

Iran Army Media Office Released a Video of Behshad Warship Mission and Announced That Iran Will Respond to Any Terrorist Act Against Iranian Vessels

IRAN NEWS

Production of Iron Ore Concentrate in Iran Increased by Six Percent in the First Nine Months of the Current Iranian Calendar Year as Compared to the Same Period of Time in the Past Year

2 DOMESTIC

Iranian Firm Unveils Launch Timeline for Satellites Kowsar, Hodhod

> SEE PAGE 2

3 INTERNATIONAL

U.S., UK Strike Dozens of Houthi Targets in Yemen

> SEE PAGE 3



Pakistan to Lay Gas Pipeline Amidst Iranian Warning of \$18bn Arbitration



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - The caretaker government has reportedly assured Iran it will move forward with laying a gas pipeline within its territory, aimed at importing Iranian gas, sources in the Pakistan Petroleum Ministry said. This decision comes after repeated warnings and potential arbitration threats from Iran regarding the stalled project, the sources said. Pakistan signed a gas pipeline agreement with Iran in 2014, aiming to import gas to address its energy needs. However, the project has faced numerous delays due to various factors, including US sanctions against Iran and internal disagreements within Pakistan. Iran issued three notices to Pakistan in 2019, 2022, and most recently in December 2023, demanding to either complete the pipeline or face legal consequences. The latest notice warned of a potential \$18 billion arbitration claim if Pakistan fails to meet the September 2024 deadline. With this recent assurance, Iran might delay the arbitration process depending on the progress made by Pakistan. Sui gas companies will be tasked with carrying out the construction of the 81km section within Pakistan's territory. The success of this project hinges on timely completion and overcoming any potential hurdles to avoid arbitration and subsequent financial penalties. If successful, the pipeline could provide a much-needed source of energy for Pakistan while also strengthening its economic ties with Iran.



Three Branches Explore Ways for Boosting Economy, Strengthening Justice

TEHRAN - In the meeting of the Supreme Council of Economic Coordination chaired by President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, the ways of deepening the cooperation of the three branches in order to improve economic indicators and strengthen justice were discussed. The Supreme Council of Economic Coordination held a meeting this Saturday afternoon under the chairmanship of Raisi and in the presence of Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Judiciary Chief Hojatolislam val-Moslemin Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei. In this meeting, the members discussed ways to deepen and expand the relations and cooperation of the three branches in order to further improve the economic indicators. Also, the issue of ways to strengthen economic justice and efforts to resolve disagreements was among other issues raised in the meeting, which was decided to continue in the next meeting of the council. Meanwhile on Sunday, emphasizing the importance of celebrating and praising the achievements of the country's elites, the President said, "Neither you elites nor we in the government should be satisfied with this amount of achievements and we should think about maintaining and promoting this process". Speaking at the ceremony of praising the medal winners of the World Science Olympiads and the celebration of the revival of the Young Scholars Club, Raisi expressed his gratitude to the winners, the efforts of their parents, teachers, coaches and managers, and stated, "Today's ceremony is held both to appreciate the medallists of science Olympiads and to revive the club of young scholars". Congratulating on the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the President said, "The Islamic Revolution has always emphasized the importance of learning, increasing knowledge, and promoting science and knowledge, and one of the reasons for this claim is that Imam Khomeini, as the leader of the revolution, was a wise scholar who has written more than 50 books". Raisi pointed out that Imam Khomeini (RA) was an innovative and creative person in the field of science and knowledge, beyond authoring important books and references, and added, "Today, the leader of this revolution is a wise scholar who always supports the growth and development of science and knowledge". The President noted, "While before the Iranian revolution, we did not have even a single scientific journal, today the number of international scientific journals in the country reaches 300 publications, and the significant improvement of the country's scientific rank is a sign of the attention of the revolution and the Islamic system to science, the scholar, learning, and increasing knowledge and applying this science and knowledge". Raisi said, "The reason for the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution's emphasis on the development of knowledge-based activities is to bring science, knowledge and technology to the field of implementation in various intellectual and scientific fields". The President described solving problems in people's lives, creating grounds for the growth and flourishing of talents, and establishing justice in the field of people's enjoyment of facilities and areas for progress among the common goals of the government and jihadist groups, and said, "One of the important tasks of you jihadist groups is problem-solving, finding solutions and efforts to solve the problem". Meanwhile in meeting with a group of activists and leaders of jihadist groups from all over the country held at the Salman Farsi Mosque of the Presidential Administration, while congratulating the arrival of the blessed days of 10-day Fajr celebration, Raisi referred to the history of forming jihad and its brilliant performance during the Sacred Defense era, and clarified, "The Popular Administration with a deep belief in the jihadist movement, considers it its duty to remove the obstacles to the activity of jihadist groups and spread the jihadist culture and spirit". President added, "Jihadist youths started jihadist camps in the most remote cities and villages of the country to remove the dust of deprivation from the face of these areas".

Europeans Rejecting Visas For Iranian Truck Drivers



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The chairman of Iran's Transportation and Logistics Federation has raised concerns that European countries refuse to issue visas for Iranian drivers of transit trucks. "Currently, Iranian trucks are not allowed to enter Germany, and visas are not being issued for Iranian drivers," ILNA, Iran's labor news agency, quoted Ali Mahmoudi Saray as saying. Six months ago, the last round of negotiations was held with the German embassy in Iran to resolve the problem but things have not changed, he went on to say. According to the official, Italy used to issue visas for 20 Iranian drivers per week but the Italian embassy in Tehran has also stopped the process. "It is likely that the Italian embassy's visa regulations for Iranian drivers will become similar to those of the German embassy," he remarked. Mahmoudi Saray added that with regard to the current situation, Iran's cargo fleet to Europe has been "paralyzed" and Turkish trucks have replaced Iranian ones in European routes. Only those Iranian drivers who already had visas are still working, but their visas will expire soon and they will have to stop working as well, he warned. Earlier in January, Reza Rostami, the head of the Transportation Commission of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, said that the imposition of sanctions on Iran's Central Insurance has led to European countries not issuing visas to Iranian transit drivers. Expressing concern for the future, he emphasized a potential shortage of heavy goods vehicle (HGV) drivers in the coming years.

No Iranian Base or Advisors Targeted by U.S. Strikes in Iraq, Syria



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Ambassador to Damascus Hossein Akbari says no Iranian bases or military advisors have been targeted in deadly strikes by the US occupation forces on a number of sites in Iraq and Syria. Akbari said that contrary to claims, the attacks aimed to destroy Syria's civil infrastructure amid the pro-Palestine actions undertaken by the resistance front. He said the U.S. government's terrorist act on Friday night was carried out mainly to make up for Israel's defeats in the Gaza Strip and strengthening armed Takfiri terrorists based on the borders of Iraq and Syria. The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement on Friday that its forces had struck more than 85 targets "with numerous aircraft" during overnight raids on localities in Iraq and Syria. The Syrian state media reported that the U.S. aggression targeted positions in Syria's eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr and the city of al-Bukamal near the Iraqi border, falling short of providing details on the extent of damage and the exact number of casualties. Sixteen people were killed, among them civilians, and 25 injured in the US airstrikes in Iraq, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani's office said.

Any Ceasefire in Gaza Must Entail Full Withdrawal of Israeli Forces, End of Siege

GAZA (Dispatches) - A senior official of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas says any ceasefire deal in the Gaza Strip must entail complete withdrawal of Israeli forces and lifting of the regime's blockade of the territory. Osama Hamdan, the movement's representative in Lebanon, made the remarks at a press conference in Beirut on Saturday. "Since the beginning of the aggression, the movement has stated that it is open to discussing any initiatives or ideas that can stop the barbaric aggression on our people and restrain this criminal enemy that has murdered civilians, including children, women, and the elderly, and destroyed civilian infrastructure and human life in the Gaza Strip," he said. Hamdan added that the movement has received the general framework proposal discussed at the Paris Quartet meeting, adding, "The [Hamas] leadership's discussions and consultations on are based on the premise that negotiations would lead to a total end of the terrorist aggression against our people and a complete withdrawal of the occupation army from Gaza." He noted that Hamas also seeks lifting of the siege "that has been imposed on Gaza for 17 years,

reconstruction of what the occupation has destroyed, a serious prisoner exchange deal, and practical international recognition of our people's right to self-determination and the establishment of their fully independent state with al-Quds as its capital." "For 120 days, this Nazi occupation [regime] has not stopped committing the most heinous crimes and massacres against unarmed civilians, mostly children, women, the elderly, and displaced people who lack the most basic human necessities, in addition to the brutal destruction of [their] homes, properties, and infrastructure," Hamdan said. "This Nazi war will remain a testament to the brutality of the occupation and a stain on the forehead of all those involved in it, and those who falter in criminalizing and stopping it," the Hamas official added. He also slammed the global inaction in the face of Israel's crimes in Gaza, saying, "The crimes of genocide and ethnic cleansing are being committed in plain sight of the whole world, which stands by watching, [and] procrastinating, and [is] unable to stop the Zionist crimes that are supported by the US administration."

Iranian Medical Society Expresses Concern Over Brain Drain



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Secretary-general of the Iranian Medical Society has warned about emigration of elite workforce and professionals from various medical and non-medical sectors amid economic crisis. Speaking about the current state and future prospects of Iran during the general assembly of the Iranian Medical Society, Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi expressed deep concern, noting that vital signs pointing to an emigration crisis have reached a critical juncture. Zafarqandi emphasized the alarming increase in demand for permission from the medical system for professionals seeking to leave the country. Amidst the celebrations marking the 45th anniversary of the Islamic revolution, he lamented the challenges faced by the country. The Secretary-General drew attention to critical conditions prevailing in various sectors, including the economy, politics, academia, environment, and public health. He stressed the alarming decline in social capital and trust in governance. Furthermore, Zafarqandi revealed alarming statistics, indicating that approximately 80 percent of medical students are considering leaving the country. "Many professors from the country's universities are leaving. Today, important fields such as heart surgery, emergency medicine, anesthesia, and many medical fields do not have volunteer applicants, and residency positions remain vacant," he warned.



IRAN NEWS



13th INOTEX Exhibition Will Be Held in May 2024

TEHRAN (IP) - According to the Vice President of Innovation of Science and Technology Park, the 13th Innotex International Exhibition will be held in Pardis Technology Park in May 2024. Mojtabi Jabaripour, the Vice President of Pardis Science and Technology Park, at his press conference, said: "INOTEX is a platform for cooperation and increasing interaction between activists in ecology and technology." Referring to the goals of this exhibition, he said that forming cooperation and synergy, attracting capital and interaction between investors, networking and indigenization of the innovative ecosystem are among the goals of the 13th edition of INOTEX International Innovation and Technology Exhibition. Referring to the 12th INOTEX exhibition, Jabaripour said: "In the previous year, more than 450 companies were present at the exhibition." The INOTEX International Exhibition of Innovation and Technology, INOTEX, is the largest gathering of the country's innovation and technology ecosystem. The 13th edition of this event will be held from May 7 to 10, 2024, at the Pardis Technology Park. This event, with the slogan "The Innovation and Technology Ecosystem Under One Roof," is working to create a suitable platform for collaboration, investment, and networking for the different components of this ecosystem, with the support and participation of major players in the country's innovation and technology ecosystem. Also, there is a section with the presence of companies, to realize the goals of cooperation and interaction of stakeholders, and most of these programs are managed by companies. Also, the online event is one of the other programs of INOTEX 2024.

UN Lauds Iran's Push for Yemen Peace



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The United Nations' Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg commended Iran for its efforts to ensure security and stability in Yemen. In a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, held in Tehran on Saturday, the UN envoy praised Iran's stances on Yemen and its determination to establish stability and security in the Arab country. Briefing the Iranian minister on the UN's plans to ensure peace and reduce tensions in Yemen, Grundberg stressed the need for the employment of intraregional capacities to address the root causes of regional crises. For his part, Amirabdollahian said the US' military approaches, the recent American and British strikes against Yemen, and Washington's move to designate Ansarullah forces a terrorist group have further complicated the situation and hindered a political solution. He also reaffirmed Iran's constant support for sustainable peace and security in Yemen, stressing that the efforts at the establishment of stability and security across the region will serve the interests of all regional countries. The top Iranian diplomat then condemned the US' recent military strikes on Syria and Iraq as a continuation of Washington's wrong and failed policy of resorting to force and militarism. The US on Friday night launched air strikes against more than 85 targets in Syria and Iraq on what it alleged were establishments linked to Iran.



Iranian Firm Unveils Launch Timeline for Satellites Kowsar, Hodhod

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Mustafa Aghili, the executive director of the Iranian satellite manufacturing firm OmidFaza, disclosed the eagerly awaited launch schedule for the private satellites Kowsar and Hodhod, stating that the ambitious venture is set to take place in May-June 2024. "After successfully registering the Omid satellite project in our portfolio, OmidFaza decided to continue satellite manufacturing privately. Therefore, we initiated the design and construction of the Kowsar satellite," Aghili explained, addressing reporters. "To execute this project," Aghili continued, "we were able to pre-sell images of the Kowsar satellite through collaboration with some institutions, and ultimately, it was designed and built with collective investment." Highlighting recent developments, Aghili pointed out, "Recently, the Space Organization, by signing a contract, pre-purchased images of the Kowsar satellite and secured the satellite's functionality." Emphasizing the growing confidence in OmidFaza, Aghili noted, "On the other hand, others observed our capabilities and gradually gained confidence in us." Aghili revealed, "Based on this, an organization

commissioned us to design and build the Hodhod satellite, making it the client of the Hodhod satellite project." "If the Hodhod project is completed," he added, "the path for integrating these satellites will open up." Referring to the launch plans, Aghili explained, "It is planned that the Kowsar and Hodhod satellites will be placed in orbit by a foreign launcher." "The construction of the Kowsar satellite took 4 years," Aghili highlighted, "and with the experience gained from this satellite, we were able to build the Hodhod satellite in one year." Aghili added, "Currently, these two satellites are in the assembly testing phase." Regarding the launch time, Aghili reminded, "These two satellites were supposed to be launched in Azar (November-December) of the current year, but their launch time has been delayed by 6 months." He added, "We conducted a test phase in Russia with the hope that these satellites would be launched in Azar of the current year, but the launch was delayed. If it is supposed to take place in Khordad (May-June) of next year, once again, in Ordibehesht (April) of next year, we will assemble the satellite in Russia and perform the necessary tests."

Persian Gulf Star Refinery Supplies 40% of Iran's Gasoline Needs

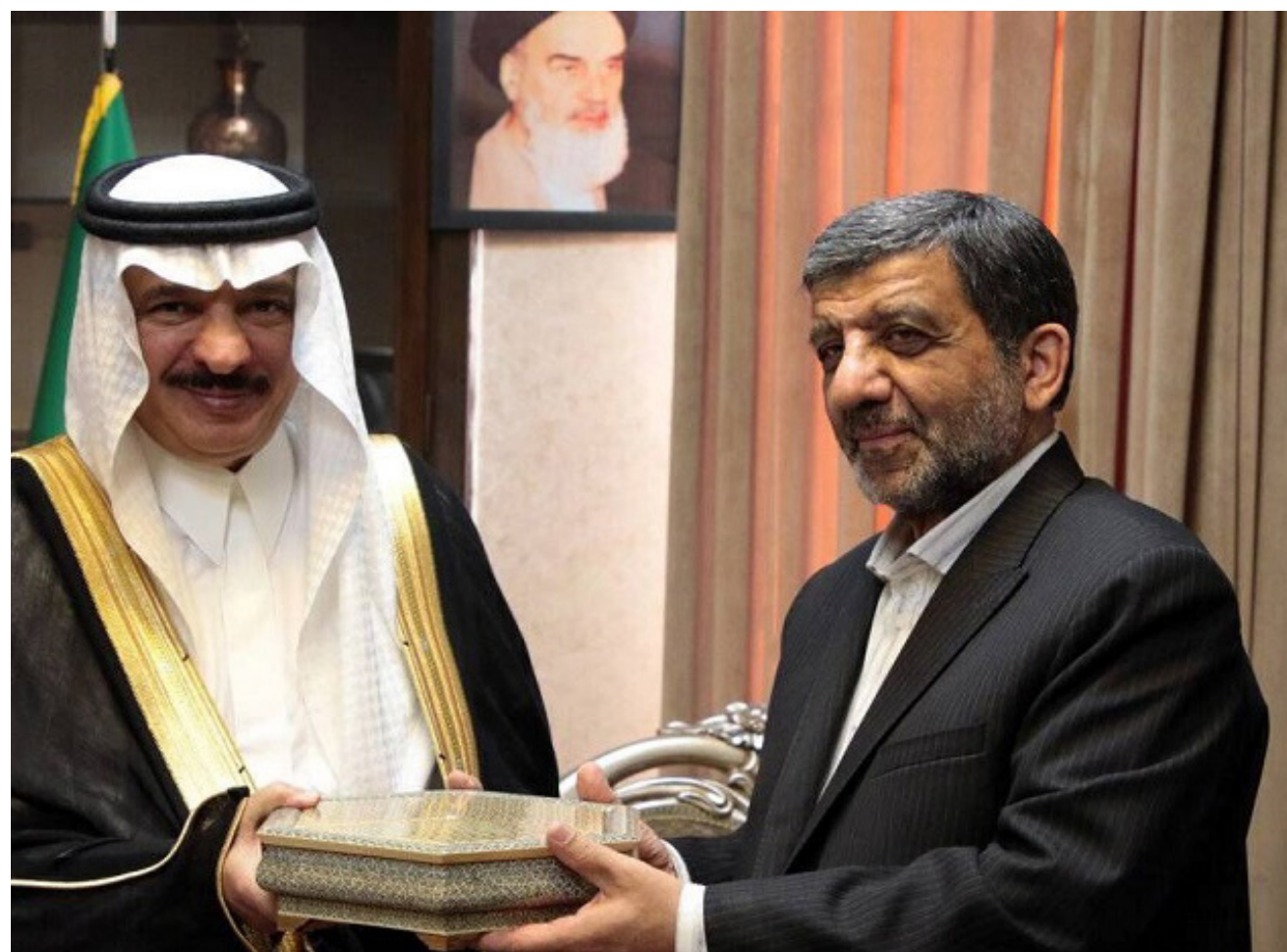


TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Managing-Director of the Persian Gulf Star refinery in southern Iran has said that the refinery is responsible for 40% of the country's gasoline needs and also has a significant share in producing other products such as liquefied gas and kerosene. Alireza Jafarpour Boroujeni said that the Persian Gulf Star refinery is Iran's largest refinery and the world's largest gasoline producer. Iran used to be producing some 33 million liters a day of gasoline and other gasoline products two years ago while the figure has not grown to 43 million liters a day, he said. He added that the country's gasoline output has grown by around 15 million liters either directly or indirectly over the past two years which will significantly help remove imbalances in gasoline production. Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) Jalil Salari said early in January that the Iranian average daily gasoline consumption had reached about 113 million liters.

Iran, Saudi Arabia to Boost Closer Tourism Ties

TEHRAN (IP) - The Saudi ambassador in Tehran, in a meeting with Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts stated that there is no obstacle to the development of tourism ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia. During a meeting with Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, Ezzatollah Zarghami, in Tehran on Saturday, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Tehran, Abdullah bin Saud Al-Anzi said he sees no obstacle to boosting tourism relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi diplomat added: "Iran and Saudi Arabia are two neighboring and brotherly countries with abundant potential. These capacities can serve as an opportunity for boosting tourism between the two nations." "We traveled to Qom and visited

the pilgrimage and historical places of the city and there were no problems," he said, adding that Saudi Arabia is optimistic about tourism cooperation with the Islamic Republic. Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, Zarghami, on his part, said tourism can play an important role in fostering stronger ties between the two sides. "Tourism ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia bear significant responsibilities in the new era of bilateral relations," he said. The minister expressed hope that the new Saudi ambassador to Iran can help strengthen bilateral cooperation in the field of tourism. Iran and Saudi Arabia restored their diplomatic relations under a China-brokered deal after seven years.



Over 3m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Week



TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) last week witnessed trade of 3,185,461 tons of commodities and 270 vehicles with a total trading value of almost \$797m on its physical market. According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,469,828 tons of commodities and 270 vehicles valued at nearly \$480m. On this floor the IME sold 1,137,642 tons of cement, 779,000 tons of iron ore, 451,906 tons of steel, 81,500 tons of sponge iron, 9,240 tons of copper, 8,430 tons of aluminum, 1,910 tons of zinc, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 270 vehicles. Based on this report, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 696,443 tons of commodities worth more than \$305m. Commodities traded on this floor included 293,843 tons of bitumen, 180,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 114,692 tons of polymeric products, 59,600 tons of lube cut, 34,388 tons of chemicals, 5,830 tons of oil, 5,650 tons of sulfur and 240 tons of feedstocks. The IME also traded within the same week 19,190 tons of goods on its side market. Author: IME International Affairs

Iran-Turkey Trade Hits \$5.5b in 2023

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - The Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) put the volume of the trade exchanges between Iran and Turkey in 2023 at about \$5.5 billion. According to the TURKSTAT's latest report, the two countries exchanged \$5.490 billion worth of trade in 2023, showing a 14% decline compared to the same period last year. Iran and Turkey's trade exchanges in 2022 exceeded \$6.420 billion. Turkey exported \$3.310 billion worth of non-oil products to Iran from January to December 2023, registering an 8% growth compared to a year earlier. Turkey imported over \$2.180 billion worth of goods from Iran in 2023, showing a 35% slump compared to a year before. Accordingly, Turkey had imported over \$3.350 billion from Iran in 2022.

Namibia's President Hage Geingob Dies in Hospital

PARIS (AFP) - Namibia's President Hage Geingob died early Sunday in a hospital in Windhoek, the presidential office said in a statement. He was 82. Geingob, who was serving his second term as president, revealed last month that he was receiving treatment for cancer. "It is with utmost sadness and regret that I inform you that our beloved Dr. Hage G. Geingob, the President of the Republic of Namibia has passed on today", read the statement on X, formerly Twitter, signed by acting president Nangolo Mbumba. "At his side, was his dear wife Madame Monica Geingos and his children." A biopsy following a routine medical check-up in January had revealed "cancerous cells", Geingob's office said at the time. First elected president in 2014, Geingob was Namibia's longest serving prime minister and third president. In 2013, Geingob underwent brain surgery, and last year he underwent an aortic operation in neighbouring South Africa



Ukrainian Shelling in Eastern Occupied City Kills Dozens in Bakery



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Ukrainian shelling on the eastern occupied city of Lysychansk killed at least 20 people, Russia said Saturday, with at least 10 others wounded and rescue operations ongoing. Moscow's forces said Kyiv had targeted a bakery that is popular on weekends. The attack hit almost two years into Russia's Ukraine offensive. Lysychansk, a city in the Lugansk region that had a population of around 110,000 people before Moscow's offensive, fell to Russian forces after a brutal battle in the summer of 2022. "In Lysychansk, employees of the Russian emergency ministry recovered the bodies of 20 people from under the rubble," the ministry said on Telegram. It showed a video of rescuers working in the dark, pulling out one dead body from the rubble before finding a wounded woman alive and putting her on a stretcher to take her out of the heavily destroyed building. The ministry earlier said it had pulled out 10 survivors from under the rubble and said rescue operations will continue into the night. The Moscow-installed governor of Lugansk, Leonid Pasechnik, said earlier that Kyiv had targeted a bakery that was known to have fresh bread on weekends. RIA Novosti published a video of a heavily damaged building, with emergency workers pulling out an entirely crushed car. The one-storey building had a large sign on it that read "Restaurant Adriatic" and appeared entirely destroyed and covered in rubble. The front in eastern Ukraine has barely moved in months but battles continue to be bloody with intensified attacks on both sides this winter. The attack came as Kyiv said Russia hit it with a fresh barrage of Iranian-made drones, which targeted energy facilities in the central Dnipropetrovsk region, leaving thousands without power. Moscow-installed authorities said one wounded man in "serious condition" was taken to hospital in the city of Lugansk. Lysychansk lies some 15 kilometres (nine miles) from Ukrainian-controlled territory. Russia took control of it and its twin city of Severodonetsk in summer 2022 after some of the most brutal battles of its almost two-year offensive.

Senegalese President Sall Postpones Presidential Vote



DAKAR (Dispatches) - President Macky Sall postponed Senegal's planned Feb. 25 presidential election, announcing in a televised address to the nation on Saturday that he had cancelled the relevant law due to electoral issues he warned would fuel disputes. With little more than three weeks to go before the vote, the unprecedented step of delaying the poll, to an unspecified date, pitches Senegal into uncharted constitutional waters that some opposition and civil society groups said amounted to an "institutional coup." One opposition coalition has already vowed to challenge the move in the courts, raising the prospect of a protracted legal battle that could further muddy the democratic outlook. Sall's decision follows the constitutional council's January decision to exclude some prominent contenders from the electoral list, which has seriously undermined the election process. "These troubled conditions could seriously undermine the credibility of the ballot by sowing the seeds of pre- and post-electoral disputes," Sall said in his address. He did not set a new date for the vote, but said a parliamentary inquiry had been set up to look into how candidates were verified and any other issues, and that a national dialogue would also take place to ensure the eventual election is free, fair and transparent. He said the postponement would not affect his decision not to run for a third term - an issue that has helped provoke recurrent and sometimes deadly protests in what is normally one of West Africa's most stable democracies. The U.S. State Department's Africa bureau said "we are deeply concerned about the disruption to the Presidential electoral calendar," in a post on X that said the bureau had noted Sall's reiteration he would not run again. The capital Dakar appeared calm after Sall's announcement with no immediate sign of people taking to the streets in protest. The F24 platform, a large group of civil society organisations behind past demonstrations, said in a statement it would hold an emergency meeting to decide how to respond to the "institutional coup d'etat that is taking shape."

U.S., UK Strike Dozens of Houthi Targets in Yemen



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The United States and Britain struck dozens of targets in Yemen on Saturday in response to repeated attacks on shipping by Houthi rebels that have disrupted global trade and put lives at risk. The joint air raids in Yemen came a day after a separate wave of unilateral American strikes against targets in Iraq and Syria that were carried out in response to the killing of three U.S. soldiers in Jordan on January 28. It is the third time that British and American forces have jointly targeted the Houthis and the United States has also carried out a series of air raids against them on its own, but the rebels' attacks have persisted. Saturday's strikes hit "36 Houthi targets across 13 locations in Yemen in response to the Houthis' continued attacks against international and commercial shipping as well as naval vessels transiting the Red Sea," the United States, Britain and other countries that provided support for the operation said in a statement. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the strikes "are intended to further disrupt and degrade the capabilities of the Houthi militia to conduct their reckless and destabilizing attacks." "Coalition forces targeted 13 locations associated with the Houthis' deeply buried weapons storage facilities, missile systems and launchers, air defense systems, and radars," he said in a statement. Neither Austin nor the joint statement identified the specific places that

were hit, but the Houthis' Al-Massirah television said Sanaa and other locations were targeted. Britain's Defense Ministry said Royal Air Force Typhoon warplanes struck targets including two ground control stations used to operate both attack and reconnaissance drones. Separately, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said its forces carried out a strike against a Houthi anti-ship missile "prepared to launch against ships in the Red Sea" early Sunday morning after deeming it "presented an imminent threat" against military and commercial vessels in the area. That strike came after CENTCOM said they had earlier Saturday also launched strikes against six other Houthi anti-ship missiles and that on Friday U.S. forces had shot down eight drones in and near Yemen, and destroyed four more before they could be launched. The Houthis began targeting Red Sea shipping in November, saying they were hitting Israel-linked vessels in support of Palestinians in Gaza, which has been ravaged by the Israel-Hamas war. U.S. and UK forces responded with strikes against the Houthis, who have since declared American and British interests to be legitimate targets as well. Houthi spokesman Nasr al-Din Amer said following the Saturday strikes that "either there is peace for us, Palestine and Gaza, or there is no peace and no safety for you in our region." "We will meet the escalation with escalation," he wrote on social media.

India's Decisions on IIOJK Tantamount to Suppress Basic Human Rights, Violation of UNSC Resolutions



By Former Ambassador Syed Abrar Hussain

Despite on the agenda list of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) since 1948, the dispute of Indian Illegal Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) has been persistently lingered on for justice during the last eight decades or so. The third oppressed Kashmiri generation like that of the people of South Sudan and East Timor are looking forward for implementation of the UNSC resolutions to gain their basic rights to self-determination. But the unilateral decisions of India on fate of the IIOJK have kept on blatantly suppressing basic human rights of the Kashmiri people and violating international laws of justice - showing least concern about the UN resolutions and disputed status of the territory. India has unilaterally taken the unlawful decision to revoke the special status of IIOJK on August 5, 2019, to bring about demographic changes in the region - to turn Kashmiris into minority by giving domiciles to non-Kashmiris which is a blatant violation of the Article 49 of the fourth Geneva Convention. It is not possible for India to snatch the basic rights of self-determination from Kashmiri people. This right has already recognized by the United Nations and the first Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who has repeatedly promised a plebiscite to the people of Kashmir, which was never held. But sadly, no action was taken during the first four years on the illegal decision of the government by the Indian Supreme Court where a case was registered against the illegal move on IIOJK on August 5, 2019. Intentionally, the period has given enough time to the government to suppress the voice of the Kashmiri people through all possible means of the Indian state security apparatus. But last year, more shockingly, the Indian SC has supported the unlawful and unilateral move of India on disputed territory of IIOJK. The recent Indian SC's verdict on IIOJK is based on the supposition that during 1947, the Kashmiri Raja has decided to join India. But the SC has ignored the UN resolutions and promises made by the Indian leadership of the plebiscite to the people of Kashmir. India cannot bypass the UN resolutions and international laws. Similarly, it cannot forcefully impose the illegal decision on the disputed territory Kashmir. It is clear from the Article 122 of the UNSC 1957 resolution that the final destiny of IIOJK lies in the hands of the indigenous people of Kashmir - based on a plebiscite as per their aspirations. The renowned lawyer, Kapil Sibal has acknowledged the fact during the

debate on the disputed territory in the Indian SC that historically and geographically, Kashmir has no relations whatsoever with the present-day India. He argued that Radcliffe during the partition of the Subcontinent has deceitfully paved the way for Kashmir. He also said at that time, Pakistan was agreed on referendum in Jammu and it also believed that the same will take place in Kashmir. The pleading of the so-called case in the Indian SC has made fun of the Kashmiri people as it has asked Mohammad Akbar Lon to submit an affidavit in the SC that he would remain loyal to the Constitution of India despite the fact that he is a member of the Lok Sabha. The Indian SC's verdict is in absolute contrast with the Indian Constitution as its Article 51 states that India was bound to follow international laws. However, the 2019 decision regarding IIOJK is against the international laws. Similarly, according to Article 3 of the Constitution, without taking consent of the Assembly, no change could occur on geographical border of any state. However, the disputed state of IIOJK has been divided into two parts without taking the assembly of the state into confidence while Ladakh is made a separate area. The Indian SC has approved this whole illegal process. Likewise, according to Article 370, in order to revoke special status of the territory, consent of the state assembly was required. But a lame excuse and baseless arguments were made as it stated that the state was under the Governor Raj, therefore, Indian Parliament was given equal status to that of the state assembly. Therefore, the government of Pakistan has rejected the unlawful verdict of the Indian SC regarding the IIOJK and sought to resolve the issue of the disputed territory in light of the UNSC resolutions and as per the aspirations of the people of Kashmir. The Foreign Office said in its statement on December 11, 2023 that Pakistan does not accept the supremacy of Indian Constitution in the disputed territory. The Indian SC's verdict has undermined the aspirations of the people of Kashmir and it could not replace plebiscite. Now all possible efforts have been made from the Indian state institutions including Parliament, judiciary, and Army to suppress the rights of Kashmiri people to self-determination. Therefore, India has unleashed the onslaught of terror and force to subjugate the spirit of the people. But despite the ongoing Indian state terrorism, the free minds and hearts of the people of Kashmir continued to disturb India.



Biden Cruises to South Carolina Democratic Primary Win

COLUMBIA (Dispatches) - U.S. President Joe Biden on Saturday won the South Carolina Democratic primary - the first officially sanctioned race of the party's nominating season - with returns showing him swamping two other candidates, according to Edison Research. While Biden, 81, faced little opposition, the vote was being closely watched amid concerns about his popularity, especially among Black voters. Edison Research predicted a Biden win soon after polls closed at 7 p.m. EST (0000 GMT) on Saturday and his margin of victory held steady as the night wore on. With 93.3% of precincts reporting, Biden had won 116,266 votes, or 96.4% out of 120,643 votes cast, way ahead of his two main challengers, U.S. Representative Dean Phillips and best-selling self-help author Marianne Williamson. But turnout failed to exceed expectations. Democratic officials interviewed by Reuters had expected somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 total votes, following a county-by-county tour of the Southern state aimed at exciting voters and multiple events featuring Biden or Vice President Kamala Harris. In a victory statement, the Biden campaign said: "In 2020, it was the voters of South Carolina who proved the pundits wrong, breathed new life into our campaign, and set us on the path to winning the presidency." "Now in 2024, the people of South Carolina have spoken again and I have no doubt that you have set us on the path to winning the presidency again - and making Donald Trump a loser - again," the campaign said in a statement. Four years ago, it was South Carolina's Black vote in the state's primary that helped ignite Biden's campaign and ultimately propel him to the White House. Shortly before the polls in South Carolina closed, Biden arrived in Los Angeles, where he was expected to meet with Black entertainers.

Israel Forges Buffer Zone Inside Gaza at Risk to Civilians

GAZA (Dispatches) - Israeli forces in Gaza have systematically destroyed buildings in an attempt to create a buffer zone inside the Palestinian territory, experts and rights groups told AFP, raising fears over the civilian cost. The plan, not publicly confirmed by Israel, appears to entail taking a significant chunk of territory out of the already tiny Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, something experts as well as Israel's foreign allies have warned against. Since Hamas militants stormed across the border on October 7, Israeli forces have targeted structures in Gaza within a kilometre (0.6 miles) of the border, said Adi Ben Nun, a professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem who has carried out an analysis of satellite imagery. More than 30 percent of all buildings in that area have been damaged or destroyed during the war, he said. Last month, the Israeli army's deadliest day since the ground invasion began in late October offered a glimpse of the tactics being used to clear the border area. Israeli army chief Herzi Halevi said at the time that 21 reservists were killed "during a defensive operation in the area separating the Israeli communities from Gaza" to allow for residents' "safe return". The troops had laid out explosives to blow up buildings when they were fired upon by militants, the army said. Displacement of Gazans including from the border area could breach the laws of war, experts said. "We are seeing mounting evidence that Israel appears to be rendering large parts of Gaza unlivable," said Nadia Hardman, a refugee rights expert at Human Rights Watch. "One very clear example of that may be the buffer zone - this may amount to a war

crime." When contacted by AFP, the military declined to comment on the buffer zone. Cecilie Hellestveit, of the Norwegian Academy of International Law, warned of "the prospect of ethnic cleansing, transfer, or lack of rebuilding, so that the Palestinians will eventually be forced out of the area entirely". Scrutiny of Israel's actions in Gaza is likely to be heightened by last month's International Court of Justice ruling asking Israel to prevent any acts of genocide. The United States, Israel's top ally and provider of military aid, has repeatedly said Gaza's territory should not change and that a buffer zone would breach that principle. "When it comes to the permanent status of Gaza... we remain clear about not encroaching on its territory," said US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Rights experts said Israel could use parts of its own territory to create a security zone. "If the Israeli government wants a buffer zone, it has every right to create one in far larger Israel, but it has no right to seize land in Gaza," human rights expert Ken Roth, a professor at Princeton University, said on social media. Border security has become a priority for many Israelis, experts said, and the return to communities near the Gaza border would be seen as a sign that Hamas no longer posed a threat. In Nahal Oz, a kibbutz barely a kilometre from Gaza that was targeted in the October 7 attack, artillery fire rang out and smoke billowed over the Palestinian territory in the distance. Like many Israelis who lived along the border before the attack, nearly all of the kibbutz's 400 residents were evacuated and have yet to return.





Slovakia Rout Serbia in Djokovic Absence to Make Davis Cup Finals

PARIS (Dispatches) - Serbia, without Novak Djokovic, proved no match for Slovakia who surged into the group stage of the Davis Cup finals for the first time, with Germany and Finland among five other countries qualifying. Slovak doubles duo Lukas Klein and Igor Zelenay clinched the decisive point with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 win over Nikola Caci and Miomir Kecmanovic to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the tie. Lukas Pokorny made it 4-0 after Laslo Djere retired while trailing in the first set of the reverse singles on indoor clay at Kraljevo. "Too many years we didn't qualify but finally we made it," said Zelenay. Alex Molcan, who won Friday's second singles, added: "We knew it was going to be tough against Serbians in their home nation. I'm happy we were able to win two matches today." Zelenay and Klein had recovered from a break in the first set, digging deep with 31 winners to see off 2010 champions Serbia. On Friday, Klein got Slovakia off the mark with a 7-6 (7/2), 6-2 win over Kecmanovic, with Molcan rallying past Dusan Lajovic 4-6, 6-2, 6-0. In Hungary, three-time winners Germany -- missing Alexander Zverev due to illness -- clinched the first two of Saturday's matches for an eventual 3-2 victory. Doubles pairing Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz's 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) win over Fabian Marozsan and Mate Valkusz pulled the Germans ahead. Jan-Lennard Struff sealed their ticket with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Valkusz to advance to September's group stage featuring 16 teams. Zsombor Piros won a dead fifth rubber against Krawietz. Finland cruised to a 3-1 win over Portugal,

while Brazil qualified for a first finals appearance as Thiago Monteiro defeated Elias Ymer in three sets to cement a 3-1 victory of their own. The Netherlands won a thrilling contest against Switzerland, Botić van de Zandschulp edging Marc-Andrea Huesler 5-7, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 in the decisive second reverse singles as the Dutch prevailed 3-2 in Groningen. The Swiss led the tie 2-1 after Huesler and Leandro Riedi won Saturday's doubles, but Tallon Griekspoor kept the hosts alive by seeing off Riedi in two tie-break sets. "We had to win and it was up to me to do it," said Griekspoor. "That is what you have to do as a team leader. I really didn't feel any tension - I really enjoyed it." Canada, the 2022 champions, seized a 3-1 lead over South Korea to clinch victory on Saturday in Montreal when Gabriel Diallo defeated Hong Seong-chan 7-5, 4-6, 6-1. Two-time winners Croatia are level at 1-1 with Belgium as are Argentina and Kazakhstan. France hold a 2-0 lead against Taiwan, in one of five qualifiers set to conclude on Sunday. The Czech Republic have a similar advantage over Israel. Defending champions Italy and last year's runners-up Australia, as well as Britain and Spain have advanced automatically to the finals. On Friday, the United States advanced 4-0 with Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram sealing their spot with a doubles win against Ukraine. Taylor Fritz then eased past Vladyslav Orlov 6-3, 6-4 to complete an American sweep. "I'm proud of the guys," said US captain Bob Bryan of the record 32-time winners who have not lifted the trophy since 2007.

Mbappe Reportedly to join Real Madrid at End of Season



PARIS (Dispatches) - France captain Kylian Mbappe will join LaLiga giants Real Madrid when his contract with Paris St Germain finishes at the end of the season, Le Parisien and ESPN reported on Saturday. Mbappe said last year he would not renew his contract at the Ligue 1 side when it expired at the end of the 2023-24 campaign, allowing him to move on to another club on a free transfer. French newspaper Le Parisien and ESPN, citing sources, said the 25-year-old striker would announce a pre-contract agreement with the 14-times European champions next week. Media reports last September said Mbappe had agreed to forego loyalty bonuses worth up to €100 million (US\$107.84 million) to leave PSG as a free agent. Mbappe was heavily linked with a move to Real in 2022 but announced a contract extension with PSG just weeks before the transfer window opened.

Kings' Stars Provide Big Lift in Win Over Bulls

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - February 4 - De'Aaron Fox scored 41 points, Domantas Sabonis recorded his 14th triple-double of the season with 13 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists, and the Sacramento Kings improved to 5-1 on their seven-game road trip with a 123-115 defeat of the Chicago Bulls. Fox scored 14 in a wild fourth quarter, during which Sacramento held off a furious Chicago rally. The Bulls trailed by as many as 30 in the third quarter before a 29-9 burst sent them into the final period down 91-81. Chicago pulled to within a one-possession margin in the final minute behind the trio of Coby White, DeMar DeRozan and Nikola Vucevic. White scored 12 of his team-high 26 points in the fourth, while DeRozan and Vucevic combined to score 11 consecutive Bulls points in a stretch spanning almost three minutes. DeRozan connected on a jumper with 59 seconds remaining that brought Chicago to within three points. But after a pair of Fox free throws pushed the lead back to five, Sabonis successfully contested DeRozan at the rim to effectively put the game away for Sacramento. DeRozan and Vucevic each finished with 24 points. DeRozan grabbed seven rebounds, dished six assists and made four steals. Vucevic led Chicago with 12 rebounds. Ayo Dosunmu was the only other Bull to score in double-figures with 18 points. Malik Monk (22 points) and Trey Lyles (16 points) came off the bench and excelled for the Kings. Monk also had seven assists and five rebounds. Harrison Barnes scored four of his 11 points in the final 1:10, including a big pull-up jumper that kept the Sacramento lead at two possessions down the stretch. The Kings shot 15-of-39 from 3-point range, which helped make the difference. Chicago finished 11-of-34 from beyond the arc.



Last-Gasp AFCON Triumph for I. Coast, S. Africa Also Reach Semis



BOUAKE (Dispatches) - Oumar Diakite was the hero as hosts Ivory Coast staged another remarkable salvage operation on Saturday to reach the Africa cup of Nations semi-finals, and South Africa later joined them. A brilliant back-heel by the substitute in added time at the end of extra time in Bouake gave the Elephants a 2-1 victory over Mali, who dominated much of the quarter-final and scored first. Ivory Coast-born Nene Dorogbe put Mali ahead on 71 minutes against the host nation, who were reduced to 10 men just before half-time when Odilon Kossounou was sent off. But another Ivorian substitute, Simon Adingra, levelled in the 90th minute to take the pulsating west African showdown into extra time. Then, with the quarter-final seemingly set to be decided by a penalty shootout, Diakite back-heeled a drive from a teammate past Mali goalkeeper Djigui Diarra. Diakite, who had been yellow-carded earlier, took off his shirt when celebrating, leading to a second caution followed by a red card. Victory came at a high price as suspensions rule Diakite, Kossounou, captain Serge Aurier and Christian Kouame out of a semi-final against the Democratic Republic of Congo on Wednesday. Victory maintained the dominance of the Elephants over the Eagles in AFCON tournaments -- it was their fifth win from 1994 with one other meeting drawn. The last time Ivory Coast reached the semi-finals was in 2015 in Equatorial Guinea, and they defeated DR Congo 3-1 before going on to win the tournament a second time. Ivory Coast scraped into the knockout stage this time as the last of the four best third-placed nations and then trailed holders Senegal for 82 minutes before snatching an equaliser. They went on to win the last-16 clash on penalties, only to be play second fiddle to Mali in the next round before staging an amazing comeback. Mali contributed to their downfall by squandering a chance to take an early lead when Adama 'Noss' Traore had a penalty saved by Youssouf Fofana. Several Malians could face disciplinary action as a group, including red-carded captain Hamari Traore, surrounded the Egyptian referee after the winning goal, forcing the official to push some away. Meanwhile, South Africa goalkeeper Ronwen Williams saved four penalties in a shootout as his country beat Cape Verde 2-1 in a shootout after a 0-0 draw following extra time in Yamoussoukro. Bryan Teixeira was the only Cape Verdean to score from the spot while Teboho Mokoena and Mthobi Mvala netted for South Africa.

Villa Rout Sheffield Utd, Everton Salvage Draw

LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - Aston Villa bounced back from a winless January to thrash Sheffield United 5-0 and climb up to fourth in the Premier League as relegation-threatened Everton rescued a late point against Tottenham Hotspur in a 2-2 draw. Brighton & Hove Albion moved up to seventh with a 4-1 victory over Crystal Palace, Newcastle United fought back from two down in a rollercoaster 4-4 draw with Luton Town and David Datro Fofana scored twice to earn relegation-threatened Burnley a 2-2 draw with Fulham. Ollie Watkins grabbed a goal and two assists as Villa served notice of their top-four intentions with their rout of Sheffield United. Villa, third-placed Arsenal and second-placed Manchester City all have 46 points. "I'm happy because before the match we were very focused," Villa manager Unai Emery told the BBC. "We scored goals, created chances and stopped them. Winning away is difficult." Bottom side Sheffield, who are 10 points from safety, have conceded 59 goals this season, the most ever by a Premier League team at this point of a campaign. "For our 30,000 Sheffield United supporters it wasn't good enough," Blades manager Chris Wilder told Sky Sports. "Myself and my players have got to accept that responsibility. We have got well and truly took to the cleaners." Jarrad Branthwaite headed in Everton's equaliser in the 94th minute after Spurs striker Richarlison had netted a first-half brace against his old team. "It is a massive point, we have had a rough patch recently," Branthwaite told BBC. "We took our chances, obviously a bit disappointed with the goals we



conceded but it is a good point and shows the fight we have as a team." Spurs are fifth in the table on 44 points while Everton are 18th. Brighton ended a run of three games without a win to move level on 35 points with Manchester United. Palace, whose loss piled more pressure on manager Roy Hodgson, are five points above the drop zone in 14th. Lewis Dunk opened the floodgates for Brighton in the third minute and they were 3-0 up at half-time after goals from Jack Hinshelwood and Facundo Buonanotte. "We killed the game off in the first half. A top performance from everyone," Brighton captain Dunk told the BBC. "It is always nice to score a goal and especially in a derby." Newcastle's Sean Longstaff scored twice in the first half but Luton went 4-2 up through a Carlton Morris penalty and Elijah Adebayo's strike. Kieran Trippier pulled one back for the hosts and substitute Harvey Barnes equalised in the 73rd minute. Newcastle are ninth with 33 points and Luton are 16th on 20. "To be honest, I don't know what the feeling is," Longstaff said. "I feel as though, with no disrespect to Luton, we should win at home. And going twice ahead, we should win it." Burnley clawed back from two goals down against Fulham and Fofana bundled home the equaliser in the 91st minute. Joao Palhinha and Rodrigo Muniz had struck in the first half to put Fulham in a commanding position but Fofana pulled a goal back in the 71st minute before sliding in to push Wilson Odobert's cross over the line. The draw kept Burnley second-bottom of the standings, seven points from the safety zone. Fulham are 12th.