

Iran seeks quick resolution of issues preventing Umrah pilgrimage



REUTERS - Iran hopes technical problems preventing Iranian Muslims from making the Umrah pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia will soon be resolved, Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on Monday.

Iran initially announced in December that the first Umrah pilgrims would travel on Dec. 19, following an agreement between Tehran and Riyadh to allow the pilgrimage to take place after a pause of eight years.

However, the first flight and subsequent ones were cancelled due to Riyadh failing to provide the "necessary final permits" for the entry of Iranian planes into Saudi airports, the spokesman of Iran Air Hesham Qorbanali had told national TV.

"The relevant authorities have announced that it is just a technical issue and that there is no political dispute as the bilateral agreement regarding Umrah pilgrimage is well-established and Saudi Arabia is committed to it," Kanaani said during a televised press conference on Monday.

Saudi Arabia did not comment on the matter. Kanaani added that Iran's head of Hajj and Pilgrimage was in Saudi Arabia with a team of experts to resolve the problems.

According to Tasnim news agency, representatives of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization are also in Saudi Arabia working on the issues.

China mediated an agreement in March under which Iran and Saudi Arabia resumed full diplomatic relations which were cut in 2016 over Riyadh's execution of a Shia Muslim cleric and the storming of the Saudi Embassy in Tehran.

Umrah, known as the "lesser pilgrimage", can be undertaken at any time of the year and is not generally deemed compulsory in Islam.

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Book 'Without Fear' unveiled

A tale of patriotism, bravery of an Iranian pilot



By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

The book 'Without Fear' was unveiled at the Iran Cultural & Press Institute on Monday, recounting the life and operations of Mahmoud Eskandari, one of the fighter pilots of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Air Force.

The ceremony was attended by family members, as well as some veteran pilots and comrades of Eskandari.

Born in 1950, and tragically passing away in 2001 in a car accident, Eskandari dynamically participated in numerous operations, notably during the Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980. Among the most significant was the Liberation of Khorramshahr, the operation known as "H-3," and the Baghdad Operation.

Operation H-3 stands out as one of the world's largest and most complex aerial operations, in which eight Iranian Phantom aircraft penetrated 1,000 kilometers into the westernmost point of Iraq, bombing Iraqi airbases near the Jordanian border and returning safely.

Published by Iran Publications, the 496-page book features eight interviews and roundtable discussions with Eskandari's comrades. Farajollah Baratpour, Ali-Akbar Zamani, Mahmoud Zarrabi, Esmaeil Omidi, Rouhollah Abutale-



● SAJJAD SAFARI/IRAN DAILY



His abilities, and flying skills were remarkable and courageous. He possessed all the qualities a fighter pilot should have.

bi, Fereidoun Samadi, Nasser Baqeri, Mohammad-Reza Qarebaqi, Asghar Shafiei, and Mohammad-Reza Maleki, all former Air Force pilots during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), share various aspects of life and different operations of this heroic Air Force figure.

The common theme in these recounted memories, as expressed by the program's attendees, was the depiction of Eskandari's courage, chivalrous spirit, and love for Iran.

Zarrabi, who died a few months before the book's release, men-

tioned in one of these interviews, "Mahmoud made no claims. He simply said, 'I am an Iranian soldier.' His abilities, and flying skills were remarkable and courageous. He possessed all the qualities a fighter pilot should have."

Sadeq Vafaei, who interviewed people who knew Eskandari, emphasized in his remarks the extensive discussions and side studies about Eskandari, highlighting his exceptional patriotism and devotion to Iran.

Amir Baratpour, another guest at the book unveiling ceremony, briefly addressed the initial mili-

tary imbalance between Iran and Iraq at the start of the war.

He underscored the significance of the Air Force throughout the conflict, especially in the war's early stages, stating that without the aerial skills displayed by Iranian forces, the Iraqi forces could have conquered at least Khuzestan Province.

As a former commander during Eskandari's tenure, Baratpour concluded by sharing personal memories of trusting difficult operations to Eskandari, confident in his ability to perform them in the best possible way.

Blood reserves double, lasting eight days in Iran



Social Desk

The blood reserves in the country have doubled, increasing from four to eight days, said the CEO of the Blood Transfusion Organization.

According to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, the improvement is attributed to the implementation of molecular screening tests capable of detecting viral factors such as HIV in less than three to four days, IRNA reported.

Jamali stated, "We have successfully met 100% of the country's blood and its re-

lated product needs, eliminating any shortages."

The CEO highlighted that the Blood Transfusion Organization of Iran handles an annual influx of 2.7 million visitors, with 2.22 million individuals donating blood last Iranian year.

Jamali emphasized, "Blood donation is a charitable and humanitarian act, and it is our duty to facilitate blood donation conditions across the country."

He added, "Currently, the country's blood reserves exceed eight days, a significant improvement from the previous three to

four days. The recent terrorist attack in Kerman serves as evidence to provincial self-sufficiency as the blood reserves of that province alone proved effective, although we also sent O-negative blood reserves from other provinces."

Jamali assured that continuous field visits are conducted to all blood donation centers nationwide to address any problems.

He noted, "Blood donation indices in Iran are comparable to advanced countries; last year, we achieved the top ranking in blood health in Asia."

Iran registers over 29,000 multiple births in nine-month period

Social Desk

The National Organization for Civil Registration announced that there were over 29,000 multiple births in the country in a nine-month period, from March 21 to December 21, 2023 (first nine months of the Iranian year). The provinces of Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, and Khuzestan recorded the highest number of multiple births.

According to the data released by the country's Civil Regis-

tration Organization, a total of 29,728 cases of multiple births were registered, of which 28,148 were twins, 1,506 triplets, 64 quadruplets, and 10 quintuplets, IRNA wrote.

The registration report emphasized that approximately 7.3% of the births in the nine-month period were multiple births. Tehran Province had the highest number of multiple births, with 4,318 cases, followed by Khorasan Razavi, with 2,622, and Khuzestan, with 2,351.

Furthermore, the organization's report indicated that during the nine-month period, the highest number of births, totaling 296,886 infants, belonged to the second-born children. The distribution of births by birth order was 4.36% for the first child, 9.38% for the second child, 6.17% for the third child, 1.5% for the fourth child, and 2% for the fifth child.

In the last Iranian year, there were 38,321 multiple births in the country. Tehran had the

highest number, with 6,093 cases, followed by Khorasan Razavi with 3,096, Khuzestan with 2,864, and Isfahan with 2,121 cases.

Two years ago, a total of 18,205 twins, 602 triplets, and 25 quadruplets were registered in the Civil Registration Organization. Tehran Province led with 2,918 cases of twins, while Tehran and Khorasan Razavi had the highest number of triplets. Golestan Province held the record for the highest number of quintuplets.

