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Iran is often blamed for US pressure, but what about other countries that are being blackmailed?

Greenland, Panama, Canada... The Insatiable America



Tehran opposed to border changes, Pezeshkian warns Azerbaijani official

TEHRAN – In a meeting with the Azerbaijani President's foreign policy assistant Hikmet Hajiyeve on Monday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian reaffirmed that preserving the sovereignty of regional nations remains a cornerstone of Iran's foreign policy.

He warned that any attempt to alter borders is entirely unacceptable and cautioned against foreign interference, which he said threatens regional stability.

Pezeshkian also highlighted Iran's commitment to strengthening ties with neighboring and Islamic nations, stating that Tehran seeks greater unity among Muslim countries.

"Beyond fostering internal solidarity, we are dedicated to expanding relations with our neighbors and Islamic allies because any division among Muslims invites external powers to exploit and create discord," he said.

Israeli claims against Iran aim to hinder Lebanon's reconstruction: foreign ministry

TEHRAN – Iran has rejected Israel's accusations that it is funneling millions of dollars to Hezbollah in Lebanon, calling the claims unfounded and aimed at hindering Lebanon's recovery after Israeli aggression.

Esmail Baqaei, spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry, addressed these allegations during a weekly press conference on Monday, stating, "These false claims are part of a broader attempt to disrupt Lebanon's reconstruction efforts following Israel's attacks."

Last November, Israel agreed to a ceasefire with Hezbollah after more than 16 months of conflict, which saw significant Israeli military losses and failure to meet its objectives in Lebanon. ▶ Page 2

Iran is no longer under serious security threats, says Zarif as he discusses regional issues with scholars

TEHRAN – Iran's Vice President for Strategic Affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif, delivered a strong message regarding Iran's regional position and security during a gathering in Tehran on Monday.

Zarif stated that Iran has reached a point of strength where it is no longer vulnerable to foreign attacks, referencing a shift away from what he termed a "hit-and-run" policy of the past.

"Iran today, after 220 years, has reached a position where neither the United States, nor Israel, nor any other entity can even think of attacking Iran and getting away with it," Zarif stated. He emphasized that the era of "hit-and-run," where enemies could attack without facing serious consequences, is over. "Iran was trapped in the 'hit-and-run' policy for 170 years... But today, this era has come to an end."

Zarif acknowledged that threats still exist, but stated that the constant worry associated with them is no longer a reality. He emphasized that Iran is no longer in a position of weakness and continuous concern over foreign attacks.

Addressing the issue of regional Resistance against Israeli colonialism, Zarif asserted that Islamic Resistance movements were formed due to "occupation," ▶ Page 2

Where is the situation in Syria heading?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – The upcoming meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump is of great interest to the Hebrew media, which considers it a strategic meeting due to the issues under discussion.

Netanyahu had described the meeting as "reflecting the strength of the alliance between Israel and the United States."

Itamar Eichner, a correspondent for Yedioth Ahronoth, said the meetings in Washington will focus on "the victory over Hamas, the return of prisoners, and dealing with the Iranian axis," in addition to expanding the "Abraham Accords," including the possibility of normalization with Saudi Arabia.

One of the important issues for Netanyahu is the fate of the new Syria too.

Before announcing his appointment as interim president, al-Julani dissolved the army, in addition to abolishing the 2012 constitution, dissolving the People's Assembly, the Baath Party, the National Progressive Front, etc.

Nasrallah: A living martyr

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The funeral ceremony for Hezbollah Secretary-General Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah has been officially announced.

Sheikh Naim Qassem, the current leader of the Lebanese resistance, confirmed the commemoration will take place on February 23.

Sheikh Qassem noted that foreign dignitaries will attend the funeral. The ceremony is expected to be massive, with many important figures present.

People will gather to pay their respects to a man adored in Lebanon, West Asia, and beyond.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Nasrallah was widely seen as a champion of resistance.

He was admired not only for his strong leadership skills and influence but also for his unwavering, decades-long mission to end Israeli occupation.

To many, he was a symbol of defiance and determination, shaping the course of Lebanon's struggle to end the Israeli occupation.

The Israeli military withdrew from southern Lebanon on May 24, 2000, ending nearly 18 years of occupation.

Celebrating carnage: Trump embracing butcher of Gaza

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- US President Donald Trump is rolling out the red carpet at the White House for a wanted criminal whose army has slaughtered close to 62,000 Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip in cold blood.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose arrest warrant has been issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for committing war crimes in Gaza, is set to meet with Trump on Tuesday evening at 6 p.m. local time.

Netanyahu, known as Bibi, was welcomed to the US capital on Sunday night by Israel's ambassador to the UN Danny Danon.

Trump has anticipated "big meetings" with Netanyahu.

"Bibi Netanyahu's coming on Tuesday, and I think we have some very big meetings scheduled," the US president told reporters in Maryland.

Bibi's US visit comes two weeks after a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas went into effect which paused the regime's genocidal war on Gaza.

Science production grows noticeably after Islamic revolution

TEHRAN – Science production in Iran has been experiencing a constant rise after the 1979 Islamic revolution, moving up by 33 positions among the world's countries from 50 in 1980 to 17 in 2024.

The country ranked second in science production among Islamic nations in 2024, compared with fifth in 1980, Mehr news agency reported.

Forty-six years after the Islamic revolution, the country has made great strides in different stores including science, health, security, economy, industry, and legislation.

A review of Scopus data shows that in the first twenty years following the Islamic revolution, scientific production moved up significantly, ▶ Page 7



Qalibaf: Iran, Iraq committed to Resistance Front, regional stability

TEHRAN – Iran and Iraq have reaffirmed their joint commitment to supporting the Resistance Front and strengthening regional stability.

The announcement came during a press conference in Tehran, where Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf hosted his Iraqi counterpart, Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, on Monday.

This marks Mashhadani's first official foreign visit since assuming office in October 2024.

Qalibaf emphasized the deep-rooted ties between the two nations, stressing their determination to expand political and economic cooperation. ▶ Page 2

TEHRAN PAPERS

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in yesterday's Iranian newspapers.

Beneficiaries of sanctions aligned with enemies

In an analysis, Ettelaat discussed the upcoming opportunities for negotiations and wrote: Dealing and negotiating in a fundamentally accepted principle in international relations. Such approach is followed by the most powerful countries with the most powerful economies and the most competent managers and politicians. The hands of rent-seekers and idiots who try to show themselves smart but are enemies of national interests must be cut off. In the last five years, our statesmen have repeatedly had the opportunity to negotiate, make deals, and make necessary openings but the same beneficiaries of sanctions, with the promise of a harsh European winter, delayed and stopped the results of the exhausting negotiations. Europe managed its harsh winter, but the opportunity was lost for us. Along with these internal enemies, Iran's competitors and enemies are also trying hard to prevent de-escalation and important negotiations with Iran. For example, the Zionist regime is vainly campaigning that Iran is in the weakest position to get Trump into a war that will be pointless for us and life-saving for Netanyahu and his partners.

Sobh-e-No: "Weak Iran" project on the agenda

In a note, Sobh-e-No addressed the statements of American officials against Iran. It wrote: In recent weeks, statements have been published by American officials that present Iran as a country in decline and emphasize the need to make key decisions against it. These statements have received widespread coverage, especially in the media. Characterizing Iran as a weak country is part of a broad cognitive war that the United States has used to weaken the spirit of resistance within the country and create pressure to change the behavior of the Islamic Republic. The image of Iran as a weak country is a complex cognitive operation that the United States uses to contain the Islamic Republic at the global level. The Islamic Republic of Iran has not only been able to resist these pressures, but by strengthening its relations it remains a regional power and an important player in West Asia. The "weak Iran" project, which failed in the past, will also fail in the future against the resistance and will of the Iranian people.

Kayhan: Let's not be fooled by Trump

In a commentary, Kayhan dealt with Trump's political thinking. The paper said: With today's domestic, regional, and global developments,

the negotiating levers are not numerous and diverse. The 2025 Trump model is also more informed, more experienced, and much more self-interested than before, and these will be in favor of America in any negotiation, not the other side. The quality of Iran's relationship with Europe is also, if not the worst, in an unfavorable and tense state. Trump's claim that he is not a warmonger is also very naive and shows a lack of understanding of his thinking in the field of foreign policy. Trump intends to have complete hegemony over his surroundings and turn them into his backyard, and he has adopted a very decisive and even harsh stance in this direction. Trump will probably start by presenting a package of proposals with maximum demands, which will probably include the nuclear file, regional forces (resistance forces), and missile-military capabilities. Trump's conflict with Iran is not merely ideological. He is also engaged with everyone from Mexico, Canada, and Panama in his neighborhood to Europe, Russia, and China. And he does not honor mutual respect and a win-win agreement.

Farhikhtegan: Cut of funds to the opposition should not be taken as a positive signal

In an article, Farhikhtegan discussed the Trump administration's move to freeze funds to the Iranian opposition groups based in Western countries. It said: It was just last week that Donald Trump announced his decision to stop multimillion-dollar funds to various countries, organizations, institutes, NGOs, etc. Immediately after announcing the new policy, some considered it a positive impulse from Trump to Iran. However, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio bluntly said we cut off the funds because they were not doing their job well. This issue not only does not seem a positive impulse, but it could be an opportunity for the opposition to review their behavior and receive new rations. The main goal of America with this decision is to review and make its spending more targeted and not abandon its policies against Iran. The failure of sabotage projects, internal divisions among the opposition groups, and their failure in the 1401 unrest (the 2022 riots that followed the death of Mahsa Amini) have led American decision-makers to conclude that their investments have been futile. The main problem with these groups was the abuse of funds, and it was proven that they misused these funds for themselves, and only spent a small portion of them for the White House's purposes.

Iran to send 4 warships to UAE, declares IRGC navy chief



TEHRAN – Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy, announced that four warships from both the IRGC and the Iranian Army Navy will soon set sail for the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The mission marks the first-ever official meeting between the naval forces of Iran and the UAE, signaling a potential shift in maritime cooperation within the Persian Gulf.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 14th Malek Ashtar Festival, Admiral Tangsiri emphasized that the region's security should be managed by its own countries rather than external powers.

"This meeting is taking place for the first time, and we have repeatedly stated that regional countries are fully capable of ensuring their own security without the need for foreign presence," Tasnim news agency quoted

him as saying.

Beyond this unprecedented visit, Iran is also ramping up military collaborations with its neighbors. The IRGC Navy commander revealed that joint military exercises with regional states, including Iraq, are on the agenda.

"For example, we have engaged in naval cooperation with Oman and have already participated in joint drills with them," he noted, underscoring Iran's ongoing efforts to build stronger defense ties with neighboring nations.

Tangsiri also addressed the vital role Iran plays in securing the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway for global oil shipments.

"We have been ensuring the security of the Strait of Hormuz for years, and significant efforts have been made in this regard," he stated.

Iran has consistently asserted its ability to safeguard the strategic passage without foreign intervention, a stance that has been a key point of contention with Western powers.

Additionally, Admiral Tangsiri provided updates on Iran's growing fleet capabilities, announcing the imminent induction of a multi-purpose drone carrier into the IRGC Navy.

"We have drone carrier vessels and other ships capable of carrying helicopters and UAVs. The new multi-purpose drone carrier will soon be integrated into the IRGC Navy," he said.

Iran is no longer under serious security threats, says Zarif as he discusses regional issues with scholars

From page 1 ▶ not Iranian influence or weapons. He noted that these movements arose when Israel was at the peak of its power, driven by a "message of self-belief", rather than Iranian military might.

"What created Resistance was 'occupation,' not Iran," Zarif stressed, adding that "It is the people of Lebanon and Palestine who are fighting for their rights."

He said Israel is attempting to mischaracterize the Palestinian issue as a conflict between Iran and Israel, rather than acknowledging the core issue of occupation.

Zarif also commented on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Ac-



tion (JCPOA), highlighting that Israel opposed the agreement because it dismantled the "security narrative" that Israel had built around Iran.

"Israel opposed the JCPOA...

because the JCPOA dismantled the 'security narrative' that Israel had constructed around Iran. This was considered a threat to Israel because the game was not a security game," Zarif said.

Furthermore, he argued that if Israel was truly concerned about Iran's nuclear program, it should have supported the JCPOA, which he noted, "would at least delay Iran's nuclear program for 15 years."

Zarif added that claims made in 2014 and 2015 that Iran was close to developing nuclear weapons should have made those making the claims feel secure once the JCPOA delayed the program.

The official made the remarks during a gathering with journalists, scholars, and analysts who had visited the Iranian Office for Strategic Affairs to launch the first round of monthly talks on regional and international issues.

Qalibaf: Iran, Iraq committed to Resistance Front, regional stability

From page 1 ▶ "We are committed to enhancing political and economic relations, which play a crucial role in fostering regional and stability among both Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries," he said.

The Iranian parliament speaker highlighted the extensive cooperation between the governments and parliaments of both nations, stating that they are working closely to boost regional and international collaboration. He described Iran and Iraq's relationship as "very deep," spanning multiple sectors, including religious, cultural, social, political, economic, security, and defense.

Qalibaf underscored the importance of strengthening parliamentary relations as a key mechanism for increasing economic ties. He urged lawmakers from both countries to facilitate the implementation of agreements signed during Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid's visit to Tehran in May, reinforcing

their shared commitment to economic and strategic development.

For his part, Mashhadani affirmed Iraq's steadfast support for Iran and emphasized the importance of cooperation on key bilateral and regional issues. He stated that his discussions with Qalibaf covered a wide range of topics, including border security, water resources, infrastructure projects, and the fight against armed terrorist groups.

Addressing broader regional concerns, the Iraqi parliament speaker pointed to ongoing developments in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria, warning against any attempts to destabilize the region. "No one should be allowed to disrupt regional security and stability," he stressed, adding that Baghdad remains committed to maintaining strong and growing relations with Tehran.

Mashhadani also noted that Iran and Iraq share a unified and clear stance on regional

affairs, particularly regarding the Palestinian issue. He reaffirmed that both nations will continue to advocate for Palestinian rights and oppose external interference that threatens regional peace.

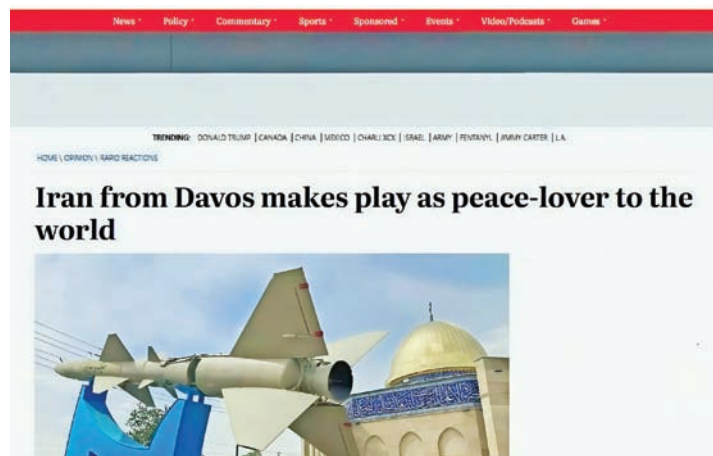
Iran judiciary chief commends Iraq's support for Palestinian cause

Mashhadani also had a meeting with Iran's Judiciary Chief Hojjat al-Islam Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei, where Iranian official reaffirmed the country's steadfast backing for the Resistance Front.

During their meeting, Mohseni-Ejei welcomed the Iraqi delegation and expressed gratitude for Iraq's solidarity with Iran on key regional issues.

The Iranian official also expressed appreciation for Iraq's strong support of the Palestinian cause, commending the Iraqi government's firm stance against Israeli actions and its solidarity with the people of Gaza.

How Zionists are trying to twist Zarif's message at Davos



By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN – In a recent article published by the Washington Times, Cheryl K. Chumley presents a one-dimensional portrayal of Iran, framing the nation as a perpetual antagonist on the global stage.

Her piece, rife with allegations and rooted in artificially constructed stereotypes, calls for a critical examination.

The article falls into the trap of repeating long-standing Zionist and anti-Iran talking points without substantial backing.

Chumley's record of making baseless claims, such as her 2020 article titled "Coronavirus hype biggest political hoax in history," where she irresponsibly dismissed the severity of the disease, undermines her credibility as a journalist committed to factual reporting.

Her biased approach this time is evident from the outset, as she repeatedly labels Iran as "the nation that funds terror around the world." The Washington Times' history of labeling the anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela a terrorist serves as a reminder of the dangers of one-sided narratives.

Mandela himself wrote about this in his book, when the paper's reporters visited him in jail: "They

seemed less intent on finding out my views than on proving that I was a Communist and a terrorist. All of their questions were slanted in that direction."

No wonder Mandela was on the U.S. government terrorist list until 2008, as his struggle against apartheid involved resistance that contradicted America's hegemonic interests. Chumley's portrayal of Iran echoes this legacy, prioritizing ideological alignment over journalistic integrity.

Furthermore, the article strongly attacked Iran's Vice President for Strategic Affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif, depicting him as "a hypocrite and a double-dealer" sent by the Iranian government to "deceive" Americans. However, this oversimplification ignores Zarif's nuanced role in public diplomacy. His participation in the World Economic Forum in Davos was not a negotiation ploy but an effort to present Iran's perspective on the global stage.

Iran's foreign policy is determined at the highest levels of government, and the nation's positions are often reflected in the official statements of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, and President Massoud Pzeshkian.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israeli claims against Iran aim to hinder Lebanon's reconstruction: foreign ministry



From page 1 ▶ Calls for international action against Israeli violence in West Bank

In light of escalating Israeli military actions in the occupied West Bank, Iran has called on the international community to intervene to prevent further atrocities.

During a weekly press briefing on Monday, Baqaei expressed grave concern over the ongoing violence. "Despite the ceasefire in Gaza, Israeli crimes and killings continue in the West Bank," he said, adding that human rights experts have raised alarms that a "genocide" is unfolding in the area.

Baqaei urged world powers to take immediate action, warning, "The international community should not allow the normalization of killing."

Baqaei also reiterated Iran's commitment to holding Israeli leaders accountable for their actions, particularly in Gaza.

He praised the formation of a new anti-Israel alliance in the Netherlands, which aims to pursue legal action against Israeli officials for their role in the Gaza conflict.

"The main goal of this coalition is to end the Zionist regime's impunity for genocide," he said, em-

phasizing Iran's support for any initiative aimed at securing justice for Palestinians.

He condemned Western support for Israel, particularly through arms supplies, and insisted that Israeli leaders must face legal consequences for their actions.

Last week, a group of nations—including South Africa, Malaysia, Colombia, and Chile—launched The Hague Group, a coalition dedicated to ending Israel's occupation and taking legal, diplomatic, and economic measures against Israel's violations of international law. One key objective is to halt the flow of weapons to Israel, which could be used in further aggression against Palestinians.

Condemnation of forced relocation of Gazans

Iran also voiced strong opposition to former U.S. President Donald Trump's recent proposal to relocate Gaza's population to Jordan and Egypt. Baqaei emphasized that the future of Gaza must be determined by Palestinians themselves.

"No foreign power has the authority to decide Gaza's fate—only the Palestinian people can decide their own future," he said.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran is often blamed for US pressure, but what about other countries that are being blackmailed? Greenland, Panama, Canada...

The insatiable America

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – An economic war – this is how media and observers are describing U.S. President Donald Trump's latest set of actions against Canada, one of Washington's biggest allies, which has become the target of new tariffs next to China and Mexico.

Tariffs are essentially taxes levied on imported goods and services. When a country imports goods, its government may impose a tariff, which is a fee paid by the importer to bring those goods into the country.

Last week, U.S. President Donald Trump announced tariffs of 25% on goods from Mexico, 25% on goods from Canada, and 10% on goods from China. While the tariffs on Mexican goods were later rescinded, those on Canadian and Chinese goods remain in effect.

Canada is particularly concerned about these tariffs, as they are expected to further harm its already struggling economy. Canada exports approximately \$470 billion in goods to the U.S. annually.

These new tariffs are anticipated to reduce demand for Canadian goods due to higher prices, leading to decreased export volumes to the U.S. and, subsequently, broader economic consequences such as lower GDP growth, job losses, and a weaker currency.

"Tariffs function similarly to sanctions," stated Amir Ali Abolfath, an expert on North American Affairs, highlighting that "both help the U.S. make money". Abolfath explained that by implementing sanctions, the U.S. can benefit by supplanting a sanctioned country,

like Iran, in certain markets. He contends that tariffs also enable the U.S. to generate revenue by applying pressure on other nations. "Sanctions are more harmful and aim to reach broader, often political, goals," Abolfath added. "Washington uses sanctions for adversaries, and tariffs for countries it deems more friendly, or in the case of Canada, an ally."

Trump's latest policies and rhetoric have ignited heated discussions among Iranians, who are revisiting the long-promoted argument that Tehran is responsible when Washington sanctions, destabilizes, or pressures Iran

Trump's recently announced tariffs have been accompanied by a string of controversial and unprecedentedly provocative remarks, which have been alarming for the U.S. allies, and thought-provoking for its adversaries.

In the past few weeks, the president has routinely bullied outgoing Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on social media. One of his closest associates, Elon Musk, tried to mock Trudeau by calling him a "girl", and both have suggested that Canada should become the "51st state of America".

Other territories Trump has claimed or threatened to capture belong to Mexico, Panama, and Denmark.

He recently announced he has "changed" the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, rolled out plans to take over the Panama Canal, and "get Greenland".

"These remarks and actions," said Abolfath, "remind observers of the time White people arrived in America and began to take over other people's lands." He added that Trump's comments concerning U.S. allies have, in some instances, been harsher and more provocative than those aimed at adversaries.

"How can an ally threaten to take over your territory?" Abolfath questioned, stating, "This only shows that, in the view of Washington, all must prioritize U.S. interests or face severe consequences."

Was Iran ever at fault?

While fear may be the prevailing emotion for U.S. allies, for many Iranians, the recent developments elicit amusement and absurdity. Trump's policies and rhetoric have ignited heated discussions on social media, with many now revisiting the long-promoted argument that Tehran is responsible when Washington sanctions, destabilizes, or pressures Iran.

On X, an Iranian user inquired, "Am I missing something? Is Canada also being accused of pursuing nuclear weapons?" Another responded with, "Maybe Canada is assisting Resistance movements in Texas."

Iran and the FATF

A look at the organization's history, function, and potential impact on Iran

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – For some time, the debate over Iran's potential membership in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has polarized both public opinion and the political class within the country.

Proponents of the initiative emphasize the economic and financial benefits of joining the FATF. They argue that, in an interconnected world, integration into global infrastructures is key to facilitating international transactions, attracting foreign investment, and alleviating the banking restrictions that have burdened Iran's economy. They also assert that advancing toward greater cooperation with international organizations is a necessary step to overcome economic challenges and reduce the country's isolation.

On the other hand, critics view the FATF as a tool of foreign pressure that could compromise national sovereignty. Some even refer to it as a "second Treaty of Turkmenchay," alluding to the 19th-century agreement that weakened Iran against Russia. They warn that membership could violate key articles of the Iranian Constitution, designed to prevent foreign interference in the country's internal affairs.

Beyond these opposing viewpoints, this article seeks to examine the potential implications of Iran's membership in the FATF, both positive and negative, and provide an analysis of the role this organization plays in the international financial system.

History and functions

The Financial Action Task Force is not a treaty or a convention but rather an intergovernmental organization. These entities, composed of sovereign states or other international institutions, play a key role in global governance and the shaping of international public law.

The FATF was established in 1989 at the initiative of the G7 member countries, with the initial purpose of evaluating and strengthening regulations against money laundering in international financial markets. However, the September 11, 2001 attacks marked a turning point in its mandate. Since then,



the organization has expanded its focus to include monitoring financial flows to detect and prevent the financing of groups it designates as terrorists.

Within the FATF, there is a prevailing view that these terrorist groups not only operate for ideological reasons but also require financial resources to sustain their activities. In response, the organization has developed ongoing monitoring mechanisms to identify and block their sources of funding.

It is important to note that the terror list the FATF refers to is at times controversial. For instance, it includes Resistance groups like Hezbollah, which were formed to fend off Israeli colonialism and aggression.

Role and impact

On its official website, the FATF defines itself as an international political organization whose purpose is to foster the political will necessary to reform laws and regulations in the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism. Its mission, it says, is to establish standards and promote the effective implementation of legal and operational measures to combat these threats and protect the integrity of the global financial system.

Due to its broad mandate and powers, the FATF produces reports and evaluation lists that determine the level of investment risk in various countries. These rankings not only influence financial decisions but can also have far-reaching political and economic implications.

The FATF reports serve as a key reference for financial institutions and international investors. Its im-

portance is primarily driven by two factors: Reduction of investment risk by following the recommendations of a specialized organization, and avoiding sanctions for non-compliance with FATF regulations, which can restrict access to global financial markets.

Ultimately, the FATF plays a pivotal role in regulating international financial flows. Its influence extends beyond the technical realm, making it a central actor in global financial and political architecture.

Members of FATF

The FATF consists of 39 members, including 37 countries and 2 regional organizations. Additionally, it has several observers, including important international organizations.

The FATF member countries represent various regions around the world. They include Germany, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, South Korea, Denmark, Spain, the United States, Finland, France, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Norway, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey.

The Member Organizations include the European Union (EU) and Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The FATF also has countries and entities with observer status, including Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Furthermore, several international actors collaborate with the FATF in overseeing and enforcing global regulations. Notable organizations are the United Nations

(UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These institutions work alongside the FATF in implementing financial regulations and strategies at the global level.

In favor of Iran's membership in the FATF

Proponents of Iran's accession to the FATF take a global and strategic view of the issue. They argue that joining the FATF is a necessary step in a broader process toward economic globalization. They contend that in an increasingly interconnected world, no country can afford to isolate itself without facing significant costs and losses.

Additionally, they highlight that Iran has been a victim of terrorist acts and has suffered considerable damage due to the threat of extremist groups. From this perspective, they argue that FATF membership would provide the country with more effective tools to combat terrorism and mitigate its internal impact.

Another key point raised by supporters is the need to facilitate international financial transactions. Joining the FATF would allow Iran to better integrate with global banks, reducing the risk of sanctions and financial restrictions. They argue that without this membership, the country could face severe limitations in its commercial relations, affecting foreign investment, exports, and imports.

Ultimately, supporters believe that Iran needs to be part of a well-regulated global financial system to enhance its economic stability and reduce pressure from international actors.

Against Iran's membership in the FATF

Opponents of Iran's accession to the Financial Action Task Force primarily criticize the organization's lack of transparency. They argue that accepting its regulations would amount to self-imposed sanctions, as it would force the country to align with a set of rules established by an entity whose most influential members are long-standing adversaries of Iran.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Hard task ahead of Persepolis against Al Hilal

TEHRAN – Al Hilal SFC will expect another three points when they play Persepolis FC in the AFC Champions League Elite 2024/25 on Tuesday.

Chasing a fifth continental title, Al Hilal SFC booked their Round of 16 spot with three matches to spare and will aim to finish as the League Stage winners.

Al Hilal went into the break level on 16 points with fellow Saudi Arabian side Al Ahli Saudi FC but top of the West Zone standings with a better goal difference.

They have been firing on all cylinders in the Saudi Pro League and look capable of winning the continental title after suffering semi-final heartbreak last season against eventual champions Al Ain FC of the UAE.

Al Hilal's confidence will be further boosted by the fact that they have only lost once to Persepolis in nine previous meetings on the continental stage.

Persepolis, on the other hand, can't afford to slip up as their hold on a knockout stage spot is flimsy, at best.

Sitting in sixth on six points before the break, the Islamic Republic of Iran side are in danger of being overtaken by the sides below them and desperately need a win to stay ahead.

The odds will be against them as the Iranian giants have not won their last five meetings with Saudi Arabian sides, including not scoring in the previous four games.

The match will be held at the Kingdom Arena in Riyadh.

Chinese referee Ma Ning to officiate Al Hilal vs Persepolis

TEHRAN – Chinese referee Ma Ning has been chosen to officiate the match between Al Hilal and Persepolis in the 2024-25 AFC Champions League Elite.

The Iranian team are scheduled to face Saudi powerhouse Al Hilal on Tuesday at the Kingdom Arena.

Al Hilal lead the table with 16 points, while Persepolis sit sixth in the 12-team table of the west zone with just six points out of six matches.

Airik Abedinzadeh wins Silver at Nairobi Tennis event

TEHRAN – Iran's Airik Abedinzadeh won a silver medal at the J60 Nairobi 2025 Tennis Tournament.

He lost to North Macedonian player Amar Huseinovic 6-3 6-1 in the final.

Abedinzadeh had defeated tennis players from Kenya, Spain and Kazakhstan en route to the final.

The J60 2025 Tennis Tournament was held in Nairobi, Kenya from February 1 to 3.

Norouzi remains head of Iran's Sports Medicine Federation

TEHRAN – Gholamreza Norouzi was re-elected as head of Iran's Sports Medicine Federation on Monday for a four-year term till 2029.

In the elections held at the Iran's Academy Olympic, Norouzi secured 38 of 39 votes cast.

"I hope we can take steps to promote sports medicine. Our primary concern is the

treatment of athletes. An athlete's main worry is that when they get injured, they can easily receive treatment and return to their sport, as sports is now a profession," Norouzi said.

"In the future, we will focus on the treatment of athletes, allowing them to compete with peace of mind, knowing that there is a refuge called the Sports Medicine Federation where they can receive treatment comfortably without financial worries. Whether athletes come to us or seek treatment at centers themselves, they will have access to funds quickly by providing the necessary documentation," he added.

Ex-Iran and Esteghlal forward Hajmohammad laid to rest

TEHRAN – Former Esteghlal and Iran national football team striker Mehdi Hajmohammad, who passed away on Saturday, was laid to rest on Monday in Tehran's Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery.

Iran and Persepolis football team legend Ali Parvin, Team Melli head coach Amir Ghalenoei, and former Iran midfielder Hamid Estili were among the attendees. He succumbed to cancer at the age of 74.

Hajmohammad holds the record as Esteghlal's youngest player in the club's history, having debuted at the age of 14.

He was a key member of Taj, now known as Esteghlal, when they defeated Hapoel Tel Aviv 2-1 in the final match of the 1970 Asian Championship Club Tournament.

Hajmohammad represented Iran in two international matches but was forced to retire from his playing career at the age of 23 due to a foot injury.

The Tehran Times extends its deepest sympathies to Hajmohammad's family, loved ones, and friends during this time of loss.

Iran start 2025 FIH Indoor Hockey World Cup on high

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Argentina 5-3 in their opening match of the 2025 Men's FIH Indoor Hockey World Cup on Monday.

Team Melli are scheduled to play Germany and Malaysia on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively.

The top eight teams from across the three pools (the top two in each group, plus the two best third-placed teams) will go through to the quarter-finals.

The remaining teams will play in the 9th-12th position playoffs.

An added incentive is that a top 6-finish for an African team earns the continent an additional spot at the 2029 Indoor World Cup.

Groups:

Pool A – Austria, South Africa, Poland, Croatia.

Pool B – Iran, Argentina, Germany, Malaysia.

Pool C – Belgium, Australia, Namibia, Trinidad & Tobago.

The competition is being held in Porec, Croatia from Feb. 3 to 9.

Persepolis secure promotion to Kowsar Women Football League

TEHRAN – Persepolis defeated Foolad 3-1 on aggregate, securing their place in the 2025-26 Kowsar Women's Football League.

This will be the team's first appearance in the league.

Bam Khatoon are the most decorated team in the league's history, having won 10 titles out of 16 competitions.

The Kowsar League will feature a total of 10 teams.

Iran increases oil production by 70,000 bpd



TEHRAN - The managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) announced a 70,000-barrel-per-day (bpd) increase in the country's oil production and a rise in gas output to over 30 million cubic meters in recent months.

Hamid Bovard, head of NIOC, told state news agency IRIB that Iran's oil industry has played a significant role in the national economy for decades.

He highlighted key developments since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, including the expansion of various oil and gas fields and the large-scale development of the South Pars gas field.

"In recent months, we have increased oil production by 70,000 barrels per day and boosted gas output by more than 30 million cubic meters, marking another achievement for the country," Bovard said.

He also noted the finalization of major oil sector contracts.

"The integrated development contract for the Azadegan oil field, valued at \$10 billion, has been approved by the Economic Council and awarded to relevant contractors.

This is one of the major development projects successfully executed under the 14th administration," he stated.

Additionally, smaller projects worth €160

million are in progress.

Bovard further announced that a significant oil industry project is set to be unveiled next week.

Iran's oil production has been steadily increasing despite ongoing international sanctions.

According to industry sources, the country's daily crude output has exceeded 3.4 million barrels per day, with exports showing resilience in key markets, including China.

The Iranian government has also focused on expanding production from mature fields and enhancing recovery rates through advanced extraction techniques.

The rise in output comes as Iran looks to strengthen its position in global energy markets. The country has been actively negotiating with international partners to secure new investment and technology, aiming to push production levels closer to pre-sanction figures.

Higher oil revenues are expected to support Iran's economy amid inflationary pressures and currency fluctuations.

With global oil demand projected to remain strong, the government is prioritizing energy sector development as a key driver of economic growth in the coming years.

Loading, unloading of goods increases 46% in Khorramshahr port

TEHRAN - The loading and unloading of goods in Khorramshahr port, in Iran's southwestern Khuzestan province, increased by 46 percent during the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024 - January 19, 2025), as compared to the same time span in the previous year, according to a provincial official.

Ali Asgari, the director-general of the Ports and Maritime Department of Khorramshahr county, said that 90 percent of the products exported from this port is to Iraq and 10 percent to Kuwait.

The Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran has announced that a total of 194.79 million tons of goods were loaded and unloaded at the country's ports during the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year.

According to the PMO's statement, oil product unloading totaled 23.53 million tons, while unloading of non-oil products reached 44.16 million tons, bringing the total unloaded goods to 67.69 million tons.

Oil product loading at PMO-controlled ports amounted to 64.41 million tons, and non-oil product loading totaled 62.69 million tons, resulting in a combined loading volume of 127.10 million tons by the end of the 10-month period.

The total volume of oil product loading and unloading during this period stood at 87.94 million tons, while non-oil product operations accounted for 106.84 million tons.

Altogether, 194.79 million tons of oil and non-oil products were handled.



The ports handled 2.57 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of containers during this period, marking a 13 percent increase compared to the same period last year, which saw 2.28 million TEUs processed.

Iran's ports have a total nominal capacity of over 260 million tons per year, allowing them to handle a wide range of oil and non-oil commodities.

Key ports, such as Shahid Rajaei Port in Hormozgan Province, account for a significant portion of the country's trade activity due to their advanced infrastructure and strategic location along international shipping routes.

Investments in port infrastructure have further enhanced the efficiency of loading and unloading operations, reducing turnaround times for vessels.

The PMO has emphasized the importance of increasing port capacity to accommodate growing trade volumes and support Iran's economic development goals.

Upgrades in equipment, digitalization of operations, and expanded storage facilities are part of ongoing efforts to optimize port efficiency.

Strategic outlook on developing Chabahar, Makran coasts

By Mohammad Saeed Arbabi



TEHRAN - With the inauguration of the new administration under President Masoud Pezeshkian, the development of Iran's strategic regions, particularly the Makran coasts and Chabahar Free Zone, has become a key priority. Given its strategic location on the Indian Ocean and its connection to international economic corridors, Chabahar is increasingly positioned as a future hub for maritime trade and Iran's blue economy.

In line with the government's strategic policies for infrastructural transformation, I believe that Chabahar is not merely a free trade zone but a crucial gateway linking Iran to global trade, providing a foundation for the expansion of marine industries, goods transit, and economic growth.

One of the primary objectives in this regard is the enhancement of critical infrastructure, including transportation and logistics.



The integration of Chabahar's railway with the national rail network, improvement of roads, and expansion of ports are among the key initiatives being pursued by the Chabahar Free Zone Organization. These measures will not only boost the region's transit capacity but also create new opportunities for international cooperation.

Another core aspect of the development agenda is the promotion of domestic and foreign investment.

In line with the government's facilitation policies, a range of incentive packages has been de-

signed to attract investors.

Streamlining administrative processes, reducing bureaucratic obstacles, and ensuring the availability of necessary infrastructure are among the steps taken to encourage investment in Chabahar's industrial, commercial, and tourism sectors.

The development of marine industries and the optimal utilization of the region's resources are also among the government's major initiatives.

Fisheries, shipbuilding, and renewable energy sectors have the potential to serve as key drivers

of sustainable economic growth in the region.

However, these efforts would be incomplete without considering the role of local communities. Empowering indigenous populations through education, job creation, and sustainable economic opportunities is a key component of the Chabahar Free Zone Organization's agenda.

The Iranian government, emphasizing international investment partnerships, has positioned Chabahar as a commercial and transit hub and invites all foreign partners to participate in the development of this strategic region.

The promising outlook for Chabahar, supported by the policies of the new administration and the dedicated efforts of my colleagues in the Free Zone, can transform this port into a major economic hub for Iran and the region, taking a significant step toward realizing the country's maritime economic ambitions and sustainable development goals.

Mohammad Saeed Arbabi is the chairman of the board of directors and head of Chabahar Free Zone Organization

Iran's non-oil exports rise 18% to nearly \$48b in 10 months

TEHRAN - Iran's non-oil exports reached approximately \$48 billion in the first 10 months of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2024 - January 19, 2025), marking an 18 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

Foroud Asgari, the deputy economy minister and head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), said the country's total foreign trade during this period amounted to 158.18 million tons, valued at \$103.85 billion.

Out of this, exports accounted for 127.4 million tons worth \$47.76 billion, reflecting a 12 percent rise in volume and an 18 percent increase in value.

China remained Iran's top export destination with \$12.3 billion in imports, followed by Iraq (\$10 billion), the United Arab Emirates (\$5.9 billion), and Turkey (\$5.5 billion).

During the same period, Iran imported 30.78 million tons of goods worth \$56 billion, showing a 3.0 percent decrease in volume but a 3.0 percent rise in value.

Major imports included \$6.3 billion in gold bullion, \$2.3 billion in livestock corn, \$1.8 billion in smartphones, and \$1.6 billion in soybean meal.

Asgari stated that the UAE was Iran's top source of imports with \$17 billion, followed by China (\$14.4 billion), Turkey (\$9.9 billion), and Germany (\$1.9 billion).

He also noted a sharp increase in car imports, with 41,297 vehicles worth \$877 million entering the country, marking a 709 percent surge in quantity and a 744 percent rise in value compared to the same period last year.

As previously announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, Iran's non-oil exports rose 18 percent in the first nine months of the Iranian calendar year to \$43.14 billion.

Foroud Asgari said imports during the mentioned period, including gold bullion, amounted to \$50.89 billion. The weight of imports declined by 3.16 percent to 27.94 million tons, he added.

Non-oil export volume reached 116.35 million tons in the nine-month period, a 13.77 percent increase from the previous year, Asgari noted. The average customs value per ton of exported goods rose 3.74 percent to \$371.

Petrochemical exports accounted for 50.7 million tons, valued at \$19.7 billion, representing a 33.25 percent increase in volume and a 32 percent rise in value year-on-year.

China remained Iran's top export destina-



tion, purchasing \$11 billion worth of goods. Iraq followed with \$9.4 billion, the UAE with \$5.3 billion, Turkey with \$5.2 billion, Afghanistan and Pakistan with \$1.7 billion each, and India with \$1.4 billion. Together, these seven countries accounted for 82.4 percent of the total export volume and 82.85 percent of export value.

The UAE topped the list of Iran's import partners, exporting \$15.3 billion worth of goods to Iran. China followed with \$13 billion, Turkey with \$8.9 billion, Germany with \$1.8 billion, India and Russia with \$1.1 billion each, and Hong Kong with \$1 billion. These seven countries supplied 75 percent of the import volume and 83 percent of import value during the period.

The average customs value per ton of imported goods rose 8.4 percent to \$1,821.

Natural gas in liquid form led the export list at \$6 billion, followed by liquefied propane at \$2.5 billion and methanol at \$1.9 billion. Key imports included raw gold at \$5.6 billion, livestock corn at \$2.1 billion, and smartphones at \$1.7 billion.

Asgari, who also serves as deputy economy minister, emphasized the role of trade in bolstering the national economy amid ongoing international sanctions.

The 11th session of the Supreme Council for the Development of Non-Oil Exports was held after a four-year hiatus, with the participation of Iran's first vice president on January 1.

In an exclusive interview with IRIB, Alireza Dehghan Dehnavi, head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), highlighted the significance of this council, which had been inactive for nearly four years.

He noted that the council had played a key role in national decision-making processes before falling into disuse.

Dehnavi explained that the revival of the

council was prompted during this year's National Export Day event, where Masoud Pezeshkian instructed its reactivation.

With the efforts of the government and the support of the first vice president and the minister of industry, mining, and trade, the groundwork for the council's return was laid, culminating in its 11th session.

The session, chaired by First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, brought together all council members to discuss pressing trade issues. The meeting focused on three main areas:

The council reviewed the statistical performance of the country's non-oil exports. Dehnavi acknowledged that Iran's non-oil trade balance has been negative in recent years, with a \$17 million deficit recorded last year despite a positive overall trade balance. The Vice President tasked the TPO with reversing this trend by boosting non-oil exports.

The council identified several obstacles hindering foreign trade, including excessive regulations, insufficient infrastructure for exports (such as transportation and customs facilities), and challenges in export-related policies.

Dehnavi emphasized the need to align monetary and trade policies, as the former has often overshadowed the latter. The council resolved to reform trade policies to address these issues.

Several proposals were approved, including holding regular council sessions and establishing provincial export development task forces led by governors. These initiatives aim to make export promotion a nationwide campaign.

The council also discussed a strategic roadmap for free trade zones, aiming to transform these areas into export hubs. The TPO is preparing this document with council support.

Additionally, collaboration with the private sector was emphasized to identify and implement high-impact export projects.

Other topics included reforms in re-exports and temporary imports, with a task force comprising customs, agriculture, health, and trade organizations formed to streamline processes. The pricing of export goods at customs was also debated, with calls for a review to enhance coordination among export-related bodies.

The session concluded with plans to establish specialized commissions to maintain continuity between council meetings and ensure effective decision-making in foreign trade.

282 mega water, electricity projects to be inaugurated during Ten-Day Dawn

TEHRAN- Iranian deputy energy minister announced the inauguration of 282 mega water and electricity projects during the Ten-Day Dawn (January 31- February 10), which marks the 46th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, and said that the creation

of 34,000 jobs is one of the features of these projects.

According to IRNA, Yazdan Rezaei, the deputy energy minister for planning and economic affairs, said that part of these projects includes two projects

for the utilization of border waters to prevent the outflow of shared waters and 175 projects in the field of transmission, distribution, and super-distribution networks aimed at stabilizing power supply and providing water to 2,675,000 urban residents

and 1,337,000 rural residents.

He also mentioned the inauguration of 25 sewage collection projects and the irrigation and drainage network of 6,741 hectares as other projects that will be operational during this period.

From page 1 ▶ This was a historic moment for Lebanon, marking the first time the Israeli regime pulled out of Arab land without direct negotiations or a peace deal. The withdrawal was seen as a major victory for the Lebanese resistance.

Hezbollah was the driving force behind the Israeli retreat. Through years of relentless guerilla warfare and strategic attacks, the group made the occupation too costly for Israel to sustain.

Under Nasrallah's leadership, Hezbollah's resistance efforts gained widespread support, ultimately forcing the Israeli military to withdraw and reshaping the balance of power in the region.

Nasrallah's son, Hadi Nasrallah, was martyred by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) on September 12, 1997.

He died in a battle with the IOF in southern Lebanon while fighting on the frontlines along with co-Hezbollah guerrilla forces. His death became a symbol of sacrifice for the Lebanese resistance.

After the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, Nasrallah's speeches grew bolder and more defiant.

He frequently warned that Hezbollah remained ready for any future conflict and that Israel's defeat in Lebanon was only the beginning, something which infuriated politicians in Tel Aviv and Washington.



Between 2000 and 2006, he delivered fiery addresses, threatening to strike deep into Israeli territory if Lebanon was provoked. His speeches reinforced his image as a powerful and fearless leader.

The 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon saw the regime wage a massive military offensive.

For 33 days, the Israeli military carried out relentless airstrikes and a ground invasion, while Hezbollah responded with rocket attacks on Israeli territory and ground operations that proved too costly for Israel.

Despite Israel's military superiority, Hezbollah's strong resistance and guerilla tactics prevented an Israeli victory.

When the war ended with a UN-brokered ceasefire, Hezbollah emerged politically and militarily stronger. An Israeli-formed committee acknowledged a defeat for

the occupying regime. "Nasrallah wins the war", the Economist magazine declared in 2006.

The Lebanese resistance, under Nasrallah's leadership, stood its ground and proved that "Israel was weaker than the spider's web". On October 8, 2023, Hezbollah opened a "support front" in solidarity with Gaza following the October 7 operation by Hamas.

This marked a historic moment, as it was the first time in history that the resistance in both Gaza and Lebanon united to confront Israeli occupation and aggression.

This unprecedented collaboration highlighted the growing strength and unity of resistance efforts in the region.

It also marked the first time that hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers were forcibly displaced from northern Israel amid

Hezbollah fire.

The Hezbollah Secretary-General vowed that the settlers would not return to the north until a ceasefire was reached in Gaza.

Nasrallah was martyred on September 27 in an intense and unparalleled series of airstrikes by Israeli F-35 jets, which targeted the southern Haret Hreik neighborhood of Beirut. The strikes were the most aggressive the regime had launched on Lebanon.

The martyr Secretary-General left behind a powerful legacy of resistance. Under his leadership, Hezbollah became a formidable military and political force.

Even after Nasrallah's martyrdom, Hezbollah continued its military operations for approximately two months, launching unprecedented ground, drone, and missile attacks deep into Israeli territory.

It proved that Nasrallah's influence and legacy would shape Lebanon's resistance for years to come.

He will be remembered as a leader who kept his word: until the Lebanese army was strong enough to defend Lebanon's territorial integrity, Hezbollah would never surrender its weapons.

No matter the cost, he vowed to stand firm against the Israeli enemy, always prioritizing the safety of the Lebanese as well as the Palestinians and ultimately sacrificing his life for Palestine.

Trump threatens EU with tariffs while the bloc warns of firm response

US President Donald Trump has hinted the European Union (EU) could be next to face tariffs, after he slapped 25% levies on goods from Mexico and Canada, and an additional 10% tax on imports from China.

While arriving into Maryland from Florida, Trump told the BBC that tariffs on EU goods imported into the US could happen "pretty soon".

"They don't take our cars, they don't take our farm products, they take almost nothing and we take everything from them. Millions of cars, tremendous amounts of food and farm products," he told journalists.

The US President added he enjoyed good relations with British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, and that trade issues with the UK could be worked out.

When asked by the BBC if there was a timeline for announcing tariffs on the European bloc, Trump said: "I wouldn't say there's a timeline, but it's going to be pretty soon."

For its part, the 27-member bloc has condemned Trump's decision to move ahead with tariffs against Canada, Mexico and China, and warned that it will "respond firmly" if it also becomes a target.



Mexico and Canada have vowed to take retaliatory measures, while China said it could take "corresponding countermeasures".

On trade with the UK, the US President said the country has been "out of line" but added that the issues could be resolved.

"The UK is out of line. But I'm sure that one, I think that one, can be worked out," Trump said.

But many economists warn that these tariffs could lead to higher prices for American consumers and could ultimately encourage other countries to reduce their reliance on the US.

Celebrating carnage: Trump embracing butcher of Gaza

From page 1 ▶ Israel signed the truce deal after failing to meet its military objectives in Gaza, which included the elimination of Hamas.

The Israeli army invaded Gaza on October 7, 2023, after Hamas carried out a surprise military operation in southern Israel on the morning of the same date. More than 1,100 people were killed in the Hamas attack and about 250 others were taken captive.

Dozens of the captives are still held in Gaza who are expected to be freed based on the three-phase ceasefire deal that took effect on January 19.

Hamas has freed 18 captives in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinians from Israeli jails since then.

The resistance movement will free other captives if Israel complies with the deal which includes the full withdrawal of the Israeli army from Gaza in its second phase.

But Netanyahu has said he will discuss "victory over Hamas" with Trump amid intense pressure from within his cabinet to resume the war.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has threatened to quit and strip Netanyahu of his Knesset majority if he refuses to do so.

For now, it appears that Netanyahu wants to have his cake and eat it too.

The Israeli army has failed to secure the re-



Officials in Gaza say more than 61,700 Palestinians were killed in Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip.

lease of the remaining captives through military action. The resumption of the war on Gaza will jeopardize the lives of the captives which would lead to growing domestic divisions. Besides, a renewed conflict will further deepen Israel's international isolation.

Presently, Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for its brutal war in Gaza.

On Monday, the head of the Gaza Government Information Office updated the death toll from Israel's war on the Palestinian territory to 61,709.

Salama Maarouf told reporters that the bod-

ies of 76 percent of the Palestinians killed in the war have been recovered and brought to medical centers.

"Only 47,487 bodies were transferred to hospitals, while 14,222 remained missing under the rubble."

He added that 17,881 children, including 214 newborn infants are among the fatalities.

Israel's "war crimes and crimes against humanity" in Gaza pushed the ICC to issue arrest warrants for Netanyahu and his former war minister Yoav Gallant in November last year.

Effectively, Netanyahu is internationally a wanted suspect and ICC member states are under legal obligation to arrest them. The United States, which has thrown its full military and political weight behind Israel's war on Gaza, has rejected the ICC's decision.

But the US brokered the January ceasefire deal along with Egypt and Qatar amid Israel's inability to achieve its war goals.

The United States has spared no effort to support Israel since its establishment in 1948. During the Gaza war, Washington provided Tel Aviv with additional military aid worth tens of billions of dollars.

At the moment, Trump's endorsement of Netanyahu suggests he is betting on the wrong horse although all Israeli leaders have the blood of Palestinians on their hands.

Where is the situation in Syria heading?

From page 1 ▶ The decline of the dollar in the Syrian local market has raised concerns among economic experts if it coincides with the rise in the prices of bread and transportation. The promise to quadruple salaries three times has also gone unfulfilled.

Also, Syrian citizens were not convinced of the usefulness of giving hundreds of thousands of employees a 3-month forced leave, especially as al-Julani has hired a large number of employees in various state bodies, a fair number of them foreigners.

The Syrians indeed are disgusted by the dissolution of political parties for fear that this will lead to the disruption of political life, which was already paralyzed due to the absence of a real role for these parties, and even for fear of imposing the ideological orientations of the ruling authority and thus consolidating tyranny.

In parallel, al-Julani continues to coordinate with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) according to a plan agreed with Abdullah Ocalan to disarm the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

According to the plan, the PKK will be expelled from Syria in coordination with the Kurdish National Council (a coalition of Kurdish parties close to Turkey and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq).

The plan aims at reaching a compromise formula that would determine the fate of the SDF as it fought the Syrian National Army (sponsored by

Turkey) during its attempt to penetrate east of the Euphrates via Tishrin Dam and Karakozk Bridge.

Ankara is sparing no effort to assure Washington regarding the seriousness of establishing a new Syrian government, which means that everyone carrying a weapon in Syria, including the SDF, must comply.

Hakan Fidan, the Turkish foreign minister, had acknowledged that there were differences with Washington regarding the situation in Syria, especially the fate of ISIS and the formation of a government that includes all components of the Syrian society.

Ankara, however, has failed to overcome Washington's veto on the ground operation, as the US intervention facilitated the SDF to operate freely, especially after Trump announced his unwillingness to withdraw from the Syrian areas under its control, coinciding with the Israeli expansion in the south since December 8.

Undoubtedly, this position supports Mazloum Abdi, the SDF military commander, who continues his negotiations with al-Julani regarding the position of his forces within the future Syrian army, in conjunction with the status of Raqqa, Deir Ezzor, and Aleppo.

In this context, it is worth noting that the Druze community of Sweida has announced that they would not hand over their weapons until the new constitution and state institutions were approved.

In Daraa, there are two armed groups too that refuse to hand over their weapons, demanding negotiations with al-Julani.

The SDF has withdrawn - in coordination with the US side - from the two oil fields south of Raqqa. It then offered to cooperate with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in order to return the detainees in the al-Hawl camp to their homes.

Besides, it raised the new Syrian flag in the autonomous areas and proposed deporting fighters from the Kurdistan Workers' Party from Syria.

Meanwhile, al-Julani called for recognizing the Kurds' cultural rights and including them as individuals - not groups - in the security institutions, while reducing the broad powers of the local councils.

al-Julani further welcomed the deportation of the non-Syrian PPK leaders and the handover of Kurds of Turkish origin to Ankara while ensuring that strategic resources, border crossings, prisons, and camps remain under his control.

This means that the SDF's demands, most notably their integration into the Syrian army - as a single bloc - and their deployment in their current locations while granting them a fixed share of oil revenues, will not be achieved unless they are supported by Trump, who tends to maintain his alliance with them.

So far, observers and experts have no clear vision of Trump's approach in Syria.

UN rapporteur warns of Israel's genocidal intent in the West Bank

UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese warned of Israel's practices in the West Bank, which she described as "criminal," indicating that there is a clear intent for genocide in the way the occupation forces target the Palestinians.

According to the Palestinian news agency Wafa, the UN official said "Israel's actions in the West Bank are criminal, as widening the scope of destruction beyond Gaza across all the occupied Palestinian territory."

"I warned the UNGA this was happening, in my last report of October 2024," she added.

The UN rapporteur called on the international community to intervene and stop the destruction, adding that "it's past the time to intervene to stop it."

The Palestinian presidency had previously called for an urgent and emergency session of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to force



the Israeli occupation to stop its ongoing aggression against the Palestinian people in the West Bank.

The ongoing Israeli occupation aggression on the Jenin Governorate in the West Bank, since it began two weeks ago, resulted in the martyrdom of more than two dozen Palestinians, in addition to dozens of injuries.

Israeli-Saudi normalization is within reach: Atlantic Council

High on the agenda of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House is a potential deal to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Trump wants to move fast on it, having dispatched his special envoy, Steve Witkoff, to Riyadh both during the transition and last week.

This would produce major gains for US national security interests and is within reach. But it is not imminent. A carefully sequenced series of steps, and a corresponding political strategy, has a greater likelihood of success, perhaps even later this year, than a mad rush in the opening weeks of Trump's term.

Several conditions must fall into place to make this deal viable.

First, the Gaza ceasefire must hold and advance to its second phase. If all goes well, by early March, phase one will be complete, with the release of thirty-three Israeli hostages and a significant surge of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The second phase, for which negotiations are just getting underway, would secure the release of the remaining live Israeli hostages.

While Netanyahu already lost one far-right coalition partner, National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, over the deal, and another, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, is a threat to leave Netanyahu's coalition and bring down his government if phase two occurs, polls show that 73 percent of the Israeli public wants the agreement to proceed. Trump will insist that Netanyahu deliver on this. Ac-

ording to Israeli media reports, Witkoff told the prime minister, "Your coalition is your problem."

Second, reconstruction in Gaza needs to begin, and there needs to be a credible pathway to some form of Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and Gaza. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and his aides have consistently cited this pathway as a requirement for normalization to proceed.

Trump complicated this issue last week by musing about Palestinians being evacuated from Gaza—something Palestinians and Arab states associate with the death of Palestinian aspirations to statehood. An added concern for MBS, whose highest priority is the regional stability necessary for his ambitious Vision 2030 economic and social transformation of the kingdom to succeed, would be the potentially destabilizing effects of such population relocations on two key Arab partners, Egypt and Jordan.

On the Israeli side, there are two problems: the Israeli coalition depends on staunch opponents of Palestinian statehood.

The precise description of a Palestinian state and a timeline for its establishment that MBS needs and that the Israeli public can accept, which would require significant security guarantees for Israel, would need to be carefully negotiated. Trump's 2020 Middle East peace plan, while insufficient, may offer a starting point.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Photo exhibition by Michel Setboun opens at Niavaran cultural complex

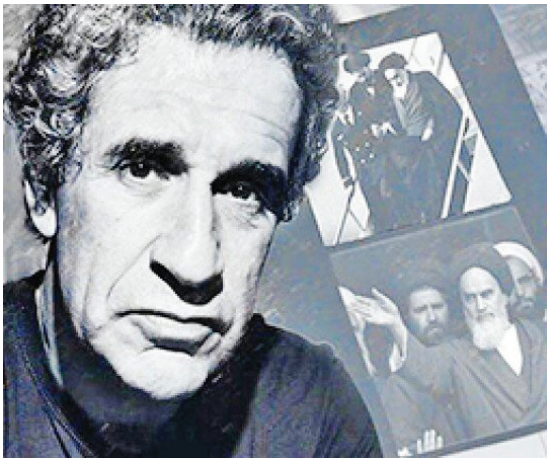
TEHRAN - A special photo exhibition featuring the works of renowned French photographer Michel Setboun is now open to the public at the Niavaran Historical-Cultural Complex in Tehran.

The exhibition commemorates the 46th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and showcases a selection of Setboun's iconic photographs documenting the significant events of 1979.

The exhibition, held in the Blue Hall of the Niavaran complex, presents images from Setboun's book "Days of Revolution", which chronicles key moments from the revolution. Organized in collaboration with the Association of Photographers of the Islamic Revolution and Sacred Defense, the exhibition offers a rare glimpse into the tumultuous days leading up to the victory of the revolution.

Setboun, who closely followed the revolutionary events, captured historic moments including the exile and return of Imam Khomeini. His extensive collection of 28,000 photographs includes images of mass demonstrations, public gatherings, and Khomeini's speeches at Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery and Alavi School. These images serve as a valuable visual archive of one of Iran's most defining historical periods.

Setboun, 72, started as an architect but turned to photography in 1978 as a news and war photographer covering conflicts around the world for SIPA Press, a French photo agency based in Paris. He also covered news events in El Salvador, Afghanistan, and Pakistan among others. In the late 1980s, he started working on long-term international



stories in Mongolia, Hong Kong, Albania for French Rapho photo agency and U.S.-based Sygma Photo News. In 1990 he decided to work as a freelance photographer, again on long-term projects. He still produces fine art photography and books and his photos have been published in The New York Times, Geo, Life, and Paris Match, among others.

The exhibition will be open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. until February 18, welcoming photography enthusiasts, historians, and visitors interested in this pivotal chapter of Iran's modern history.

Covering an area of about eleven hectares, the Niavaran Cultural-Historical Complex is composed of several landmark buildings, museums, and monuments constructed in the 19th and 20th centuries during the Pahlavi and late Qajar eras. The main palace of the complex was originally erected for royal ceremonies and gatherings. However, it later turned into a dwelling for Mohammad Reza Shah and his family.

Foreign national arrested in Greece for selling ancient Greek artifacts online

A foreign national was arrested in Athens on charges of orchestrating online auctions to sell ancient Greek artifacts. The suspect, not a Greek citizen, is accused of targeting buyers across multiple countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Italy. The arrest is an attempt to safeguard the country's cultural heritage.

Greece has been combating the illegal trade of ancient artifacts for years, as there are many who are willing to pay large sums to obtain an ancient relic. The suspect, whose identity remains unknown, was apprehended by a specialized police unit of Greece's police that focuses on ancient Greek artifacts smuggling.

During a search, that was conducted on the residence of the suspect in Athens, officers uncovered a trove of ancient Greek artifacts.

They were all immediately seized. Among the seized items were pottery fragments, pieces of figurines and a small statue depicting a satyr, a mythical creature from Greek

mythology related to the ancient Greek god of wine, Dionysus.

These artifacts are believed to be of significant historical value and were allegedly being sold without authorization through online platforms to buyers across the globe.

Under Greek law, the unauthorized transfer or sale of ancient Greek artifacts is a serious offence, severely punishable.

Convictions can result in penalties ranging from two years to up to ten years in prison for cases of more severe violations.

The suspect has been referred to a public prosecutor to face formal charges, though further details about the case have not yet been disclosed.

A few weeks ago, a true archaeological treasure was discovered in a shop in Athens. Over 100 ancient Greek artifacts dating back to the Geometric and Hellenistic periods were found in a shop run by the National Gallery in the heart of Athens.

(Source: Greek Reporter)

Echoes of Iran



Cup decorated with ibexes, Neyshabur, Iran, ca. 4000 BC, being kept at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Qajar-era Moshir Mosque in Shiraz to undergo restoration

TEHRAN - A restoration project for Moshir Mosque, a treasured Qajar-era landmark in the heart of Shiraz, is set to commence in the coming days, the tourism chief of Fars province said on Sunday.

Mohammad Sabet-Eqlidi announced that the restoration project, which is estimated to cost 30 billion rials, will focus on refurbishing the eastern and western sections of the mosque. The restoration efforts will address several key structural and aesthetic issues to preserve the mosque's historical integrity, the official said.

"The restoration will include reinforcing the brick arch walls, replacing the vaulted ceilings, applying moisture-resistant insulation on the eastern side, repairing the wind tower, and restoring the wooden windows and doors."

In addition to the Moshir Mosque, restoration work is also scheduled for other important Shiraz mosques. The Vakil Mosque will undergo repairs with an allocation of 30 billion rials, while the Nasir al-Molk and Atiq mosques will each receive 40 billion rials for their restoration.

The Moshir (aka Moshir-al Molk) Mosque constructed in the 19th century during the Qajar period by Haj Mirza Abolhasan Khan Moshir al-Molk, is renowned for its architectural beauty. A small prayer hall on the northern side is decorated with colorful tiles, and the northern two corners of its roof are beautifully adorned with exquisite tilework. The mosque's large prayer niche, or mihrab, features Quranic verses



written in elegant Thuluth script, further adding to its cultural and religious significance.

The mosque also boasts two tall minarets, intricately covered in tiles, and a grand arch on the eastern side, also decorated with decorative tilework and Quranic inscriptions. A central pool, measuring 25 meters in length and 10 meters in width, once filled with charitable water, is located at the heart of the mosque.

Also known as Moshir al-Molk Mosque, it is a remarkably sturdy structure, making it a notable exception among Qajar-era buildings. The northern part of the iwan (portico) is crowned by a pair of intricately tiled minarets. The mosque is richly adorned with exquisite Qajar-era earthenware tiles and fine muqarnas at the base of the vault. The western iwan is also particularly striking, crowned by Shiraz's first clock tower and a badgir (wind tower), which helps improve air circulation in the main prayer hall

behind the porch. The mihrab, though covered with carved tiles and stone slabs, is relatively simple in design. Its most notable feature is a beautifully executed arabesque inscription of Quranic verses.

Collection of 34 Iranian mosques seek UNESCO label

Iran has taken a significant step towards the potential registration of its historical mosques as a collective property on the UNESCO World Heritage list. So far, a primary selection of 34 mosques from 12 different provinces has been made to undergo extensive research and a field survey to prepare a comprehensive dossier for submission.

According to Abdolrasul Vatandoust, the project manager overseeing the UNESCO World Heritage nomination of "Iranian Mosques," the selected structures represent the architectural evolution of mosque design in Iran, spanning from the early Islamic period to contemporary

times.

Vatandoust noted that the current list of 34 mosques might change over the course of the next one to two years, with some mosques potentially being added or removed as the research progresses. "The key objective is to ensure that these mosques are thoroughly documented and studied in time for submission."

Architecturally, Iranian mosques display a rich diversity influenced by regional variations in geometry, materials, and style. These mosques often feature complex structures adorned with colorful tiles and symbolic patterns, reflecting the unique architectural traditions of each area. Stunning domes and minarets, integral to the country's mosques, can be seen in nearly every city and village. These architectural elements have become iconic, with some mosques recognized as timeless masterpieces of Islamic architecture.

Among Iran's most beautiful and must-visit mosques are the Nasir al-Molk Mosque in Shiraz, the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan, the Shah Cheragh Mosque in Shiraz, the Imam Mosque in Isfahan, the Jameh Mosque of Yazd, the Blue Mosque in Tabriz, the Goharshad Mosque in Mashhad, the Vakil Mosque in Shiraz, and the Agha Bozorg Mosque in Kashan.

A mosque, known locally as "masjed" or "masjid" (meaning "a place of prostration to God"), is a central place of worship in Islam. In Iran, mosque architecture is characterized by symmetry, intricate geometric designs, and vibrant colors.

Exhibit showcasing Siraf's ancient heritage opens in Bushehr

TEHRAN - A special exhibition featuring ancient relics excavated from the historic port city of Siraf has opened at the Persian Gulf Region Museum in Bushehr.

Organized in collaboration with the National Museum of Iran, the exhibition coincides with the celebrations of the Ten-Day Dawn (Dahe-ye Fajr), marking the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

According to Nasrollah Ebrahimi, the deputy director of cultural heritage in Bushehr province, the exhibition presents a collection of artifacts unearthed during archaeological excavations led by British archaeologist David Whitehouse more than five decades ago. This marks the first time in 52 years that these relics are being publicly displayed in Iran.

Siraf, an ancient port on the Persian Gulf, was a major trade hub during the pre-Islamic



and early Islamic era, linking Iran to distant regions such as China, India, and East Africa. According to organizers, the artifacts on display provide valuable insights into the city's rich maritime history, trade networks, and cultural exchanges.

Siraf was Iran's most important port from the Sassanid period to the 4th century AH. It

bears plentiful evidence of Persian mastery and genius in seafaring, international relations, and interaction with other near and far cultures and civilizations.

Between 1966 and 1973, the British Institute of Persian Studies conducted seven seasons of excavation and survey at Siraf, which was a major city on the Iranian shore of the Persian Gulf that played a leading role in the network of maritime trade that supplied Western Asia with the products of India, the Far East and Eastern Africa between 800 CE and 1050.

The historical and architectural monuments of Bushehr include Islamic buildings like mosques and praying centers, mansions, old towers, castles, as well as gardens. Moreover, Bushehr embraces significant monuments from the Elamite, Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid eras.

Global Halal tourism market projected to reach \$410 billion by 2032

TEHRAN - The global Halal and Muslim-friendly tourism market is on track to expand significantly, with projections estimating its value to reach \$410.9 billion by 2032, up from \$256.5 billion in 2023.

As demand surges, popular tourist destinations are implementing various initiatives to attract Muslim travelers and cater to their specific needs.

According to Crescent Rating, international Muslim tourist arrivals in the first half of 2024 reached 80 million, with figures expected to climb to 230 million by 2028.

This upward trend is in line with the broader growth of the Islamic Halal economy, which includes tourism, investments, and other sectors. Industry analysts predict the Halal economy will reach \$7.7 trillion in 2024, more

than doubling its \$3.2 trillion valuation in 2015.

Halal, an Arabic term meaning "permitted," extends beyond food to include travel experiences aligned with Islamic principles. Halal tourism encompasses services such as Halal food options, prayer facilities, gender-segregated amenities, and accommodations free from alcohol and gambling.



China travel agency offers North Korea tour from February

A Chinese tour operator has opened bookings for trips to a city in North Korea's northeast to celebrate former leader Kim Jong Il's birthday.

The tour would offer foreign tourists the first chance to visit North Korea since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lavish celebrations for Kim Jong Il's birthday

Beijing-based travel agency Koryo Tours said the tours, scheduled for February through April, will take visitors to "must-see sites" in Rason, a city on the border with China in North Korea's special economic zone.

"Plus, you will travel to North Korea to celebrate one of the biggest holidays, Kim Jong Il's Birthday," the travel agency wrote on its website.

The birthday of late former North Korean leader Kim Jong-il is on February 16, a national holiday in North Korea. The birthdays of members of the ruling Kim dynasty are typically feted in the country with large-scale public celebrations.

No confirmation of border opening
However, although the tour is open for bookings, it is "not yet confirmed," Koryo said, adding it was "awaiting information from the Chinese authorities on the opening of the Chinese side of the border".

February's tour also includes visits to factories, markets, a bank and a school.

Another China-based travel agency, Young Pioneer Tours, also announced in January that North Korea was opening tourism in Rason, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

Not first time that tours from China announced

Koryo Tours, as well as another Chinese travel operator, announced back in August 2024 that they expected the border to open to Chinese tourists by December that year.

(Source: dw.com)

Science production grows noticeably after Islamic revolution

TEHRAN – Science production in Iran has been experiencing a constant rise after the 1979 Islamic revolution, moving up by 33 positions among the world's countries from 50 in 1980 to 17 in 2024.

The country ranked second in science production among Islamic nations in 2024, compared with fifth in 1980, Mehr news agency reported.

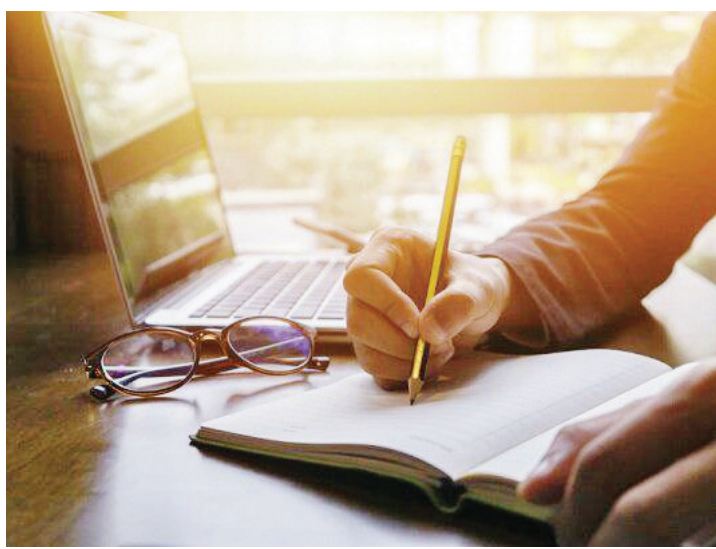
Forty-six years after the Islamic revolution, the country has made great strides in different stores including science, health, security, economy, industry, and legislation.

A review of Scopus data shows that in the first twenty years following the Islamic revolution, scientific production moved up significantly, rising from 284 articles published in 1980 to 1450 articles in 1999, reaching 8497 articles in 2005. In 2024, Iran published 75,928 scientific articles.

Iran targets world's 12th spot in science production

Despite ongoing sanctions, Iran is planning to elevate the country's ranking for scientific productions from currently 17 to 12 by 2027.

Due to sanctions, economic



restrictions, and the limitations on publishing papers by Iranian scholars, particularly during the last three years, Iran's ranking in scientific productions has lowered from 15 to 17, Shahin Akhondzadeh, an official with the health ministry, has said.

The country's advancement in science production requires compensating for the regression in research and technology through providing funds, faci-

tating research, and promoting meritocracy which will reduce young elites' migration, as well, the health ministry's website quoted Akhondzadeh as saying.

Scientific associations grow by 23%

The number of scientific associations as one of the pillars of science in the country has increased from 322 in the Iranian year 1392 (2013 -2014) to 396

last year (ended on March 19), signifying a 22.9 percent growth.

Interdisciplinary and humanitarian associations have experienced the highest growth. Within a decade, the number of interdisciplinary and humanitarian associations has increased from 50 and 102 to 85 and 142, respectively, IRNA reported.

Scientific associations have always played an essential role in producing knowledge and achieving scientific development.

They are the main foundation of institutions beyond political, racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual boundaries.

Scientific associations have emerged in response to the needs of the world of democracy and the enhancement of human solidarity. They have also created an appropriate environment for free thinking and the establishment of a culture of conversations.

Their Independence from governments in finance and human resources, speed of action, high decision-making power, limited bureaucracy, and flexible mechanism bolster their efficiency at national and international levels. HIGHLIGHT: Iran ranked second among Islamic nations in 2024, compared with fifth in 1980.

Iran ranked second among Islamic nations in 2024, compared with fifth in 1980.

'Iran Corridor' presents country as safe digital link

TEHRAN – An international event titled Iran Corridor 2025 was held on Monday, aimed to showcase Iran's communication infrastructure as a secure route for data transmission in the region.

Hosted by Dubai, the event was held a day prior to Capacity Middle East, the major telecommunications conference in the region, which is being held from February 4 to 6.

An Iranian delegation led by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister, Sattar Hashemi, has traveled to Dubai to take part in the events.

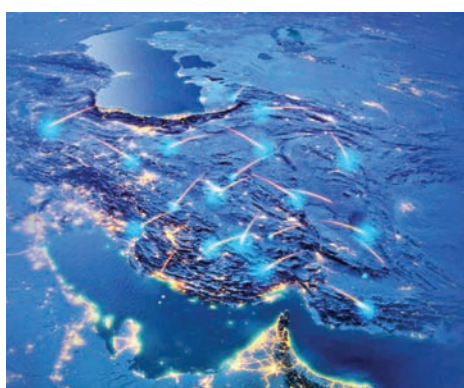
Leading regional operators from 15 countries participated in the Iran Corridor. Hashemi delivered a speech focusing on Iran's capabilities in the communication sector as well as strengthening regional cooperation.

The Iran Corridor aims to promote regional cooperation in advancing the Digital Economy by enhancing interconnected digital infrastructures.

The one-day event served as a platform to showcase the rapid advancement in technology, innovation, and connectivity via Iran. As one of the most dynamic regions for technological growth, Iran is poised to be at the center of transformation in the Middle East.

The country plays a strategic role as a vital corridor, linking regions through terrestrial and submarine fiber optic networks, and fostering diversity in digital facilities. This position enables the integration of regional digital platforms and reliable, high-speed data communication.

The event explored opportunities for co-investment in interregional cable systems, leveraging Iran's role at the crossroads of Trans-Eur-



asian corridors: the Middle East to Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Indian Ocean to the Caspian Sea, and the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea.

It emphasized geo-distributed data centers, Digital Free Zones, and Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) while highlighting advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing, and secure communication systems to advance digital connectivity.

On the sidelines of the event, Hashemi is scheduled to hold meetings with key leaders, who have participated in the event, from across the globe.

Status of ICT in Iran

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology is the highest authority in the field of ICT in the country. All activities related to the information and communication technology industry are directly related to the ministry.

The government pays special attention to plans and policies in this sector in order to maximize the use of ICT to facilitate people's lives.

The successful designing, building, and launching of a satellite show the growth of the

national technology and scientific power of a country.

Space technology has been considered a tool to expand prosperity, peace, scientific-cultural development, and economic progress in human societies.

Different nations of the world exploit this technology in some way based on their capacity, capabilities, and efforts.

Currently, 13 universities and a research institute affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology are offering aerospace majors, thus Iran has a high capability in training specialists and experts in the aerospace sector and is a leading country in the region.

Access to telecommunication services in rural areas of the country had improved over the period as the overall number of villages with access to communication services rose to 52,182, around 93 percent of all villages, while 47,837 villages had access to home landline services.

Moreover, the number of Iranian mobile users reached nearly 135.890 million, according to the CRA which put the mobile phone penetration rate in the country at 161.67 percent.

The figures showed, however, that fixed broadband adoption in Iran had stalled at 14 percent with nearly 11.921 million customers having access to the Internet via those services.

This statistic shows that fixed broadband internet has grown by less than 2 percent compared to last year and mobile internet has experienced a growth of 10 percent. However, it can be said that the speed of mobile internet expansion is 5 times the speed of fixed internet.

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Precipitation forecast to reach above normal in next 3 months

The country is predicted to receive above normal rainfall over the next three months (February 20–May 21), head of the climatological research institute affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization (IMO) has said.

The whole country will meet normal and above normal rainfalls, the northern parts will receive above normal rainfall while southern provinces will receive normal to lower-than-normal rainfall, IRNA quoted Iman Babaeian as saying on Sunday.

This month, northern and eastern provinces will receive rain above normal averages, while in the first month of spring precipitation will be at normal amounts across the country, he noted, adding, during the second month of spring rainfall will reach its peak.

بارش‌های کشور در سه ماه پیش رو بیش از نرمال است

رئیس پژوهشکده اقلیم‌شناسی سازمان هواشناسی گفت: پیش‌بینی‌ها نشان می‌دهد میزان بارش در کشور در سه ماهه پیش رو (اسفند ۹۷، فروردین و اردیبهشت ۹۸) در حد نرمال و متمایل به بیش از نرمال خواهد بود. ایمان بابایان روز یکشنبه در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: مجموع بارش‌ها در سطح کشور نرمال و متمایل به بیشتر از نرمال است اما در نیمه شمالی، بیشتر از نرمال و در نیمه جنوبی در محدوده نرمال تا کمتر از نرمال خواهد بود.

وی اظهار داشت: بارش‌ها در اسفندماه ۹۷ در نیمه شمالی و شرقی بیشتر از نرمال است، در فروردین ماه ۹۸ نیز بارش‌ها در محدوده نرمال و برای اردیبهشت بیشتر از نرمال پیش‌بینی شده است.

Health houses revolutionize health sector

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN –Health houses and networks are providing primary health care (PHC) services all over the country, including most remote areas, thanks to which the health system has been frequently lauded by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a role model for many other countries.

The development of health houses in Iran dates back to years after the Islamic revolution (1979). The first health houses were established in 1985 to promote health indices by making PHC services accessible to all individuals, particularly in rural and less privileged areas, with the help of nurse aids, ISNA reported.

Currently, 18,000 health houses with over 28,000 nurse aids are operating in the country. At least, one health house is available for every 700-1500 people while mobile medical units cover less populated areas.

Health houses and nursing aids are responsible for promoting health by training communities on how to prevent and address epidemics, communicable and non-communicable diseases, injuries, and disasters.

Screening the targeted population, providing nutrition care, prenatal care, vaccination, and immunization, monitoring environmental and occupational health standards, as well as students' health and wellbeing at schools are among other services offered by nurse aids; all these services are free of charge.

Thanks to their efforts the mortality rate among pregnant women and children under the age of five has significantly declined, and life expectancy has increased.

In addition, over 6,000 centers are providing comprehensive health services, that is a center for every 13,000 individuals. Also, there are more than 5,000 health bases offering healthcare services in the country.

By referring to health houses, people receive services from nutritionists, dentists, and mental health experts, and benefit from para-clinical and pharmaceutical services in comprehensive health centers.

These centers also provide diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitation services, elective and emergency surgeries, clinical procedures, pharmaceutical and laboratory services, and imaging.

Nationwide implementation of Family Physician Program

The Family Physician Program was started in 2005, which targeted almost 25,000,000 citizens residing in rural areas, and was piloted in two provinces of Fars and Mazandaran.

Periodic examinations and monitoring of people's health status, easy and round-the-clock access to basic services and primary care, and frequent visits to doctors are the characteristics of a family physician.

Based on the Family Physician Program, a physician and a midwife offer services in rural areas, every 3,300 villagers have a physician and there is a midwife per 5,200 people in villages.

The implementation of the family physician program in urban areas began in June 2012

in Fars and Mazandaran provinces. Reducing out-of-pocket payments has been an important effect and benefit of the urban family physician program. A total of 20,263,501 persons have been covered by the Family Physician Program, which constitutes 40 percent of the target population in cities.

The current administration is determined to implement the Family Physician Program nationwide the next Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025 – March 2026). To launch the program a budget of 850 billion rials (around 1,063 million dollars) is needed.

Once implemented, there will be a physician, and a healthcare provider for every 3,000 and 1,500 people, respectively.

In the first phase, four universities in Fars (Fasa county), Mazandaran, Khuzestan (Dez-foul), and Tehran (Eslamshahr) provinces have been chosen to implant the program.

Iran health system has always prioritized prevention over treatment as its main objective which can come true via strengthening and rebuilding the country's health care networks, implementing Family Physician Program, and referral system nationwide, as well as promoting health literacy and self-care.

'Iran's health sector a role model'

President Masoud Pezeshkian has called the country's health system a role model in the region and even the world thanks to its unique, particularly primary healthcare, services.

The official made the remarks on January 2nd, in a letter addressing a national seminar held in Mashhad to honor healthcare staff including nursing aids.

Lauding the substantial progress made in the health sector, the president said these remarkable achievements are the results of health workers' ceaseless efforts, such as providing vaccination and prenatal care for pregnant mothers, controlling infectious diseases, promoting health education, sharing knowledge, and training new generations of health staff nationwide.

The notable increase in life expectancy, reduction in infant mortality rate, control of infectious diseases, and reduction in complications from chronic diseases are all due to health workers' dedication and commitment.

Pezeshkian also commended the ongoing health programs such as universal health coverage and family physician programs, which have made comprehensive and continuous healthcare accessible to millions.

The president went on to say that the administration recognizes the untiring efforts and services of all health workers, and is determined to elevate the country's health system to its rightful and deserving position, utilizing health workers' valuable capacities and potentials.

In October 2024, the World Health Organization's (WHO) director for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) called Iran's health sector a role model in the region.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



Children planting Hyrcanian saplings

A group of children took part in a campaign on Sunday, planting saplings endemic to Hyrcanian forests in northern Golestan province.

The forests contain the most significant natural habitats for in situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the perspective of science or conservation.



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FEBRUARY 4, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Knowledge and wisdom are really the privilege of a faithful Muslim. If you have lost them, get them back even though you may have to get them from the apostates.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:18 Evening: 17:35 Dawn: 5:36 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:01 (tomorrow)

Crowdfunder collects cash to bring Palestinian artists to Edinburgh Fringe

A crowdfunder has been set up to raise money for Palestinian artists coming to the Edinburgh Fringe.

The project, called "Welcome to the Fringe: Palestine 2025", is aiming to allow Palestinian artists to perform in the city, enabling them to develop a network of other artists who can offer guidance and mentorship. Deadline reported.

The project also ran ten years ago, when ten artists were able to come from Palestine to Edinburgh to allow audiences to engage with Palestinian performance.

The crowdfunder launched January 28 and has already made £1,855 of its £30,000 target.

The target figure aims to cover costs such as flights, accommodation, Fringe registration, venue costs, and volunteer expenses.

On their crowdfunder page, the group states: "It is more important than ever that we host and share in the work of our Palestinian colleagues."

In the past weeks, thousands of Palestinians have been returning home to what is left of Northern Gaza after a ceasefire deal was arranged.

"Welcome to the Fringe: Palestine" aims to bring up to 16 artists to Edinburgh, working in various mediums such as poetry, theater, live art, and song.

The group is made up of Scottish-based creatives who have worked in Palestine and the wider Middle East in the past decades.

Since the project is volunteer led, they are calling for support from the community to get the fund off the ground, and to offer any skills such as PR, publicity, and marketing, as well as technical help or even accommodation if possible.

The page states: "We want to do something, however small it seems, to combat the ongoing dehumanization and violence against the Palest-

inian people, and the ongoing censorship, restrictions and barriers placed in the way of Palestinian art.

"Above all, 'Welcome to the Fringe: Palestine' aims to listen and learn from Palestinians. The Edinburgh Fringe is one of our favorite places in the world. It is a place of welcome and refuge. We want it to be a place where everyone can speak in the open and tell their stories. We want it to be a place where the unheard are finally heard. We hope you feel able to support us in this."

If individuals donate £100 or more to the cause, they will receive a full pass to a four-day showcase of Palestinian performance, and £500 or more will get a pass plus an invite to the end of festival party. £2,000 will mean sponsoring an artist and covering the costs of bringing them to Edinburgh.

Locals have shared their support, with one commenting: "Very much looking forward to seeing some excellent work from Palestinian artists this August." Another called the project: "Beautiful and vital!" A third said: "Good luck with this wonderful initiative. I'll help spread the word"

The Edinburgh Fringe is the world's largest performance arts festival. For three weeks in August, the city of Edinburgh, Scotland, welcomes an explosion of creative energy from around the globe. Artists and performers take to hundreds of stages all over the city, presenting shows for every taste. Venues can be anywhere, from existing theaters and concert halls to repurposed spaces like parks, buses and shipping containers. The Fringe street events bring color, excitement and vibrancy to outdoor areas, free of charge.

From big names in the world of entertainment to unknown artists looking to build their careers, the festival spans every genre of live performance, including theater, comedy, physical theater, circus, children's shows, musicals, opera, music, spoken word, exhibitions and events.

Literary heritage of Rudaki reviewed by scholars in Tehran

TEHRAN—Rudaki was not the first Persian-speaking poet; however, as he demonstrated the power of Persian as a poetic language after two centuries of Arabic dominance, he is considered the founder of New Persian poetry. Nizamuddin Zahedi, Tajikistan's ambassador to Iran said at the Literary Heritage of Rudaki session, which was held at the National Library of Iran in Tehran on Sunday.

The session was organized by the Association for Iranian Studies and the Institute for Iran-Eurasia Studies (IRAS), IRNA reported.

"During the Tahirid and Saffarid periods, there were poets composing poetry in Persian. Before Rudaki, in the realm of the Caliphate, of which Iran was a part, the language of literature and culture was Arabic. But what Rudaki did paved the way for poets in later centuries as they followed his path," Zahedi added.

The Tajik ambassador added that one of Rudaki's distinguishing features was his mastery of various poetic forms, including qasida, qit'a, ghazal, mathnawi, and rubai. "He skillfully employed different meters and literary embellishments".

Discussing the revival of Persian identity during the Islamic period, Zahedi stated: "In the first and second centuries A.H., Middle Iranian languages such as Pahlavi, Khwarezmian, Sogdian, and Bactrian gradually lost their speakers and faded into history. During this time, Iranian scholars and scribes of the second and third centuries, more than 40 individuals, became masters of Arabic prose and poetry. In their writings, they incorporated Iranian pre-Islamic traditions and customs, ensuring their continuity through the Arabic language".



Tajikistan's ambassador to Iran Nizamuddin Zahedi speaks at the Literary Heritage of Rudaki session in Tehran on February 2, 2025.

"Another group of Iranians, led by Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa, directly translated ancient Iranian literature into Arabic prose. Additionally, some Iranian poets rendered classical Iranian literary works into Arabic verse," he continued.

"Thus, the second and third centuries A.H. can be regarded as the period of the Iranian intellectual uprising in the Arabic language. However, the second stage of the Persian revival began during the Sasanid era in the fourth century A.H., to which Rudaki belonged. During this period, Persian literature revived Persian identity through the national language of Iranians—Persian and Tajik," Zahedi emphasized.

Also speaking at the session, Mahmoud Jafari-Dehghi, president of the Association for Iranian Studies, highlighted Rudaki's

contributions to Persian poetry, including the invention of the rubai (quatrain), his attention to epics and myths, and the evolution of the Khorasani style.

Another speaker at the event was Asghar Dadbeh, a professor of philosophy and mystical literature. "The magnificent chain of Iranian culture continued after the Arab invasion and was not broken. Even in the first and second centuries, texts were written in Pahlavi. Therefore, Rudaki, who flourished in the third century, had access to the knowledge of the two preceding centuries," he said.

Discussing the consequences of Rudaki's efforts to revive Persian culture and literature, Dadbeh noted: "The reactionary faction affiliated with Baghdad persecuted Rudaki for his patriotism and Iranian nationalism, to the extent that he

lost his eyesight".

Other speakers at the conference included Mehdi Sanaei, president of the IRAS Institute; Ali Ashraf Mojtahed Shabestari, Iran's first ambassador to Tajikistan; and Shah Mansur Shah-Mirza, a Tajik researcher and poet.

Rudaki (858-940/41) was a poet, singer, and musician who is regarded as the first major poet to write in New Persian. A court poet under the Sasanids, he reportedly composed more than 180,000 verses, yet only a small portion of his work has survived, most notably parts of his versification of the Kalila wa-Dimna, a collection of Indian fables.

In Iran, Rudaki is acknowledged as the founder of New Persian poetry and in Tajikistan as the father of Tajik literature.

Sadriddin Aini's "Odina" published in Persian

TEHRAN—The Persian translation of the novel "Odina" written by Tajik author Sadriddin Aini has been released in the Iranian bookstores.

The book has been translated by Mohsen Farahbar and Jahan Ketab Publication has published it in 296 pages, Mehr reported.

"Odina" is considered the beginning of new Tajik literature. Odina, the protagonist of "Odina," comes from a poor peasant family and is exploited throughout his life, until he finally comes into contact with socialist ideas that signify for him light at the end of the tunnel of oppression (which he, however, is unable to reach). Odina was a poor, lonely and desperate young man, who in his youth became a victim of treachery, betrayal, oppression and injustice of tyrannical rulers.

By the time he started writing Odina, Aini had already become established in the Soviet social hierarchy by supporting the creation of the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic (despite

physically remaining in Samarqand).

Aini's "Odina" (completed between 1924 and 1926) is one of his early works, in which the author's journey towards Socialist realism was just starting. This makes its analysis particularly interesting from the point of view of how politics affected literature in early Soviet Central Asia. This story, similarly to many of Aini's other works, was published and modified by both the author himself and various editors several times.

The length of the story increased with each subsequent edition, with various detailed descriptions and Odina's social development being added along the way. This was Aini's first published work, in which one could still notice remnants of sentimentalism and romanticism, which were characteristic of the writer's pre-Revolutionary literary legacy.

Sadriddin Aini (1878-1954) was a Tajik intellectual who wrote poetry, fiction, journalism,

history, and a dictionary. He is regarded by Tajiks as Tajikistan's national poet and one of the most important writers in the country's history.

In 1934, he attended the first Soviet Congress of Writers as the Tajik representative. By purporting national identity in his writings, he was able to escape the Soviet censors that quieted many intellectuals in Central Asia. He was member of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan for 20 years, was awarded the Order of Lenin three times, and was the first president of the Academy of Sciences of Tajik SSR. After 1992, his writing helped to bind together a sense of Tajik nationalism that survived the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Aini's early poems were about love and nature, but after the national awakening in Tajikistan, his subject matter shifted to the dawn of the new age and the working class. His writings often criticized the Amir of Bukhara.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt's "Romulus the Great" on stage at Mehrab Theater

TEHRAN—The play "Romulus the Great" written by Friedrich Dürrenmatt is being performed at Mehrab Theater in Tehran.

Mojtaba Tabatabaei has directed the play and performs in it along with Fatima Joudaki, Omid Mojtahedi, Arman Nassehifar, Zahra Labafian, Laleh Zolfaghari, Mahsa Esmaeili, and Ali Panahi among others.

Written in 1950, it is an unhistorical historical comedy in four parts. It shows the demise of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century – taking place during the day of (and the day following) the Ides of March, 476.

The Roman empire is collapsing although that does not bother emperor Romulus much. Even with the rapid advances of the Germanic troupes led by General Odokar, he intends to have his breakfast without being interrupted by bad news. The most important things in his life are his chickens (all named after great Roman emperors or

philosophers) and how many eggs they produce. The breeding of his chickens has become his one and only passion.

Ever since Romulus took over the governance of the Western Roman Empire some 20 years ago, he has only ever taken her of his clucking hens.

His palace is just as run down as the whole country. Not long ago the minister of finance has made away with the treasury, leaving Romulus to pay his staff with the last leaves of his golden laurel crown.

Romulus' wife Julia and the remaining court are very worried about all the reports of threats to their world and urge their emperor to DO SOMETHING.

But, alas, Romulus does not want to. He is not even willing to take up Cäsar Ruf's - who happens to be a very rich pants manufacturer - offer to invest millions into Rome's rescue in exchange for Romulus' daughter's hand in marriage and

a law making wearing pants a civic duty.

The emperor's laziness and lack of interest drive his allies insane. But there is something they do not know: Romulus' ostensible lethargy is part of a grander scheme. He is working deliberately on the downfall of the Roman empire because he does not deem it worthy of continuing to exist - and he has decided to be the judge of his depraved homeland himself.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt's comedy takes place from the morning of March 15th until the morning of March 16th, 476, and has some bearing on the demise of the Roman empire in the Fifth century A.D. Yet it is only a vague reference to the actual historical events.

Instead, Dürrenmatt uses the premise for an amusing yet analytically astute thought model showcasing the downfall of highly developed civilizations because of their own satiety and arrogance they present to the world.

Dürrenmatt edited this timelessly relevant text regularly until 1980. The setting and characters in "Romulus the Great" are designed with a certain absurdity and comicality. At the same time the narrative about the "imperial chicken breeder" and "world's judge in a fool's costume" allows the grotesque and perceptive analysis of political and societal cohesion to shine through.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921-1990) was a Swiss author and dramatist. He was a proponent of epic theater whose plays reflected the recent experiences of World War II. The politically active author's work included avant-garde dramas, philosophical crime novels, and macabre satire.

"Romulus the Great" will remain on stage through February 21 at Mehrab Theater, located at the junction of Imam Khomeini and Vali-e Asr streets.

Cartoon of Day



Free Palestine

Cartoonist: Kamal Sharaf from Yemen