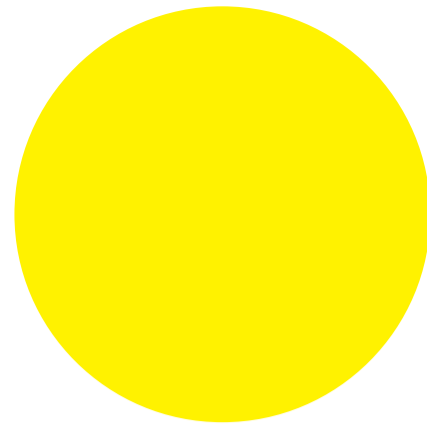


Ali Akbar San'ati Museum features a unique collection of sculptures

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Desperate effort in West Asian quagmire



By Afifeh Abedi
Regional affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Although the Americans claim that their extensive air raids in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen are retaliatory strikes following the drone attack on a US base in Jordan known as "Tower 22" and the killing of three service members, but in fact, these attacks should be seen as the continuation of US military support to Israel in the ongoing Gaza war. Almost four months have passed since the outbreak of the war between Palestinian resistance groups in the Gaza Strip against the Israeli offensive which has killed more than 27,300 Palestinians. However, Israel has not yet achieved its declared goal of destroying Hamas. It was crystal clear from the beginning the goal was nothing more than a pipedream.

Therefore, Washington is trying to set the scene in West Asia in such a way that the war in Gaza is taken off the global focus and any cease-fire or agreement to end the war in Gaza is not seen as yet another defeat for Israel as such a failure will seal the deal on the unprecedented intelligence, security, and military blow delivered by Operation Al-Aqsa Storm to America's strategic ally Israel. In the same vein, reports about Israel's gradual withdrawal from Gaza and a potential cease-fire, amid US attacks on the Axis of Resistance, should be seen as parts of a single puzzle.

Hamas does not seem to be on the ropes in the Gaza war, and this will be yet another setback for Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet. The war in Gaza has led to the resurgence of the Axis of Resistance in West Asia. Meanwhile, the foundation of the Axis of Resistance lies in opposition to the existence of Israel and the US order in West Asia. America's stubborn resistance to end the Gaza war also demonstrates its strategic concerns about the situation in the region.

In essence, Washington is trying to prevent new regional arrangements that would undermine its regional influence in West Asia. This is being sought by bolstering military presence in the region, strengthening Israel, and maintaining the existence of its strategic partner in the region. These conditions serve as catalysts accelerate the transformation in the world order. In other words, the US perceives the ongoing rivalry in West Asia as an integral part of a power struggle within the regional order, the international sphere, and the transformation in the world order.

The changing regional and global conditions have presented strategic limitations for the United States. The number of conflict zones for the US has increased while its tools for addressing them remain limited. Saudi Arabia, a traditional ally, has caused long-term doubts for Washington due to its balanced policy between the United States, China, and regional rivals like Iran.

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Warmonger PM Under Fire

Israelis protest Netanyahu's Gaza policies

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Israeli protesters hold placards and banners as they rally against the war on Gaza outside the Israel's Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv on February 3, 2024.
● AHMAD GHARABLI/AFP



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Minister highlights achievements in space technology



Iran's minister of communications and information technology (ICT) said the country's space industry has gained significant achievements, especially since the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi assumed power in August 2021.

The space industry has been fully indigenized, Issa Zarepour said, adding that 11 satellites were launched during Raisi's administration, which is unprecedented, reported Tasnim News Agency. The minister emphasized that the administration has paid special attention to the space industry. Iran has high capabilities and potential to further enhance its technical know-how in space technology, he said. Iran has gained great achievements in the space field since the glorious victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, he stated.

Iran is currently among the top 10 countries in the space industry and has managed to localize this significant industry, the minister highlighted. The country has manufactured a satellite launcher, indigenized satellite carriers and land data receiving stations, so the country can now launch its homegrown satellites to orbit using the indigenized satellite carriers, he added. He further noted that a \$500 million budget will be allocated for the development and progress of the space industry, \$150 million of which has been earmarked already.

Foreign trade hits \$276b under current administration

The value of Iran's foreign trade since the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi took office in August 2021 has reached \$276 billion, according to a report. The report put the volume of foreign trade of the country in the period at 410 million tons, reported Tasnim News Agency. During the 29 months of the current administration, 95.858 million tons of products, valued at \$149.558 billion, were imported into the country. More than 113 million tons of goods, valued at over \$40 billion, were exported from the country in the first 10 months of the current Iranian year (March 21, 2023 to January 22, 2024). Also, more than 32 million tons of products, valued at over \$54 billion, were imported into the country from March 21, 2023, to January 22, 2024.

Oil minister discusses techno-engineering ties in Venezuela

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji held talks with Venezuela's high-ranking officials on bilateral relations and ongoing projects in Caracas.

Owji exchanged views with his Venezuelan counterpart Pedro Rafael Tellechea, Foreign Minister Yván Gil, and other top officials on exports of Iran's technical and engineering services, refining operations and overhaul of refineries in the Latin American country, creation of a market for Iran's private sector, particularly in the petrochemical sector, and investment in oil and energy industries, Shana reported.

In addition to issues related to the expansion of oil and gas cooperation, follow-up of refining, oil, and gas infrastructure projects and progress of petrochemical and gas trans-

mission projects were discussed.

Iran's oil industry has high capacities for presence in the lucrative Latin American market, and contractors, manufacturers, and knowledge-based companies are required to pay due attention to them and seize the opportunities provided by the government. The Oil Ministry has promoted energy diplomacy, developing its relations with Latin American states.

Taking office in August 2021, Iran's incumbent administration has paved the way for private and semigovernmental companies' presence in the lucrative market. Given the administration's efforts, Iran-Venezuela oil trade volume has reached around \$4 billion – a great breakthrough after a long hiatus.



Venezuela – the first Latin American country, with which Iran has expanded its oil ties – is the world's

largest holder of oil reserves and has numerous oil, gas, refining, and petrochemical complexes and fa-

cilities. Tehran has provided crude and condensate as well as parts and feedstock for Venezuela's aging

refining network. It also oversaw a project to modernize the largest refining complex in Venezuela.

Iran has made 'gains' in economy, foreign policy: US think tank

The Islamic Republic of Iran has made gains in domestic and foreign policy, driving economic growth and expanding its influence in the region despite years of pressure by the United States, according to an analysis by a major US think tank.

Patrick Clawson, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, wrote in a recent analysis for the pro-Israel American think tank

that US officials have been wrong believing that they could extract concessions from Iran through economic sanctions, IRNA reported on Sunday. Instead, he argued, Iran's economy is doing well enough to leave the Islamic Republic "feeling quite secure on that front." "According to IMF projections, 2024 will be the third year in a row where Iran's GDP grows faster than that of the United States,

and this trend is expected to continue in 2025," Clawson wrote. One factor driving this growth has been a rise in Iran's oil income. Citing data from the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) Research Center, the analysis pointed out that Iran's export revenues for the Iranian year 2024/25 will grow between \$28 billion and \$40 billion, depending on price and volume. This comes as the Iranian economy has be-

come less dependent on oil, it added. On the national security front, Clawson said Iran has made substantial progress on keynote programs such as missile and drone development as well as nuclear enrichment, all despite Western efforts to restrain the programs. The analysis also said that the Islamic Republic has managed to upset US-led attempts to isolate the country, and has successfully spread



its influence across the West Asia region. "The Gaza war has likewise gained more adherents for Iran's view

that the United States and Israel are the real culprits behind the region's problems," Clawson wrote.

270 vehicles traded at IME

The Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 3.18 million tons of commodities as well as 270 vehicles with a total trading value of almost \$797 million during the week to February 2.

The exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2.46 million tons of commodities and 270 vehicles valued at nearly \$480 million, according to ime.co.ir

On this floor the IME sold 1.13 million tons of cement, 779,000 tons of iron ore, 451,906 tons of steel, 81,500 tons of sponge iron, 9,240 tons of copper, 8,430 tons of aluminum, 1,910 tons of zinc, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 270 vehicles.

Based on the report, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 696,443 tons of commodities worth more than \$305 million.

Commodities traded on this floor included 293,843 tons of bitumen, 180,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 114,692 tons of polymeric products, 59,600 tons of lube cut, 34,388 tons of chemicals, 5,830 tons of oil, 5,650 tons of sulfur and 240 tons of feedstocks.

The IME also traded within the same week 19,190 tons of goods on its side market.



IRICA's tax collection up 45% in 10 months

The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said the country's customs revenues in the first four months of the current Iranian year to late January has reached the equivalent of some \$2.8 billion. Mohammad Rezvanifar said the figure - more than 1,575 trillion rials - shows a 45% increase in the total customs revenues collected from imported goods compared to the same period last year, IRNA reported.

Rezvanifar said revenues collected from import tax on automobiles, mobile phones, worth over \$600 per unit, and 23 other items had amounted to more than 785 trillion rials (\$1.4 billion) in the 10 months to late January, up 79% compared to the same period last year. During the same period, the official added, the value-added tax collected from imported goods had also totaled 790 trillion rials.



Darooqeh Historical House demonstrating Mashhad's rich heritage



destinationiran.com

Iranica Desk

Historical monuments serve as a testament to the authenticity of each city, showcasing its history, culture, and civilization. While some of these ancient structures have succumbed to the ravages of time, many have been painstakingly restored and preserved by cultural heritage organizations and other institutions. In Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi Province, and home to the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), numerous restored old houses offer a glimpse into the city's rich past. Among these, the Darooqeh Historical House stands out as a prominent tourist attraction, drawing visitors with its exquisite and distinctive architecture. Situated on Navvab Safavi Street, approximately four kilometers from the city center, this historical house was commissioned by the last sheriff (referred to as *darooqehi* in Persian) of the city during the late Qajar period. Yusef Khan Harati oversaw the construction of the house, intending that it serve as both his personal residence and a venue for official receptions. After several years

of residence, the house passed down through his descendants. Since 1987, the house, acquired by the rural council of a village in Yazd, was utilized for religious ceremonies for a number of years. Over time, however, the house fell into disrepair and was on the brink of destruction. Recognizing its historical significance, the house was designated as one of Iran's national monuments in 2002. Subsequently, in 2012, the municipality purchased the property and embarked on a comprehensive restoration and reconstruction effort, ensuring the preservation of this architectural gem for future generations to appreciate. Throughout the various stages of the restoration process, the architects and restoration experts were dedicated to fully preserving the house's identity in terms of both its structure and appearance. They utilized high-quality, modern materials, while also incorporating materials from demolished old houses in the area to maintain its old and authentic appearance. New sections were integrated into the house during the restoration, creating a

distinct contrast from the original parts, making them easily recognizable to visitors. The restoration project benefited from the expertise of professionals in architecture, archaeology, documentation, and historical preservation. The restoration of Darooqeh House was executed with such beauty and professionalism that it was honored with the Asia-Pacific Award from UNESCO in 2016. Among 13 projects for the preservation of historical and cultural heritage in countries such as Australia, India, China, Japan, and Pakistan, Darooqeh House proudly received this award, becoming a source of pride for Iran. Today, Darooqeh House, with its administrative spaces and museum, eagerly awaits visitors and enthusiasts of historical artifacts. The historical house is situated on a 1,100 square meter plot of land and features a unique blend of Iranian and Russian architectural styles. The house is positioned at the beginning of a street, with its entrance door located on the southern side. Upon entering the courtyard, one immediately notices that the house is approximately 75 centimeters

lower than the street level. Within the courtyard, a striking pool and two small gardens capture one's attention. The two-story house façade encompasses the northern, eastern, and western sides of the courtyard. The design of the terrace and the stairs on both sides of the Darooqeh House is influenced by Russian architecture. Noteworthy decorations in the house include seven-color tile work on the facade, wooden embellishments on the ceilings, as well as statues in the form of winged lions and angels all reflecting Russian architectural influences. In the northern section of Darooqeh House, an *ivan* (portico) with four columns is prominently featured, extending forward and reaching the courtyard floor. These columns boast exquisite brickwork. Flanking the northern *ivan*, two inclined staircases with delicate metal railings are visible. Additionally, the western part of the house showcases a columned *ivan* adorned with octagonal and oval tiles featuring floral and plant motifs. The house is designed to meet the needs of its residents by utilizing natural re-

sources such as wind, water, and solar energy. It is divided into two sections, one for summer and one for winter, each tailored for use during different seasons. The winter section is strategically positioned to make the most of sunlight and solar energy during colder months. It also houses the kitchen and features double-paned windows and a fireplace, representing some of the earliest design elements of the house. Conversely, the summer section is positioned away from direct sunlight. It includes wind-catching rooms and a traditional water basin, ensuring a cool and pleasant environment during the warmer months. The first private bathroom is also located in this section, a notable feature given that public baths were commonly used during that era. Additionally, the historical Darooqeh House includes two bakeries, a traditional water basin, a kitchen, and a cellar. The kitchen is currently serving as a traditional coffee house, while another part has been transformed into a photography studio. Visitors also have the opportunity to select handicrafts or silverware as souvenirs.

Roman and Sassanid empires' negotiation of the past

The preservation and manipulation of cultural memory were a constant and much-contested preoccupation for the two self-described ancient and universal empires, Roman and Sassanid. Despite both regimes' claims to be ageless and changeless, a relentless series of transformations marked every era of their existence. Internal transfers of subject or captive peoples augmented the population pressures caused by massive influxes of nomadic peoples who swept over the Danube or Caspian Gates. To make sense of the tension between the two regimes' steadfast adherence to myths of monolithic stability and the volatility of the Mediterranean and Near East during this period, it is fruitful to concentrate on the means by which the two empires negotiated these changes. An important segment of Roman and Sassanid imperial ritual and artistic activity sought to apprehend and shape the past as a method of forming the regimes' identities. That a regime would associate itself with a prestigious past appears rather obvious. However, because this practice is widespread throughout history, its particular consequences for the Ro-

man and Sassanid empires' relations with one another are easy to misunderstand. The Roman and Sassanid empires did maintain a remarkable degree of cultural continuity throughout the four hundred years under study, and if one concentrates only on the imperial elites, this continuity appears even more pronounced. However, by 630 many changes had swept both empires. At this point in time, the two states bore a greater resemblance to each other than to the empires of Severus Alexander and Ardashir I, which preceded them, and even less similarity to the Rome of Augustus or the Persian empire of Darius I. It is tempting to concentrate solely on the changes and continuities themselves in explaining the two empires' cultural identity; yet focusing on just the continuities or discontinuities does not take us very far in understanding Roman or Sassanid cultural stability or identity construction. A more fruitful approach is to consider the motivations and methods of such assiduous preservation or creative reenlivenment. The Roman and Sassanid emperors

sought to engage with, and define themselves in relation to, various pasts at different points in their histories. In addition to the eminent kings of their own dynasty, the Sassanid included as their ancestors the historical, yet imperfectly understood Achaemenids, legendary kings and heroes such as Jamshid and Freydoun, and mythical dynasties such as the Kaynids. The Romans had a much different sense of the past, which was articulated by a sustained historical literary tradition. Christianity introduced a new concept of history, grafting the religion's Old Testament scriptural tradition and the history of the church itself onto the Roman past. A sovereign could select among a variety of pasts according to how he wished to define his identity. This was partially dictated by the potential audience an emperor wanted to impress or convince. Different audiences required different identities thus presenting a different past over which an emperor needed to gain control. In the face of all these changes, how did the two realms engage their pasts, and what purpose did their engagement with the past serve?



The Maison Carrée, one of the best-preserved Roman temples in France

First, the past was a source of power. The Roman's and Sassanid's techniques of creating and shaping memory were a means of ensuring that they gained or retained ownership not only of their own venerable pasts but also of prestigious mythological or foreign pasts out of which (external or internal) elites might fashion rival claims to territory, privileges, or the throne,

or that the oppressed masses could potentially use to combat their subjection and agitate for, in today's parlance, human rights. However, the two realms' engagement with the past was not just focused on establishing dominance or prestige. In these two very conservative cultures, control of the past was also a useful way to present and enact new visions of culture.

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled, "The Lure of the Other and the Limits of the Past", from a book entitled, "The Two Eyes of the Earth", written by Matthew P. Vanepa, published by University of California Press.

Ali Akbar San'ati Museum features a unique collection of sculptures



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

The number of museums displaying sculptures and human figures in Iran is substantial, but a museum featuring sculptures that represent the social aspect of a specific era is relatively rare in the country. From this perspective, the Museum of Ali Akbar San'ati Artist in Tehran stands out.

If you've passed through Imam Khomeini Square in the heart of Tehran's historical fabric, you may have noticed the old brick building on its northwest side — a museum that holds memories for many Tehranians, and even their grandparents.

The museum's signboard prominently displays the name of Ali Akbar San'ati, a renowned Iranian

painter and sculptor of the 20th century. He is the only Iranian artist with two museums named after him, in the cities of Tehran and Kerman.

The Ali Akbar San'ati Museum, dating back to the Qajar period, houses a valuable collection of paintings, plaster, stone, and bronze sculptures depicting Iranian scientific, literary, and social figures created during San'ati's artistic life spanning over sixty years.

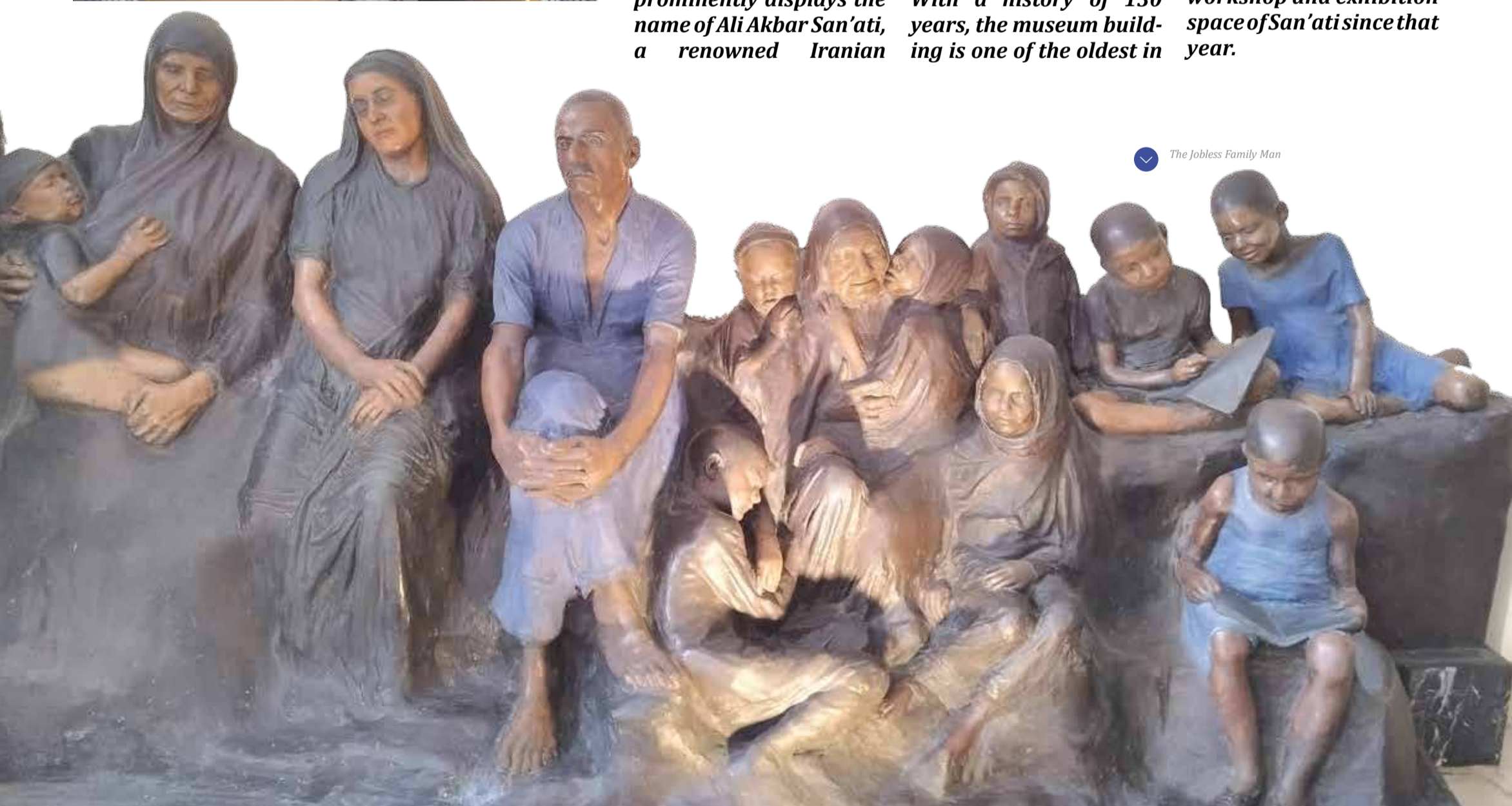
In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Nourallah Nosrati, the museum director, said that the museum was inaugurated at the headquarters of the Red Lion and Sun Society (the former name of Iran's Red Crescent Society).

With a history of 130 years, the museum building is one of the oldest in



Nourallah Nosrati

Imam Khomeini Square, constructed during the reign of Ahmad Shah Qajar. It served as the main headquarters of the Red Lion and Sun Society of Iran, from 1922 to 1946, until the organization moved to a larger building on Nejatollahi Street. Since 1946, the sculptor worked with the society under a contract on the ground floor of this building. In fact, the building transformed into a workshop and exhibition space of San'ati since that year.



The Jobless Family Man



Prisoners in Chain

Heaven and Hell

Nosrati continued that in the memoir of Dr. Hossein Khatibi-Nouri, the former CEO of the Red Crescent Society of Iran, it is mentioned that Sepah Bank, in its early years of establishment, intended to purchase the building, however due to the historical value of the edifice and the artistic activities of San'ati, this plan was cancelled. "During that time, there was such a high demand for seeing his artworks that a portion of the financial resources of the society was obtained through the museum's ticket sales," he said. Ali Akbar San'ati Museum, also known as the 13th Aban Museum, has been popular for a long time due to one of its artworks depicting people in heaven and hell. Nosrati mentioned that seventy years ago, when many people did not even have family photos, the existence of a museum featuring a three-dimensional representation of heaven and hell was highly attractive and significant. "A number of elderly people who are presently visiting the museum say that seeing this place during their childhood had a deep impact on them, in such a way that since then they have imagine heaven and hell like that. Parts of the artworks had been destroyed in the past; however, due to their historical significance, we tried to renovate and revive them in the best possible manner," he added. Nosrati stated that nearly half of the museum's visitors are returning to reminisce about their previous visits. Many visitors have multi-generational memories associated with the museum; for example, some people who toured the museum in 1966, and took photos with the statue of Shah Abbas Safavid, now return with their grandchildren to create new memories and relive the past.



Abolqasem Ferdowsi

A narrative artist

San'ati is recognized as one of the pioneers of modern sculpture in Iran. His artistic journey began under the mentorship of Abolhassan Khan Sediqi, a student of Kamal-ol-Molk, a renowned Iranian painter (1847-1940). Notably, San'ati stands out as one of the earliest contemporary realistic artists who not only excelled in sculpting but also introduced innovative styles and schools in the realm of watercolor painting. When discussing the numerous artworks displayed across various sections of the museum, Nosrati emphasized their narrative nature, with each piece conveying a distinct story. As a narrative artist, San'ati skillfully imbues his sculptures with storytelling elements. Consequently, each masterpiece unfolds a specific narrative and comprises several sculptures that depict incidents or events. For instance, his work "Prisoners in Chain" (*Zendanian Dar Band* in Persian) comprises approximately 80 sculptures, while "The Disheartened" (*Sooteh Delan*) portrays several artists and promi-

nent figures of his time, including the esteemed poet Mohammad Taghi Bahar (1886-1951 CE) and Allameh Dehkhoda, a prominent Iranian literary writer, philologist, and lexicographer (1879-1956 CE) and Abolqasem Ferdowsi a Persian poet and the author of *Shahnameh* (940-1020 CE). Nosrati further elaborated that the museum encompasses two floors, with sculptures adorning the ground floor, and oil and watercolor paintings, along with several half-body sculptures and busts, housed on the second floor. Notably, the museum boasts around 400 sculptures and 80 paintings. A significant portion of the artworks represent the masses of people, their struggles, and societal concerns, featuring sculptures depicting various ordinary individuals, from laborers to barbers and shoemakers. Additionally, there are sculptures of rulers alongside notable Iranian and foreign cultural, historical, and political figures, including those of Shah Abbas Safavid, Nader Shah Afshar, Lenin, and Tolstoy.



Ali Akbar San'ati

Early hardships

Born into a financially disadvantaged family in Kerman, the artist faced early hardships, losing his father during childhood. "His mother, affectionately called *bibi*, earned a living by spinning thread, and many nights this artist would fall sleep to the sound of the spinning wheel, which acted as a comforting lullaby to his ears," said Nosrati. Unable to afford his upbringing, his mother entrusted him to an orphanage in Kerman, established by a benevolent person, Haj Ali Akbar San'ati, a wealthy man who generously bestowed his last name on the children at the orphanage, allowing them to pursue education and obtain identity cards. A statue depicting him as a baby in the arms of the orphanage founder is situated in a corner of the museum narrating the tale of that day. "The baby was restless and persistently pleaded for his mother to take him back. However, when Haj Ali Akbar tenderly embraced him and pressed his face to his chest, assuring him that this was his new home, it felt as if he were being born again. The statue portrays their initial encounter," he said. When San'ati's artistic talent was discovered at the orphanage, he traveled to Tehran at a young age to study at the Darolfonoon (Iran's first center of learning), driven by the aspiration to learn from Kamal-ol-Molk. However, during that period, Kamal-ol-Molk was exiled to Neishabur. Thus, at the recommendation of Abolhassan Sediqi, one of most distinguished students of Kamal-ol-Molk, San'ati turned to sculpture. Due to the poverty he experienced in his childhood, he always sought to be gen-

erous and supportive of the poor. In his sculptures, he depicted delicately and artistically, the suffering of the poor and distressed people in their facial expressions, clothing, and physical posture. His first artwork, "The Jobless Family Man," is housed and preserved in a section of this museum. Nosrati noted that this masterpiece was created in 1946, in the context of events taking place in Iran before and after World War II, precisely in the years when Iran was invaded from the north and south. During that period, conditions deteriorated to the point where even military barracks did not have bread to feed their soldiers. In these circumstances, San'ati depicted the members of a family, including a man sitting with his wife, his mother-in-law, his own mother, and children in the street. The man's eyes and facial expression clearly convey a sense of depression. Reflecting the time, this work portrays the pain and suffering of the people. San'ati's famous work, "Prisoners in Chain," consist of approximately 80 sculptures created in 1949. The emotions and feelings depicted on the faces of these sculptures have been intricately designed, capturing the viewer's attention to the extent that one can spend a significant amount of time engrossed in the details. Nosrati described this work as a symbol of the museum, showcasing a large number of individuals, each representing a specific segment of society. Many of these people are depicted with chains around their necks, suggesting they are under social pressure. Some even wear a bitter smile, depicting a society in captivity during a specific period of Iranian history.

Many visitors have multi-generational memories associated with the museum; for example, some people who toured the museum in 1966, and took photos with the statue of Shah Abbas Safavid, now return with their grandchildren to create new memories and relive the past.



Shah Abbas Safavid



Nader Shah Afshar

AFC Asian Cup: Victory over Japan 'a turning point' for Iranian football, Qalenoiei says

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoiei believes Saturday's comeback victory over Japan in the AFC Asian Cup quarterfinals could go down as "a turning point" for football in his country.

Trailing by one goal at halftime, Qalenoiei's men turned the game on its head with a much-improved performance after the break to win 2-1 right at the death and book a place in Wednesday's semi-final against host Qatar, which defeated Uzbekistan in the shootout later in the day.

Iran was rewarded for its front-foot display 10 minutes after the interval as Sardar Azmoun played Mohammad Mohebbi through with a sublime pass, before the latter ran around his marker and slipped his shot past Japanese keeper Zion Suzuki into the bottom corner, canceling out Hide-masa Morita's 28th-minute strike. Team Melli had several chances to take the lead but had to wait until the sixth minute of stoppage time when Alireza Jahanbakhsh smashed home from the spot to send his fellow Iranians at the Education City Stadium into raptures. "Asian football should be happy with this match, and we should be proud of the performance of our players who gave everything for the fans," Qalenoiei said in the post-match press conference.

"I want to say thank you to everyone who supported us along the way. This match can be a turning point for Iranian football, not just for the senior national team, but also for the U23s, U19s and the whole football setup in



Iranian skipper Alireza Jahanbakhsh celebrates with teammates after scoring the winner in a 2-1 victory over Japan in the AFC Asian Cup quarterfinals at the Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan, Qatar, on February 3, 2024.
● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

the country." Stepping into the game less than 72 hours after an exhausting shootout win against Syria, not to mention missing prolific striker Mahdi Taremi through suspension, Iran was the ultimate underdog against the pretournament favorites, but Qalenoiei and his staff deserve all the credit for

outplaying the opponent in the second half. "We had a plan to control their midfielders though we didn't succeed before their goal, but everything turned in our favor in the second half as our performance was beyond Asian football," added Qalenoiei. "I think everybody should have

the belief in Iranian people. We had a lot of great Iranian coaches in history who never got the chance to coach in Europe. "If we want to have a higher standard of performance, we should have a long-term plan, infrastructure, stadiums and most importantly the support of the authorities in Iran," added the head

coach, who was also in charge of the national team at the tournament in 2007 but was shown the exit door after a shootout defeat against South Korea in the quarterfinals. Saturday's win was Iran's first against Japan in nine Asian Cup attempts – including a last-four 3-0 loss in the previous edition

– while it came 19 years after Team Melli had last beaten the Blue Samurai in all competitions. "We respect Japan football because they are a big team and they have good players who play in top European leagues. Coach Hajime Moriyasu is a friend of mine and a big character. I want to say congratulations to Japan too on their performance," added the Iranian manager. Moriyasu, meanwhile, took responsibility for the setback, while acknowledging that his side failed to cope with Iran's pressing and frontline prowess. "I feel responsible for the result as my staff and players gave their maximum through this game and this tournament," said the Japanese, whose team came to Qatar on the back of a remarkable 10-game winning streak, including impressive results against Germany and Turkey. "As you saw we have to improve on many aspects. We played five matches and we conceded in every game. If we can't keep a clean sheet, we can't win," said Moriyasu, adding: "They put pressure on us and we couldn't resist it. We conceded because of their attacking qualities." "But it's not just the defensive line. We should have scored our second goal which would have changed things. We couldn't win the second balls in the middle of the pitch." While Japan's quest for a record-extending fifth Asian title came to a premature ending, three-time winner Iran will keep chasing a first trophy in the continent's flagship competition in 48 years.

Esteghlal set to sign Uzbek skipper Masharipov

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League leader Esteghlal has reached an agreement with Uzbekistani international Jaloliddin Masharipov to make him a second winter signing for the Tehran Blues, the club confirmed on Sunday. Masharipov, 30, is to arrive in Tehran "in the coming days" to undergo medicals before signing a year-and-a-half contract with the capital giant, read the club's statement. Having 12 goals in 60 international caps under his belt, Masharipov captained his team at the ongoing AFC

Asian Cup in Qatar, where he was unfortunate to miss from the spot in the shootout as Uzbekistan was knocked out by the host in the quarterfinals on Saturday. A former winger of Pakhtakor in his home country as well as Saudi club Al Nassr, Masharipov joined Panserraikos in the summer but parted ways with the Greek top-flight side after registering a couple of assists in eight appearances in all competitions. His signing comes as a boost for Esteghlal head coach Javad Nekounam, who will be without versatile fullback Kevin Yamga for the rest of the sea-

son – after the Frenchman suffered a career-threatening eye injury in a training session – while midfielder Saeid Mehri terminated his contract to reunite with ex-Blues boss Ricardo Sa Pinto at Cypriot First Division leader APOEL Nicosia. Having left Esteghlal by the end of the previous campaign, Brazilian center-back Raphael Silva rejoined the Blues in the midseason transfer window. Esteghlal is on top of the Iranian Pro League table after 15 matches with 32 points – one clear of Sepahan and two above archrival and defending champion Persepolis.



● AFC

Fury v Usyk rescheduled for May in Saudi Arabia

BBC – Tyson Fury's undisputed heavyweight title fight against Oleksandr Usyk has been rescheduled for 18 May. Fury, 35, had been due to fight Ukraine's Usyk on 17 February but withdrew from the contest on Friday after sustaining a cut in sparring. The Briton is the WBC champion while Ukraine's Usyk, 37, holds the WBA, WBO and IBF titles. Their bout in Saudi Arabia will crown the first undisputed heavyweight boxing champion in the four-belt era. Usyk wished Fury a speedy recovery and said he was "ready to fight for undisputed any time, anywhere."

The Ukrainian had been in talks to fight Croatia's Filip Hrgovic as a replacement for Fury on the February date. Hrgovic is the mandatory challenger to Usyk's IBF belt and there were fears he could be stripped of that title if Fury was sidelined for several months. But in a fast-moving 24 hours, Saudi Arabian organisers and Team Fury moved quickly to secure a new date for the undisputed bout. Speaking on the MMA Hour, external, Fury took aim at Usyk's manager Egidio Klimas who questioned the legitimacy of his injury. "Egidio, never call me a coward again,"

he said. "[I have] never backed down from any man in my life." There has not been an undisputed heavyweight champion since Lennox Lewis defeated Evander Holyfield in 1999. Fury's cut above his right eye required "urgent medical attention" and "significant stitching". It is the third time since 2023 a fight date between Usyk and Fury has been rescheduled. Event organiser Turki Alalashikh, chairman of Saudi Arabia's general entertainment authority, said if either Usyk or Fury withdrew from the new date they would forfeit £9.3m to the other fighter.



● JUSTIN SETTERFIELD/GETTY IMAGES

Yemen vows response after US, UK attacks



● AFP

International Desk

Yemen said Sunday US and British air strikes "will not deter us," and vowed a response after the two countries launched new joint air raids on the Arab country late Saturday. It was the third time that British and American forces have jointly targeted Yemen, which has launched several attacks on Israel-bound ships in solidarity with Palestinians in the war-stricken Gaza Strip. The United States has also carried out a series of air raids on Yemen on its own. Yemen spokesman for the country's armed forces, Yahya Saree, said the cap-

ital Sana'a and other areas were targeted.

Saree reported a total of 48 air strikes, and said on social media platform X, "These attacks will not deter us from our... stance in support of the steadfast Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip," where Israel's onslaught has claimed the lives of more than 26,000 Palestinians since October 7.

The latest strikes "will not pass without response and punishment," said Saree. Iran denounced the Saturday strikes on Yemen, saying they "contradict" declared intentions by Washington and London to avoid a "wider conflict"

in the Middle East. These attacks are "in clear contradiction with the repeated claims of Washington and London that they do not want the expansion of war and conflict in the region," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nassar Kanaani said in a statement.

'Fueling insecurity'

He accused the United States and Britain of "fueling chaos, disorder, insecurity and instability" by supporting Israel in its war on Gaza.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, in a meeting with UN Special Envoy of the UN

Secretary-General for Yemen Hans Grundberg in Tehran on Saturday, said the US military approach has complicated the situation in the region and created obstacles in the path toward a political solution to regional conflicts. Amir-Abdollahian also slammed military attacks of the US and Britain against Yemen.

The United States, Britain and other countries that provided support for the operation claimed in a statement that the Saturday strikes hit 36 Ansarallah targets across 13 locations.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the

strikes are intended to further disrupt and degrade the capabilities of the Ansarallah resistance movement to conduct their attacks.

Britain's Defence Ministry said the Royal Air Force Typhoon warplanes struck two ground control stations used to operate attack and reconnaissance drones.

Austin said targets included "locations associated with the Houthis' (Ansarallah) deeply buried weapons storage facilities, missile systems and launchers, air defense systems, and radars."

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Supporting Palestinians

Yemen's armed forces began targeting Red Sea shipping in November, saying they were hitting Israel-linked vessels in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

US and UK forces responded with strikes against Yemen, which has since declared US and UK interests to be legitimate targets as well. Anger over Israel's devastating campaign in Gaza has grown across the Middle East, sparking attacks on US and Israeli positions by resistance groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Warmonger PM under fire Israelis protest Netanyahu's Gaza policies

International Desk

Thousands of people took to the streets across Israel on Saturday night to show their anger at the warmongering policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Holding placards reading, "Revenge is not victory," and placards that showed the number of Palestinians killed in Israel's onslaught

on the Gaza Strip, the protesters expressed their opposition to the continuation of the war on the Palestinian territory.

The Israeli protesters also called on their officials to bring back the remaining captives held by the Hamas resistance group in Gaza.

Israel's attacks on Gaza have killed more than 27,000 Palestinians and

wounded over 66,000 people since the regime began its aggression against the Palestinian territory in response to Hamas's October 7 attack on the occupied territories.

Hamas took 240 people captive during the attack. Around 100 captives have been released under a deal brokered by Qatar.

The protesters who gathered in the Israeli cities of



● AFP

Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Beer Sheva, among others, also demanded the end of Netanyahu's mandate.

In Tel Aviv, demonstrators called for the dissolution of the cabinet, general elections and the immediate return of the captives.

Many held up signs with images of their loved ones, calling on the cabinet to "bring them home."

A new organization for mothers whose children were drafted into the war on Gaza called for elections and hung banners

on bridges that read: "Netanyahu is killing us."

In occupied Al-Quds, Israeli protesters took to the streets for the fourth consecutive week demanding immediate elections.

The rally was held under the banner of "120 days underground," a reference to the days since the Oct. 7 attack and the Hamas tunnels in the Palestinian territory where the captives are believed to be held.

Demonstrators also demanded the resignation of Netanyahu, whom they accuse of mismanagement and blame for the Oct. 7 attack that caught Israel by surprise with deadly consequences.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Raisi: Elites should play 'effective role' in Iran's development



National Desk

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said that the country's elites should play an effective role in Iran's development by identifying and solving problems.

Addressing a group of elites in Tehran on Sunday, Raisi said that the Islamic Revolution has always emphasized the importance of learning and promoting science within the country. He stressed that significant promotion of Iran's scientific ranking in the world is a sign of the revolution's attention to science.

However, the president said, "Neither you, elites, nor we in the government should be confined to these achievements"; we should try hard to maintain and promote the process of development in the country.

Meanwhile, 28 medalists of the International Science Olympiads in the fields of biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics, computer, astronomy and astrophysics were praised during the Sunday ceremony.

Hamas deploys police, distributes funds in Gaza

Hamas has begun deploying police forces and making partial salary payments to some of its civil servants in Gaza City in recent days in areas from which Israel had withdrawn the bulk of its troops a month ago, four residents and a senior official in the resistance group said Saturday.

Four Gaza City residents told The Associated Press that in recent days, uniformed and plainclothes police officers deployed near police headquarters and other government offices, including near Shifa Hospital, the territory's largest.

The return of police marks an attempt to reinstate order in the devastated city, a Hamas official told AP, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

Saeed Abdel-Bar, a resident of Gaza City, said a cousin received funds from a makeshift Hamas office near the hospital that was set up to distribute \$200 payouts to government employees, including police officers and municipal workers. Israel's war on Gaza has killed more than 27,360 people so far.

Desperate effort in ...

In recent months, the US has attempted to maintain Riyadh as a key player in its regional policy by seeking to normalize Israel-Saudi relations and making concessions to Riyadh. However, Washington has faced numerous obstacles and challenges, posed by both Operation Al-Aqsa Storm and Riyadh's political and security demands. Consequently, Israel currently stands as

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the sole reliable pillar of American policy in West Asia.

Hence, the recent US attacks on Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, while seeking revenge, aim to revive defensive deterrence for Israel in the region. Rather than initiating a new war, America's objective is to dissuade the Axis of Resistance and other potential actors from launching further attacks on Israel's interests.

Israel's security doctrine rests on defensive deterrence, offensive strategies, and transregional alliances. The way Operation Al-Aqsa Storm was carried out on October 7 and its surprise for the Israelis undermined Tel Aviv's defensive deterrence. As a result, Israel has focused on enhancing its offensive capabilities and requesting increased military-political support from the United States to restore

its defensive deterrence. American involvement in the Gaza war has intensified and legitimized resistance groups' attacks against US interests in the region, expanding the scope of the conflict. These conditions are seen as tragic for a power like the United States, which has maintained global dominance for nearly eight decades. The current public perception is that a global power is engaged

in a direct and ongoing campaign against militia groups with unique characteristics, which not only remain resilient but also have the potential to grow stronger.

Perhaps the only solution for the US is to further encourage Saudi Arabia to implement the normalization of relations with Israel. Such normalization could potentially mitigate the extent of the American-Israeli setback in Gaza.

Director: Crafting films on 'Sacred Defense' requires poetic perspective



Arts & Culture Desk

Ensieh Shahhosseini, director and writer of the film 'Missing Hand,' discussed the cinematic portrayal of the "Sacred Defense" era (1980-1988) at a press conference during the 42nd Fajr International Film Festival. Shahhosseini expressed her admiration for the late Parvaneh Massoumi, stating that Massoumi's life was a true miracle. Shahhosseini emphasized the need for a poetic and cultural perspective when creating films about the "Sacred Defense" and the war. The press event also featured a tribute to Massoumi, where festival's president Mojtaba Amini presented a plaque of honor to her nephew. Shahhosseini highlighted the significance of Massoumi's life and contributions to the film industry. Addressing the delay in pursuing the sub-

ject of the film after 12 years, Shahhosseini pointed to external factors and expressed her readiness to film scripts during the period when she was not actively working. Regarding the film's title and its perspective on the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Shahhosseini underscored the cultural revolution's approach and the importance of returning human dignity, echoing the ideals of the founder of Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini. Shahhosseini emphasized her desire to explore hidden aspects of women's lives during the war, resonating with the sentiments expressed by Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani. She clarified that while 'Missing Hand' shares a theme with the book 'Blood Pool,' the narrative, viewpoint, and interpretation are distinct. The director defended the use of local actors, stating that celebrity presence could



● fajriff.com

distort the documentary foundation of the film. She explained that the film aimed to preserve the sanctity of martyrs and deliberately avoided showing certain elements, such as the bones of the women's hands, to uphold their honor. Shahhosseini concluded by stating that the film addresses universal themes and stories of women in various situations, both in times of war and peace.

Over 1.2m health tourists arrive in Iran in one year



Social Desk

Iran's Deputy Minister of Health and Medical Education, Saeed Karimi, announced that in the past Iranian year, ending on March 21, 2023, the country welcomed over 1.2 million health tourists for medical treatment. According to Karimi, this influx of health tourists resulted in a substantial economic boost of one billion dollars for Iran, adding that, half of this revenue was attributed to healthcare facilities, while the other half contributed to the tourism sector and various other fields. Karimi shared this information during a press conference, explaining that that health tourists encompass individuals who are not residents of Iran. These tourists obtain visas, seek medical services in the country, and then return to their home countries. The deputy minister highlighted the trust health tourists place in Iranian physicians, the advancements of the country, and the well-equipped and standardized healthcare facilities. He stated that the positive perception of Iran's medical services is a significant factor driving health tourists to seek treatment in the country. Currently, 290 healthcare centers across Iran have the capability to provide services to international patients.

Iran sends third shipment of humanitarian aid to Gaza

Iran has sent a third shipment of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, the head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) said as a massive humanitarian crisis is unfolding in the besieged territory amid Israel's devastating war. Pir-Hossein Kolivand said on Sunday that a ship filled with humanitarian aid for civilians in Gaza had recently left Iran's port and passed through the Strait of Hormuz, Press TV reported. "The aid consignment includes food, medical equipment and medications, tents, blankets, and other critically needed items based on the list provided to the IRCS by the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and the Gaza Red Crescent Society," Kolivand said. Kolivand said that Iranians have so far provided IRCS more than 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza, which he said is "unprecedented." He added that the Iranian Foreign Ministry is working to facilitate the delivery of more aid to Gaza. Since the war erupted in the Strip on October 7, Kolivand said, Iran has sent two ships and one aircraft carrying aid to Gaza. The first ship sent last month, provided by Iranian public donations, left for Gaza after Iran's first humanitarian aid cargo sent in October

was stopped to be transferred by Israeli forces in Egypt. In November, Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network, citing political sources speaking on condition of anonymity, reported that Egyptian officials have extended apologies to Iranians that they cannot receive any Iranian aid destined for the strip due to the Israeli regime's refusal to allow it to pass through the Rafah border crossing. The 60 tons of humanitarian aid including food, medical supplies, and medicines, was also sent from the Imam Khomeini Airport (IKA) to Egypt in coordination with the IRCS. The heads of humanitarian organizations have time and again reiterated that the closing of entry routes to Gaza, which limit the number of trucks loaded with aid, entering the besieged territory and restrictions on the movement of humanitarian workers have worsened the "catastrophic" humanitarian condition. World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that the death toll from starvation and sickness in coming months could eclipse the number of people killed in Israeli bombardment so far — more than 27,000, according to the Gaza health ministry, the majority of them women and children.

Syrian Ministry of Culture says US strikes damaged historic sites

The Syrian Ministry of Culture said the overnight US strikes damaged the historical sites in eastern Syria. According to Britain's Sky News, the Ministry of Culture of Syria issued a statement on its Facebook account to react to the recent US airstrike on Deir ez-zor Governorate, during which US fighter jets pounded some sites, including historical monuments. Syrian Ministry of Culture condemns "in the strongest terms the barbaric US bombardment of the Al-Rahba fortress" in eastern Syria's Mayadeen area. In a statement on social media, it says the citadel, located along the Euphrates River, dates to the ninth century, without elaborating on the damage the site sustained. The "blatant" attack violated "all international norms and charters that call for the protection and respect for cultural property," the ministry added. According to Syria's Al-Watan newspaper, Director of the Historical and Archeological Buildings Department at the Directorate-General of Antiqu-



ities and Museums (DGAM) Nazir Awad confirmed that bombardment late Friday caused cracks and fissures in the fortress walls. The full extent of the damage had not yet been assessed, Al-Watan cited Awad as saying. The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) announced on Saturday that American fighter jets conducted airstrikes on 85 positions of resistance fighters both in Iraq and Syria.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
 Cartoonist



Sri Lanka marks 76th Independence Day

Arts & Culture Desk

Sri Lanka Ambassador to Tehran G.M.V. Wishwanath Aponsu extended a warm welcome to Sri Lankan community, and other guests, celebrating the 76th Independence Day of Sri Lanka. In his welcome remarks, the ambassador emphasized the cultural significance of the occasion, highlighting Sri Lanka's rich history and the resilience of its people. He paid tribute to the heroes who secured the nation's freedom in 1948, setting the stage for Sri Lanka's emergence as a free, sovereign, and democratic nation. The ambassador expressed gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran for its unwavering support, acknowledging their role in Sri Lanka's journey over the past 76 years. He emphasized the role of the Sri Lankan community abroad in contributing to the nation's progress and called for their continued support. He acknowledged Iran's recent assistance,



● IRAN DAILY

including urgent medical consignments and support for debt restructuring, as well as progress in humanitarian trade, tourism, education, aviation, sports, and welfare. Looking ahead, the ambassador expressed optimism about achieving the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2048, under the visionary leadership of President Ranil Wickremesinghe. The ambassador extended wishes for peace, progress, and prosperity to the Islamic Republic of Iran.