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Londoners urge end to UK complicity in Israel's decades-long oppression

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STOP GAZA GENOCIDE

Pro-Palestinian activists and supporters wave flags and carry placards on a march through London, during the National Day of Action for Palestine on March 9, 2024.

● HENRY NICHOLLS/AFP

Iran-US trade exchanges grow 240% in Jan. : Report



The US Bureau of Statistics in its latest report pointed to a 240% growth in trade between Iran and the United States in January 2024. Iran and the US exchange of trade in 2023 had been reported to be \$3.1 million, and the figure reached \$10.6 million in January 2024, rising more than threefold, Tasnim News Agency reported. The United States exported over \$7.2 million of products to Iran in January 2024, showing a 130% hike compared to the same period last year. According to the report, the US had exported \$3.1 million worth of products to Iran in January 2023. The US import of products from Iran hit \$3.4 million in January 2024, registering a 100% rise compared to last year's corresponding period. Iran ranked 148th among the US export target markets in January 2024, the report added.

Tehran to host second Iran-Africa summit in April

Iran will host economy ministers from over 40 African countries during the second Iran-Africa International Summit set to be held in April, an official at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said. Mohammad Sadeq Qanadzadeh, the vice chairman of TPO, said on Saturday that the summit will take place on April 26-29 in Tehran, according to IRNA. He made the announcement at a preliminary meeting for the summit, which was attended by Iran's Deputy Minister and Head of the TPO Mehdi Zeyqami, and a number of representatives of the various departments of the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade. Meanwhile, the TPO head said that the summit will be held in Tehran concurrent with the Iran EXPO 2024. The world attaches importance to trade with African countries, Zeyqami said, adding that effective steps should be taken to promote trade and economic ties with Africa, Mehr News Agency reported. Africa is home to one-fifth of the world's population and holds about 30% of its mineral reserves, 12% of its oil, 8% of its natural gas, and 50% of the world's gold reserves.

Historic \$20b deal signed for SP gas pressure-boosting project

Economy Desk

The signing of the country's largest gas deal in the country's history, valued at \$20 billion, for the gas pressure boosting of the South Pars (SP) Gas Field took place in Tehran with the presence of the Iranian minister of oil. On Sunday, in the ceremony for signing the implementation contracts of the South Pars project with Iranian contractors, Javad Owji said, "Most of the country's gas reserves are located in South Pars, and the feedstock for refineries, petrochemicals, and even the country's gasoline production relies on South Pars." The minister mentioned that the average gas production from South Pars is

equivalent to 707 million cubic meters, signifying a pressure decline, IRNA reported.

"Fortunately, before the pressure decline in the gas reservoirs occurred, we addressed it, leading to an increase in extraction capacity to 90 trillion cubic feet (TCF), resulting in a \$900 billion revenue for the country," Owji added. Stating that the development of Azadegan oil field is also on the agenda, he said the project will be launched with the presence of President Ebrahim Raisi.

Owji added that the ministry will prioritize border phases in this project. The oil minister also declared an increase in fuel reserves to one billion li-

ters, and gas reserves to three billion cubic meters this Iranian year (which began on March 21, 2023).

With the implementation of the gas pressure-boosting project in the SP Gas Field, Iran will earn more than \$900 billion in revenues. The chief executive of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Mohsen Khojastehmehr said that the project is an important one in ensuring sustainable energy security.

The deputy oil minister said that pressure boosting plays an important role in producing gas and gas condensates.

Several private-sector contractors will help carry out the gas pressure-boosting project in the joint South Pars field, he added.



IRNA

Tehran, Kabul ink road transport cooperation document



Officials from Iran and Afghanistan signed a joint cooperation document in the field of international road transport.

Director General of Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization for International Transport and Transit Affairs Javad Hedayati met with the Taliban government's Minister of Civil Aviation and Transport Mullah Hamidullah Akhundzada to discuss bilateral ties and issues of mutual interest, Tasnim News Agency reported.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on expanding mutual relations in the fields of transportation and transit.

Hedayati emphasized the determination of the Islamic Republic of Iran to boost economic relations between the two countries, strengthen the transit corridors and the significance of completing the construction operation of the Herat-Mazar-i-Sharif roads for easy access to the Central Asian states for other countries of the region.

Welcoming the decision of the Taliban government regarding the use of Chabahar port, he said that his organization is ready to cooperate with Afghan traders to facilitate the transit of goods within the framework of the logistics services chain at Chabahar port and common border terminals.

Earlier, the transport officials from Iran and Afghanistan's caretaker government emphasized the need for broadening cooperation in the field of transport and transit.

Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash and deputy minister of transport and civil aviation of Afghanistan's caretaker government Hamidullah Saeed held talks in Tehran on the development and enhancement of cooperation between the air, road and rail sectors of the two countries.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran seeking higher share in economy of the sea: PMO chief

The chief executive of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) said there are plans for efforts next year (starting March 20, 2024) to increase the share of the sea in the country's economy.

The organization will take effective steps in the upcoming year to implement three strategies in the fields of "economy of the sea," "transit," and "logistics management," Ali Akbar Safaei said, IRNA reported.

Speaking at the annual conference of the PMO managers, he said pursuing the deployment and

participation of the permanent representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is one of the strategies that will be followed up in the international division of the organization.

The development of transit and foreign investment at ports are other strategies that should be improved in line with developing economic cooperation with the neighboring states, the deputy roads minister emphasized.

Elsewhere in his remarks,

Safaei said the development of transit will be one of the pivotal programs of the organization next year, IRNA reported. Growth of logistics and boosting the business environment at sea and ports are other strategies that will be followed by the organization in the next Iranian calendar year, Safaei noted.

He added that his organization will focus on spurring domestic and foreign investment in port projects and use all its capacities to renovate ports and maritime equipment in the upcoming year.



Annual foreign investment in Iran tops \$4b: Deputy economy minister

The value of foreign investment in Iran within the framework of Direct Foreign Investment (FDI) has reached more than \$4 billion, the head of the Organization of Investment, Economic and Technical Assistant of Iran (OIETA) announced.

Iran's Deputy Economy Minister Ali Fekri said that the current Iranian government, in office since August 2021, has attracted over \$4 billion in foreign investments annually. Turning to Iran's accession

to several major international and regional organizations, he said that Iran's relations were revitalized with international banks and regional organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS group of emerging economies to a great extent in the current administration.

He added that Iran's economic relations with most countries are on a growth trajectory in spite of the sanctions imposed against the country.



Earlier, the organization announced that Iran's Foreign Investment Board, in its latest session, approved \$1.2 billion worth of projects within the framework of the FDI in various economic sectors.

Baladeh Qanat: A historical water system in South Khorasan Province



alibaba.ir



Iranica Desk

The use of qanats for water supply in Iran dates back to the first millennium BCE. Due to low precipitation in Iran, the construction of qanats allowed farmers to bring water from underground springs through channels from the foothills to the surface during times when surface water was not available for daily use and agriculture.

Baladeh Qanat is one of the oldest qanats in Iran, located in South Khorasan Province, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is still active today, providing a significant portion of the water needed for agricultural lands, and is also considered a tourist attraction in Ferdows, a historical city dating back to the third millennium BCE.

Baladeh Qanat is approximately 200 kilometers northwest of Birjand, the capital of South Khorasan Province. It is among the remaining Iranian qanats from the Sassanid period, which, along with 10 others, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on July 14, 2016. The 11 qanats, with a history ranging from

200 years to over 3,000 years, and meeting UNESCO's criteria, are recognized as the 20th registered heritage site from Iran. With its complex technology, Baladeh Qanat represents an important stage in human history and serves as evidence of a cultural tradition dating back to around 2,000 years ago.

All 11 qanats listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List are distinguished by their unique architecture, depth, and other characteristics. These qanats are located in the provinces of Khorasan Razavi, South Khorasan, Yazd, Kerman, and Markazi.

Zarch Qanat, spanning a history of 2,000 to 3,000 years, and stretching over 71 kilometers, stands out as one of the tallest qanats in Iran. Qasabeh Qanat, tracing its origins back to the Achaemenid era, holds the title of the deepest qanat.

Historical records indicate that Baladeh was initially governed by the Medes. The city of Ferdows has long been renowned for its qanats and subterranean aqueducts. While the precise date of Baladeh Qanat's construction remains uncertain, ev-

idence suggests that it was excavated during the Sassanid period. Some sources and historical investigations imply the presence of pottery near Baladeh Qanat, indicating its construction occurred 500 years after the Qasabeh Qanat in Gonabad.

Baladeh Qanat may resemble a conventional water structure, yet the specialized technical expertise applied in its design has ensured its preservation to this day, supplying water for the irrigation of gardens and farmlands in Ferdows. This qanat orchestrates a sophisticated water distribution network by harnessing surface waters from nearby valleys. In the past, water from this qanat was stored in reservoirs to allow sedimentation, serving as a vital water source for the city of Ferdows.

Structures erected atop water reservoirs or ponds in arid regions feature domed or arched configurations, often incorporating multiple entrances leading to staircases for accessing these reservoirs. The water volume in Baladeh Qanat has been significant; hence, in the past, the water was directed into two parts

and two channels to benefit more people. Despite the challenges of living in these conditions, desert dwellers would allocate half of their water rights. Experts in water distribution and channel maintenance, known as *kiyal* and *jooyban*, were compensated and entrusted with the full-time oversight of these channels.

Water from Baladeh Qanat flows into a main channel and then divides into two smaller streams. This qanat plays a crucial role in providing water to the gardens and agricultural lands of the villages of Baghestan Aliya, Solfi, and the city of Eslamieh.

Approximately three years ago, a route was established to allow tourists to explore and appreciate the engineering intricacies of Baladeh Qanat. This route enables visitors to explore the underground and internal spaces of the qanats. Moreover, in the vicinity of the Baladeh Qanat complex and in the villages of Eslamieh, Baghestan Aliya, in Ferdows, there are eco-lodges such as Shams Emareh, Babashabnam, and Sharifi, where you can plan your stay.

Splendor of Mir Mosque in Natanz

Natanz, a picturesque city nestled in Isfahan Province and renowned as a garden city, boasts a rich tapestry of historical landmarks, many of which are proudly listed on the prestigious Iran National Heritage List. Among these treasures stands the magnificent Mir Mosque of Natanz, a site brimming with distinctive embellishments and architectural allure.

Located on Malik Ashtar St. within the charming confines of "Mir Alley," this mosque traces its origins back to the illustrious late Seljuk era, earning its

designation as a national heritage site in 1934. A grand entrance portal, crafted from sturdy bricks, welcomes visitors with a barrel-vault arch adorned with intricate plasterwork decorations and fading relief inscriptions, bearing witness to the passage of time and the elements, destinationiran.com wrote.

The mosque's entrance is flanked by two false arches on separate floors, with the upper arch now in a state of disrepair. Inside, additional brick false arches serve as niches, enhancing the

architectural grandeur of the interior. A corridor leads to a square-shaped *shabestan* (prayer hall), partitioned by columns into nine sections, each supporting a uniform dome atop broad square columns.

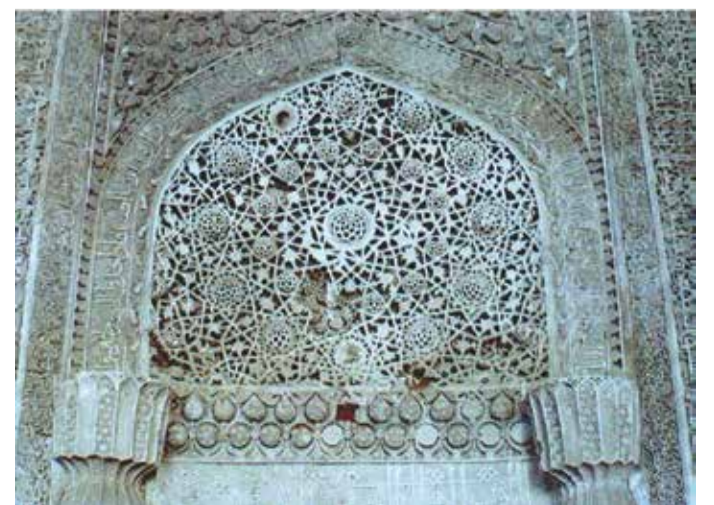
Adjacent to this hall lies a vestibule connecting to a subterranean prayer area, added in recent times to augment the mosque's spiritual sanctity. A defining feature of the Mir Mosque is its dual mihrabs, with the primary altar from the late Seljuk and early Timurid era, standing at an impressive height of

approximately 84cm. Elaborate plasterwork, floral motifs, and refined Arabesque designs grace the altar, complemented by Quranic inscriptions in thuluth script.

Evidences within the mosque hint at a bygone era when the structure may have encompassed two stories, notably showcased by a secondary mihrab perched atop the main one. Despite weather-induced degradation, including the erosion of parts and inscriptions, the enduring charm of the Mir Mosque beckons visitors to delve into

its storied past and architectural opulence.

While the ravages of time have taken their toll on certain sections, the Mir Mosque remains a cherished historical gem in Natanz, beckoning both local and global travelers to behold its unique splendor. A journey to Natanz, whether as part of an Iran tour package or personal pilgrimage, promises a glimpse into a bygone era and the architectural marvels that continue to captivate visitors from far and wide.



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Iran's major achievements in drone

Tufan

Tufan locates and destroys the enemy using an optical tracker. Also known as Chamran-2, the drone is made of lightweight and radar-absorbing materials, with the lowest radar cross-section. The forward-looking camera, located in the nose of this aerial vehicle, sends real-time images until the last moment to complete the targeting task. Tufan has a maximum speed of 250 km/h, a flight radius of 100km, a flight ceiling of 14,000 feet (4,267m), and a flight endurance of 21-22 hours. A 100-kilometer range provides it with acceptable operational value, allowing sufficient time for target search and attack during its flight endurance. By utilizing ground station guidance and navigation, Tufan can be upgraded to have a range of 200km to 400km. Its launching mechanism is JATO (Jet-Assisted Take-Off), a type of auxiliary rocket engine used in the aviation industry to provide additional thrust during takeoff. If necessary, the drone performs a gentle landing on the ground for recovery, allowing the launch of these small drones near the frontlines, or in urban combat areas as an immediate and rapid response solution for destroying a significant target.

Sa'eqeh

Equipped with a 10-km warhead, the drone is used for suicide missions with a range of 100km. It transmits images up to the point of impact, allowing the user to stay informed about the target's latest status. Manufactured in two types: 1 and 2, with somewhat different specifications:

Sa'eqeh-1

With high agility in terms of maneuverability, Saeqeh-1 is among the fastest Iranian propeller-driven UAVs, making it a suitable tool for practicing artillery techniques. The JATO-launched drone does not need a runway to obtain the necessary initial speed for flight. Saeqeh-1 is used in the practical training of air defense operations as a target for non-radar air defense systems, as well as to deceive the enemy on the battlefield. The execution of maneuvers in the Saeqeh-1 is carried out through a radio-controlled device with an optical tracking system by the pilot, and the flight stability is ensured by an automatic stability system. It is recovered through a parachute, and in emergency situations, it can gently land on the runway by the pilot. The maximum speed is 250km/h, the flight radius is 10km, the flight ceiling is 11,000 feet (about 3,300m) and its flight duration is about 60 minutes.

Sa'eqeh-2

Sa'eqeh-2, in addition to its educational and personnel training purposes in radar and missile defense, can also be used to deceive the enemy on the battlefield. This drone can fly at an altitude of 10,000 to 12,000 feet (3,000 to 3,600m). It has a length of 2.81m, a wingspan of 2.60m, a maximum launch weight of 60kg, a maximum speed of 230 to 250km/h, a flight endurance of 45 to 60 minutes, and a range of 50km. The ground control station for this drone serves as a system for sending necessary information and commands to guide and control the drone, manipulated by the pilot. It has the capability for establishing uplink and downlink communication, receiving flight data, storing, and displaying received information. After following its planned route, Saeqeh-2 automatically returns to its takeoff point, or any predefined location. The recovery of this drone, like Saeqeh-1, is also carried out through a parachute, and in emergency situations, it can gently land on the runway by the pilot. This combat drone has a range of 100km and is designed for rapid attacks in less than 30 minutes. Sa'eqeh-2 is equipped to send images and carry explosive payloads for effective destruction.

Ababil

The Ababil drone group, including types S, B, and T, is another domestically-designed drone family. Its first-generation design dates back to the mid-years of the Iraqi-imposed war (1980-1988). The drone uses a four-cylinder piston engine with a propeller blade. The dimensional and flight specifications of different models within the Ababil family vary, including the capability to reach speeds of 300km/h, an operational identification range of 150km, a flight ceiling of approximately 4,200m, and the capacity to carry identification or explosive payloads ranging from 30kg to 40kg. In addition to a reconnaissance mission, where Ababil demonstrated its capabilities by capturing images of the US aircraft carriers in October 2023, this drone is also used as an aerial defense target for anti-aircraft exercises. Ababil is a low-wing aircraft with a canard (foreplane), and this characteristic contributes to its high maneuverability due to the inherent instability or low stability feature, especially at high altitudes. General features: suitable aerodynamic design, quick disassembly and assembly, ease of use and repair, good maneuverability and flexibility, usability in both sea and land environments, recoverability and reuse, and reasonable total cost.

Kian-1

Built in 2014, the Kian-1 drone has a mission to assess air defense equipment. It is a small-scale suicide and target drone with a microjet engine capable of reaching a maximum speed of 480km/h. This drone, with a 2-m wingspan, can carry a payload of 30kg. It has a ceiling of nearly 5,500m, and flies at a cruising speed of 350km/h.



Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, have emerged as a modern phenomenon, finding uses in sectors such as surveillance, agriculture, and disaster management. However, their significance extends beyond these applications, as they play a prominent role in global battles and wars, with "suicide" drones standing out

among various types.

Equipped with advanced capabilities, drones have rewritten the rules of warfare. Due to their economic efficiency, effective impact, and ease of deployment, these vehicles have become significant weapons in determining the outcome of battlegrounds, capable of inflicting considerable losses on the enemy, or at least

causing significant damage.

The following infographic aims to shed light on Iran's most significant drone accomplishments. Its armed forces and defense industries have designed and produced a diverse range of suicide drones, transforming the country into a prominent player in the field of suicide drone design and production.

Karrar

Unveiled in 2010, the Karrar drone has an operational range of up to 1,000km. It intercepts and destroys aerial targets at a much lower cost than manned jet fighters. Up to now, four generations of Karrar drones have been introduced, each with slight differences in dimensions and flight characteristics but serving various missions. All kinds of combat drones are launched using a rail launcher and solid fuel accelerator. The landing method is carried out through a parachute and airbag. This model has achieved a maximum flight ceiling of 35,000 feet with a top speed of 700km/h and a cruising speed of 650km/h, and has a continuous flight endurance of one hour and 15 minutes. Other models of the Karrar have the ability to fly at an altitude of 40,000 feet, equivalent to 12,200m, and a maximum speed of 900km/h. By adding different navigation systems and an optical sensor at the tip of its nose, as well as a secure data link between the drone and the air defense command stations, the suicide drone has gained the ability to automatically take off from its storage location and fly towards its target with the most optimal takeoff route upon receiving target information directly.

Kian-2

Kian-2 targets and disables aerial defense systems, with precise strikes. The operational range of this drone is over 1,000km. This drone is a delta-wing type, which gives it good dynamic characteristics at high speeds, including high maneuverability that is also used to increase accuracy in target destruction. The thick wings suitable for subsonic flight speeds have allowed Kian-2 to carry much more fuel. Kian-1 and -2 are capable of carrying out offensive missions necessary for the operation of the country's air defense network, such as destroying enemy listening posts, or electronic warfare centers that threaten the operation of the country's air defense system.

Shahed-131 and Shahed-136

For the first time in the Great Prophet (PBUH) 15 drill (June 2021), images of various targets being destroyed by these drones of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force were showcased. During the Great Prophet (PBUH) 17 drill, these drones also played a prominent role in the exercise of attacking the Dimona nuclear reactor simulator and demonstrated their high accuracy in this exercise. The suicide drones have delta-shaped bodies and utilize piston engines as propulsion.

Shahed Family drones

These suicide drones are known for their versatility, range, and capabilities for surveillance, reconnaissance, and combat missions.

Shahed-238

Shahed-238 are in three types, equipped with thermal, optical, and sensor-free seekers. Its turbojet engine provides the Shahed-238 with a cruising speed of around 520km/h during the mid-course of the flight, as recorded during radar surveillance of this drone.

Shahed-107

Shahed 107 is a multi-purpose drone capable of being used not only as a suicide drone but also as a combat or reconnaissance UAV.

Arash

The Arash-2 has a range of 2,000km. This drone, powered by a piston engine, has a cylindrical body with a vertical tail and two wings positioned at the end of the body. Its launching method is JATO and, therefore, does not need a runway to obtain the necessary initial speed for flight. The Arash drone is capable of flying towards targets using various mobile launchers, allowing operators to deploy it in various geographical locations.

Meraj-532

The UAV with a piston engine has a one-way range of 450km. Its flight ceiling is 12,000 feet (4,267m). Equipped with a 50-km warhead, this drone is capable of flying at an altitude of 12,000 feet for three hours. The type of its takeoff is a catapult launch manner from a vehicle.

Sayyad

The Sayyad drone has a slim body and a V-shaped tail to reduce its radar reflectivity. It also utilizes a piston engine for propulsion.

Meraj-521

The loitering munition drone has the capability of being carried by personnel and deployed in combat units. The drone has the ability to be fired from various types of vehicles.

Sina

The loitering munition drone is a suicide anti-target drone targeting gatherings of individuals and vehicles. The drone has an operational range of up to 5km. It is launched from a ground launcher. With an eight-minute loitering time, it is equipped with manual and automatic guidance, explosively formed penetrator (EFP) warhead, and an electric motor.

Asian Age Group Aquatics Championships: Water polo silver tops off medal-laden campaign for Iran



● IRSF

Sports Desk

Iranian boys settled for the water polo silver at the Asian Age Group Aquatics Championships in the Filipino city of Capas following a 17-13 defeat against Japan.

The two sides went toe-to-toe for the best part of the final showpiece, with only one goal separating them by the end of the third quarter, before the Japanese opened up a three-goal gap in the final period to walk away with the ultimate prize.

The Iranian young guns ran away comfortable winners over Malaysia (34-3), Sri Lanka (34-0), and played to a 9-9 stalemate against Kazakhstan, before a 19-8 victory over Singapore sealed a top-spot finish in Group B for Ali Pirouzkah's boys.

Iran then went on to beat China 7-5 for a place in the final.

Saturday's silver brought the curtain down on a glorious campaign for the Iranian boys in Capas, which also featured a remarkable 18 medals across dif-

ferent age classes of the swimming and diving competitions.

Sam Vajer, who claimed the best diver award in the 15-17 age class, bagged a couple of golds in the boys' board level 3m and 1m contests, as well as the platform silver.

He also teamed up with Kiumars Aslani to win the 3m synchronized springboard silver and finish on the third podium in the synchro board level final. Samyar Abdoli, meanwhile, led the charge for the country in the swimming contests with a men's 50m freestyle gold in the over-18 class, while he was part of the four-man team alongside Homer Abbasi, Mehrshad Afghari, and Matin Sohran that won the 4X100m freestyle relay bronze.

Mohammad-Mahdi Gholami also enjoyed a prolific campaign with five medals in the 13-14 age category despite leaving Capas without a gold – grabbing double silvers in the 200m individual medley and 200m butterfly events – as Iran finished with three golds plus eight silvers and bronzes apiece.

Mokhtari suspended by IWF after Vehbi Emre mayhem

Sports Desk

Greco-Roman wrestler Mohammadreza Mokhtari has been banned "until further notice" by the Iranian Wrestling Federation, the IWF announced on Saturday, following a physical altercation with a Turkish opponent at the Yasar Dogu & Vehbi Emre tournament in Antalya.

The incident came in the closing stages of the 77kg semifinal, where Mokhtari, trailing a 7-3 scoreline, complained to the referee against the host's Yuksel Saricicek repeatedly using his arm an elbow when defending the Iranian's attacks, before his frustration eventually led to an exchange of punches and kicks between the two wrestlers.

Members from the two

camp, including Iranian head coach Hassan Rangraz, as well as the organizing officials had to interfere to end the brawl and both athletes were disqualified afterwards, which gave Amin Kavianejad – beaten by Mokhtari in the previous round – a second chance to go all the way to beat fellow-Iranian Ali Oskou 5-0 in the final.

Sharam Lorestani, the head of the Iranian federation's disciplinary committee said the final decision on Mokhtari will be made "following a full review of the incident", while he could be facing further punishment by the United World Wrestling – the international governing body of the sport.

The suspension could also mean the end of the ex-Asian champion's quest

for a place in the Paris Olympics in August as Kavianejad will now be the frontrunner to represent the country in the Asian qualification tournament in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, next month.

Mokhtari took to Instagram on Saturday to offer his apology to the Iranian wrestling fans, saying: "Respectful behavior has always been a top priority in my life and sporting career, and I deeply regret what happened in the bout against the Turkish wrestler."

Friday's incident overshadowed an impressive campaign for the Iranian 19-man squad in Antalya, which collected 12 medals – including four golds – to beat the host to the Greco-Roman team title.

Kavianejad was joined by Pouria Dadmarz (55kg), Saeid Esmaeili (67kg), and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg) in claiming the ultimate prize of their respective weight classes, while Oskou, Amir-Reza Dehbozorgi (60kg), Rasoul Garmsiri (82kg), Mahdi Bali (97kg), and reigning world champion Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg), who suffered a knee problem ahead of the superheavyweight final, added five silvers to Iran's medal haul.

Amir Abdi (77kg), Abbas Mahdizadeh (82kg), and Fardin Hedayati (130kg) left Antalya with three consolation bronzes as Iran finished atop the table with 166 points, with Turkey in second on 107 points.

Iran's Boloukat wins slalom bronze in Asian Junior Championships

Sports Desk

Iranian skier Ali Boloukat bagged a second bronze for the country at the Asian Junior Alpine Ski Championships in Jilin, China.

The young Iranian finished third to athletes from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the men's slalom event at the Beidahu Ski Resort on Sunday. Atena Kiashemshaki had opened the account for Iran in the 32nd edition of the competition on the preceding day, when she won the women's giant slalom bronze – following South



● skifed.ir

Korean and the host's skiers. Kiashemshaki was also part

of the women's slalom race on Sunday, finishing fifth.

Doncic sets new NBA record in Mavericks win at Pistons



● NIC ANTAYA/GETTY IMAGES

BBC – Luka Doncic became the first NBA player to record six consecutive 30-point triple-doubles as the Dallas Mavericks won 142-124 at the Detroit Pistons.

Russell Westbrook's mark of five in a row from 2017 was beaten by Doncic as the Slovenian, 25, delivered 39 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds on Saturday.

He also extended his own record with a fifth straight 35-point triple-double.

"That just shows what level he's playing on right now," said Mavericks coach Jason Kidd.

Kyrie Irving added 21 points for Dallas, who pulled away in the second half to claim their second straight win after a

three-game losing streak. Dallas now have a 36-28 record behind just the New Orleans Pelicans (38-25) in the Western Conference Southwest division.

The Denver Nuggets had their highest ever half-time lead of 78-44 before closing out a 142-121 win at home to the Utah Jazz.



● UWW



Worldwide protests call for Gaza cease-fire

Londoners urge end to UK complicity in Israel's decades-long oppression

International Desk

Hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets on Saturday in several major cities around the world to show solidarity with Palestinians and call for an immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. In Britain's capital, London, tens of thousands of protesters marched in central city to call for a cease-fire in Gaza. The march, from Hyde Park Corner to the US Embassy, was the 10th pro-Palestinian march in central London since Israel started its onslaught on Gaza following the October 7 attacks by the Hamas resistance group. "We will continue to protest until a cease-fire is called, and until there is an end to all UK complicity with Israel's decades-long oppression of the Palestinian people," march organizer Ben Jamal said ahead of the protest. Singer Charlotte Church was

seen at the front of the march as it set off. The Welsh singer, who has been a vocal campaigner, said she had joined to "show solidarity" with Palestinians "for all that they are suffering through". Israel's military launched an air and ground strike on the Gaza Strip after Hamas's deadly attacks on Israel on October 7, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 253 others were taken captive. Israel has killed nearly 31,000 people in Gaza since then. The conflict has created a growing humanitarian crisis in the territory and the UN has warned that famine in Gaza is "almost inevitable". At least 576,000 people across the Gaza Strip – one quarter of the population – are facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity, and one in six children under the age of two in the north are suffering from acute malnutrition, a senior

UN aid official warned last week.

Israel's president not welcome in Amsterdam

In Netherlands' capital Amsterdam, where Dutch King Willem-Alexander officially opened the country's first Holocaust Museum on Sunday, demonstrators angry at Israel's military campaign in Gaza protested against the regime's President Isaac Herzog, who also addressed the ceremony. Thousands gathered waving Palestinian flags and banners, and shouting "Never Again Is Now," a reference to their belief Israel is committing genocide in the Palestinian territory. They booed and shouted slogans as the dignitaries arrived at the museum. "There's only one place for him [president of Israel] here and that's the ICC," said Estelle Jilissen, a 25-year-old consultant, referring to the International Criminal Court that tries sus-

pected war criminals.

"A lot of Jewish people are against his arrival here as well because the pain of their ancestors, the suffering of their ancestors, is being smeared by this president's arrival," said Jilissen.

New York demonstration

In the US, thousands of pro-Palestine protesters flooded the streets of New York as part of a demonstration on International Women's Day, which saw them storm the Oculus near the World Trade Center. Footage shows the demonstrators clutching Palestinian flags, shouting and cheering after they successfully squeeze into the shopping center on Friday. Once inside, they formed a drumming circle and waved banners which read: "30, 878 dead and Joe is eating ice cream," in reference to the president nonchalantly slurping on an ice cream cone while being grilled about the situation between Israel and Gaza recently.



Pro-Palestinian activists and supporters wave flags and carry placards on a march through London during the National Day of Action for Palestine on March 9, 2024. **● HENRY NICHOLLS/AFP**

Rallies in Bosnia, Serbia

Meanwhile, thousands gathered in the capitals of Western Balkan countries to show support for Palestine amid an intensified Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip. People in Bosnia and Herzegovina gathered with Palestinian flags in their hands in front of the public fountain in Bascarsija in Sarajevo. Meanwhile, hundreds participated in protests in Serbia's Novi Pazar, where most Muslims reside. Protesters came together with banners painted in red, symbolizing blood, and created a human text message: "Free Gaza". Similar protests were also held in Calgary, Canada; Rome, Italy; and Paris, France.

Raisi congratulates Zardari on his election as Pakistan's new president



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi congratulated Asif Ali Zardari on his election as the new president of Pakistan. In a message on Sunday, Raisi expressed hope that the two countries will further develop mutual relations during Zardari's presidency given mutual historical, cultural and religious bonds.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, as always and especially in the new tenure, announces its readiness to develop relations with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," he said. Zardari, the widower of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, on Sunday was sworn in after winning a second non-consecutive term. He previously served as president from 2008 until 2013. Pakistan's newly formed National Assembly, as the lower house of parliament is called, on March 3 elected Shehbaz Sharif as prime minister for the second time by 201 votes, presiding over a shaky alliance that has shut out followers of jailed opposition leader and former prime minister Imran Khan.

Hezbollah targets Israeli positions with rockets, drones

The Hezbollah resistance movement launched rocket and drone attacks on positions in the Israeli-occupied territories in retaliation for a deadly attack by the regime's military on southern Lebanon carried out early on Sunday. In a statement released on Sunday, Hezbollah said that its fighters had targeted the Meron settlement in the occupied territories with Katyusha rockets, Press TV reported.

The group said it also launched a drone attack on Israeli artillery launchers in the Arar barracks and fired rockets at a gathering of the regime's soldiers east of the Birkat Risha outpost. The operation came "in response to the enemy's attacks on the steadfast southern villages and civilian homes, the most recent of which was the attack on ... Khirbet Selm and the martyrdom" of five people, it said. A family of four, including a father, his pregnant wife and their two sons, and another individual, were killed in the Israeli strike on a house in the Khirbet Selm village in southern Lebanon on Sunday, Lebanon's official National News Agency reported. The air raid also wounded at least nine others who lived nearby.



Smoke billows above buildings following an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese border village of Majdal Zoun on March 9, 2024. **● AFP**

The year since Iran-Saudi Arabia rapprochement



By Emad Abshenas
West Asia expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

A year ago, relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia returned to normal after several years following an agreement mediated by China. After different experiences and based on the existing facts, Iran and Saudi Arabia came to a conclusion that they should restore diplomatic relations, while each side had its own reasons to do so. Since the signing of the agreement, it was expected that relations between the two countries would expand to economic fields and international cooperation.

However, contrary to expectations, these relations have remained at the diplomatic or political level for now, and have not expanded to other areas. Perhaps there are still some political issues and controversial issues that have not been resolved. On the other hand, it seems that Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region are waiting for the results of the presidential elections in the United States.

One of the reasons behind Riyadh's decision to ease tensions with Tehran was its differences with the policies of the US government – the issue that sparked Saudi Arabia's decision to expand relations with the East, namely China, Russia and Iran. Saudi Arabia also needed to establish peace with the Ansarallah movement in Yemen to proceed with its development plans, and the agreement with Iran helped to end the war in Yemen.

On the part of Iran, there are still some concerns regarding relations with Saudi Arabia, as the economic relations between the two countries have not changed significantly, and even the issue of Hajj and pilgrimage between the two countries is still facing problems. At the level of international cooperation, differences still exist between Tehran and Riyadh – an issue that was obvious during a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the Gaza war.

In addition to bilateral issues, some external pressures may also have an impact on relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Before the restoration of relations, countries such as Oman, Qatar and Iraq had acted as mediators, but the signing of the agreement required a reliable mediator to guarantee the agreement. Therefore, China stepped in and played a positive role.

Although the United States did not oppose the normalization of relations between the two countries, it exerted pressure on Riyadh to also normalize relations with Israel. However, due to domestic opposition and opposition from the Arab world, Saudi Arabia could not advance the issue of normalization with Israel before determining the issue of Palestine.

Therefore, there may be pressure from the US and Israel on Riyadh to hinder progress in relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. While there are many capacities on both sides to develop relations and extend them to economic, cultural and international cooperation fields, ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia have remained at the diplomatic level over the past year.

Iranian video art 'Sculpture' awarded in St. Petersburg

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian video artist Ramin Hosseinpour's work, 'Sculpture,' won the Best Music Video Animation Award at the 12th Halo International Film Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia.

The closing ceremony took place at the historic and cultural venue, Kazanskaya St. Petersburg, with winners invited to Russia to showcase their works, IRNA reported. Hosseinpour's video art has been previously won awards at various international festivals including 2022 Vancouver Independent Film Festival Award, 2022 Rome Music Video Award, One-Reeler Short Film Competition, International Music Video Underground, Munich Music Video Awards, Boden International Film Festival, High Tatra Film & Video Festival, Art Blocks International Film Festival, Europe Music Video Awards, Vegas Movie Awards, Accolade Competition, Europe Film Festival U.K. (EFFUK), Stockholm Gold Awards International Film Festival, Prague International Film Festival, International Izmir Short Film Festival, International Music Video Awards and Zagreb Film Festival.



The video is listed among the top 50 selected documentaries on IMDb in 2023-2024, showcasing its international acclaim. Media outlets globally have recognized Hosseinpour as a multi-talented artist with numerous talents. 'Sculpture,' showcases Hosseinpour's skills in composing, arranging, singing, and

playing the electric guitar. Hosseinpour, educated in architecture, music, and cinema, has left his mark as a designer, educator, writer, poet, composer, arranger, and performer in the fields of architecture and music. His contributions to cinema, as a writer, director, producer, and conceptual artist, have

been acknowledged in the international Euro Art House Cinema Day magazine in Germany. In 2015, Hosseinpour merged architecture, music, and cinema to produce two works titled 'Ghanimat' (Boo-ty) and 'Eshtiagh' (Longing),' both finalists at various international film festivals.

Minister: Gaza focal point of Int'l Holy Qur'an Exhibition

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance emphasized the significance of highlighting the issue of Gaza in the upcoming 31st edition of the International Holy Qur'an Exhibition during the month of Ramadan.

Speaking at the 31st session of the International Qur'an Exhibition Council on March 10, Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili stressed the need to prevent intentional neglect of Gaza, urging all exhibition sectors to address this matter, IRNA wrote.

Esmaeili noted that the exhibition's progress is crucial for all nations and not confined to a single organization.

He called for strengthening the presence of children and adolescents at the exhibition, emphasizing the inclusion of activities related to Qur'anic memorization.

He encouraged youth of different age groups to produce and share video clips centered on memorizing the Holy Qur'an.

The minister underscored the importance of bringing the Qur'an exhibition to people's homes and engaging families in the event.

He suggested the inclusion of live performances by Qur'an memorizers during exhibition days.

Referring to the tragic events in Gaza, Esmaeili highlighted that the International Section of the exhibi-



tion should prioritize addressing the Gaza situation.

In the session, the organizers presented a report on various activities undertaken for the successful execution of the exhibition, including Qur'an memorization campaigns, media people related to the exhibition, and efforts against enemies and Zionism.

The exhibition will open on March 21 and will run through April 3.

PICS OF THE DAY



A carriage section, featuring historical carriages and chariots such as Nassereddin Shah's carriage, opened at Museum of Historical Cars of Iran on March 10, 2024.
 ● MOHAMMAD-MAHDI POURARAB/IRNA

Next Persian year designated as Year of East Azarbaijan

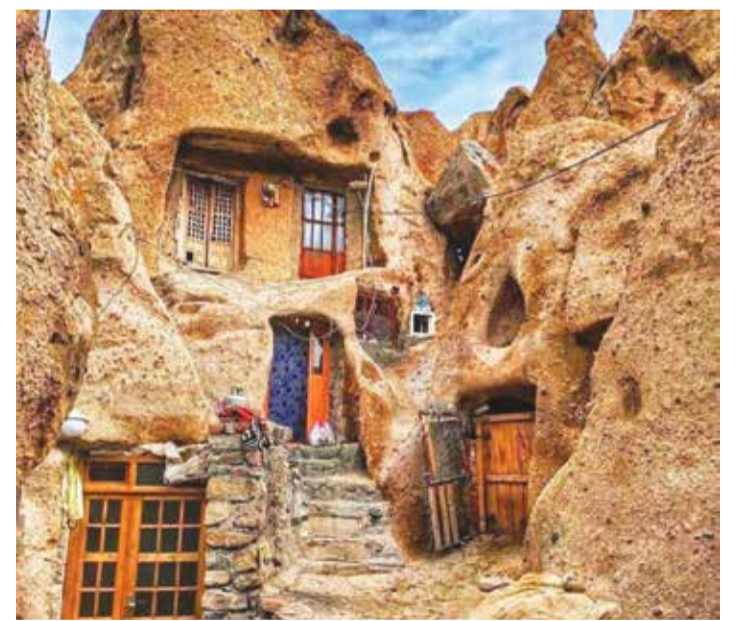
Arts & Culture Desk

In a cultural move aimed at promoting the rich history, culture, tourist attractions, industrial capacities, agriculture, and notable figures of East Azarbaijan, Iran's Architecture Prideworthy Foundation and the Iranian Public Relations Association designated the next Persian year (starting from March 20, 2024) as the "Year of East Azarbaijan."

The objective behind this is to introduce the diverse and abundant potentials of this vast province to both fellow citizens and the global community, Tasnim news agency wrote. East Azarbaijan, with its illustrious historical and cultural background, standing as a cradle of civilizations and diverse cultures, boasts natural and captivating tourist attractions, vital industrial hubs, and notewor-

thy agricultural capacities. It is rightfully considered a fitting choice for this program. The beginning of the "Year of East Azarbaijan" program will kick off with the event "Nowruz in Kandovan." Kandovan, recognized as the first globally acknowledged tourist village in Iran, distinguishes itself with unique rock architecture, undoubtedly capturing the attention of both domestic and international tourists.

The "Year of East Azarbaijan" program is anticipated to provide a golden opportunity to showcase the province as one of the top tourist destinations and economic hubs in Iran. Furthermore, the program is expected to contribute to the enhancement of the tourism industry, agriculture, and other economic sectors, fostering employment and economic prosperity in the region.



Renowned poet Nezami remembered in Turkmenistan

The Iranian Embassy in Ashgabat organized an event on Saturday to commemorate Nezami Ganjavi, a renowned Persian poet and storyteller from the 12th century.

The ceremony, attended by Iranian Ambassador Ali Mojtaba Roozbahani, Maral Muradova of Daulat Muhammad Azadi State University, Bahar Ataniazova, Head of the Persian Language Department, and other professors and students, highlighted Nezami's contributions to Persian literature, IRNA wrote. Roozbahani praised Nezami as one

of Iran's gems, emphasizing his storytelling ability, illustration skills, and character development. The ambassador commended Turkmen officials for their commitment to expanding cultural cooperation between Tehran and Ashgabat.

The event featured the recitation of Nezami's story 'Khosro and Shirin' and readings of essays and poems by Azadi State University students. Nezami Ganjavi is celebrated for his significant role in shaping Iran's mystical and romantic culture, particularly through works like 'Panj

Ganj.' The Iranian ambassador underscored Nezami's focus on human identity and the central role of humanity in his works. He acknowledged Nezami's efforts to express mystical and philosophical thoughts in poetic language, citing the enduring popularity of the romantic tale of Khosro and Shirin among the people.

The cultural attaché of the Iranian embassy in Turkmenistan, Navid Rasouli, celebrated Nezami's stature in Persian literature, comparing him to a shining star in the literary

sky. Bahar Ataniazova, the Head of the Persian Language Department at Azadi State University, highlighted the profound impact of Nezami among other great thinkers and poets in the history of the Middle East. Ataniazova stressed the importance of studying Nezami's literary legacy, promoting his works, and transmitting his profound thoughts to future generations as fundamental priorities. The ceremony served as a poignant tribute to the enduring influence of Nezami Ganjavi in Persian literature and cultural heritage.