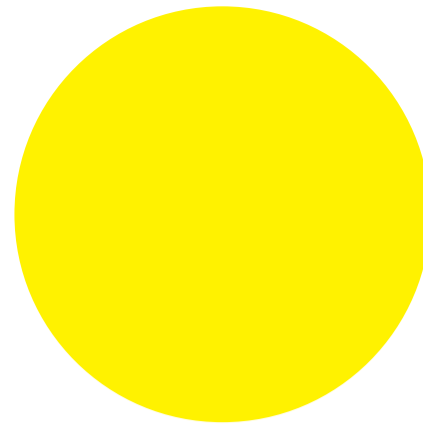


Leader hails Iranian businesspeople for offsetting sanctions

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Iran Daily

62607571900044 irandaily.ir newspaper.irandaily.ir IranDailyWeb

Vol. 7498 Wednesday, January 31, 2024 Bahman 11, 1402 Rajab 19, 1445 100,000 rials 8 pages

Israeli genocide in proper context The West with gloves off

EDITORIAL

Merely hours after the interim ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Friday, which found that Israel could potentially be committing genocide and demanded that it take action to prevent genocidal violence by its armed forces, "prevent and punish" incitement to genocide, and ensure increased humanitarian aid to Gaza, several countries including the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and a few others decided to suspend their financial aid to The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), an organization that supports an estimated two million people.

When it comes to the true intentions of Israel's allies, there is no act as revealing as their immediate, almost retaliatory response to ICJ, which exposed what they have worked so assiduously to conceal: The undeniable fact that US imperialism will not adhere to any rules except its own. This brings to mind the famous words of Ramsey Clark, former US attorney general, who stated, "The greatest crime since World War II has been US foreign policy." To maintain its hegemony, the West, spearheaded by the US, is making unrestrained efforts to assert its agenda and provide unwavering support to Israel until the very end.

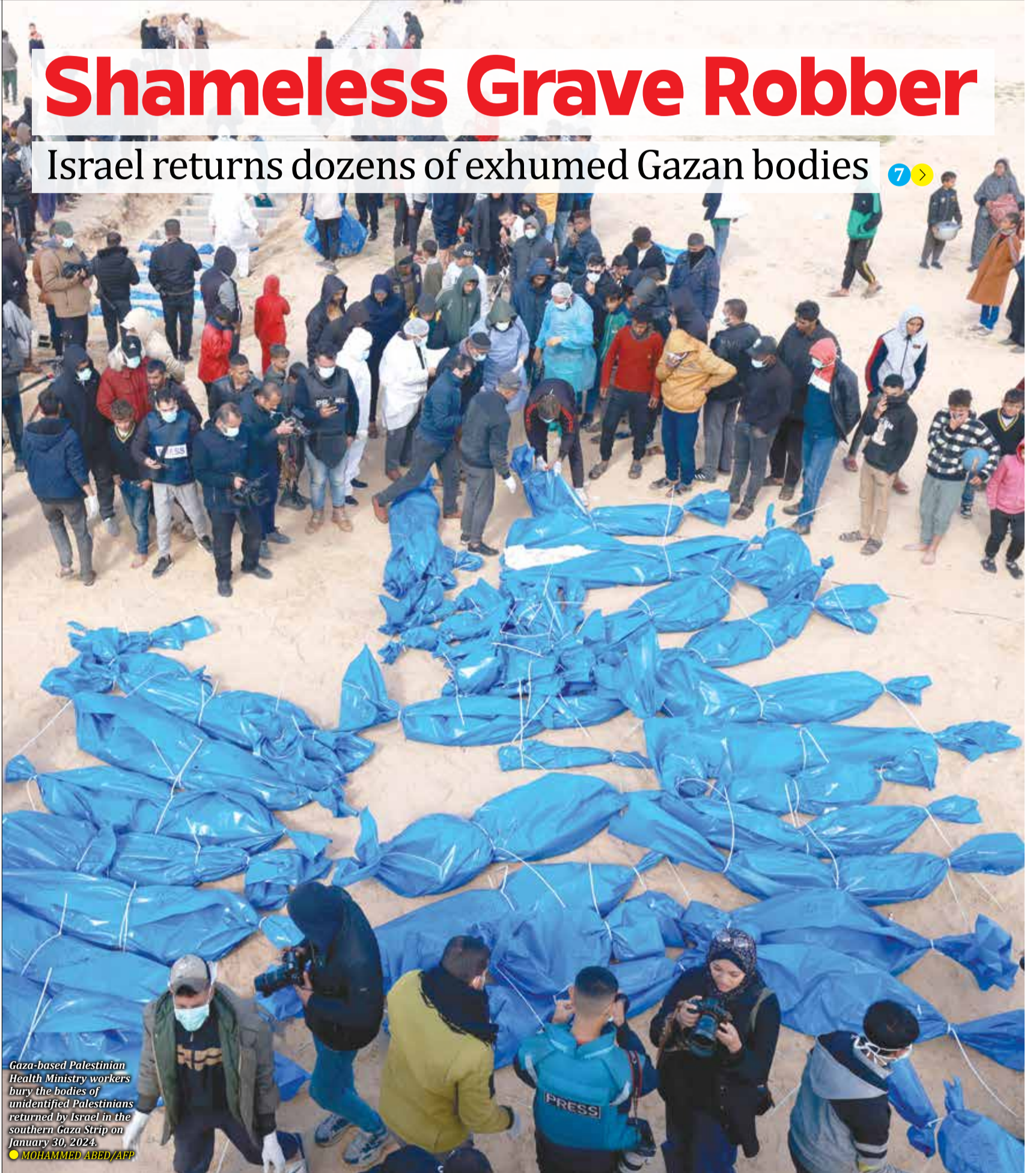
Hereafter, let us make no mistake: This is not about the Jewish people, their right to exist, or self-defense. Nor is it about the Holocaust. The crux of the matter is that the US Empire maintains its outpost in the Middle East, which enables it to police one of the most strategically significant regions in the world. By greenlighting and facilitating such a massive act of genocide, and by opposing a world that demands a cease-fire, the US and its allies are paying the price to safeguard this strategic outpost.

Now, as the darkest hours of the Palestinian people promise a new dawn, Western liberal democracy seems to be resting on its deathbed. By disregarding public opinion and avoiding any public vote, the corrupt political elite of the Western world reveal their true colors. They do not care one bit about human rights or democracy. They are only concerned with the profits they could amass through maintaining a global alignment with their self-serving agenda.

Shameless Grave Robber

Israel returns dozens of exhumed Gazan bodies

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Gaza-based Palestinian Health Ministry workers bury the bodies of unidentified Palestinians returned by Israel in the southern Gaza Strip on January 30, 2024. MOHAMMED ABED/AFP



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Tehran, Ankara sign MoU to hold renewable energy events

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization of Iran (SATBA) and the Turkish EFOR Company, aimed at holding specialized exhibitions and events in the field of renewable energies.

The MoU was inked by Director General of the International Affairs Office of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization of Iran Masoud Rezaei and CEO of the Turkish EFOR Company for Strategic Affairs Gary Gross to expand international cooperation, IRNA reported. During a meeting earlier, the two sides emphasized the interaction and cooperation of officials of the two countries on holding exhibitions jointly and seizing the opportunity of investing as a joint venture.

EFOR Company is one of the organizers of an exhibition on clean energy technologies in Turkey's Izmir city, entitled "WENERGY Clean Energy Expo," which will be held in Ankara in late May 2024, with the participation of leading international companies working in the fields of renewable energy, electricity efficiency, electric transportation, storage and smart electricity grids.

The company has invited Iranian firms to take part in the exhibition.

Leader hails Iranian businesspeople for offsetting sanctions

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei praised the Iranian people engaged in the economy for turning the foreign sanctions into opportunities in some sectors.

A large group of Iranian producers and those active in the economy met with Ayatollah Khamenei in Tehran on Tuesday, reported Tasnim News Agency.

During the meeting, the Leader referred to the fully effective capacity and capability of the private sector to achieve macro-economic goals. He emphasized the importance of government support in terms of tackling obstacles in the business environment, and highlighted the responsibility of the private sector as crucial factors for improving the overall situation and driving substantial progress in the country.

After hearing the words of 12 individuals who were active in the manufacturing field, the Leader called for the government's serious follow-up to fulfill the demands raised by manufacturers.

Ayatollah Khamenei also pointed to the Domestic Production Capabilities exhibition that he visited a day earlier, describing it as captivating and exceptional.

"We can introduce this ex-



A group of Iranian industry owners meet with Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran on January 30, 2024.

● khamenei.ir

hibition as an illustration of the country's scientific and technological prowess," the Leader said.

While referring to limiting issues such as sanctions, Ayatollah Khamenei noted, "The effort and progress of the private sector, despite such obstacles, makes one hopeful that this sector is able to propel Iran towards the desired growth outlined in the seventh five-year plan, with an eight percent (economic) growth." The Leader also considered "innovation" to be a clear reality seen in yesterday's exhibition and today's meeting. "Innovation is an indication of an elite workforce, and having such a valuable workforce will serve as a reliable backing in solving major issues, traversing difficult paths, and propelling Iran to achieve excellence."

The Leader considered the sense of responsibility of both the government and those active in the economic sector as necessary in order to effectively utilize the potential of the nation's capital.



"The responsibility of the government is generally aimed at removing obstacles and improving the business environment," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei stated that the government's supervision of the private sector is essential and should not be disregarded, emphasizing, "What we negate is government interference; otherwise, we believe that government monitoring is necessary." The Leader also acknowledged that the support

provided by governments worldwide plays a pivotal role in the success of prominent corporations and businesses, Khamenei reported.

"A crucial way for governments to assist the private sector is by facilitating the growth of exports and foreign markets. In light of this, there is a need to strengthen economic diplomacy through collaborative efforts between the government and the private sector," he said. Speaking about the pres-

ence of foreign problems such as sanctions and hostilities of ill-wishers, the Leader said, "While these situations are undoubtedly detrimental and pose problems for the country, they can also be used as opportunities, in the same way that our youth took advantage of these circumstances, leading to the acquisition of military weapons and remarkable scientific accomplishments such as advancements in the field of space and the success-

ful launch of satellites like the Soraya satellite. If it were not for the sanctions, we would not have had these achievements today."

The Leader concluded, "If the private sector is effectively managed and adequately supported, Iran's significant progress would become a tangible reality due to its great potential, abundant natural wealth, elite workforce and the good relationship that exists between the government and the people."

Iranian firms dredging Russia's Volga River: PMO

The chief executive of the Iranian Ports and Maritime Organization (MPO) said Iranian companies are implementing the dredging operations in Russia's Volga River. Ali Akbar Safaei also described the construction operation of gantry crane as one of the strategic port equipment in the country, and noted that the revenues of the organization will witness a significant hike in the current Iranian year (started March 21, 2023) compared to a year earlier, reported IRNA. Regarding the latest situation of talks with India on a

long-term investment contract at Chabahar port, the deputy minister of roads said India's ports and shipping minister will soon visit Iran to clinch a contract for the development of the port. India's high-ranking officials are determined to play a key role in the development of Chabahar port, Safaei underlined.

The official pointed to the port equipment and machinery needed to be imported to Chabahar port by India, and added, "Under the contract, the gantry crane will be imported by the Indian



side into Chabahar port." Meanwhile, construction of the strategic port equipment by Iranian manufacturers is under the finalization stage, he said, adding that giant investment has been made

in President Ebrahim Raisi's administration in the field of supplying relevant port equipment, as the capacity of ports has thus far increased from 270 tons to 290 tons."

Saudi Arabia halts plan to raise production capacity

Saudi Arabia has ordered energy giant Aramco to maintain its oil production capacity at 12 million barrels per day, abandoning a planned increase, the firm said on Tuesday.

"Aramco announces that it has received a directive from the ministry of energy to maintain its maximum sustainable capacity (MSC) at 12 million barrels per day" instead of ramping it up to 13 million bpd, the firm said in a statement,

AFP reported. "The company will update its capital spending guidance when its full-year 2023 results are announced in March."

Riyadh announced the planned production capacity increase in October 2021, the same month it pledged to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2060 - drawing intense scepticism from environmental activists. Aramco said it planned to achieve production capacity

of 13 million bpd by 2027. The decision to drop the target "suggests Riyadh is not very confident that the world will need so much additional capacity and that the investment required to get to and maintain 13 million bpd is better spent elsewhere," said Jamie Ingram, senior editor at the Middle East Economic Survey. Aramco has pledged to achieve "operational net-zero" carbon emissions by 2050.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Tender invitation

Invitation to public tender for Heat Transfer Fluid // 35000 LT

Tabriz petrochemical company intends to procure its required quantity of Heat Transfer Fluid for Polystyrene production plant from reputable & reliable producer and supplier of said product.

Interested suppliers should submit their request to below email in order to get tender documents until: **Feb 07.2024**

Deadline for submission of offers for tender is: Feb.20.2024

Email: n.ahmadian@tpco.ir Phone No.: +98-41-34217426

Tender	No	Quantity
Heat Transfer Fluid	PVS-0241056	35000 LT

Public Relations of Tabriz Petrochemical Company (Public Stock)

Published : January 31, 2024

Iranshahr, a city full of attractions in Sistan and Baluchestan Province



Iranica Desk

Iranshahr, situated in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, is bordered by Khash and Zahedan to the north, Chabahar to the south, Bam, Bampur, and Fanouj to the west, and Saravan and Zabol to the east. Additionally, it is close to Irandegan to the northeast, Rask and Pishin

to the southeast, Nikshahr, Qasr-e Qand, and Lashar districts to the southwest, and Delgan to the northwest.

At an elevation of 591 meters above sea level, Iranshahr experiences an average annual temperature of 32°C and an average annual rainfall of 1.53mm, characteristic of its warm and dry desert climate. The best times to visit are during the spring, autumn, and winter.

The city's main agricultural prod-

ucts include grains, while active industries encompass livestock and poultry farming, fish farming, as well as the production of milk, red meat, chicken meat, and honey. Iranshahr is also home to major mines, such as lime, marble, manganese, and talc, and hosts the combined-cycle power plant, a significant energy source for the country.

Previously known as Pareh or Pahreh, Iranshahr showcases remnants of ancient human settlements. Notably, the city features numerous castles, underscoring its historical significance and defensive role in Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

Key attractions in Iranshahr and its vicinity

- Nasseri Castle, constructed during the Qajar period
- Bampur Castle, dating back to the Parthian and Sassanid eras
- Espidej Cemetery, an ancient site dating back 5,000 years
- Molla Soleiman Cave, a historical site in Lashar District
- Bampur River, originating from the highlands of Karvandar District

- Bazman Hot Springs, located in Bazman village
- Maksan Hot Springs, situated 110km northwest of Iranshahr
- Katookan Mineral Spring, known for its high mineral water content
- Daman River, a natural attraction with water all year round, located near Chabahar-Zahedan transit road

● wikipedia.org



Bazman Hot Springs
● kojara.com



Nasseri Castle
● visitiran.ir

Development of health tourism a strategic priority in Mazandaran Province

Iranica Desk

The promotion of health tourism is considered a top priority by senior officials in Mazandaran Province for the current Iranian year, which began on March 21, 2023. This sector is currently undergoing significant development as evidenced by recent data. In April 2023, the former director general of Mazandaran Province's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization emphasized improving the health and medical tourism sector as the primary strategy adopted by the organization in the current year.

The province's unique natural resources and health care infrastructure make it an ideal destination for health and medical tourists. The province's Governor General Seyyed Mahmoud Hosseinipour also highlighted the significant efforts being made to develop health and medical tourism in the northern part of the country, emphasizing its importance as an integral part of the province's overall tourism sector. In response to the need for developing the sector, several actions have been taken, including the operation of medical centers in cities such as Babol, Sari, and Nowshahr. These centers, both specialized and non-specialized, offer services in cosmeticsurgery, ophthalmology, and

open-heart surgery to both domestic and foreign tourists, particularly those from the Persian Gulf littoral states.

The deputy chancellor of the Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences has announced that eight hospitals in the province are equipped to admit foreign health tourists. Both public and private hospitals are actively preparing to receive medical tourists.

Kazem Mahmoudi also specified that Khatam Hospital in Behshahr specializes in ophthalmology, Fatemeh Zahra

(PBUH) Hospital in Sari in heart disease, Sari's Imam Khomeini (RA) Hospital in oncology and infertility, and Ramsar and Chalus hospitals are ready to admit foreign patients in the fields of surgery and gastroenterology.

Emphasizing the high capacity of medical services, Hosseinipour stated: "We have specialist physicians in this field, which presents a great opportunity that we should capitalize on."

Hossein Izadi, the director general of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and

Handicrafts Organization of Mazandaran Province, also announced, "A strategic committee has been established for health tourism in the province."

He further explained, "The primary focus of the committee is to streamline health tourism in the province in order to achieve tourism goals, and this matter has been given significant consideration and emphasis."

Taking into account the emphasis made by the minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, as well

as the governor general of Mazandaran Province, he said, "Regarding its significant potential, investors select this province for making investments." He also emphasized the need for increased communication between tour and travel agencies, universities of medical sciences, medical centers, and hospitals in the province to ensure that both parties can benefit from each other's activities and capacities.

He continued, "With the establishment of the strategic committee for health tourism in Mazandaran Province and the selection of members, efforts have been made to include a representative from tour and travel agencies, private and public hospitals in this committee." Izadi said, "Out of 198 travel agencies active in Mazandaran Province, 12 have received licenses to accept health tourists, and six others are in the process." He further added that 10 hospitals in Mazandaran Province have received the IPD license, allowing them to engage in health tourism activities.

The IPD license stands for International Patient Department. Obtaining this license is mandatory for hospitals and clinics intending to admit international patients. In fact, it can be said that only hospitals that have obtained the IPD license can engage in medical tourism activities.



● denjila.ir



● asmaseir.com

Time is ripe for the US to leave

By Javad
Mohammad Ali
Staff writer

OPINION

Finally, the United States was forced to sit down with Iraq to discuss the end of the provocative presence of its troops in the Arab country. The two countries began their first round of formal talks on Saturday to wind down the mission of a US-led military coalition formed years ago to eradicate the Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group. However, the US claims that will not involve a US withdrawal from Iraq.



US Army paratroopers prepare to board an aircraft bound for the US Central Command area of operations from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, US, on January 4, 2020.
● REUTERS

Baghdad says the group is defeated and the alliance's job is over in the country. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani has recently said that Daesh "is no longer a danger for the Iraqi state, and our armed forces are capable of fully assuming the maintenance of security and stability." But in fact, the US assassination of Abu-Taqwa al-Saedi earlier this month, the leader of Harakat al-Nujaba, that is technically a part of Iraq's security forces, has prompted Iraqi officials to renew their calls for the long-awaited withdrawal of US troops from the country. The 2020 US assassination of senior Iranian military commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and their companions in Baghdad actually triggered the process of expulsion of US troops from Iraq and perhaps from the region. Soon afterwards, the Iraqi Parliament voted on a resolution to end the US military presence in Iraq – a goal long sought by many regional countries including Iraq's eastern neighbor, Iran. Experts believe that a potential withdrawal of US troops would be a strategic victory for its arch-foe Iran. Tehran believes that regional countries are capable of guaran-

teeing the security of their region without US help. False claims In early 2003, the US invaded Iraq under the later debunked pretext that the regime of Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. However, the alleged weapons of mass destruction were never found, while hundreds of thousands of innocent lives perished in the prolonged war and conflict. US combat forces left the country in 2011, but thousands of troops returned in 2014 on the pretext of helping Baghdad defeat the Daesh terrorist group. During those years the US forces conducted many serious crimes. They subjected Iraqi detainees in Abu Ghraib and other detention sites to torture, including sexual abuse and humiliation, wrongly killed protesters, and hired private military contractors who killed and injured dozens of Iraqi civilians. These inhumane actions gradually strengthened anti-US sentiment among the Iraqi people and led to the formation of resistance groups, which have been carrying out strikes on US troops to force them out of Iraq. However, the hatred towards the US, which has grown in the region in the wake of Washington's unwavering support for the Israeli regime's genocidal acts in the

Gaza Strip, has gained momentum. The US military and financial support for Israel, which has so far killed more than 26,000 Palestinians in nearly four months, has infuriated people in the region. In fact, the ongoing Israeli onslaught on Gaza has presented itself as an opportunity for the regional countries to expel the US from the region. Resistance groups have stepped

up their attacks on the US and Israeli targets in Iraq and elsewhere in the region in response to the massacre of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. According to the Pentagon, US troops in Iraq and Syria have been attacked over 150 times since mid-October. The most recent attack claimed the lives of three American soldiers in Jordan. Washington claims that the tim-

ing of negotiations with Baghdad isn't related to the attacks on its forces.

Advisory role?

The US military declared the end of its combat mission in Iraq in December 2021, but it still maintains a number of troops there under the guise of playing an advisory role. There are roughly 2,500 US troops in Iraq and about 900 in

Syria as part of the anti-Daesh coalition formed in 2014 – the year the terrorist group overran around a third of Iraq. In Syria, the US military has deployed forces and equipment in the northeast of the country, with the Pentagon claiming that the deployment is aimed at preventing the oilfields in the area from falling into the hands of Daesh terrorists. Damascus, however, says the deployment is aimed at plundering the country's rich mineral resources and to destabilize the country.

Not welcome in Syria, either

Syria has repeatedly urged the US, which supported militants and terrorists during the war in the country, to withdraw its troops illegally stationed in the northeast of the country. There are also conflicting reports that the Pentagon has a plan for Syria's Kurdish militia to cooperate with the Syrian government against Daesh, indicating that the US has plans to eventually withdraw from Syria. However, a senior US official has told CNN that the White House is not considering a withdrawal of forces from Syria. We should wait and see if these countries would be able to expel the US from their countries or not.



Wounded US personnel get flown from Iraq to Ramstein, Germany, for medical treatment in February 2007.
● US AIR FORCE

US troops would not be targets if they left unwelcome region

OPINION

MORNING STAR – The killing of three US soldiers along the Jordan-Syria border is inseparable from the war in Gaza. It risks a spiralling Middle East war, a risk heightened by the reflex blaming of Iran and the clamour for revenge driven by hawkish US politicians in an election year. Attacks on US forces will always be presented in mass media as unprovoked. British politicians too will depict them as acts of illegal terrorism that need to be punished to shore up the “international rules-based order”. We should therefore be clear: US troops would not be under attack in the Middle East if they were not stationed in the Middle East, often against the wishes of the host countries.

Sunday’s attack was launched by a group called the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. US troops in Iraq have come under fire dozens of times since Israel’s invasion of Gaza began.

What won’t get a mention in most media reports is that the Iraqi government has told them to leave. Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said earlier this month that their “destabilising” presence incited spillover attacks from the Gaza war that could escalate into a new civil war in the long-suffering country.

It’s not even the first time. The Iraqi parliament voted to expel all US troops more than four years ago after the US illegally murdered Iranian general Qassim Soleimani while he was visiting Iraq as its government’s guest. Stationing your troops in a country against its wishes is not upholding an “international rules-based order” — it is an act of contempt for international law.

Tower 22, where the three US soldiers were killed, is close to the intersection of Jordan, Syria, and Iraq and is described as a “critical logistical base for US forces in Syria”. US forces are certainly not in Syria at its government’s invitation. Officially, 900 troops remain there to prevent a revival of the Islamic State terror group.

Ex-president Donald Trump was more honest when he admitted they were there “only for the oil,” and Syrian authorities have complained that the US illegally exports about 80 percent of the country’s oil output through contracts signed with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in the northeast.

It is true that Iran has links to many armed groups in the region, with the spread of Iran-backed militias in Iraq one of the many unintended consequences of Britain and the US’s unprovoked attack on the latter.

But if the Middle East and North Africa have been flooded with weapons, it is not primarily by Iran. The wanton destruction of Libya by NATO powers in 2010–11 saw groups seize stockpiles of weapons and ammo that were then sold abroad.

The US threw lorryloads of armaments into the Syrian war, admitting that many of the recipients ended up aligning with ISIS. At the weekend, the *New York Times* reported that a fair proportion of Hamas’s arsenal in Gaza is actually Israeli in origin.

The way to stop attacks like this prompting a downward spiral is to work for peace.

Israel’s allies need to cut off the weapons and logistical support enabling its Gaza genocide, which is the cause of the current escalation in attacks on Western forces and Israel-linked shipping.

The US should be pressed to respect international law and withdraw its troops from Iraq and Syria, where they are not welcome.

And we should call time on an arms trade that spreads murder and mayhem throughout the world, routinely blowing up in the faces of the countries that provide these arms to a staggering array of customers in pursuit of short-term outcomes in conflicts like those in Libya or Syria, without thought of what may follow.



The map shows the strategic location of the US military base known as Tower 22 in northeastern Jordan near the Syrian and Iraqi borders that was hit by a drone strike on January 28, 2024, killing three American soldiers and injuring more than 40 others.

Bring American forces home from Iraq and Syria now



By Paul R. Pillar
Scholar

OPINION

The drone attack on Sunday that killed three US service members at an outpost in Jordan near the Syria border is more likely to increase rather than decrease US military involvement in the region.

This is unfortunate, and doubly so coming at a time when the Biden administration was showing signs of considering a withdrawal of the 900 US troops in Syria and 2,500 in Iraq. Just last week, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin intimated that a joint US-Iraqi review might lead to a drawdown of at least some of the troops in Iraq. Other reporting points to discussions within the administration about possibly removing the troops now in Syria. It is unclear why the administration chose this time to consider what was already a long-overdue withdrawal of these troops. The answer probably involves the upsurge in regional violence stemming from Israel’s devastating assault on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and associated anger against the United States for its backing of Israel. Since the Israeli assault began, US military installations in Iraq have been attacked more than 60 times and those in Syria more than 90 times.

The attacks underscore how much these residual US deployments have entailed costs and risks far out of proportion to any positive gains they can achieve. They have been sitting-duck targets within easy reach of militias and other elements wishing to make a violent anti-US statement. Even without deaths, US service members have paid a price, such as in the form of traumatic brain injuries from missile attacks.

The now-familiar tit-for-tat sequence in which American airstrikes against militias in Iraq or Syria alternate with more militia attacks on the US installations illustrates a perverse form of mission creep. Whatever the original mission of the US troop presence itself becomes the main concern. The tit-for-tats also carry the risk of escalation into a larger conflict.

This weekend’s attack just across the border in Jordan is likely to become part of the same risk-laden sequence. A White House statement promised to “hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner our choosing”.

This will lead the administration to shelve for the time being any ideas it had about bringing home the troops — out of fear of showing weakness amid the inevitable criticism from domestic political opponents. The better course would be to interpret the attack as one more demonstration of how the troop presence in Syria and Iraq represents a needless vulnerability for the US that ought to be ended sooner rather than later.

The official rationale for the presence on both those countries is to prevent a rise of the group known as Daesh or ISIS. But the motivations have always involved more than that. The presence in Iraq is, in some respects, a legacy of the US war begun there in 2003, which has imparted the sense of ownership that often follows a large-scale military intervention. The fixation with Iran and a desire to match Iranian presence and influence in these countries have constituted another motivation. As for ISIS, although it has shown resilience, it is nowhere near what it was in 2014 when



A US soldier (L) stands near a military vehicle during a patrol near the Syrian-Turkish border in Syria’s northeastern Hasakah province on August 21, 2022.

DELIL SOULEIMAN/AFP

it ruled a de facto mini-state across much of western Iraq and northeastern Syria. If the group ever were to begin approaching that status again, much more than the small US contingents in Syria and Iraq would be needed to counter it. To those who might argue that ISIS already is resurgent, one is entitled to ask exactly what good the presence of those contingents is doing in keeping ISIS down.

With regard to any armed group, the foremost US concern ought to be not how the group plays in some local conflict but rather the risk of it striking US interests, either at home or abroad. In that regard, the most relevant fact, repeatedly demonstrated with other groups in other places, is that anger at a foreign military presence is one of the chief motivations for attacks.

To the extent that ISIS has been kept down, this is partly due to popular opposition in Iraq and Syria to the group’s brutal methods that it displayed when it had its mini-state. It is

partly due to the efforts of security forces in those two countries. And it is partly due to the efforts of the foreign state most extensively involved in those countries — Iran. Iran is very much an enemy of ISIS. It has been a victim of highly lethal ISIS attacks within Iran, including bombings in the heart of Tehran in 2017 and, earlier this month, an attack on a memorial ceremony in the city of Kerman that killed nearly 100 Iranians. Iran was a major player in the earlier efforts to undo the ISIS mini-state.

Combating ISIS is a shared interest of Iran and the United States, as illustrated by the United States allegedly sharing — quite properly, in conformity with the duty to warn — information about the planned ISIS attack in Kerman. It would be in US interests to have Iran continue to do the heavy lifting in holding down ISIS — and to have Iran, not the United States, risk any resulting reprisals.

The article first appeared on *Responsible Statecraft*.

AFC Asian Cup:

Iran has to be wary as underdog Syria looks to continue fairytale run

By Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

Three-time champion Iran will be looking to continue its quest for a first AFC Asian Cup trophy in nearly five decades in the round of 16 of the continent's major international tournament today.

Standing between the Asian powerhouse and a showdown with Japan or Bahrain – which will square off earlier today – in the quarterfinals is Syria, which was inspired by a high-profile Argentinian head coach in Hector Cuper for a first-ever progress into the knockout phase of the tournament.

A trademark combination between Roma striker Sardar Azmoun and Porto frontman Mahdi Taremi saw the latter find the back of the net twice as Iran defeated the United Arab Emirates 2-1 for a clean sweep of group victories – a feat only achieved by Qatar and Iraq.

In securing a place among the four best third-placed teams across the six groups, Syria had Omar Khrubin to thank for a historic night as the veteran striker came off the bench to score his team's sole goal in three outings for a 1-0 victory over India last time out.

All the facts and figures as well as the history of the two sides' head-to-head make Iran the ultimate favorite to win today's encounter but the outcome of the tournament so far suggest anything but an easy test for Amir Qalenoee's men as football fans in the continent have been treated to some shock results in Qatar.

Japan's 2-1 loss to Iraq and South Korea's failure to finish atop the



● AFC

group, followed by surprise last-16 wins for Tajikistan and Jordan, mean Qalenoee will have to make sure his men will take nothing for granted when stepping onto the pitch in Doha's Abdullah bin Khalifa Stadium.

While Iran's performance has been just decent amidst under-par displays by the pretournament favorites, the backline looked vulnerable every time the team was disposed of the ball in

its own half – even against minnow opponents in Palestine and Hong Kong – and a repeat of the incident could cost Qalenoee's side dearly against the prolific Khrubin – a former Asian Player of the Year who has fond memories of playing against Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand, bagging five goals in Al Hilal's 6-2 aggregate victory over Persepolis in the AFC Champions League semifinals seven years ago – not

to mention Iran will be without center-backs Hossein Kan'ani and Majid Hosseini through suspension and injury, as well as full-back Sadeq Moharrami, who will be out for months after suffering a torn ligament against the UAE. For all the lack of goals in the group phase, Cuper will be looking to build on his team's solid performance in the back – which saw Syria concede only once in a defeat by Australia while keeping

a clean sheet against Uzbekistan – when facing Azmoun and Taremi, probably the deadliest duo in the Asian football.

"I believe it is going to be one of our toughest games in the tournament as Syria has a top coach on the bench and enjoys a well-organized backline. Mr. Cuper has been a great coach in forming a solid defensive structure in his teams as he did with Valencia and Inter," Qalenoee said in Tuesday's

press conference, adding: "We have to take lessons from our mistakes in the previous games and stay focused throughout the contest."

Qalenoee said he has been trying to change the team's defensive approach and mindset – which was built under former coach Carlos Queiroz during his nine-year spell in charge – since he took the role less than a year ago. "Individual errors saw us concede two goals in the group stage, but we will still play an attack-minded football against Syria as we want our fans to enjoy watching their team," added Qalenoee.

"I've always told my players to showcase their individual skills on the pitch, specially in the final third, as dribbling and technical flair are the main features of the Iranian football."

Cuper might be best remembered by being an unfortunate runner-up when his Valencia team fell to defeats against European heavyweights Real Madrid and Bayern Munich in back-to-back UEFA Champions League finals in the early 2000s, but the Argentine knows an underdog victory today will go down as one of the biggest achievements in his 30-year managerial career.

If you have any doubt about what the fairytale run in Qatar means to war-ravaged Syrians – whose team includes players who have learned their trades overseas as a result of years of migration caused by the domestic conflict – just watch the viral footage of the beIN SPORTS reporter and Cuper's translator bursting into tears and hugging each other during an interview with the Argentinian coach after the historic victory over India.

Esteghlal fullback Yamga out for rest of the season with eye injury

Sports Desk

Esteghlal fullback Kevin Yamga's season has come to a premature ending after the Frenchman suffered an eye injury during a training session, the Persian Gulf Pro League club's head coach Javad Nekounam confirmed on Monday.

The career-threatening injury came after Yamga's collision with teammate Omid Hamedifar weeks ago before he underwent several surgeries on his left eye.

Yet to have his sight fully restored, the versatile right-back played his part in helping the Tehran Blues lead the Iranian top-flight table before the Asian Cup pause, bagging four goals in 15 appearances – including a last-gasp equalizer from the spot against Persepolis in the Tehran Derby.

Esteghlal is one point clear of Sepahan on top the league table, with Persepolis in third, two points adrift of its city rival.

Yamga's injury comes as a massive blow for Nekounam, who is frustrated by his team's lack of activity in the midseason transfer window.



● INSTAGRAM

The club's only signing has seen Brazilian center-back rejoin after parting ways with the Blues at the end of the previous campaign, while Esteghlal is reportedly in advanced talks with Golgozar Sirjan to sign Mahdi Tikdari as a replacement for Yamga.

Meanwhile, Saeid Mehri, who terminated his contract with Esteghlal two weeks ago, was unveiled as a new midfielder at the Cypriot First Division leader APOEL Nicosia, where he will reunite with the Blues' former Portuguese head coach Ricardo Sá Pinto.

Kremlin condemns doping ban on Olympic figure skater

REUTERS – The Kremlin on Tuesday condemned a doping ban on teenage figure skater Kamila Valieva and the stripping of an Olympic gold medal from her and her team mates, saying Russia would try to contest the decisions.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) on Monday banned Valieva for four years for doping, a decision that also took away the Russian Olympic Committee's gold medal in the team event at the 2022 Beijing Winter Games.

"We do not agree with these decisions – neither with the decision of the court, nor with the decision of the (ice skating) federation. We don't accept them," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "If there are any opportunities to challenge and continue to defend the rights of our athletes, they must be mobilised to the end."

Valieva tested positive for the banned substance trimetazidine, which prevents angina, at the Russian national championships in December 2021. The result was made known only after she competed in the team event in Beijing. Her team has said the positive test could have been due to a mix-up with her grandfather's heart medication.



● SKY SPORTS

But the CAS panel determined there had been no scope for Valieva, who was 15 at the time of the offence, to be treated with more leniency than an adult found to have committed an anti-doping rule violation. The doping charge against the young athlete stirred strong emotions in Russia at the time. Russia, and before it the Soviet

Union, have long regarded the Olympics as a chance to showcase the country as a winner on the global stage. But doping controversies in the past decade have soured Moscow's relations with the International Olympic Committee and forced its athletes to compete at successive Games without their national flag or anthem.

Iran denies involvement in attacks on US bases

International Desk

Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations has categorically rejected the US's "baseless" accusations of the involvement of Iran's Armed Forces in attacks on US positions in Iraq and Syria. In a letter to the UN Security Council's president on Monday, Amir Saeid Irvani said, "There is no group affiliated with Iran's Armed Forces, whether in Iraq, Syria, or elsewhere, that operates directly or indirectly under the control of the Islamic Republic of Iran or acts on its behalf." He added that Iran is not responsible for the actions of any individual or group in the region. US Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, in a letter to the Security Council on Friday, claimed that "militia groups affiliated with the Islamic Republic of Iran's Armed Forces" were involved in "actions against US personnel and facilities in Iraq and Syria". US military bases in Iraq and Syria

have been the target of resistance groups over the past years. The strikes have increased in recent months, especially after the Israeli regime launched a devastating aggression against the Gaza Strip in response to Hamas's October 7 attack on the occupied territories. Resistance groups say the strikes are in response to US support for the Israeli aggression which has claimed the lives of more than 26,000 people in the Palestinian territory. In the latest strike, three American troops were killed after a US base located on Jordan's border with Syria was targeted by drones on Sunday. More than 40 others were injured in the attack, according to Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh. The attack marked a significant escalation after roughly 165 attacks on US and coalition forces since October 17, further raising concerns over a broader conflict breaking out in the Middle East. "We do not seek another war.



This satellite photo shows a military base known as Tower 22 in northeastern Jordan, where three American troops were killed in a drone strike on January 28, 2024. **PLANET LABS PBC/AP**

We do not seek to escalate. But we will absolutely do what is required to protect ourselves ... and to respond appropriately to these attacks," US National Security spokesman John Kirby said on Monday. The Kremlin on Tuesday called for de-escalation of tensions in the Middle East after Washington vowed to respond to the attack in Jordan. "In our view, the overall level of tension is very alarming and, on the contrary, now is the time for steps to de-escalate tensions," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. China also reacted to the attack, warning against a "cycle of retaliation" in the Middle East. Beijing said Tuesday it had "noted reports of casualties caused by the



attack on a US military base". "We have also noted that Iran stated that it had nothing to do with the attack," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin

said. "We hope that all relevant parties will remain calm and restrained... in order to avoid falling into a vicious cycle of retaliation and prevent further escalation of regional tension," he added. "The situation in the Middle East is currently highly complex and sensitive," Wang said.

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Shameless grave robber

Israel returns dozens of exhumed Gazan bodies

WHO: UNRWA issue distraction from Gaza crisis

International Desk

The spokesman for the World Health Organization Christian Lindmeier called the row over the United Nations' Palestinian refugee agency "a distraction from what's really going on every day, every hour, every minute in Gaza".

His remarks came after Israel accused around a dozen staff of the main UN aid agency for Palestinians of taking part in the Hamas October 7 attack on the occupied territories. The issue has led to suspension of UNRWA funding by some Western nations.

"As important as this discussion is, let's not forget what the real issues are on the ground," said Lindmeier.

Russia on Tuesday also criticized the decision by several countries to suspend their funding, calling it a form of "collective punishment".

"What has happened and is happening is collective punishment, prohibited by international humanitarian law," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said. An investigation into accusations UNRWA staff were involved in the October 7 attack should not be replaced by "collective punishment" of the agency and Gazan people, he added.

UNRWA has fired several employees and promised a thorough investigation into the claims, which were not specified.

Bombardment continues

Deadly fighting and bombardment rocked Gaza on Tuesday as international mediators pushed for a new halt in the Israel's war on Gaza and a deal to release captives. Heavy Israeli strikes and urban combat across the besieged Gaza Strip killed 128 more people overnight, the health ministry in the Palestinian territory said on Tuesday.

The epicenter of fighting has been the southern city of Khan Yunis, where vast areas have been reduced to a muddy wasteland of bombed-out buildings. In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where

violence has surged since the start of the war, Israeli undercover troops raided a hospital in the northern city of Jenin, killing three men.

Some of the Israeli agents were dressed as medical staff and carried a wheelchair and baby carrier as props, according to officials and hospital CCTV footage released by the Ramallah-based Palestinian health ministry. Hamas said one of the three killed, Muhammad Jalannah, was a commander in its armed wing.

The Palestinian health ministry stressed that hospitals enjoy special protection under international law and urged the United Nations to help end Israel's "daily string of crimes... against our people and health centers".

In the latest efforts to broker a new truce, a meeting in Paris on Sunday between top US, Israeli, Egyptian and Qatari officials resulted in a proposed framework. Hamas confirmed on Tuesday that it had received the proposal, saying on its Telegram account that it was "in the process of examining it and delivering its response".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose office earlier also called the talks "constructive", on Tuesday ruled out releasing "thousands" of Palestinian prisoners as part of any deal to halt fighting in Gaza.

In southern Gaza, Palestinians buried dozens of bodies in a mass grave after officials said Israel returned remains it had exhumed from the territory. The Israeli military did not respond to a request to comment, although it has previously made remarks about exhuming bodies from Gaza graves in search of Israeli captives.

A second source at Gaza's ministry of religious affairs said Israel "stole them from Bani Suheila cemetery, east of Khan Yunis" around two weeks ago.

The government media office in Gaza accused Israel of removing organs from the bodies.

Hamas fighters took captive of 250 people, of whom Israel says around 132 remain in Gaza, including the bodies of at least 28 dead captives.

Iran summons British envoy to protest accusations



Iran's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday summoned the British ambassador to Tehran to protest against London's accusations against Iran. "Following the continuation of the British regime's accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran, Simon Shercliff, the British ambassador in Tehran, was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs... and was

informed of our country's strong protest", a ministry's statement said. The statement said this is a bitter irony that a country that is the founder and supporter of organized terrorist groups, drug trafficking, and criminal gangs level accusations against the Islamic Republic and its loyal forces who are on the front line of fighting against organized crimes.

Notice of tender for export sale No. Z/1402/19

Golgohar Mining and Industrial Company

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 70.000 metric tons of Pellet (%Fe:65.00) on basis of F.O.B at Barco Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: ww.geg.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 14:00 P.M. on 12. Feb.2024 to Golgohar complex in sirjan (50 km in shiraz road). Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 10:00 A.M. on 13.Feb.2024 at the office of the Seller.

Analysis %		
Min	65.00	Fe
Ave	1.2	FeO
Max	0.05	P
Max	0.01	S
Max	3.5	SiO2
Max	0.7	Al2O3
Max	0.9	CaO
Max	2.5	MgO
Ave 250		CCS(kg/p)
Min 90		8-16 mm%
Ave 5		-6 mm%
Max 3.8		A.1%
Min 95		T.1%
19-24		Prosity%
Min 90		Reducibility%

GOLGOHAR MINING & INDUSTRIAL CO.

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Min 95		T.1%
19-24		Prosity%
Min 90		Reducibility%

GOLGOHAR MINING & INDUSTRIAL CO.



Iran's Marashi Library to study Armenian manuscripts



The Ayatollah Marashi Najafi Library in Iran's Qom will start studying Armenian manuscripts as part of cooperation with Yerevan's Matenadaran.

A Matenadaran delegation recently visited the Ayatollah Marashi Najafi Library, the world's third largest Islamic library, and was received by the library's director Mahmoud Marashi Najafi, the son of its founder Ayatollah Marashi Najafi, armenpress.am reported.

During the meeting, the sides emphasized "the importance and willingness for cooperation, which will begin with the studies of Armenian manuscripts kept at the center," the Matenadaran Institute of Ancient Manuscripts said in a statement.



Over 5m foreign tourists visit Iran in 11-month period: UNWTO

The World Tourism Organization of the United Nations in its latest report said more than five million foreign tourists visited Iran in the first 11 months of 2023, registering a 42 percent growth compared to the same period a year earlier.

The international tourism body in a report revealed a boom in Iran's tourism industry in 2023, Tasnim news agency reported.

The report added that over 3.74 million foreign tourists had visited Iran from January to November 2022 and the number rose to more than 5 million in the first 11 months of 2023. The 42% growth in the arrival of foreign tourists to Iran in 2023 came as Iran's tourism industry experienced a significant slump during the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Only 880,000 foreign tourists had visited Iran in 2021, but the number grew to 4.11 million in 2022.

Cemetery dating back to Ilkhanid era discovered in NW Iran

Arts & Culture Desk

Archaeologists uncovered a cemetery dating back to the Ilkhanid period in Iran's northwestern city of Zanjan.

The discovery, made during a rescue excavation at the Marash Dam reservoir in Maneshan County,

revealed the remains of four individuals buried on a gypsum floor. The burials, believed to be placed inside wooden coffins based on evidence such as wood remains, nails, and corroded metal fittings, are part of an octagonal structure (possibly a tomb) and surrounding graveyard likely from the Ilkhanid era, according to artifacts like pottery and glazed bricks.

Shaghayegh Hoorshid, head of the archaeological team, reported that the excavation, began in the winter of 2014, focused on the No. 5 area of the Marash Dam reservoir. Hoorshid explained that the recent excavation at Area No. 5, conducted four years after the initial exploration, uncovered the remains of a stone and gypsum cemetery. The team also identified two large waste pits associated with a pottery kiln, containing over 16,000 pottery fragments, many of which were burnt, melted, and reshaped.

The ongoing salvage excavations, managed by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism, aim to reveal more about the historical significance of the site, providing insights into the Ilkhanid period and other ancient eras present in the region.

Traditions and ethics of Iranian chivalry never die



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

Khosro Abar, a 61-year-old man, stands out as one of the people who are known as *Lutis* embodying a tradition of Iranian chivalry, endured for nearly a century. In a society where *Lutis* once held influence during the Qajar Era (1796 to 1925) and were recognized for their strength and presence, Khosro proudly gets dressed in the *Luti* attire, aiming to convey the true meaning of this term to the people.

The term "*Luti*" generally refers to a group of men and champions during the Qajar era who frequented *Zurkhanehs* (the ancient Iranian house of strength, is a unique and traditional venue for physical fitness and spiritual cultivation). *Lutis* were respected for their strength and athleticism, wearing distinctive attire consisting of a chapeau, black coat and trousers, white-colored shirts, and patent leather shoes. Their appearance featured a rugged face, and broad-shouldered physique. These people adorned themselves with Yazdi scarves around their wrists, large prayer beads, ring with agate

stones, and carried Zanjan knives and Kashan chains in their pockets or on their waistbands. While some viewed *Lutis* as popular champions, others saw them as troublemakers and villains. In reality, they adopted unique approaches and attitudes in their interactions with society and cultural matters, portraying themselves as individuals with contradictory personalities so that in old Tehran, some even referred to them as ignorant. Yet, among *Lutis*, there were those known for their gallantry. They adhered to ethical values, principles of decency, and courageously defended the weak against oppressors. Perhaps due to these characteristics, they can be considered the *Ayyaran* (vagabonds) of their time who had a tradition of assisting the needy people even before *Lutis* existed. They distributed confiscated possessions of perceived oppressors among the poor, resembling, in a Western context, figures like Robin Hood. Reflecting on his father's influence, Abar said, "I embraced the *Luti* attire, just like my father did." Khosro hails from a family of *Lutis*, expressing his passion for painting in the style of teahouse art, illustrating stories from the 'Shahnameh'

and religious events. In addition to his artistic pursuits, Khosro has been engaged in acting, participating in various theaters and TV series. Recalling his father, Khosro says, "My father came to Tehran in the early 1940s and settled in the Javadiyeh neighborhood. He worked in a grocery store and was known for his generosity, helping everyone in the community. He wore *Luti* attire - a white shirt, scarf, black coat and trousers." Khosro reflects on the simplicity and intimacy of people's lives in the past, stating, "Respect, courtesy, and modesty were more prevalent among people in the past. Children showed more respect to their elders. If someone had financial difficulties, neighbors would step in and be aware of each other's well-being. There was so much kindness among people. Life was more comfortable because people did not keep up with the Joneses. We ate very simple Iranian foods. Maybe on weekends or special occasions, we'd have *Qormeh sabzi* (a traditional Persian stew) or *Abgoosht* (rich lamb stew with legumes, tomatoes and potatoes).

But despite the hardships and simplicity, we were happy." Discussing the sacredness of the *Luti* hat, Khosro emphasizes the significance of not wearing the hat casually. He shares an anecdote about meeting a renowned *Luti*, Pahlevan Vali, who invited him to a gathering, where he was bestowed with the symbolic *Luti* hat. Khosro underscores the respect associated with dressing in the *Luti* attire, expressing concern about the misinterpretation of *Luti* people in contemporary culture. Addressing the misconception, Khosro clarifies, "The concept of *Luti* is not exclusive to Iran. The term may be used to describe some individuals in Iran, particularly in Tehran. However, it is a cultural concept that transcends a specific region. Even characters like Robin Hood could be considered *Lutis* based on their attributes. My goal is to revive and introduce the true values of *Luti* people by showcasing their integrity and principles. I've tried to instill these values in my own daughters, who, inspired by my behavior, wear *Luti* attire with respect and courtesy."

