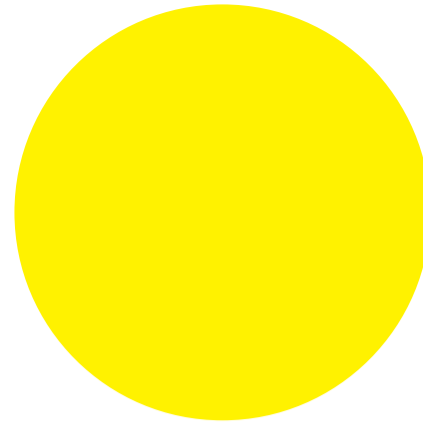


Hamas chief urges Muslim states to arm resistance

Gaza War not Palestinians' only: *Haniyeh*

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Iran Daily



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Vol. 7481 • Wednesday, January 10, 2024 • Dey 20, 1402 • Jumada al-Thani 27, 1445 • 100,000 rials • 8 Pages



Leader urges manhunt for Kerman masterminds

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Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses people from the central province of Qom on January 9, 2024. *Khamenei.ir*

Houthis pulling their weight for Gaza

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Iran-Tajikistan trade triples:

Lawmaker

EXCLUSIVE

The head of the Iran-Tajikistan Parliamentary Friendship Group believes that despite the tripling of the bilateral trade in two years, the two countries are still far from the ideal in the field of developing economic relations. Talking to Iran Daily, Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi added that the volume of trade between the two countries will top \$300 million by the end of the current Iranian year (March 19, 2024). "During the first visit of President Ebrahim Raisi to Tajikistan, the presidents set an annual trade target of \$500 million, which we hope will be realized within a period of one to two years," the lawmaker said.

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INSTC is pivot for realizing Iran's sea-based economy goals: PMO



The director general of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) for Transit & Logistics Affairs said the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is the pivot for realizing the objectives of the country's sea-based economy.

Khosro Saraei pointed to the special emphasis of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on the sea-based economy and added that the high capacities of the corridor as well as its key role in facilitating regional and international trade will be assessed specifically in a conference on "Iran's Sea-Based Economy," slated to be held on February 12-13, reported Tasnim news agency. He added that the INSTC will play a leading role in increasing the efficiency of multimodal transportation in the regional and extra-regional arenas.

The official called on responsible organizations to pave the way for increasing both domestic and foreign investments in line with the realization of the sea-based economy objectives.

Pointing to the rail and road transportation capacities in the country for the materialization of those objectives, he added, "With the studies conducted in this regard, Chabahar port is considered a new gateway for the development of multifaceted services in the INSTC."

Iran-Tajikistan trade triples: Lawmaker



By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writers

The head of the Iran-Tajikistan Parliamentary Friendship Group believes that despite the tripling of the bilateral trade in two years, the two countries are still far from the ideal in the field of developing economic relations.

Talking to Iran Daily, Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi added that the volume of trade between the two countries will top \$300 million by the end of the current Iranian year (March 19, 2024).

"During the first visit of President Ebrahim Raisi to Tajikistan, the presidents set an annual trade target of \$500 million, which we hope will be realized within a period of one to two years," the lawmaker said. The Iranian and Tajik parliaments on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on expanding cooperation between the two legislative bodies.

The MoU was signed by Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and visiting Chairman of the National Assembly of Tajikistan Rustam Emomali in the Iranian capital of Tehran. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who met Emomali

later in the day, said the expansion of bilateral parliamentary cooperation is important and serves as a backing for the two countries' political and economic collaborations, according to a statement published on the website of Raisi's office. The president also highlighted bilateral cooperation in other fields, especially in fighting terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking.

Emomali, for his part, pointed to the surging trade volume between the two sides in the past two years, stressing that insecurity in the region is a common concern of Tajikistan and Iran as well as a threat to bilateral trade cooperation.

Raisi's first visit to Tajikistan, which took place in 2021, was considered a turning point in the development of relations between the two countries, said the MP, noting that the growth that was achieved in the development of relations between the two countries are due to the visits of the officials of the two countries to Tehran and Dushanbe.

During his first visit to Tajikistan, Raisi met with his Tajik counter-

part, Emomali Rahmon, in Dushanbe, on September 18, 2021.

The Iranian president called for Iran and Tajikistan to expand their relations, saying this will pave the way for regional cooperation.

Speaking during a meeting with his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon in Dushanbe, Raisi stressed that Iran and Tajikistan enjoy ample capacities to expand bilateral relations.

"Deepening and strengthening bilateral relations will also serve to enhance regional cooperation," he said. Raisi said through regular meetings and bilateral talks, Iranian and Tajik officials should establish stable and comprehensive relations between the two Persian-speaking countries and make it a model at the regional level.

Raisi's visit to Dushanbe culminated in Iran being accepted as a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) after

waiting for years as an observer to join the Eurasian political, economic and security alliance.

The accession marks President Raisi's first achievement in office, coming on the back of his visit to a country which opposed Iran's SCO membership before.

Referring to joint projects implemented by Iranian experts in Tajikistan, Rahmon said, "The friendship and love that exist between the two countries' people and governments provide a proper ground for enhancing the level of cooperation." During the meeting, the two sides pointed to their common religion, culture and language and expressed hope that the endeavors of Iranian and Tajik officials will open a new chapter in economic, cultural and political cooperation.

After the meeting, the Iranian and Tajik delegations signed six MoUs, an agreement and a technical proto-

col on customs cooperation.

The next meeting between the presidents of Iran and Tajikistan dates back to September 2023, which took place during the presence of world leaders in New York to participate in the 78th General Assembly of the United Nations, as the presidents of the two countries agreed to use the capacity of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Commission to raise the level of trade.

Raisi also left for Dushanbe on November 8, 2023 on a one-day trip to participate in the meeting of the Joint Chamber of Commerce of Iran and Tajikistan. During the trip, 18 cooperation documents and a memorandum of understanding were signed between the two sides.

Referring to pacts signed by Iran and Tajikistan, Rahimi Jahanabadi said some of the agreements were in the field of development of transportation, which we are following up on, includ-

ing increasing the number of flights between Tehran and Dushanbe, as well as the development of rail connections.

Referring to the Tajiks' need to have access to the high seas, the MP noted that we in the Iran-Tajikistan Parliamentary Friendship Group suggested that the landlocked state can use Chabahar port to get access to international markets.

"Currently, many Iranian banks and companies are active in the Central Asian country, including in the field of tractor manufacturing, tunnel construction, dams and power plants, as we are trying to solve their problems and facilitate their businesses."

In my opinion, the improvement of economic relations between the two countries indicates the improvement of friendship between the two nations, he concluded.

Preregistration for Iran Oil Show 2024 to start in days



Preregistration for the 28th Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition, also known as Iran Oil Show 2024, will start on January 20 and continue until January 24, announced the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

According to NIOC, the applicants need to pre-register for the event via the preregistration system available on its

website www.iran-oil-show.ir.

Following a careful study of the terms and conditions for participation and preregistration, the qualified applicants having full knowledge of the latest requirements, changes, and tariffs announced by the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) are required to submit the necessary documents via the abovementioned

website within the five-day period.

Preregistration is not regarded as final registration. Following inquiry and authentication, those applicants, which obtain the final approval of the Technical Assessment Committee of the Exhibition Organizing Management, will be allocated exhibition spaces according to the aforesaid terms and conditions.

Procurement, Construction, Test and Commissioning of

اصلاحیه آگهی مناقصه عمومی

Lot 1: Main Lines, Laterals & Interceptors of Zone C & D of Darab wastewater Networks.

and

Lot 2: Main Lines, Laterals & Interceptors of Zone E & L & I of Darab wastewater Networks.

Following the Procurement Notice of Fars Water and Wastewater Company with NCB No. DA-SL1 and DA-SL2 which was published on December 12, 2023 and December 21, 2023 in this newspaper, this is to announce that the bid opening date has been postponed up to 11:00 a.m. January 23, 2024.

لات ۱: باقیمانده کارهای تدارکات، ساخت، آزمایش و راه اندازی «خط انتقال و خطوط اصلی و فرعی زون های C و D» شبکه جمع آوری فاضلاب داراب» و

لات ۲: باقیمانده کارهای تدارکات، ساخت، آزمایش و راه اندازی «خط انتقال و خطوط اصلی و فرعی زون های E و L و I» شبکه جمع آوری فاضلاب داراب»

پیرو آگهی مناقصه شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس به شماره های DA-SL2 & DA-SL1 که در تاریخ های ۱۴۰۲/۰۹/۲۱ و ۱۴۰۲/۰۹/۲۰ در این روزنامه به چاپ رسیده است، بدین وسیله به اطلاع می رساند که تاریخ بازگشایی پیشنهادها تا تاریخ ۱۴۰۲/۱۱/۰۳ رأس ساعت ۱۱ صبح تمدید گردید.

Procurement, Construction, Test and Commissioning of

اصلاحیه آگهی مناقصه عمومی

Lot 1: Trunk Mains, Interceptors and Laterals of Zone 9,11,13 of Fasa Wastewater Project and

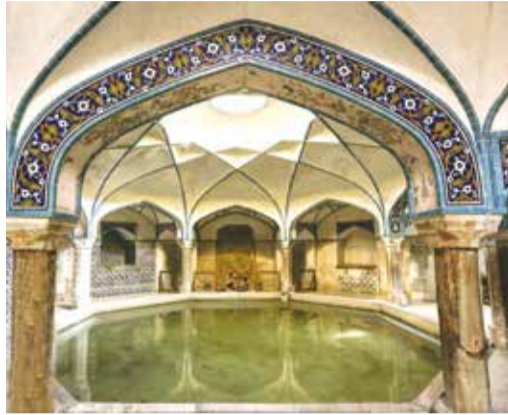
Lot 2: Interceptors and Laterals of Zone 5,7,10 of Fasa Wastewater Project

Following the Procurement Notice of Fars Water and Wastewater Company with NCB No.: FA-SL1 and FA-SL2 which was published on December 13, 2023 and December 22, 2023 in this newspaper, this is to announce that the bid opening date has been postponed up to 11:00 a.m. January 29, 2024.

تهیه، ساخت، آزمایش و راه اندازی خط انتقال و خطوط اصلی و فرعی لات های ۱ و ۲ شبکه فاضلاب فسا

پیرو آگهی مناقصه شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس به شماره FA-SL1 and FA-SL2 که در تاریخ های ۱۴۰۲/۱۰/۰۲ و ۱۴۰۲/۰۹/۲۲ در این روزنامه به چاپ رسیده است، بدین وسیله به اطلاع می رساند که تاریخ بازگشایی پیشنهادها تا تاریخ ۱۴۰۲/۱۱/۰۹ رأس ساعت ۱۱ صبح تمدید گردید.

Ganjali Khan Bathhouse: A historical masterpiece of Iranian architecture



Iranica Desk

Ganjali Khan Bathhouse is a significant legacy of the Safavid era and an integral part of the renowned Ganjali Khan Complex, celebrated for its remarkable architecture and ornate decorations.

Following a restoration in 1968, the bathhouse transitioned into an anthropology museum, featuring wax sculptures portraying individuals from diverse social classes in ancient times. This historical site has been officially recognized as a national heritage site, according to IRNA.

History

Historical records indicate that the construction of the Ganjali Khan Complex was commissioned during the Safavid period by Ganjali Khan, the ruler of Kerman. Upon assuming leadership in Kerman, Ganjali Khan prioritized urban development initiatives. Notably, he oversaw the creation of a sizable public square at the heart of Kerman, spanning over 100 meters in length and 50 meters in width. Surrounding this square, Ganjali

Khan erected specific structures such as a school, mosque, bazaar, bathhouse, caravanserai, water reservoir, and mint, culminating in an exceptional complex. The gradual construction of these edifices culminated in the completion of the bathhouse in 1610, situated along the primary thoroughfare of Kerman's bazaar, south of the Ganjali Khan Complex.

Fascinatingly, the bathhouse remained in use until 1937. In 1968 it underwent restoration and subsequently transformed into an anthropology museum. Today, this complex stands as one of Kerman's foremost tourist attractions, welcoming both local and international visitors annually.

Architecture

The architect and designer of Ganjali Khan Bathhouse was Sultan Mohammad, a Yazdi architect. This historical masterpiece was completed by Ali Mardan Khan, the son of Ganjali Khan, and has taken its present form. The Ganjali Khan Bathhouse is 26 meters long, 30 meters wide, and has an area of approximate-

ly 1,300 square meters. It features a unique architectural entrance, dressing rooms, a pool, and a *khazineh* (a place where water was heated). Prominent Iranian craftsmen and artists have used delicate paintings, colorful tiles, courtyard lighting, beautiful plaster decorations, and pleasant calligraphy for beautification and design of this historical work.

This bathhouse depicts a blend of architectural artistry and the use of various materials in a space that is proportionate and people-friendly.

Sections

Like other ancient Iranian bathhouses, it consists of various separate sections, including a royal section, to separate different segments of society (the wealthy and ordinary people) from each other. The skilled and creative architects of that time had designed dressing rooms with six separate compartments for the comfort and convenience of the people.

Furthermore, the architects have given a striking appearance to the entire bathhouse

by using colorful and beautiful tiles and stones. The relatively high ceiling of the dressing rooms stands tall and sturdy on strong columns. In addition to the compartments surrounding the dressing rooms, a beautiful pool in the middle of these compartments showcases itself. A fountain installed in the center of this pool offers delightful music to the hearts of visitors.

The bathhouse is illuminated by skylights positioned in the center or around the ceilings, which not only allow sunlight to enter the space but also help regulate the temperature. The sunlight shining into the pool and reflecting off the walls and ceilings enhances the beauty of the bath.

Architects and engineers conducted studies and found that the bath's heat was provided by a furnace called Toon. Channels were designed and drawn under the warm room, allowing warm air to pass through, heat the floor, and remove dirty air through windows.

The water supply system of the bathhouse is interestingly con-

nected to pipelines from the nearby qanat near the square in the Ganjali Khan complex. The water in the reservoir was heated by burning wood and bushes.

Entrance

The entrance and vestibule of the bath stand out as some of the most exquisite areas, adorned with elegant blue bricks, marble borders, captivating paintings, and decorative bands.

Continuing from the entrance, a corridor is strategically designed to shield the view into the bath and preserve its warmth. This passage leads to a small octagonal area situated adjacent to the entrance. Upon passing through this space, one is greeted by a finely carved gateway embellished with stone depictions of seabirds, guiding visitors to the subsequent areas of the bath.

Dressing room

The dressing room, also known as Sarbineh, is an octagonal expanse featuring a central pool. Encircling the room are six alcoves for seating, each uniquely illuminated. Each alcove was

designated for a distinct social class. Within this area, everything from intricately patterned tilework to marble stones, wooden ceilings, and fountains captures the attention of on-lookers. The combination of these elements, alongside the specialized lighting, creates a delightful ambiance. The dressing room's ceiling is a captivating display of wooden embellishments adorned with Islamic paintings.

While the dressing room presents a cohesive space, it also offers secluded and intricate corners, providing suitable areas for relaxation, and conversation. Additionally, there is a space known as miandar, essentially a small dressing room designed to minimize the exchange of heat between the Sarbineh and the hot room.

Following their bathing, individuals wait in this space for a period to regulate their body temperature and avoid abrupt changes in temperature. On one side of this area lies the dressing room, while on the other side, there is a hexagonal space leading to the hot room.

Evolution of Persian and Arabic inscriptions

The rivalry between the Persian and Arabic languages in inscriptions on objects was already noticeable during the 10th to early 12th centuries, but it developed differently on the various materials.

On bronze (brass) this process proceeded fairly slowly. Up to the 14th century there are fewer Persian inscriptions than Arabic. It must be stressed that there are few known versions of the latter, but they were very often reproduced on objects.

On the other hand, Persian inscriptions occupied a place of honour on the famous ceramics of the late 12th and 13th centuries decorated with lustre and enamels, to which we have already referred. These consist of quotations from the work both of famous poets of the past (Ferdowsi, Omar Khayyam) as well as of contemporaries (Nizami, Kamal al-Din Ismail Isfahani, Jamal al-Din Muhammad Isfahani).

Probably this bears witness to the literary taste of the craftsmen themselves, to the links between literary and artistic circles in the cities and to the

spread of Sufi poetry. The interest in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is connected rather with some sort of anti-Mongol sentiment, for the earliest extracts from the poem appear on tiles only after 1260, i.e. during the Mongol period. But with the onset of the new phase in the mid-14th century fundamental changes take place. A set of Kashan lustre tiles dating from the 1330 bears an exact reference to the place of manufacture.

After this period we know of no large-scale output either of lustre vessels or of sizeable sets of lustre tiles (the lustre tiles on tombs of that date and of the 15th century are clearly not mass-produced).

In general, the mass-production of lustreware dies out for almost 200 years. As far as one can judge from preliminary observations, the 17th-century lustreware which has survived also appears not to be mass-produced and, above all, there is no longer any reason to link it with Kashan (in late historical sources Kashan is not referred to as a centre of ceramic production).

New centres of ceramic production such as Mashhad apparently arose during the course of this new phase, beginning somewhere in the mid-14th century. The most surprising new feature of Iranian ceramics of the later period is the almost total absence of inscriptions on dishes and, probably, tiles, though the latter may not have been produced in any quantities in comparison with the preceding phase. Ceramic mosaics were widely used in the decoration of buildings. The small number of inscriptions which appear on faience dishes of the 15th-17th centuries should be regarded as exceptions, and by no means as a continuation of the tradition of the late 12th to the first half of the 14th centuries.

But the role which ceramics played in pre-Mongol and Mongol times in disseminating Persian inscriptions passes to metalwork in the new phase. The period of transition occupies the second half of the 14th century to the first half of the 15th century, insofar as the number of Persian inscriptions

also increases slowly, though often they are only benedictory Persian verses. But from the beginning of the 15th century verses of Hafez are found on copper items, and from the second half of the 15th century we see numerous extracts from the works of famous poets - Hafez, Sa'di, Jami, or such little-known authors as Salihi Khurasani.

The number of Persian verses on copper and bronze (brass) objects increases during the course of the 16th century. Arabic inscriptions meanwhile, especially benedictory ones, practically fall into disuse towards the beginning of the 16th century, but at the same time two new Arabic inscriptions appear, linked to the rise to power of the Safavid dynasty in Iran (1501-1736) - these are verses in honour of Imam Ali (PBUH) and blessings on the Shi'a imams, and they become prevalent on all types of object, in architecture and the applied arts.

Thus, in the mid-14th century a new phase begins in the history of art in Iran. The transitional period probably lasts a fairly



Kashan lustre pottery jug, late 12th century

long time, more than fifty years. One feature which characterises the art of this age is a loss of interest in the depiction of people on objects of applied art. This is indeed a surprising fact and one which has not

yet been explained, for in this phase the Persian miniature flourished (although it was perhaps not at the height of its development) and was being rapidly produced at various centres.

Houthis pulling their weight for Gaza

Israel, allies moving to keep lid on

By Reza Raadfar
Political analyst

PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE

Yemen's Houthis (Ansarullah), one of the few resistance groups that actually followed up with its promise of standing up for the people of Gaza, is increasingly becoming a source of worry for Israel and its allies. Once a small group of dissatisfied youth in one of the poorest and most war-stricken countries in the world, it has now turned into such a formidable military force that it gives the most powerful armies in the world second doubts about starting a conflict with it.

By controlling the irrefutably strategic Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the Ansarullah has the ability to make entry into the Red Sea hazardous for any ship that it deems to be working against its ideological and strategic interests, and that's exactly what it has been doing over the past month or so. It's not the first ruling body in the world to use its geostrategic position to its advantage; in fact, it is following in the footsteps of all its enemies, including Israel, US, UK, and Saudi Arabia, in this regard.

The six countries bordering the Red Sea proper are not in the crosshairs of the Ansarullah. However, through the Suez Canal — the shortest maritime route to Asia from Europe — the Red Sea is connected to the Mediterranean Sea, where Israel, the Gaza Strip, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria all have coastlines. So, on the one hand, the Ansarullah has used its strategic position over the narrow strait to attack any vessel they believe is either going to or coming from Israel through the Red Sea, and on the other hand, used Yemen's relative proximity to Israel itself to launch several ballistic missiles at military posts in southern Israel.

It is worth noting that during this latest bout of heightened tension in the Red Sea, the resistance group has been cherry-picking its targets; so much has been apparent from digging into the trajectories or ownership of the maritime vessels and their cargos. The top Houthi officials have repeatedly stated that their ire is directed toward Israel and its interests, and that's what they were targeting so far. Granted, many of their missiles and drones have either inflicted little to no casualties or been intercepted by the US warships in the region, but the Houthis have likely succeeded in what they were trying to do: cautiously expanding the war on Gaza and inciting the fear of economic loss in the hearts of state leaders that are sitting on the fence and allowing that



The Galaxy Leader cargo ship is escorted by Houthi boats in the Red Sea in this photo released on November 20, 2023.
REUTERS

atrocities in Gaza to go on. However, since the Western world, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, are staunch allies of Israel and, at times, have common interests in the safe passage of Israeli ships, they have been hard at work to build an anti-Houthi consensus in international organizations and media. Despite being labeled as a "threat to global economy" in more than one instance, which the Houthis have downplayed to only include the economy of Israel and its trading partners, the Yemeni group has not yet been slowed in their pursuit of alleviating the Israeli pressure on Gazans. Given that the rather small Yemeni group seemed unfazed by Tel Aviv and Washington's almost daily threats over the

past two months and kept humbling its foes, at least in spirit, the US announced the formation of a naval protection task force operating in the southern Red Sea in an attempt to ward off mounting attacks from the Ansarullah on merchant shipping. Only days after being touted as including more than 20 nations, key players with major naval capabilities such as France, Italy, and Spain publicly stated that they don't want to be associated with the task force at all. Nearly half of the remaining countries have so far not come forward to acknowledge their contributions or allowed the US to do so; so those contributions can range from dispatching warships to merely sending a staff officer. Meanwhile, some hawkish po-

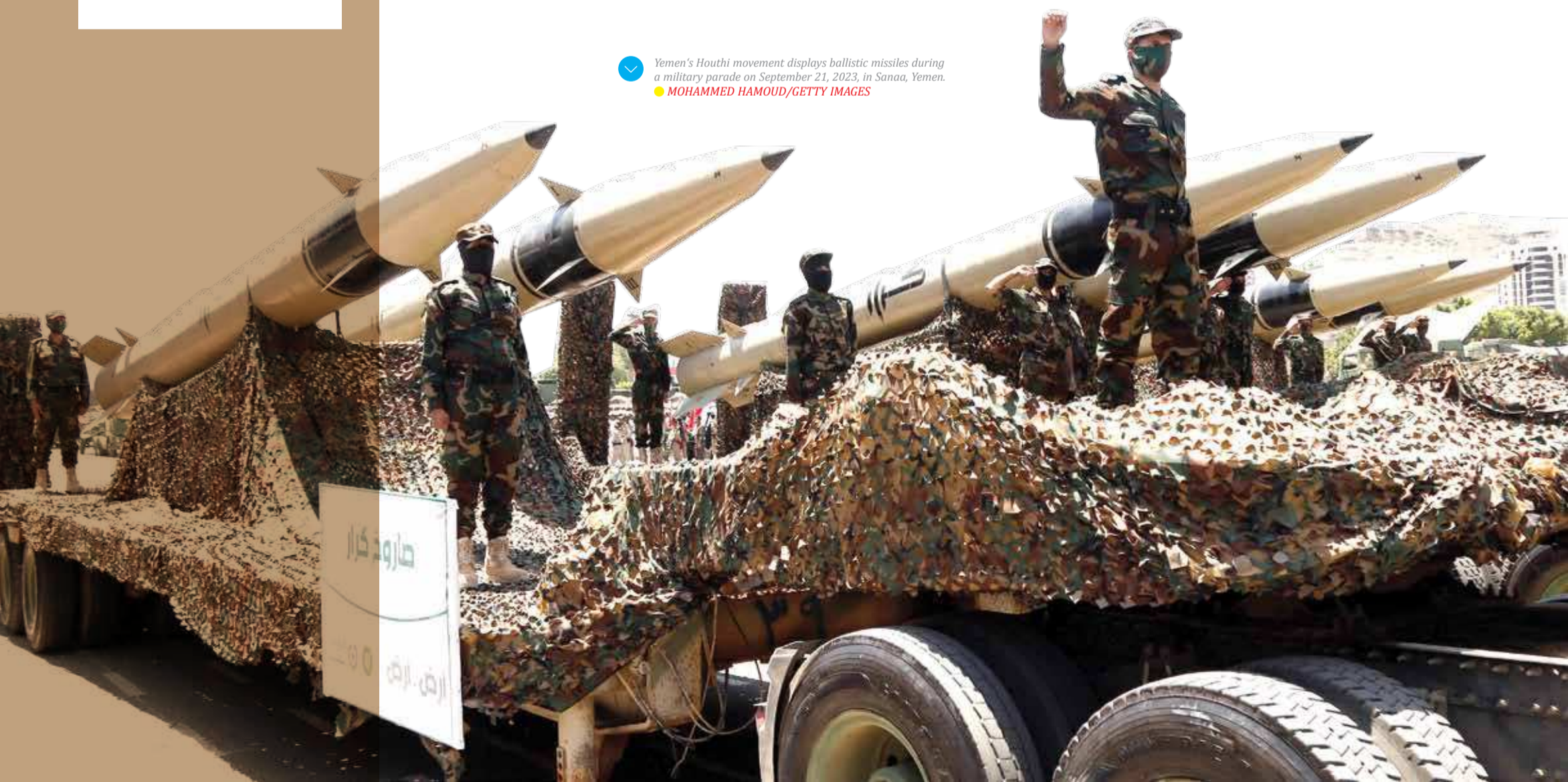
litical figures in Israel and the United States have been quick to seize the opportunity and demand that either Iran reins in the Ansarullah or we deem Iran responsible for the expansion of war. To begin with, while Tehran supports the Ansarullah and approves of some of their actions, it has repeatedly denied being involved in planning the group's attacks as they act independently. Moreover, that line of reasoning is a stretch. After all, the United States is an ally to many countries, particularly Israel, but it notoriously cannot and will not rein in Israeli cabinets, especially the ultra-right-wing cabinet of Benjamin Netanyahu. This is a comparison that those political figures are more than happy to overlook since they know that logically,

as the Iranian foreign minister said, Israel's war on Gaza, where it is "massacring women and children," should be a bigger concern than the stopping of Israeli ships in the Red Sea.

Yet, on Sunday 31, 2023, the British newspaper The Times reported that UK, US, and possibly other members of the aforementioned task force are planning to unleash a salvo of missiles against preplanned targets in Yemen. The Iranian foreign minister told his British counterpart that his country will definitely give a strong response to any act of aggression and adventurism by Israel, which will make the regime regret its actions. A day later, it was announced that Iran's Alborz warship has entered the Red Sea through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. It also comes after Seyyed Razi Mousavi, a senior commander in the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, was killed in an Israeli air strike outside of Damascus last week.

Yemen's Ansarullah is doing its part in helping the people of Gaza. What it has been doing may not have amounted to much in the eyes of some, but it was within its capacity. Interestingly, even that much it achieved elicited such a strong response from Israel and its Western allies that one wonders what the Arab countries and resistance groups of the region could achieve if they all stepped in simultaneously to take tangible steps for the oppressed Palestinians.

Yemen's Houthi movement displays ballistic missiles during a military parade on September 21, 2023, in Sanaa, Yemen.
MOHAMMED HAMOUD/GETTY IMAGES



Red Sea crisis: Shipping costs surge

Yemen-based Houthi fighters' attacks on cargo vessels in the Red Sea, a show of their support for Hamas fighting Israel in Gaza, have surged ocean freight rates, triggering warnings of inflation and delayed goods.

One of the world's busiest waterways, Egypt's Suez Canal, connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and ships fuel, food, and consumer goods from Asia and the Middle East to Europe, CGTN reported. The canal accounts for 12 percent of global trade, including 30 percent of all container movement, according to Egypt's State Information Service.

As Houthi fighters, who are backed by Iran, have stepped up attacks on vessels in the Red Sea since November, hundreds of container ships and other vessels have been rerouted around Africa's southern Cape of Good Hope to avoid the attacks.

This adds up thousands of kilometers, or seven to 20 days of their voyages, driving up the cost of shipments from Asia to Europe and raising the prospect of a renewed inflation shock for the world economy.

As a rough benchmark, avoiding the Red Sea would add around \$2 million to a ship's journey in terms of fuel and other costs, Lars Jensen, founder of Vespucci Maritime and former Maersk director said. This means for a full round-trip journey between Asia and Europe, each vessel could have an extra \$4 million in costs, he added, which would lead to increases in freight rates.

Asia-to-North Europe rates more than doubled to above \$4,000 per 40-foot container in the first week of the new year, with Asia-to-Mediterranean prices climbing to \$5,175, according to Freightos, a booking and payments platform for international freight.

Some carriers have announced rates above \$6,000 per 40-foot container for Mediterranean shipments starting mid-month, and surcharges of \$500 to as much as \$2,700 per container could make all-in prices even higher, said Judah Levine, Freightos' head of research.

Higher costs have also stirred worries about a resurgence in inflation, particularly in the eurozone.

Goldman Sachs on Friday raised its forecast for May euro-area core inflation to 2.3 percent, from 2.2 percent, as a result of the jump in shipping costs, and said a prolonged re-routing of cargo away from the Red Sea would likely have a bigger inflation effect.

But Goldman Sachs believed the inflation would not be as severe as in the pandemic era. "Our equity analysts expect that the shock will be neither as bad nor as prolonged as 2020-22 due to increased ship supply, and no port congestion due to lockdowns," it said.

Delivery of products destined for numerous companies had already been delayed due to Houthi attacks, as the Suez route is used by the likes of IKEA, Walmart, and Amazon.

Twelve governments, including the US, Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom, issued a strongly-worded statement earlier, warning the Houthis against further attacks.



Houthi supporters rally to commemorate 10 Houthi fighters killed by the US Navy in the Red Sea, in Sanaa, Yemen, on January 5, 2024.
● KHALED ABDULLAH/REUTERS

Houthis attracting swathes of new recruits Will Red Sea attacks destabilise Yemen's fragile peace?



Houthi forces boarding the cargo ship Galaxy Leader on November 19, 2023, in the Red Sea.
● AP

By Justin Salhani
Freelance journalist

PERSPECTIVE

The recent Houthi attacks on commercial shipping vessels in the Red Sea have helped the group drive domestic recruitment and mobilise large rallies in the capital, Sanaa. Analysts say the attacks have provided the group a boost after its popularity had taken a hit in recent months.

But they also warn that domestic moves by the emboldened group could threaten the fragile peace within Yemen, as talks towards a ceasefire to a decade-long war appear to be gathering momentum.

The Houthis say their attacks in the Red Sea target Israeli-connected or allied ships and are aimed at pressuring Israel to stop its devastating war on Gaza, which has killed more than 22,000 people since October 7.

That's a message that appears to have resonated with many Yemenis.

Ansarullah, more popularly known as the Houthis, held a rally in Sanaa on Friday, January 1, 2024, drawing millions of Yemenis, according to a Houthi-affiliated media outlet. Images from the event showed a packed al-Sabeen Square, where protesters carried Palestinian and Yemeni flags. The mobilisation took place as the Houthis continued sending missiles and drones into the Red Sea, defying threats of increased military action by the United States.

Amid the heightened tensions in the key maritime waterway, international shipping companies have decided to avoid the Red Sea and go around the southern coast of Africa, adding about nine days to their journey and increasing costs by at least 15 percent. Danish shipping giant Maersk announced on January 1 that it would avoid the Red Sea for the foreseeable future.

programme at Chatham House, told Al Jazeera.

Ceasefire close

The Palestinian cause is extremely popular among Yemenis. But prior to their attacks on ships in the Red Sea, some analysts said the Houthis had struggled to pay salaries and attract new recruits.

That changed after the Houthis started attacking vessels. Recruitment has spiked in recent months as young Yemenis eagerly enlist in the hopes of fighting for the Palestinian cause. The group recently graduated more than 20,000 new fighters, according to Yemen researcher Nicholas Brumfield. He added that the class was named after Hamas's October 7 mission, Al-Aqsa Flood.

"The attacks towards Israel and maritime targets in the Red Sea are favouring Houthis' internal support and recruitment, thus diverting the attention from the social and economic failures," under their rule in Yemen domestically, said Eleonora Ardemagni, a senior associate research fellow at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI). "Direct confrontation with the US is likely to have the same effect."

A decade-long war with a Saudi-backed coalition, which supports the internationally recognised government of Yemen, dampened enthusiasm surrounding the group. A truce took effect in October 2022, and the parties have since been in ceasefire talks. The two sides seem to have made serious progress, with an end to hostilities in sight, the United Nations announced in late December. But analysts believe that the Houthis' recent actions mean a final deal could still be derailed.

"Their actions continue to foreshadow escalation that could easily trigger a more aggressive US military response that in turn can unravel the fragile ceasefire conditions," Vakil said. Brumfield added that "it wouldn't be the first time that there was progress and the whole thing fell apart at the last minute."

A teetering truce

The ceasefire could be threatened if the Houthis decide to launch a new domestic offensive, a prospect that some analysts say is a distinct possibility.

In February 2021, the Houthis launched an offensive to seize Marib, the internationally recognised Yemeni government's last stronghold. The city saw active fighting until the truce was announced in October 2022. But in recent weeks, the Houthis have capitalised on their recent recruitment bump by deploying 50,000 troops around Marib, sparking fears that hostilities could be renewed.

"We've seen this very large build-up of forces there over the course of the last couple of months," Brumfield said. "Within the last week, they've deployed even more forces to that location."

He warned that the relative period of calm in Yemen could soon be over. The Houthis appear to be in position for possible confrontations on both the domestic and regional fronts — on land and at sea.

"For the last 18 months, Yemen has been relatively quiet, and that's been a good thing," Brumfield said. "It's just a matter of smoothing out how this war can end, and it could very easily go the other way."

This article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

Zagreb Open Ranking Series: Iranian Greco-Roman prodigy Hedayati to enter seniors' territory

Sports Desk

Iranian young gun Fardin Hedayati will be looking to have an impressive introduction when making his senior international debut at the Zagreb Open later this week.

A world superheavyweight under-20 champion last year, Hedayati will be a part of the country's five-man Greco-Roman squad at the UWW's season-opening Ranking Series event – starting with the freestyle contests today – alongside Danial Sohrabi (67kg), Amir Abdi (77kg), Alireza Mohmedi (87kg), and Mahdi Bali (97kg).

Hedayati punched his Zagreb ticket after a dominant performance in December's National Championships, which saw him outmuscle former world champion Ali-Akbar Yousefi in the final, and could go head-to-head with some high-profile wrestlers – including four-time world medalist Oscar Pino, Iranian-born Sabah Shariati, who won a bronze for Azerbaijan in Rio 2016, and China's Meng Lingzhe – in the Croatian capital.



UWW

Reigning world champion Amin Mirzazadeh remains the favorite to be the Iranian 130kg wrestler in next summer's Paris Olympics, and probably go all the way to win the ultimate prize, which means Hedayati needs to finish atop the podium in Zagreb to have a slight chance for a berth in the French capital, though he is all but guaranteed a shot at glory in April's Asian Championships.

Meanwhile, Mohmedi – last September's world 82kg silver winner – will be flying high ahead of the 87kg contests after a final victory over Nasser Alizadeh in the national event, hoping to lead the line for the country when the Olympic qualifiers get underway in two-months' time.

Sohrabi – absent at the National Championships – will step into the Zagreb Open on the back of a bronze in October's Asian Games, but will face a daunting challenge in the 67kg competitions, which will feature the reigning world top-two in Cuban Luis Orta and Hasrat Jafarov of Azerbaijan.

With veteran Mohammad-Ali Geraei serving a one-year ban by the international governing body of the sport, Abdi will likely be the Iranian 77kg frontrunner in the Olympic qualifiers, and will build on the national title in Zagreb. Bali, meanwhile, knows he is behind Mohammad-Hadi Saravi – a four-time world and Olympic medalist since 2021 – in the pecking order for a place in Paris but will still look to add the Ranking Series glory to last year's Asian title.

Franz Beckenbauer was a graceful and visionary 'libero' who changed the face of football

AP – By taking a step back, Franz Beckenbauer put himself a step ahead.

The "libero" – taken from the Italian word for "free" and describing a player who had a covering role behind a defensive line – was not an entirely new concept to football by the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It was just that nobody who'd played in that rare position had ever done so with the vision, grace and ability on the ball demonstrated by Beckenbauer, the football revolutionary who died Monday at the age of 78.

The epitome of elegance in that iconic white Germany jersey with No. 5 on the back, Beckenbauer was regarded as a pioneer because he brought an attacking element to the deepest outfield position on the pitch.

Whether it was surging out from the back with the ball at his feet or picking out a teammate with a long, precise pass forward, he was the guy who started his team's attacks – whether it was for Bayern Munich, which he helped become a force in the German game in the mid-1960s, or his national team, with whom he won the World Cup in 1974.

"As a kid he was the first foreign footballer I'd ever heard of," former England and Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "That's because if any player tried to play out from the back whether at pro or amateur level, I would hear, 'He thinks he's Beckenbauer.'"

"That just shows the impact he had on the world game and how he helped change it."

Beckenbauer actually started out as a central midfielder, the position he played in the 1966 World Cup final when West Germany lost to England, and would still play there at times later in his career. But it was as a libero – or a "sweeper," as some call it – that he really became a phenomenon through the way he read the game and surveyed the scene ahead of him.

"He was essentially a midfielder playing at the back and he made

it look so easy," Paul Lambert, a Champions League winner with Borussia Dortmund in 1997, told the BBC. "He could have kept his suit on most of the time."

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann said Beckenbauer's interpretation of the libero role changed the game, epitomizing perhaps the cultural liberalism and spirit of freedom pervading through Europe in the 1960s.

"His friendship with the ball made him free," Nagelsmann said. "Franz Beckenbauer could float across the grass."

Whereas the modern-day sweeper is typically the middle central defender in a back three, Beckenbauer was one of two nominal center backs used as a libero behind a three-man line for Bayern and would pick his moment to step out and bolster the midfield. That particular role has disappeared from the game, though lives on in ball-playing center backs in a back four such as David Alaba at Real Madrid or, a few years back, Rio Ferdinand at Manchester United.

Such was his excellence that "Der Kaiser" – as Beckenbauer was known – was a two-time Ballon d'Or winner (1972 and 1976) and finished second in the voting in 1974 and 1975, amid an era he bestrode while winning three straight German league titles (1972-74) and three straight European Cups (1974-76).

His most famous goal might be a free kick he scored in that period with the outside of his right boot for Bayern at Duisburg in March 1974, an example of the class and impudence of a player who could do things defenders weren't supposed to even attempt.

Of all the tributes to Beckenbauer that poured in Monday, few were as fitting as that of UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin.

"His unparalleled versatility, graceful transitions between defense and midfield, impeccable ball control, and visionary style reshaped the way football was playing in his era," Čeferin said.



GETTY IMAGES

Henry reveals battle with depression throughout career



JOHANNA GERON/REUTERS

AFP – Arsenal and France legend Thierry Henry has revealed he suffered with depression during his stellar playing career.

The 46-year-old, who won the World Cup with France and is Arsenal's all-time top goalscorer, told the Diary of a CEO podcast that the coronavirus pandemic made him appreciate his mental health struggles as he cried "almost every day."

Henry has linked that to his past and a search for approval from his father, who was often critical of his performances as a young player.

"Throughout my career, and since I was born, I must have been in depression," said Henry.

"Did I know it? No. Did I do something about it? No. But I adapted to a certain way. That doesn't mean I'm walking straight, but I'm walking. You've got to put one foot (forward) and another one, and walk. That's what I've been told since I'm young."

"I never stopped walking, then maybe I would have realised. (But during) Covid – I stopped walking. I couldn't. Then you start to realise."

Henry was in charge of Canadian side Montral Impact when the pandemic hit, leaving him isolated and on the other side of the world from his family.

"I was in isolation in Montreal, and not being able to see my kids for a year was tough," he added.

"Tears were coming alone. Why I don't know, but maybe they were there for a very long time."

"Technically, it wasn't me, it was the young me. (Crying for) everything he didn't get, approval."

Henry, who is now coach of France's under-21 team, said his father's desire was for him to be "an amazing football player" from the moment he first held his son.

"As a little boy it was always 'you didn't do that well'. So obviously when you hear that more often than not, that's what's going to stay," said Henry.

"(It) did to a degree help the athlete....(it) didn't help so much the human being".

Leader urges manhunt for Kerman masterminds

National Desk

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the Islamic Republic insists on finding the masterminds of the Kerman terrorist attacks. The Leader noted that the Islamic Republic does not insist on accusing others for the Wednesday incident but insists on finding and suppressing the real and behind-the-scene perpetrators of the attacks which killed more than 90 people. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks during a meeting with thousands of people from Qom on Tuesday, marking the anniversary of the 1978 popular uprising in the holy city against the former US-backed Pahlavi regime. He expressed hope that the authorities would find the masterminds involved in the attack and punish them. The bombings, which were claimed by the Daesh terrorist group, were carried out near the burial site of Iran's late anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani during a ceremony marking the fourth anniversary of his killing. The blasts left 91 people, including 14 Afghans, dead and 286 others wounded.

Soleimani who was the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, was assassinated in a US strike near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020. According to authorities in the southeastern province of Kerman, all individuals suspected to be involved in the attack have been arrested so far. The leader also pointed to the importance of the active presence of people in the country's events, saying that the United States and Israel have been pursuing the policy of decreasing the participation of Iranians in the country's important occasions. He described the enemy's effort in downplaying the presence of people in the events, such as the Arba'een march and the anniversary of the assassination of Iranian anti-terror commander General Qassem Soleimani, as one of its tricks to decrease the people's participation in such occasions. Ayatollah Khamenei said that the reason for their enmity is that they have found that the main factor behind Iran's progress, its emergence as an important power in the region, and the creation of the resistance forces across the region, and foiling all of their



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting with people from the central province of Qom on January 9, 2024. khamenei.ir

plots, including coups and imposed wars against Iran, is the presence of Iranian people in the country's events. He also referred to the foreign media's efforts to discourage people, especially the youth, from having hope in the future of the country, as other plots to decrease the people's participation on such occasions. Ayatollah Khamenei underlined that the best way to counter such

plots is the active presence of people in the country's political and economic issues, elections and even the security issues. The Leader of the Islamic Revolution also touched upon the ongoing Israeli onslaught on the Gaza Strip, saying that the resistance of Palestinian people in the Palestinian territory has frustrated the United States and Israel. He said that a limited number of people in a limited area of land

called the Gaza Strip managed to frustrate the United States and its vassal, Israel. The crimes that Israel is committing against the Palestinians will be recorded in history even after the regime is wiped off the face of the earth, he asserted. Additionally, he noted, it will not be forgotten that the patience of the Palestinian people and their resilience forced the regime to retreat.

Hezbollah hits Israeli base with drones in response to killings



AFP

Hezbollah launched explosive drones at an army base in northern Israel on Tuesday, declaring the attack part of its response to recent Israeli assassinations in Lebanon, as sources reported three Hezbollah fighters killed in an Israeli strike. The group said its drones had hit the Israeli army headquarters in Safed as part of retaliation for last week's killing of deputy Hamas leader Saleh al-Arouri in Beirut, and in response to Monday's killing of a Hezbollah commander, Reuters reported. A source familiar with Hezbollah operations said it marked the first time the group had attacked Safed, some 14 km (8 miles) from the border, during hostilities that began three months ago after Hamas attacked Israel from the Gaza Strip. An Israeli army spokesperson said a northern base was hit in an aerial attack but there had been no damage or casualties. The spokesperson did not say precisely where the incident occurred. More than 130 Hezbollah fighters have been killed in Lebanon during the hostilities with Israel, their worst confrontation since they went to war in 2006. The violence has forced tens of thousands of people to flee homes on both sides of the border, and has raised concern the conflict could intensify and spread further. The three Hezbollah fighters killed on Tuesday in a strike on their vehicle in the town of Ghandouriyeh in the south of Lebanon, the sources said, without identifying them.

In a statement, the Israeli military said its air force attacked Hezbollah targets in Kila – an apparent reference to the Lebanese border village of Kfar Kila – and a drone squad belonging to the group elsewhere in southern Lebanon. The Hezbollah commander killed on Monday, Wisam Tawil, was a commander in Hezbollah's elite Radwan forces and the most senior Hezbollah officer killed so far in the conflict. He had played a leading role in directing its operations in the south. Hezbollah deputy leader Naim Qassem, in a televised speech on Tuesday, said his group did not want to expand the war from Lebanon, "but if Israel expands it, the response is inevitable to the maximum extent required to deter Israel".

Hamas chief urges Muslim states to arm resistance

Gaza War not Palestinians' only: *Haniyeh*

International Desk

Head of Hamas' political bureau Ismail Haniyeh has called for Muslim states' support in Gaza war, saying the war in Gaza is not just about the Palestinian people. "We see countries of the world pouring weapons into the occupation (Israel)... The time has come (for Muslim states) to support the resistance with weapons, because this is... not the battle of the Palestinian people alone," Haniyeh said on Tuesday in a speech in Doha. He also underlined that the Israeli enemy has failed to achieve any of its objectives in the war on the Gaza Strip. Israel vowed to crush Gaza's

Hamas after the resistance group carried out the deadliest attack in the regime's history on October 7. The Israeli army said on Tuesday that 185 soldiers have been killed so far in its offensive against Hamas fighters in the Gaza Strip. It said nine soldiers died in fighting on Monday, one of the deadliest days for the military since it launched a ground invasion of the Palestinian territory on October 27. On Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held talks in Israel as he sought a plan for Gaza's post-war future, while Israel's military pushes ahead with its offensive in the beleaguered territory.

Blinken, on his latest mission to rein in the Gaza war, told Israeli leaders that there was still a chance of winning acceptance from their Arab neighbors, if they create a path to a viable Palestinian state. On his fourth trip to the region since October in a so far largely fruitless quest to tamp down the violence, Blinken said he would share what he had heard in two days of talks with Jordan, Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Blinken had already said he would press Israel on the "absolute imperative" to do more to protect Gaza's civilians and allow humanitarian aid to reach them. His boss, President Joe Biden, said overnight that Washington

was quietly pushing Israel to begin withdrawing some forces. Biden, confronted on Monday by protesters shouting "Cease-fire now!" while visiting a church in South Carolina, said he had been "quietly" working to encourage Israel to ease its attacks and "significantly get out of Gaza". The Health Ministry in Gaza said Tuesday at least 23,210 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory, adding that it had recorded 126 deaths in the past 24 hours. The UN humanitarian office OCHA said that "as casualties rise, the ability to treat them continues to be in jeopardy". It said three hospitals in central Gaza and Khan Younis, including

Al-Aqsa, were "at risk of closure due to the issuance of evacuation orders in nearby areas and the ongoing conduct of hostilities nearby". Sean Casey, World Health Organization Emergency Medical Teams coordinator in Gaza, said that "we are seeing the health system collapse at a very rapid pace". He said many staff at the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis had joined hundreds of thousands of other Gazans crowded into shelters in the strip's southernmost tip, leaving just one doctor for more than 100 burn victims. **AP, AFP, REUTERS, and Al Jazeera contributed to the report.**

First Announcement

N.I.S.O.C
 NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY
 AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 08-38-0040002

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
27	PARTS FOR "WENZEL" HYDRAULIC FISHING JAR 3-3/8 IN. OD., 1-1/2 IN. ID., 2-3/8 API IF CONN. VALVE MANDREL HOUSING	135 NO

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 35,204/23 EURO or 15,043,543,818 RIAL, in favor of NISOC. Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material-procurement-management-tab. ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P.

NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL. NOTE: Based on enactment issued by Nisoc's Tender committee, foreign companies must submit a Bid Bond Guarantee amounting to aforementioned (paragraph 1)Euro amount. Otherwise, their quotations will not be considered.

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Iran rejects US claims on Yemen's Red Sea attacks

Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations rejected the United States' "unfounded allegations" against Iran concerning Yemen's pro-Palestine operations in the Red Sea, slamming it as a bid to divert attention from the "root causes" of the situation in the key maritime waterway. In a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the Iranian envoy reaffirmed Tehran's commitment to maritime security and freedom of navigation, and rejected "unfounded allegations" made by the US and Israel at a UNSC open briefing on the situation in the Red Sea held last Wednesday, Press TV reported. US Deputy Ambassador Christopher Lu urged the UNSC to take action against Yemen over its pro-Palestine operations that have targeted Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea, and accused Iran of being "deeply involved in planning operations against commercial vessels in the Red Sea." The letter added that the recent incidents in the Red Sea came in response to Israel's US-backed "genocidal war" in the Gaza Strip. It urged the UN Security Council "to uphold its responsibilities to address the causes of the current situation in the Red Sea" and take decisive measures to "compel" the Israeli regime to end its brutal war on Gaza. The Iranian envoy also warned against any provocative or irresponsible actions by the United States in the Red Sea that may endanger the peace and security of the region.

Only 265 of 321 Oscar-qualifying films eligible for best picture



There are 321 films that have qualified for the 2023 Academy Awards, with 265 of those films also eligible in the Best Picture category, the Academy announced.

The discrepancy between films that have qualified for the top category and films that are eligible in other categories comes because of new eligibility rules that require Best Picture candidates to meet additional benchmarks for diversity and inclusion. This is the first year that those Representation and Inclusion Standards (RAISE) have been enforced, though they did not appear to disqualify any serious contenders in the category, *The Wrap* reported.

Films that qualified for the Oscars but are not eligible for Best Picture include 'Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania,' 'The Creator,' 'Dumb Money,' and 'The Marvels'. Absence from the Best Picture list does not necessarily mean that a film failed to meet the RAISE standards, because that application is voluntary and films can opt out of Best Picture consideration.

Other films that aren't on the qualifying list for Best Picture include a handful of documentaries ('20 Days in Mariupol,' 'Common Ground,' 'Going to Mars: The Nikki Giovanni Project'), animated features ('Ernest & Celestine: A Trip to Gibberitia,' 'Monkey King,' 'They Shot the Piano Player') and international films ('Concrete Utopia,' 'Godland').

The 321 eligible films are the most since the 2020 Oscars, when 366 films qualified under COVID-era rules that relaxed the theatrical requirement and made it easier to qualify. Since then, 276 films qualified in 2021 and 301 in 2022.

In order to be eligible for consideration, Academy rules state, "feature films must open in a commercial motion picture theater in at least one of six US metropolitan areas: Los Angeles County; the City of New York; the Bay Area; Chicago, Illinois; Miami, Florida; and Atlanta, Georgia, between January 1, 2023, and December 31, 2023, and complete a minimum qualifying run of seven consecutive days in the same venue. Feature films must have a running time of more than 40 minutes." Nominations voting begins on Thursday and concludes on Jan. 16. The nominations will be announced on Jan. 23. The 96th Oscars will be held on March 24 at the Dolby Theatre at Ovation Hollywood and will be televised live on ABC and in more than 200 territories worldwide.

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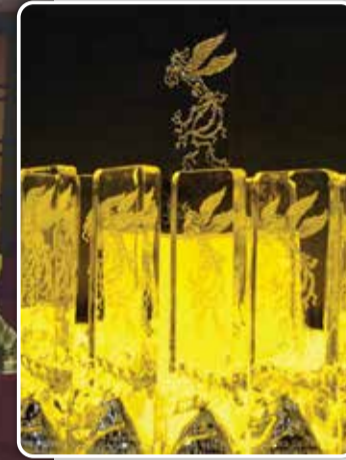
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- Advertising Dept. Tel: +98 21 88500601
- & Email: irandaily@iranagahiha.com
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- Email: newspaper.irandaily.ir
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42nd Fajr International Film Festival unveils official lineup



Arts & Culture Desk

The 42nd edition of the Fajr International Film Festival, Iran's most important film event, announced its lineup for three sections: Sodaye-Simorgh (the festival's main competition section), New Perspective (first-time filmmakers) and Animations. The announcement was

made live on state TV by Mojtaba Amini, the event's secretary, who said that the festival is set to showcase a diverse selection of films, IRNA reported. 'Breakfast with Giraffes' directed by Soroush Sehhat, 'Parviz Khan' by Ali Saqafi, and 'Ahmad' by Amir-Abbas Rabiei are among the films of the main competition section.

The selection committee, comprised of seven members, including prominent figures such as Daryoush Arjmand and Hossein Zandbaf, spent a month reviewing 106 submissions before finalizing the final lineup.

The list includes 12 cinematic productions from the Farabi Cinema Foundation, produced collaboratively with various organizations, marking a shift in strategy towards supportive filmmaking in Iran. These films will be part of the 'Sodaye-Simorgh' and 'New Perspective' sections of the festival. Amini emphasized that all productions this year resulted from partnerships with public or private sectors. The 42nd Fajr International Film Festival is slated to be held in Tehran from February 1 to 11, promising cinephiles a rich cinematic experience and a platform for emerging talents in the Iranian film industry.

Iran urges trust-building for return of expats: Judiciary chief



Social Desk

Iranian Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseini Ejei stressed the need to instill trust for the return of Iranians residing abroad. He emphasized that face-to-face trust-building is essential, warning that without it, the complexities surrounding the return of Iranians might not be addressed even with numerous laws and regulations, *iribnews.ir* reported. Ejei pointed out scenarios where specialists, having left the country during sensitive periods like war, aim to return to contribute their expertise.

However, the lack of mutual trust between the individuals and the authorities may prevent their successful return. Many Iranians abroad express the desire to return but are hesitant due to a lack of confidence. Ejei called for the implementation of mechanisms to foster mutual trust. Speaking about legal and judicial matters for Iranians abroad, Ejei suggested solutions that could resolve issues without requiring their physical presence in the country. He stressed the importance of informing and educating individuals about the procedures, emphasizing the important role of the responsible authorities in ensuring a smooth process. Ejei highlighted the difference between verbal assurances and tangible actions, asserting that actions by the judiciary would be more impactful in reassuring Iranians abroad about their return. He also emphasized the significance of positive interactions at key points such as airports, consulates, and embassies to counteract negative perceptions and false propaganda.

Colorful mummies discovered in unique 1,300-year-old graves

While exploring an ancient cemetery in Egypt, a team of archaeologists from Spain discovered a peculiar set of tombs carved into rock. Inside, they found a trove of treasures dating back more than 1,300 years. The graves — dating to between about 332 B.C. and 641 A.D. — were carved into the ground, similar to a stone well, according to a Jan. 8 Facebook post from Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, *mi-amiherald.com* reported. The well-like holes end with a door closed by mud bricks. Archaeologists said

they found empty coffins within the graves and at least 23 mummies. Among the human remains, many were wrapped in colorful garments, experts said. Some of the mummies wore gilded and colorful funerary masks. Two of the burials had a gold tongue in their mouths, which is a burial ritual to preserve the dead dating to the Roman era, according to archaeologists. Photos show mummies in their graves as well as a mask worn by one of the deceased. The team also found a unique terracotta statue depicting

Aphrodite, officials said. The goddess is wearing a floral wreath topped by a crown. It's the first time such a statue has been discovered in the region. In addition to mummies and statue, a collection of stone bricks belonging to a demolished building were excavated, experts said. Many of the bricks depict drawings of plants, fruit or animals. Archaeologists said they will continue exploring the area. The tombs and artifacts were found in Al-Bahnasa, which is about 130 miles south of Cairo.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

