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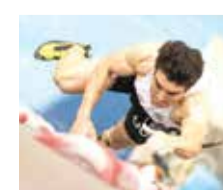
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Iran partakes in BRICS agriculture ministers meeting in Moscow

The 14th meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Agriculture has been held in Moscow with the Iranian delegation in attendance. Representatives of Brazil, China, India, South Africa, and South Africa took part in the meeting on Friday, IRNA reported.

New members of the association, namely Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Ethiopia, also participated in the event. The meeting addressed the development of sustainable agriculture, the establishment of the BRICS grain exchange, and other issues.

Alireza Mohajer, a senior official with the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad, headed the Iranian delegation at the international event.

The BRICS countries will develop and approve a new action plan for cooperation in the field of agriculture in 2025, taking into account the countries that have joined, Russia's Agriculture Minister Oksana Lut said, stressing that Russia is ready to actively participate in its development.

"Another result of the chairmanship was the general report on the implementation of the action plan for cooperation between BRICS countries in the field of agriculture in 2021-24, which was approved at a meeting of the BRICS Working Group on Agriculture. I would like to note that we have achieved significant successes in the implementation of the provisions of the plan. Looking ahead, I would like to note that within the framework of the Brazilian BRICS presidency in 2025 we will have to develop and approve a new plan, taking into account the accession countries," Lut said. According to her, the BRICS countries have "the best resource base." For example, the share of agricultural land in the BRICS countries exceeds 30% of the global area. "BRICS countries have significant potential to strengthen their position in the global agricultural market and provide uninterrupted supplies to ensure global food security," the minister said.

"In 2024, BRICS has significantly expanded and new countries have joined us. I would like to welcome Brazil, India, China, and South Africa, as well as the new BRICS members - the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Egypt, and Ethiopia. I am confident that we will continue to develop the political and economic partnership between our countries in the field of agriculture and food security," she added.



ELECOMP 2024 kicks off in Tehran

The 27th Iran International Electronic, Computer & E-Commerce Exhibition entitled "Iran ELECOMP 2024" was launched at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Saturday in the presence of Iran's Minister of Communications and Informa-

tion Technology Issa Zarepour. The exhibition, with the slogan of "All Together for Digital Economy", will run from June 29 to July 2, 2024, as reported by Tasnim News Agency. In the exhibition, startups, economic enterprises and com-

panies active in the related field will showcase their latest achievements and products to help promote the country's digital economy. Taking advantage of the high capability and potential of the private sector more than before

has been the focus of the 27th edition of the ELECOMP. In addition, the exhibition will host representatives of foreign countries including Russia, South Korea, Germany, Taiwan, Syria, China, Pakistan and Turkey. More than 500 startup compa-

nies and nine science and technology parks are taking part in this edition of the exhibition. ELECOMP is regarded as the most significant commercial event in Iran's electronics and computer products and services market.

Iran stands as main producer of ornamental fish in Mideast



By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writers

Iran's annual production of ornamental fish stands at over 380 million pieces, announced Mohammad Hassan Elahi, the head of the Iran Fisheries Organization's Ornamental Fish Department, adding that the country has the largest amount of ornamental fish production among Middle Eastern countries. Talking to Iran Daily, Elahi said the country's export of ornamental fish has faced a lot of ups and downs in recent years, and now it stands at over \$2 million dollars per year, but the figure hit \$2.8 million some years ago. "The recent pandemic of Corona

Virus (COVID-19) has been one of the factors in reducing the export of ornamental fish in Iran and has created problems in the field of export to neighboring countries," Elahi said.

He pointed to Iraq as one of the largest importers of ornamental fish from Iran in the past which re-exported a part of Iranian ornamental fish, but during the pandemic, the Arab country limited the import of the product due to a series of health considerations.

Fish production was around 230 million pieces 10 years ago, which has gradually increased, Elahi stated, noting that the figure of the production of aquarium fish was 330 million pieces during the year to March 19,

which is expected to top 380 million pieces during the current year.

As the breeding and rearing of ornamental fish in Iran is a new industry, the country's share in the global market is small, he said, adding that the country holds about one percent of the world ornamental fish market.

"Iran enjoys a suitable climate for the production of ornamental fish, based on which the production of ornamental fish is now carried out in all provinces of the country."

The official went on to say that aquarium fish production in our country is done in the form of small businesses or mass production in large farms in urban and rural areas.

Considering the potential that the country enjoys in the field of ornamental fish production and breeding, if measures are taken to build ornamental fish breeding farms, we will succeed in fetching more forex from the production and export of ornamental fish along with further job creation. Pointing out that 12,600 people are employed in the ornamental fish industry in Iran, he said the financial turnover of the ornamental fish industry in the country is about \$120 million. According to the official, currently more than 125 species of freshwater and saltwater aquarium fish are being bred across the country.

Iran ranked world's 7th largest crude producer in 2023

Iran was the 7th largest crude oil producer in the world in 2023, according to the British IE Institute. Iran also ranked second in the world in terms of rise in production, registering a 19-percent growth in production of crude oil and condensates last year, the institute added. In its report on the review of global energy, the IE Institute said Iran ranked second in terms of increasing the volume of its crude oil production in 2023. Despite the cruel and unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States, Iran produced 3.940 million barrels of crude oil and conden-

sates per day (bpd) in 2023, registering a 19-percent growth compared to a year earlier, the report said. Iran had produced more than 3.331 million bpd of oil in 2022. More than 82 million barrels of oil per day were produced in the world in 2023, showing a 1.4 percent growth compared to a year before. Production of crude oil and condensates in Saudi Arabia decreased by 8.6 percent in 2023. According to the report, Iran accounted for 4.8 percent of the world's total crude oil and gas condensates production in 2023.



Iran exports \$50m worth of handwoven carpets

The CEO of the National Union of Handwoven Carpet Cooperatives of Iran said \$50 million of the handwoven carpets were exported from the country in the last Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023 to March 19, 2024). Highlighting the significance of organizing the

Handwoven Carpet Exhibition, Abdollah Bahrami said the issue of organizing the exhibition and participation of foreign delegations is of paramount importance, because introducing, supplying, selling and marketing handwoven carpets would be very effective, Tasnim News Agency reported.

The 16th International Carpet Expo 2024 is slated to be held from November 13 to 16, 2024 at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds. It is one of the most important international events in the field of carpets, moquettes, and related industries in Iran.

The exhibition's objective is to provide the participants and exhibitors with information on the latest developments of Iran's carpet and moquette producers and provide a chance for business relationships between domestic and international businesses and market players.



Shah Abbasid Caravanserai, a legacy of Safavid architecture in Neyshabur

Iranica Desk

The Shah Abbasid Caravanserai in Neyshabur, Khorasan Razavi Province, is one of the many caravanserais in Iran that was constructed by Shah Abbas Safavid (1571-1629 CE) during his reign. This caravanserai gained a high reputation due to its location on the route taken by caravans heading towards the city of Mashhad, home to the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), the third Imam of Shia Muslims. The notable edifice of the Shah Abbasid Caravanserai is a prominent attraction in Neyshabur and is currently utilized as a museum.

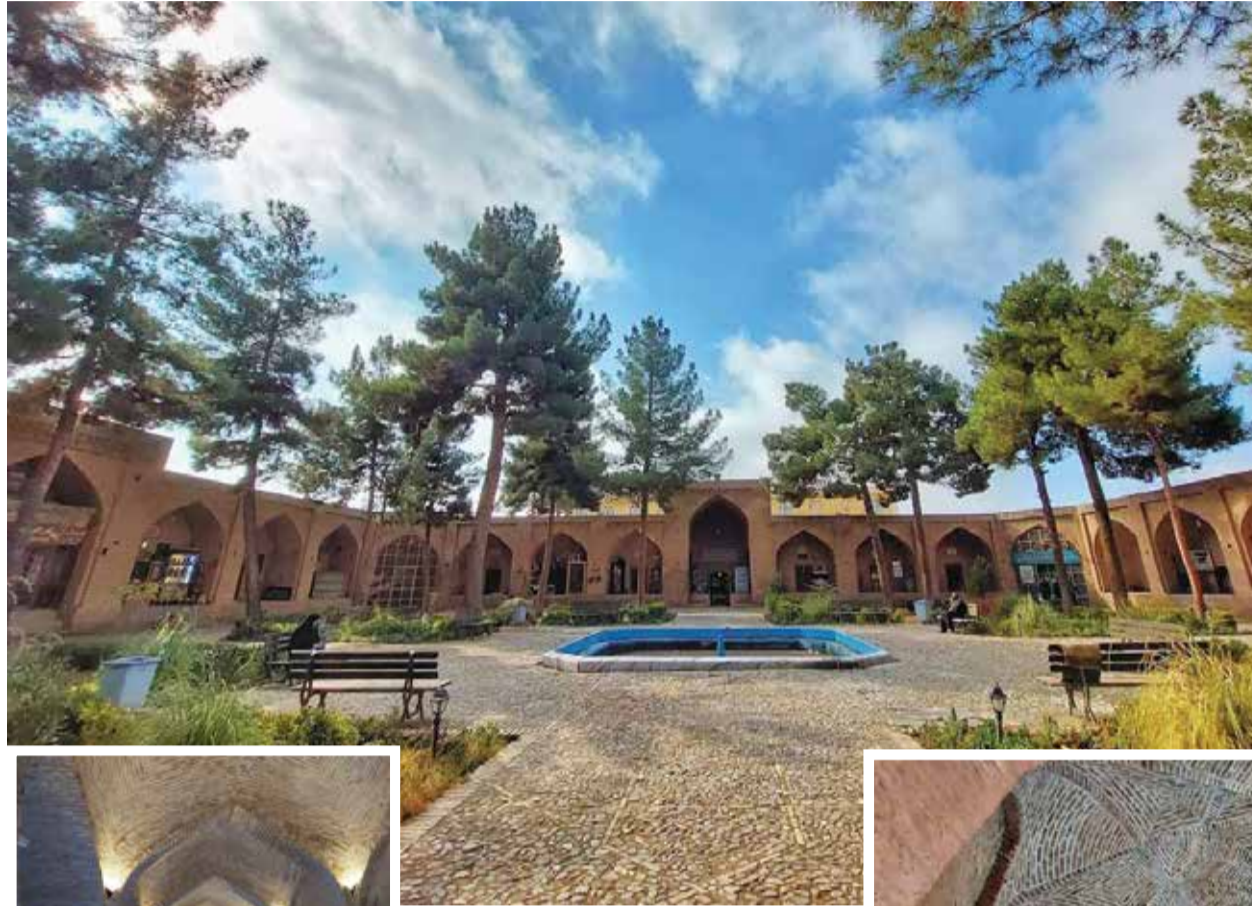
Following a haunting dream, Shah Abbas Safavid made a vow to erect 1,000 caravanserais across Iran. Presently, only 54 of these caravanserais have endured. The Shah Abbasid Caravanserai in Neyshabur, also known stands as a historic edifice and tourist hotspot in Khorasan Razavi Province. Initially, caravanserais were situated outside the gates of Mashhad and the moat encircling the old city; however, nowadays, it is positioned on the north-western periphery of Khayyam Square at the commencement of Imam Khomeini Street.

The western wing of the Shah Abbasid Caravanserai is designated for a gathering hall and a permanent exhibition area showcasing handicrafts and workshops. The remaining rooms within the central courtyard are utilized for the sale of handicrafts and traditional arts such as pottery, carpet-weaving, miniatures, marquetry, wood carving, mosaic tiles, and traditional clothing.

History

During the Qajar period, the Shah Abbasid Caravanserai served as a refuge for orphans and the underprivileged. In the subsequent Pahlavi era, it was repurposed as a military barracks. Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the caravanserai temporarily fell under the jurisdiction of the Reconstruction Jihad until it was transferred to the Cultural Heritage Organization in 1988, marking the commencement of its restoration.

In 1995, coinciding with an international congress commemorating Attar Neyshaburi, this historic site began operating



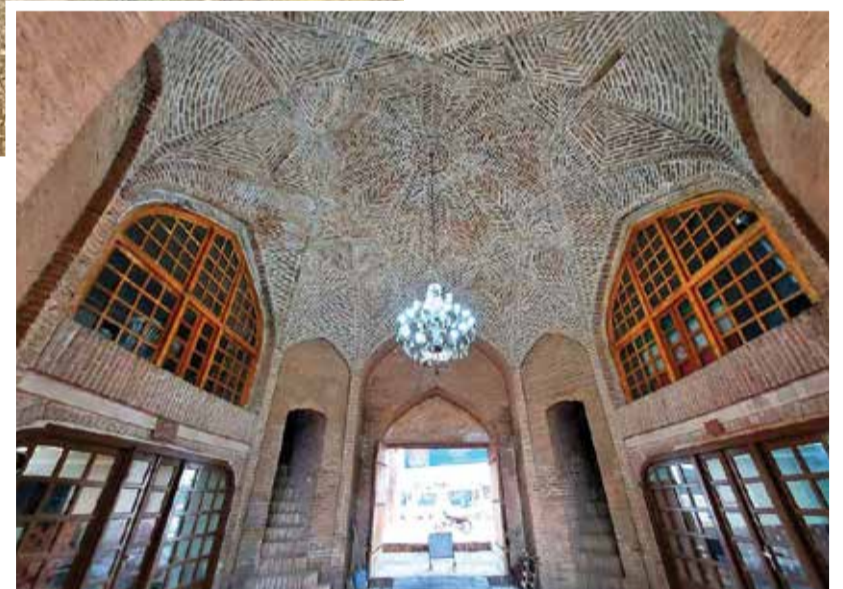
as a cultural complex and museum. The Shah Abbasid Caravanserai was officially included in Iran's National Heritage List in 1976.

Architecture

The Shah Abbasid Caravanserai boasts a four-ivan architectural design with a square layout measuring 69 by 68 meters. Among caravanserais, its size of approximately 4,900 square meters categorizes it as relatively large. The central courtyard is encircled by 24 rooms.

Located behind the rooms are the stables, which housed animals and livestock. The stables in the second row surrounding the courtyard feature spaces interconnected. Platforms within this area were designated for storing travelers' goods. Notably, the stables occupy a substantial portion of the caravanserai, while the rooms occupy a smaller segment.

Visitors gain entrance to the Shah Abbasid Caravanserai through the northern ivan. The grand entrance portal, crafted in the Safavid architectural style, stands tall and is adorned with muqarnas columns on each side, distinguishing it from other facades. Once through the portal, visitors encounter a spacious octagonal area with a vaulted ceiling, formerly flanked by booths and rooms, now dilapidated, leading to the stables. Continuing from the octagon,



travelers arrive at the northern frontal ivan before reaching the central courtyard of the caravanserai.

Sections

The four facades encompassing the

courtyard of the caravanserai exhibit a uniform design, reflecting meticulous order. The two front ivans situated on the northern and southern sides slightly surpass the height of the remaining two. Notably, the eastern and western ivans of the caravanserai feature intricate brickwork on their facades. At the heart of the caravanserai lies a square courtyard, now adorned with a central pool and encircled by lush gardens. Towards the eastern side of the caravanserai, a museum is housed, divided into three distinct sections:

Archaeology Section: This section showcases a range of historical artifacts, including coins spanning from pre-Islamic to Timurid eras, diverse pottery items, metalwork, glass objects, and stone artifacts.

Anthropology Section: Here, visitors can explore facets of the daily lives of the region's inhabitants through various displays.

Special Section: This unique segment of the museum is dedicated to exhibiting a collection of remarkable objects,

such as statues from historical and pre-historical periods, a detailed model depicting the ancient city of Neyshabur during the Timurid era as well as an array of historical documents and decrees.

Alexander Prison stands as a symbol of Yazd's illustrious history

The city Yazd, the capital city of Yazd Province, a globally renowned city, is home to a plethora of historical attractions that would take days, if not weeks, to fully explore. These structures not only epitomize the rich culture and heritage of the city but also exemplify the artistic prowess of Iranian art.

With Yazd garnering international acclaim, an increasing number of foreign tourists are keen on experiencing the allure of this ancient city. One of its prized possessions, the Alexander Prison, also known as Ziyaiyeh School, comes highly recommended for a visit

during your sojourn in Yazd.

Construction of Alexander's Prison commenced in the 7th century under the guidance of Zia al-Din Hosseini, spanning about 74 years to reach completion. Nestled in one of Yazd's most ancient neighborhoods, Fahadan, in Imam Square, this historic edifice stands in close proximity to the Twelve Imams Shrine, offering tourists the convenience of exploring two of Yazd's historical marvels in a single visit. Historical records suggest that following Alexander's conquest of Iran, he erected a prison along the path now recognized as Yazd. Initially named

Kisheh, it is believed that Alexander utilized this prison to confine his adversaries. The transformation of its name from Kisheh to Alexander's Prison possibly stemmed from the prevailing fear and unease that characterized the people's perception of Alexander during that era. This prison stands as the earliest edifice commissioned by Alexander in Yazd.

Under the rule of the Muzaffarid dynasty, Yazd flourished in terms of education and culture, earning the esteemed designation of Dar al-Oloom (House of Knowledge). Ziyaiyeh School, from the same epoch, played a

pivotal role in fostering this intellectual environment.

Alexander's Prison showcases a modest yet captivating architectural design. Constructed entirely from raw bricks with minimal ornamental tilework, this edifice has endured the test of time, owing to the enduring quality of its raw brick construction. Despite undergoing periodic restoration and upkeep, the intrinsic strength of the raw brickwork has ensured its lasting presence.

The courtyard of Alexander's Prison harbors a well, enveloped in numerous conjectures regarding its original pur-

pose. While some contend it functioned as a notorious dungeon during Alexander's era, the well's presence is primarily linked to subsidence in the courtyard's center, sparking diverse theories among the populace. Additionally, the ongoing maintenance and restoration endeavors add to the significance of this majestic historical site.

In essence, Alexander Prison stands as a poignant symbol of Yazd's illustrious history and cultural legacy. Its unassuming yet resilient architecture and profound historical import render it an indispensable stop for all venturing into this time-honored city.



A space quad: Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran



By Gabriel Honrada
Journalist

PERSPECTIVE

The US has flagged as a growing threat to global security an increasingly deepening four-way quadrilateral quasi-alliance that's deepening space collaboration among

Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran. This month, Air & Space Forces Magazine reports that General Stephen Whiting, commander of the United

States Space Command (USSPACECOM), expressed concern over those four countries' increasing cooperation in space. Whiting highlighted in particular

the workings of bilateral ties between Russia and each of the other three nations as Russia seeks assistance for its war in Ukraine, the magazine says.



In this photo released on February 29, 2024, the Soyuz-2.1b rocket blasts off at the Vostochny Cosmodrome outside the city of Tsiolkovsky, Russia. The Russian Soyuz rocket put an Iranian satellite into orbit along with 18 Russian satellites.
● ROSCOSMOS SPACE CORPORATION

Air & Space Forces notes multiple examples of space cooperation among the four, citing

- a Russian rocket launching an Iranian satellite;
- plans for a Russo-Chinese lunar nuclear power plant; and
- a defense pact between Russia and North Korea, which could benefit North Korea's space and missile capabilities.

The magazine mentions that US officials have also noted that this growing partnership adds complexity to the already contested space domain, where the US has observed Russia deploying a counter-space weapon co-planar to a US national security satellite, indicating operational intent.

Air & Space Forces mentions that the US has compared Russian activities to "nesting doll" satellites capable of deploying kinetic weapons. Meanwhile, it says, US Space Force (USSF) leaders have described China's rapid expansion in space capabilities — including counter-space technologies and support for terrestrial forces — as "breathhtakingly fast".

Space cooperation adds another element to a sophisticated four-way pragmatic relationship connecting Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran, a relationship that now covers weapons sales, energy, and finance.

While Russia and Iran have vastly different systems of governance, the ongoing Ukraine War has put Russia in the same sanctions boat as Iran, giving

rise to a partnership of convenience between the two.

In August 2022, Asia Times reported that Iran launched the Khayyam satellite from Kazakhstan's Baikonur Cosmodrome using a Russian Soyuz rocket, marking a significant step in its space-based military capabilities and deepening its strategic partnership with Russia.

Khayyam can be used for military purposes, such as surveillance and reconnaissance, which could enhance Iran's deterrence against adversaries like the US and Israel.

The launch reflects Iran's growing self-sufficiency in space technology and its collaboration with Russia, which seeks new clients for its space program amid Western sanctions.

At the same time, Iran sees the situation as a chance to gain support from a leading nuclear technology and energy powerhouse.

Iran may have seen an opportunity in the Ukraine War to become indispensable to Russia's war effort. This opportunity could give Iran more influence over Russia, potentially allowing Iran to seek assistance for its nuclear and missile programs, upgrade its military, and secure Russian support for the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multi-mode freight-moving network that is viewed as one way for Iran and Russia to evade sanctions.

Likewise, the Ukraine War has brought

Russia and North Korea closer in a pragmatic partnership. Asia Times reported in January 2024 that Russia had used North Korean ballistic missiles against Ukraine.

Declassified US intelligence indicates that Russia launched North Korean short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM) in December 2023 and January 2024 and plans to continue using them. The missiles in question, likely the KN-23 and KN-24, are comparable to Russia's Iskander-M and the US MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS). North Korea may be supporting Russia's war effort because it believes that

a Russian victory in Ukraine would set a precedent for easing the effects of US sanctions on its struggling economy. Russian support could lessen its heavy dependence on China for economic and political support.

Moreover, Russia and North Korea have revived a Cold War-era mutual defense agreement. The pact, announced during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to North Korea this month, commits both nations to providing military assistance to each other in the event of war.

An account by the New York Times mentions that the pact has negative implications for international efforts to hinder North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons programs. The newspaper says that Putin's and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's agreement is seen as a strategic alignment against the democratic partnership of the US, South Korea, and Japan. It also notes that the pact raises the prospects that Japan and South Korea will seek nuclear weapons.

In addition, increasingly deep ties with Russia can enable Iran and North Korea to advance their missile technologies independently. In January 2024, Asia Times pointed out that while the world had been focused on North Korean and Iranian support for Russia's war efforts in Ukraine, the Tehran-Pyongyang collaboration had slipped under the radar. In 2020, a confidential UN report indicated that North Korea and Iran had restarted their collaboration on the development of long-range missiles. The report mentioned that this renewed cooperation involved the transfer of essential components, which took place during that year.

Iran's Khorramshahr missile, first launched in 2017, is similar to North Korea's missile known alternatively as Musudan or Hwasong-10. Reports of Iran purchasing those missiles date

back to 2005. US intelligence has been tracking Iran's search for a high-performance North Korean propulsion system since 2010.

Additionally, Iran's Shahab-3 missile may be based on North Korea's Nodong missile, and Iran's space launch vehicles show similarities with North Korea's Hwasong-14 missiles.

While China's economic and industrial capacity has been crucial in keeping Russia in the fight in Ukraine and keeping the heavily sanctioned Russian economy afloat, its support for Moscow is more nuanced, possibly neither wanting to see Russia win or lose.

In September 2023, Asia Times noted that a scenario in which Russia wins, causing Western backing for Ukraine to collapse, could lead to a deal that fully allows Russian energy exports to resume in Europe. Lifting Western sanctions would free Russia from relying on China for economic and diplomatic support. If Ukraine were to achieve a victory over Russia and retake a significant portion of its territories while causing considerable losses to the Russian military, it would showcase the impact of Western military assistance and sanctions, establishing a precedent that China would find unfavorable in the case of Taiwan.

A Korean War-style armistice freezing the Ukraine War is probably the most favorable scenario for China. It would secure China's ongoing influence over Russia by maintaining Russia's reliance on China. This scenario would give China continued leverage over Russia's energy exports, disputed territories in the Russian Far East, competition for influence in Central Asia, and weapons sales.

The full article first appeared on Asia Times.

Head of the Iranian Space Agency Hassan Salarieh (R) and his Russian counterpart, Yuri Borisov, sign a cooperation document on the sidelines of Iran Airshow 2022 in Kish Island, southern Iran, on December 14, 2022. The document included cooperation on the construction of remote-sensing and communication satellites, creating laboratory infrastructure, assembling, launching bases, and satellite tests.
● IRNA



Who really created new 'axis of evil'?



By Lee Bon-young
Journalist

OPINION

The term "axis of evil" first appeared in January 2002, four months after 9/11, when George W. Bush used the phrase to refer to Iran, Iraq, and North Korea during his State of the Union address. Bush borrowed the word axis from the Axis Powers of World War II: Germany, Japan, and Italy. The Biden administration and the Democratic Party, however, rarely use the term. It would be stupid to borrow terminology from a Republican administration's attempt to cover up failed diplomacy.

Yet the conceptual framework for the "new axis of evil" was actually created by the Biden administration. The Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community, published by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, began identifying China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea as the US' principal threats in its introduction in 2021, the first year of the Biden administration. Before 2021, the report would list threats individually by region, as opposed to lumping multiple countries into a single category.

It seems as if failure to adopt the new terminology in the US solicits accusations of falling behind the times. John Aquilino, who served as the commander of the Indo-Pacific Command from 2021 to 2024, also used the term "axis of evil" this past March. Aquilino was

the first government figure to publicly adopt the term under the Biden administration.

You may ask what's the problem with referring to the aforementioned countries as an "axis of evil" or the "new axis of evil". But it's not so simple. Soon after Bush denounced the "axis of evil," war broke out in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The US also rattled the saber of a preemptive strike against North Korea, undoing progress that had been made with regard to North Korea's nuclear program. Conciliatory policies toward Iran suddenly took on a more hostile tone. The West harbors a religious worldview that divides the world into good and evil. In this worldview, evil is not something that can be negotiated with. It simply must be destroyed.

Another problem with this concept is that it fails to distinguish between individual countries within the axis, which makes it difficult to exploit such differences. Three of the four countries in the "axis of evil" possess nuclear weapons. This new axis of evil is much different from the one identified over 20 years ago. How can the West take on all four at once?

While an axis of evil may form on its own, it can often be created and fostered by the labels of the outside world. From the US perspective, they seem to be join-

ing forces and threatening the security of the world, but from their perspective, they have no choice but to join forces because they're condemned by the US. Instead of calmly and rationally approaching each individual issue, we revert to a mindset of "How dare you" and

risk making the mistakes of the past. I want to ask this question of the critics. If the war in Gaza, which has persisted for over eight months now, is not evil, what is it? If that is not evil, what is?

"new axis of evil" that the US is talking about comprises China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. Republicans talk about it as if it were a given fact. Robert O'Brien, the national security adviser under former President Donald Trump, also called these four countries an "axis of evil" on CBS on Sunday, June 23. A Washington Post column called it an "alignment of evil".



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (2nd-R) make a joint statement after their summit in Pyongyang, North Korea, on June 19, 2024.
EPA

The article first appeared on Hankyoreh.

US labels challengers evil, overlooks Israel



By Rotimi S. Bello
Peace, conflict expert

OPINION

It must be noted that the term 'axis' existed long before this period; it started as early as the time before the Second World War (WW2) and the alliance of the German Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler, the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini, and the Japanese general Hideki Tojo. In fact, the term 'The Axis Powers' refers primarily to the three great powers of that time: Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan. However, other nations joined the alliance during the war. The Axis Powers were united by common ideology and ambitions and therefore forged a military and political unity to aid one another in achieving their goals. The Axis Powers aimed to expand their territorial borders, to expand the global reach of their ideologies (in this case, Nazism and Fascism), and to challenge the established international order.

However, calling Iran, Iraq, and North Korea the "axis of evil" is a misnomer that unfairly stigmatizes these countries — it's like calling a dog a horrible name to hang it. Rather than calling them "axis of evil," they are axes of resistance to Western infiltration. The overt categorization of these nations ignores the peculiar conditions of each country and the complexities of geopolitical realities.

Although these nations have disagreed with the US and its allies on a few issues, such as nuclear proliferation, combining them under one

heading ignores their diverse histories, cultures, and geopolitical goals. For instance, Iran has a diversified population, a rich cultural history, a complex culture, and a thriving civil society. Contrariwise, Iraq saw much political turmoil, namely the Saddam Hussein regime overthrow and successive struggles for stability and the establishment of democratic governance. Nowadays, North Korea is a place widely known as isolated and belligerent. Nevertheless, it has its distinctive characteristics as a state with centralized government ideology under the Kim dynasty, a history of conflict with adjacent countries, the desire to have nuclear power, and one week of notification before the long-range ballistic missile test in breach of UN decrees.

In the real world, the use of such divisive language, like the "axis of evil," affects policy and diplomatic relations between countries. Policymakers are, therefore, ready to escalate animosity and shut down what could be very useful communication and diplomatic channels when they demonize entire countries. In fact, this kind of rhetoric can foment stereotypes that underpin international scepticism and hatred. Branding Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as members of an 'axis of evil' has served to create a storyline in which confrontation is the motivating ideology, and it is much more effortful to turn this

world into one of peaceful dispute and crisis resolution. The previous US administration, under President Trump, made quite a commendable effort in trying to establish rapport with Kim Jong Un, but by and large, that was to no avail. However, the subsequent Democratic government under Joe Biden seems not to have a well-organized diplomatic strategy but rather a confrontational one for complex world issues. Ukraine has not markedly made any advancement and is still wracked, despite heavy aid and cash assistance to become more self-sufficient under the influence of Russia. As a further note, the United States has been constantly condemned for its continued, and even increased, aid being sent to the administration of Benjamin Netanyahu, currently embroiled in the conflict in Palestine that has engendered such catastrophic destruction in Gaza, which some critics have even considered genocide, particularly on the part of the ruling Likud administration.

Summarily, designating North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as the "axis of evil" is a futile and harmful exercise in simplifying complex geopolitical realities and raising the temperature of states. In the process of solving the world's problems and promoting peace and stability, politicians must make it their business to seriously engage in constructive interaction, dialogue,

and diplomacy, rather than fanning the flames of provocative rhetoric and demonising whole communities. The importance of fostering international understanding and cooperation has never been felt as it is today in the interconnected and interdependent world. This would mean dispensing with the old terminology and going in for a far more nuanced and pragmatic approach to the management of international affairs.

The full article first appeared on Businessday NG.



US President George W. Bush (front) smiles while delivering his second State of the Union address in Washington on January 28, 2003.
PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVALS/GETTY IMAGES



By Amirhadi
Arsalanpour
Staff writer

Iranian speed climber Reza Alipour says he pursued the Olympic berth for "20 long years", though a place in Paris will not be the ceiling of his ambitions.

The 30-year-old Iranian made history when he punched his ticket for the French capital in the Olympic Qualifier Series in Budapest last week, becoming the first climber to represent the country in the Games.

"I finished in the top six in the Shanghai series and collected 31 points to edge closer to the Olympic spot. I ended 13th in Budapest but an overall tally of 63 points over the two series was enough for me to be among the five athletes progressing to the Games. In fact, the event in China was the launch pad for my qualification," Alipour told Mehr News Agency.

"I worked my socks off for 20 long years to reach the Olympics," said the Iranian, adding: "I'm not done yet and will have further goals in Paris, though I will keep it to myself as I don't want to raise the expectations. I'll just keep working hard to deliver

my best performance in the Games."

Alipour's record-breaking performance in the 2017 Climbing World Cup – where the footage of him scaling the 15-meter wall in 5.48 seconds went viral on social media – saw the Iranian earn the nicknames of 'Persian Cheetah' and 'Usain Bolt of speed climbing' before he faded away from the international stage over the course of the following five years.

When he stepped into last year's Hangzhou Asian Games he was regarded as an underdog as some high-profile names of the sport – including Indonesian then-world record holder Veddriq Leonardo and world silver medalist Long Jinbao of China – competed for the top prize.

However, the Iranian beat all odds to leave China with the coveted gold and will now be seeking a more prestigious triumph in Paris.

"Nothing is predictable in climbing. Milliseconds literally play a decisive part in the sport and that is why you can't be confident of one's victory in a competition. The battle against the gravity is the major challenge for every climber."

Alipour 'not done yet' as he gears up for Paris wall



● DIMITRIS TOSIDIS/grapped.com

Iranian Moghanlou set to join Emirati Ittihad Kalba: Report

Sports Desk

Iranian international striker Shahriar Moghanlou is on the verge of signing for UAE Pro League club Ittihad Kalba, Varzesh3 reported, citing Dubai-based newspaper Emarat Al Youm.

Moghanlou, 29, who was part of the national team in January's AFC Asian Cup, was the leading marksman in the Persian Gulf Pro League in the past two seasons, finishing

third in the table with Sepahan in the previous campaign.

He then found the net twice to help Sepahan beat Mes Rafsanjan 2-0 in the final showpiece of the Iranian domestic cup, Khorramshahr Liberation Memorial, earlier in the month – a first trophy for the Isfahan-based club in nine years.

Should the deal go through, Moghanlou will likely team up with fellow-Iranian Mahdi Qayedi, though the latter could also be set

for a new chapter in his career after an impressive loan season with Ittihad Kalba, during which he bagged 16 goals and six assists in 34 games across all competitions.

Iranian top-flight team Esteghlal has reportedly approached Qayedi's parent club Shabab Al Ahli in recent days to seal a second loan move for the Iranian winger, though the Emirati side's asking price could see the Tehran Blues walk away from negotiations.



Sepahan striker Shahriar Moghanlou celebrates a goal during a 2-0 victory over Mes Rafsanjan in the Iranian Hazfi Cup final in Tehran, Iran, on June 20, 2024.
● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

Belgium, France in head-on clash, both battling first round blues



REUTERS – By this stage of the European Championship, favourites France and contenders Belgium would have wanted to be well into their stride and hitting their straps as they enter the knockout stages. Instead, the neighbours go spluttering into the last 16 and into a head-on collision in Duesseldorf on Monday after both failed to finish top of their first-round group.

France's much-vaunted attack is suffering from a crisis of confidence and coach Didier Deschamps, usually a steady hand guiding the squad, looks unsure of what his next move will be.

Belgium will have had some motivation sucked out of their cause following an astonishingly hostile reaction from their own supporters after they limped into the next stage of the tournament in Germany.

Despite Wednesday's draw with Ukraine assuring them progress, they were subjected to loud barracking

from their fans and have since closed ranks.

Captain Kevin De Bruyne did not take kindly to the abuse. His attitude and demeanour will set the tone for the rest of the Belgian side as they look to leave behind them the limp performances from the group stage.

Romelu Lukaku needs to find his scoring touch after a number of missed opportunities in the tournament. His record 85 goals for Belgium does not include any from Euro 2024, and overall he has a poor scoring record at major tournaments.

Few would have envisaged a French forward line failing to score in open play in their opening three matches at the tournament. One of their two goals was a penalty from Kylian Mbappe, the other an own goal from Austria in their opening game.

Deschamps must now decide whether to restore Antoine Griezmann to the line-up and pair him up front with Mbappe.



● MASASHI HARA/GETTY IMAGES



● ARIEL SCHALIT/AP

Griezmann has been a long-time mainstay for Deschamps but was dropped for their last game, a 1-1 draw with Poland, which allowed Austria to emerge unexpected winners of Group D, which also included the Netherlands.

Belgium is France's oldest and most frequent opponent. The first international for both countries was a 3-3 draw in Brussels 120 years ago. Belgium lead the win count of 75 past meetings 30-26 but France won the last two – the semi-final at the 2018

World Cup in St Petersburg and the Nations League semi-final in Turin in October, 2021.

The winner of Monday's clash at the Duesseldorf Arena will take on Portugal or Slovenia in the quarter-finals.

Pezeshkian vs. Jalili in July 5 runoff



on Friday. According to Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi, the campaign for the two candidates in the second phase will begin today and will continue until 8 a.m. on Thursday, July 4. The second round of the elections will also be the scene of serious competition between Iran's two main factions, the Reformists and the Conservatives. Qalibaf said in a statement that he would support Jalili in the second round. The election race, especially the election debates in the second phase, is expected to be much more serious than the first round. Each candidate along

Pezeshkian and Reformists hope to convince more people to come to the polls in the second round. They believe that the increase in the number of voters, especially the undecided ones, who did not participate in the first round, will benefit Pezeshkian. Despite having criteria for a competitive election, the turnout was not as high as expected and was even lower than predictions made before elections. According to the Interior Ministry, out of 60 million eligible voters, 24 million cast their ballots, resulting in a 40% turnout. This means that the turnout rate has been lower than the previous presidential election, which saw nearly 49% turnout.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi announced that all the necessary measures have been taken for holding the run-off election and officials in the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting has declared preparedness for broadcasting candidates' campaigns.

Iran is now left in a state of limbo over who to choose for president until Friday, with the return of a percentage of those who did not participate in the first round to the polls being the winning ticket for the Reformist heart surgeon-cum-politician, or funneling Qalibaf's votes into Jalili's ballot box in favor of the Conservative candidate.

Iranians cast their votes at a polling station in Tehran during the presidential election on June 28, 2024.

● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

Iran's 14th presidential election headed to a runoff after neither of the four candidates secured more than 50 percent of the vote in the Friday's election. According to Iran's electoral law, the winner must secure at least 50 percent the total votes. Otherwise, the second round will be held a week later with the two candidates who garnered the most ballots. In the second round, the candidate who manages to obtain the most votes will become the country's president.

Iran's presidential race began with six candidates approved by the Guardian Council, but Alireza Zakani, the current mayor of Tehran and Amir Hosein Ghazizadeh Hashemi withdrew from the race on the eve of the election day.

The contenders include Conservative parliamentary speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili. Also running were the sole Reformist, Masoud Pezeshkian, and a fourth candidate, former interior minister Mostafa

42,6%	10,415,991	Masoud Pezeshkian
38,8%	9,473,298	Saeed Jalili
13,8%	3,383,340	Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf
0,8%	206,397	Mostafa Pourmohammadi
24,535,185		Total votes

Pourmohammadi. Voting began at 8 a.m. Friday and continued until 12 midnight. According to the Interior Ministry, 24,535,185 people participated in the elections. Final results showed that Pezeshkian, a candidate supported by Reformists and Moderates, secured a

narrow lead over Jalili. Pezeshkian received 10,415,991 votes while Jalili gained 9,473,298. Qalibaf garnered 3,383,340 votes and Pourmohammadi had only 206,397 votes. Therefore, Pezeshkian and Jalili went to the second round which will be held

with their supporters will do their utmost to win this important race. In fact, the two candidates pursue different political, economic, cultural and foreign policy approaches, and the differences may make the second round more sensitive. Jalili hopes that people who supported Qalibaf in the first round, would vote in favor of him in the second round, although some experts believe that parts of Qalibaf's votes will eventually go to Pezeshkian. On the other hand,

US has sent Israel thousands of 2,000-pound bombs since Oct. 7

The Biden administration has sent to Israel large numbers of munitions, including more than 10,000 highly destructive 2,000-pound bombs and thousands of Hellfire missiles, since the start of the war in Gaza, said two US officials briefed on an updated list of weapons shipments. Between the war's start last October and recent days, the United States has transferred at least

14,000 of the MK-84 2,000-pound bombs, 6,500 500-pound bombs, 3,000 Hellfire precision-guided air-to-ground missiles, 1,000 bunker-buster bombs, 2,600 air-dropped small-diameter bombs, and other munitions, according to the officials, who were not authorized to speak publicly. While the officials didn't give a timeline for the shipments, the totals sug-

gest there has been no significant drop-off in US military support for its ally, despite international calls to limit weapons supplies and a recent administration decision to pause a shipment of powerful bombs. Experts said the contents of the shipments appear consistent with what Israel would need to replenish supplies used in this eight-month intense military campaign in Gaza,



● AFP

which it launched after the Oct. 7 attack by Palestinian Hamas resistance movement.

"While these numbers could be expended relatively quickly in a major conflict, this list clearly reflects a substantial level of support from the United States for our Israeli allies," said Tom Karako, a weapons expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, adding that the listed munitions were the type Israel would use in its fight against Hamas or in a potential conflict with Hezbollah. The delivery numbers, which have not been pre-

viously reported, provide the most up-to-date and extensive tally of munitions shipped to Israel since the Gaza war began. Israel and Hezbollah have been trading fire since the start of the Gaza war, and concern is rising that an all-out war could break out between the two sides.

The shipments are part of a bigger list of weapons sent to Israel since the Gaza conflict began, one of the US officials said. A senior Biden administration official on Wednesday told reporters that Washington has since Oct. 7 sent \$6.5 billion worth of security assistance to Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in recent weeks claimed that Washington was withholding weapons, a suggestion US officials have repeatedly denied even though they acknowledged some "bottlenecks". The Biden administration has paused one shipment of the 2,000-pound bomb, citing concern over the impact it could have in densely populated areas in Gaza, but US officials insist that all other arms deliveries continue as normal. One 2,000-pound bomb can rip through thick concrete and metal, creating a wide blast radius.

Israel's Western backers to blame for another crisis in region:

Iran



● AFP

International Desk

Iran's acting foreign minister said regional nations and the Resistance Front are ready more than any other time to counter Israel's acts of aggression, warning that Western supporters of the regime would be responsible for another crisis in the region.

Iran believes that the disastrous impacts of the possible expansion of conflicts in the region are a result of irresponsible behavior of the regime's supporters in the United States and the West, Ali Bagheri Kani said in a message posted on his X account on Saturday.

His comments came as tensions between Israel and Lebanon over the regime's brutal onslaught in the besieged Gaza Strip have escalated in recent weeks.

Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging deadly fire since early October last year, shortly after the regime launched a genocidal aggression against Gaza following a surprise operation by the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas.

Such exchanges have intensified this month, alongside bellicose rhetoric from both sides. Israel's military said plans for an offensive in Lebanon had been "approved and validated," prompting Hezbollah to respond that none of Israel would be spared in a full-blown conflict.

Moreover, Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations has dismissed Israel's threats of launching a war on Lebanon as "psychological warfare", stressing that all options, including full involvement of all resistance groups in the Middle East, are on the table in case of such military aggression.

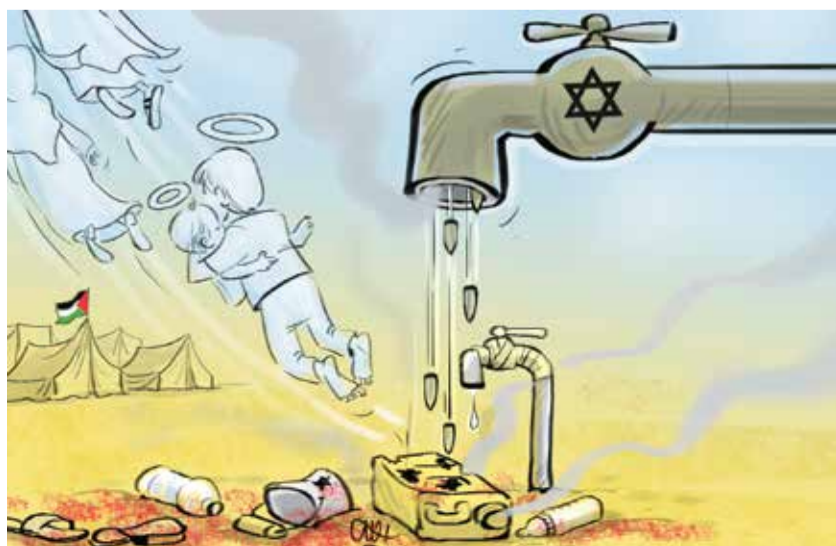
"Albeit Iran deems as psychological warfare the Zionist regime's propaganda about intending to attack Lebanon, should it embark on full-scale military aggression, an obliterating war will ensue. All options, incl. the full involvement of all Resistance Fronts, are on the table," the mission said in a post published on its official X account on Saturday.

Germany has also asked Iran to help prevent further escalation in the region.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock made the plea in a Friday telephone conversation with Bagheri Kani. "Further escalation must be prevented at all costs, and Iran must also contribute to this," she told Iran's acting foreign minister, according to a German foreign ministry post on X.

On Wednesday, the German top diplomat said there was a need for world powers to chip in towards dialing down the regional tensions.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Leader extols Holy Shrine defenders as saviors of Iran, region

Resistance martyrs honored in int'l confab

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei praised sacrifices made by fighters of the Resistance Front and those who embraced martyrdom in their relentless fight against Takfiri terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria, known as Defenders of the Holy Shrine.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks on June 19 in a meeting with organizing members of the international conference of Martyred Defenders of Holy Shrine on the Resistance Front, Press TV reported.

The leader's remarks were released at the venue of the international congress held on Saturday at the holy shrine of Imam Reza in the northeastern city of Mashhad.

The Leader commended the Holy Shrine Defenders as an extraordinary and important phenomenon and one of the manifestations of the Islamic Republic of Iran's internationalism.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the presence of young people of different nationalities in the form of Holy Shrine Defenders showed that the 1979 Islamic Revolution, after more than four decades, has the power to re-create the very same passion and epic of the time.

"As part of his plot, the enemy intended to destroy the Islamic Establishment by invading the region and concurrently by imposing economic and political as well as ideological and religious pressures on Iran, but a group of young believers, revolving on the Islamic Republic, vanquished this exorbitant project by the global arrogance," he said.

"With such a view, it should be stated that the Defenders of the Holy Shrine saved Iran and the region."

Ayatollah Khamenei also pointed to the "violent, merciless

honor and pride, and salvation and prosperity for Islamic Iran, and the Islamic Revolution is definitely indebted to such martyrs and their families."

Since March 2011, Syria has

December 2017 after a three-year counter-terrorism military campaign, in which Hashd al-Sha'abi, also known as Popular Mobilization Units, played a major role.

resistance groups will respond proportionally to any act of aggression in West Asia.

Salami gave assurances that Palestinians will continue to vigorously confront the Israeli

region, and prevents the unity and consolidation of Muslim sovereignty just like a poisoned dagger in the side of the Muslim world," Salami said.

He noted that the martyrs of the Resistance Front are the progeny of the culture of trust, resistance and perseverance.

"Muslims no longer want to bow to the hegemony of the West. It is much worse than death for us to live under the control of the political system of the Western tyranny," the IRGC chief commander underscored.

Salami also pointed to the growing international support for Gaza and the pro-Palestinian rallies in the United States and European states, stating that Palestine has conquered the hearts of all peoples in the world.

The Resistance Front is destined for victory, he said, adding, "Palestine goes on, Lebanon shines, Yemen is standing, Afghanistan has humiliated the enemies, and Syria has driven the ill-wishers of Islam away."

In a message to the congress, the secretary general of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement emphasized that the final victory, meaning the liberation of Palestine and the region from the US domination, requires continued efforts.

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah said that the oppressed nations in the West Asia region are today provided with the opportunity to receive support from the Islamic Republic of Iran and its Leader Ayatollah Khamenei who is at the forefront of defending the Islamic Ummah in the face of arrogant powers and occupiers.



The international conference of Martyred Defenders of Holy Shrine on the Resistance Front was held in Mashhad, Iran, on June 29, 2024.
 ● MEHDI QORBANI/IRNA

regime as all forces of the Axis of Resistance have stood firmly. "The fallen defenders of the holy shrine and fighters of the resistance front are clear manifestations of courage and sacrifice, the standing pillars of martyrdom, epitomes of freedom and dignity, and God's testimonies upon us," he said.

Salami said Westerners are well aware of the fact that no power can secure glory and grandeur in the world without the Muslim world.

The Westerners, he said, have been seeking to dominate the whole world by establishing full control over Muslims, emphasizing that Western powers have been wielding influence over a wide array of issues, ranging from economy to culture and social affairs, in the Muslim world for nearly a century, and that the 1947 creation of the Israeli regime is the upshot of such a wicked dominance.

"The Zionist regime acts as a fairly dangerous political, geographical, security and military hub that serves the West's interests. It safeguards their (Westerners') interests in this

and inhumane nature" of Daesh and other terror outfits aligned with it, which were formed through the arms and propaganda support of the United States and the West.

"The goal of this [terrorist] organization was to make the region, especially Iran, insecure, but the Holy Shrine Defenders also neutralized this grave danger," he noted.

The Leader underlined, "The Holy Shrine Defenders and their families are a source of

been gripped by a campaign of militancy and destruction sponsored by the US and its allies. In recent years, however, Syrian government forces have managed to win back control of almost all regions from terrorist groups.

Moreover, the Takfiri Daesh terrorist group began a campaign of terror in Iraq in 2014 and then took control of vast swathes in lightning attacks across the region. Iraq declared victory over the terror outfit in

Daesh has already been driven out of all its urban bastions both in Iraq and Syria, but its remnants carry out sporadic terror attacks in both neighboring Arab countries.

Resistance to respond to any aggression

Addressing the conference, the chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said Muslims will determine their own fate from now on, stressing that anti-terror

Iranians from all walks of life at 2024 presidential polls

