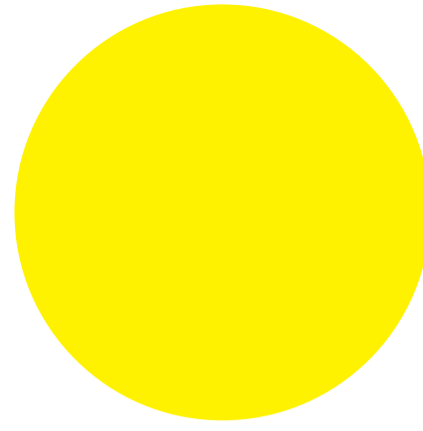




International Day
of Older Persons
**Elderly-friendly
society a necessity
for Iran**

EXCLUSIVE

7 >



Iran Daily



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The performance
of the Ministry
of Intelligence
of the Islamic
Republic of Iran
(2021-2023)

SPECIAL ISSUE

Sharp-Eyed VAJA



The Ministry of Intelligence is vital for ensuring national security in the country. It plays a unique role in safeguarding national interests against both domestic and foreign threats while also contributing to economic growth and political influence. This article explores the actions and renewed approaches of this security institution as it approaches the second anniversary of the thirteenth government's inception. The Ministry's responsibilities include economic security, countering smuggling, espionage prevention, and conducting informational warfare against foreign entities, among others.



**Iran eyes reduction
in costs by reducing
work accidents:
Minister**

2 >

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over Iranian isles
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2 >

Not all stories of war have been told to people

**Chemical warfare
veteran narrates
121 months on
frontlines**

INTERVIEW

8 >



**Qanat system and
cultural heritage
in Qasemabad of
Hamedan**

3 >

**Persepolis looking to
bounce back; Sepahan,
Nassaji gearing up for
Saudi tests**

6 >

**Iran exports
pharmaceuticals to
40 countries: Official**

7 >



UAE repeated claims over Iranian isles in vain: MP



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

The UAE's Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy has recently renewed her country's claim that Iran should end the "occupation" of the islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa.

Speaking at the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 23, Hashimy said the United Arab Emirates will "continue to seek a resolution, either through direct negotiation or through the International Court of Justice. This has been our firm stance for decades."

In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Iranian parliamentarian Yaqub Rezazadeh said the claims

made by the UAE regarding Iranian islands will not lead anywhere and repeating such claims can only harm bilateral relations.

"The three islands — Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb, and the Lesser Tunb — are an integral and permanent part of the Iranian territory, supported by historical documents," said the member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the parliament.

The claim by the Emirati official, backed by the United States, drew a strong reaction from the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which summoned Switzerland's ambassador, who represents Washington's interests in Tehran, to convey Iran's strong protest. In response to these baseless claims, it was emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to defend its territorial integrity and protect its security and interests against any threats from the US, particularly in the context of maritime security and commercial shipping.

Rezazadeh added that whenever American officials feel that Iran's relations with regional and neighboring countries can be exploited to their advantage,

they resort to such claims.

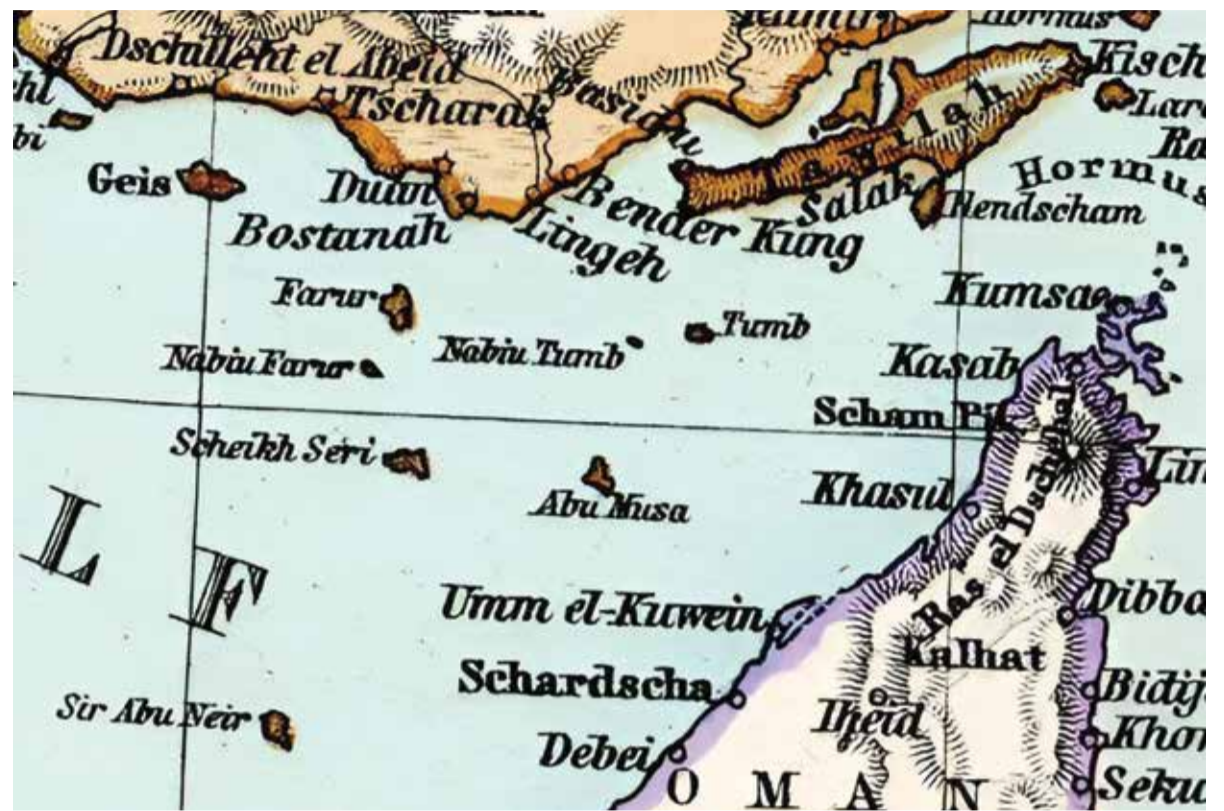
He also pointed out that in the case of the three islands, the right is undoubtedly on the Iranian side as historical documents demonstrate Iran's ownership of these islands.

Iran's sovereignty over the three islands dates back to ancient eras of the land, including the Medes, the Achaemenids, and the Sassanids eras. During these periods, Iranian rule and protection extended across the waters of the Persian Gulf and its islands, Rezazadeh said. So, Iran's ownership of the three islands has historical and cultural evidence.

Etymologically speaking, the term "Tunb" — or more accurately "Tomb" — is a Persian word used in the local dialects of southern Iran to refer to a hill. The reason for this naming is that local sailors saw these islands as hill-like formations amid the waters.

The oldest historical text in which the name "Tunb" is mentioned is the book "Al-Fawa'id fi Usul Ilm al-Bahr wa al-Qawa'id" by Ahmad Ibn Majid al-Najdi, who is the most renowned Muslim navigator of the 15th century.

Iraj Afshar, an Iranian linguist and historical geography expert, explained that



the name of the Abu Musa island is derived from two other words: "Abu" and "Musa." In ancient Persian, "Abu" — or "Abou" — means land, and "Musa" was the name of a historical person of Iranian descent who lived on this island before the Islamic era. However, Rezazadeh noted that the UAE does not have any historical document of note that supports its

claims in a legal dispute since these islands have always belonged to Iran. Such disputes are usually incited by Israel and some regional countries to disrupt relations between the two neighbors, the MP said.

"If Emirati officials were to do their research and look into historical records, they would certainly not make such claims," he added.

Rezazadeh concluded by emphasizing the positive and constructive relations between the two countries, which are economically and commercially beneficial to both sides.

He also highlighted the crucial role that the Persian Gulf plays as a global gateway for the largest export of oil and gas, where Iran's cooperation with other countries benefits them.



The photo shows a fragment of Adolf Stieler's Handatlas (1891) where the three Islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb, and the Lesser Tunb are colored to indicate they were part of the Iranian territory.

WIKIPEDIA



Iranian lawmaker Yaqub Rezazadeh

Iran eyes reduction in costs by reducing work accidents: Minister



By Reza Abesh Ahmadi
Staff writer

Iran has plans to register reduction in costs by decreasing work accidents, announced Iranian minister of cooperatives, labour and social welfare.

Speaking in the First National Conference of Occupational Safety and Health Vision in Tehran on Saturday, Solat Mortazavi said in order to protect the workforce, the government and state-run bodies should consider necessary measures to monitor the implementation of related laws and regulations.

"The main roles of the labor system's social part-

ners — the government, the workforce and the employers — are to protect the national capital which is in the form of human resources," the minister said. Mortazavi noted that greater productivity and efficiency of the workforce requires the employer community to provide the workplace with updated safety and health equipment.

"Workers should also try to improve safety with safe performances in the field of compliance with the principles of safety and health, along with updating their knowledge on safety issues," the minister said.

The implementation of

safety regulations will lead to a reduction in work accidents and a reduction in costs caused by fewer accidents, he concluded.

Meanwhile, speaking at the event, Ali-Hossein Raeiyati-fard, the deputy for labor relations of minister of cooperatives, labour and social welfare said, "Last year, with the cooperation of inspectors, technical committees and HSE officials, we managed to reduce work accidents in Iran by 14 percent."

The official added that according to the labor law, the protection of the country's workforce is the responsibility of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare.

Iran, Russia to expand cooperation in fishery sector

Economy Desk

In a meeting with Ilya Shestakov, the head of Russia's Federal Agency for Fishery, the head of Iran's Fisheries Organization (IFO), Hossein Hosseini, emphasized the expansion of fisheries cooperation.

The Russian official was invited to attend the International Exhibition of Fisheries, Aquaculture, Fishing, Seafood and Related Industries (IFEX) 2023, to be held in Tehran in the coming months, IRNA reported.

In case Russia's Federal

Agency for Fishery and Russian merchants and companies attend the Tehran exhibition, agreements signed in the fields of logistics, aquatic health and money transfer will be implemented, said Hosseini, who is a deputy minister of agriculture.

Hosseini also met the Minister of Fisheries and Marine Economy of the Republic of Guinea during his trip, in which the Guinean counterpart called for the expansion of fisheries cooperation and the use of Iran's aquaculture potential.

Official: NIGC importing gas from Turkmenistan

The dispatching head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) put the current gas volume imported from Turkmenistan into the country at 7.5 million cubic meters (mcm).

Speaking to reporters on Saturday, Saeed Aqli stated that 93 percent of the fuel used in power plants in the country has been supplied by the National Iranian Gas Company for generating electricity,

Tasnim news

agency reported.

Presently, repair and maintenance services of refineries are either underway or completed in order to forward the gas to the farthest regions of the country in the cold season of the year, he further said.

The country is home to more than 39,000km of gas transmission network and 400,000km of electricity distribution grid, he added. In response

to a question on importing gas from Turkmenistan, the manager said that Iran is importing gas from Turkmenistan and has so far imported 10 million cubic meters of gas from this country. He put the volume of gas imported from Turkmenistan to Iran at 7.5 million cubic meters.

Regarding the latest situation of gas swap deal with Turkmenistan, the official noted that gas swap will be made according to the request of the Republic of Azerbaijan.



Delaram: Village of physicians, where knowledge and care flourish



alefir



MEHR/BEHNAM YOUSEFI

Iranica Desk

In the vicinity of Tafresh, a city in Markazi Province, lies the renowned village of Delaram, widely celebrated as the 'Village of Physicians'. The village entrance proudly showcases the birthplace of Professor Ardeshir Qavamzadeh, the father of neurosurgery and bone marrow transplantation in Iran.

As you approach the village along the secondary road, you'll be greeted by a picturesque sight of lush walnut and almond trees adorning both sides. Gradually, the rural houses begin to reveal themselves, each street and alley bearing the name of a distinguished physician.

A prominent sign adorns the middle of the road, proclaiming: "Welcome to Delaram village, the esteemed Village of Physicians, where an impressive 175 doctors have emerged from its 180 households, bringing great recognition to this remarkable place."

Among the village's bustling grape vines, a villager who had climbed onto the wall of a house to pick grapes shared, "This

very house is the birthplace of several doctors, specializing in various fields such as pharmacy and radiology."

A woman who is the relative of one of Iran's esteemed gynecologists, spoke of Delaram's pleasant climate, organic products, and the tranquility that envelops the area. She proudly said that the village's inhabitants have consistently valued knowledge and education, nurturing the progress of their future generations.

Mehrdad Parsa, a Ph.D. holder in genetics, revealed that his father was born there and migrated to Tehran in his youth. During the Iran-Iraq war, the family returned to Delaram village briefly, allowing Mehرداد and his brother Mehdi, now a pharmacist, to attend the village's sole school. Interestingly, the oldest school in Tafresh is also located in Delaram, dating back to 1926.

Mehرداد expressed his desire for the restoration of this historic school, where many scientific figures from Delaram village have received their education. He believed that transforming it into a

tourist attraction would greatly benefit the village, although presently it rests in ruins.

Presently, Delaram village boasts 70 doctors, 40 non-medical Ph.D. graduates, and 30 engineers who have become active professionals across the country. However, for the sake of rural development and ensuring equal access to health care, medical services, and welfare facilities, it is vital to establish favorable conditions that encourage the next generation to receive an education in their hometown and serve their community. A young doctor likened the entrance to heaven's gate and exclaimed, "The interwoven, lush trees that grace the beginning of the village path are absolutely enchanting!"

He also referred to the presence of three ancient walnut trees within the village, one of which is over a thousand years old. Witnessing these majestic trees is indeed a delightful experience. So ancient are they that their branches have grown from the ground, often mistaken by people as roots.

Among the plethora of physician names seen on signs scattered throughout the village streets and alleys, Dr. Mahasti Karimi stands out as an internist. Moved by her late father's wishes, she chose to remain in Tafresh, dedicating herself to serving those in need. Even without her father's influence, Dr. Karimi's deep affection for the people of Tafresh would have made it her chosen home.

After 16 years of practicing medicine in Tafresh, she temporarily relocated to Tehran to accompany her husband during his advanced medical studies. They eventually returned to Tafresh, continuing their service to the community.

Dr. Karimi also mentioned a super specialist in blood and oncology from their family who occasionally visits Tafresh to treat patients in the area.

Another notable individual born and educated in Delaram village happens to be one of the first dentists in Iran. He even founded the Dentistry Department at the University of Tehran. After moving to Tehran, he graciously accommodat-

ed patients in his own two-story house, personally covering their food and other necessities.

"He was a remarkable person and a true role model for my work and life, but sadly, he passed away at the young age of 40," she added, a touch of sorrow evident in her voice.

Regrettably, the lack of educational facilities for the children of physicians and low incomes have decreased the motivation for specialist doctors to remain in the town.

Professor Ardeshir Ghavamzadeh, esteemed pioneer of bone marrow transplantation in Iran, was among the remarkable specialists born in Delaram village.

Zahra Ganjali, a rural manager, expressed hope that this renowned doctor, along with some of his students, would continue their periodic visits to Tafresh and the surrounding villages, providing free medical care to patients. She eagerly anticipated the transformation of Dr. Ghavamzadeh's old house into a tourist destination in the near future.

Qanat system and cultural heritage in Qasemabad of Hamedan

The village of Qasemabad belongs to Hamedan, Hamedan Province in western Iran. Qanat system is the most important water source in this village, which is a holdover from thousands of years of sedentary livelihood in the region.

Qanat consists of some shaft wells interconnected by a subterranean tunnel that drains out the groundwater seepage and conveys it onto the earth surface using the height difference between the two ends of the tunnel. Over the past centuries, various ethnicities dwelled in this area and left behind some vestiges of their culture. Hence, a wealth of cultural elements has been amassed over time, which is manifest in water and irrigation culture in this village.

Qasemabad has long been irrigated by two qanats that were the only water sources for both domestic and agricultural uses. The village has had no access to any surface streams like permanent rivers. Like the city of Hamedan itself, Qasemabad nestles on an alluvial fan in Zagros Mountains whose peaks receive a considerable annual precipitation. Airport meteorological station that is only 6km from Qasemabad has recorded an annual precipitation of 206.3 mm

on average (Hamedan Meteorological Organization 2017), whereas this number reaches between 400 and 500 mm mostly in the shape of snowfall at the top of the mountains overlooking the village.

Therefore, such a disparity in precipitation types and amounts along with topographical and geological conditions has set the stage for qanat system in this region.

In the elevated areas, the melting of the winter snows plays a vital role in replenishing groundwater reserves that have formed inside the alluvial fans and sediments of Alvand Mountains. In fact, the qanat of Qasemabad could have proved to be a solution to the region's uneven distribution of vital production factors like water and soil. At higher altitudes, water is abundant but arable soil is at a premium, and the climate does not lend itself to agriculture. On the contrary, at lower altitudes, water is in short supply but fertile soil is ample and the climate is well suited to agricultural activities. Hence, qanat can somehow even out such resources by bringing water from higher altitudes to the less elevated lands where suitable soil and climate allow a lucrative agriculture but

in the presence of water.

The village of Qasemabad actually enjoys two qanats named Emamzadeh and Bozorg. Emamzadeh qanat with a length of 2km appears on the surface close to a shrine, and its water is used for irrigating a vast area of orchards and ash trees. In 2017, this qanat was completely out of water due to years of negligence, collapse and tunnel obstruction. The water shareholders have turned to other water sources like tube wells in the area to irrigate their orchards.

They have to rent some water shares from those tube wells as a last resort.

Although Emamzadeh qanat has been abandoned nowadays, the exit point of this qanat used to be one of the best places for recreation in the village in the past. Qasemabad's shrine is much revered, since it is a Shia saint' tomb, named Ghasem ibn Mohammad Bahtayi that descended from Imam Hossein (PBUH). The village has probably been named after that same shrine, and some historical records give credence to the fact that the village was known by the same name at least at the time of Mongolian invasion.

Building a sacred place like Qasemabad's shrine close to a qanat flow is



Emamzadeh qanat

rooted in the ancient culture of the region. Before Islam, it was quite common to build fire temples near a spring or qanat water as a sacred element that was highly venerated by Zoroastrians, and the same custom lived on later in the shape of Islamic shrines or mosques. For example, in Baneh, Kurdistan Province, Pir Morad tomb situated close to a natural spring has once been a fire temple that retained its religious function even after the inhabitants converted from Zoroastrianism to Islam. Also, such shrines as Zobeydeh Kha-

toon in Naraq, Emamzadeh Ebrahim in Karaj, Chartaghi in the village of Nashlaj in Niyasar in Kashan, and Emamzadeh Hamzeh in Ab-Ali were all probably Sassanid fire temples that were converted to the Islamic sacred places and continued to be revered in a new ideological system. Therefore, proximity of Qasemabad's shrine to the qanat exit point is expressive of an enduring influence that Iran's ancient culture exerts, regarding spiritual relationship between water and sacred places.

The performance of the Ministry of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2021-2023)

Sharp-eyed VAJA

10 Principal Axes of VAJA's Actions

The Ministry of Intelligence is vital for ensuring national security in the country. It plays a unique role in safeguarding national interests against both domestic and foreign threats while also contributing to economic growth and political influence. This article explores the actions and renewed approaches of this security institution as it approaches the second anniversary of the thirteenth government's inception. The Ministry's responsibilities include economic security, countering smuggling, espionage prevention, and conducting informational warfare against foreign entities, among others.

1 Counteracting Economic Offenses:

Economic threats represent a fundamental impediment to economic growth and advancement. They are frequently utilized as instruments by adversarial governments and foreign services. Interestingly, one of the strategic objectives of the Ministry of Intelligence is to safeguard economic security. In the face of a broad spectrum of threats and a multitude of operations, this aspect has, to a large extent, remained overshadowed. Instances such as smuggling, currency disruptions, money laundering, hoarding, the misuse of cryptocurrencies, unauthorized exchange offices, pyramid schemes, antiquities smuggling, disruptions in the markets for essential commodities like food and medicine, land-grabbing, fraud, forgery of official titles and documents, and more, constitute a collection of offenses that the Ministry of Intelligence has confronted over the course of these two years.

One of the challenges that has compounded the complexity of the fight against economic crimes is the entanglement of economic threats with the counterespionage domain and the infiltration of foreign services into the arena of economic disruption. In the subsequent discussion, we will delve into certain key aspects of this challenge. Actions undertaken include the dismantling of the highly organized network involved in pyramid schemes known as "Unique Finance" in 19 provinces, dealing a blow to the network engaged in cryptocurrency scams known as "Money King," dismantling multiple gangs and networks engaged in land-grabbing and the forgery of official documents and titles for economic motives. Other actions include the blocking of 9,219 unauthorized accounts, the discovery of 7 trillion tomans worth of strategic smuggled goods, the crippling of 23 networks involved in currency disruption, identifying and dismantling 15 organized smuggling groups dealing in tobacco products across 10 provinces of the country, and the arrest of a family network involved in pharmaceutical dis-

ruptions.

However, the most critical action by this ministry pertains to the discovery and neutralization of the second phase of riots in 2022, which is the economic phase. This phase encompasses complex financial maneuvers, exploitation of cryptocurrencies, and the involvement of unauthorized currency exchange offices. These actions were elucidated in a joint statement by the Ministry of Intelligence and the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC. A segment of the statement reads as follows: "The transfer and distribution of funds from foreign entities among internal actors responsible for subversive projects are carried out using various and diverse methods. Various methods have been discovered, and numerous individuals have been detained thus far. For instance, a recently uncovered network was found to exploit 'barter' techniques with Iranian individuals traveling abroad, such as students and construction industry activists. In this method, the principal agent or facilitator would identify individuals in need of foreign currency in the destination country, determine the required amount along with the cooperation commission, and instruct them to deposit the funds into a designated account (an account in the United States) upon their return to the country. In another method, some of the profits from investments made in venues such as small workshops, networks related to domestic network marketing, cryptocurrency misuse, unauthorized currency exchange offices, etc., would be injected into American projects inside the country. These methods effectively concealed the origins and destinations of funds for subversive projects, making their identification challenging. Nevertheless, despite the CIA's efforts to complicate the dimensions of fund transfer to the interior, multi-layered financial and informational transactions related to these networks were tracked and identified. Ultimately, financial and informational exchanges of these networks were apprehended."

2 Striking Against Terrorist Groups

Governments and affiliated services have long invested in armed groups hostile to the Islamic Republic since the outset of the Islamic Revolution. In the past two years, this support reached its peak, spanning from unprecedented financial and armament assistance to endeavors aimed at connecting anti-revolutionary groups and providing them political support on international platforms. These anti-revolutionary armed groups can be categorized into three main types: transnational, border-based, and central. Transnational groups like ISIS enter the country from abroad and hold foreign affiliations. Border-based groups, such as separatist groups like Komala and Jaysh al-Adl, primarily operate in border regions. Central groups, like the MEK (Mujahedin-e Khalq) and urban thugs, are active in central cities.

The Ministry of Intelligence, over the course of the past two years, has taken robust measures against all three categories of terrorist groups, effectively thwarting their objectives despite the unprecedented influx of arms into the country. This has been achieved both from an intelligence and operational standpoint.

Actions include the dismantling of two terrorist teams linked to foreign services in Baluchistan in February 2022, the apprehension of members of a separatist terrorist team in the northwest of the country in June 2022, the arrest of 10 individuals affiliated with a terrorist Takfiri group during Muharram of the same year, the capture of individuals involved in a terrorist attack on the Shah Cheragh shrine in November 2022, the identification and elimination of operational nuclei of the MEK in multiple phases, the arrest of individuals involved in the assassination attempt on Mullah Abdul Wahid Rigi, security exchanges with European intelligence organizations, which led to the Albanian police's strike against the MEK in Ashraf 3 camp, and the arrest of the key terrorist element related to the second Shah Cheragh incident. These actions, in addition to the elimination and apprehension of 196 Takfiri terrorists between the two attacks on the shrine of Ahmad ibn Musa, constitute some of the most significant counter-terrorism measures undertaken during these two years. A comprehensive report on the dimensions of each of these operations can delve deeper into the subject.

3 Combatting Criminal Cults

The Ministry of Intelligence also shoulders the responsibility of countering the influence and deviation caused by organized cults and the threats associated with these misguided groups. The actions of these cults and pseudo-religious movements cannot be solely attributed to ideological matters. Rather, they must be observed from the perspective of national security threats and their relations with foreign governments and organizations. The Ministry of Intelligence is actively engaged in efforts to counteract groups promoting deviant beliefs, demon-worship, and false mysticism that, under the guise of spirituality, seek to recruit and manipulate individuals for the cult's objectives. As an example, the arrest of the core members of the deviant Baha'i cult aimed at promoting immodesty in August 2022, just a month before the riots of 2022, can be cited.

4 Fighting Drug Trafficking

The production, smuggling, and distribution of narcotics in Iran are part of the anti-Iranian strategy of the American mafia regime, which has seen a significant surge following the occupation of Afghanistan. The Ministry of Intelligence, like other security entities, has a commendable track record in this field, acting as a deterrent to the enemies' objectives. In one of its announcements, the Ministry reported the discovery of 110 tons of various traditional and industrial narcotics. Ministry of Information officials succeeded in uncovering a shipment containing 25 tons of various narcotics in Zahedan during a single operation.

5 Countering Arms Smuggling

Another strategy employed by the enemy to destabilize Iran is the smuggling of firearms into the country through border crossings. In just the first three months of the autumn riots of 2022, according to the announcement of the police command, over 10,000 firearms, including light and semi-heavy weapons, were reportedly smuggled into the country. The Ministry of Intelligence, in collaboration with other responsible entities such as regional army bases, security bases, the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC, border control, and extraterritorial intelligence, combats arms smuggling into the country. The dismantling of 78 arms smuggling networks in represents one of the significant achievements of the Ministry of Information officials. The discussion on the discovery of weapons by VAJA should not be limited to direct operations against arms smuggling networks. Instead, it can also be observed that the discovery of weapons and explosive materials by this security entity plays a vital role in countering terrorist groups and anti-spy operations.



10

Rival and hostile governments have always sought to exploit the potential of Iran's elites. These efforts range from stealing Iran's historical, scientific, and cultural heritage to luring and deceiving academic and industrial elites by regional and extraregional intelligence services. This recent phenomenon, often referred to as "brain drain" and "migration of elites," has been frequently portrayed with aims beyond psychological objectives such as implying that Iran is uninhabitable for elites. Strategic objectives also include depleting the country of elite human resources,

6 Cybersecurity

One of the strategic areas under the purview of the Ministry of Intelligence is cybersecurity and countering cyberattacks. Cyberattacks are typically carried out by hacker groups affiliated with organizations, hostile governments, and, in some cases, independent criminal groups. These actions are often politically motivated or financially driven, targeting the infrastructure of the industrial, governmental, and banking sectors. The Ministry of Intelligence is one of the responsible bodies for countering these acts of cyber disruption. In one of the announcements by this entity during the riots of the past year, efforts to infiltrate and disrupt Iranian cyberspace by anti-Iranian groups and cyber defense activities were highlighted.

7 Counterintelligence and Striking Against Foreign Services

Counterintelligence operations against enemy services, in conjunction with cooperation with security organizations from friendly countries, are among the responsibilities and actions of the Ministry of Intelligence. Over the past two years, numerous successful counter-spy operations have been carried out by this organization. Some of the most notable include the arrest of Alireza Akbari, a spy for the English service (MI6), the discovery of a Zionist espionage network connected to Kurdish groups, and the disruption of an explosion operation at an industrial facility, all of which dealt significant blows to MI6 and Mossad. Additionally, the arrest of ten individuals connected to foreign services in Bushehr, the detention of two European spies involved in organizing cultural protests, the arrest of a Swedish spy, and the discovery and dismantling of six operational Mossad teams in several provinces, resulting in the discovery of hundreds of handmade explosive devices, multiple firearms, and grenades, were among the most significant achievements in the field of counterintelligence in the past two years.

8 Countering Industrial and Defense Sabotage

Sabotage in the country's industrial centers poses a significant security threat. It involves actions such as bombing production units, hacking production lines, and deploying drones to target these facilities, among others. Attempts to target factories in the defense industry have been one of the enemy's strategies over the past decade. As an example, in February 2023, the Ministry of Intelligence, in a joint operation with the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC and the Information Protection of the Ministry of Defense, thwarted one of these acts of sabotage targeting defense industries.

9 Countering Civil Unrest

Launching riots under various pretexts to destabilize countries is one of the longstanding strategies of the US-led global hegemony system. Conversely, predicting, preventing, and countering the tools of civil unrest are among the most critical tasks of the Ministry of Intelligence. Throughout the history of the Islamic Revolution, foreign intelligence organizations have made numerous attempts to foment unrest in Iran under various pretexts. Examples include the communist uprisings, armed Turkmen-Sahra insurgency, Arab separatist movements, the June 20th uprising, and the unrest in 1999. The Ministry of Intelligence has been one of the primary institutions responsible for predicting, preventing, and countering these acts of unrest since its inception in the summer of 1983. During the past two years of the thirteenth government, several conspiracies to destabilize the country have been thwarted by the Ministry of Intelligence officials, ranging from preventing labor gatherings and arresting those who exploited cultural demands to striking against domestic and foreign elements involved in the autumn riots of 2022. Countermeasures include dismantling networks organized by leaders, discovering hideouts and safe houses of terrorists, uncovering weapons and explosive equipment, identifying sources and methods of financial support for disruptors, information warfare against foreign services, and uncovering communications of organic agents and actors of unrest. Detailed accounts of the actions taken by this ministry in this area can be found in their comprehensive statements jointly released with the IRGC Intelligence Organization and other announcements and statements of this security entity.

Countering Recruitment and Diversion of Elites

employing these capacities to destabilize the country, and identifying the economic and industrial vulnerabilities for imposing sanctions in these areas. If we examine the names of Iranian entities and think tanks in the United States with anti-Iran positions, we can identify a relatively new generation of Iranians who explicitly adopt anti-Iran positions. They provide economic and industrial information to hostile governments, including the United States, for intensifying and expanding sanctions.

The Ministry of Intelligence is obliged to counter illegal and unlawful propaganda campaigns to recruit elites and, more broadly, prevent the wavering of individuals to foreign countries. In one of the an-

nouncements of this ministry earlier this year, it was reported that an international network recruiting Iranians abroad, connected to sensitive entities in the country, had been dismantled. The announcement provided the following explanation:

"To inform the noble Iranian people, it is hereby announced that during the ongoing pursuit of the objectives and intelligence-operational activities of hostile intelligence agencies, information from the heavy and specific concentration of one of the services on Iranians abroad was obtained. Continued surveillance and information gathering activities in a foreign environment revealed that among Iranians moving abroad, individuals with responsibilities in various positions or access to

important information in the country's sensitive organizations and institutions and individuals with special expertise in various fields were subject to focused surveillance by the service in question. The said service would convey the names of the target individuals among Iranians abroad to a head of cell who, in turn, would pass them on to their contacts. Eventually, this information reached the executives of the network and, in the same sequence, to intelligence operatives in several organizations and agencies in the country. The individuals in charge of these organizations would, in an illegal and unauthorized manner, extract the information gathered regarding the subject and provide it to the agents."

the most important actions and achievements in 2021-2023 by VAJA

2021

September 15: Strike against a terrorist group.
September 27: Annihilation of a terrorist cell affiliated with Mossad and elimination of its leader.
September 28: Blow to the "Money King" cryptocurrency scam network.
October 3: Identification of counterfeit titles, such as antique expert, real estate, and automotive.
October 11: Arrest of 10 individuals linked to foreign services in Bushehr.
October 31: Announcement of the destruction of 78 arms smuggling networks.
November 6: Dismantling of an organized pyramid scheme fraud network called "Unique Finance" in 19 provinces.
November 12: Discovery of 25 tons of various narcotics in Zahedan.

2022

January 4: Identification of a large-scale smuggling operation of household appliances on the northwestern borders of the country.
January 10: Disruption of a land-grabbing and document forgery gang.
February 19: Detention of individuals involved in forging official titles and documents.
March 14: Elimination of two terrorist teams affiliated with foreign services in Baluchistan.
April 18: Announcement of the discovery of 110 tons of various traditional and industrial narcotics.
May 11: Arrest of two European spies linked to the organization behind cultural protests.
May 14: Blocking of 9219 unauthorized accounts.
May 28: Uncovering 7 trillion tomans worth of strategic smuggled goods.
July 13: Arrest of members of a separatist terrorist group in the northwest of the country.
July 23: Discovery of a Zionist espionage network involved in sabotage operations related to Kurdish groups with the aim of causing explosions in one of the country's industrial centers (a significant operation).
July 25: Uncovering a 139-member forgery and economic corruption network.
July 30: Arrest of a Swedish spy.
August 1: Arrest of the core of the promotion of immodesty within the Baha'i sect.
August 4: Arrest of 10 members of terrorist Takfiri groups during the Muharram.
August 17: Arrest of a cross-border terrorist.
September 30: Issuance of a statement regarding the nature of riots.
October 24: Announcement regarding the rumor of hacking of the VAJA website and countering cyberattacks.
October 27: Issuance of a joint clarification statement by the Ministry of Intelligence and the Sepah Intelligence Organization regarding the three-stage courses before, during, and post-turmoil.
October 30: Arrest of terrorist attack elements at Shah Cheragh shrine.
December 6: Identification of operational nuclei of the hypocrites.
December 13: Arrest of individuals involved in the assassination of Mullah Abdul Wahid Rigi.

2023

January 1: Discovery of the financial and equipment supply network of the hypocrites.
January 9: Discovery and destruction of 6 operational Mossad teams in several provinces of the country.
January 10: Arrest of Alireza Akbari, an agent of the British intelligence service.
February 9: Joint operation by the Ministry of Intelligence and Sepah Intelligence Organization to neutralize sabotage at one of the industrial centers.
March 8: Statement by the Ministry of Intelligence regarding the dire situation of some students in certain schools in the country.
March 13: Discovery of explosive equipment and sabotage on the last Wednesday of the year.
April 28: Detailed statement by the Ministry of Intelligence regarding incidents in the country's schools.
May 5: Strike against 23 currency disruption networks.
May 22: Destruction of the network recruiting Iranians abroad.
July 2: Liaison with European intelligence agencies and a blow to the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) in Camp Ashraf 3 by Albanian police.
July 23: Annihilation of several Zionist terrorist teams and the discovery of 43 explosive projectiles on the eve of Muharram.
July 24: Identification of the intelligence and personal identity of a Quran defiler in Sweden (Salwan Momika).
July 25: Identification and dismantling of 15 organized smuggling gangs of tobacco products in 10 provinces of the country.
August 12: Arrest of a Baha'i family network involved in pharmaceutical disruption.
August 17: Arrest of the key terrorist element related to the Shah Cheragh incident and announcement of the detention and elimination of 196 Takfiri terrorists between the two attacks on Shah Cheragh shrine.
August 29: Annihilation of the remnants of terrorist groups affiliated with Zionist services in various parts of the country.

Fury to face Usyk in undisputed title fight in Riyadh



● GETTY IMAGES

BBC – A historic undisputed heavyweight fight between champions Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk has been signed and will take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Additional details, including the fight date, are yet to be announced.

Briton Fury, 35, is the WBC champion and Ukraine's Usyk, 36, holds the WBA, WBO and IBF titles.

"Delighted to finally get this fight signed. This is the biggest fight that could possibly be made in our sport," said Queensberry promoter Frank Warren.

The winner will be crowned the first undisputed heavyweight champion in the four-belt era.

The targeted date is 23 December, although the fight could be pushed back to early next year.

Fury has won 33 fights with one draw since turning professional in 2008. "The Gypsy King" must first come through a non-title bout against MMA star Francis Ngannou uninjured on 28 October in Riyadh.

Usyk – who has won all 21 pro bouts – defended his titles against Londoner Daniel Dubois in August.

"The heavyweights always spark the imagination of the fans, and I have no doubt this will be the biggest boxing event of the century," Warren added. Fury faced criticism for failing to reach terms with Usyk after a proposed bout at London's Wembley Stadium in April fell through.

"I can't believe that it's happening but it is," Usyk's promoter Alexander Krassyuk said.

There has not been an undisputed heavyweight champion since 1999 when Lennox Lewis beat Evander Holyfield to defend the WBA, WBC and IBF titles.

"Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk are the two greatest heavyweights of their generation, and I can't wait to see what happens when they step into the ring in Riyadh," Fury's co-promoter Bob Arum said.

"They are special talents worthy of competing for the greatest prize in sports."

The fight will form part of 'Riyadh Season' – an entertainment events festival held in Saudi Arabia's capital every winter since its launch in 2019.

A number of high-profile bouts have been held in Saudi in recent years, including Usyk's win over Anthony Joshua in August 2022.

Hangzhou Asian Games:

Alamians' fairy tale continues with a place in doubles last four

➤ Noshad (L) and Nima Alamian celebrate after progressing to the table tennis men's doubles semifinals at the Hangzhou Asian Games in China on September 30, 2023.
● hangzhou2022.cn



Sports Desk

Iranian brothers Nima and Noshad Alamian carried on their impressive form in the table tennis contests of the Hangzhou Asian Games

in China with a last-eight victory over the Japanese duo in the men's doubles event.

The Iranian pair came out on top in straight games (11-6, 11-8, 11-5) against

Taisei Matsushita and Mizuki Oikawa to guarantee a second table tennis medal for the country in Hangzhou.

It has already been a memorable campaign for Nima

and Noshad, who were part of the Iranian trio, alongside Mirhossein Hodaei, that beat Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist Japan before falling to South Korea in the semifinals to

win the men's team bronze – Iran's first table tennis medal in the Asian Games in 65 years.

"It was a really tough match. We were just thinking of securing a second medal before the contest, but now we'll be looking to improve on the team bronze," elder brother Noshad said after the victory.

Standing between them and a place in today's final showdown at the GSP Gymnasium are the host's Fan Zhendong – a team gold medalist and a singles silver winner in Tokyo Olympics – and Wang Chuqin.

Kurash silver

The first day of the kurash competitions in Hangzhou saw Iranian Majid Vahid Barimanlou win a silver medal in the men's -66kg weight class.

Barimanlou overcame opponents from Vietnam and the Chinese Taipei before a semifinal victory over Tajikistan's Murodzoda Khairandeshi, only to suffer a defeat against Uzbekistan's Artyom Shturbabin in the final showdown.

A first medal for the country on Saturday came in the shooting contests, where Haniyeh Rostamian and Amir Joharikou teamed up for a bronze in the 10m air pistol mixed team event.

The Iranian duo defeated Pakistan's Gulfam Joseph and Kishmala Talat 16-14 to share the third place with the South Korean pair.

AFC Champions League:

Persepolis looking to bounce back; Sepahan, Nassaji gearing up for Saudi tests

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League champion Persepolis will be chasing first points in the new season of the AFC Champions League against Qatari champion Al Duhail in Doha on Monday.

Elsewhere, Sepahan and Nassaji Mazandaran will come up against star-studded giants of the Saudi Pro League, hosting Al Ittihad and Al Hilal respectively.

Reds eyeing recovery

Runner-up in 2018 and 2020, the Tehran Reds got off to a disappointing start in the Asian elite clubs competition, falling to a 2-0 defeat against Al Nassr on home soil in Group E. What added to the misery for Yahya Golmohammadi's side was a couple of injury setbacks for star players Mahdi Torabi and Vahid Amiri, leaving both Iranian internationals a major doubt for the game in Doha, while midfielder Milad Sarlak is ruled out of the contest after being red carded on Matchday One.

New signing Nabil Bahoui will be available for team selection, though the Swedish striker will likely start from the bench due to lack of match fitness.

Persepolis was last in action on the opening day of the competition, whereas



➤ Persepolis captain Vahid Amiri (red), pictured in a 2-0 defeat against Al Nassr, is a doubt for the game against Al Duhail in the AFC Champions League.
● MEQDAD MADADI/TASNIM

Al Duhail will step onto the pitch at Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium on the back of Thursday's 2-1 away victory over Al Markhiya in the Qatari top flight, where Brazilian superstar Philippe Coutinho, who joined on loan from Aston

Villa in the summer, bagged his first goal for the club.

The former Liverpool and Barcelona player is set to make his debut in the continental event, having missed the goalless stalemate against Istiklol in Dushanbe.

Kenyan striker Michael Oluanga has been in dazzling form this season, scoring five in as many games in the Qatar Stars League. Persepolis supporters have fond memories of the previous encounter between the two sides in the

AFC Champions League, when three second-half goals saw the Reds come from behind to beat Al Duhail 3-1 at the Azadi Stadium – 3-2 on aggregate – and progress to the 2018 semifinals.

Inspiring debut

Nassaji Mazandaran could not have dreamt of a more delightful debut in the Asian showpiece as Ehsan Hosseini and Mohamadreza Azadi netted two unanswered goals to help the northern Iranian club walk away with maximum points against Mumbai City in India.

"From today, opponents will have a different level of respect for us," Rahmati said after the game, and now hopes his side – the surprise leader in Group D – will build on the maiden victory when facing Saudi heavyweight Al Hilal.

Al Hilal sits atop the Saudi league table, yet to concede a defeat after eight rounds of matches, though there has already been rumors of Portuguese manager Jorge Jesus losing control of a star-packed dressing room, which includes Neymar, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic, Malcom, Aleksandar Mitrovic, and Kalidou Koulibaly.

Mitrovic and Koulibaly were both on the score-sheet as Al Hilal beat Al Shabab 2-0 at home in the domestic league on Friday. However, the Saudi giant was lucky to leave the pitch with a single point in a 1-1 draw against Navbahor on the first day in the

group.

Georgian Toma Tabatadze netted 10 minutes after the break to silence the crowd at Riyadh's King Fahd International Stadium, only to see his strike canceled out by Saudi center-back Ali al-Bulayhi's header in the 10th minute of stoppage time.

In Group C, Sepahan will be after a first win of the campaign but standing between the Isfahan-based club and the three points is formidable Al Ittihad. Sepahan thought it had done enough for a victory in the group opener against Iraq's Air Force Club before an Ali Jasim's 89th-minute equalizer saw the two sides share the spoils in a 2-2 draw.

Having spent massively in the summer, Sepahan has enjoyed a perfect run in the Iranian league, though the club was handed a four-point deduction by the Iranian federation for a "budget cap violation" earlier in the month, dropping to fifth in the table.

The good news for Sepahan boss Jose Morais is that Al Ittihad will be without injured French striker Karim Benzema for the visit to Isfahan.

Al Ittihad is second in the Saudi league and played to a goalless draw away to Al Feiha on Saturday.

Haroune Camara's strike was followed by a brace from Brazilian Romarinho to lead Al Ittihad to commanding 3-0 home win against Uzbekistan's AGMK in the Group C opener.



International Day of Older Persons Elderly-friendly society a necessity for Iran

Social Desk

In the span of just over two centuries, the world has witnessed a remarkable transformation in life expectancy. Europe's average age, for example, rose from 33.3 in 1800 to 77 in 2021. In our own country of Iran, life expectancy has risen from 39 in 1950 to 76 in 2015. It has almost doubled, which is a tremendous progress. The steady increase in life expectancy can be attributed to advancements in healthcare, sanitation, nutrition, and overall quality of life. It's also worth noting that the remarkable progress made over the years signals the potential for further improvements in longevity.

Such progress in extending human life is undoubtedly an achievement worth celebrating. However, it has also brought about significant societal changes, as more and more individuals find themselves entering old age. In human beings, old age is defined as the final stage of the normal life span. Definitions of old age, however, are not consistent from the standpoints of biology, demography, employment and retirement, and sociology. The social aspects of old age are influenced by the relationship of the physiological effects of aging and the collective experiences and shared values of that generation to the particular organization of the society in which it exists.

In today's world, it has become an imperative for societies to adapt and create environments that are elderly-friendly, while simultaneously recognizing and valuing the contributions of older persons. The reason is quite obvious: With longer life expectancies, the world is experiencing a demographic shift towards an aging population. The proportion of older adults in society is growing, leading to increased diversity and unique needs within communities.

This demographic shift in turn necessitates a reevaluation of societal structures and policies to ensure the well-being and inclusion of older persons.

That's where the importance of having elderly-friendly societies come to play. Such societies prioritize the needs and rights of older individuals, which would lead to an environment that promotes their well-being and independence. These societies recognize the valuable contributions that older persons can make, based on their wisdom, experience, and expertise.

Through offering older persons acceptance and support, societies can tap into their potential and create intergenerational harmony, leading to mutual benefits for all age groups. This all begs the question: What qualities an elderly-friendly society have? Such a society should have accessible and affordable healthcare, along with comprehensive social support systems designed to address the unique needs of older individuals.

They should also come with an age-inclusive infrastructure, meaning that urban planning and infrastructure should consider the mobility and accessibility requirements of older adults, promoting their active participation in society.

And elderly-friendly society should also consider the employment and retirement of its older persons carefully. Encouraging flexible work options and creating opportunities for older persons to remain engaged in the workforce can contribute to their overall well-being and financial security. Such structure will also prevent early onsets of diseases such as Alzheimer's and dementia.

In an ideal society for older individuals, they should also feel socially included and well-engaged with their communities. Promoting social connections and cultivating intergen-

erational interactions can combat the feelings of loneliness the elderly are prone to, and enhance their quality of life.

One final thing that policy-makers for such societies should be aware of is the fact that without ageism awareness and proper education, not much can be achieved. Raising awareness about ageism and promoting positive attitudes towards aging can challenge stereotypes and create a culture that values older persons.

Iran's National Week of Older Persons

Iran is among the fastest-aging countries, with projections indicating that in about 50 years, it would have more than 25 million older individuals. However, devising a week-long celebration indicates the will of Iran's policy-makers to strive towards an elderly-friendly society.

The week dedicated to honoring the elderly in Iran spans from Saturday, September 30 to Friday, October 6, and each day of the week has a specific theme: Saturday is focused on "popularization and strengthening of the foundations of aging," Sunday emphasizes "social and economic support, as well as respect for the elderly," Monday centers around "education and empowering the elderly," Tuesday highlights "policymaking, leadership, and intersectional cooperation in elderly affairs," Wednesday emphasizes "media, raising awareness, culture, and discourse," Thursday focuses on "equitable access to services," and, finally, Friday emphasizes the "participation of the elderly in the family and society."

The growing population of older persons in our country is as much cause for caution as it is for celebration. In order to ensure the well-being and inclusion of this demographic, our society must fast adapt and become elderly-friendly. It is no easy task, and

mere words and slogans and wishful thinking is not going to cut it.

It is only through prioritizing the needs of older individuals, valuing their contributions, and implementing policies that address their unique requirements, that we can have a society that not only enhances the lives of older persons but also creates harmonious intergenerational relationships.

Embracing age and building an elderly-friendly society is not only our religious and moral imperative, but also a means to harness the immense potential that older individuals bring to our communities, further strengthening our position in the region and world.

Raising awareness about ageism and promoting positive attitudes towards aging can challenge stereotypes and create a culture that values older persons.



IRNA



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran joins Electronic Communications Convention

Members of the Iranian Parliament have approved Iran's membership in the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts (the "Electronic Communications Convention", or ECC).

Iran as a member of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) signed the Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts and joined the treaty as the 19th country after Russia, Azerbaijan, Singapore, and Bahrain,

IRNA reported.

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 23 November 2005, the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts aims to enhance legal certainty and commercial predictability where electronic communications are used in relation to international contracts.

It addresses the determination of a party's location in an electronic environment; the time and place of dispatch and receipt of electronic communications; the

use of automated message systems for contract formation; and the criteria to be used for establishing functional equivalence between electronic communications and paper documents - including "original" paper documents - as well as between electronic authentication methods and hand-written signatures.

By establishing legal arrangements for Iran's membership in the convention, a clear vision of the development of electronic documents between Iran and other member states would be created.

Iran exports pharmaceuticals to 40 countries: Official

PRESS TV - A senior Iranian health official has hailed the country's progress in the fields of medical science and pharmaceutical industry, pointing to the export of Iranian-developed medicines to 40 countries across the world. Heydar Mohammadi, the head of Iran's Food and Drug Administration, said on Friday that a threefold increase in the export of Iranian pharmaceuticals bespeaks the country's good interaction with the neighboring countries. Speaking on the sidelines of the 2023 edition of Iran Pharma Expo in Tehran, Mohammadi said the presence of representatives from foreign countries is one of the greatest achievements of the exhibition.

The three-day exhibition, which is hailed as one of the biggest pharmaceutical events in the West Asian region, wrapped up on Friday. "Iran Pharma exhibition is a very good place to annually showcase and present the pharmaceutical capabilities of our country," Mohammadi said, stressing that Iranian medicines are exported to 40 countries.

"This year, the exhibition was held with more splendor and reception, and fortunately, high-ranking officials of the country also paid good visits to the capabilities of our country's pharmaceutical industries."

According to Mohammadi, who is also the deputy minister of health, 427 Iranian and 282 foreign companies from 33 countries participated in this year's exhibit.

"We hope to expand the access of the people of the region to quality medicines at the Group of Five (G5) meeting and in regional cooperation," the official said, referring to an initiative that was launched in June 2005 by the Islamic Republic of Iran based on historical, geographical and cultural links and common health problems with three other regional states namely Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. WHO is also another member of the initiative which aims to enhance and strengthen sub-regional cooperation between members. Tajikistan has also joined as an observer to the G5 mechanism which bears the slogan of "joint work for solving joint health problems."

Organized by the Iranian Pharmaceutical Industries Syndicate, and with the collaboration of the Ministry of Health, Iran Pharma Expo is held every September, hosting manufacturers of pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical equipment and machinery, pharmaceutical printing and packaging, recombinant drugs, herbal medicine, food and dietary supplements, knowledge-based companies and pharmaceutical distributors. The international event provides an excellent opportunity for showcasing the national potentials and capabilities of experts and industry professionals in the prolific world of pharmaceutical industries.

Chemical warfare veteran narrates 121 months on frontlines

Not all stories of war have been told to people



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By Sadeq Dehqan
 Staff writer

Nasser Mashhadi Farahani, aged 65, is a chemical veteran of the eight-year Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988). With a record of 121 months of service on various fronts and operational areas in the north, west, and south of the country, and recovering from three separate wounds, his life story has turned into a book about the history and manner of occurrence of many battles and combat operations from the beginning of the Islamic Revolution to the end of the Iraqi-imposed war, the pages of which are filled with unforgettable and even heart-wrenching events. The veteran soldier, who, after years of treatment and enduring many hardships, managed to return to normal life, said, "We have not been able to convey the facts and instructive lessons of the eight-year war to the people as they deserve."

According to Farahani, the years of war that passed over Iran contain untold stories and extraordinary scenes that, if described well, will have many instructive lessons for the younger generation and today's society and will help us overcome the challenges and difficulties of the country.

At the young age of 19, Farahani joined the army as a second sergeant and served in the 21st Hamzeh Division in Tehran. He left for the western city of Sanandaj in the midst of the first days of the revolution as conflicts started by the rebels in different regions of the country.

He said, "At that time, our division was stationed in Tehran, and we were assigned to various missions in remote areas. At that time, neither the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) nor the Basij existed, so anytime there was a conflict in any part of the country, army personnel would join the ranks to confront the enemy. In the early days of the revolution, in Sanandaj, a group of Kurds rebelled under the name of Democratic Party and Komala. However, shortly after Ayatollah Taleghani's speech in Sanandaj, which

was like pouring water on fire, things quieted down. We were engaged in a three-month war with Kurdish rebels in Sanandaj. The conflict there ended, and the city was liberated. We were then sent to Urmia on foot. It took about 20 days to reach Mahabad, which had been besieged by the Democrats and Komala forces. The liberation of Mahabad from the insurgents took almost four months.

"After Mahabad, clashes occurred in Turkmen Sahra and the city of Gorgan in northeastern Iran. Twice from Mahabad, we were directly sent to Gorgan. They sent us twice from Mahabad to Gonbad-e Kavus. There, we were engaged in a five-month war with a group called the People's Fedai Guerrillas led by Ashraf Dehqani. All these battles I'm describing took place in about a year and some since the beginning of the revolution."

The Iranian People's Fedai Guerrillas is the group that split from the Organization of Iranian People's Fedai Guerrillas (OIFPG) in 1979, dropping the word 'organization' from its name. It is currently operating against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Unlike the majority of the organization, the group believed in continuing armed struggle even after the overthrow of the Shah.

Farahani continued, "Ashraf's group was engaged in combat with the Turkmens in Gorgan and Turkmen Sahra and tried to gain control of these areas. They also aimed to establish their own government. In fact, in the early days of the Islamic Revolution, any group that thought it had the capability was vying for power in different parts of the country. After a while, things quieted down there as well, and we returned to Tehran. The exhaustion from the journey hadn't left our bodies yet when the Iran-Iraq war began in earnest on September 22, 1980. This marked the beginning of my presence in the imposed war."

Unwavering presence on frontlines

I asked him how long he had been present in the war and operational areas in total.

He said, "In total, it was 121 months and 14 days, which is

about 10 years. Only 76 and a half months of that were spent in the war with Iraq on the frontlines. That means I was on the frontlines for the entire duration of the eight-year war, and even after the war, along with my comrades, I remained in war zones for months to stabilize the situation because, at any moment, conditions could change and a new attack could occur.

"I was wounded three times during this period. Two of those injuries were chemical, related to Operation Badr on Majnoon Island. I was wounded once before the operation and once after it. Each time, I was hospitalized for 20 days to a month, and, depending on the need, I would return to the frontlines. Once, during Operation Valfajr (Dawn) 4, I was hit by a bullet in the leg.

"Operation Valfajr 4 was an Iranian operation of the Iran-Iraq war, launched in October 1983. It took place for 33 days in Suleimaniyah and Penjwen, both in the Sulaymaniyah Governorate of Iraq, in October and November 1983. The operation involved the participation of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, the Army, and the cooperation of Kurdish militias affiliated with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, a political party in the Iraqi Kurdistan.

"At the end of the operation, we had captured some territory from the Iraqis including the Garmak military garrison, and entered Iraq. We intended to cut off enemy forces deep within 180 kilometers into the country and, subsequently, the cities of Suleimaniyah, Halabja, and some other areas came under our control. However, later, during the cease-fire between the two countries and the issuance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 598, the order to withdraw was issued."

Courage wounds

I asked him to explain more about his chemical injury.

"That day, we were busy preparing for the details after the operation. In fact, Operation Badr had already been carried out.

"Operation Badr was carried out in February 1985. In the initial advance from Majnoon Island, the Iranian forces managed to take control of the Tarabeh checkpoint and parts of the Baghdad-Bas-

ra highway. However, the Iraqis' counterattack pushed back the Iranian forces.

"It was the time when Saddam went mad, or rather, became crazier. He was frequently using chemical weapons, either by shells or by airplanes. Several divisions of our forces had been stationed in Majnoon Island. Suddenly, we saw eight Iraqi planes flying over the island. In less than a minute, a total of eight chemical bombs – four bombs carrying nerve gas and four bombs carrying cyanide gas – were dropped on us. The bombs hit the ground in the area where we were located, an area about the size of two football fields.

"Cyanide gas usually completely destroys the eyes. And the nerve gas bombs – if they hit the ground near someone, the person's head will explode just like a balloon.

"But we were lucky and, in fact, God was kind to the fighters. The two different bombs hit the ground at the same time and exploded; since cyanide and nerve gas have a neutralizing effect on each other, their harmful effects were reduced.

"On the same day, about 2,500 of our forces were injured by chemical bombs. I, along with 16 other fighters, were transferred to Torfeh Hospital near Baharestan Square in Tehran. Four fighters lost their sight and the remaining 12 people are mostly healed, but the effects of that injury are still with us.

"I am now a war-disabled person. Cyanide gas destroyed the capillaries of my eyes. My vision is now very weak. The bombs affected me mentally. Of course, during these years, I have tried to decrease their negative consequences; I have tried hard to communicate with people and become a normal person again.

"Of course, I still take medicine. The condition of my lungs is not bad. I try to rest, walk and exercise every day."

Against warmongers with empty hands

I asked him about the Sacred Defense Week, what he thought about the commemoration of this week and the days after the war.

He said: "Unfortunately, we have not been able to explain the battlefield and the war very well to the young generation and familiarize them with the facts of the

war. We withstood against the world with empty hands. They haven't described this issue for the public very well.

"We were a human shield against the enemy. At the time, Saddam was taking delivery of military equipment and ammunition from Western countries so much that he targeted our people with tank bullets, while we did not have enough bullets for our guns.

"We had ammunition, but it was not enough. The shortage of ammunition caused us to lose more fighters in operations and battles. On the other hand, the situation was such that some of our Armed Forces had been going to the frontlines without sufficient military training and they lost their lives due to the lack of experience in the battlefield.

"But, thank God, today we produce military equipment ourselves and enjoy advanced military and defense facilities in such a way that the defense power of the country is worlds apart from the time when Iraq invaded Iran.

"I remember that fifteen other fighters and I, along with Major General Hassan Abshenasan, were on our way to a military patrol when we encountered an Iraqi military brigade with around four thousand soldiers equipped with all kinds of military ammunition. But we managed to stop them. We did not allow them to achieve their goals, and this was a victory." What was the secret of the victory of the Iranian fighters in these unequal battles?

"Our warriors fought with heart and soul, to sincerely defend this land and water. God also helped them. Even today, if we want to overcome the country's problems, that is the secret of victory. Serving people from your heart."

As a last question, I asked him, do you think today, if another war occurs, will our youth do what you people did? Will they die to defend the revolution and the country?

After pausing for a few seconds, he said, "Certainly, even if Iranians are dissatisfied with the conditions of their country, or if there are differences of opinion in the country, when it comes to the issue of our homeland and the invasion of a foreign enemy, they will come to defend the country and put aside their differences."

