Straight Truth

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Israelis recognize the bitter truth about their inability to destroy resistance

Endless Hamas

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Israeli troops evacuate a wounded soldier during operations in the Gaza Strip, amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian resistance group Hamas, Jan. 31, 2024.

French sociologist: Israelis engaged in "real massive slaughter" in Gaza

A French philosopher and sociologist, who is one of the country's most revered intellectual figures, has denounced the Israeli massacre in the Gaza Strip.

"I am both astonished and outraged by the fact that those who represent the descendants of a people who were persecuted for centuries for religious or racial reasons... That the descendants of this people who are today the decision-makers of the State of Israel, that they could not only colonize an entire people, partly drive them out of their land and seek to expel them for good," Edgar Morin, who is also a Jewish WW2 veteran, wrote on X.

He added that, "Israelis are engaged in a real massive slaughter on the populations of Gaza and continue, incessantly, hitting civilians, women, and children."

"I think we are living through a horrible tragedy because we are also powerless in the face of this thing that is unleashing. At least, I say: bear witness! The only thing that remains if we cannot resist concretely is to testify. Let's resist in our minds, let's not be fooled, let's not forget, let's have the courage to face things head-on," Morin said.

Nasrallah: Israel to 'pay with blood' price of killing Lebanese civilians

The secretary general of Lebanon's Hezbollah says the Israeli regime will "pay with blood" the price for the recent killing of civilians in the country's south, stressing that the massacre will not force the resistance movement to back down from supporting Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah made the remarks in a televised speech broadcast live from the Lebanese capital city of Beirut on Friday on the occasion of Hezbollah's Martyred Leaders Day, which annually falls on February 16, Press TV reported.

The speech came two days after an Israeli strike targeted a building in the southern Lebanese city of Nabatiyeh, claiming the lives of seven members of a family, including a child.

In a separate attack by the illegal entity, a woman and her two children were also killed in the village of as-Sawana in southern Lebanon.

Nasrallah condemned the Israeli strikes on Nabatiyeh and as-Sawana as "deliberate massacres," and said Tel Aviv must know that it "went too far" by its targeting of civilians.

Hezbollah's "initial" response to Israeli massacre

By Ali Karbalaei

TEHRAN- Lebanon's Hezbollah waged a barrage of rockets and missiles at Israeli sites in what the resistance movement said was an "initial" response to the regime's airstrikes that killed at least eleven Lebanese civilians, including children.

Israeli media reported that 25 rockets and two anti-tank missiles were launched from Lebanon towards the settlement of Kiryat Shmona in the north. The Israeli army closed several roads in the north following the attacks.

The head of the Margaliot settlement, Eitan Davidi, mentioned that an anti-tank missile hit the settlement, stating that Margaliot has not had a quiet day since October 8.

Earlier, Hezbollah announced that it had targeted the Kiryat Shmona military base with a number of missiles, confirming direct hits. This came after it targeted the Kiryat Shmona settlement with dozens of Katyusha rockets.

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Iran, Russia discuss security in annual meeting on Afghanistan

TEHRAN - The secretaries of the national security councils of Russia and Iran have discussed ways to boost security cooperation between the two countries on the sidelines of an annual meeting in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan.

Ali Akbar Ahmadian and his Russian counterpart Nikolay Patrushev have joined officials from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China, and India to discuss the situation in the war-torn country of Afghanistan which has been grappling with various security, economic, and social challenges as the result of two decades of American occupation.

A wide range of topics concerning security cooperation between Russia and Iran such as the fight against terrorism, intelligence security issues, and economic security were discussed during the bilateral meeting, according to a statement by Russia's National Security Council. The two officials also talked about efforts to prevent foreign interference in the national affairs of regional countries.

"In the continuation of this meeting, the development of a new long-term bilateral comprehensive agreement was discussed and it was emphasized that the conclusion of this fundamental document will give a powerful incentive to further expand beneficial bilateral cooperation in all fields," the statement declared.

FM expresses concerns over Rafah crisis with OIC secretary-general, Algerian, Saudi counterparts

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian raised concerns about the dire situation in Rafah during phone discussions with the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Algerian, Saudi Foreign Minister.

Iran, Saudi foreign ministers engage in phone call

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, engaged in a phone call on Friday to discuss various pertinent issues.

Among the topics on the agenda were the bilateral relations between their respective countries, ongoing regional developments, the Rafah crisis, and the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

Both diplomats also delved into the collective efforts being made to address these pressing matters.

Amir Abdollahian, who recently embarked on a regional tour, had prior discussions concerning the Palestine issue with diplomats from Syria, Lebanon, and Qatar, as well as leaders of resistance groups. ▸ Page **2**

Iran, Tatarstan universities to bolster academic ties

TEHRAN – Universities of Iran and Tatarstan have signed 12 memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to deepen their scientific cooperation, according to the head of the Ministry and Educational Science of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The MOUs are in the fields of agriculture, medicine, space technology, and sport, IRNA quoted Ilsur Khadiullin as saying on Wednesday.

Over 1,840 Iranian students are studying in Tatarstan, he added.

Rustam Nurgaliyevich Minnikhanov, the president of the Republic of Tatarstan, heading a fifty-member delegation of ministers and traders visited Iran on February 14. ▸ Page **7**

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Armenia Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan (L) met Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran on Thursday, February 15, 2024.

Iran, Armenia ink 19 co-op documents during 18th Joint Economic Committee meeting

TEHRAN - The 18th meeting of the Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee was held in Tehran during February 14-15, in which the two sides signed 19 documents and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to enhance cooperation in various areas.

The mentioned documents covered a variety of areas including trade development, customs cooperation, maritime transportation, food, and medicine.

The 18th meeting of the Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee meeting, hosted by Iran's Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), was attended by senior officials and ministers from the two sides including the PBO Head Davoud Manzour, ▸ Page **4**

Isfahan map dedicated to Chinese travelers unveiled

TEHRAN - A specialized tourism map of Isfahan has been published in Chinese, unveiled at the 17th Tehran International Tourism & Related Industries Exhibition on Thursday.

This unique map, which bears notes in English as well, has been developed with the help of Chinese-speaking tour guides, said Alireza Massah, who presides over the tourism department of Isfahan's Municipality.

Highlighting distinctive features of the map, the official explained that the design elements, symbols, and colors were chosen specifically to resonate with the tastes of Chinese visitors.

"For instance, miniature art featuring various historical periods was incorporated into the design, along with color schemes appealing to Chinese preferences." ▸ Page **6**

TEHRAN PAPERS

Continuation of the sabotage project with psychological operations

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

In a note, the Iran newspaper addressed the failure of the sabotage attack on the gas transmission pipeline in two provinces of the country and wrote: The enthusiastic presence of the Iranian people in the 22 Bahman (11 February) rally has, as usual, angered the enemies of our country.

Creating insecurity and sabotage in the country is the goal that anti-Iranian groups and hostile intelligence services have pursued in the past few years. Clearly, the aim of the chaos employers is to sabotage, instill insecurity in society and disturb the public minds of the Iranian people. Basically, a project of insecurity and sabotage is successful when it can make a societal anxious.

Taking revenge for the failures of last year's riots and the failure to promote insecurity due to terrorist acts in some parts of the country, along with taking revenge on the 13th government for work and activity and preventing citizens' gas from being cut off on the coldest days of the year, are the goals that the contractors of sabotage projects pursue to attack the security of Iranians, goals that become smaller and smaller in their eyes every day and will have no other result for them than disappointment and sadness.

Arman-e-Melli: Intensification of tension between Iran and America

In an interview with an international relations analyst Hassan Beheshtipour, Arman-e-Melli dealt with the increase of the tension between Iran and the United States and said: The Americans have repeatedly stated their unwillingness to go to war with Iran. Because they have understood well, that such an action would increase tensions in the region and widen the scope of hostilities and war.

On the other hand, due to the upcoming presidential elections, the price for Washington to enter into a war whose outcome is not clear will be costly.

However, it should not be overlooked that while Washington's level of safekeeping is high regarding the non-intervention of military forces against Tehran, it is Tel Aviv that, with its maximum efforts, is determined to provide a new trap and enter Iran into a direct war; because currently, the public atmosphere of the world has become extremely negative for Israel due to the crimes that happened in Gaza, and Netanyahu is trying to move this atmosphere to another way by creating a new adventure.

Shargh: different positions in the Agency

Shargh devoted its headline to the different positions of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding Iran's nuclear activities and said: While all the attention is focused on the war between Hamas and Israel and the killings in the Gaza Strip, sometimes Rafael Grossi's positions make Iran's nuclear case back to the top of the news again. He claimed that Iran "is not completely transparent" about its nuclear program. He said earlier that the enrichment of uranium with 60% purity by Iran is slowing down a bit. Considering the false positions and claims against Tehran, we are now witnessing a political and diplomatic fluctuation between Biden's behavior in creating tension with Tehran and the continued escalation of Tehran-Agency challenges. Because they neither want to issue a resolution against Iran nor change their position. It is also possible to analyze the possibility that what was raised in the report of the last days of the agency against Iran's nuclear program in the middle of the conflict between Hamas and Israel would be the agenda for 2024 vis-a-vis Tehran.

Javan: The failures of the reveler son of Pahlavi in the political scene

In an analysis, Javan discussed the failure of the plan to re-establish a coalition among the saboteur opposition centered on Reza Pahlavi and wrote: Recently, it was declared that the plan to re-establish a coalition among the opposition centered on Reza Pahlavi has failed and this plan has not been well welcomed even among the opposition in social networks. Some of the opposition argue that basically the actions of Pahlavi and his family against Iran are not aimed at politics, but their ultimate goal is to receive money and funds from the stupid supporters of monarchism as well as Western regimes. Last year, the Charter of Solidarity centered on Reza Pahlavi suffered a heavy defeat. Because both the common point of the signatories of this anti-Iranian charter was to request more sanctions and a military attack on the country, and part of the opposition called it a charter for the separation of Iran. In general, Reza Pahlavi's political record is full of failures and disgraces, and many elements of the opposition have concluded that he should abandon any political action and continue his revelries with the property looted from the Iranian people and become a subject in the opposition theater for fun and laughter.

FM expresses concerns over Rafah crisis with OIC secretary-general, Algerian, Saudi counterparts

From page 1 ▶ **Iran's Amir Abdollahian consults with Ibrahim Taha regarding urgent OIC meeting**

Amir Abdollahian engaged in a conversation on Thursday with Hissein Ibrahim Taha, the Secretary-General of the OIC, covering a range of pressing issues. These included the latest developments in occupied Palestine, the Israeli military's onslaught in the Gaza Strip, the recent devastating conditions in Rafah, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and the OIC's activities.

The Iranian Foreign Minister strongly condemned the recent Israeli attacks on Rafah, which tragically claimed the lives of numerous civilians, including many women and children.

According to Amnesty International, at least 95 people, including 42 children, have been killed in four separate Israeli assaults on Rafah, underscoring the severity of the situation.

Amir Abdollahian urged more proactive measures from the OIC to halt the Israeli aggression in Palestine, noting the significant time gap since the last OIC meeting.

He emphasized the necessity of convening an urgent session to assess the ongoing crisis and take decisive action in response to Israeli aggression.

Highlighting the dire conditions in northern Gaza, including shortages of essential supplies for residents, the Iranian Foreign Minister called for immediate decisions to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, particularly food and medical supplies.

Additionally, Amir Abdollahian briefed Ibrahim Taha on his recent regional tour aimed at supporting the Palestinian people in their struggle against Israeli oppression.

In response, Ibrahim Taha expressed deep concerns about the continuing Israeli attacks and the deteriorating situation in Gaza, condemning the ongoing violence.

He praised the proposal for an urgent OIC meeting and pledged to work towards its convening by consulting with member states.

Iranian FM and Algerian counterpart discuss Palestine issue over phone

In a recent diplomatic exchange, the Iranian Foreign Minister engaged in a phone conversation with his Algerian counterpart, Ahmed Attaf, covering a range of bilateral, regional, and Palestinian issues.

Both diplomats condemned the ongoing Israeli war crimes against the vulnerable population in Gaza, highlighting the dire humanitarian situation and stressing the imperative for immediate international intervention to halt the Israeli aggression targeting civilians, particularly women and children.

They underscored the urgent need for humanitarian aid to reach the Palestinian people, especially those in the northern Gaza region, and called for an end to Israeli military attacks on areas like Rafah, which have resulted in the forced displacement of Gazans.

Rafah, situated approximately 30 km from Gaza City, has seen over half of its 2.3 million residents displaced, enduring harsh conditions on the streets.

During the conversation, the Algerian Foreign Minister extended greetings from President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, advocating for the participation of both leaders in the upcoming Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) summit.

He reiterated Algeria's commitment to strengthening ties with Iran, sharing insights into Algiers' efforts as a non-permanent UN member to address the Israeli onslaught against Gaza.

In response, Iran's Amir Abdollahian provided an overview of his recent regional engagements in Lebanon, Syria, and Qatar, where he held consultations with diplomats and resistance group leaders to coordinate joint actions in support of the Palestinian cause.

He also discussed his initiative to convene an urgent meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which was warmly welcomed by Ahmed Attaf.

Turkish FM foresees promising prospects in Tehran-Ankara relations

In a cordial message directed to his Iranian counterpart, the Turkish Foreign Minister extended warm congratulations on the occasion of the National Day of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Hakan Fidan underscored the profound historical and cultural ties shared between Iran and Turkey, emphasizing that these longstanding connections have laid the foundation for robust bilateral relations, poised for further growth in the years ahead.

Highlighting the recent high-level engagement between the two nations, Fidan acknowledged the significance of the Iranian President's visit to Turkey, affirming that the outcomes of this meeting will significantly influence the trajectory of bilateral relations.

Moreover, Fidan emphasized the critical importance of strong cooperation between Turkey and Iran, particularly in addressing pressing political issues within the Islamic world.

Of utmost priority among these issues is the situation in Palestine, underscoring the shared responsibility of both nations to contribute to regional stability and peace.

Israeli attacks on Rafah

Following the Israeli attacks on Rafah, Amnesty International warned Israel has already violated international law in Rafah in four assaults since December.

Hamas resistance group condemned the latest aerial blitz on the crowded city, saying the aggression represents an "expansion of the scope of the massacres it is committing against our people."

The vast majority of these refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), are trapped between the Israeli regime's genocidal pressure and the collaboration of the Egyptian government.

The escalation of violence in Rafah, the southernmost city of Gaza, comes as the death toll from the Israeli genocidal war on the territory has exceeded 28,000, mostly women and children.

IRGC unveils new weapons

TEHRAN- The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy has unveiled new weaponry aimed at bolstering defense capabilities on three islands in the Persian Gulf.

Previously, IRGC Navy vessels were outfitted solely with guns. However, in a significant development, cruise missile systems with a range of 300 to 700 km have been introduced, capable of being fired while in motion rather than being launched from stationary positions on the shore.

This advancement allows for momentary displacement of the missile systems, reducing the likelihood of detection and enemy targeting.

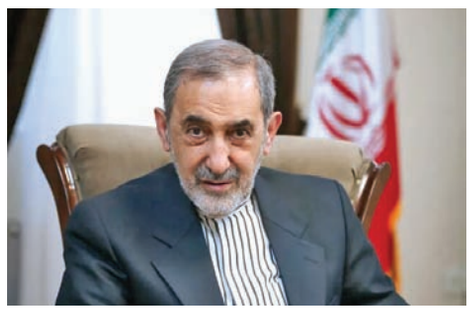
Cruise missiles typically traverse their entire trajectory at very low altitudes to evade detection by enemy radar, maintaining a near-constant speed, either supersonic or near-sonic. Unlike drones, cruise missiles are exclusively utilized as weapons, with the warhead integrated into their structure.

The history of cruise missiles dates back to 1944 during World War II when Germany deployed the first operational cruise missiles. Known as the V-1, or "flying bomb," it featured a gyroscope guidance system and was powered by a simple pulsejet engine, earning it the monikers of "buzz bomb" or "doodlebug."

While its accuracy was suitable only for targeting large areas such as cities, its range of 250 km fell short compared to bombers carrying similar payloads.

However, its advantages included speed, albeit insufficient to outpace contemporary interceptors, and cost-effectiveness, with production costs significantly lower than supersonic ballistic missiles like the V-2.

Iranian official applauds Yemeni solidarity with Gaza amid Muslim 'inaction'



TEHRAN – An advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution has praised Yemen's courageous operations against Israel in the Red Sea while criticizing certain Arab and Muslim countries for their disregard towards the loss of human lives in Gaza.

"Unfortunately, some Islamic and Arab countries not only do not take any positive action in defense of Palestine but some supposedly Muslim governments have only resorted to issuing cautious statements to gain economic benefits and attract the support of the biggest enemy of Islam, America," Ali Akbar Velayati told Al-Jazeera.

The former foreign minister urged other Muslim countries to speak out in support of Yemen and help the country put an end to Israel's genocidal war on the besieged Gaza Strip. The popular Ansarullah Movement in Yemen has been attacking Israeli-bound or Israeli-owned ships in the Red Sea, asking the regime to cease its onslaughts in Gaza if it doesn't want to get hit in the strategic waterway.

In return, the U.S. and UK have been carrying out retaliatory attacks on the Arab country which has yet to reel from almost a decade of war with a Saudi-led coalition. The two Western states have also refused to pressure the regime to halt its deadly attacks.

Amidst the attacks on Yemen, startling reports have revealed that certain Arab countries have been helping Israel bypass the blockade in the Red Sea. Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have formed a land corridor that allows Israel to receive hundreds of trucks carrying goods and fresh food.

Turkey is also being condemned in the Muslim world for refusing to cut economic ties with the regime and supplying it with the fuel needed to operate Israeli fighter jets.

"The Yemenis believe and assert that to stop the massacres of Gaza civilians and until the Zionist regime continues its brutal aggressions against the people of Gaza, they will continue their deterrent actions against the ships heading to the ports of the Zionist regime. Muslims and free-minded people around the world support these humane actions of Ansarullah," Ali Akbar Velayati stressed.

The senior advisor also commented on other resistance forces' attacks on Israeli and American positions, saying the Axis of Resistance is in full unity and cohesion to expel the global arrogance from the region.

"Every day, the resistance front is achieving more success and greater victories. From Yemen to Iraq and Lebanon, Islamic resistance, including Palestine and Syria, all these countries have faced more severe challenges and have now overcome some of these difficulties with triumph and glory. The future of the region will undoubtedly not be in favor of the U.S., UK, and Zionists," the official noted.

Iran apprehends two terrorists linked to Rask police headquarters attack

TEHRAN- The police spokesman disclosed the arrest of two terrorists in southern Iran, highlighting the operation's execution through meticulous technical and intelligence monitoring.

The Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran, formerly known as the Law Enforcement Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran or Disciplinary Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran, commonly abbreviated as Faraja, spearheaded the operation.

General Montazer-al-Mahdi emphasized that the apprehension of these two terrorists occurred promptly in a city within Sistan and Baluchestan province, facilitated by swift and decisive action.

Furthermore, the general stated that a firearm and various equipment were seized from these two terrorists.

General Montazer-al-Mahdi concluded by affirming that four terrorists associated with the terrorist group responsible for the Rask attack had been previously arrested.

Back in late December, Iran's police chief announced that the country would target terrorists "wherever" it sees fit after 11 police forces were killed in a terrorist attack in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan.

Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Radan made the remarks while visiting the city of Rask, where the terrorist attack took place on Friday.

"Among the 11 police forces that were martyred, there were several Sunni individuals. This shows that the enemy does not distinguish between religious sects and different ethnicities. It wants to deal a blow to everyone in the Iranian nation," Radan explained.

Sistan and Baluchestan is home to a large part of Iran's Sunni minority. Different foreign forces have been trying to spark religious conflicts between Shias and Sunnis in the past decades, despite the Iranian people's centuries of peaceful coexistence.

The Police chief also called on Iran's neighbor Pakistan to take the fight against terrorism more seriously.

"I want to assure the people of Iran and our colleagues across the country that the terror act will not go unpunished. We are working with intelligence forces and other armed units to bring all the terrorists to justice," the official stated.

The Jaish-ul-Adl terrorist group has claimed responsibility for the attack, which was one of the deadliest in years for the region sitting close to Iran's border with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Iran's interior minister has pointed the finger of blame at Israel, saying the regime was the one to recruit and train the terrorists.

Iran's ambassador meets with Saudi Minister of National Guard

TEHRAN- Iranian Ambassador Alireza Enayati met with Saudi Minister of National Guard Prince Abdullah bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz on Thursday in Riyadh, marking a significant diplomatic engagement between the two nations.

During the meeting, both officials engaged in discussions on various topics of mutual interest, reflecting the ongoing efforts to strengthen bilateral relations.

The meeting, which took place at the minister's office, was attended by officials from the Saudi Ministry of National Guard, underscoring the importance both sides place on constructive dialogue.This meeting follows a series of diplomatic engagements, including a notable interaction earlier in February when an Iranian military delegation paid a visit to Saudi Arabia.

The delegation participated in the prestigious World Defense Show (WDS) 2024 in Riyadh.

Furthermore, Ambassador Enayati highlighted subsequent talks with ambassadors from Egypt, Turkey, and Algeria during the Riyadh defense exhibition, which showcased cutting-edge advancements in the defense industry from various nations.

Iran's participation in the exhibition held from February 4 to 8 was significant for several reasons, including the potential for strengthening defense ties between Tehran and Riyadh, as well as showcasing Iran's latest military developments and promoting its defense equipment.

The ongoing cooperation between Riyadh and Tehran across various domains underscores the shared commitment of both sides to enhancing their relationship, marking a positive step forward in their diplomatic engagement.

Notably, the formal commencement of military cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia on November 30, 2023, marked a pivotal moment after nearly a decade-long hiatus.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

West unable to hinder Iranian nation's progress: spox

TEHRAN – The Iranian administration's spokesman says the enemies' plan to hinder Iran's progress has proven to be ineffective.

Ali Bahadori Jahromi made the remarks during a meeting with Islamic teaching instructors on Friday, shedding light on the nation's economic landscape and drawing connections to citizens' livelihoods.

Bahadori Jahromi acknowledged the administration's persistent efforts and delved into the intricacies of inflation and economic challenges, stating, "Despite grappling with prolonged high inflation and navigating international challenges, the West strategically sought to impede our country through stringent sanctions, aiming to dampen the spirits of the people."

The spokesman went on to explain, "The Western strategy involved transitioning from economic sanctions to political measures, with the goal of isolating Iran in the process, which turned out to be futile."

Bahadori Jahromi confidently declared, "Despite the enemy's concerted efforts to politically and economically isolate the Iranian people, the 13th administration successfully garnered the trust of the populace."

He also acknowledged Western hostility during rounds of negotiations, which was another impeding factor.

The spokesman concluded, "The 13th government has charted a new course, not only adopting a distinct approach in the economic sphere but also in foreign policy. The average economic growth, which stagnated at zero during the previous government, has surged to 4.5% over the past two years. Our economic growth in the spring and summer, as reported by the official sources, surpassed 7%, while the Central Bank's report indicates a growth of approximately 6%."

Back in May 2018, Trump unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of the 2015 Iran deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and initiated the so-called "maximum pressure campaign" against Tehran despite its full compliance with the pact. Consequently, Washington's European allies, including France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, aligned with the sanctions by curtailing their trade activities with Iran.

The campaign, although falling short of achieving its intended goals, had severe repercussions on ordinary Iranians, especially those grappling with life-threatening illnesses. Even with the change in administration to Joe Biden, the sanctions persisted, constricting financial channels crucial for acquiring basic goods and medicine. This, in turn, disrupted supply chains by limiting the number of suppliers willing to facilitate the sale of humanitarian goods to Iran.

Despite claims by Washington and its Western allies that humanitarian goods were exempted from sanctions, tens of thousands of patients in Iran have over the years died or developed critical ailments due to the non-availability of essential drugs.

Iran vehemently denounced these sanctions as acts of "economic war," "economic terrorism," and "medical terrorism."

The subsequent Vienna talks, initiated in April 2021 with Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and China, aimed at reinstating the JCPOA. Iran, firm in its stance, insisted on the verifiable removal of all U.S. sanctions and sought guarantees against a future abandonment of the agreement by Washington.

However, discussions hit a standstill in August 2022, primarily due to Washington's unwavering position of not lifting all the sanctions imposed on Tehran by the previous U.S. administration. Adding to the complexity, the U.S. and the European Union imposed additional sanctions on Iran in response to nationwide riots in Iran and allegations of Tehran supplying armed drones to Russia for the conflict in Ukraine – claims that Tehran vehemently denies.

Various analysts believe Iran has managed to neutralize sanctions in many areas and begun to repair its economy, which took a heavy toll from Western embargoes.

Iran vows to put MKO terrorists on trial for harrowing crimes

TEHRAN – In a recent press briefing, Iranian deputy president for legal affairs Mohammad Dehghan unveiled the government's resolute efforts to prosecute members of the terrorist group Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization or MKO.

Dehghan underscored the 13th government's unwavering commitment to bringing these offenders to trial, highlighting the consequence of neglecting their past crimes, which he claimed allowed them to escape punishment.

Detailing the ongoing trials, Dehghan stated that the government has diligently addressed the issue since its inception, with multiple sessions dedicated to investigating complaints against the accused and examining the crimes they have committed.

He further elaborated on the proactive role played by the Ministry of Intelligence under the current administration. According to Dehghan, the Ministry actively gathered evidence related to the crimes of the MKO members and presented the collected documents to the judiciary. In response, the judicial system expressed interest and initiated legal proceedings against the accused individuals.

Reflecting on historical shortcomings, Dehghan lamented a past failure in pursuing the crimes of these individuals in Iranian courts. He argued that this failure had allowed them to escape justice, despite their involvement in serious crimes.

Emphasizing the gravity of the alleged crimes, Dehghan characterized the accused as innovators of terrorism in recent decades, accusing them of committing heinous acts against the people. While acknowledging the missed opportunities for justice in the past, he praised the 13th government for its current diligent pursuit of justice, noting significant progress in the ongoing judicial proceedings.

Since the victory of Islamic Revolution in 1979, the MKO has conducted numerous terrorist attacks targeting both Iranian civilians and government officials. Approximately 12,000 out of nearly 17,000 Iranians killed in terrorist incidents over the past forty years have been victims of the MKO's terrorism.

Previously, the European Union, Canada, the United States, and Japan all classified the MKO as a "terrorist organization."

However, in 2012, the United States removed the group from its list of designated terrorist organizations. Following suit, the European Union also delisted the MKO from its own roster of terrorist organizations.

Book Review Part 7:

Why the 2022 riots failed to bring Iran to its knees

TEHRAN – In the opening six chapters of 'Mirage of Shadows,' Mehdi Mohammadi delves into how the repercussions of the West's actions from the preceding two decades unfolded in the autumn of 2022.

He explores the events of that year, suggesting that the riots were orchestrated as a component of a larger scheme aimed at influencing Iran's strategic choices in the region.

The author revealed that in order to incite violent riots in 2022, the West and Israel decided to use a young and low-paid group of people who were willing to engage in illegal acts either for money or under the influence of fake propaganda.

The masterminds of the 2022 unrest then utilized a perfectly crafted strategy to prevent the riots from waning: creating casualties.

Based on intelligence reports, it has been uncovered that amid the chaos, an employee within Iran's Emergency Information Center assisted Western-based anti-Iran media in fabricating new victims purportedly killed during the riots.

This individual, a male, utilized his access to patient information in emergency rooms to selectively identify young females in distressing situations categorized as "delinquents" or those who had left their homes due to familial disagreements. By connecting these individuals with Western and Israeli agents posing as journalists, he received substantial payments from these media organizations.

The fake journalists then approached the families of these girls, falsely informing them that their daughters had been fatally shot by security forces during the unrest. Most families ended up believing the calls and agreed to hold interviews with Western media outlets. They even regurgitated what they had been guided to say by Israeli and Western agents.

In the last chapter of the book, Mohammadi explains why the 2022 riots that had been masterly orchestrated by spy services across the world ended up failing. He believes that the main reason for this lack of success should be attributed to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and his quick understanding and management of the situation.

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei decided to turn to "strategic patience." He realized that a large-scale sedition was underway, and to neutralize it, Iran needed to take its steps very carefully and with great precision. The Leader believed that a grand cognitive war had been unleashed against the country, and, therefore, the people of Iran needed to see the reality of the situation for themselves with the passage of time.

What Ayatollah Khamenei predicted would happen ended up happening. The majority of people inside Iran who were supposed to feel compelled to join the riots eventually grew loathful of the situation. They were faced with an unprecedented wave of violence, profanity, and chaos. For most people inside Iran, the events of 2022 didn't look to be headed towards rectification. They realized that what was happening on the other end was pure criminal and that the country would never be able to benefit from disorder and anarchy plaguing every corner of Iranian citizens' lives.

Something else also happened that ended up benefiting the Islamic Republic and the people of Iran hugely. During the unrest of 2022 and the vast media campaigns against the country, citizens realized that there was no real or legitimate alternative to the current government. They watched how oppositionists were ready to sacrifice anything for a penny from the West, and that the West and Israel did not have the interests of Iranians at heart.

Many who turned their backs on rioters that year were actually avid critics of the Iranian government. However, they realized that even if the government is unable to fill the gaps in some areas, the Islamic Republic is still the best option for making the country ascendant.

The West couldn't wreak havoc in Iran and sentence it to the same fate as Iraq and Afghanistan because Iranians were well aware that nothing good could ever come out of solutions put forth by hegemonic powers seeking to exploit their country's resources.

SPORTS

Esteghlal victorious over Sanat Naft

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team defeated Sanat Naft 1-0 courtesy of a second half goal from Mehdi Mehdipour in the 2023/24 Iran Persian Gulf Pro League (PGPL) on Friday.

Mehdipour scored the solitary goal of the match just two minutes into the second half.

Esteghlal cemented their place in top with 35 points, four points ahead of Sepahan.

On Thursday, Aluminum football team edged past Persepolis 1-0 in Arak.

Amir Nouri found the back of the net in the 75th minute.

In Isfahan, Malavan defeated Zob Ahan 1-0, Paykan and Nassaji shared the spoils in a 1-1 draw in Tehran, Shams Azar and Esteghlal Khuzestan played out a goalless draw in Qazvin and Mes were held by Havadar to a 0-0 draw in Rafsanjan.

Iran move a place in FIFA ranking

TEHRAN – Iran national football team moved one place to 20th in the latest edition of the FIFA Men's World Ranking, released on Thursday.

Team Melli advanced to the 2023 AFC Asian Cup, where they suffered a 3-2 loss against Qatar in the semifinals.

Qatar, who won the Asian Cup for the successive time, moved up 21 places to 37th.

Japan, who were eliminated in the quarterfinals of Qatar 2023, remained Asia's highest ranked side but moved down one spot at 18.Argentina remain top followed by France and England.

The next edition of the FIFA Men's World Ranking will be published on 4 April.

Sepahan's Morais rues red card

TEHRAN – Mohammad Daneshgar's red card was the reason for Sepahan FC's late collapse against Al Hilal SFC on Thursday, said head coach Jose Morais.

The first leg of the AFC Champions League 2023-24 Round of 16 tie looked set to end in a 1-1 stalemate but Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal took full advantage of Daneshgar's sending off to strike twice in added time to take a hefty lead going into next week's rematch in Riyadh.

"The only 'weakness' we had was the red card. I did not see any other weaknesses. Defensive organization is our main strength but I must say conceding the second goal was a surprise as we were defending with nine players to Al Hilal's five," said Morais.

"We played against a very good team. With one less player, we will definitely face challenges. We suffered and sacrificed ourselves. Sometimes we didn't make the right decisions, but we played a good game before the dismissal.

"We had many chances but we didn't score, but it's not over yet," the Portuguese added.

Also, Al Hilal head coach Jorge Jesus said his side deserved the victory against Sepahan in the first leg.

"We won because we were better and we deserved this win. Congratulations to my players," said Jesus.

"It is a good advantage and with respect to our opponents, we will continue to play our game and I want to win again," he added.

Tractor complete signing of Serbian winger Deletic

TEHRAN – Tractor football team completed signing of Milos Deletic on Friday.

The Serbian winger, who traveled to Tabriz on Thursday to participate in medical tests, has penned an 18-month deal with the Iranian top-flight club.

Deltic has most recently played in Greek football team Volos.

Deletic's arrival in Tabriz is not just significant for Tractor but for the league as a whole. Tractor, currently positioned fourth and trailing the league leaders Esteghlal by four points, are in the thick of the title race.

Deletic's addition to the squad is seen as a strategic move to bolster their attacking options. With a career that began in Mladenovac in 2012, Deletic's journey through the ranks of European football has been marked by determination and consistent performance. His recent achievements in Greece have only added to his reputation as a player capable of making a difference on the field.

Fakhroddini joins Esteghlal

TEHRAN – Iran's Esteghlal football team completed the signing of Aluminum Arak winger Milad Fakhroddini.

The 33-year-old player has joined the Blues on an 18-month deal.

Fakhroddini is Esteghlal's third signing in the winter transfer window after Rafael Silva and Jaloliddin Masharipov.

He will replace Kevin Yamga, who will miss the rest of the season after an eye surgery.

Esteghlal, Motahari part ways: IPL

TEHRAN – Amir Arsalan Motahari parted ways with Esteghlal football team on Friday.

The 30-year-old forward joined the Blues in 2020 and scored 29 goals in 123 matches for the team.

Motahari was left 'frustrated' over his lack of playing time in Esteghlal.

He was a member of Iran football team in the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Inter postpone Mehdi Taremi's arrival

TEHRAN – Inter, who were expected to welcome Mehdi Taremi for his medical tests on Tuesday, have now decided to postpone the Porto Striker's arrival.

The 31-year-old Iranian has less than six months left on his contract with the Portuguese club and isn't interested in penning a new deal, allowing him to sign a pre-contract with his new club, which is set to be the Nerazzurri.

Taremi has agreed to sign a two-year contract with an option for a third worth around €3m net per season plus add-ons, and Inter penciled in his medicals for this week, keen to finalize his arrival long before the summer.

As detailed by Gianluca Di Marzio, Inter have decided to postpone both Taremi's flight to Italy and his pre-transfer medicals at the club, delaying things until later in the year. The club's management want to avoid any possible problems for the striker, who still has four months left to play at Porto.

Iran will never give up: Moslem Mesigar

TEHRAN – Iran national beach soccer team forward Moslem Mesigar says that they will never give up.

Team Melli started the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup on high note Thursday night, beating Spain 3-1 on penalties.

The match ended 6-6 after four periods.

"We followed exactly what our coach told us. He kept telling us we could win the game. Iran will never give up. When you wear this shirt, you never give up," Mesigar told FIFA.com.

Iran is scheduled to play Argentina on Saturday in Group B.

The competition is being held in Dubai, the UAE from February 15 to 25.

Iran, Armenia ink 19 co-op documents during 18th Joint Economic Committee meeting

From page 1 ▶ Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Mher Grigoryan, Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan, Armenia's Deputy Minister of Economy Narek Teryan, and the Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mehdi Zeighami.

Tehran, Yerevan eye $3b of annual trade

Speaking at the meeting, Mher Grigoryan said Iran and Armenia can increase their annual trade to $3 billion.

Underlining the significance of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting, Grigoryan said: "Considering the relations and cooperation between the two countries, we can implement the agreed matters with joint efforts and take the necessary steps for ensuring the interests of the people of the two countries."

"Iran is not just a neighboring country for us, but a very important partner and we have to deepen the relations between the two countries," he stressed.

Iranian government fully supports implementation of agreements with Armenia: Raisi

Prior to attending the second day of the Joint Committee meeting on Thursday, Grigoryan held a meeting with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, during which Raisi said his government fully supports the agreements reached with Armenia. "We support the implementation of all agreements made between Tehran and Yerevan, and (implementing these agreements) requires efforts and diligent follow-up of the Joint Economic Committee of the two countries," the president said.

Iran, Armenia could be gateway linking east to Eurasia

On the sidelines of the meeting, TPO Head Mehdi Zeighami held a meeting with Narek Teryan to discuss ways of expanding trade relations.

In this meeting, Zeighami said Iran and Armenia could be the gateway to link east to Eurasia by developing their transportation infrastructure at borders.

"Having a common land border, Iran and Armenia can act as a gateway to Eurasia by developing road infrastructure and transit routes," he said.

Armenia welcomes Iranian companies' participation in infrastructure projects

In another meeting on the sidelines of the event, Armenian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Vahan Kostanyan met with Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari in which he called on Iranian companies to participate in Armenia's road construction and infrastructure projects.

Armenia, Iran could soon enhance energy swap deal

Earlier on Tuesday February 13, Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan said that Armenia and Iran could soon increase the volumes of the gas for electricity swap deal.

The gas-for-electricity agreement between Armenia and Iran has been extended until 2030 and enables Armenia to import greater volumes of natural gas and export more electricity.

"I believe that in terms of the legal documentation we have implemented the important phase and soon, as required, according to needs and also infrastructures, we will be able to use that opportunity. New power transmission lines are under construction in order to be able to export greater volumes of electricity to Iran. Both sides have the desire to increase the volumes, and the changes will be visible in various stages," Sanosyan told Armenpress.

The minister also spoke about the involvement of Iranian companies in construction projects in Armenia. He said that the bigger the project the harder it is to find contractors.

Iran ready to export medicine to Armenia

Also, during the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting, the Head of Iran's Food and Drug Administration (IFDA) Heidar Mohammadi voiced the country's readiness to export domestically produced drugs to Armenia.

Iran enjoys self-sufficiency in the production of drugs and pharmaceutical equipment, he said.For her part, Deputy Minister of Healthcare of Armenia Lena Nanushyan said that Iran has made significant progress in the production of medicines and medical equipment.

Armenia welcomes cooperation with Iran in the field of health tourism, pharmaceutical insurance, and healthcare, the official added.

Construction of 5 solar farms underway across Iran

TEHRAN – The head of the technical office of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) has said that five solar parks are currently being constructed across the country, Mehr News Agency reported.

"The government has approved the plan for the establishment of 17 solar parks in six provinces, five of which are being constructed," Ruhollah Ebrahimi said.

According to the official, the mentioned parks are being established in Qazvin and Kerman provinces.

The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), on behalf of the Energy Ministry, is in charge of the construction of the mentioned solar parks, and so far this organization has had good cooperation with ISIPO for the implementation of the said plan, Ebrahimi explained.

According to the official, the government has also allowed the export of the excess electricity generated by the mentioned solar parks.

"Iran's electricity network is connected through transmission lines and substations, and if electricity production exceeds electricity consumption in the country, and if approval is obtained from neighboring countries, it is possible to export the excess electricity," the official said.

Back in July 2023, the head of SATBA said that solar parks would be established in every province in the country during the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2024).

Mahmoud Kamani said that these parks will be set up with the aim of renewable energy development in the country.

The official put the current capacity of Iran's renewable power plants at 1,070 megawatts (MW).

He has also previously announced the construction of 110,000 solar power plants with a capacity of five kilowatts (KW) for low-income groups in the current Iranian calendar year.

Kamani said that the tender for the construction of solar power plants with a capacity of 2,200 megawatts, left over from the plan for the construction of solar power plants with 4,000 megawatts capacity in the past year, will be also held this year.

Export from Markazi province rises 6% in 10 months on year

TEHRAN- The value of export from Markazi province, in the center of Iran, rose six percent during the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023-January 20, 2024), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the acting head of the province's Customs Department announced.

Ruhollah Gholami said 1.554 million tons of products worth about $957 million were exported from the province in the ten-month period, indicating also 16 percent growth in weight, year on year.

He said that the products were exported from Markazi province to 85 countries around the world, and named Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Armenia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the major export destinations.

Government determined to attract investment in free trade, special economic zones

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- The establishment of free trade zones (FTZs) in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989 - March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azarbaijan Province and Maku in West-Azarbaijan Province, both in the northwest of the country.

As the free trade and special economic zones have great potential to accelerate economic development, the development of existing free trade and special economic zones and the establishment of new zones has become one of the major economic approaches of the Iranian government, and the government is determined to attract investment to these zones.

In last August, Secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council Hojatollah Abdolmaleki, said the growth of investment-making has doubled in the country's free trade and special economic zones during the current government's incumbency.

The official said that the implementation of development projects has also doubled.

In an interview conducted by the Tehran Times in last June, Abdolmaleki said: "In the past, the amount of foreign investment made in the zones was very limited and the reason was that the investment opportunities and capacities in these areas were not well introduced. This [Iranian calendar] year (began on March 21, 2023), we started a program that, thank God, is working very well, and that is preparing investment packages and introducing them to domestic and foreign investors."

These packages are in fact a preliminary feasibility study plan that shows the profitability of that plan, the amount of capital required, the required raw materials, technical and technological issues, consumer and market, which is actually the feasibility studies of that project and it shows whether the project is profitable or not, he added

"We gave the title of "Safe haven for Investment" to Iran's free trade and special economic zones because, first of all, the cost of production in these areas is very low, the cost of land, the cost of manpower, the cost of energy and the cost of access to raw materials are very low, and there is appropriate infrastructure in these areas, and they mostly have good access to global markets, in addition to domestic markets. And in these areas, very special discounts and exemptions are offered as well", the secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council further highlighted.

"Profitability in these areas is very high and our goal with these packages is to make the work of the investor easy", he underlined.

As announced by Abdolmaleki, Iran unveiled 850 foreign investment packages in the 23rd China International Fair for Investment & Trade (CIFIT), which was held in last September.

As reported, the country presented packages ready for investment in its 48 free trade and special economic zones during the mentioned fair.

The secretary of Iran's Free Zones High Council, who traveled to China to participate in the mentioned event, said at the time that 850 foreign investment packages worth 15 billion euros were ready for the investment of foreign partners, which were presented in that exhibition.

In early December 2023, the official announced that 1,000 investment packages worth nine quadrillion rials (about €20 billion) have been prepared to be offered to investors in the country's free trade and special economic zones.

Speaking to the press on the sidelines of the Second Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Exclusive Exhibition on December 5, Abdolmaleki said: "The preparation of investment projects to introduce the country's free and special economic zones to international economic operators and investors was put on the agenda since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] year."

"Investment projects are considered as a tool to introduce the opportunities and advantages of investment in the country's free and special economic zones to the economic operators. The preliminary studies of each of these projects have been done, the infrastructure has been provided and the necessary licenses have been issued," he explained.

According to the official, the mentioned investment packages had been unveiled in four stages since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year, the last of which worth 2.5 quadrillion rials (about $5.0 billion) was presented in the EAEU exclusive exhibition.

The secretary of the Free Zones High Council emphasized that these zones are considered as poles of the economic progress, adding: "Free and special economic zones are frontiers of the country's international economy and more than a third of the country's non-oil exports was done from these zones.

At the same time, the official outlined 10 new strategies to increase investment and export in the country's free trade and special economic zones.

Abdolmaleki made the remarks in a meeting with the deputy heads of the country's free zones on the sidelines of the second EAEU Exclusive exhibition.

He stated that the mentioned strategies mainly focus on a network of cooperation among the investment and economic departments of the country's free zones.

"Joint marketing between the free zones in the fields of income, investment, logistics, and export is the main purpose of the said network," he explained.

Implementing a comprehensive plan for developing logistics and re-export from free zones by using the capacities of combined transport and transit among free zones is another part of the mentioned strategies, the official said.

"The third strategy is the use of the capacity of international organizations and agreements such as the Eurasian Economic Union. Shanghai, BRICS, ECO, etc.," he added.

The official stated that identifying the advantages and distinctive features of free zones and introducing them to each other to benefit from the relative advantages of each zone in the network structure is another part of the mentioned coordinated strategies.

"The fifth strategy is to use the passenger goods model to maximize the income of free zone organizations and the sixth strategy, is to attend exhibitions and domestic and international business events to introduce the investment opportunities of free zones in line with the continuation of the path taken this year," Abdolmaleki said.

The seventh strategy would be to determine a supply chain of goods among free zones in such a way that goods are exchanged, sold, or supplied in a cooperative network, the official said, adding: "using China's One Belt One Road plan with a focus on free zones, determining a comprehensive tourism network of free and special zones to outline the common interests and goals are the eighth and ninth parts of this program; and monetary, banking, and financial cooperation in the form of drawing up a cooperation style sheet to finance construction projects and investment is the tenth strategy."

Annual production of road construction, mining machinery rises 100%

TEHRAN - Manufacturing of road construction and mining machinery in Iran has increased by 100 percent in the previous Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20, 2023), an official with the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry said.

Speaking at the fourth National Event on Knowledge-based Industry on Thursday, Mohammad Mousavi, the deputy minister for heavy machinery and equipment industries, said tractor manufacturing in the previous Iranian year increased by 37 percent compared to the year before.

Mousavi had said earlier in November 2023 that 3,500 road construction and mining machines were manufactured in the country in the previous Iranian calendar year, IRNA reported.

Referring to a plan for the modernization of road construction machinery, he said: "In the field of mining and road construction machinery, we have 15,000 worn-out machines which are over 20 years old. Due to the efforts of the private sector, 10 powerful Iranian companies were able to achieve a 100 percent increase in production in 1401 compared to 1400."

According to the official, the Industry Ministry is taking the necessary measures to maintain the current upward trend in the production of the mentioned machinery in the country and plans are underway to achieve a 40 percent increase in output in the current year.

He said all the country's road construction and mining machinery are going to be renovated in the next three years, noting: "The main problem of manufacturing companies is the supply of raw materials, and I hope that the plans we have had for the supply of raw materials will lead to an increase in production [of such machinery]."

The official said Iranian manufacturers of heavy machinery are also eying exports to foreign destinations and the upcoming EAEU exclusive exhibition would be a good opportunity for such companies to ink deals in this regard.

Over 33,000 tons of red meat produced in a month

TEHRAN- Production of red meat in Iran stood at 33,510 tons in the tenth month of the current Iranian calendar year (December 22, 2023-January 20, 2024), showing an 18 percent fall compared to the same month in the past year, Mehr news agency reported.

As reported, beef and veal had the lion's share in the country's red meat output during the tenth month with 18,226 tons, followed by lamb and mutton with 11,881 tons, goat meat with 2,266 tons, and red meat from other livestock with 1,137 tons.

Supply of red meat in the tenth month also fell nine percent from the ninth month.

Iran is among the leading consumers of red meat in the West Asia region with lamb being the most sought after. However, the consumption per person is around a third of what is normally seen in countries like the U.S. and Australia, mainly due to the prohibition of pork in Islamic law.

The major part of Iran's red meat imports comes from countries like Brazil, where Iranian supervisors directly control culling methods to ensure they comply with religious rules.

Israelis recognize the bitter truth about their inability to destroy resistance

Endless Hamas

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- The Israeli prime minister continues to push back against growing international pressure to end the regime's genocidal war on the besieged Gaza Strip that began on October 7.

On Friday, Benjamin Netanyahu poured cold water on efforts aimed at establishing truce between his regime and the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas.

"Israel categorically rejects international dictates regarding a permanent settlement with the Palestinians," Netanyahu said.

He added that Tel Aviv will "continue to oppose the unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state".

Netanyahu has repeatedly vowed to go ahead with the brutal onslaught in Gaza until achieving "total victory" over Hamas and destroying the resistance group.

But his dream has so far remained elusive and is indicative of the fact that his paranoia and narcissism have grown.

Since October 7, the Israeli military chief has generally spoken of "dismantling" rather than eliminating or eradicating Hamas.

The term used by Herzi Halevi indicates that even a protracted war will not be able to destroy Hamas.

A document drawn up by Israel's military intelligence showed that even if the Netanyahu regime dismantles Hamas' organized military capabilities, the resistance

group will continue to operate in Gaza, that's according to a report by Israel's Channel 12 aired Thursday evening.

The document, which could give Netanyahu a horrible nightmare, also states that "authentic support remains" for Hamas among Gazans.

Presently, there seems to be no end in sight to his troubles.

A poll by the Israeli daily Maariv published on Friday suggested that only 32% of Israelis see Netanyahu as the most suitable figure for the premiership while 47% said that war minister member Benny Gantz is more suitable for the position.

Although both Netanyahu and Gantz are complicit in Israel's atrocities against Palestinians, the study is indicative of divisions among politicians.

Anti-Netanyahu protests are also continuing in Israel over the premier's failure to secure the release of the remaining captives in Gaza.

They say the Netanyahu cabinet is squandering opportunity after opportunity to do a deal with Hamas.

Foreign pressure

Israel's Western allies including the U.S. are further exerting pressure on Netanyahu to put a halt to the Gaza war.

In a Thursday phone call, President Joe Biden warned Netanyahu not to go ahead with his planned assault on Rafah.

French President Emmanuel Macron, meanwhile, warned that an Israeli invasion of Rafah "could only lead to an unprecedented humanitarian disaster."

The city in southern Gaza is packed with more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million population who have fled there under Israeli orders in the wake of the regime's relentless bombardment. Concerns are mounting over a potential genocide if Israel launches a ground military offensive in Rafah.

The U.S., France and some other Western countries have previously issued warnings to Israel over the continuation of the Gaza war.

But they have taken no practical action to force Tel Aviv to end the war, which has so far claimed the lives of nearly 29,000 Palestinians in Gaza.

Every year, the U.S. government sends nearly $4 billion in military funding to Israel. It has also provided unwavering political support for Israel since the regime launched its offensive in Gaza in October.

The inaction of the West has emboldened the Netanyahu regime to continue the massacre of the Palestinians in the besieged territory.

Netanyahu is under fire from Israelis over his responsibility for the deadly October 7 military operation by Hamas in southern Israel. During the Hamas attack more than 1,100 Israelis were killed and about 240 others were taken captive.

Around 100 of the captives were released during a seven-day truce in late November in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails

Currently, Netanyahu believes prolonging the war will provide him with a lifeline and help him shirk responsibility for the intelligence fiasco of his regime over failing to deter the Hamas attack.

Hezbollah's "initial" response to Israeli massacre

Lebanese resistance bombards northern occupied territories

From page 1 ▸ The attacks were an initial response to the two massacres committed by the Israeli occupation in the Lebanese city of Nabatieh and also the town of Sawaneh that killed a mother and her two daughters.

Hezbollah continues to target Israeli occupation military sites and settlements in solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza, while enforcing its resistance in response to Israeli attacks on villages and civilian homes in southern Lebanon.

Lebanon submitted a complaint to the UN Security Council following the latest Israeli attacks on civilian targets, which its foreign ministry "considered the most violent and bloody since last October".

The regime's "deliberate and direct bombing of civilians safe in their homes is a violation of international humanitarian law and a war crime ... the Israeli bombardment is a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and citizens and all United Nations resolutions" the foreign ministry added.

In some of its latest operations, the Lebanese resistance issued concise statements confirming the targeting of Israeli military sites, including Barka Risha, a gathering of occupation soldiers in the vicinity of the Zar'it base, the Zboudin barracks in the occupied Sheba'a farms, among other Israeli military sites, resulting in direct hits.

Hezbollah has staged more than 1,000 operations against Israeli forces since the regime's war on Gaza started. The operations have also left tens of thousands of settlers displaced from the northern occupied territories.

During a memorial service for the resistance movement's fighters the deputy Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Sheikh Naim Qassem reiterated the group's commitment to supporting the Palestinian resistance and Gaza, emphasizing that this support won't cease until the war on Gaza ends entirely.

Sheikh Qassem underlined that "if some in the world fear the repercussions, difficulties, and complexities in the region, we say start with Gaza because Gaza is the solution, and there is no other solution for all the tension in the region."

Regarding the Israeli aggression on civilians in Lebanon, Sheikh Qassem stated: "We will not leave any aggression against civilians without an appropriate response. We will declare it, and we will make it clear that our response is for the civilians."

The senior Hezbollah official noted that the movement's current strategies are based on limited confrontation to benefit Gaza without using all its strength, saying we will reserve "this force for the right time."

He warned the regime, "If the right time comes against our will, we will be fully prepared for any confrontation, no matter how significant. We will teach the Israelis lessons they will never forget, and the lessons of 2006 will be an elementary lesson compared to what they will face in the next confrontation."

The deputy chief further clarified that Hezbollah responds proportionally, and its decision was to support Gaza while continuing to "deter the enemy" with this support.

The Israeli military has been forced to pull some of its armed units from Gaza in the south and deploy them to its northern front.

The limited level of confrontation is what Hezbollah deemed beneficial, Sheikh Qassem pointed out, whilst making it clear that Hezbollah has three steadfast positions in its confrontation with the Israeli regime

"Firstly, no retreat from supporting Gaza as long as the aggression persists, regardless of the cost or developments. Secondly, we do not submit to Israeli or Western threats and intimidations ... Thirdly, we have nothing to discuss about the future of southern Lebanon on both its (occupied) Palestinian and Lebanese sides until the complete aggression on Gaza stops."

Nasrallah: Israel to 'pay with blood' price of killing Lebanese civilians

From page 1 ▸ "The enemy will pay the price for the killing of our women and children with blood. The price of this blood will be blood, not sites, spy devices, and vehicles, and I will leave the matter to the battlefield," the Hezbollah chief asserted.

"The enemy is killing our leaders, fighters and families and it is destroying our homes, but this will not push us to retreat or give up on our responsibilities."

Stressing that the Israeli regime's goal from killing civilians is to pressure the resistance to stop, Nasrallah said, "We are in the heart of a real battle on a front that extends more than 100 kilometers, and the martyrdom of our fighters is part of the battle."

The Hezbollah leader said the recent targeting of the Kiryat Shmona settlement in the north of the occupied territories with dozens of Katyusha rockets was an "initial response" to Wednesday's bloodshed, adding that the Lebanese resistance has enormous and precision-guided missiles that can extend from Kiryat Shmona in the north to Eilat in the south.

Meet Palestinian doctor who braved Israeli sniper fire to save a bleeding man

In an extraordinary act of bravery, Palestinian physician Amira al-Assouli ran toward an injured man, with her back bent, braving the Israeli sniper fire outside the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis.

She risked her own life to save a man who was bleeding profusely at the entrance of the hospital that has become a new flashpoint in the Gaza Strip amid the four-month Israeli genocidal war.

A viral video showed al-Assouli taking off her winter coat and bending to avoid sniper shots as she dashes from the hospital compound's inner gate to save a man hit by an Israeli sniper's bullet.

She managed to reach the small tent outside the hospital and together with other medics placed the injured Palestinian on a stretcher and took him inside the hospital for treatment.

"God removed fear from my heart when I felt that someone needed help. I did not think about myself, I thought about saving people," she told the Palestinian Wafa News Agency after the heroic act.

Al-Assouli, who hails from the eastern region of the city of Khan Younis, is an Arab board-certified specialist in obstetrics and gynecology.

She retired from Nasser Medical Hospital, the biggest hospital that remains partly functional in Gaza but returned to work as a volunteer since the beginning of Israel's genocidal war on the territory.

"I returned to work as a volunteer at the Nasser Complex. My message to the world is, we have taken physician oath, it is our duty to help any human in need of medical help," she said in the interview.

"Saving others is programmed inside us. When I see a patient in need of my help, I will not think for a second about myself but will be there to save the life of the person."

While talking about the desperate situation in various hospitals in the southern area of the besieged strip, al-Assouli said a young man was martyred under the hospital window moments before.

"I went to him and found that Dr. Muhammad Abu Lihiyah who had gone to rescue the man was also killed by an Israeli sniper. I heard Dr. Lihiyah reciting the two Shahadas before his death," he said.

"We carried both the bodies to the morgue."

Al-Assouli is a displaced refugee herself. Her home in Abasan Al-Jadeeda, east of Khan Younis, was destroyed in an Israeli bombing a few months ago.

She has been living at the al-Nasser Hospital and working around the clock.

Hospitals under siege

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

WORLD HEADLINES

Patients die at Nasser Hospital as Israeli raid cuts off power

Medical authorities in the Gaza Strip say at least four patients have lost their lives at a hospital in southern part of the territory because power to the facility was cut during an Israeli raid and oxygen supplies were subsequently restricted.

"The generators of Nasser Hospital stopped and the power was cut off," Gaza's Health Ministry said in a statement on Friday, raising the alarm over the fate of six other patients in intensive care and three children in a nursery at the medical complex in the southern city of Khan Younis.

"We hold the Israeli Occupation responsible for the lives of patients and staff considering that the complex is now under its full control," the statement added.

Additionally, reports indicate that two women have been forced to give birth in inhumane conditions at Nasser Hospital, without electricity, water, food, or heating.

Dr Nahed Abu Taima, director of Nasser Medical Complex, has described the situation at the hospital as "catastrophic".

"We were forced to transfer all the patients and the wounded to the hospital's old building," he told Al Jazeera on Friday, adding that Israeli forces were rounding up patients and civilians taking shelter in the hospital.

"Electric power was cut off from the entire medical complex. Many patients in ICUs and those on oxygen supply and also those on dialysis are left fighting for their lives since 3 am [02:00 GMT]," Taima said.

"We stand helpless, unable to provide any form of medical assistance to the patients inside the hospital or the victims flooding into the hospital every single minute."

Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny dies in prison

Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny has died in prison, according to Russian authorities.

The ardent critic of President Vladimir Putin has been jailed since 2021.

In December, he was moved to an artic penal colony, thousands of miles to the northeast of Moscow in Siberia.

A reason has not yet been given for his death, though prison authorities have said he felt unwell after a walk on Friday and then fell unconscious.

Putin has been informed of Navalny's death, according to Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov.

Peskov also said that Russia's penitentiary service was making "all checks" regarding Navalny's death but that he had no other information about the matter.

Brazil's Lula: No explanation for Israel's behavior in Gaza

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has said Israel's behavior in the Gaza Strip is beyond explanation.

"Israel's behavior has no explanation," he said after a meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo on Thursday.

"With the pretext of fighting Hamas, it (Israel) is killing women and children," Lula said, Press TV reported.

The Israeli regime's response was "disproportional and indiscriminate" and unacceptable, the Brazilian head of state noted.

"The killing must be stopped," he said, calling for an immediate ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Lula criticized the United Nations over its inability to resolve the situation in Gaza, including through the failure of the world body's Security Council (UNSC) to pass a resolution calling for cessation of the Israeli aggression.

Charges of hate and war crime denial brought against German politician

Activists filed criminal charges against a German politician for suspected incitement of hate and denial of war crimes in Israel's war in Gaza.

The charges against Volker Beck, a former MP and head of the German-Israeli Society, were brought by Palestinian solidarity groups Palestine Speaks and Jewish Voice for Just Peace in the Middle East.

"This is the first step in holding public figures who publicly make genocidal statements legally accountable," a statement on Instagram said, according to Al Jazeera.

Russia invites Hamas and all Palestinian factions for talks

Hamas and other Palestinian groups including Fatah were invited to Moscow for talks on Israel's war on Gaza and other Middle East issues, Al Jazeera reported.

Russia asked a dozen Palestinian factions to Moscow for "inter-Palestinian" talks from February 29, the state-run TASS news agency reports, citing Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov.

Imran Khan picks Omar Ayub as PM nominee

Jailed cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan has named a man in hiding as his pick for Pakistan's prime minister, according to BBC.

Omar Ayub Khan will run against the candidate of Imran Khan's rivals.

Ayub, one of the former prime minister's party leaders, is currently wanted by police on criminal charges. That does not bar him from running.

However, despite Khan's independents unexpectedly winning the most seats in last week's election, they do not have enough to form a government.

Currently, the two main rivals appear on course to take control, after they formed a coalition - Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

A senior leader of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) party, Asad Qaiser, announced Ayub as his pick for PM after meeting with the former premier in prison.

Members of Pakistan's National Assembly will elect the new prime minister and 56-year-old Ayub will face off against the PML-N's Shehbaz Sharif, Nawaz Sharif's brother.

Egypt building new walled buffer zone more than 2 miles wide on Gaza border

Egypt is building a massive miles-wide buffer zone and wall along its border with southern Gaza, new satellite images show, as fears grow over Israel's planned ground offensive in Rafah where more than half of Gaza's population is sheltering.

The images, taken in the past five days by Maxar Technologies, show a significant section of Egyptian territory between a roadway and the Gaza border has been bulldozed.

If the buffer zone — which stretches from the end of the Gaza border to the Mediterranean Sea — is completed, it will completely engulf the Egyptian-Rafah border crossing complex.

At the actual border, multiple cranes can be seen laying sections of wall.

Additional satellite imagery reviewed by CNN shows that bulldozers arrived on site on February 3, and the initial excavation of the buffer zone began on February 6.

There has been a significant uptick in excavation in the last five days.

Dzordzor Chapel: where history and architecture converge in mesmerizing harmony

TEHRAN – Dzordzor Chapel, also known as the Chapel of the Holy Mother of God, is a lesser-known gem that captivates visitors with its historical significance and architectural beauty.

The monument is situated twelve kilometers northwest of the UNESCO-designated Saint Thaddeus Monastery, in proximity to Baron Village, approximately twenty kilometers from Maku.

The architecture of Dzordzor Chapel is a blend of Armenian ecclesiastical design and the natural beauty of its surroundings. The centuries-old chapel has a modest yet attractive façade, crafted from stones with windows along its walls leading to pointed barrel vaults supported by false columns. The building, resembling a cross in shape, is rectangular and has the appearance of a prayer hall.

Measuring seven meters in length, five meters in width, and standing at a height of twelve meters, the chapel features a dome with sixteen grooves, four arches beneath it, and an additional four surrounding it. Four attics adorn the sides of the walls, complemented by four interior rooms.

The entrance gate, positioned on the western side, is crafted from metal with ornate cross-like patterns. Notably, the stones are intricately arranged and interlocked, concealing the mortar between them from view. Cross forms are also engraved on the stones, adding a unique touch to the chapel's aesthetic.

As mentioned by Visit Iran, the chapel derives its name from the Armenian bishop Hovanes Yerznkatsi, also known as Tsortsoretsi, who was a literary figure and educator.

Dzordzor Chapel faced submersion due to the operation of Baron Dam in 1988. Through collaborative efforts between the Armenian society and experts from the then Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization of Iran, the chapel underwent restoration and reconstruction to reclaim its former glory.

In accord with the Armenian Apostolic Church, Iranian authorities relocated the structure 600 meters in 1987-1988, responding to the decision to construct a dam on the Zangmar River.

This strategic move prevented the chapel from being submerged in the dam reservoir. The resulting lake, formed behind Baron Dam, not only preserved the chapel but also contributed to the breathtaking scenery, enhancing the overall beauty of this historical site.

Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran

The UNESCO-registered Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran, in the northwest of the country, consists of three monastic ensembles of the Armenian Christian faith: St Thaddeus and St Stepanos and the Chapel of Dzordzor.

These edifices - the oldest of which, St Thaddeus, dates back to the 7th century – are examples of outstanding universal value of the Armenian architectural and decorative traditions.

According to the UN cultural body, they bear testimony to very important interchanges with the other regional cultures, in particular the Byzantine, Orthodox, and Persian. Situated on the southeastern fringe of the main zone of the Armenian cultural space, the monasteries constituted a major center for the dissemination of that culture in the region.

They are the last regional remains of this culture that are still in a satisfactory state of integrity and authenticity. Furthermore, as places of pilgrimage, the monastic ensembles are living witnesses of Armenian religious traditions through the centuries.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites

Jesuit Block and Estancias of Córdoba

The Jesuit Block in Córdoba, the heart of the former Jesuit Province of Paraguay, contains the core buildings of the Jesuit system: the university, the church and residence of the Society of Jesus, and the college.

According to UNESCO, the 38-ha ensemble of the Jesuit Block and five of its estancias (rural farming and manufacturing establishments) in the province of Córdoba, near the geographical center of Argentina, contains 17th and 18th century religious and secular buildings that illustrate an unprecedented 150-year-long religious, social, and economic experiment.

The Jesuit Block in the city of Córdoba contains the core buildings of the capital of the former Jesuit Province of Paraguay: the church, the Jesuit priests' residence, the university, and the Colegio Convictorio de Montserrat.

Isfahan map dedicated to Chinese travelers unveiled

From Page 1 ▶ Regarding the motivation behind publishing this map in Chinese, Massah mentioned the significant influx of Chinese tourists to Isfahan, with approximately 60,000 visitors recorded so far this [Iranian calendar] year.

"A lack of special content to cater to this demographic, prompting the initiative to introduce Isfahan to Chinese travelers through this specialized map," he explained.

Massah added that while the map is currently available in print format, it will soon be accessible on the Chinese search engine website "Baidu," providing a digital resource for Chinese tourists.

"Furthermore, copies of the printed map will be distributed to airlines, hotels, and tourism representative offices of Iran in China, facilitating access for Chinese tourists and travelers."

Moreover, Hamidreza Mohaqeqian, Isfahan province's tourism chief, emphasized the significance of Chinese tourists as the primary foreign visitors to Isfahan.

Mohaqeqian expressed hope that initiatives like that specialized tourism map would further enhance the experience of Chinese tourists exploring the historical and cultural treasures of Isfahan.

Isfahan, bride of Iran's tourism

Iran's tourism minister has said

Isfahan is the bride of the country's cultural heritage and tourism. However, it is still unknown to many foreign nationals and in particular potential travelers.

"Isfahan is undoubtedly the bride of Iran's cultural heritage and tourism, so we should introduce it to the world more effectively than before with the help of provincial officials and parliament members," Ezzatollah Zarghami said last November.

The ancient city, which was the capital of Iran under the Safavids, was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy and now is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons.

Isfahan is filled with many architectural wonders, such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people. Moreover, it is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges but also for its 'life-giving river', the Zayandeh Road, which has long bestowed the city an original beauty and fertility.

The cool blue tiles of Isfahan's Islamic buildings, and the city's majestic bridges, contrast perfectly with the encircling hot, dry Iranian countryside.

The huge Imam Square, best known as Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. (literary meaning "Image of the World"), is one of the largest in the world (500m by 160m), and a majestic example of town planning. Constructed in the early 17th century, the UNESCO-registered square is punctuated with the most interesting sights in Isfahan.

The square was at the heart of the Safavid capital's culture, economy, religion, social power, government, and politics. It is hemmed on four sides by magnificent buildings: to the east, the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque; to the west, the palace of Ali Qapu; to the north, the portico of Qeysarieh; and to the south, the eminent Imam Mosque.

When Shah Abbas the Great became ruler of Persia's Safavid dynasty in 1587, he chose Isfahan as his capital and undertook to make it eclipse all other cities. During his reign, he built so many palaces, mosques, gardens, and bridges that the inhabitants boasted: "Isfahan nesfe Jahan"— "Isfahan is half the world." The subtle nickname implies that seeing Isfahan is relevant to seeing half the world.

Shah Abbas's immediate successors continued the beautification. According to a contemporary, Isfahan, a city of 600,000, had 162 mosques, 48 colleges, 273 public baths, and no fewer than 1,802 caravanserais — open courtyards surrounded with buildings, which served as medieval tourist parks where travelers could find water for their camels and food and lodging for themselves.

Tepe Ozbaki, Caravanserai of Yengi Imam, still hidden gems near Tehran

TEHRAN – Mostafa Dehpahlavan, the head of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, has underscored the tourism significance of two historical sites in Alborz province, Tepe Ozbaki, and the Caravanserai of Yengi Imam.

Dehpahlavan on Thursday emphasized that the two sites hold immense potential as cultural and historical attractions for tourism near the Iranian capital.

"These sites, though only partially excavated, can serve as important cultural and historical tourism attractions," Dehpahlavan said.

Dehpahlavan stressed the necessity of first establishing tourism infrastructure and museum sites in the area before conducting extensive excavations.

"It is crucial that the findings, once unearthed, are properly preserved and narrated. Failure to present these heritage structures adequately, utilizing modern technology, could lead to a misinterpretation of the site's significance for the public," Dehpahlavan elaborated.

"Therefore, meeting these requirements is essential for the development of cultural and historical tourism."

Dehpahlavan further highlighted the strategic location of Tepe Ozbaki, suggesting its potential transformation into a museum site and a science and technology park focused on cultural heritage.

According to the senior Iranian archaeologist, the eighth season of excavation on Tepe Ozbaki began last August to throw new light on the history of human settlement at the site.

"So far, the hill site has yielded cultural relics dating from the first half of the 7th millennium to the first half of the first millennium BC, i.e. the Medes period."

Experts suggest that the discovery of certain objects in the hill indicates some kind of commercial link to Susa in the Khuzestan region, southwest Iran.

The discovery of objects such as tablets, statuettes, and 'jagged' earthenware in the hill indicates some kind of commercial link between Susa in Khuzestan and, this in Tehran province, according to senior Iranian archaeologist Yousef Majidzadeh, who has led excavations at Ozbaki, Qabristan, and Jiroft hills.

The Caravanserai of Yengi Imam showcases an exemplary form of Persian architecture, which emerged from the Silk Road. Experts say that the caravanserai offers a unique venue for exchanging goods and traditions among travelers coming from the most diverse cultures.

In September of the previous year, a selection of 54 century-old roadside inns received UNESCO recognition under the name "The Persian Caravanserai." However, this shortlist represents only a small fraction of the numerous caravanserais built along the ancient roads of Iran.

Due to its traditional texture and atmospheric surroundings, the establishment of a five-star caravanserai hotel will be a good idea to accommodate domestic and foreign guests and to provide a source of income, according to the provincial tourism chief.

A view of Tepe Ozbaki, a 9,000-year-old site, situated some 80 km from Tehran.

Yengi-Imam caravanserai is one of the prestigious and valuable historical monuments that is situated along the ancient Silk Road, Rahim Khaki added.In addition, side spaces of the caravanserai can be used for exhibition settings, such as ethnic fairs, handicraft sales exhibits, and local bazaars, he said.

For centuries, caravanserais constituted key parts of a rich circuit of travel and trade by providing shelter, food, and water for caravans, pilgrims, and other trekkers. For many travelers, staying in or even visiting a centuries-old caravanserai can be a broad experience; they have an opportunity to feel the past, and time travel to a forgotten age.

The earliest caravanserais in Iran were built during the Achaemenid era (550 - 330 BC). Centuries later, when Shah Abbas I assumed power from 1588 to 1629, he ordered the construction of a network of caravanserais across the country. Such roadside inns were once constructed along ancient caravan routes in the Muslim world to shelter people, their goods, and animals. The former Silk Road may be the most famous example, dotted with caravanserais.

Second Announcement

K S C

Khouzestan Steel Company

International tender announcement
No. 52469346

Khouzestan steel company (KSC) intends of the contractors' qualification for new Electric Arc Furnace and auxiliaries in EAF, LF, FTP, STATCOM, EOT Crane, MHS, ... at KSC plant by EPC tender.

- Location of project: north of existing steel shop in KSC plant in AHWAZ south west of Iran.
- Capacity: 1.3 mtpy
- Time schedule: 36 months
- Bid bond guarantee: 1.4 million Euro or equal rial
- Performance bond guarantee: 5% contract value (for contractor)

Company interested in taking part the tender having the following qualification, can declare their readiness:
1. Tecnological knowledge of Electric Arc Furnace and related auxiliaries or ability to contract with technology companies according to vendor list
Attention, in this regard, the necessary documents must be submitted at the time of declaration of readiness.
2. Experienced in executing EAF, LF, FTP, STATCOM, EOT Crane, MHS
Attention, please send the lists and references (name, location, capacity and contract price) of similar EPC projects
3. Rank one from industry government institutions
4. HSE certificate from government institutions
The interested companies shall enter above documents in the KSC's web site and send them to KSC by the date: 09.03.2024.
After receiving the documents and evaluating the companies' competency, the KSC will send tendering document to the selected company.
Address: IRAN, Khouzestan province, Ahwaz, Khouzestan steel company, post box: 1378, post code: 61788-13111; Purchasing Department.
For more information please contact to Mr. pour Moghadam
Email: m.pourmoghadam@ksc.ir
Telephone: +98-6132136414
Web site: http://pim.ksc.ir

Japan is finally releasing a digital nomad visa

Japan's Immigration Services Agency just announced it will start issuing its long-anticipated digital nomad visa within the next few weeks. According to the Japan Times, the visa will be available to nationals of 49 countries, a list that includes the United Kingdom and the United States. Once obtained, visa holders can legally live and work remotely from anywhere in the country for up to six months.

It has come as welcome news to the global digital nomad community, with the announcement garnering plenty of praise in online communities such as Reddit's r/DigitalNomad sub and hundreds more comments on the social platform's r/Japan page. However, would-be digital nomads have been quick to point out that, like many new digital nomad visas, this one comes with some rather hefty requirements for eligibility.

As Japan Times reported, applicants must show they earn a minimum income of ¥10 million (about £54,356 or $66,622). Applicants must also hold private health insurance, and visa holders will not be allowed to obtain a residence card. The visa expires after six months and is not eligible for renewal. Although it comes with steep terms, the visa is likely to be a popular one. It's the result of a survey of digital nomads, who overwhelmingly indicated they'd prefer to be able to stay longer than the current, 90-day visa-free tourist stays allow.

And why not allow for an extended stay? After all, Japan ranked as the fastest-growing remote working hub in 2023, according to data shared with CNBC by Nomad List, a website for remote workers, which analyses more than 300,000 check-ins on its database.

But, beyond simply providing supply for the growing demand, Japan is also likely hoping to cash in on the economic benefits that can come with digital nomads moving in. As the BBC previously reported, a 2023 survey by Carlos Grider estimates that digital nomads contribute nearly $800bn to the global economy annually. A lot of that cash was flowing to places such as Portugal and its neighboring nation of Spain. The former was home to nearly 16,000 digital nomads in December 2023, according to Nomad List, thanks to its Golden Visa residency program for expats looking to make Portugal a permanent home – plus a newly launched digital nomad visa of its own.

(Source: BBC)

Iran, Tatarstan universities to bolster academic ties

From page 1

Iranian universities' global ranking

A total of 435 Iranian institutions are among 11,989 institutions ranked in Webometrics world ranking 2024.

Tehran University is the top among Iranian institutions. Its ranking has improved from 305 in 2023 to 285 in 2024, Mehr news agency reported.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences (445), Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Science (606), Sharif University of Technology (639), Amirkabir University of Technology (792), Iran Science and Technology (890), Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (920), Iran Medical Sciences University (940), Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (940), and Shahid Beheshti University (967) are ranked second to tenth, respectively, in the country.

The Ranking Web is not a ranking of the websites of universities. It is a Ranking of Universities. It uses both webometric (all missions) and bibliometric (research mission) indicators.

According to the results of the 2023-2024 edition of the University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP), 71 Iranian institutions were included in the ranking compared to 64 institutions in the 2022-2023 edition.

URAP World Ranking is based on six academic performance indicators including number of articles, citations, total document, scientific productivity, research impact, and international collaboration.

In the academic performance ranking of 71 universities in Iran, Tehran University was ranked first nationally with a global rank of 231, IRNA reported.

Tehran University of Medical Science (277), and Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Science (436) were ranked second and third, respectively.

In the 2023 edition of URAP, the University of Tehran was ranked first nationally with a global rank of 231.

Golestan University of Medical Science (1307), University of Hormozgan, Amol University of Special Modern Technologies, Vali-e-Asr University of Rafsanjan, Ilam University, University of Science and Technology of Mazandaran are institutions that have recently been ranked among the best in the world in the 2023-2024 edition.

The main objective of URAP is to develop a ranking system for world universities based on academic performance indicators that reflect the quality and the quantity of their scholarly publications.

In line with this objective URAP has been annually releasing the World Ranking of Higher Education Institutions since 2010, and Field Rankings since 2011.

The most recent ranking gathered data about 3,000 Higher Education Institutes (HEI) in an effort to rank these organizations by their academic performance. The overall score of each HEI was based on its performance over several indicators.

Since URAP is an academic performance-based ranking, publications constitute the basis of the ranking methodology. Both quality and quantity of publications and international research collaboration performance are used as indicators.

In December 2023, the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC) released a report, ranking 115 governmental and 17 non-governmental universities according to six indices.

Education counts for 30 percent, Research counts for 25 percent, Technology and Innovation counts for 20 percent, International Outlook counts for 10 percent, and Social Services, Infrastructure, and Facilities counts for 5 percent, ISNA quoted the ISC head Ahmad Fazelzadeh as saying.

The universities of Tehran, Ferdowsi of Mashhad, Tarbiat Modarres, Shahid Beheshti, and Shiraz were placed first to fifth in the ranking.

The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2024 has listed 36 Iranian universities among the world's top 1,000 institutions, compared with 29 universities in 2023.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024 include 1,904 universities across 108 countries and regions.

The ranking is based on 18 carefully calibrated performance indicators that measure an institution's performance across five areas: teaching, research environment, research quality, industry, and international outlook.

Sharif University of Technology ranked first among Iranian universities with a rank in the range of 301-350.

Attracting intl. students

Iran is among the 15 successful countries in attracting international students, according to Mohammad Javad Salmanpour, the deputy head of the Organization for Student Affairs.

"We have the ability and capacity to have more than 250,000 foreign students by 2026," he stated.

Currently, nearly 100,000 foreign nationals are studying in Iran, more than 90 percent of whom are from Iraq and Afghanistan and the rest are from other countries.

These students are studying in different fields of science, research and technology, health and medical education, and also in the fields of humanities, Islamic sciences, Persian language and literature, law, fundamentals of Islamic law, management fields, economics, psychology, social sciences, as well as engineering, agricultural sciences, animal sciences, and basic sciences.

> MOUS have been signed in the fields of agriculture, medicine, space technology, and sport.

In September 2023, Hashem Dadashpour, the head of the Organization of Student Affairs, said that the Ministry of Science is planning to increase the number of international students to some 320,000 from currently around 100,000 by 2026.

"There was an increase in the number of international students over the sixth National Development Plan (2017-2021). The seventh development plan (2022-2026) has also put increasing the figure to around 320,000 on the agenda," he explained.

"Strengthening scientific authority, developing public diplomacy, and expanding the Persian language are the three main reasons for attracting international students," Dadashpour said, IRIB reported.

He went on to say that the principle of attracting international students is a major strategy and plan for the Ministry of Science."

Universities should increase their interactions and scientific exchanges in order to attract international students and accelerate internationalization in the region and the world, he highlighted.

Iranian universities achieved good ranks at the global level and based on the evaluations of the world's most prestigious institutions so that there is the capacity to attract international students, he said.

Currently, international students from 119 countries are studying in Iran, IRNA reported.

Shortening the processes of providing services to international students, such as issuing visas and residence permits, offering employment, banking, and transportation services, and benefiting from cultural advisors who are currently based in 81 countries, as well as ambassadors in different countries, are among the capacities which can be used to attract more international students.

The Ministry of Science is planning to upgrade an online system titled "Study in Iran" in order to familiarize foreign students with universities as well as the conditions and costs of living in the country.

For the time being, the system is operating in four languages Persian, English, Arabic, and Chinese, Dadashpour said in June 2023.

"We plan to add three more languages, namely Russian, French, and Spanish in the next few months," he added, IRNA reported.

The system actually plays the role of an intermediary between universities and applicants for studies in Iran, Dadashpour said, noting: "We briefly introduce the universities with the license to admit international students, and at the same time, the applicants can be connected to the desired university through special links."

This possibility is also provided for the applicants to study in Iran to register and send the admission application while being familiarized with the cultural and academic situation in Iran, and at the same time to learn about the experiences of international students in the country, he highlighted.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iran pioneer in cancer research among Islamic countries

Iran has the most research and innovation in the field of cancer both in the region and among Islamic countries, deputy health minister Reza Malekzadeh has stated.

Referring to the great progress in cancer research, he said that "We have been able to play a role in this area globally."

He added that one of the hopes for early detection of cancer is the use of urine and blood tests for people who are susceptible to cancer.

"We have conducted researches in the field of blood and urine biomarkers, which will help control cancers in the country," he said.

ایران بیشترین نوآوری و تحقیقات سرطان را بین کشورهای اسلامی دارد

معاون تحقیقات و فناوری وزیر بهداشت، درمان و آموزش پزشکی گفت: ایران هم در منطقه و هم بین کشورهای اسلامی بیشترین میزان تحقیقات و نوآوری ها در حوزه سرطان را داشته است.
به گزارش ایرنا، رضا ملک زاده روز شنبه با اشاره به اینکه ما در زمینه تحقیقات سرطان پیشرفت های خیلی خوبی داشتیم، گفت: ما در سطح جهانی هم توانستیم در این حوزه نقش آفرین باشیم.
وی افزود: یکی از امیدهای خیلی روشن برای تشخیص زودرس سرطان، استفاده از آزمایش ادرار و خون برای افرادی است که استعداد سرطان را دارند.
در ایران تحقیقات خیلی خوبی در زمینه بیومارکرهای ادراری و خونی در دست اجرا داریم و امیدواریم با این کار، امکان کنترل سرطان ها در کشور میسر شود.

UNODC helps strengthen IRFIU's infrastructure

TEHRAN – In an effort to boost the Iranian Financial Intelligence Unit (IRFIU) infrastructure in the fight against transnational organized crime, money laundering, and the financing of terrorism, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Iran has procured 15 desktop computers to IRFIU.

The provision of these computers aligns with the UNODC Country Partnership Program in the Islamic Republic of Iran for the period of 2023-2026, with the goal to enhance institutional knowledge and capacities in countering various forms of illicit activities related to money laundering, organized crime, and financing terrorism, the UN website announced in a press release on February 13.

The procurement was made possible through the funding received from the Russian Federation.

The procurement of 15 desktop computers marks a significant milestone in strengthening IRFIU's infrastructure. The computers have been specifically procured for the newly established Anti-Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Computer-Based Training Laboratory, which serves as a crucial hub for conducting training sessions.These computers will facilitate both online and offline training programs on the aforementioned subjects, adhering to UN standards and international best practices.

The inauguration ceremony of the training laboratory, equipped with the newly procured computers, was attended by representatives from UNODC and IRFIU, Alexander Fedulov – UNODC Iran Country Representative, and Hadi Khani – Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and the Head of IRFIU, signifying the collaborative efforts to combat financial crimes. The ceremony highlighted the importance of such technological advancements in promoting effective training and capacity-building initiatives.

The provision of these computers underscores the commitment of UNODC Iran to support IRFIU in its mission to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism. By equipping the training laboratory, UNODC Iran aims to enhance IRFIU's capabilities in detecting and preventing illicit financial activities within the region and beyond.

UNODC Iran remains dedicated to facilitating international cooperation and supporting member states in their fight against transnational organized crime.The partnership between UNODC Iran and IRFIU exemplifies the shared commitment to upholding the rule of law, ensuring financial integrity, and safeguarding global security.

Training courses for anti-narcotics experts

In January, the UNODC in Iran held a five-day specialized training course for experts and officers from the Drug Control Headquarters, Anti-Narcotics Police, and Customs Administration of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Moscow, Russia.

The course titled "Searching Method of Illicit Drugs with Use of Trained Dogs", was organized with the cooperation of the Central Customs Canine Training Centre of the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation, which is a World Customs Organization (WCO) Regional Dog Training Centre, in Moscow Region, from January 22 to 26.

The UNODC Iran has been actively present in the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1999 and considers Iran as one of the strategic partners for drug control and crime prevention in the region supporting the Islamic Republic of Iran by providing technical assistance and training for years ever since its establishment, the UN website announced in a press release on February 6.

In addition to various lectures and specialized seminars and classes envisaged under the curriculum of this training, practical visits, trainings, and demonstrations were foreseen for the members of the delegation, which significantly enriched the courses, and complemented the theoretical section.

At the graduation ceremony, certificates were handed over to the participants from the Islamic Republic of Iran by the head of the Central Customs Canine Training Centre of the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation.

Study-visit workshop in Tashkent

Anti-narcotics police and law enforcement experts and officers from the Drug Control Headquarters participated in a three-day study visit organized by the UNODC office in Iran from December 4-6, 2023, in Tashkent – Uzbekistan.

The study visit encompassed various activities and topics, inter alia session on "Construction and structure of an optimal canine center, management of an optimal canine center; staffing of an optimal canine center; breeding, health, treatment, food, etc. for drug-detecting dogs", the report added.The attendees learned about the specific ways of training and dealing with working dogs. They also acquired needed practical knowledge for managing kennels.

Some $100m predicted to develop AI infrastructure

TEHRAN – By allocating 50 trillion rials (some $100 million), the public and the private sector will develop the infrastructure for artificial intelligence operators in the next calendar year, which starts on March 21.

The importance of artificial intelligence cannot be denied. However, it's hard to keep pace with the rapid [global] growth in the area, Rouhollah Dehqani-Firouzabadi, the vice president for science and technology, said, IRNA reported.

He made the remarks while attending the first meeting of the national steering committee's working group on artificial intelligence.

The main objective behind founding the national steering committee is to promote and develop AI in the country with the help of both the private sector and the public sector, he added.

Dehqani-Firouzabadi went on to say that the national committee is not seeking to hold a share in management. It aims to facilitate and coordinate the development of AI by developing a streamlined, dynamic, and synergetic structure. It also endeavors to pave the way for individuals to participate in the development of artificial intelligence.

On December 3, 2023, President Ebrahim Raisi issued an executive order for the establishment of the 'National Steering Committee and the National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Center'.

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

Plans to develop AI

"Iran ranks 17th in artificial intelligence in terms of scientific production and publication of articles in the world, while ranks 78th in terms of its application in the world," Firouzabadi said in July 2023.

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

Firouzabadi said artificial intelligence is the first priority for the development of technology and is pursued with three programs.

Artificial intelligence is a comprehensive technology and affects all other areas of technology, he highlighted."The plans in the field of artificial intelligence include scientific development programs that are mostly pursued in universities. The second plan is technology development programs that are pursued in companies that work in the field of artificial intelligence. And the third plan is the creation of a national technology hub in the field of artificial intelligence."

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

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

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Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**

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

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
Email: info@tehrantimes.com
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
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No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran **P.o. Box:** 14155-4843 **Zip Code:** 1599814713

FEBRUARY 17, 2024

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

One who imagines himself to be all-knowing will surely suffer on account of his ignorance.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:18 Evening: 18:06 Dawn: 5:25 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:49 (tomorrow)

International Quran Competition opens in Tehran

TEHRAN-The 40th edition of Iran's International Quran Competition commenced on Thursday evening at Tehran's Islamic Summit Conference Hall.

Mehdi Khamushi, director of the State Endowment and Charity Affairs Organization, the main organizer of the Quran competition, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili, Minister of Education Reza Morad Sahraei, and Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf graced the opening ceremony with their presence.

A total of 99 reciters and memorizers from 44 countries worldwide have gathered to participate in the prestigious event, which is scheduled to run until February 21.

Competitors from diverse nations like Malaysia, Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Indonesia, Lebanon, India, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States, Tunisia, Russia, Ivory Coast, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Senegal, Syria, Iraq, Canada and several other countries are vying for top honors in various categories such as recitation, interpretation, tarteel, and Quran memorization.

Running in parallel with the main competition is the 8th edition of the International Quran Competition for School Students, also set to conclude on February 21.

The event is being covered by approximately 40 television networks.

Under the theme "One Book, One Ummah, the Book of Resistance," this edition pays homage to the martyrs of the resistance movement, with special representatives from Palestine and Gaza in attendance.

In addition to the competitions, attendees can engage in a diverse range of activities including educational and cultural exhibitions, family counseling services tailored especially for children, and a dedicated children's room for mothers to enjoy the event with their young ones.

The International Quran Competition is organized annually a few weeks before Ramadan at Tehran's Islamic Summit Conference Hall.

The Quran Channel of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting records recitations every year to air during the fasting month.

What's in Tehran art galleries

Painting

* A collection of paintings by Farnaz Baghban is on view in an exhibition at Soo Gallery.

The exhibit named "Regression" will continue until March 8 at the gallery located at 30 Purmusa St. off Somayyeh St.

* Artibition Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Ali Mirfatah.

Entitled "Sometimes Rhinos Don't Travel Alone", the exhibit runs until February 26 at the gallery located at No. 2798, Vali-e Asr Ave, after Parkvay, next to Bank of Industry and Mine.

* Paintings by Ozhen Sirousi are currently on view in an exhibition entitled "Persistence" at Etemad Gallery 1.

Etemad Gallery 2 is also showcasing paintings by Pegah Salimi in an exhibition named "Dream".

The exhibitions will be running until March 12 at the galleries located at 25 Shirudi Alley, Mofatteh St., near Haft-e Tir Square.

* An exhibition displaying paintings by Hamid Bahrami is currently underway at Homa Gallery.

The exhibit runs until February 27 at the gallery located at No. 8, Fourth Alley, Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.

* Nian Gallery is currently playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Fariba Farghadani.

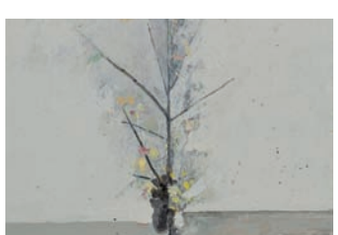
The exhibition entitled "Nevertheless" will be running until March 1 at the gallery located at 5 Abhari Alley, Vafai St. off Tur St. off South Mofatteh St.

* Paintings by Leila Mohammadi are on display in an exhibition at Doost Gallery.

Entitled "Remnant", the exhibit will be running until March 5 at the gallery, which can be found at No. 4, 4th St. off Eshqyar St., Khorramshahr Ave.

* A group of artists including Javad Burbur, Ali Golestaneh, Reza Hedayat, Ebrahim Faraji, Mahta Moeini, Ahmad Vakili and Nilufar Qaderinejad are displaying their latest paintings in an exhibition at Asr Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Me, Myself and I" will run until March 1 at the gallery located at 18 Delaviz St. off North Mirzaye Shirazi St.



* A collection of paintings by Mehdi Seifi is currently on view in an exhibition at Hoor Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until March 15 at the gallery located at 12 Naeimi Alley, North Mirza Shirazi St., off Motahhari Ave.

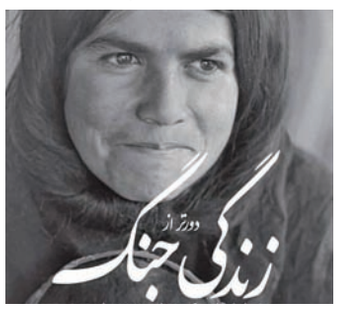
* A collection of paintings by Mehdi Qanbari is on display in an exhibit at Ev Gallery.

Entitled "Coexistence", the exhibition runs until February 27 at the gallery located at 36 Palizvani Alley, Africa Blvd.

Photo

* Photos by Sasan Moa'yedi are on display in an exhibition at Dena Gallery.

The exhibition runs until February 27 at the gallery located at 4 Sussan Alley off Qarani St.



Iranian artist wins first prize at Syria International Caricature Festival

TEHRAN- Iranian artist Esmaeil Babaei claimed the first prize at the 20th International Caricature Festival in Damascus, Syria, which concluded on February 13.

Anatoly Radin of Russia secured the second position and Javier Cubero Torres from Cuba clinched the third spot, Mehr reported.

Active in the field of cartoon and caricature for about three decades, Babaei has participated in different contests and won many prizes including a trophy from 5th Cartoon Biennial Tehran 2001, Special Prize at the International Sinop Cartoon Contest Turkey 2012, the first prize at Exchange International Contest in Tehran 2014, an honorable prize at International Contest Jiaksing in China 2015, Honorable Mention at the 10th International Contest Bukharest in Romania 2016, and Special Prize at the International Contest Caneva Ride in Italy 2016 among others.

This year's edition of the event, dedicated to the Palestinian resistance and the late Palestinian cartoonist Naji Al-Ali, resonated with a global chorus of voices standing against oppression.

The festival, a testament to the power of art as a medium of dissent, garnered participation from artists worldwide. "The wide participation from across the globe reflects the unity of artists in supporting the Palestinian people against the Zionist enemy," said the festival director Raed Khalil.

"We wanted to convey a message of support to the Palestinian people and the resistance facing the Zionist enemy through the art of caricature, which reveals Israel's lies to the world's public opinion," said the Syrian artist who founded the festival in 2005.

The Syrian Minister of Culture, Lubana Mashouh, considered that the art of caricature unites the world of free peoples against the false and biased policies of Western governments.

Standing as a beacon of unity and resilience, the festival was a poignant homage to the late Palestinian cartoonist Naji Al-Ali, whose works have become a symbol of Palestinian defiance. Al-Ali's iconic character, Handala, a ten-year-old boy witnessing the Palestinian struggle, continues to be a potent symbol of resistance. The participating artists paid tribute to Al-Ali's legacy, reinforcing the power of art as a tool for social commentary and change.

In the cacophony of geopolitical conflicts, caricature has emerged as a universal language of protest. The International Caricature Festival in Damascus underscored this power, bringing together artists from diverse cultural backgrounds. Their collective voice resounded with a clear message: the world stands with the Palestinian people in their quest for justice and freedom.

Intense Israeli bombardment from air, land and sea continues to be reported across much of the Gaza Strip, resulting in further civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of civilian infrastructure. Ground operations and heavy fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups also continue to be reported, especially in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis.

Since October 7, at least 29,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and over 68,000 Palestinians have been injured.

Airstrikes on Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah and statements by Israeli officials have heightened concerns about a possible ground invasion in Rafah where well over one million people are crammed amid insecurity and acute shortages of shelter, food, clean water, and medical care.

Population movements out of Rafah toward Deir al Balah and An Nuseirat Refugee Camp have been reported, following intensified airstrikes on Rafah. This is occurring within the context of rising food insecurity, limitations on the entry of aid, the erosion of coping mechanisms, and the prospects of a ground operation in the area. The World Food Program (WFP) has expressed concern that displacement from Rafah would further decrease the resilience of people who have been previously displaced to Rafah in search of safety, and Action Against Hunger warned that it will be forced to suspend its activities if military operations expand to Rafah.

Humanitarian and health workers continue to face enormous challenges and risks to serve people in need of urgent assistance and save lives, particularly given the insufficient materials and supplies that aid organizations are able to bring in, according to the Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim for the occupied Palestinian territory, Jamie McGoldrick.

Damage to civilian infrastructure continues to be reported across Gaza, including residential buildings, schools, hospitals, roads, cemeteries, as well as water and sanitation facilities. In December 2023, UNICEF reported that at least half of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities have been damaged or destroyed in Gaza.

Two documentaries by Iranian filmmakers at Copenhagen Documentary Film Festival CPH:DOX

TEHRAN-Copenhagen Documentary Film Festival CPH:DOX, whose 21st edition runs from March 13 to 24, has unveiled the films nominated across all six award categories, with two movies by Iranain filmmakers competing at the event.

The selection features 66 films in competition, among which 47 are world premieres, 17 international premieres and two European premieres. All the films in the main competition will be world premieres, ISNA reported.

In the Next: Wave Award category, "Grand Me" by Atieh Zare Arandi, a coproduction of Iran and Belgium will have its world premiere.

The 78-minute film is about 9-year-old Melina, who is old enough to bring a legal case to choose her own guardian. But having her day in court does not mean her dearest wish will be granted.

In the Nordic: DOX Award category, "The Son and the Moon" by Roja Pakari, a joint production of Iran and Denmark wil also experience its world premiere.

It is a Danish-Iranian filmmaker's brave and honest journey through six years of cancer, love and a life project of mapping her family's dramatic history. It includes existential poetry with an unforgettable woman in front of (and behind) the camera.

Speaking about the festival lineup, Niklas Engstrøm, CPH:DOX's artistic director, commented: "What unites these films is their ambition to engage with the world in a meaningful way. This year's competition sharpens its focus on the most urgent issues of our time, from the wars in Ukraine and Gaza to gang violence in Sweden, exploring themes of identity politics, colonialism, and the foundational struggles for democracy and the fight against climate change. These films offer fresh perspectives, challenge aesthetic boundaries, and delve deeper into issues we thought we understood."

CPH:DOX and the Institute for Human Rights have introduced the new Human:Rights Award to this year's festival, marking the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This award "underscores the ongoing relevance of human rights in challenging times."

Mads K. Mikkelsen, CPH:DOX's head of program, stated: "In an era that demands solidarity with courageous filmmakers who champion equality and justice worldwide, we've established the Human:Rights Award. This year, we nominate 10 exceptional films that highlight pressing global issues, reflecting our commitment to fostering a deeper understanding of human rights."