiness to export technical-engineering services to Armenia, announcing the plan of the two countries to strengthen the level of trade and

transit, and remove cumbersome regulations in the way of trade development.

Iran and Armenia have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to cooperate in the fields of labor exchange, technical and professional training, as well as, welfare and empowerment of the disabled.

The MOU, signed by Iranian Labor and Social Welfare Minister Solat Mortazavi and his Armenian counterpart Narek Mkrtchyan in Tehran in late October 2023, also covers economic cooperation between the two countries in the fields of petrochemicals, road and construction materials, and medicine.

Uzbek envoy calls for establishing Iran-Uzbekistan economic co-op club



ICCIMA Head Samad Hassanzadeh (R) and Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Tehran Fariddin Nasriyev

THRAN – Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Tehran Fariddin Nasriyev, in a meeting with Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Samad Hassanzadeh on Tuesday, called for establishing an Iran-Uzbekistan Economic cooperation club, the ICCIMA portal reported.

“In this club, in addition to the monthly introduction of business and investment opportunities of the two countries, the issues and problems of two sides' businessmen can also be investigated and resolved,” Nasriyev said.

Hassanzadeh also referred to the \$500-million trade volume between Iran and Uzbekistan and said: “This amount is very low compared to the economic capacities of the two countries, and ICCIMA is ready to take the necessary measures for the development of economic cooperation between the two countries.”

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Abbas Aliabadi and his accompanying delegation, during a visit to the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, in late January, held talks with senior Uzbek officials to broaden bilateral ties in trade, economic and energy fields.

During the visit, the Iranian delegation met and held talks with the minister of industry and investment, the minister of energy, the minister

of mines and geology, and finally the prime minister of Uzbekistan, Mohammad-Sadegh Ghanadzadeh, Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)'s deputy head for International Business Promotion, said at the time.

The agreement of the central banks of the two countries to activate a banking exchange mechanism and the introduction of commercial banks to advance technical negotiations, the acceptance of the Most Favored Nation (MFN) principle by the Uzbek government after several years of negotiations, and the signing of the executive document for the preferential trade agreement between the two countries are among the agreements reached between the two sides during the industry minister's visit to Tashkent, according to Ghanadzadeh.

The two sides also agreed on the cooperation and participation of Iran in the overhaul of Uzbekistan's gas turbines, the establishment of a regional service center for repairs and overhaul of oil, refinery, and power plant equipment in Uzbekistan, and the establishment of gas pressure boosting stations for the country, the official said.

“Iran is also going to participate and invest in the construction of thermal power plants in Uzbekistan, and the Uzbek government has agreed to hand over large areas of metal mines, including iron ore, copper, gold, etc., to Iranian contractors for executive operations from extraction to production,” he added.

Preliminary agreements on the formation of a joint logistics company and the supply of freight wagons by Iran for the development of transportation between the two countries, preliminary agreement on the presence of large Iranian contractors in Uzbekistan's infrastructure projects and facilitation regarding guarantees, preliminary agreement on facilitating the registration of Iranian drugs and medical equipment in Uzbekistan and equipping medical centers with medical equipment based on Iranian knowledge were also part of the achievements of this trip.

Before he visited Uzbekistan, Aliabadi had met with Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Tehran Fariddin Nasriyev, in which he stressed the need to increase the two countries' trade exchanges to one billion dollars per year.

“Currently, the value of trade between the two countries is around 500 million dollars, so achieving the one-billion-dollar goal is not a high expectation and can be reached,” Aliabadi said.

The minister expressed hope that the cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan can become an example for the future cooperation between Iran and Eurasia, adding: “Important areas such as agriculture, electricity, and energy can create broad fields of cooperation.”

Nasriyev also stated in this meeting that “our country is fully prepared for the development of trade relations, and as you mentioned, 500 million dollars is not appropriate for the level of relations between the two countries.”

In mid-June, 2023, Iran and Uzbekistan signed several memorandums of understanding in various fields including transportation, transit, investment, and insurance for expanding economic ties.

Iranian Transport Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash and his Uzbek counterpart signed a document on comprehensive transportation and transit cooperation.

Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi also signed two MOUs with the Minister of Investments, Industry, and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan Laziz Kudratov for establishing joint free zones and expanding cooperation in investment and insurance sectors.

Also, the ministers discussed the establishment of an investment company to transfer Iran's technical know-how to Uzbekistan.

It should be noted that the mentioned agreements and MOUs have been signed as part of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev's official visit to Iran on top of a high-ranking politico-economic delegation.

The corridor of betrayal

How Israel is using Arab countries’ help to bypass the Yemeni blockade in the Red Sea

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – On November 19th, as the world was still struggling to take in the sheer brutality of Israel against Palestinians in Gaza, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called on Islamic countries to cut ties with the regime for at least a “limited period of time” to help save Palestinian lives.

Before governments, people all over the world seemed to follow the advice in a bid to pressure Israel in any way they could. Store shelves in West Asia and beyond began to see an accumulation of Israeli products as citizens refused to spend their money to fund a genocide. Many not only avoided purchasing Israeli-produced goods but also boycotted brands associated with the regime, causing giant companies like Starbucks and MacDonald’s to suffer heavy revenue losses.

Among Arab states, some felt obliged to act against Israeli onslaughts more than others. The biggest display of solidarity toward Palestinians was undoubtedly seen in Yemen. The impoverished country’s Ansarullah movement began to target Israeli ships in the azure depths of the Red Sea, choking off a lifeline extremely vital to Israel - the bustling port of Eliat. Yemen’s courageous stance in support of Gaza, however, did not come at a low price.

Israel’s biggest patrons, the U.S. and Britain, launched airstrikes against Yemeni positions saying they were acting to “protect” the interests of ordinary people. Western media outlets jumped out as stenographers, arguing that Ansarullah’s attacks in the Red Sea would eventually cause prices to surge in the West and hence needed to be dealt with. Nothing though was mentioned about the



fact that only Israeli ships were getting targeted, and that these attacks too would come to an end once the regime agreed not to kill Palestinians anymore.

The Western aerial assaults on January 12th unleashed haunting echoes of years of unrelenting Saudi bombardments for Yemenis. People were reminded of a harrowing symphony that has left vast swathes of the country in ruins, and incited famine across the Arab nation.

The people of Yemen, however, could not care less about the flashbacks they got that night. “Honestly, I was ashamed that Palestinians in Gaza were getting bombed while I spent the night at my safe home. Now I feel less ashamed. I don’t care that we are getting attacked. All I want is to be able to help our brothers and sisters in Gaza,” said a man who had joined millions of demonstrators in Sana’a to express unyielding support for the Palestinians a day after the Western attacks.

Yemen continues to get pounded by American and British fighter jets today as it has refused to halt its operations against Israeli vessels. It hopes that by dealing economic blows to Israel, the regime would

eventually have to stop its attacks on Gazans before it’s too late.

Across the Muslim world though, Ayatollah Khamenei’s request seems to have fallen on deaf ears. After Turkey increased its shipments to the occupied territories, certain Arab countries rushed to Israel’s rescue, essentially squandering everything the Yemenis had been working for.

Startling revelations surfaced on Israel’s Channel 13 in early February, revealing footage of how Israel bypasses Yemen’s blockade in the Red Sea with the help of three Arab countries: Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. It reported that hundreds of trucks of goods and fresh food were traveling from Saudi Arabia and Jordan and eventually reaching the port of Haifa in the occupied territories through Dubai.

While the three Arab states have not yet rejected or confirmed the Israeli report, analysts believe their explanations would not make any difference anyway.

“Most Arab states have not taken any steps to help the Palestinians. Even if they end up denying the corridor exists, people would still accuse them of inaction because

they really haven’t done anything,” Ahmad Dastmalchian, Iran’s former envoy to Jordan and Lebanon, told the Tehran Times.

The former diplomat believes that the Arab states harbor aspirations of reviving the two-state proposals in order to maintain or even enhance their relations with the Israeli regime once the war ends.

“Jordan has constraints in supporting the Palestinians due to its dependence on Washington. But Saudi Arabia and the UAE are making strategic mistakes here,” he explained adding that even if a Palestinian state ends up being formed, Palestinians will never accept to live alongside people who have stolen their lands and identity.

“As long as Israel remains on occupied territories there will be resistance. So normalization with the regime is never going to work. Arabs should instead respect Palestinians’ right to self-determination and let them decide what they want to do with their ancestral lands”.

Meanwhile, some figures in the Arab world have warned the states that passivity in the face of Israeli crimes will have far worse consequences for regional rulers than just disappointment. A renowned Egyptian journalist says the corridor amounts to Arab collusion in the Gaza genocide and could eventually send the public in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE into a furor with reverberating effects.

“We are not asking these three countries to take the same valiant stance as the Yemenis and confront the U.S. and British warships. But we do ask them to listen to their people who are seething over this feigned impotence,” Abdel Bari Atwan warned in an article.

From page 1 ► That number is expected to widely increase once the war is over and the bodies of the dead and missing are dug up from under the rubble.

Attempts to damage the reputation of Palestinian journalists is also another measure by the regime to kill more reporters on the ground inside Gaza in a bid to prevent further reports emerging to the outside world over the Israeli war crimes being committed, especially with a looming invasion of Rafah on the horizon.

According to the Gaza media office, nearly 130 journalists have been killed in the Israeli war on the coastal enclave since October 7, 2023.

What these professionals did was travel to the scene in the aftermath of Israeli airstrikes on residential buildings and broadcast (sometimes live) the pictures of women and children being pulled out of the rubble.

They are also documenting the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where the UN has warned a large portion of the population is facing famine as a result of the tight Israeli siege on the

Tel Aviv spins more media lies

entry of food and water.

The same journalists also travel to the hospitals in Gaza, where the scenes of desperation have seen hundreds of thousands of protesters marching in the capital cities of the Western world on an almost weekly basis.

The reports of the Palestinian journalists make their way to Western media, which use some of their images to show the destruction in Gaza.

By attempting to blend a few reporters with Hamas, Tel Aviv is trying to cut that supply line, while distracting the Western audience with false allegations that the reports from Gaza are inaccurate.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) underlined that the number of media crew workers killed in the war on Gaza is unprecedented and at the end of 2023 said the number of reporters killed in Gaza (within 3 months) sharply surpassed the total number of reporters killed in all war zones around the world in 2022.

There does appear to be a similar pattern

emerging by the regime of discrediting the entire journalistic profession by falsely accusing a few of ties to the armed wing of Hamas, which Israel has vowed to eliminate with the support of the West.

Only recently, Tel Aviv accused less than a dozen UNRWA members of ties to Hamas, prompting Western governments to halt funding to the sole international agency providing critical humanitarian aid to the starved population of Gaza.

There are 13,000 UNRWA workers. Its commissioner general Philippe Lazzarini admitted last week he sacked the nearly dozen workers without any evidence because the agency is facing “fierce and ugly” attacks but it must focus on resuming aid supplies.

Lazzarini did promise to compensate the staff fired if an internal probe confirms their innocence.

Yet, the regime successfully tainted UNRWA in the Western world and is now tainting the image of the journalists in Gaza as its own global image declines significantly.

West Africa: Between neocolonialism and geopolitical competition

By Omella Sukkar

Over the past decades, West African countries have been boldly expressing their dissatisfaction with their relations with former colonial states, with whom they have had deep cooperation in the political, economic and military fields since the colonial period. In particular, countries in the region have been reviewing their relations with Western countries such as France. And the United States, which claimed to have left it alone in the fight against terrorism and extremism, and sometimes even added more problems to these threats.

The bridges between France and Africa have been cut, especially under the administration of Emmanuel Macron, who said that he abandoned the “Françafrique” policy and aimed to establish equal and fair relations with continental countries, because Macron, whose actions differed from his speeches, continued French intervention in Africa. It continued to exploit the economies of the former colonies on the continent with new colonial

practices, and did not achieve the expected success in the security field. African countries that must combat greater threats day after day began to search for new partners to combat security threats and strengthen political and economic structures. This allowed for an increase in the influence of major and middle powers such as China, the United States, Russia, Japan, India, Brazil and Turkey in Africa. The fact that these actors compete with each other while trying to increase their effectiveness on the continent has had both positive and negative consequences for the continental countries.

Competition results

Increased competition among international actors in Africa has led to a complex set of positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, increased foreign investment and aid have often led to infrastructure development, economic growth, and job creation in many African countries. Many international organizations, including non-governmental organizations, have

played a critical role in addressing humanitarian crises, promoting health care, and supporting education initiatives. In addition, the influx of foreign capital has facilitated technology transfer and knowledge exchange, contributing to advances in the agriculture, healthcare, and renewable energy sectors.

However, intense competition has also led to negative consequences, through which resource conflicts and geopolitical rivalries have exacerbated existing tensions within African countries, leading to instability and violence in some regions. The influence of external actors in shaping national policies can sometimes undermine local governance structures and hinder the ability of African states to make sovereign decisions that best serve their populations. Furthermore, economic competition can create dependencies and debt burdens, as some countries may struggle to repay loans or face challenges in negotiating favorable terms. Balancing the positive and

negative impacts of international competition in Africa remains a critical challenge to ensure sustainable development and protect the autonomy of African countries.

On the other hand, it can be said that some competing actors in Africa come to the fore from time to time. In previous years, we argued that continental countries were under the heavy influence of competition between the United States and China. However, during the era of Donald Trump, the Washington administration’s foreign policy focused on the Asia-Pacific region. On the other hand, many African leaders expressed their dissatisfaction with China. Because China has not fulfilled its obligations under its agreements with these countries, it has also caused economic hardship due to the “debt trap.” Although China remains the continent’s largest trading partner, it is no longer a player with which the continent’s countries seek to develop relations with great enthusiasm.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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WORLD HEADLINES

WHO: Assault on Rafah would be an ‘unfathomable catastrophe’

The World Health Organization on Wednesday warned that an Israeli military offensive against Rafah in southern Gaza would cause an “unfathomable catastrophe” and push the territory’s health system closer to the brink of collapse.

“Military activities in this area, this densely populated area, would be, of course, an unfathomable catastrophe... and would even further expand the humanitarian disaster beyond imagination,” said Richard Peeperkorn, WHO representative for Gaza and the West Bank, Reuters reported.

Peeperkorn said WHO’s ability to distribute medical aid to Gaza was limited because many of its requests to deliver supplies had been denied.

More than one million Palestinians crammed into Rafah at the southern tip of the Gaza Strip, on the border with Egypt, where many are living in tent camps and makeshift shelters after fleeing Israeli bombardments elsewhere in Gaza.

EU pressed to ‘urgently confront’ Israel’s ‘grave and imminent threat’

The leaders of Spain and Ireland say they’re “deeply concerned at the deteriorating situation in Israel and in Gaza”.

“The expanded Israeli military operation in the Rafah area poses a grave and imminent threat that the international community must urgently confront,” they said in a joint letter shared by the Spanish government, Al Jazeera reported.

In the letter, they called for an “immediate ceasefire that can facilitate access for urgently needed humanitarian supplies”.

Pro-Palestinian protesters disrupt Democrat’s congressional victory

Protesters waving Palestinian flags attempted to crash the stage as Democrat Tom Suozzi started his victory speech after winning the New York congressional seat vacated by disgraced Republican George Santos.

“You can’t hide!” one protester shouted at him. “You’re supporting genocide! Stop supporting genocide!”

Suozzi has been a vocal supporter of Israel’s war on Gaza.

The Long Island district held for a decade by Democrats was flipped by Santos in the 2022 midterms. However, Santos was kicked out of the House less than a year into his tenure for lying about his background and being indicted for several financial crimes.

Chileans urge govt. to cut Israel ties over Gaza war

Pro-Palestinian protesters staged a rally in the Chilean capital Santiago calling on their government to sever ties with the Israeli regime over the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip.

The demonstrators took to the streets in the Providencia district of the capital city on Tuesday, as they waved Palestinian flags and demanded an end to Israel’s brutal aggression against Gaza, Press TV reported.

The protesters called on President Gabriel Boric to immediately withdraw the country’s ambassador from Israel, and urged the government to close the “criminal” Israeli embassy.

Back in January, Boric said the situation in Gaza is “much worse” than that of the German city of Berlin in 1945, referring to the Fall of Berlin that ended

World War II.

The Chilean president’s remarks came after in November the country recalled its ambassador from Israel for consultations due to the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

Accommodating around half a million Palestinians, Chile hosts the largest Palestinian community outside Arab countries.

The Latin American country recognized Palestine as a “free, independent, and sovereign state” in 2011.

Russia: U.S. causing global unrest with strategy of ‘controlled chaos’

The United States is creating instability in region after region in a strategy of controlled chaos, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told the State Duma (lower house of parliament).

“Creating instability in region after region, the Americans want, so to speak, controlled chaos. However, I actually don’t think they know what they are doing,” Lavrov said. TASS reported.

According to Lavrov, Russia and its numerous foreign partners are convinced that the West’s attempts to perpetuate its unilateral advantages in international affairs are bound to fail.

“The emergence of a multi-polar and fairer world order, designed to ensure the implementation of nations’ natural right to decide their future and choose their development path, has been a key trend in global development for more than a decade,” he stressed.

House Republicans impeach Biden’s homeland security secretary

The U.S. House voted to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, with the Republican majority determined to punish President Joe Biden’s administration over its handling of the U.S.-Mexico border after failing last week in a politically embarrassing setback.

The evening roll call proved tight, with Speaker Mike Johnson’s threadbare Republican majority unable to handle many defectors or absences in the face of staunch Democratic opposition to impeaching Mayorkas, the first Cabinet secretary facing charges in nearly 150 years, AP wrote.

In a historic rebuke, the House impeached Mayorkas 214-213.

With the return of Majority Leader Steve Scalise to bolster the Republicans’ numbers after being away from Washington for cancer care and a Northeastern storm impacting some others, Republicans recouped — despite dissent from their own ranks.

Biden said in a statement released after the vote, “History will not look kindly on House Republicans for their blatant act of unconstitutional partisanship that has targeted an honorable public servant in order to play petty political games.”

Shehbaz Sharif set for Pakistan’s top job as elder brother steps aside

Shehbaz Sharif is set to begin a second term as Pakistan’s prime minister in coming days, returning to the role he had until August when parliament was dissolved ahead of last week’s elections.

Sharif, 72, was named by his party and coalition allies to head the nation despite his elder brother and three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif winning a seat in the assembly and being favorite to be sworn in for a fourth term, Reuters wrote.

Nawaz Sharif’s daughter Maryam said in a post on X that her father did not want to run a minority coalition government having had clear majorities in his three previous stints as premier. Their Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party controls only 80 seats in the 264-seat parliament but has been promised support by six other parties for a majority.

5 artworks from Gilan province to be showcased at 8th Fajr handicrafts festival

TEHRAN - In a remarkable achievement, five captivating artworks by skilled artists from Gilan province have earned a prestigious place in the spotlight at the 8th Fajr Handicrafts and Traditional Arts Festival.

Providing insights into the selection process, Mostafa Khanalinejad, the Deputy of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts at the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department in Gilan province, explained that during the preliminary judging overseen by the Deputy of Handicrafts and Traditional Arts of the Ministry, five outstanding works by artists from this province successfully secured coveted spots in the 8th Fajr Handicrafts and Tra-

ditional Arts Festival.

Khanalinejad further detailed the selected handicrafts, attributing them to the skilled hands of Shima Rahbaryar, Sharare Kiabi, Sayede Asieh Sadeghi, Mohammad Hossein Shabani, and Zohra Ashuri. The 8th edition of the Fajr International Handicrafts and Traditional Arts Festival, titled "Sarv-e Simin," is scheduled to take place from February 16 to 20, 2024, in Tehran.

Sarv-e Simin stands out as a grand festival in Iran, characterized by the presence of ambassadors and cultural attachés, with the submission of 5000 artworks from 2000 artisans.

Official highlights cultural gains from Tehran Tourism Exhibition

TEHRAN - Mohammad Hosseini, Vice-President for Parliamentary Affairs, has highlighted the significant cultural and economic advantages associated with the 17th Tehran International Tourism Exhibition, expressing support for this grand event.

Hosseini underscored the potential of such exhibitions to make a substantial contribution to the growth of the country's tourism industry. He expressed appreciation for the organization of these events, recognizing the manifold benefits they bring.

Delving into the distinctive and alluring tourist attractions of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he observed, "The diversity and richness of our tourist attractions, cultural heritage sites, handicrafts,

and the accomplishments of notable figures are rarely paralleled. However, achieving a more extensive introduction necessitates well-planned programs and events, such as this tourism exhibition, catering to both domestic and international audiences."

Hosseini emphasized that the tourism exhibition serves as a primary platform to showcase Iran's excellence in the tourism industry, highlighting its diverse offerings. He added, "Beyond these events, the role of digital marketing and media outreach is crucial in presenting Iran to the global audience. With the necessary support from other institutions, these endeavors in the tourism industry can ultimately yield positive cultural and economic outcomes.

Valuable archaeological discoveries announced in Asir, Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Heritage Commission announced on Monday its most significant discovery in the archaeological site of Jurash in the southern Asir region.

The excavations that continued during its 15th season in 2023 culminated in the discovery of Jurash Archaeological Site, one of the most important archaeological sites in the southern part of Saudi Arabia.

The scientific team at the site revealed new architectural residential units whose walls were built with stones and clay, the commission said in its report, adding that these units are an extension of what was unveiled during archaeological excavations in the previous 14 seasons, specifically on the northern side of the site.

The Heritage Commission also announced the discovery of a new irrigation technology for the first time at the site. This is consisting of a well built using the method of stacked stones, connected to water channels built with two rows of stones with a channel in the middle for distributing water to the residential units, and other channels branching out from it that flow into water basins adjacent to the

units. Also discovered were stoves and terraces built of stones and clay.

A large number of stone tools for daily use were also found, in addition to a collection of beads made of fine stones. With regard to archaeological finds, a granite stone was found containing an Islamic inscription consisting of three lines, and it is considered the second of its kind at the site.

A large group of stone tools for daily use was also found, including pestles, powders, grinders, mills of different sizes and shapes, broken ordinary and glazed pottery, glass, steatite for the bodies, edges and handles of pottery, glass and stone vessels of various sizes, and beads made of precious stones.

Through excavation projects, the commission seeks to study and document archaeological sites, preserve them and introduce them, and benefit from them as they are an important cultural and economic resource within its responsibilities towards cultural heritage, protecting and caring for it, and highlighting the civilizational role of Saudi Arabia.

(Source: Saudi Gazette)

Iran in frames



Rudkhan Castle stands as a remarkable medieval fortress nestled in the picturesque landscapes of Iran. Situated 25 km southwest of Fuman in the Gilan province, this military complex boasts a rich history dating back to the Sasanian era (224-651). Perched on two tips of a mountain, the castle spans an expansive 2.6 hectares (6.4 acres), showcasing its strategic and imposing presence.

Health tourism takes center stage at Tehran International Exhibition

TEHRAN - In a move to address weaknesses in health tourism structures, the head of the Health Tourism Council has announced the establishment of a dedicated task force within the Office of the Iranian President.

According to Iranian media, this development unfolded during the second National Symposium on Tourism and Green Investment, which included a panel on the future of health tourism in Iran. The event, held on the sidelines of the 17th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition, brought together influential figures such as Soheil Dadkhah, the head of the Business Development Foundation at the University of Science and Culture, Diako Abbasi, the head of the Health Tourism Council at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, and Parisa Nasiri, a researcher and health tourism guide.

Parisa Nasiri, the panel's secretary, underscored the undeniable role of health tourism in spurring growth across various sectors crucial to the country's development. While acknowledging recent effective actions, Nasiri pointed out the absence of a comprehensive plan in the national policy agenda, hindering Iran from fully capitalizing on its health tourism potential. The focus of this session, with the participation of university professors and relevant officials, was directed toward shaping the future of health tourism in Iran.

The central theme, as stated by Nasiri, centered around the 'Introduction and Evaluation of



Factors Influencing the Development of Health Tourism in Iran.' Each speaker was invited to share perspectives from the standpoint of responsible authorities and the university.

Soheil Dadkhah outlined a realistic scenario for the gradual growth of Iran's health tourism

“The number of health tourism centers has more than doubled from 130 to 280 during the 13th government's efforts.”

industry, given current situations such as sanctions. He highlighted the need to focus on regional markets, especially neighboring countries, aligning development strategies with the relative advantages of each province. Dadkhah expressed optimism about universities playing a crucial role in planning for both public and private sectors, contributing to growth and prosperity in the in-

dustry.

Diako Abbasi detailed the goals, planning, and future initiatives of the Health Tourism Council, emphasizing the untapped opportunity within Iran's health tourism sector. Acknowledging existing structural weaknesses as the cause of underutilization, Abbasi announced the formation of a special task force within the Office of the President for health tourism. Top priorities include strengthening associations related to health tourism.

In response to a question about facilitating the entry of health tourists and advancing the industry, Abbasi underscored the significance of recent visa cancellations with certain countries. Ongoing efforts aim to enhance support measures for further development.

Health attachés to be stationed at Iranian embassies to attract tourists: health minister

Behram Eynollahi, the Iranian Health Minister also visited the 17th Tehran International

Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition on February 14, revealing plans to station health attachés at Iranian embassies, aiming to streamline and attract health tourists from diverse countries.

During his visit, Eynollahi engaged in discussions with health tourism activists and exhibition participants.

Eynollahi shared the news of over one million and 200 thousand health tourists entering the country in the first ten months of the current year, noting, "Health tourists seek treatment in Iran from 60 different countries."

The minister emphasized, "The responsibility for health tourism now rests with embassies, where health attachés will oversee these matters."

He confirmed, "The inaugural health attaché will be stationed at the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad next week."

Eynollahi underscored the thirteenth government's dedication to health tourism, stating, "The number of health tourism centers has more than doubled from 130 to 280 during the thirteenth government's efforts."

The 17th Iran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition 2024 kicked off at the Tehran International Permanent Fairground on February 12. This three-day-long exhibition is considered Iran's premier tourism industry event and seeks to not only showcase the tourism potential of the Iranian capital but also extend a warm welcome to enthusiasts and professionals in the field of tourism.

Tourism in Iran enjoys significant growth: minister

TEHRAN - In a recent announcement, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Ezzatollah Zarghami, revealed a noteworthy surge in tourism over the past two years in Iran.

During a meeting on the sildeline of the 17th Iran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition 2024 (TITE), Zarghami underscored key initiatives set to elevate Iran's tourism standing, including the identification of suitable lands for tourism development, installation of tourist signs, launch of targeted tourism campaigns, and the facilitation of opportunities and investments under the comprehensive urban development plan overseen by municipal authorities.

Applauding the collaborative efforts, Zarghami specifically acknowledged Tehran municipality's vital role and emphasized the imperative need for increased financial allocations to fortify tourism infrastructure.

The minister delved into the strategic importance of considering people's needs and ensuring visitors feel a genuine connection to the city. Zarghami emphasized that fostering a tourist-friendly environment is piv-

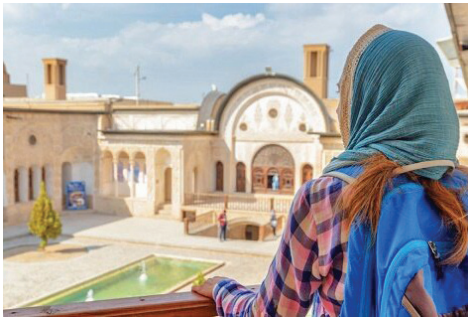
otal, asserting that there is no alternative but to fortify tourism. He backed this claim with concrete evidence, citing substantial growth achieved in the sector over the past two years.

Expanding on the collaborative efforts, Zarghami commended various stakeholders for their contributions to creating a positive environment for both local and international tourists.

The minister expressed gratitude not only for financial support but also for the synergy among governmental bodies, private enterprises, and the broader community.

Looking ahead, Zarghami provided insight into the strategic vision for Tehran's tourism growth. He highlighted the importance of comprehensive urban development plans, integrating physical infrastructure, cultural elements, and recreational offerings. The minister envisioned Tehran as a leading hub for cultural exchange and immersive tourism experiences, with the government committed to fostering a welcoming atmosphere for visitors through innovative approaches.

Moreover, Zarghami suggested the integration of technology to enhance the overall



tourism experience. He proposed the implementation of digital solutions, including interactive maps and virtual tours, to cater to the preferences of modern tourists and position Tehran as a forward-thinking and technologically advanced destination.

The 17th Iran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition 2024 kicked off at the Tehran International Permanent Fairground on February 12. This three-day-long exhibition is considered Iran's premier tourism industry event and seeks to not only showcase the tourism potential of the Iranian capital but also extend a warm welcome to enthusiasts and professionals in the field of tourism.

Mysterious mummies discovered by archaeologists in Chinese desert

Experts have narrowed down the origins of mysterious mummies found in the Chinese desert, and the results are quite surprising.

Most of us typically associate mummification with Ancient Egypt, but the remains of other mummified objects have been found across the world. In Peru, experts were left baffled by the discovery of mummified "non-human" remains that had just three fingers.

The discovery of hundreds of human mummies in the deserts of China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region equally confused experts, who have now used the genetic data to determine their origins.

They were found located off

the Silk Road in the Tarim Basin but left experts confused due to their unusual traditions and appearance that seemed out of place for the region.

Dating from between 2,000 BCE to 200 CE, the mummies possessed "Western" features and wore colourful wool clothing. Alongside them were indicators of a farming culture, including animals like cattle, sheep and goats, as well as food products like wheat, barley and cheese. The mummies were discovered buried in boat-shaped coffins which were covered with cow hides.

In a new study in the Nature journal, researchers analysed the genetic data gathered from 13 of the earliest known Tarim

Basin mummies. They date back to 2,100 to 1,700 BCE and have revealed where the people came from.

The results showed the mummies were direct descendants of the Ancient North Eurasians - a group of hunter-gatherers who occupied the north Eurasian steppe and Siberia. They are a group that disappeared approximately 10,000 years ago despite being quite widespread before that.

Genetics of Ancient North Eurasians can still be found in some populations of Indigenous groups in Siberia and the Americas today.

The study contradicted theories that the group were herders from the Black Sea region

of southern Russia, Central Asians, or early farmers on the Iranian Plateau, and suggested that they had been there for some time and had a clear local ancestry.

Christina Warinner, a study author, professor of Anthropology at Harvard University and research group leader at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, said in a statement: "Despite being genetically isolated, the Bronze Age peoples of the Tarim Basin were remarkably culturally cosmopolitan - they built their cuisine around wheat and dairy from the West Asia, millet from East Asia, and medicinal plants like Ephedra from Central Asia."

(Source: Indy100)

Tehran hosting G5 meeting on women and family health

TEHRAN – The 28th Technical Meeting of the G5 Forum commenced in Tehran on Tuesday with the theme of “Women and Family Health” and will wrap up on Thursday.

G5 member states including Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Uzbekistan (as an observer member), and the World Health Organization have attended the meeting.

The participants will examine joint strategies to improve the health of women and mothers. Also, indicators, achievements, challenges, and threats to women's health in physical, mental, and spiritual categories, and the future approaches will be discussed, the Health Ministry website reported.

Addressing the meeting, Health Minister Bahram Einollahi said the main objective is improving regional countries' health. Mother's health is the pillar of a family's health, which leads to the expansion of health in a country. So, mothers have a central role in the family.

“Making up half of the country's population, mothers can play an essential role in the nutritional and mental health of families by maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Women's physical, mental, cultural, emotional, and spiritual well-being improves health care. Healthy women make a healthy family and subsequently a healthy society.”

Cooperation for ensuring the health of countries in the region is critical since many pilgrims and tourists travel to these



countries, he mentioned.

Einollahi added that the family physician program focusing on family health is being implemented in the country. He highlighted that the International Health Congress will be held in Iran on March 5.

Women play an essential role in the nutritional and mental health of families by maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Stating that in Iran, 99 health care services are provided to women free of charge, he went on to say that preserving the dignity of motherhood, the value of childbearing, timely marriage and childbearing, services, and full coverage of free insurance for mothers and infertility treatment are among these services.

For her part, Ensieh Khazali, the vice president for women and family affairs, noted that good measures have been taken to support women during their pregnancy and breastfeeding period, and their children, up to the age of five, are covered by insurance.

In addition to 99 free health care services, telephone counseling and several screenings for women including heart diseases, cancer, and depression are carried out in the country, she added.

Among other measures is the allocation of certain parks to women to maximize their vitality, physical mobility, and mental health, the official noted.

Referring to the significant reduction in the mortality of pregnant mothers as one of the successes of the country, Khazali stated the mortality of pregnant mothers has decreased from 245 per 100,000 before the Islamic Revolution to 23 per 100,000 live births.

Also, infant mortality has decreased from 110 per thousand live births before the Islamic

Revolution to 8 per thousand live births, which is part of the country's achievements in improving public health, she concluded.

G5 Forum

Iran initiated the establishment of the G5 in 2005 to promote subregional cooperation in health among the group of four countries – Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan – plus the World Health Organization as the fifth member of this group to provide technical support in improving this collaboration.

Several activities have already been taken under this initiative, with the Islamic Republic of Iran taking responsibility for serving as its secretariat.

The first subregional workshop for G5 countries on health system strengthening was hosted by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination of Pakistan on November 19–20, 2013 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Exchanging experiences on issues related to moving towards universal health coverage; developing national roadmaps and strategies for improving service delivery, population coverage, and financial risk protection; assisting each other in health workforce capacity development activities, health system research, national health accounts, and policy development; developing measurable indicators related to three dimensions of universal health coverage were among the goals of this two-day meeting.

DOE preparing distribution map for 19 selected species



TEHRAN – A distribution map for 19 selected species of animals in the country's wildlife is being prepared for the first time by the Department of Environment.

Iran's vast geography is home to many animal species. There are small and big animals living all over the country, IRNA quoted Hasan Akbari, the DOE's director for natural environment and biodiversity, as saying on Wednesday.

“We should care about their habitats [not to be damaged] while implementing development projects.”

For this purpose, the DOE is providing a distribution map for 19 selected mammal species in the country in cooperation with

Shiraz University, Akbari said, adding that almost 50 percent of the work is completed.

The distribution map will be prepared for all felines, including small ones such as sand cats and pallas cats, medium-sized cats such as caracals and lynxes, and large cats like leopards, as well as selected herbivores such as deer, antelope, ram, goat, maral, black and brown bear, the official explained.

“From now on, if there is a project to be carried out in an area, it will be easy to know what species are living there or if there is any sensitive habitat nearby. Therefore, the implementation method for each project will be compatible with the region and its environment.”

Protected areas on the rise

The number of protected areas under the supervision of the Department of Environment has increased 5.5 times after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Before the Revolution, there were a total of 58 protected areas in the country, Alireza Najimi, an official with the DOE said on February 9.

The number of protected areas has in-

creased to 309 after the Islamic Revolution, ISNA quoted Najimi as saying.

In terms of area, the protected sites have expanded from 6.335 million hectares to 18.963 million hectares, he added.

In September 2023, Akbari said that during the last two years, the number of protected areas under a comprehensive management plan has increased, indicating a growth of 18 percent.

“The comprehensive plan studies the condition of wildlife, vegetation, water, and soil. Based on that, the land is classified into several zones,” IRNA quoted Akbari as saying.

In these zones, parts of the area are considered only for protection, parts for recreation and nature tourism, and small parts for administrative activities, he explained.

“In fact, zoning and management are done based on specific conditions and the use of land.”

A series of restrictions are imposed on these zones. For example, road construction or mining are banned. These limitations will ultimately lead to better management and preservation of the region, Akbari concluded.

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‘Recent rainfall not to compensate for water scarcity’

Since the beginning of autumn, the country has been poured with rain, experiencing a 14 millimeters increase compared to the long-term average, nevertheless the water scarcity or the severe drop in groundwater resources are not compensated, director for drought and crisis management department at Iran's Meteorological Organization has said.

Since the beginning of the current water year (September 23) up to November 12, the whole country has received some 35.5 millimeters of precipitation which demonstrates a 14 mm increase compared to its long term mean of 21.6 mm, ISNA quoted Sadeq Ziaeian as saying.

“It also exceeded the last year's autumn rainfall rate of 11.2 millimeters by 24 millimeters,” he added.

The capital also has experienced 44.7 millimeters rainfall while the long-term averages are 29 millimeters which indicates a 15.7-millimeter increase in mean precipitation, Ziaeian explained.

باران پاییزی کم آبی ها را جبران نمی کند

رئیس مرکز ملی خشکسالی گفت: از ابتدای پاییز تا ۲۲ آبان ماه میانگین بارش نسبت به بلندمدت حدود ۱۴ میلی‌متر بیشتر بود و بیش‌بینی می‌شود که تا پایان فصل پاییز بازندگی‌ها در حد نرمال یا بالاتر از نرمال باشد، با این وجود خشکسالی‌های انباشته و افت شدید آب‌های زیرزمینی جبران نمی‌شود. صادق ضیائی‌ان در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا اظهار کرد: میانگین بارش بلندمدت کشور ۲۱۶ میلی‌متر و برای مدت مشابه در سال گذشته، ۱۱۲ میلی‌متر ثبت شده است بنابراین در ایران نسبت به بلندمدت حدود ۱۴ میلی‌متر و نسبت به سال قبل حدود ۲۴ میلی‌متر افزایش بارش وجود دارد. این کارشناس سازمان هواشناسی اظهار کرد: از اول مهر تا ۲۲ آبان، استان تهران ۴۴۷ میلی‌متر بارش دریافت کرده این در حالیست که در این بازه زمانی بارش سال قبل تهران ۹۲ میلی‌متر و بارش بلندمدت تهران ۲۹ میلی‌متر بود بنابراین نسبت به درازمدت ۱۵۷ میلی‌متر افزایش بارش رخ داده است.

Second national risk reduction forum held

TEHRAN –The second national risk reduction forum was held in Tehran on Tuesday to highlight the role of preparedness in dealing with natural disasters.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi, Department of Environment Head Ali Salajeqeh, and more than 200 experts and university professors attended the event.

“The organized presence of non-governmental organizations is very necessary after a crisis,” Vahidi said, IRNA reported.

What is important and should be paid attention to is organizing people after the crisis to help provide aid, he added.

“After the occurrence of any crisis and before the arrival of rescue and relief forces, people of the region can greatly help.”

Throughout the meeting, Vahidi underscored the necessity of continuous training of organizations and said crisis headquarters and other organizations need to improve their existing knowledge and skills; continuous learning is the key to effective crisis management which reduces vulnerability to disasters.

He highlighted organizing non-governmental organizations, accelerating new infrastructures, identifying the risk and reducing its consequences, and creating the potential for the cohesion of the forces during crisis.

To be able to respond more effectively to a crisis, responsible teams have to be present on the scene to identify the crisis and take necessary steps to create a crisis management plan to reduce the risks of accidents, Vahidi said.

“It is very important to encourage people's collaboration in crisis and to organize them to provide help to those in need.”

Vahidi also stressed the need to develop infrastructures for the use of seismographs and accelerometers. Crisis Management Organization will support the establishment of necessary facilities.

Regarding the issue of crisis economy, Vahidi suggested forming a work group to examine and analyze the relationship between the government and the public in crisis situations.

Environmental protection essential

Referring to natural resources and the ways to use them, Ali Salajeqeh, the head of the Department of Environment, stated that disasters are either natural or man-made, and the principle of prevention in either case is to preserve natural resources and the environment.

Apart from climate change that is affecting the country, the problem of waste management, caused by people, is becoming a crisis for the country, which is hoped to be resolved.

Cultural competence

During the meeting, Mohammad-Hassan Nami, the head of Crisis Management Organization, referring to the goals and duties of the national forum, said the institution has five specialized committees and should hold meetings twice a year.

The discussions and ideas throughout the year are reviewed by the committees and presented in the forum.

The forum has 220 members, the heads of various research institutions that are related to the issue of natural disasters are among the main members of the forum.

Pointing out that Iran is a disaster-prone country where 44 out of 64 known hazards in the world occur, he added within the forum, the focus is mostly on hazards such as floods, storms, droughts, subsidence earthquakes, frostbite, fires, fine dust, outbreaks of diseases and the way to deal with them.

Some 250 natural disasters annually

In October 2023, Jafar Miadfar, head of Iran's Emergency Organization, said approximately 250 natural disasters hit the country every year.

Based on a report published by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the country is in the risk level eight out of ten, he added.

A total of 40 natural disasters are known in the world, 32 of which occur in Iran, ISNA quoted Miadfar as saying.

“Iran is one of the ten highly hazard-prone countries in the world. It ranks fourth in Asia. The Iranian people's vulnerability to natural

disasters is 80 percent.”

As a result of these natural hazards, some 3,000 people are killed, 9,000 people are physically injured, and 1.5 million people are affected, he noted.

“Geographical location, topographical features of Iran, and high structural and non-structural vulnerability of the society strengthens natural hazards impacts leading to countless deaths and injuries and other health consequences,” Miadfar highlighted.

He added the rapid development of urbanization has caused many rural residents to live on the outskirts of big cities, places which do not have the necessary resistance against disasters.

Failing to strengthen resilience to natural hazards while developing cities, i.e. poor urban planning and lack of Iranian households' preparedness against disasters are the factors that intensify the damage caused by increasing natural hazards, particularly climate hazards.

Smart crisis management systems on agenda

Designing and launching comprehensive systems with various layers of data for smart management of natural disasters are on the agenda, Hossein Zafari, an official with the Crisis Management Organization, said on February 9.

Iran has about one percent of the world's population, but accounts for six percent of the damages caused by natural disasters, IRNA quoted Zafari as saying.

Surveys show that the damages caused by natural and man-made disasters in Iran cause an average of five billion dollars in damage annually, which has made Iran one of the ten most disaster-prone countries in the world and the fourth country in Asia, he explained.

The Iranian plateau, with its location between two vast expanses of water as well as the intersection of the Eurasian plateau and Saudi Arabia, has always been exposed to numerous natural hazards and disasters.

According to UN surveys, the main natural disasters listed for Iran in 2022 were drought, floods, and earthquakes. Subsidence is also a phenomenon that has emerged as one of the consequences of drought along with the aforementioned three challenges.

Earthquake, as one of the main natural challenges, occasionally becomes an uninvited guest of Iranian homes. On the other hand, the existence of important rivers and water reservoirs in the country has also increased flood risk.

Land subsidence, a gradual settling or sudden sinking of the Earth's surface due to subsurface movement of earth materials is mainly caused by aquifer-system compaction, drainage, and decomposition of organic soils, underground mining, oil and gas extraction, hydro compaction, natural compaction, sinkholes, and thawing permafrost.

Iran's potential in dealing with natural disasters

In 2022, Stefan Priesner, the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Iran, said, “Iran has the potential to deal with natural disasters broadly and the United Nations is willing to document these valuable experiences.”

In case of natural disasters, the United Nations is ready to provide services by forming a permanent working group with representatives of the UN, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Crisis Management Organization, IRNA quoted Priesner as saying.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Nami, suggesting that the two sides should hold meetings every three months for further coordination.

For his part, Nami said all nations have a sense of philanthropy and kindness, but they will face sanctions if they want to provide help. So, this issue should be resolved.

In June 2023, Priesner said the United Nations will use all its power and capacity to assist Iran in dealing with natural hazards by increasing operational performance and improving safety in specialized areas.

“Expressing the desirable capacities of Iran in dealing with natural hazards, he said that we will do everything to assist Iran. In this regard, we can increase operational performance and improve safety in the sector to enhance cooperation.”



FEBRUARY 15, 2024

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When you get ill do not get nervous about it and try as much as possible to be hopeful.

Imam Ali (AS)

Lili Golestan, Nouredin Zarrinkelk collaborate in new translation of “Little Prince”

TEHRAN-The well-known veteran translator Lili Golestan will unveil her new translation of the famous novella “The Little Prince” written by French author Antoine de Saint Exupery on Friday at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran.

Gahgah Publications has published the book with illustrations by the celebrated veteran artist Nouredin Zarrinkelk, Mehr reported.

First published in 1943, “The Little Prince” has been translated into 300 languages and dialects, selling nearly two million copies annually. With a total sale of over 140 million worldwide, it has become one of the best-selling books ever published.

In Iran, the first translation of the book was published in 1954 by renowned translator and writer Mohammad Ghazi. Since then, about 130 other translators have rendered the book into Persian. Notable translators of the book include Abolhassan Najafi, Ahmad Shamlou, Abbas Pejman, Kaveh Mirabbasi, Delara Qahraman, Media Kashigar, Parviz Shahdi, and Mostafa Rahmandoust.

The novella is about a little prince who lives in a faraway asteroid with his rose. One day he comes to Earth where he meets an aviator, a fox, a snake, and some strange people.

Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944) was a French aviator and writer whose works are the unique testimony of a pilot and a warrior who looked at adventure and danger with a poet's eyes.

Equally loved by children and adults alike, “The Little Prince” is one of the most translated books on the planet. With wonderful and whimsical illustrations by the author, the delightful tale straddles a world between adulthood and childhood, philosophy and fantasy, satire, and fable.

“The Little Prince” draws unflattering portraits of grown-ups as being hopelessly narrow-minded. In contrast, children come to wisdom through open-mindedness and a willingness to explore the world around them and within themselves. The main theme of the fable is expressed in the secret that the fox tells the little prince: “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly: what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

Globally, linguists have compared the many translations and even editions of the same translation for style, composition, titles, wordings, and genealogy. As an example: as of 2011 there are approximately 47 translated editions of “The Little Prince” in Korean, and there are also about 50 different translated editions in Chinese.

The book has been adapted to numerous art forms and media, including audio recordings, radio plays, live stage, film, television, ballet, and opera.

Golestan, 79, studied dress and textile design at the Decorative Art Institute of Paris and the same time attended classes on world art history and French literature at La Sorbonne.

“Nothing, and So Be It” by Oriana Fallaci was her first translation, which was published in 1967. The book was received well and encouraged her to translate more novels. She has since translated more than 30 books including “Chronicle of a Death Foretold,” and “The Fragrance of Guava,” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, “Six Memos for the Next Millennium,” and “If on a Winter's Night a Traveler,” by Italo Calvino, “Remarks on Color,” by Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Story Number 3,” by Eugène Ionesco, “Life with Picasso,” by Françoise Gilot, and “Tistou of the Green Thumbs,” by Maurice Druon.

Zarrinkelk, 86, is an animator, concept artist, editor, graphic designer, illustrator, layout artist, photographer, script writer, educator, and sculptor.

He studied pharmacy at University of Tehran and holds a PharmD. Then he studied animation film in the Belgium Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Raoul Servais) from 1969 to 1972.

Known as the father of animation of Iran, he founded the first school of animation, which later merged with the prestigious Faculty of Fine Art of University of Tehran. Zarrinkelk continued being a professor of animation and graphic arts well into his retirement age.

Since 1971, Zarrinkelk has been Jury member of various international animation festivals and illustration biennials. He was elected as the president of Association International du Film d'Animation (ASIFA) by his peers in 2003.

Indian, Tajik, Uzbek musicians perform at 39th Fajr Music Festival

© Tehran Times / Bahman Vakhshour



Internationally acclaimed musician Rahis Bharti (C) from India performed with DHOAD Gypsies of Rajasthan at Vahdat Hall on Tuesday, February 13.

From Page 1 ► “Music has a significant place Rajasthan and connects religions,” Bharti said at the concert. “As an artist, I wish for peace on the planet for all the people of the world. Today, we are members of a family and I try to give you happiness through the music.”

Bharti is the creator and director of various program performed by the legendary Bollywood Masala Orchestra – Spirit of India, Jaipur Maharaja Brass Band, and Chalaang – drummers of India. He has appeared in over 2,500 Performances in 110

countries for the last 18 years.

Tehran's Roudaki Hall hosted two international performances on Tuesday, one from Tajikistan and the other from Uzbekistan.

Tajik musician and singer Abrar Zufarov performed on the second day of the festival at Roudaki Hall. Besides singing, he played Tajik tanbur and setar during his performance, and was accompanied by a dayera player.

Another concert was held at the same venue and Uzbek musician and singer Serdar Soliev performed

mugham music of Uzbekistan.

Iranian traditional and pop singer Hojat Ashrafzadeh also performed at Vahdat Hall as part of the national section of the festival on Tuesday.

In addition to Vahdat and Roudaki halls, five other venues in Tehran play host to various performances during the festival including pop, folk, traditional, and international music.

The festival is held in Tehran and 14 other provinces simultaneously. The seven venues in Tehran host more than 70 performances and over 330 stage performances will be held in 14

provinces including East Azerbaijan, Bushehr, Semnan, Fars, Golestan, Markazi, Mazandaran, North Khorasan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Khuzestan, Kermanshah, Lorestan, Kerman, and Hormozgan.

Organized by the Music Office of the Deputy for Artistic Affairs of Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the festival encompasses various sections such as the competitive (Barbad Award), non-competitive, and research sessions.

The international event will conclude on February 17.

Four Iranian short animations to participate in 28th Animac International Animated Film Festival



Screenshots from “Anita, Lost in the News” (L) and “Phoenix”

TEHRAN-Four short animations from Iran will be shown at the 28th Animac International Animated Film Festival, which will be held from February 15 to 18 in Lleida, Spain.

“Anita, Lost in the News” directed by Behzad Nalbandi, “Our Uniform” by Yeganeh Moghaddam, “Phoenix” by Mona Shams, and “In the Shadow of Cypress” co-directed by Hossein Molayemi and Shirin Sohani are the four Iranian animated films at the festival, ILNA reported.

“Anita, Lost in the News” is a 15-minute animation made in 2023. Created using puppets made from newspaper clippings, it is about a Kurdish-Iranian family of four who died in the sinking of a migrant boat in the English Channel in 2020.

At the time of the tragedy, there were ten more people on board than the vessel could hold. One of the victims was nine-year-old Anita, from whose perspective we follow the story.

The seven-minute “Our Uniform” is one of the five nominees in the category of the Best Animated Short at the Oscars 2024.

In the short flick an Iranian girl recalls school-age memories through the wrinkles and fabrics of her old uniform, quite literally. Rather than using paper, canvas, or a digital medium, Moghaddam painted directly on the cloth used for making

school uniforms to tell the story of a character who dreams of a better future.

Moghaddam's self-produced animation won the Grand Jury prize at Spain's Animayo Festival and the Best Short Animation award at France's Annecy International Animation Film Festival.

The short film stands out for its ability to combine different techniques and media, in what is known as mixed media, creating a visually captivating experience through a unique and creative approach.

The 2022 production explores the footprints of childhood uniforms as they are more than just a piece of clothing and can affect the way people present themselves in public.

Moghaddam is an animator and illustrator who has a strong passion for nature, culture, and the reality she lives in. In her films, she tries to find a voice for beings who usually don't have a voice.

Her student short animation “On the Cover” (2018) gained global attention. Later, she continued creating films and visuals for ecological events. In addition, she has authored the first ecological comic book series for children, published in Iran, titled “The Little Forester.”

“Phoenix,” produced by the Documentary, Experimental, and Animation Cinema Expansion

Center, delves into the concept of migration and leaving one's homeland. It was crafted using the actual voices of Iranian migrants across the world.

It is an animated documentary based on real sounds. The story of the film is about a person who decides to immigrate, and different voices of immigrants collected in documentary form narrate the feelings and events of the hero of the film.

The 20-minute “In the Shadow of Cypress,” produced by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, is the story of an ex-captain suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder who lives with his daughter in a modest house by the sea. They have to face the challenges of a difficult life. One day, something unexpected happens and their lives change forever.

Founded in 1996, Animac is one of the highlights of the international animation calendar. Audiences can view the various screenings at different venues around the city, including the Principal Theater, which is the official festival venue. Parallel activities such as workshops, presentations and alternative shows complete the program.

Over the years, Animac has consolidated its independent and artistic character. Nowadays, it is a rigorous, dynamic and welcoming festival continually making efforts to improve, generating new audiences and attracting those who love animation.

Animac is a festival aimed at artists who use animation as a tool for personal expression. It goes beyond the limits of traditional narrative and seeks visionaries who make independent and daring works full of energy and who take their expressive potential to the limit. It is also a meeting place for artists, where ideas are generated and relations between different artistic disciplines are established.

US authors urge PEN America to take stronger stance on Israel's killing of Palestinians in Gaza

Several authors in the US have criticized PEN America, a nongovernmental organization that advocates for freedom of expression, for its stance on the war in Gaza, after the organization expressed “hope” that a ceasefire would be reached in the embattled Palestinian enclave.

It comes after more than 500 writers and literary professionals signed a strongly-worded open letter to the organization urging it to respond to “the extraordinary threat that Israel's genocide of Palestinians represents for the lives of writers in Palestine and to freedom of expression everywhere.”

The letter condemned PEN America for remaining “silent” about the “Palestinian journalists, writers and poets murdered by Israel” other than in “press releases buried on its website,” Arab News reported.

Issuing a statement, PEN America has said it is “anguished about the direct impact of the current conflict between Israel and Hamas on writers, artists, culture.”

“We hope that the multinational negotiations now under way will lead to a mutually agreed upon ceasefire, ending deadly airstrikes, and

that a resolution can be reached that will save lives in the region, preserve rich and varied cultures, and pave the way toward a lasting peace that enables freedom and creativity for all,” it added.

But some of the writers found this response unsatisfactory. In a message posted on social media platform X, novelist Eman Quotah wrote: “Don't ‘hope’ for a ceasefire, PEN America, CALL for one like other PEN Centers have done.”

The signatories of the letter said PEN America “should disband” if it “cannot live up to its mission of protecting, platforming and amplifying those writers made most marginalized by nefarious forces.”

They demanded that the organization “wakes up from its own silent, tepid, neither-here-nor-there self-congratulatory middle of the road” and do the “bare minimum” by taking “an actual stand against an actual genocide.”

The Committee to Protect Journalists has said that 85 journalists and media workers, 78 of them Palestinians, are confirmed to have died in Gaza since Oct. 7, when Israel launched its bombing campaign in the territory in retaliation for Hamas

attacks in southern Israel.

The onslaught has also killed several poets and writers, including Refaat Alareer, often referred to as “the voice of Gaza.”

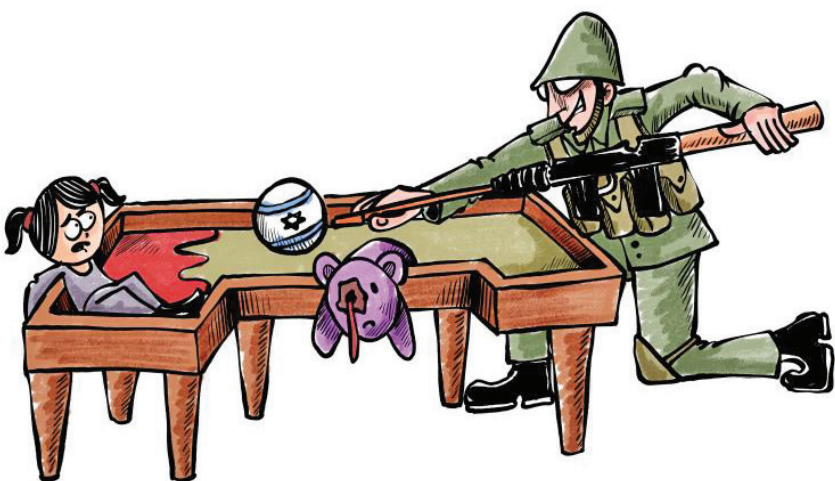
the Israeli army is still systematically destroying residential neighborhoods, civilian infrastructure, and other facilities, rendering most of the Gaza Strip de facto uninhabitable.

In More than four months of war, the overall Palestinian death toll has surpassed 29,000 people with many thousands more lost under the rubble and believed to be dead. Moreover, a quarter of Gaza's residents are starving.

At least 68% of the buildings have been destroyed or damaged in the northern Gaza Strip, at least 72% in Gaza City, 39% in the central camps, and 46% in Khan Yunis. As for the city of Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip, where Israel threatens to carry out a military operation, the destruction rate has reached about 20%.

According to the UN estimates, after the current war, it will take at least a year just to clear the rubble, and between seven and 10 years to rebuild the destroyed homes.

Cartoon of Day



Qaddura

Rafah under attack

Cartoonist: Ahmad Qaddura from Sweden