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Ayatollah Khamenei: Westerners, who raise a commotion about the execution of a convict, have closed their eyes to the killing of 30,000 innocent people in Gaza

Gaza Reveals Western Hypocrisy



The bodies of Palestinians killed during the war are buried in a mass grave on January 30, in Rafah, Gaza.

Iran ramps up pressure on Pakistan-based terrorist group with elimination of ringleader

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – Iran has stepped up security measures to curb terrorist chatter southeast of the country, after attacking the so-called Jaish Al-Adl terrorist group's headquarters in unprecedented airstrikes early this year.

On Friday the Mehr news agency reported that expeditionary Iranian forces had carried out a ground operation that led to the liquidation of Jaish Al-Adl's ringleader Ismail Shah Bakhsh and a number of his associates. It did not specify which unit of Iranian armed forces conducted the offensive nor did it reveal what exact region was targeted.

While some Western-aligned Pakistani media outlets claimed that the terrorist's death was the result of an armed dispute between smugglers, the Tehran Times' further exchanges with Mehr confirmed the veracity of the initial report.

Jaish Al-Adl was established in 2012 in Pakistan by the remaining members of a dismantled terrorist group active in the southeastern province of Sistan-Balouchistan. The group called Jundallah which was responsible for the death of over 150 civilians ended its activities after its leader Abdolmalek Rigi was arrested and executed in June 2010. ▶ Page 2

Kenya seeks to foster scientific co-op with Iran

TEHRAN –The Kenyan ambassador to Iran has called for developing scientific ties with Iran, especially exchanging professors and students, to benefit from the experiences of Iranian researchers.

"Iran's progress and self-sufficiency in biotechnology and genetic fields are astonishing," Joshua Igweta Gatimo said while visiting the National Institute of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (NIGEB) on Thursday.

In addition to exchanging professors and students, Kenya welcomes cooperation with Iran in the treatment of cancer and infectious diseases," Gatimo said in a meeting with Javad Mohammadi, the NIGEB director general, IRNA reported.

Mohammadi, for his part, said that in line with the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy to boost international cooperation in the field of scientific diplomacy, the institute welcomes interaction and collaboration with all countries.

He proposed that the two countries launch joint projects in biotechnology and genetic engineering.

Iran, Africa boost ties

In July 2023, President Ebrahim Raisi started his tour of African countries by first visiting Kenya, where he held many high-level meetings. After Kenya, he headed to Uganda. The tour will also take Raisi to Zimbabwe. ▶ Page 7

Netanyahu narcissism

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- Divisions continue to grow in Israel over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the war on Gaza.

Netanyahu has found himself in hot water over the fate of the captives that were taken after Hamas launched a successful military operation in southern Israel more than four months ago.

The resistance movement carried out "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" in October last year. More than 1,100 were killed in the operation and around 250 others were taken captive.

More than 100 of the captives were freed as part of a weeklong truce between Israel and Hamas in late November that led to the release of hundreds of Palestinians from Israeli jails. Around 130 of the captives remain in Gaza, a fourth of them believed to be dead. They have lost their lives as a result of Israel's relentless strikes against the besieged Palestinian territory.

Israelis have held anti-Netanyahu protests since the October 7 Hamas attack. They have filled the streets to vent their anger at the premier for his regime's failure to anticipate and prevent the attack.

Anglo-American attacks on Yemen are making Ansarullah stronger

By Ali Karbalaei

TEHRAN – American and British militaries struck around 18 Ansarullah targets in Yemen on Saturday, according to U.S. officials.

Yemeni media has confirmed the aggression, reporting that American and British forces in the region carried out nine airstrikes in the capital Sana'a, including three that hit a pesticide factory.

Among other locations struck by the Anglo-American attacks included three airstrikes on telecommunication networks in the southwestern city of Taiz, where a civilian has been killed and six others injured.

The latest attacks come after the Sana'a government forces targeted U.S. warships in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden with a number of drones as well as several sensitive sites in the southern Israeli-occupied city of Umm al-Rashrash, also known as Eilat.

Whilst this is believed to be the fifth major joint military action taken by the two countries against targets in Yemen, America has been frequently attacking what the Pentagon claims to be sites belonging to Ansarullah.

American duplicity and Arab cowardice enabling Israeli war crimes and ethnic cleansing

By Professor Hossein Askari

President Biden, looking somber, keeps urging Israel to avoid civilian deaths and to use targeted strikes on Hamas. Yet he keeps supplying Israel with 2,000-pound bunker buster bombs that are designed to kill indiscriminately and over a wide area!

He rightly reels against nuclear proliferation and vows to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Yet the United States will not even acknowledge the fact that Israel possesses over 200 nukes, let alone endorse a longstanding Arab and Iranian proposal to declare the region a nuclear-free zone! Why? Because Israel wants to keep its nukes so it can threaten its neighbors. As a result, we risk a nuclear war.

The U.S. says it wants an end to hostilities and civilian deaths, largely those of women and children in the Gaza 'war' that is not a war because what we have is an army of well-equipped soldiers massacring defenseless women and children. Yet at the United Nations Security Council, the United States stands isolated after having vetoed three resolutions demanding an immediate ceasefire!

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Intl. resistance music conference proposes joint orchestra formation

TEHRAN- The second edition of an international conference focused on exploring the realm of resistance music concluded with a proposal to establish a common orchestra among artists from countries in the axis of resistance.

The conference was held at Tehran University on Saturday, with the presence of several professors, researchers, and musicians from both domestic and foreign countries in the Islamic and North African resistance axis, Mehr reported on Sunday.

During the meeting, Iranian musician Shahrouz Haqqi presented a proposal, suggesting the formation of an orchestra consisting of artists from countries within the resistance bloc. ▶ Page 8



Imam Mahdi's birthday anniversary celebrated

The holy shrine of Imam Reza in the city of Mashhad hosted on Saturday night huge numbers of people from all walks of life who converged to celebrate the birth anniversary of Imam Mahdi.

People also marched in droves toward the Jamkaran mosque, which is closely associated with Imam Mahdi, to honor the event. The mosque is located near the central city of Qom.

Imam Mahdi was born in 969 AD in Iraq. According to historical scriptures, when he was born, his father hid him from the ruler of the time who sought to dispose of him.

Shia Muslims believe Imam Mahdi is alive, but in hiding, and will reappear one day to administer justice the world over.

Deputy minister calls for formation of union among Persian-speaking nations

TEHRAN – Ali Darabi, Iran's deputy tourism minister of cultural heritage and tourism, has called for the establishment of a union dedicated to Persian-speaking countries.

Speaking at a cultural event dedicated to Iran and Tajikistan on Friday, Darabi highlighted the importance of forming a "Union of Persian-speaking Countries."

The official expressed hope for the establishment of this union, mentioning the deep shared linguistic and cultural roots between Persian-speaking nations and between Iran and Tajikistan in particular.

Addressing the cultural night, he acknowledged the various names given to Tajikistan. ▶ Page 6

TEHRAN PAPERS

The target of sanctions against Russia is Iran

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

In a note, Hamshahri discussed the purpose of the new U.S. sanctions against Russia.

It wrote: Referring to the new U.S. sanctions against Russia on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine war, and repeating the anti-Iran claims, the deputy special representative of the U.S. for Iran stated that these sanctions have targeted Iran's support for Russia in the Ukraine war. According to Abram Paley, the deepening of the military partnership between Iran and Russia is not only harmful to Ukraine but also threatens Iran's neighbors and the international community.

Iran's UN mission in New York rejected the claims of some Western media that Iran has sold ballistic missiles to Russia to use in the Ukraine war and said, "Despite no legal restrictions on ballistic missile sales, Iran is morally obligated to refrain from weapon transactions during the Russia-Ukraine conflict to prevent fueling the war."

Even though there are no legal limitations on the sale of ballistic missiles, Iran is morally obligated to refrain from arms deals during the Russia-Ukraine conflict to avoid provoking the war, and this is based on Iran's adherence to international law and the UN Charter.

Ham Mihan: Repeated claim against Iran

Ham Mihan wrote that the U.S. has not seen any evidence confirming the transfer of ballistic missiles from Iran to Russia. American news website Axios quoted three Israeli officials as saying that Iran has given up on delivering ballistic missiles to Russia, but it is not clear whether will it refuse to deliver these missiles in the future or not. This report is important because it cites sources related to the Zionist regime.

Western parties have repeatedly accused Iran of sending weapons to Russia in its war against Ukraine which has been denied by the authorities of our country.

This claim has been repeated so much that the Iranian authorities usually do not show a specific reaction to each claim. Hossein Amir Abdollahian has once again strongly condemned the baseless accusations raised against Iran regarding Russia's use of Iranian weapons in the Ukraine war.

Repetition of undocumented claims in this regard has reached a boring stage. Americans should stop being hypocritical about these

developments.

Shargh: America invents excuses against Iran whenever it gets desperate

In a commentary, Shargh discussed the reactions of the West against Iran under various pretexts.

Sharq says Saeed Safari, a political affairs expert is sure that "the West's false claims against Tehran are related to the Hamas-Israeli war of attrition and the worsening of the situation in Gaza.

Above all, the impact of this war on arming Ukraine by the West, with the centrality of the United States of America, has created a situation in which Washington tries to justify the weakening support for Kyiv by making baseless accusations such as sending ballistic missiles or drones from Iran to Russia and propaganda against Tehran to strike a balance of power."

Safari considers Joe Biden's recent words as a confirmation of his analysis and believes that the White House is more concerned than ever before about the depletion of Ukraine's arms stockpile in the war with Russia and its impact on the fate of the war because according to Biden's claim, after two years of war, the people of Ukraine continue to fight (against Russia) with great courage; but their ammunition is running out.

Siasat-e-Rooz: Ballot box will neutralize plots by the foes

In an article, Siasat-e-Rooz points to the great importance of participation in the parliamentary election in Iran which will be held on March 1. It wrote: The enemies seek various ways to undermine Iran and war is only one of them. Since they are disappointed with a direct military conflict with Iran they have turned to other ploys.

Disappointing the people from the Islamic system is another way they have adopted and to achieve this goal they are trying to discourage people from coming to the polling stations because they know that a low turnout in elections will weaken the Islamic Republic system.

There should be no doubt that the Islamic Republic has been able to overcome hostilities due to the support of the people, and if participation in elections decreases, the enemy's threats will increase. In fact, the same aims that the enemy is pursuing, such as disintegration, internal conflicts, and even military attacks, would be implemented in absence of the involvement of the public in deciding their fate.

excruciating pain the vestiges of which still exist today," Collon recalled.

Collon directs his own website called InvestigAction which stays active thanks to donations from tens of thousands of readers around the world. He has also published several books on destructive Western policies in different countries: from Yugoslavia to Kosovo, Ukraine, and Palestine. The dedicated author has tried to expose the lies that have cost the lives of countless people. Despite all his efforts, Collon has been barred from reaching an even wider audience by Western leaders.

"There is a big government censorship in the West. We like to pretend that we support freedom of speech but anyone who decides to offer a different narrative than what's being fed to people gets censored. I am on the blacklist of the European TV stations, my website gets attacked now and then, and I and my colleagues get targeted by smear campaigns routinely."

I expressed to Collon my difficulty in envisioning the immense pressure he has to face, stating that I would probably opt for a different profession to spare myself from the inevitable scrutiny and pressure. In response, the Belgian writer emphasized the hidden resilience within each individual, drawing parallels to the enduring resistance seen in Gaza against Israeli aggression. "Look at what's happening in Gaza. People are withstanding Israeli violence and oppression with everything they have got. When it comes to defending our freedom and dignity, we sometimes go through things we never knew we could tolerate."

Iran ramps up pressure on Pakistan-based terrorist group with elimination of ringleader

From page 1 ▶ The so-called Jaish Al-Adl has also been staging terror attacks in Sistan-Balouchestan, so far killing over 100 Iranian individuals. Its most recent attempt to foment chaos in the border region was thwarted by Iranian forces who carried out airstrikes on the terror outfit's headquarters inside Pakistan. It was reported that the attack killed a substantial number of terrorists and decimated its logistics and weapons.

The attack on Pakistani soil was followed by what seemed to be a retaliatory strike by Islamabad. Pakistan claimed it had targeted separatists inside Iran. Tehran confirmed that no Iranian nationals had lost their lives during the offensive.

The reciprocal airstrikes caused the traditionally friendly ties between the two nations to fray with Pakistan calling back its envoy and barring the Iranian ambassador from returning to Islamabad until further notice.

Tehran strongly condemns US, UK military strikes on Yemen

TEHRAN - Nasser Kanaani, spokesman for Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has delivered a strong rebuke against the extensive military attacks conducted by the United States and the United Kingdom within Yemen's borders on Saturday.

Kanaani argued that these "unilateral and dangerous" actions have far-reaching implications, surpassing internationally recognized norms and constituting a blatant violation of Yemen's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He continued by asserting that the United States and Britain, once again, demonstrated their unwavering support for the full-scale war crimes and genocide perpetrated by the Zionist regime in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. "The prioritization of the security and questionable interests of the occupying and criminal Zionist regime over international peace and security reflects a concerning disregard for ethical and humanitarian principles, as well as a blatant neglect of international laws, regulations, and the United Nations Charter," the spokesman stated.

Shining a spotlight on the motives behind these attacks, Kanaani emphasized that the United States and Britain appear to pursue an agenda aimed at escalating tensions and crises in the region. "Furthermore, there is a clear intent to broaden the scope of war and instability, divert public attention from the war crimes of the Zionist regime, and create an opportunity for the continuation of these alleged genocide-related war crimes."

Kanaani underscored that rather than taking effective and immediate action to address the root causes of insecurities and instabilities, particularly the aggressive actions of the Zionist regime and the daily atrocities against hundreds of Palestinians, including women and children, the United States and Britain have opted for military strikes on a country attempting to apply pressure on this regime to

Tehran's new ambassador to Bangkok starts diplomatic mission

TEHRAN - In preparation for his diplomatic mission, Nasseredin Heidari, the recently appointed ambassador of Iran to Thailand, held a crucial meeting on Saturday with Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Heidari presented a comprehensive report during the meeting, outlining the scope of his mission and detailing ambitious plans to foster development and strengthen cooperation between Tehran and Bangkok.

In the course of discussions, Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian underscored the significance of expanding and deepening the longstanding relations between Iran and Thailand, emphasizing Thailand's pivotal role in the Asia-Pacific region.

Iranian consul general to Kazan meets Amir Abdollahian

TEHRAN - In a diplomatic session with Davood Mirzakhani, serving as Iran's consul general to Russia's Kazan, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian placed a significant emphasis on cultivating enduring relationships with students and Iranian residents in Kazan and the Republic of Tatarstan as a whole.

Stressing the strategic role of public diplomacy, Amir Abdollahian highlighted the effectiveness of such an approach in showcasing Iran's capabilities.



While the two neighbors managed to repair ties and re-exchange envoys in a short period, Israeli and Western media outlets seemed to be hoping for gaps between the two Muslim countries to deepen.

On January 25 the Atlantic Council suggested that while Iran and Pakistan had managed to move past a short period of fractious ties, their strikes on each other's territories were likely to leave "lasting diplomatic damage".

"The strikes last week will alter regional dynamics with a long-term impact on bilateral ties between Islamabad and Tehran. While the immediate crisis will subside, an intensifying security dilemma will be permanent for Pakistan," wrote the Atlantic Council, echoing the remarks of several other Western outlets and think tanks that were hoping for Iran-Pakistan relations to eventually nosedive.

It appears however that those

predictions (or perhaps wishes) failed to materialize as the latest Iranian operation against the Jaish Al-Adl points to a deeper security cooperation between Iran and Pakistan.

"The exact nature and location of the operation is not yet revealed. But what's clear in my opinion is that the elimination of Shah Bakhsh could not have happened without thorough coordination between Iran and Pakistan," Nozar Shafie, a senior expert on South Asia, told the Tehran Times.

"Despite Western expectations, the January attacks have caused Iran and Pakistan to grow closer ties. Both countries are now more determined to combat terrorism and fully understand that rather than rivals, they are regional partners. I think more will be done in the future to secure the borders and territories of Iran and Pakistan with this new understanding of the situation."

halt its lethal actions.

The spokesman stressed that these unilateral and aggressive military operations will undoubtedly contribute to increased insecurity and instability in the region.

"The consequences of such actions are anticipated to yield no positive outcomes for the invading countries, as they further complicate an already intricate geopolitical landscape. The international community is closely watching as tensions escalate, emphasizing the urgent need for diplomatic solutions to restore stability and peace in the region," he noted.

The United States and Britain in December announced a military coalition to target Yemen in support of Israel.

In a joint statement on Saturday, the United States and Britain said their military action hit eight locations across Yemen. The statement described the strikes as "necessary and proportionate", hitting 18 targets that featured "underground weapons storage facilities, missile storage facilities, one-way attack unmanned aerial systems, air defense systems, radars, and a helicopter".

The operation marked the fourth time that the United States and Britain militaries have carried out joint attacks against Yemen since January 12.

Apart from the joint action, the United States has also been carrying out almost daily raids on Yemeni targets, including incoming missiles, rockets and drones targeting commercial and other navy vessels related to Israel.

The attacks were supported by Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

Brigadier General Yahya Saree, the spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces, pledged that the country would "confront the American-British escalation with more qualitative military operations against all hostile targets in the Red

and Arab Seas".

The official reiterated that the Yemeni forces will "persist in upholding their religious, moral and humanitarian duties towards the Palestinian people, and their military operations will not stop unless the (Israeli) aggression stops and the siege on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip is lifted."

The turmoil from Israel's war on Gaza has also spilled over to other parts of West Asia.

The United States and Britain have been carrying out such strikes on Yemen since Washington and its allies offered the Tel Aviv regime unqualified support and said Yemeni forces bear the consequences of attacks against Israeli-owned ships or merchant vessels heading to the occupied territories.

The maritime attacks have forced some of the world's biggest shipping and oil companies to suspend transit through one of the world's most important maritime trade routes.

Tankers are instead adding thousands of miles to international shipping routes by sailing around the continent of Africa rather than going through the Suez Canal.

Israel unleashed a bombardment campaign against Gaza on October 7, after the Palestinian resistance groups launched Operation Al-Aqsa Storm in response to decades of violence against Palestinians.

According to the figures announced by Palestinian health authorities, so far 29,692 people, largely women and children, have been killed in the besieged enclave. The United Nations deems the figures credible, though they are now updated only infrequently as war devastation has hampered communications. The Israeli war on Gaza has pushed 85% of the territory's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN.

Defying the tide: Meet the Belgian journalist advocating for Palestinian rights



Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN - The ongoing devastating events in the Gaza conflict have prompted numerous dedicated supporters of the Palestinian cause to reemerge, gaining renewed acknowledgment after years of advocating for truth and justice.

Among these individuals is Michel Collon, a Belgian journalist and writer renowned for championing not just Palestinian rights but also promoting peace and dignity on a global scale.

In an exclusive interview with Collon during the 24th Iran Media Exhibition in Tehran, I inquired about the driving force behind his passionate advocacy for human rights, especially concerning the Palestinian cause.

"I was raised in a racist and pro-Israel family in Brussels. I also was pro-Israel when I was young due to my education and upbringing. But I realized at one point in time that what I was taught was right was in fact full of flaws. I realized that people in other parts of the world were not lesser than us and that we had no right to colonize other nations. That we were not giving them civilization and technology. We were rather 'bestowing' them with



Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The newly-appointed ambassador of Iran to Thailand will concurrently assume representation duties at this esteemed international institution, further solidifying Iran's diplomatic presence in the region.

the agreements resulting from the recent visit of Rustam Minnikhanov, the head of the Republic of Tatarstan, to Tehran and Isfahan. These agreements were underscored for their pivotal role in advancing regional cooperation.

The foreign minister emphasized the imperative of sustained efforts to actualize the agreements stemming from the visit, especially those involving meetings between the head of Tatarstan and high-ranking Iranian officials.

Ayatollah Khamenei: Westerners, who raise a commotion about the execution of a convict, have closed their eyes to the killing of 30,000 innocent people in Gaza

Gaza reveals Western hypocrisy

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN - During the past months, Western governments' hypocrisy and double standards on human rights have been exposed time and again. The solemn faces slamming Russian "war crimes" in Ukraine quickly turned to apathetic and indifferent ones when Israel began to carpet bomb Palestinians in Gaza and incite famine against the remaining population that manage to dodge Israeli fire.

"Westerners, who raise a commotion about the execution of a convict, have closed their eyes to the killing of 30,000 innocent people in Gaza. And the United States has shamelessly vetoed the resolution for a ceasefire for the umpteenth time," said the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on Saturday, referring to the West's propaganda campaigns in the past years aiming to lionize individuals convicted of murder and terrorism in Iran.

"A façade using well-groomed and smiling politicians is hiding the truth about Western culture, civilization, and democracy. These governments resemble rabid dogs and bloodthirsty wolves rather than avid supporters of human rights," Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei added.

The West has been under great scrutiny since Israel began its wave



of onslaughts against the besieged Gaza Strip on October 7. The regime has not spared any civilian sites in its military campaign, attacking and demolishing every home, hospital, school, mosque, and church perceptible in Gaza.

Meanwhile, it has imposed a "full blockade" on the strip allowing only a limited number of food trucks to enter Gaza through the Rafah border crossing while occasionally opening fire on the vehicles or displaced Palestinians trying to reach them.

The flow of aid to Gaza is expected to dry up further with the UN declaring that it would no longer be able to deliver food to the enclave due to the "breakdown of law and order". The announcement came after several Western countries

said they were suspending funds to the organization's relief and work agency which is the main body aiding Gaza's population amid the worsening humanitarian disaster.

The decision was made based on unfounded Israeli claims saying 12 out of 13,000 UNRWA staff members had helped Hamas during its October 7 operation in the occupied territories. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has slammed the fund cuts as "collective punishment" which is what Israel seems to have been doing since the beginning of its gut-wrenching war on Gaza.

All the recent atrocities against the Palestinians, and the West's untrammelled support for the Israeli regime have drawn alarm among some figures who believe

the governments in Europe and North America are losing face in other parts of the world.

"We should be aware that, for the rest of the world, it is the moral collapse of the West. It will probably have no concrete consequences but let's understand we have lost any moral clout and legitimacy," Gerard Araud, former French envoy to Washington, warned on X in response to the U.S. veto of the third UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Besides Gaza, the only times the West was exposed for its hypocrisy on human rights was when WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange published a huge cache of secret files exposing U.S. war crimes across the world. It seems, however, that this time, Western governments would not be able to sideline the truth by jailing a journalist and labeling him as a criminal. Gaza laid bare the West's true stance on human rights, meaning this newfound understanding of Western reality will not be lost with any form of manipulation, force, or propaganda.

"The West's civilization and its misguided values will not prevail. Rather, a culture based on truth and the correct reasoning of Islam will ultimately triumph over," Ayatollah Khamenei stated.

As Iran braces for election, politician says future is in hands of people



TEHRAN - A prominent politician emphasizes the rationality of engaging in elections for the country's well-being.

In an interview with Fars News on Sunday, Ali Akbar Salehi stressed the importance of active participation in the impending parliamentary elections, stating that it is not merely a "recommendation but a rational" decision.

Underscoring the crucial role of unity in determining the country's fate, he urged citizens to join hands and actively take part in the electoral process.

Salehi highlighted the risk of division, stating, "The Quran advises that when division occurs, and we separate from each other, it creates a weakness that can break us all."

Emphasizing the power of collective action, Salehi, who was foreign minister from 2011 to 2013, noted that standing together mitigates potential differences, including political disagreements.

Addressing concerns about potential division, Salehi urged the public to resist individualism, emphasizing the strength that comes from unity. He argued that boycotting elections is counterproductive and urged citizens to demonstrate both internally and globally that they are united in determining their destiny.

Salehi acknowledged the country's challenges, including economic issues, but cautioned against assuming perfection elsewhere. Salehi encouraged citizens to choose representatives aligned with their preferences and perceived as effective in addressing national challenges.

The former chief of the Atomic Energy Organization concluded by urging collective action, emphasizing the role of elections in preserving national sovereignty and asserting rights on the international stage.

Iranians will go to the ballots on March 1 to decide who they want to occupy the seats of

the Parliament. The Iranian Parliament, known as the Islamic Consultative Assembly or Majlis, plays a central role in the governance structure, responsible for passing laws, approving budgets, and overseeing government policies. Almost 15,000 candidates have been approved to compete in the parliamentary elections that are held every four years. In order to secure a position as a lawmaker for a four-year term, a victorious candidate is required to obtain a minimum of 20 percent of the votes cast within their respective constituency.

Concurrently with the elections of the Islamic Consultative Majlis, the Assembly of Experts election will also be held on the same date, where 144 candidates are vying for 88 seats at the body, which elects and oversees the activities of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and is in a position of authority to either appoint or dismiss the Leader.

Mohammadreza Shahcheraghi, the deputy minister of interior for political affairs and the head of election headquarters, said around 59,000 polling stations will be opened on the day of elections and nearly 800,000 people will be involved in the process of conducting and overseeing the elections.

IRGC Ground Force says ready for action with new defense technologies

TEHRAN - In a significant development, a senior Iranian military commander has announced the full readiness of the Ground Forces of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) to execute state-of-the-art defensive operations.

Brigadier General Rouhollah Nouri, the deputy commander of IRGC Ground Forces, confirmed the completion of the preparation process for deploying the most modern defensive strategies and tactics by the Iranian military. This announcement comes as a testament to the IRGC's commitment to staying at the

forefront of military capabilities.

According to the Iranian media, General Nouri shed light on the noteworthy changes in both combat and defensive strategies. He underscored the importance of adapting capabilities to the dynamic landscape, ensuring actions are consistently executed with precision, knowledge, and intelligence—an essential focus for the IRGC Ground Forces.

General Nouri further emphasized the collaborative efforts involving various elements and forces that contributed to the successful completion of the

IRGC Ground Forces' preparation process. The finalization of this comprehensive readiness chain aligns meticulously with the latest developments and draws insights from experiences gained in various regional conflicts, bringing it to the brink of completion.

This announcement underscores the IRGC's dedication to maintaining a state of preparedness in the face of evolving geopolitical challenges. As tensions persist in the region, the IRGC Ground Forces' enhanced capabilities position them as a formidable entity ready to respond effectively to any

emerging threats. The successful preparation for modern defensive operations marks a pivotal milestone for the IRGC, showcasing their commitment to safeguarding national security and sovereignty.

Iran has developed an ascendant military industry in the past decades. The country owns different types of precision-guided missiles, modern drones and sophisticated weapons, all domestically produced. It has reportedly also turned into an arms supplier for countries across Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Iran's intelligence apparatus works diligently to thwart threats: MP

TEHRAN - A member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has underscored the impressive achievements of the country's intelligence bodies in safeguarding the nation, despite organized enemy conspiracies.

"The intelligence bodies tirelessly deploy their capabilities day and night, undeterred, to ensure the country's security," Zohreh Elahian told IRNA on Sunday. The lawmaker added, "Enemies, including the United States, Britain, the Zionist regime, and their allies have been orchestrating conspiracies against our nation, both domestically and internationally, since the inception of the Islamic

Revolution."

Highlighting the resilience of the soldiers working under Iranian intelligence bodies, Elahian stated, "Despite significant efforts and substantial expenditures to sow insecurity, the members of the Iranian intelligence system have successfully thwarted many organized enemy conspiracies."

She continued, "Without the sincere and earnest efforts of the intelligence bodies to ensure the country's security, today we would be witnessing a lot of problems across the nation."

Emphasizing the ongoing threat to national security, the lawmaker noted, "The enemy consistently seeks to propagate unrest in Iran by equipping terrorist groups with advanced weapons in various parts of the country. However, our intelligence agencies have diligently uncovered and neutralized these conspiracies."

On February 1st, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence declared the successful identification of a substantial number of Mossad spies linked to the Zionist regime that were operating across 28 countries globally, shedding light on Iran's ongoing efforts to maintain national security.

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Iran lose to Philippines at 2024 IIHF World Championship

TEHRAN - Iran national team were defeated against the Philippines 14-2 at the 2024 IIHF World Championship Division III on Saturday.

Iran had lost to host Bosnia 3-0 in their first match.

Team Melli will play North Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, respectively.

The tournament's winners will go to division III A.

The Group A tournament will be held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan from March 10 to 16 and the Group B tournament is being held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina from Feb. 23 to 29.

Mohammad Khodabandelou joins Persepolis

TEHRAN - Persepolis football club completed the signing of Mes Rafsanjan midfielder Mohammad Khodabandelou.

The 24-year-old player has joined Persepolis on a 2.5-year contract. The Tehran born player started his playing career in Paykan in 2017 and has also played in Zob Ahan and Gol Gohar.

Khodabandelou will replace Milad Sarlak, who joined Malavan.

Ivankovic takes charge of China national team

TEHRAN - Branko Ivankovic has been appointed as head coach of the China PR men's national team, the Chinese Football Association (CFA) said on Saturday.

The Croatian replaces Aleksandar Jankovic, with the Serbian having been in charge of China PR at the recent AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023, the-afc.com wrote.

"In order to prepare for the upcoming 2026 World Cup qualifiers, the CFA decided, after the assessment of experts, to hire Branko Ivankovic as the new head coach of China's men's national team," read a CFA statement.

Ivankovic, who turns 70 next week, had coached several European clubs, including Germany's Hannover 96 and Croatia's GNK Dinamo Zagreb, as well as the national teams of Islamic Republic of Iran and Oman, who he guided at Qatar 2023.

The experienced coach also led Shandong Taishan to lift the Chinese Super League trophy in the 2010 season.

China PR failed to advance from the group stage at Qatar 2023 and need to revive their Preliminary Joint Qualification - Round 2 for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 campaign when they face Singapore in back-to-back ties in March.

China are third in the standings on three points, with Korea Republic leading Group C with two wins.

Velez Mostar to sign Aref Gholami

TEHRAN - Football club Velez are looking for a defender and, it seems, they have finally found him, and it is a new foreigner who will be staying in Mostar.

After selling Brazilian defender Bruno Oliveira to South Korea, Velez was forced to find an alternative, so in the end he decided to bring in the occasional Iranian representative Aref Gholami.

Unofficially, Persianfootball.com learned that the 26-year-old stopper will come to Mostar to undergo a medical examination and then sign a contract with Ro?eni, of course if everything goes according to plan.

Gholami has played in Iranian clubs Sepahan, Zob Ahan, Foolad and Esteghlal. After years of performing in Iran, he will leave his country for the first time and now continue his career in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Gholami has one appearance for the senior national team of Iran two years ago, and has also played for the youth selections.

It is not known when Gholami will make his debut, but it is not excluded that it will be already in the 20th round, in which the people of Mostar welcome Borac in the derby.

Iranian snooker player crowned at 2024 Asian C'ships

TEHRAN - Iranian snooker player Ali Gharagozlou won the gold medal at the 2024 Asian Men's Snooker Championship held in Doha, Qatar.

In the final round of the sporting event, Gharagozlou defeated his rival from Pakistan, Awais Munir, 5-2 to secure the top spot.

Previously in the tournament, Gharagozlou defeated his opponents from Pakistan (4-3), Saudi Arabia (4-0), Jordan (4-0), and Palestine (4-1) in group G to secure its place in the knockout stage.

Pakistani snooker player Awais Munir has successfully advanced to the finals of the Asian Snooker Championship by defeating other Iranian snooker players Amir Sarkhosh and Milad Kashani.

The 2024 Asian Men's Snooker Championship was organized by the Qatar Billiards and Snooker Federation (QBSF) and was held in Doha, Qatar from February 17-23.

Azmoun pushing to remain at Roma

TEHRAN - Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun is convinced of his stay at Roma.

The latest reports from Italy suggest that both the player and the club will seek to make his move permanent after concluding his loan spell in June.

According to calciomercato.com, Azmoun seems to have convinced everyone at Roma to bet on him beyond this season and has reaffirmed his willingness to remain in Italy.

Roma, however, have yet to find a sporting director to take Tiago Pinto's place and all transfer negotiations are therefore a bit at a standstill.

Once the new sporting director has been chosen, Roma will try to find an agreement with Bayer Leverkusen to buy Azmoun, hoping for a discount compared to the sum agreed in the summer.

Rivandi joins PFC CSKA on loan

TEHRAN - Amirhossein Rivandi joined PFC CSKA on loan.

The agreement is valid until the end of the season and includes a buyout option.

The 19-year-old player completed an internship with the youth team as part of a partnership with the Iranian KIA Academy and took part in two friendly matches against Spartak, in which he scored an assist and earned a penalty. After this, Amir got a chance in the main team.

Based on the results of the training process and the control meeting with Khimki, it was decided to sign a contract with him.

Let us remind you that Amirhossein Rivandi was selected for an internship in the youth team based on the results of testing as part of the Red-Blue Future project, as well as visits of army specialists to the Iranian academy in December 2023 and January 2024.

Rivandi will play for PFC CSKA under number 96.

Saket Elhami named Nassaji coach

TEHRAN - Saket Elhami was named the head coach of Iran's Nassaji football club.

The 48-year-old coach replaced Spanish coach Lucas Alcaraz, who had been appointed as head coach of Ghaemshahr-based club in December.

Elhami led Mes Rafsanjan in the first half season of the 2023-24 Iran Professional League (IPL) but the two parties parted ways last month.

This is Elhami's third stint in Nassaji as he had coached the team in 2017 and 2022.

Iran, Qatar labor ministers hold joint co-op committee meeting in Doha



TEHRAN - The sixth Joint Cooperation Committee meeting of Iran's Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare and Qatar's Ministry of Labor was held in Doha, Mehr News Agency reported on Saturday.

In the meeting, which was attended by the Iranian Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare Solat Mortazavi and his Qatari counterpart Ali bin Samikh Al-Marri, the two sides discussed the development of technical and professional cooperation and exchanging and empowering technical trainers.

Facilitating the dispatch of skilled Iranian labor and engineers to Qatar, conducting joint visits for Iranian and Qatari labor inspectors to exchange common experiences, and forming a joint committee to help align the views and opinions of both sides were among the approvals of the mentioned meeting.

The parties also emphasized the need to take the necessary measures to implement the provisions of a previously signed cooperation memorandum of understanding (MOU).

It was also decided for the seventh round of the committee meeting to be held in Tehran in mid-2024.

Back in June 2023, the Iranian and Qatari labor ministers urged increased cooperation in the fields of labor, employment, and skill training courses between the two countries in a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.

The meeting between Mortazavi and Ali bin Samikh Al-Marri came on the sidelines of the 111th session of the International Labor Conference in Geneva on June 10, 2023.

Al-Marri was elected as the rotating president of the International Labor Conference during the mentioned gathering.

During the meeting, the two ministers discussed ways to enhance cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Qatar, especially on labor issues.

Mortazavi said in the meeting that the expansion of relations with Qatar is of strategic importance for the Islamic Republic of Iran, adding that the two countries have adopted some valuable measures to cooperate in international forums.

Emphasizing the importance of expanding relations with Iran, Al-Marri said that his country would not forget Iran's support during the time that Qatar was under sanctions by some regional countries.

The Qatari minister added that he will pay a visit to Tehran to discuss increased cooperation between Iran and Qatar on the issue of labor.

Iran-Azerbaijan rail transit rises 28% in 11 months

TEHRAN - The director general of Iran's North Railway Administration said the transit of goods between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan registered a 28 percent hike in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year compared to the same period last year.

According to Gholam-Hossein Valadi, about 645,000 tons of goods have been exchanged between Iran and Azerbaijan in this period.

He put the volume of goods exchanged between Iran and Azerbaijan from March 21, 2022, to February 22, 2023, at more than 501,000 tons.

He went on to say that more than 206,000 tons of products were imported into the country via railway during the 11 months of the current year, showing a 58 percent rise compared to the same period last year, IRNA reported.

More than 167,000 tons of goods were exported from Astara Rail Terminal between March 21, 2023, and February 22, 2024, he stated.

Citrus fruits, various kinds of fruits, cement, chemicals, tiles, and major food products were among the main products exported from the

country into the Republic of Azerbaijan via rail, he added.

Back in December 2023, Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev said rail transportation between Iran and Azerbaijan increased by 47 percent in 2023.

Mustafayev, who is the head of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee, made the remarks in a phone conversation with Iran's Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash.

According to Mustafayev, over 700,000 tons of goods were transported between the two countries by railway in 2023, which was a record high. The official also noted that transit between the two countries also increased by 57 percent in the past year. In this conversation, the latest developments in the relations between the two countries, especially in the economic field, including transportation and energy, were discussed and opinions were exchanged.

The officials also emphasized accelerating the finalization of joint projects, including the new transit route in the Astara border and joint dams.

Iran provides countries of region with transit access to open waters

TEHRAN - Iran's Deputy Transport Minister Darioush Amani has said the Islamic Republic provides the countries of the region access to open waters via its transit routes, IRNA reported.

Amani made the remarks at the 86th session of the United Nations (UN)'s Inland Transport Committee which took place in Geneva, from 20 to 23 February 2024.

The theme of the conference was: "Taking ambitious climate action - Moving towards decarbonized inland transport by 2050".

Delivering a speech at the committee meeting,

Amani emphasized the diplomacy of international transportation development and the readiness to provide maximum transit access of the countries of the region to the open waters in an interactive framework via all kinds of passageways through the territory of Iran.

Referring to the growth of road transport, which should lead to initiatives to reduce the negative effects of transportation on the environment, the official added: "Road transport services must maintain competitiveness for society with low-cost and quick-yielding solutions."

Natural gas consumption hits 532mcm

TEHRAN - Following the significant temperature drop over the past few days, the consumption of natural gas by Iranian domestic and commercial sectors reached 532 million cubic meters (mcm), an official with the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) announced.

According to Head of NIGC Dispatching Department Saeed Aghili, of the total 532 mcm, 341 mcm were consumed in the domestic sector, 85 mcm in the non-major industries sector, 27 mcm in the agricultural sector, 32 mcm in the transportation sector, and about 48 mcm

in the commercial and public sectors, IRIB reported. Considering the continuation of the perspiration across the country and the decrease in temperature, gas consumption is expected to reach about 630 mcm in the coming days, the official said.

The official further called on the people to manage their consumption during the peak periods to help the national Iranian Gas Company and IGTC to maintain gas supply during the cold season.

Iran's oil production rise in 2023 exceeded expectations: IMF

TEHRAN - The International Monetary Fund in its latest report on Iran's microeconomic indicators has said the increase in Iran's oil production in 2023 exceeded expectations, IRNA reported.

The fund attributed the increase in its estimate of Iran's economic growth in the mentioned year to the higher-than-expected increase in the country's oil production.

According to the new estimates of this international entity, Iran's economic growth in 2023 reached 5.4 percent, registering a significant increase compared to the previous year.

The International Monetary Fund had previously estimated that Iran's economic growth would reach only 3.0 percent in 2023.



In its latest quarterly report, known as World Economic Outlook, the IMF said Iran's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was nearly 1.6 percent more than the country's economic growth in 2022.

The IMF has also reviewed its forecast of Iran's economic

growth for 2024 from 2.5 percent in October to 3.8 percent.

The increase in Iran's economic growth happens at a time when global growth has slowed to 3.1 percent. The average economic growth of the developed economies has been reported at 1.6 percent in 2023 while the

figure stood at 2.6 percent in 2022.

Developing countries have also had an average growth of 4.1 percent in 2023, indicating that Iran's economy increased more than the average of its equivalents.

The West Asian economies grew by an average of 2.0 percent. In that region, Saudi Arabia recorded -1.1 percent of economic growth.

The economic growth of some other countries in 2023 was as follows: USA 2.5 percent, Germany negative 0.3 percent, France 0.8 percent, UK 0.5 percent, China 5.2 percent, India 6.7 percent, Russia 3.0 percent, Brazil 3.1 percent, Turkey 4.0 percent, and Pakistan - 0.2 percent.

Inflation rate falls 1.1%



TEHRAN - The Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on January 20, which marks the end of the 10th Iranian

calendar month Dey, at 42.5 percent, noting that it fell by 1.1 percent from the previous year's same period.

The center put the country's point-to-point inflation rate at 35.8 percent in the 10th Iranian calendar month, which means families have paid an average of 35.8 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the preceding year.

The point-to-point inflation rate declined 2.7 percent in the mentioned month from the previous month.

The Statistical Center of Iran has put the

average inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on March 20, 2023, which marks the end of the past Iranian calendar year 1401, at 45.8 percent.

The center had put the inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on March 20, 2022 (the end of the Iranian calendar year 1400) at 40.2 percent and that of the Iranian calendar year 1399 at 36.4 percent.

In mid-July, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in an economic outlook report said inflation in Iran which was reported to be 49 percent in 2022 is expected to fall to 42 percent in 2023 and then to 30 percent in 2024.

President Raisi to attend 7th GECF Summit in Algeria

TEHRAN - Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi is going to take part in the 7th Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Summit of Heads of State and Governments in Algiers, the capital of Algeria, on March 2, said Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trade Ahmad Asadzadeh on Saturday.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Raisi will deliver a speech at the summit to raise Iran's stances on strategies and policies of GECF for safeguarding its member states' interests, promoting their cooperation on the natural gas industry's development and its role in providing energy security, and investing more in the sector, Shana reported.

The summit will open up an opportunity for GECF member states to hold constructive talks and exchange views about recent energy, particularly natural gas, developments, and future perspectives, he said.

According to Asadzadeh, a High-Level Ad Hoc Working Group meeting and an extraordinary ministerial meeting are also scheduled to be held before the summit which will be attended by GECF member states' oil and energy ministers, including Iran's Oil Minister Javad Oji.

Asadzadeh pointed to important side events, saying the headquarters of GECF's Gas Research Institute (GRI) will open during an official ceremony in

Algeria, the latest edition of the GECF Global Gas Outlook will be unveiled, exemplary individuals and institutions will be awarded, and a ceremony for signing memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with the African Energy Commission (AFREC) and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) will be also held.

GRI has a scientific-technical committee comprising the GECF member states' representatives, which started work before the institute's official inauguration, mentioned the deputy, adding the committee has so far studied 30 plans submitted by the member states and picked five to implement.

Among the selected plans is one of the five presented by Iran under the title "Plan for Flare Gases Management and Collection", said Asadzadeh, adding GRI has given priority to the Iranian plan.

Given the great efforts and follow-up made by the Department for OPEC Affairs and Relations with Energy Communities to publicize Iran's achievements amid sanctions, the Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) has been selected and will receive a GECF award during the summit, he announced.

Iran will host the 8th Gas Exporting Countries Forum Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2027.

205 idle units revived in Tehran industrial parks since last March

TEHRAN - The deputy managing director of Tehran province's Industrial Parks Company announced that 205 idle production units have been revived in the industrial parks and zones of the province during the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21, 2023).

Ali Khoda-Panahlou said, "From the beginning, our mission was to set up and complete the infrastructure, and currently we are witnessing the operation of 18 industrial parks and zones consisting of 6,000 units in Tehran province, and contracts have been concluded with more than 10,000 industrial units."

In mid-January, the deputy head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) said that 50 knowledge-based production units have been established in the country's industrial parks and zones since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year.

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

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

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

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

"Stabilizing and increasing the capacity of active production units with the approach of helping production growth and preventing stagnation is on the agenda," Moghimi stated.

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

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

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

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

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

Over the past few years, many of the production units across Iran have been wrestling with financial issues as well as the problem of supplying their raw materials, so that, many have been forced to



shut down or decrease their activities.

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

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

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

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

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

Netanyahu narcissism

From page 1 ▶

Most violent clashes

The protests have gradually increased in volume and intensity over the fate of captives held in Gaza peaking in clashes at the weekend.

On Saturday night, police used water cannons against protesters while clashing with them in Tel Aviv.

More than 20 people were arrested and several others were injured in the clashes that were the most violent of their kind since October 7.

In Tel Aviv, video from the protests showed a mounted officer using the reins of his horse to strike a protester across the head.

In a statement, Israeli police accused protesters of disturbing peace, saying they had “gathered illegally” in the streets.

“Unfortunately, today we saw a number of protesters who came with the purpose of confronting the police, and not for a legitimate protest,” the statement added.

The Israeli opposition leader reacted to police violence.

“The police violence this evening toward protesters, among them the families of hostages, is dangerous,



antidemocratic and cannot continue,” Yair Lapid said.

He added, “The right to protest is a fundamental right, and it cannot be taken from protesters with batons and water cannons.”

The protesters made several demands. They asked Netanyahu and his cabinet to resign.

The demonstrators also called for progress in talks for a captive agreement with Hamas and a diplomatic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The protesters further lashed

out at far-right politicians such as Public Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who have said they will block a deal with Hamas that they feel would jeopardize Israel’s security or constitute a surrender to the resistance movement.

Some speakers accused Netanyahu of sabotaging the captives’ return to prolong the Gaza war to avoid elections.

Some other speakers also described the Netanyahu cabinet as a “criminal government” and “the

most failed government in history”.

Former war minister Moshe Yaalon railed at Netanyahu for refusing to take responsibility for the October 7 attack.

But it seems growing protests do not matter to Netanyahu, who has been overwhelmed by narcissism.

The Netanyahu regime stands accused of committing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, where nearly 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli air and ground strikes since October 7.

But in defiance of international calls to end massacres in Gaza, he seeks to prolong the war.

The continuation of the war can help Netanyahu evade accountability for the October 7 attack that dealt severe blows to his regime’s intelligence failure.

Prolonging the war also helps him get away with corruption charges that he faced before the October 7 attack.

As long as Western countries continue to provide Israel with military support, the Netanyahu regime will not end its campaign of genocide in Gaza.

WORLD HEADLINES

Jordan warns of Gaza war expansion amid Israeli onslaught

Jordan warned Sunday that continuing the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan risks an expansion of the conflict in the region, Anadolu Agency reported.

Ramadan, the holiest month in the Islamic calendar, is scheduled to start on March 11.

“Continuing the aggression in these circumstances as Ramadan approaches will place the entire region at the risk of an explosion,” Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told a joint press conference in Amman with his Bulgarian counterpart Mariya Gabriel.

“Every day passes with the war going unabated increases the risk of explosion and mounts its casualties,” he added.

The Bulgarian foreign minister, for her part, voiced concern about the humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip.

“Jordan has proven itself as a peacemaker in the region and we support its efforts,” she said.

The Israeli war on Gaza has pushed 85% of the territory’s population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while 60% of the enclave’s infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN.

Israel is accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

U.S. activists call for global day of action in solidarity with Gaza

Pro-Palestine activists in the United States have launched a campaign on social media urging people to join nationwide rallies set to take place in most U.S. cities on March 2.

These rallies will coincide with a global day of action demanding an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the Wafa news agency wrote.

Participants will include members of Arab and Muslim communities, activists, and those standing in solidarity with the Palestinian cause. The organizers say they vehemently reject the Israeli occupation’s brutal war on Gaza, echoing the sentiments of previous large-scale protests held in Washington, New York, Chicago, and Houston.

The organizers believe that these marches and the simultaneous mobilization of participants across the streets will send a powerful message against one of the most heinous and brutal forms of genocide in modern history.

They aim to leverage global solidarity in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people amid the ongoing Israeli relentless war, which has so far claimed the lives of nearly 30,000 Palestinians, the majority of who are civilians.

UNRWA forced to ‘stretch every dollar’ amid budget shortfall

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees has been forced to “stretch every dollar” and juggle its finances in order to continue vital work in Gaza after 18 donor countries suspended funding over allegations of links to Hamas, the Guardian reported.

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is facing a shortfall of \$450m from a budget of \$880m as it confronts the biggest humanitarian crisis seen in the organization’s 75-year history.

Last week, Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the agency, said UNRWA had reached a “breaking point”. Now it reports that it has been forced to

pause aid deliveries to northern Gaza – where it is currently not “possible to conduct proper humanitarian operations” – amid increasing reports of famine among people in the area.

“It’s hand-to-mouth. For an organization with the scope of UNRWA, this is insane,” Tamara Alrifai, UNRWA’s director of external affairs” said

He added, “It’s insane that we’ve survived so long without a financial safety net – most organizations of our size have financial reserves. We have to stretch every dollar.”

Palestinian baby dies from starvation

Thousands of Palestinians in northern Gaza flocked to a central street near Gaza City for a possible delivery of flour and humanitarian aid after the UN refugee agency for Palestine, UNRWA, said it was no longer functional in northern Gaza amid Israeli restrictions on food aid access.

On Sunday a two-month-old Palestinian baby died from starvation in northern Gaza, according to media reports.

The Palestinians were queuing in the area since the early hours of Sunday morning, according to Al Jazeera.

Supplies of food and aid have long run dry in northern Gaza due to Israeli restrictions, where residents have described famine-like conditions.

Ukraine expects nearly 12\$bn in aid from US

Ukraine expects to get \$11.8 billion from the United States this year, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal has said.

“This is what we agreed on, this is what will help us close the financial gap. And we are deeply convinced that the United States will not leave Ukraine alone in terms of both financial support and armed military support, because they are combined in one package,” Shmyhal said.

Shmyhal was responding to a question from CNN about his level of faith in the U.S. Congress to deliver aid to Ukraine. Lawmakers in Washington have so far failed to agree upon providing more funding for Kyiv to push back against Russia.

Earlier this month, the Senate passed a \$95 billion foreign aid package for Ukraine and Israel, but legislation is not expected to make it to a floor vote in the House of Representatives, where isolationist Republicans hold more sway.

Speaking at Ukraine 2024, a government-run conference bringing together the top officials, Shmyhal said the Senate’s decision “gives us great hope.”

“We are very much dependent on the help of the United States as a whole package of military and financial support. So we are waiting for the Congress to make a decision,” he said.

OIC ministers call for ‘unconditional ceasefire’ in Gaza

The information ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have held an extraordinary session in Turkey’s Istanbul, condemning Israel’s “systematic oppression, massacre, and genocide of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and in the occupied West Bank.

The ministers reiterated that the “only path to peace and security in the region is through the realization of the Palestinian people’s inalienable rights, including national independence and sovereignty with East Al-Quds [Jerusalem] as its capital”, Al Jazeera wrote.

They also criticized Israel’s misinformation campaigns, accusing it of spreading false and misleading information to cover up its actions.

The IOC ministers condemned the Israeli forces’ “deliberate and systematic” targeting of Palestinian journalists, and stressed that this is part of a campaign to “silence the voices of truth-tellers”.

Anglo-American attacks on Yemen are making Ansarullah stronger

Yemeni forces expand their range of fire

From page 1 ▶ The U.S. Department of Defense has acknowledged that the now frequent attacks have failed to dent nor deter Ansarullah from imposing an embargo on Israeli ships or vessels associated with Tel Aviv from transiting the vital Bab al-Mandab strait or docking at Israeli naval ports.

As a result of the American and British attacks, Ansarullah has expanded its naval operations by blacklisting the United States and Britain as “states hostile to Yemen”.

This has seen a surge in operations against American and British warships as well as vessels sailing in the Red Sea.

Experts have pointed out how the poorest country in West Asia has been so effective and influential in its solidarity and support for the people of Gaza by targeting the military strength of the United States.

The U.S. has no strategy to stop Ansarullah from firing inexpensive locally manufactured drones and missiles against Israeli/American/British commercial ships and warships off Yemeni waters just as the Israeli military is waging an indiscriminate war on Gaza without achieving any of the occupying regime’s stated goals.

This has been evident in the statements of the U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, who has refrained from saying the U.S. will emerge victorious in its campaign to allow Israeli vessels or those associated with the regime from sailing the Red Sea.

Analysts have noted it would backfire to make such remarks when U.S. and British warships, which have militarized the Red Sea to safeguard Israeli ships and interests, now find themselves

coming under near daily attacks (by the Sana’a government’s forces) themselves.

It is quite embarrassing for the U.S. and Britain whose military interference in Yemen has now forced them to protect their own country’s commercial vessels as well as those of the Israeli regime who have been forced to camouflage their identity in the waters off Yemen to avoid coming under fire.

The economic ripple effects are starting to be felt in the U.S., Britain, and Israel, which are being affected by supply chain problems.

Yet, Ansarullah have continued their operations despite more than a month of mainly U.S. airstrikes on targets in Yemen, with the Sana’a government saying it has “a duty” to stand in solidarity with Gaza.

“We know that (Ansarullah) maintain a large arsenal. They are very capable. They have sophisticated weapons,” the Pentagon said on Thursday.

The Sana’a government’s leaders have presented evidence showing the large number of vessels that have safely passed the Red Sea because they have no affiliation to the Israeli regime and are not American-British linked.



On Thursday, the U.S. Defense Department acknowledged that Ansarullah has not been deterred by the American and British airstrikes.

“We never said we’ve wiped off the map all of their capabilities,” a Pentagon spokesperson told reporters. “We know that (Ansarullah) maintain a large arsenal. They are very capable. They have sophisticated weapons.”

Since November 19, Ansarullah has launched at least 60 operations against vessels belonging to the Israeli regime or aligned with it, U.S. warships and vessels as well as British vessels and a British warship.

The problem for Washington and London is that despite their attacks on Yemen, aimed at degrading the Ansarullah threat, the pace of these operations has picked up in recent days.

“We’ve certainly seen in the past 48, 72 hours an increase in attacks (by Ansarullah),” the Pentagon acknowledged.

The gamble to militarily take on Ansarullah, which survived eight years of American and Saudi-led war, appears to have already backfired.

American duplicity and Arab cowardice enabling Israeli war crimes and ethnic cleansing

From page 1 ▶ The world recognizes that Israel’s occupation of the West Bank is illegal and the U.S. has said that these settlements should not be expanded, yet has looked the other way as the proliferation of settlements has continued! And then this week at the International Court of Justice at The Hague, the United States has rushed to Israel’s defense—urging the 15-judge panel not to call for Israel’s withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territory! The American State Department lawyer in support of Israel argued that the solution was not an Israeli withdrawal but that a sovereign Palestinian state “living safely and securely alongside” Israel would bring about lasting peace, repeating longstanding American platitudes that Netanyahu and two of his cabinet ministers have said will NEVER be allowed by Israel! The U.S. espouses these words in public in support of a Palestinian state, yet does NOTHING to make it a reality.

This is duplicity to the max!

U.S. officials say that they have limited power over Netanyahu and Israel, I beg to differ. What if Biden announced that the U.S.:

- will no longer support Israeli intransigence at the United Nations,
- will suspend all financial and military aid to Israel (amounting to around \$300 billion over the years), and

It’s time for Americans to wake up and demand their government treat Israel as an ally but not as the 51st state! Actually no, demand that their government not treat Israel as if it were above all 50 states!

- will no longer sell arms to Israel?

Netanyahu will do as he is told. If Netanyahu does not do as told by the U.S. and if Israel then loses U.S.

backing, Israelis would feel so naked and vulnerable that they would demand a change of government. It is that simple. But no U.S. president dares take such a stand because of the power of the Jewish lobby. It’s time for Americans to wake up and demand their government treat Israel as an ally but not as the 51st state! Actually no, demand that their government not treat Israel as if it were above all 50 states! Today, America’s foreign policy toward the Middle East is in large part subservient to Israeli demands and their supporter, the Jewish lobby.

While America has been duplicitous in dealing with the Palestinian tragedy—saying one thing in public but doing little in private in its support—Palestinians have also received little or no effective backing from their Arab and Muslim brethren. Yes, most Arab and Muslim countries have supported South Africa’s case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and others have voiced their anger at Israel’s attack on Gaza, but there is much more that they could do if they had a little courage and compassion in the face of the massacre of innocent civilians, largely women and children.

If Arabs and Muslims wanted to force a change in U.S. policies and create a Palestinian state forthwith, they would:

- recall their ambassadors to Washington (and to Tel Aviv for those having relations),
- expel all U.S. military personnel (bases) from their territories,
- follow up with both primary and secondary economic sanctions on Israel, and

- bring cases at the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Israeli leaders and American and European heads of state for complicity in Israeli war crimes, ethnic cleansing and genocide (recognizing that Israel and the U.S. are not members of the ICC with enforcement difficult, still a conviction would be a black mark that no one would want).

Some Arab countries would be wise to consider these steps sooner rather than later as they may face growing domestic demands for action, possibly accompanied with much unrest.

Hossein Askari is emeritus professor of business and international affairs, George Washington University

Iranian arrivals in Türkiye surge 87 percent in January



TEHRAN – The number of Iranian travelers visiting Türkiye jumped 87 percent during January compared to the same month a year earlier.

According to recent statistics released by the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, over two million foreign tourists visited Türkiye in January, marking a 2.1% increase compared to the previous year.

As was the case in previous months, Russians constituted the largest group of foreign holidaymakers. Last month, around 231,000 Russian nationals visited Türkiye, down from 279,000 in January 2023.

Iranians reportedly claimed the second spot with 211,000 visitors, pointing to a steep 87 percent increase from a year ago. The neighboring country has long been a popular destination for Iranian travelers.

The number of Bulgarians visiting Türkiye declined by 3 percent in January. Bulgarians mostly visit the northwestern Turkish province of Edirne,

for shopping purposes.

Tourist arrivals from Germany increased by 2 percent year-on-year to around 143,000.

Istanbul was the favorite destination of foreign holidaymakers. The megacity attracted 1.2 million visitors last month, accounting for 57 percent of all tourist arrivals.

Antalya, another major tourist hotspot on the Mediterranean coast, hosted 178,000 foreign tourists, while Edirne's share in total foreign tourist visits was 11.6 percent or 238,000 people.

Last year, Türkiye welcomed 49.2 million foreign holidaymakers, up 10.4 percent from 2022.

Including Turkish citizens residing abroad, nearly 57 million people visited the country in 2023.

The country's tourism revenues amounted to \$54.3 billion last year, rising nearly 17 percent from 2022.

Türkiye aims to attract 60 million visitors and generate \$60 billion in tourism revenues in 2024.

The number of Iranian nationals visiting Türkiye reached 2.9 million from January to November 2023, which marked a five percent increase compared with the same period in 2022.

From January to November last year, Türkiye witnessed a notable surge in foreign tourist arrivals, marking a substantial 10.8 percent increase compared to a year earlier, totaling 46.7 million visitors. When considering Turkish nationals residing abroad, the overall count of visitors escalated to 52.7 million for the initial 11 months of the year.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites

Meidan Imam, Isfahan

The Meidan Imam is a public urban square in the centre of Isfahan, a city located on the main north-south and east-west routes crossing central Iran.

It is one of the largest city squares in the world and an outstanding example of Iranian and Islamic architecture.

Constructed upon the order by Shah Abbas I the Great at the beginning of the 17th century, and bordered on all sides by monumental buildings linked by a series of two-storeyed arcades, the site is known for the Royal Mosque, the Mosque of Sheikh Lotfollah, the magnificent Portico of Qaysariyyeh and the 15th-century Timurid palace.

Also known as Naghsh-e Jahan ("Image of the World"), and formerly as Meidan-e Shah, Meidan Imam is not typical of urban ensembles in Iran, where cities are usually tightly laid out without sizeable open spaces.

Isfahan's public square, by contrast, is immense: 560 m long by 160 m wide, it covers almost 9 ha. All of the architectural elements that delineate the square, including its arcades of shops, are aesthetically remarkable, adorned with a profusion of enamelled ceramic tiles and paintings.

Of particular interest is the Royal Mosque (Masjed-e Shah), located on the south side of the square and angled to face Mecca.

It remains the most celebrated example of the colourful architecture which reached its high point in Iran under the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722; 1729-1736).

The pavilion of Ali Qapu on the west side forms the monumental entrance to the palatial zone and to the royal gardens which extend behind it. Its apartments, high portal, and covered terrace (talar) are renowned. The portico of Qeyssariyyeh on the north side leads to the 2-km-long Esfahan Bazaar, and the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque on the east side, built as a private mosque for the royal court, is today considered one of the masterpieces of Safavid architecture.

The Meidan Imam was at the heart of the Safavid capital's culture, economy, religion, social power, government, and politics. Its vast sandy esplanade was used for celebrations, promenades, and public executions, for playing polo and for assembling troops. The arcades on all sides of the square housed hundreds of shops; above the portico to the large Qeyssariyyeh bazaar a balcony accommodated musicians giving public concerts; the talar of Ali Qapu was connected from behind to the throne room, where the shah occasionally received ambassadors. In short, the royal square of Esfahan was the pre-eminent monument of Persian socio-cultural life during the Safavid dynasty.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran in frames



Capturing timeless moments amidst the ancient wonders of Persepolis, foreign travelers pose for a photo during their visits to the World Heritage site in southern Iran. In its heyday, Persepolis was one of four key cities at the heart of the Achaemenid Empire (c. 550 – 330 BC) that spread from the Indus River to Ethiopia.

Deputy minister calls for formation of union among Persian-speaking nations

From Page 1 ▶ including a museum under the open sky full of ancient artifacts. Darabi quoted prominent Iranian writer Jamalzadeh, who believed that Iran and Tajikistan are relatives, along with many writers referring to Tajikistan as a part of [the Greater] Iran.

Underscoring the linguistic connection, Darabi traced the origins of the "Dari Persian" back to the regions of Khorasan and modern-day Tajikistan.

The official also noted significant historical figures such as Rudaki, the first Persian-language poet from modern-day Tajikistan, and the renowned polymath Avicenna, both hailing from the same land.

"Balkh, Dushanbe, Sarband, Kulob, and Khujand are loved cities that Iranian people are familiar with," Darabi said.

Emphasizing the shared identity and historical depth between the two nations, the official stressed the duty to preserve the



Ali Darabi, the deputy minister of cultural heritage and tourism, speaks in an undated photo.

Persian language, popularly referred to as "Sugar Persian." He argued that in an era of globalization, safeguarding one's language becomes crucial against the dominance of dominating languages.

Darabi put forward the concept of "identity" as a prevalent theme among politicians, writers, and

leaders in both Iran and Tajikistan. Moreover, he highlighted the need for revisiting and explaining concepts like "identity," "roots," "history," "civilization," and "cultural heritage" in the face of global changes and the emergence of a new generation.

"Some 730 elements have been registered on the list of

intangible cultural heritage, of which 340 are located in Asia," Darabi said.

"Of those elements, 133 represent our region [West and Central Asia] globally, serving as a testament to our identity," he noted.

Pointing to the collaborative efforts between the two countries, Darabi expressed pride in their cultural contribution to the Eastern world. He cited statistics indicating Iran's position among the top 10 countries globally in tangible cultural heritage and ranked 5th in intangible cultural heritage.

He mentioned that holding joint events in Iran and Tajikistan, such as the "Night of Cultural Heritage" we are witnessing tonight, is one of the cultural occurrences that can strengthen ties between the two countries.

Darabi attached great importance to launching special working groups between Iran and Tajikistan to preserve the heritage shared between the two nations.

National Museum to host symposium on Iranian archaeology

TEHRAN – The 21st Symposium of the Iranian Archaeology is scheduled to be held at the National Museum of Iran from March 4 to 6, gathering a host of renowned archaeologists, related officials, and enthusiasts of the field.

According to organizers, the event promises a wealth of knowledge through insightful speeches from key figures in the field including, the cultural heritage minister Ezzatollah Zarghami, Mostafa Deh-Pahlavan, the head of the Archaeology Research Institute, and Jebrael Nokandeh who presides the National Museum, to name a few.

The symposium will host a series of ten scientific conferences, each designed to shed light on the remarkable achievements.

The event is intended to serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas, fostering a deeper understanding of Iran's archaeological heritage and its significance in the broader context of history.

Iran is home to an extensive collection of archaeological sites that provide a glimpse into the rich history of the Persian civilization.

The earliest archaeological expeditions to

Iran began in the mid-19th century when British and French archaeologists were studying Susa and its surroundings in southwestern Iran. One of the earliest evidence of human occupation within the Iranian plateau comes primarily from archaeological remains in caves and rock shelters that date to the Early Paleolithic, circa 45,000 BC.

These primary inhabitants lived in a very dynamic environment that required a mobile hunter-gatherer lifestyle. It was only after a few thousand years that these short-lived camps began to develop into longer-term sedentary settlements near rivers and freshwater springs. Some of the world's earliest open-air settlements are in Iran and date back around 10,000 years.

This period marks the beginning of the Neolithic revolution, characterized by the expansion of agricultural communities and increasing social complexity, with consequent innovations in material culture, in particular, the development of pottery.

Around 5000 BC, people began mining and manipulating the region's abundant metal

resources, especially copper. Known as the Chalcolithic, this period lasted until around 3500 BC, when metallurgy became much more sophisticated by adding tin to produce bronze, marking the beginning of the Bronze Age.

Over the next 2,000 years, bronze technology became the primary material for the production of high-ranking weapons and ships; meanwhile, pottery continued to be refined and elaborate. Around 1500 BC, iron began to be exploited alongside bronze for weapons production, marking the transition period to the Iron Age and subsequent cities/states that began to consolidate their influence over a wider region.

Some of these regional powers are known as the Elamites, whose capital was in the southwestern city of Susa, the Babylonians and Assyrians of Mesopotamia, the Hittites of Anatolia, and the Scythians of the northern Caspian Sea. It was during this period that the first Indo-Iranians moved to the Iranian plateau from which arose the first great empire of Iran, the Medes.

Culinary tourism: an overlooked intangible heritage in Isfahan

TEHRAN – Majid Danesh-Mobarhan, the chair of Isfahan's Associations of Tourist Guides, has emphasized the potential of culinary tourism as an intangible heritage that could play a significant role in Isfahan's tourism economy.

Speaking to reporters, Danesh-Mobarhan addressed the question of how culinary tourism could contribute to attracting foreign tourists to Isfahan.

He stated that tourists' culinary preferences differ, but due to the abundant potential in Isfahan and the desire of some nationalities to experience different cuisines, culinary tourism could serve as an essential intangible heritage in Isfahan's tourism economy.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the expert highlighted the need for a more professional approach in this regard, suggesting the establishment of special restaurants that serve a variety of cuisines.

He pointed out that in many countries, culinary tourism is recognized as a distinct form of tourism, and this should also be emphasized in Isfahan, considering it is considered a tourist-friendly city.

Also, Danesh-Mobarhan referred to some obstacles, saying: "Due to the continuous absence of foreign tourists in the province [of Isfahan], it is not cost-effective for all Isfahan restaurants to offer diverse cuisines."

Moreover, he emphasized the importance of strategic planning to overcome some of the challenges and determine specific behaviors, asserting that with proper planning, Isfahan can harness its considerable potential to transform its tourism economy significantly.

Iran, a land steeped in history, art, and culture, beckons travelers with not just its awe-inspiring landmarks but also a culinary journey that's as diverse as the landscapes that adorn this ancient land. Among the many treasures Iran offers to visitors, its local foods and dishes stand tall as a testament to the nation's culinary heritage.

From Tehran's bustling streets to the remote villages nestled in the Zagros Mountains, Iran's cuisine paints a vivid picture of its cultural mosaic. Despite the influx of global culinary influences, Iran's culinary heritage remains deeply rooted in tradition.

In 2020, the Islamic Republic joined an online campaign launched by the UNWTO to promote gastronomy as an essential part of



tourism. Iranian cuisine, usually dominated by fragrant herbs, varies from region to region. It principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

No Persian meal is complete without an abundance of herbs. Every table is usually set with Sabzi-Khordan, a basket of fresh herbs, radishes, and scallions, which are eaten raw and by the handful. Persian cuisine is, above all, about balance — of tastes and flavors, textures and temperatures.

Experts believe that food tourism has become one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism and, at the same time, has naturally positioned itself as an element of diversification of tourism with a high impact on the promotion of sustainable development at the regional and local levels.

How climate change is thwarting travelers' cherry blossom plans

Travelers who arrived in Tokyo in April 2023 to experience the city's famous cherry tree petals were faced with quite a surprise: instead of blooming as forecast in late March, the pink sakura appeared 10 days earlier than predicted.

This was no freak occurrence: 2023 tied with 2020 and 2021 for a record-early bloom — the definitive earliest since scientific records began in 1953[1], and earliest since 812, according to historical documents from Kyoto.

According to experts, this trend points to a troublesome fact: we are overheating our planet at a frightening pace, and the early sakura are harbingers of more change to come.

Japan's beloved four seasons are under threat altogether, says Yoshihiro Tachibana, professor of Climate and Ecosystem Dynamics from Japan's Mie University. "If greenhouse gas reductions cannot be achieved, there is the possibility of cherry blossoms in February. All four seasons are

warming. But spring warming is seeing the biggest rise, so the cherry blossom season tends to come earlier and earlier."

This year, some forecast a start to the sakura season on par with the earliest recorded blooms, around 25 March. But when, exactly, the sacred blooms might appear is really anyone's guess.

Early cherry blossom season in Japan may be annoying for the plan-ahead traveler, but it's also drama that transfixes

the nation as Japanese people eagerly eye what's known as the "cherry blossom front". This chart plots the progress daily of the advancing pink flowers across the Japanese archipelago from the south. Such a predictable line of blossoms is only possible owing to the nation's predilection for one particular cherry, the Yoshino. Clones of a single (UK) specimen account for 90 percent of the sakura cultivar in Japan.

(Source: BBC)

Kenya seeks to foster scientific co-op with Iran

From page 1 ▶ In Nairobi, Raisi held talks with his Kenyan counterpart William Ruto. After the meeting, they held a joint presser in which they talked about relations between Tehran and Nairobi.

"Iran-Kenya relations have a long history and we believe that the cooperation between the two countries, as well as the cooperation between Iran and all the African countries, can develop day by day," Raisi said, according to the official website of the Iranian presidency.

He described Africa as a continent of potential and stated, "Our view in the Islamic Republic of Iran on Africa is considering countries with talent, capacity, talented human forces, material and spiritual reserves, natural and mineral resources."

Raisi added, "Also, we consider our friend Kenya as a country full of diverse capacities, whose exchange with the numerous capacities of Iran can help improve the



level of relations between the two countries."

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who accompanied President Raisi on his trip to Africa, spoke about Iran's perspective on the continent and the potential for collaboration with African nations.

"Iran's view on Africa is quite different from that of neo-colonialism or its older version," Amir-Abdollahian told Press TV in Harare,

the capital of Zimbabwe.

"We aim to empower Africa through technology transfer," he said.

The foreign minister continued his remarks by elaborating on two key points of convergence between Iran and African countries.

African people and their leaders are now quite sensitive to protecting their independence and this is among the commonalities

between Iran and African nations, Amir-Abdollahian underlined.

"Another issue of equal importance for Iran and Africa is the U.S. sanctions regime. With Africa's assistance, we should prevent the U.S. and certain states that still have a colonial mindset from utilizing the deadly tool of sanctions against nations," Iran's top diplomat pointed.

NIGEB

The National Institute of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology was established in 1989 under the supervision of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology

NIGEB is a pivotal hub for advancing the field of biotechnology in Iran, notable for its focus on multidisciplinary collaboration and ethical progress. Impressively, they engage in both basic and applied research across various biotechnology sectors while considering the implications of technological commercialization and socio-economic impacts.

Tehran, Doha put emphasis on health co-op



TEHRAN –Health Minister Bahram Einollahi and his Qatari counterpart Hanan Mohammad Al-Kuwari, in a meeting in Doha on Thursday, highlighted the importance of strengthening cooperation in the field of health.

During the meeting, which was held on the sidelines of the international conference on quality and safety in healthcare in Doha, Al-Kuwari announced Qatar's readiness to expand cooperation with Iran in the field of health.

"Exchanging medical science professors will lead to the improvement of public health and medical knowledge," the Health Ministry's website quoted Al-Kuwari as saying.

She went on to highlight facilitating health tourism as one of the other areas of strengthening the relations between the two countries.

Einollahi, for his part, underscored the need for regional cooperation to address health concerns. "We can help to protect many countries in the region from infectious diseases."

He announced the country's willingness to collaborate with Qatar in scientific and educational fields while stressing that interactions between scientists of the two countries should be broadened in research, operations, and fieldwork.

The cooperation can be intensified through promoting health tourism, exchanging professors and students, and combating diseases.

Middle East Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare

A delegation headed by Einollahi attended

the Middle East Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare 2024, which was held in Doha, Qatar, from February 21 to 25.

In addition to holding a meeting with Al-Kuwari, the minister was also scheduled to deliver a speech at the forum.

Since 2013 the Middle East Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare has helped equip and inform healthcare professionals to excel, improve, and be catalysts for change.

The 2024 Forum program covered engaging topics across five tracks including Quality and Safety, Population Health, Leadership and Innovation in Healthcare, Applied Improvement, and Person-Centered Care.

This comprehensive learning activity inspired healthcare professionals to meet, learn, and share knowledge with the collective aim of improving the quality and safety of care for patients and communities.

This year's Forum connected both in-person and online, more than 2,500 physicians, nurses, quality leaders, healthcare administrators, hospital executives, patient and family advisors, and other allied health professionals.

Intl. congress on family health

Iran will host an international congress on family health from March 5 to 6 with a focus on the significant role of mothers in the family's wellbeing.

In this regard, health programs to promote mothers' health are planned to increase in the next Iranian calendar year, starting on March 21, ISNA quoted Hossein Farshidi, an official with the Health Ministry, as saying.

The international congress on family health will be held as part of the Health Ministry's efforts to highlight the role of women in promoting family health and sharing other countries' experiences in promoting family health, the official added.

Experts from the World Health Organization

and some of the health ministers of regional countries are expected to participate in the event, Farshidi noted.

28th technical meeting of G5

The 28th Technical Meeting of the G5 Forum was held in Tehran from February 13 to 15 with the theme of "Women and Family Health".

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

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

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

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

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

Einollahi added that the family physician program focusing on family health is being implemented in the country.

On February 21, Einollahi announced that the Family Physician Program is an initiative of Iran, and its intellectual property will be registered in the name of the Islamic Republic in international forums. The administration intends to transform the health system approach from treatment-oriented to prevention-oriented.

UNHCR funds free health coverage for some 200,000 refugees

TEHRAN – About 200,000 foreign nationals in the country have been provided with free health insurance with the financial support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the managing director of Iran Health Insurance Organization has said.

Foreign nationals who are considered financially struggling can benefit from free health insurance services, Mehr news agency quoted Mohammad-Mehdi Nasehi as saying.

Stating that the number of refugees in the country is far more than the number of people who have been covered by free insurance, Nasehi added that legal refugees can enjoy insurance services by paying their insurance premiums.

Free health insurance for hard-to-cure diseases

In November 2023, Jamshid Shayanfar, an official with the Health Insurance Organization of Iran said some 95,000 foreign nationals who hold legal residence permits and are suffering from hard-to-cure diseases receive free health insurance annually.

Their insurance contract will be renewed every year in the month of Esfand – the last Iranian calendar month ending on March 19, Fars quoted Shayanfar as saying.

He added, "The insurance premiums for these people are covered by the High Commissioner for Refugees, and the insurance premiums for about 60,000 citizens are paid to the health insurance organization based on the government budget."

Shayanfar went on to say that around 800,000 non-vulnerable nationals also have to pay their own insurance premiums; once they pay the insurance premium, they will enjoy health insurance services for a year.

Some 12,000 non-vulnerable nationals have already been covered by health insurance, he concluded.

Insurance services for foreign nationals

Foreign nationals in Iran have citizenship rights and are subject to many protections, and one of the services provided to them is insurance. In recent years, the number of insured foreign nationals has increased by 15 percent. Most of the insured are nationals of Afghanistan and China.

The long-term protections granted to insured persons include the retirement pension and the work-related disability pension.

Paying compensation for sick days, paying compensation for pregnancy, paying compensation for disability, and paying allowances are among other insurance services.

Foreign nationals who work in Iranian sports clubs as head coaches, trainers, assistant coaches, athletes, players, etc., are subject to compulsory insurance.

Also, foreign journalists in Iran can be covered by social security services without obtaining a work permit by submitting a confirmation from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

According to the law, people who have worked in hard and harmful jobs for at least 20 consecutive years and 25 alternate years can apply for a pension without an age requirement.

Male insured with at least 60 years of age and 10 years of insurance premium payment, or at least 50 years of age and 30 years of insurance premium payment, and female insured with at least 55 years of age and 10 years of insurance premium payment, or at least 45 years of age and 30 years of insurance premium payment can apply for a pension.

Up to 2,188 foreign nationals residing in Iran are currently receiving pensions from social security funds, ISNA reported.

Iran's care for refugees beyond international responsibilities

An official with the National Organization for Migration has said Iran's generous and exceptional services for refugees despite unfair economic sanctions have exceeded expectations and international responsibilities.

Behzad Moradipour made the remarks in the meeting of the Almaty Process Experts Group which was held on November 29, 2023, in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Representatives from eight states were participating in the event. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan are currently members of the Almaty process. Iran and Pakistan attended the meeting as observers.

Moradipour, who represented Iran in this meeting, highlighted that the country has been



directly affected by the consequences of the massive influx of millions of refugees and foreigners for more than four decades.

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has made a very generous effort to provide services to millions of refugees and foreign nationals despite difficult living conditions and oppressive economic sanctions imposed on the country, he said.

He emphasized the need for providing accurate information and data governance in the management of refugees and immigrants.

During the meeting, the eight officials discussed issues related to immigrants in the host countries, enhancing regional cooperation, and coordinating activities in the field of migration, as well as sharing experiences on managing and improving the quality of data.

UNHCR appreciates Iran for generously hosting refugees

In August 2023, Inna Gladkova, the officer in charge of the UNHCR in Iran, appreciated the country for generously hosting refugees.

She assessed the formation of the National Migration Organization as a positive step in improving the situation of refugees and organizing them, ISNA reported.

She made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran on August 3, with Ruhollah Qaderi, the National Migration Organization's director for international affairs.

"The share of international organizations is less than one percent of Iran's cost of about 10 billion dollars for hosting refugees, which is very small and should be seriously reviewed," Qaderi said.

Humanitarian aid should be in line with the needs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the refugees, and priority should be given to supplies and equipment that cannot be accessed due to sanctions, he stressed.

With over 3.4 million refugees and refugee-like populations, Iran has become the second-largest refugee-hosting country globally this year.

In total, Iran hosts some 4.5 million Afghans of varying status – including resident permit holders, undocumented Afghans, and family passport holders – many of whom have been in the country for an extended period and require support to strengthen their resilience.

Iran's support for refugees is demonstrated through its inclusive policies, which encompass protection, assistance, education, and healthcare, inspiring the global community and positively impacting the lives of refugees.

Gladkova commended Iran for its inclusive refugee policies, particularly in the sectors of education and health.

She stated, "The scale of the global refugee crisis requires greater solidarity and burden sharing. Iran's exemplary efforts cannot be sustained without continued international support."

She further called on the international community to increase their support for Iran's humanitarian efforts, recognizing that no single country can bear the responsibility of hosting refugees alone.

She emphasized that more financial support, technical assistance, and innovative partnerships are essential to ensure the protection, well-being, and successful integration of refugees worldwide.

Despite its own domestic challenges, Iran has extended support to refugee children, allowing them to access education in public schools alongside Iranian children.

Iran's healthcare system promotes refugee integration by providing them with vital healthcare services, including access to insurance, and vaccinations, enhancing refugee well-being, and benefiting public health in host communities.

Iran's example showcases the transformative power of inclusive policies, enabling refugees to thrive as valued members of society.

ENGLISH IN USE

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20,000 residential units to be constructed for the deprived

The Welfare Organization and the Islamic Revolution Housing Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to construct 20,000 housing units for the financially struggling families, Mehr reported.

Alireza Tabesh, the Foundation's head, and Vahid Qobadi Dana, the Organization's head, inked the MOU during a meeting held in Tehran on Monday.

As per the agreement, 20,000 housing units will be provided to breadwinners with disabilities, breadwinner women, and the ex-adicts under the Organization's coverage residing in villages with a population of less than 25,000, Qobadi Dana explained.

احداث ۲۰ هزار واحد مسکونی برای محرومان

به گزارش خبرگزاری مهر تفاهم نامه مشترک برای احداث ۲۰ هزار واحد مسکونی برای محرومان بین بنیاد مسکن انقلاب اسلامی و سازمان بهزیستی کشور منعقد شد.

تفاهم نامه احداث ۲۰ هزار واحد مسکونی روستایی با حضور علیرضا تابش رئیس بنیاد مسکن انقلاب اسلامی و وحید قبادی دانا رئیس سازمان بهزیستی کشور روز دوشنبه به امضا رسید.

قبادی دانا گفت: این تفاهم نامه به منظور ساخت ۲۰ هزار واحد مسکونی برای معلولین سرپرست خانوار، زنان سرپرست خانوار، و بهبودیافتگان از بلای اعتیاد که در روستاها و شهرهایی با جمعیت کمتر از ۲۵ هزار نفر ساکن و تحت پوشش بهزیستی هستند؛ منعقد می‌شود.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Obtain knowledge wherever possible... The worth of everyone depends on what he knows.
 Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:17 Evening: 18:14 Dawn: 5:14 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:38 (tomorrow)

Iranian film “The Great Yawn of History” grabs award at 74th Berlinale



TEHRAN—The Iranian film “The Great Yawn of History” written, directed, and produced by Aliyar Rasti won the Special Jury Award of the Encounters Competition Section of the 74th Berlin International Film Festival, jointly with “Some Rain Must Fall” by Qiu Yang from China on February 24.

It was a big win for Rasti’s debut feature film, which had its world premiere at the Berlinale 2024 too, ISNA reported.

The 93-minute film tells the story of a man who dreams of a box of gold waiting for him at the end of a cave.

Curbed by his religious belief that it’s not permissible to go after it himself, he employs the assistance of a non-believer.

Together they embark on a long journey across the Iranian landscape in pursuit of a miracle. But their treasure hunt soon turns tempting also for those they meet along the way.

The cast includes Mohammad Aghebati, Amirhossein Hosseini, Saber Abar, Mahin Sadri, and Mehrdad Ziaei.

Rasti’s excellent feature debut wrestles with faith and disillusionment during a woebegone treasure hunt. Pious, middle-aged Beitollah (Mohammad Aghebati) believes his recurring dreams of finding gold coins at the end of a dark

cave.

But since picking up lost money is haram — or religiously forbidden in Islam — he employs a world-weary young agnostic, Shoja (Amirhossein Hosseini), to accompany him on his journey, resulting in a tale that’s as mysterious and melancholy as it is wryly funny.

The film is sold first and foremost by its precise performances. Both leading men appear to conform to specific types, between the overbearing Aghebati’s sharp, to-the-point delivery and Hosseini’s worn-out demeanor, burdened posture and sunken eyes. The contrasting energies they bring to the screen imbue their trip from Tehran to the rural landscape with withheld, sardonic wit, but Rasti never loses sight of the spiritual questions in the characters’ peripheries.

Bit by bit, both actors unpack more complex layers to their characters, between Beitollah’s lingering doubts about his own convictions and Shoja’s detachment from the modern world, as a young man so desperate for work he’s willing to go along with this superstitious scheme.

Born in Tehran, Rasti, 35, began his career in photography, video and video installations before gradually moving towards his true passion of filmmaking.

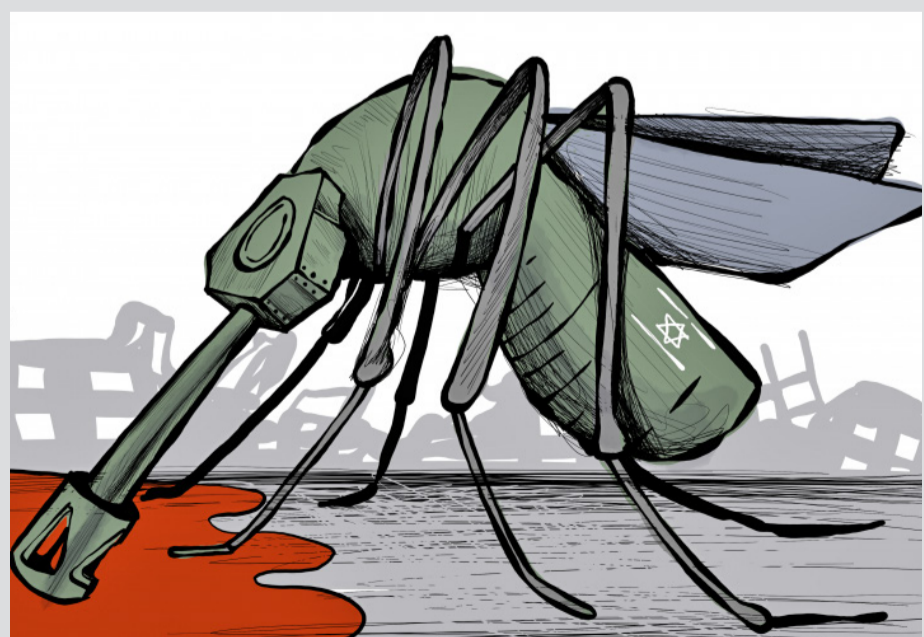
He has made more than ten music videos for independent Iranian bands which have screened at various festivals. His first short film “In Between” won the short film award at the Tehran International Short Film Festival and the Best Debut Film award at the 2018 Tirana International Film Festival. It was followed by his second short “America” in 2022.

The Athens-based boutique production and sales company Heretic has acquired world sales right to “The Great Yawn of History”.

Heretic’s head of sales and acquisitions, Ioanna Stais, has praised the first-time director’s film for how it deftly transforms into an intricate game of hide-and-seek between faith and human frailty.

“From road trip to allegory, Aliyar’s poetic commentary hits in all the right places,” said Stais. “It was an instant match for the Heretic slate and we can’t wait to get it out there.”

Cartoon of Day



Israeli Army

Cartoonist: Mohammad Sabaaneh from Palestine

Iranian political thriller “The Opposition” on screen in Beirut

TEHRAN—The public screening of the Iranian film “The Opposition” directed by Amir-Abbas Rabiei started in Beirut, Lebanon, on February 23.

A number of Lebanese artists attended the opening night of the film in Risalat Cultural Center in Beirut, and honored director Rabiei and actor Nader Soleimani who were also present at the event, IRNA reported.

A 2022 production of Soreh Cinema Organization, the film is a story from the purity of love to the madness of politics in the heart of a historical event.

In the political thriller, Saeed, who was an official member of the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran, also known as Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization, two years ago, now works as an agent for the Islamic Republic Party after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Everything goes according to the organization’s routine, when Saeed accidentally meets his fiancée, who left Iran two years ago, and is forced to hide his true identity from her, and to keep her secret from the organization. In the midst of this secrecy, Saeed,



according to the order, provides the party with building plans for the assassination of Shahid Beheshti, but apparently this is not enough and he has to do more. To prove his loyalty to the organization, Saeed shows that he can be against everything;

Anti-homeland, anti-people, anti-humanity and anti-love.

The second feature film by Rabiei has Mehdi Nosrati, Leila Zare, Linda Kiyani, Nader Soleimani, Majid Pataki, Roozbeh Reofi, Emad Darvishi, Mahshid Javadi, Shirin Aghakashi and Amin Khani in the

cast among others.

The 114-minute film premiered at the 40th Fajr Film Festival in 2022 and won two Crystal Simorgh Awards for Best Supporting Actor and Best Stage Design and among seven nominations.

Intl. resistance music conference proposes joint orchestra formation

From Page 1 ▶ Haqqi emphasized that orchestras can collaborate online and remotely, highlighting the importance of initiating this process from within Iran itself.

For his part, Mahmoud Vaezi, the head of the Faculty of Theology and Islamic Studies at the University of Tehran, emphasized the significance of critical thinking in today’s world and academic environments.

He stressed the importance of approaching work with a critical mindset and highlighted the critical discourse that is essential for combating dangers. Vaezi underscored the crucial role of music in promoting the global concept of resistance, noting that resistance music holds significant value for individuals and nations alike.

“For the advancement of the principle of resistance worldwide, music plays an indispensable role and it is through music that we can immortalize the sacrifices made by our martyrs for the cause of Islam,” he concluded.

Mustafa Youssef al-Ladawi, a Palestinian guest at the session, highlighted the enduring support of the Persian people for Palestine over centuries, amidst Western exploitation of music platforms for personal gains. He emphasized the role of music in showcasing resistance to the world and stressed the need for closer attention to this aspect.

Following him, Ahmad Hamadani, a Lebanese university professor, composer, and singer, discussed the multifaceted influence of music on social aspects, noting how musical instruments evolve in response to societal events.

Reflecting on the pivotal role of music in the Islamic revolution, Hamadani emphasized the importance of focusing on music of resistance. He underscored the significance of Jihad songs as crucial works during times of conflict, highlighting their historical

impact. Emphasizing collaboration and purposeful artistic creation, Hamadani called for a systematic and scientific approach to the discourse of folklore music, urging political officials to provide greater support to artists for achieving desired outcomes through media efforts.

Tunisian composer and singer, Abbas Al-Moukaddem, echoed the sentiment, emphasizing the need for heightened attention to music in the realm of resistance. He advocated for cross-cultural exchange through the utilization of poetry from different countries for creating songs, promoting a profound cultural connection between nations. Al-Moukaddem pledged to produce fitting songs and music inspired by these poems to foster cultural understanding and unity.

Organized by the Center for Deep Strategic Studies, the Faculty of Theology of Tehran University, and the International Institute of Cultural Convergence, the conference was a platform for extensive discussions on the resistance music.

Representatives of musicians from nations across the Islamic resistance region, encompassing North Africa, Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain, Palestine, Yemen, Iraq, and various others, participated at the event.

The forthcoming third edition of the conference is slated for March 6, with the participation of experts from the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China. The fourth session of this distinguished international event will equally unfold on the aforementioned day, welcoming musicians from the captivating realms of Europe and America.

Resistance music, often referred to as protest music or music of protest, is a genre of music that addresses social and political issues, advocating for change and challenging authority.

Resistance music is a genre of music that has been used as a tool for defiance, protest, and activism. It has been an important form of expression for marginalized and oppressed communities throughout history, providing a platform for voices that are otherwise silenced.

This type of music has been used throughout history as a means of expressing dissent, promoting social justice, and uniting communities in resistance against oppression and injustice.

Resistance music can take various forms, including folk songs, hip-hop, punk rock, reggae, and more, with lyrics that directly confront the status quo or call for action. Artists may use their platform to bring awareness to issues such as racism, inequality, war, and environmental degradation, among others.

Resistance music has the power to unite people and create a sense of solidarity among those who are fighting for change. It can be a source of strength and inspiration for activists and those who are struggling against oppression, providing a soundtrack for resistance movements around the world.

This genre of music often carries powerful messages that resonate with listeners, serving as a rallying cry for social movements and sparking conversations about important issues. It can inspire individuals to speak out, stand up for their rights, and work towards positive change in society.

Through its emotive power and ability to connect with listeners on a personal level, resistance music has the potential to ignite a sense of solidarity and empowerment among those who feel disenfranchised or marginalized. By sharing stories of resistance, perseverance, and hope through music, artists can foster a sense of unity and resilience within communities facing adversity.

Voice actor Parviz Rabiei passes away

TEHRAN—Iranian veteran voice actor Parviz Rabiei died of heart failure at his home in Tehran on Saturday night. He was 84.

Born in 1939, Rabiei had a long-standing career in dubbing spanning over four decades, portraying a diverse array of characters.

Among his notable works are his dubbing for Steve McQueen in “The Great Escape” and his contributions to the film “The Magnificent Seven,” as well as the television series “Prison

Break.”

Rabiei was also known for his voice work in children’s animated movies and series.

Additionally, he lent his voice to projects such as “A Man for All Seasons,” “Romeo and Juliet,” “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,” and “The Network.”

Since 1989, Rabiei has served as a radio presenter on the popular radio comedy program “Friday Morning with You.”



Iranian veteran voice actor Parviz Rabiei in an undated photo

Tehran cinemathèque to screen Robert Bresson’s “Mouchette”

TEHRAN— The Cinemathèque of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) will screen a restored version of Robert Bresson’s 1967 movie “Mouchette” on Monday.

The screening will be followed by a review session by Iranian critic Ali Alaei.

“Mouchette” is a French film directed by Robert Bresson. The story follows the life of a young girl named Mouchette who lives in a small rural town with her dysfunctional family. Mouchette faces difficult circumstances, including taking care of her sick mother and dealing with abuse

from her alcoholic father.

As she grapples with hardship and loneliness, Mouchette’s journey unfolds with a sense of tragic inevitability, capturing the raw emotions and struggles of adolescence in a harsh, uncaring world.

As Mouchette navigates her challenging surroundings, she grapples with her own inner turmoil and ultimately faces a tragic fate. “Mouchette” is known for its stark and minimalist style, characteristic of Bresson’s filmmaking approach.