

Regional cooperation can help eliminate terrorism on Iran-Pakistan border: analyst

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

According to the most recent edition of the Encyclopedia of Terror Victims in Iran, the country has endured over 23,000 casualties due to terrorism and counterterrorism efforts since the Islamic Revolution. This significant toll places Iran among the world's largest victims of terrorism, alongside Pakistan.

In recent years, one of Iran's most pressing security challenges has been the alarming increase in terrorist activities in its south-eastern region, particularly in Sistan and Baluchestan province. Statistics further reveal that, within the past year, terrorist attacks in this area surged by 115%, and casualties have skyrocketed by 200% compared to the previous year. Notably, 68% of all terrorist operations in Iran during the past year have taken place in this province.

In light of these escalating threats, and on the occasion of the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as it Relates to Terrorism, the Tehran Times conducted an insightful interview with Muhammad Murtaza, a leading expert on regional connectivity, security, and violent extremism, as well as a Project Manager at the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies.

Given the shared border and common security challenges between Iran and Pakistan, the interview explored the current state of terrorism in the region and examined potential strategies for effectively countering this pervasive threat. ▶ Page 2



Picture taken on February 11, 2025, at the Tehran Times building shows Government Spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani standing next to a display featuring the first edition of the newspaper, published in May 5, 1979.

Turkmenistan's FM visits Tehran to discuss bilateral ties, regional developments

TEHRAN – Rashid Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, has arrived in Tehran for high-level discussions with Iranian officials.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei confirmed that Meredov landed in Tehran on February 11. The visit comes in response to an official invitation from Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and is part of the periodic political consultations held between the foreign ministers of Iran and Turkmenistan.

Beyond his role as Turkmenistan's top diplomat, Meredov also chairs the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission.

During his stay in Tehran, he is expected to hold talks with several senior Iranian officials, discussing ways to enhance political, economic, and trade relations. Key topics on the agenda include energy cooperation, transportation links, and expanding trade exchanges between the two countries. ▶ Page 2

Tehran, Riyadh condemn Netanyahu's remarks on forced displacement of Palestinians

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has strongly denounced Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's suggestion of establishing a Palestinian state within Saudi Arabia, calling it an unprecedented act of aggression that threatens regional stability and security.

During a phone conversation with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan on Monday, Araghchi criticized Netanyahu's remarks as a "blatant provocation" and a clear reflection of Israel's expansionist ambitions.

He warned that such rhetoric demonstrated the "recklessness of the occupying regime" and posed a direct challenge to peace in West Asia.

Araghchi accused Israeli officials of attempting to erase Palestinian identity through forced displacement and the continued expansion of illegal settlements. He also condemned the broader US-Israeli plan, which, he argued, was designed to eliminate Palestinian sovereignty under the guise of "rebuilding" Gaza.

His remarks followed a statement by former US President Donald Trump, who suggested that Gaza should come under US "ownership" and that Palestinians should be permanently relocated elsewhere. Trump further claimed that displaced Palestinians would find "better housing" outside their homeland. ▶ Page 2

Trump is making a mockery of MAGA so far...

By Martin Love

NORTH CAROLINA – Iranians honestly must count themselves lucky to be Iranians. And all the rest of the world lucky not to be American with citizens stuck in an "empire" that is decaying and dying and has done little real good in decades for the planet and humanity generally.

This death of a sordid empire is being done not by alleged enemies of the U.S. but by Washington itself no matter what political party is marginally in charge. And Washington has no clue who its "enemies" really are! Iran has never been an "enemy" and has tried mightily, some Americans at least see, to mend relations with the U.S., but even so Iran has also stood up for justice like in Palestine and for decades against ill and misguided treatment by the U.S. and its allies. We have learned recently, for one thing, that the U.S. has spent billions via the USAID agency seeding the entire world with bought "journalists" spouting empire propaganda.

Why do US proxies accuse Hezbollah of implementing 'Iranian occupation' agenda?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Hezbollah was established after a committee consisting of 9 representatives of the Islamic forces agreed to adopt Imam Khomeini's orientation to liberate the occupied Lebanese territories.

The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, with Imam Khomeini's blessing, began training Hezbollah members in Zabadani, Syria.

These groups launched their primary operations secretly until Ahmad Qasir carried out his first martyrdom operation on November 11, 1982, which resulted in the demolition of the headquarters of the Israeli military governor in Tyre, killing more than 100 Israeli soldiers.

Israeli occupation 'expands' in Syria

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The Israeli regime has reportedly expanded its occupation of the southwestern Syrian province of Quneitra.

Local sources informed regional media that the Israeli military carried out an incursion into the Quneitra countryside, accompanied by military support from those occupation forces already deployed in the Syrian territory. The operation reportedly focused on the destruction of Syrian military equipment in the area.

Regional reports state that Israeli occupation forces infiltrated Ain al-Nouriyah village in Quneitra, destroying remnants of two former Syrian army units and causing panic among residents.

Reports suggest that Israeli occupation forces destroyed two former Syrian army units, a mortar and an anti-armor missile unit, on a strategic hill in Quneitra.

Firing blanks: Trump's ultimatum demands hell freeze over

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- Since winning the November presidential election, Donald Trump has been blowing hot and cold on the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

In the waning days of President Joe Biden's administration, Trump had exerted pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas to reach a ceasefire.

Two weeks before his inauguration on January 20, Trump warned that "all hell will break out in the Middle East" if Hamas failed to release captives held in Gaza before the ceremony.

A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect on January 19 and Trump claims credit for the truce deal.

But on Monday, he called on Israel to cancel the ceasefire with Hamas and "let all hell break out" if the resistance group does not return captives by noon on Saturday. ▶ Page 5



Winners of 43rd Fajr Film Festival receive Crystal Simorgh awards

TEHRAN-The 43rd Fajr Film Festival concluded at the Milad Tower Conference Center in Tehran on Monday night, presenting the Crystal Simorgh awards to the winners of various sections.

At the closing ceremony of the most significant cinematic event in Iran, the major awards in the competition section were distributed among seven films and "Moses the Kalimullah: At Dawn" received most of the technical awards, Honaronline reported.

The Crystal Simorgh for Best Film was awarded to Seyed Maziar Hashemi, for his production "Call Me Ziba". ▶ Page 8



Tehran tourism fair opens with great enthusiasm

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – The 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition opened this morning amid a diverse crowd of high-ranking officials, business leaders, travel enthusiasts, and avid visitors. The grand opening ceremony was attended by Iranian President Masoud Pezeskian and his tourism minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, alongside tens of foreign diplomats and representatives from the travel industry.

Pezeskian underscored in the opening ceremony of the tourism fair the necessity of fostering tourism and strengthening ties with friendly and neighboring countries. ▶ Page 6

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Intelligent leadership a key factor in overcoming crises

Sobh-e-No interviewed Masoud Rezaei, a history researcher, about the secret of the Islamic Revolution's longevity. He said: Today, our enemies are trying to create a distance between the people and the Leader through various methods. One of the main goals of the United States and its allies in imposing the most severe sanctions against Iran is to increase economic pressure on the people and create grounds for unrest and tension in society so that a distance can be formed between the people and the government. This can lead to irreparable losses. The Islamic Revolution, despite all the hostility and limitations, has continued and achieved progress that has astonished the world and angered the United States and its allies. Therefore, we must continue this path with vigilance. Paying attention to the Leader's guidelines and maintaining the spirit of resistance will ensure the sustainability of the revolution and the country. We must rely on our domestic forces, develop domestic talents, and continue the path of progress by relying on God to reach higher peaks.

Shargh: Change of tone and language or change of policy?!

Shargh discussed Trump's latest remarks about Iran in an interview with international analyst Vahid Bayani. He said: Donald Trump's statements were in a warning tone, but with measured and precise words. Trump said that he has great respect for Iran and is seeking to take the initiative to contact the President of Iran. However, after signing the directive to revive the maximum pressure campaign and taking steps to tighten oil sanctions on Iran, Donald Trump's tone and language will gradually become sharper and tougher. Another important point is Trump's threat regarding a military attack on Iran. Donald Trump is pursuing confrontation or military options indirectly and through the Israelis. This means that the U.S. President is not interested in a military confrontation between Tehran and Washington, and if necessary, the responsibility for the attack will be assigned to Netanyahu and the Israelis. Donald Trump is seeking diplomacy combined with pressure, engagement with maximum sanctions, negotiation from a superior position, and ul-

timately reaching an agreement that would include the most points for Washington and the least for Tehran.

Etemad: Regional and global competitors

In a note, Etemad discussed Trump's Middle East policy. The paper said: Iran is not the only threat to the United States in the Middle East. China and Russia have extensive interests and influence in West Asia. The reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia hosted and mediated by China is considered an extremely undesirable event for the strategic interests of the West. China has achieved the highest level of influence in the Middle East in the past 4 years. Russia has also been able to establish friendly relations with America's partners. A simple calculation shows that although America's clear focus is on Iran, the Easterners have also united with the Arab friends of America. Beyond the situation mentioned, the strategic alliance between Iran and Russia or the combination of Iran with China in a situation where the Eastern bloc comrades are officially pursuing the "coalition of the deconstruction" is a growing threat to the United States.

Hamshahri: Will India choose Tehran or Washington?

In an analysis of the fate of Chabahar Port and engagement with India, Hamshahri wrote: The Trump administration has decided to revoke the sanctions exemption previously granted to India for developing Chabahar Port in southern Iran. For India, this decision is more than a policy adjustment. It is a geopolitical earthquake. The absence of India in Chabahar could pave the way for greater Chinese involvement; a move that would run counter to Washington's own strategic goals. While the U.S. may achieve short-term gains in isolating Iran, it is alienating key partners like India and undermining regional stability. For India, the path forward requires diplomatic agility and strategic foresight. New Delhi must recalibrate its approach and balance its relations with Washington and Tehran while protecting its regional interests. Chabahar is ultimately more than a port. It is a symbol of India's aspirations for connectivity and influence in a region fraught with challenges.

Turkmenistan's FM visits Tehran to discuss bilateral ties, regional developments



From page 1 ▶ Iran and Turkmenistan share deep-rooted historical and cultural ties, along with a long-standing tradition of economic and political collaboration. Their geographical proximity has fostered a strong partnership, particularly in sectors such as energy, transit, and commerce. Over the past few years, both nations have worked to deepen these ties, exploring new opportunities for cooperation.

The importance of strengthening bilateral relations was further emphasized in a recent phone conversation between Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the National Leader of Turkmenistan. The call, which took place on Monday, focused on reinforcing partnerships in the areas of peace, economic development, and cultural exchange.

During the discussion, Pezeshkian hailed

Turkmenistan's initiative to declare 2025 as the "International Year of Peace and Trust" in the country. He also stressed the need for greater cultural cooperation as a means of strengthening ties between the two nations.

Pezeshkian also underscored the strategic importance of collaboration among Caspian Sea littoral states. He reaffirmed Iran's commitment to regional cooperation and its support for environmental initiatives aimed at preserving the Caspian Sea.

For his part, Berdimuhamedov emphasized the importance of expanding cultural and artistic exchanges, noting that such initiatives could serve as a bridge for deeper understanding between the Iranian and Turkmen people. He reiterated Turkmenistan's commitment to enhancing bilateral relations through shared cultural and historical connections.

Tehran, Riyadh condemn Netanyahu's remarks on forced displacement of Palestinians

From page 1 ▶ Araghchi rejected these proposals as part of a colonial project aimed at dismantling Palestinian statehood. He urged the international community to take immediate action to prevent what he described as a "systematic attempt to erase the Palestinian liberation struggle through Western-backed Israeli aggression."

Iran has proposed holding an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to address this escalating crisis. Araghchi emphasized that regional and international cooperation was crucial to countering the "normalization of genocide and lawlessness by the Israeli regime." He called on Muslim-majority countries and the global community to ensure accountability for Israeli war crimes in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

During their conversation, bin Farhan reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's firm opposition to the forced displacement of Palestinians, dismissing Netanyahu's remarks as "completely unacceptable." The Saudi foreign minister reiterated Riyadh's commitment to Palestinian self-determination.

The Popular Resistance Committees, a coalition of Palestinian Resistance movements, also condemned Trump's remarks, calling them "delusional" and a continuation



of American "arrogance" toward oppressed nations.

"Gaza is not real estate to be bought and sold. It is soaked with the blood of thousands of martyrs and wounded civilians. It will never be for sale and will remain a nightmare for occupiers and tyrants," the group said in a statement.

Hamas spokesperson Abdel-Latif al-Qanouna also rejected Trump's comments, insisting that Gaza is an inseparable part of Palestine and not a commodity to be bargained over. In an interview with Al Jazeera, he reaffirmed that the Palestinian Resistance would continue its struggle, regardless of attempts to displace its people.

Meanwhile, five Arab countries—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Egypt, and Jordan—have formally rejected Trump's plan to relocate Gaza's population. In a letter to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the nations emphasized that any reconstruction of Gaza must involve Palestinian participation and international support, rather than displacement.

Algeria supports Iran's call for Islamic nations' summit

Algeria has welcomed Iran's proposal for an emergency meeting of Islamic nations to address the crisis in Gaza.

During a phone call with Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf, Araghchi provided an update on his consultations with Islamic countries, the OIC secretary general, and the United Nations regarding the ethnic cleansing in Gaza.

He praised Algeria's strong stance in support of Palestinian resistance and self-determination, calling for a unified response from Islamic nations against the forced displacement of Palestinians.

The Algerian foreign minister reaffirmed his country's opposition to any plan that seeks to expel Gaza's residents from their homeland.

Only regional solidarity can counter Israeli expansionist policies: Iran's top general

TEHRAN – Iran's highest-ranking military official has strongly condemned a US-Israeli plan to forcibly displace Palestinians in Gaza, emphasizing that the only effective response to Israel's aggressive policies is regional unity.

Major General Mohammad Baqeri, Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces, made these remarks during a meeting with Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultanate of Oman's Armed Forces.

The meeting took place at the headquarters of Iran's General Staff of the Armed Forces in Tehran on Tuesday, where both sides discussed military cooperation and regional security concerns.

Describing Israel as an "occupying and terrorist regime," General Baqeri warned that the Zionist state's expansionist policies pose a direct threat to regional stability.

"Given the barbaric and expansionist nature of the Zionist regime, the only way to confront this occupying and terrorist regime is through unity and solidarity among the countries of the region,"

he stated.

Baqeri also highlighted the enduring friendship between Iran and Oman, characterizing their relationship as both "historical and continuously developing." While noting that bilateral ties are already "strong and stable," he stressed the need for further expansion given the current geopolitical climate.

A key focus of the discussions was enhancing maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz and the Sea of Oman. Baqeri underscored the importance of collaborative efforts to combat smuggling and ensure the safety of regional waters. To this end, he extended an invitation for Oman to participate in the upcoming Maritime Security Belt naval drills, an exercise aimed at bolstering security cooperation among regional navies.

The Iranian general also emphasized the broad scope of potential military collaboration between the two nations, pointing to opportunities in training, cultural exchange, counter-terrorism, and broader defense cooperation. "There are



numerous areas for military interaction between Iran and Oman, including education, counter-terrorism efforts, and joint military exercises," Baqeri noted.

For his part, Vice Admiral Al Raisi reaffirmed Oman's dedication to promoting stability in the Persian Gulf and broader West Asia, asserting that regional security should remain in the hands of the nations that inhabit it. "The countries of this region are its rightful owners," he stated, while cautioning against external interference.

Al Raisi also acknowledged the deep-rooted ties between Iran

and Oman, emphasizing that their long-standing relationship is built on "mutual trust." He reiterated Oman's commitment to strengthening cooperation with Iran at all levels, particularly in areas that enhance regional security and economic stability.

Al Raisi arrived in Tehran on Monday evening at the official invitation of Major General Baqeri. During his visit, he is scheduled to tour an exhibition showcasing the latest advancements of Iran's Armed Forces and hold meetings with senior Iranian military commanders.

Regional cooperation can help eliminate terrorism on Iran-Pakistan border: analyst

From page 1 ▶ Below is the full text of the interview:

Considering that Pakistan, like Iran, faces the challenge of terrorism, could you provide an overview of the current state of terrorism in Pakistan? Specifically, what are the latest trends in terrorist activities, the number of attacks and casualties, and the most active terrorist groups operating in the country?

Since Pakistan has been a core partner in the Global War on Terrorism, it has paid a heavy price in terms of losses to combat the emerging threats of terrorism. The security situation in Pakistan has deteriorated significantly since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, resulting in a sharp increase in terrorist activities and enhanced cooperation between various terrorist groups.

Currently, the most active terrorist groups operating in Pakistan are Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), and a few new emerging groups. A shift in tactics is evident, with attacks evolving from hit-and-run operations to more targeted ones. In 2024, 95% of terrorist attacks occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with TTP and its allies being the primary perpetrators. These attacks resulted in 852 fatalities and 1,092 casualties, reflecting a 23% increase compared to 2023. Meanwhile, BLA remains the most active group in Balochistan.

A concerning trend is the rise in suicide attacks carried out by the BLA, indicating increased operational collaboration between TTP and BLA. Despite the launch of significant counter-terrorism operations, such as Zarb-e-Azb in 2014 and



Rad-ul-Fasad in 2017, the frequency of attacks continues to rise since August 2021.

In terms of regional activity, BLA along with other BRAS members, remains leading in terrorist activities in Baluchistan, while TTP conducts terrorist activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Given the escalating threat, in June 2024, Pakistan launched a new operation, "Azm-e-Istehkam," signaling that there is no room for dialogue with terrorist organizations like TTP and others, but to silence the barrels through kinetic means.

In Iran, there are terrorist groups like Jaish al-Adl, Jaish al-Nasr, and Jamaat Ansar.

How do these terrorist groups finance their operations, and to what extent do these financial resources enable them to sustain their activities? Is there evidence of external support? If so, which countries or entities are believed to be providing assistance?

Terrorist groups operating in the region appear to receive foreign support, though estab-

lishing a direct link to specific sources is a challenging task due to the multi-layered nature of their funding. Tracing the origin of money is particularly difficult because these groups often use a variety of methods to finance their operations.

Established businesses and charities, often linked to diaspora communities, sometimes funnel funds through remittances. Additionally, the rise of virtual currencies has further complicated the trace of financial resources. Nevertheless, law enforcement agencies have successfully dismantled several funding networks. According to experts, these terrorist groups rely on multiple sources of income, including charities, hawala (informal money transfer systems), extortion, kidnapping, and ransom payments. A significant factor in sustaining these activities is the criminal-terrorist nexus, where there is a quid pro quo relationship between criminal networks and terrorist groups. This symbiotic relationship helps ensure a steady flow of financial resources.

What do you see as the key obstacles preventing closer Iran-Pakistan cooperation in combating border terrorism? Do differences in security priorities—such as Pakistan's focus on groups like TTP or ISIS-Khorasan—hinder joint counterterrorism efforts?

Pakistan is facing a growing internal threat mainly from TTP and BRAS; and is focused on eradicating this emerging threat mainly emanating from Afghanistan since the Taliban take-over. At the same time, coordination does exist between Pakistan and Iran. However, identifying common threats with clarity and increase of intelligence sharing is necessary to mitigate the threat of terrorism in the region and beyond.

Govt. spokeswoman to Tehran Times: Pezeshkian administration united against Trump's bullying

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – Iranian officials and groups across the political spectrum share the view of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who stated last week that Tehran would engage in talks with all countries except the United States. According to Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani talking to the Tehran Times.

"When it comes to potential negotiations with Washington, there certainly is a consensus among officials in Tehran. The president, cabinet members, parliamentarians, and figures in other governmental institutions all agree that engaging with the United States is pointless, just as the Leader recently stated," Mohajerani said during a visit to the Tehran Times building.

The spokeswoman explained that U.S. President Donald Trump's recent actions led officials to this conclusion. "The U.S. president has repeatedly said he wants to strike a deal with Iran. However, his actions contradict his words. He cannot claim to favor diplomacy while simultaneously continuing the so-called 'maximum pressure' campaign."

How Trump made Iran rule out negotiations

In his first Iran-related action since taking office as president for the second time, Trump signed a presidential memorandum renewing the maximum pressure campaign. This campaign was initially launched in 2018 after Trump withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an international agreement limiting Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions removal.

"Maximum pressure" reinstated sanctions that were to be scrapped under the JCPOA, intensified existing ones, and imposed new measures. It sent Iran's economy into a tailspin and strained the finances of ordinary Iranians, but paradoxically forced Tehran to make new headways in its nuclear program and ramp up its activities to unprecedented levels.

President Joe Biden did not walk back the policies Trump had adopted during his first term despite initially promising to return to the Iran nuclear deal. His Secretary of State Antony Blinken even said last year that in addition to maintaining the maximum pressure campaign, Biden imposed hundreds of new sanctions on Iran.

It remains unclear how the new U.S. administration's measures against Iran will mean-



fully differ from those of the past two administrations, as Washington appears to have exhausted its pressure tools against Tehran over the past four and half decades. However, even Trump's largely symbolic memorandum ended up disrupting currency markets in the West Asian country, an event likely to increase inflation, a factor Western nations heavily count on to pressure the government into submission.

In remarks to Fox News, Trump said he wants a new nuclear deal with Iran, adding he prefers that to "bombing the hell" out of the country. The deal he wants is likely similar to the one the U.S. struck with Libya in 2003, which made the African nation dismantle all its nuclear sites and ship off some of the remaining nuclear technologies to the West, according to Israel's envoy to Washington.

Reports indicate Trump also wants Iran to curtail its missile program, cede its long- and medium-range missiles, and sever ties with Resistance forces throughout West Asia.

Mohajerani's remarks to the Tehran Times appeared accurate, given President Masoud Pezeshkian's stance during a Monday speech at a large rally in Tehran on the 46th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. "Trump keeps saying he wants a deal," Pezeshkian stated. "If you want a deal, then what are these idiotic actions? Do you really think we will trust you like this?"

Pezeshkian's words contrasted sharply with his campaign rhetoric from the summer's presidential race. The former lawmaker and health minister often clashed with his conser-

vative rival, Saeed Jalili, who is known among the public for opposing talks with Americans. Pezeshkian had expressed optimism about reaching an agreement with the U.S. during televised debates, even appointing Iran's JCPOA negotiator, Mohammad Javad Zarif, as his Vice President for Strategic Affairs, despite legal challenges surrounding the appointment. However, Trump's intransigence and hostility seem to have dampened the enthusiasm of even the most forgiving Iranian politicians, including Pezeshkian.

What future holds for Iran

Given the low prospects for sanctions removal under current circumstances, analysts are now advising the president to pursue difficult but constructive reforms to mitigate the impact of U.S. sanctions. Pezeshkian himself stated on Monday that he plans to chart a new path with the cooperation of government bodies and the people.

"To be honest, I think sanctions may remain in place even if we agree to all of Trump's demands and make a deal with him," said Amir Ali Abolfath, an expert on North American affairs. "Look at Syria for instance. President Bashar al-Assad is gone and those in power today are close to both the U.S. and Israel. But Washington has not yet lifted the sanctions imposed on the country years ago."

In the same speech where Ayatollah Khamenei ruled out talks with the U.S., he also noted that even Barack Obama, who signed the JCPOA, failed to uphold Washington's commitments. "The U.S. sanctions that were meant to be lifted remained in place," the Leader stated.

How Trump's advisors pull him into a quagmire on Iran

A look at the flawed foundations of MEI's anti-Iran report

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN – The Middle East Institute's (MEI) recent report, "Beyond Maximum Pressure in US Policy on Iran: Leveraging Regional Partners to Contain Iran's Ambitions," presents a skewed and biased narrative that seeks to undermine Iran's geopolitical achievements and propagate a Western-centric agenda.

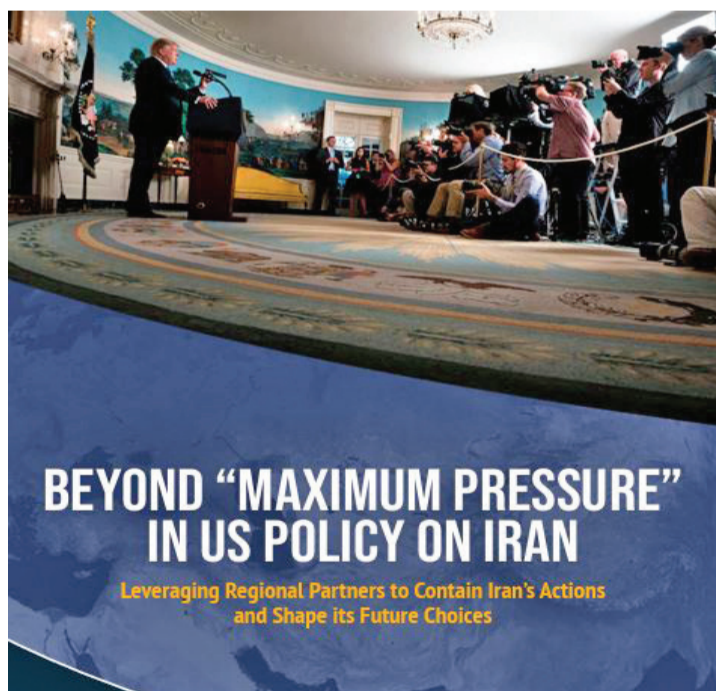
MEI's website attributes the authorship of this article to Brian Katulis, Alex Vatanka, and Patricia Karam, all of whom are affiliated with the think tank.

The Iran-U.S. relationship has become highly strained, especially following President Donald Trump's recent reinstatement of "maximum pressure" on Tehran and his warmongering rhetoric against Iran, one of the world's oldest civilizations.

Lacking a background in politics or studies in geopolitics and history, Trump is said to rely significantly on his advisors for policy decisions, many of whom come from think tanks like MEI, raising the importance of such reports.

In a world shifting toward multipolarity, this report not only misrepresents Iran's strategic role but also acts as a platform for vested interests that have long influenced discussions on West Asian policy.

The MEI report claims that Iran is in its "weakest and most isolated position since 1979," struggling under "unprecedented pressure" to maintain its regional influence.



It advocates for a renewed "maximum pressure" strategy, suggesting that the U.S. leverage regional allies to "redraw the geo-strategic realities of the Middle East [West Asia]."

Among the recommendations are militarized alliances, diplomatic isolation, and interference in Iran's domestic affairs, which may have dangerously influenced the thinking of the Trump administration's policymakers on Iran.

The distorted narrative of Iran's "weakness"

MEI's claim that "The Islamic Republic of Iran is currently in its weakest and most isolated position since the founding of the regime in 1979" is a gross mischar-

acterization. It blatantly overlooks Iran's recent diplomatic wins, such as the 2023 Saudi-Iran normalization agreement, which restored ties with a key regional player and highlighted Tehran's adept maneuvering in complex geopolitical landscapes.

Furthermore, Iran's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS in 2023 underscores its significant role in a multipolar world order, effectively countering Western hegemony.

The report also disregards Iran's critical role in combating ISIS in Iraq and Syria, a contribution acknowledged even by its ad-

versaries.

MEI's characterization of the Axis of Resistance as a liability dismisses its effectiveness in countering U.S.-backed destabilization efforts, ranging from Yemen to Lebanon.

The recent Israeli-Western narrative framing Iran as "weak" is a calculated and sinister ploy to manipulate Western decision-makers.

This portrayal goes beyond advocating for increased pressure; it subtly paves the way for military aggression and potential bombing campaigns, aiming to destabilize Iran further and undermine its legitimate security concerns in a region already fraught with Western-induced chaos.

Such rhetoric dangerously escalates tensions, serving imperialist ambitions rather than genuine peace or even serving the national interest of Western countries.

Hypocrisy of "regional partnerships"

MEI's call for "enhanced security alliances to shape Iran's future choices" reeks of neo-colonialism.

U.S. allies, like the Israeli regime, have sown chaos by waging disastrous wars in Gaza, Yemen, Libya, Iraq, and Syria.

MEI's advocacy for "military coordination" ignores the consequences of U.S. arms sales to Persian Gulf governments which have fueled violence rather than stability.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tractor beat Al Khaldiya at AFC Champions League Two



TEHRAN – Tractor will take a 2-1 lead into the second leg of their AFC Champions League Two 2024/25 Round of 16 meeting with Bahrain's Al Khaldiya SC next week after the side from Iran fought back to claim a narrow victory in Riffa on Tuesday.

Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh and Domagoj Drozdek struck for the side from Tabriz in the 50th and 55th minutes respectively after Mohamed Al Romaihi had given the hosts a 48th minute lead in a tense clash.

Beiranvand denied Dhurgham Ismael's attempt to level the scores for the hosts with four minutes remaining and Al Gharbaly was on hand to stop the Iranians from claiming a third through Mehdi Hashemnejad soon after to leave the tie finely poised.

The pair meet again in Tabriz's Sahand Stadium next Tuesday.

Sepahan to meet Persepolis in Hazfi Cup Round of 16

TEHRAN – The draw for the 2025 Iran Hazfi Cup Round of 16 has set the stage for some thrilling encounters, with the highlight being a colossal clash between defending champions Sepahan and Persepolis at the Naghsh-e Jahan Stadium.

This match promises to be a high-octane affair, pitting two of Iran's most popular and successful teams against each other for a coveted spot in the quarterfinals.

Sepahan, known for their passionate home support, will be looking to leverage their advantage at the home stadium. However, Persepolis, always formidable opponents, will be keen to silence the home crowd and advance in the competition.

In another significant fixture, Shams Azar will host Esteghlal. The Blues have recently parted ways with Pitsos Mosimane, and the team are now headed by Sohrab Bakhtiarizadeh.

Esteghlal and Persepolis are the most decorated teams in Iran's Hazfi Cup, each having won seven titles.

Iranian swimmer Safaei wins gold at Tokyo event

TEHRAN – Mohammad Parsa Safaei won the gold medal in the 50m butterfly event for the 16-17 age category at the 55th Tokyo Swimming Center Invitational Swimming Competition.

He crossed the line with a time of 24.95 seconds.

The tournament has brought 366 clubs around the world in Tokyo.

Gholizadeh among Players to Watch at 2025 AFCU20

TEHRAN – The AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2025 kicks off on Wednesday with 16 teams vying for the coveted title and Iran's Esmail Gholizadeh

is among the Players to Watch.

As the countdown to the kick-off gathers pace, the-AFC.com highlights one player to watch per team.

The midfielder netted three goals as Iran cruised through qualifying with a perfect nine points. Gholizadeh will be pivotal to Iran's bid to land the title.

Iran is scheduled to play Indonesia at the Shenzhen Youth Football Training Base Centre Stadium in Shenzhen on Thursday.

Ronaldo not to come to Tehran: report

TEHRAN – Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr football team will give their main players a rest in the match against Persepolis in the 2024-25 AFC Champions League Elite.

The Iranian team is scheduled to host Al Nassr on February 17 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

The media reports suggest that Cristiano Ronaldo will not come to Tehran for the match.

Persepolis must defeat Al Nassr to advance to the knockout stage, and now with this decision by Stefano Pioli, Italian coach of Al Nassr, the Iranian team has more chance to keep its hope alive.

Sports minister Donyamali meets Armenia ambassador to Tehran

TEHRAN – Ahmad Donyamali, the Minister of Sports and Youth, hosted Grigor Hakobyan, the Ambassador of Armenia in Tehran, in a meeting aimed at enhancing sports exchanges between Iran and Armenia.

Ahmad Donyamali welcomed the Armenian ambassador in the ministry's headquarters on Tuesday.

"Iran and Armenia have maintained a close and positive relationship over the four decades since the Islamic Revolution. However, despite this warm connection, the level of communication and exchanges between our two countries has not been very notable. Given this, we are eager to establish new collaborations in the fields of sports and youth with Armenia," Donyamali said.

He expressed that the Ministry of Sports in Iran aims to leverage the relative strengths of Armenian national teams in certain sports.

"We are interested in utilizing Armenia's advantages in sports such as chess, boxing, rowing, gymnastics, winter sports, and shooting, where they have greater potential compared to us. We can also create conditions to officially sign cooperation agreements between the sports federations of our two countries. Since Iran and Armenia are geographically close and there are no visa issues between us, we can organize joint training camps for our national athletes," he added.

Esteghlal confirm negotiations with Walter Mazzarri

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football club have confirmed that they are negotiating with Italian coach Walter Mazzarri.

Farideh Shojaei, a member of the club's board of directors commented on the negotiations with Mazzarri.

Esteghlal parted ways with Pitsos Mosimane in late January and is currently headed by Sohrab Bakhtiarizadeh.

The club have initiated negotiations with the Italian tactician.

Mazzarri, previously linked with Esteghlal's arch-rival Persepolis, managed Napoli in the 2023-2024 season but did not achieve significant success.

"We are closely monitoring the negotiations to ensure the contract has no issues. A thorough review of the details takes time, but we're committed to a smooth process," she said.

Iran to showcase export capabilities at Eurasia exhibition

TEHRAN – Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) head announced that the upcoming Eurasia International Exhibition has garnered strong interest from member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), particularly Russia.

According to TPO's public relations office, Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi emphasized that the event aims to attract business delegations and traders from EAEU countries.

"Iran maintains strong political ties with EAEU member states and has also expanded its economic relations through a free trade agreement and observer status in the union," he said.

He highlighted the significant participation of Iranian companies in the exhibition, stating that Iranian manufacturers will showcase their export-oriented capabilities alongside companies from EAEU countries.

Dehnavi noted that extensive planning has been carried out to facilitate the presence of trade delegations from these nations, allowing them to gain a better understanding of Iranian products and expertise. Responding to a question on the number of participating delegations, he said the event's organizer—appointed by TPO—has begun reviewing participant lists.

"What is clear is that promising developments are underway, and trade delegations, particularly from Russia, have expressed their readiness to attend," he added.

The Eurasia Exhibition is scheduled to take place from February 21 to 24 at Tehran's Permanent International Fairgrounds. Official invitations have been sent to deputy ministers of trade and industry of EAEU member states via their respective embassies.

The value of Iran's foreign trade with member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) reached \$2.704 billion in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 – December 21, 2024), according to the head of Iran's Customs Administration (IRICA).

Forud Asgari, speaking to IRNA's economic correspondent, provided details on Iran's exports and imports with EAEU countries. He stated that Iran's exports to the EAEU amounted to approximately \$1.494 billion, reflecting a 20.79 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

He added that the weight of exports during this period was estimated at 3.857 million tons, marking a 21.69 percent rise year-on-year.

Russia, Armenia, and Kazakhstan were the primary destinations for Iran's exports.

Asgari noted that Iran imported goods worth \$1.209 billion from the five EAEU member states in the nine-month period, a 19.16 percent decrease compared to \$1.495 billion in the same period last year.

Iran needs \$4b to expand maritime fleet: IDRO

TEHRAN – Iran requires approximately \$4.0 billion in funding to develop its maritime fleet, a senior official at the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) said, adding that negotiations are underway to produce specialized steel for shipbuilding.

Mohammad Esmaili, head of IDRO's Marine Industries Department, stated that meeting all of Iran's fleet expansion needs would require an investment of \$3.0 billion to \$4.0 billion over a 10-year period to fully utilize domestic capabilities.

"So far, no funds have been allocated by the government for this sector," Esmaili said. "IDRO has drafted the financial model for the plan and is in talks with the Planning and Budget Organization to secure the necessary resources."

He added that allocating these funds could create between 36,000 and 37,000 direct and indirect jobs, including positions at shipbuilding yards and onboard vessels.

Regarding the domestic shipbuilding industry's capabilities and the impact of sanctions, Esmaili noted that no shipyard claims to source all ship components domestically. He emphasized the need to strengthen and integrate Iran's shipbuilding supply chain.

"For instance, we are negotiating with a local company to start producing the specialized marine-grade steel required for shipbuilding," he said.



The weight of imports stood at 1.626 million tons, representing a significant 45.3 percent decline year-on-year.

Russia accounted for the majority of Iran's imports, with a value of approximately \$1 billion and a weight of 1.491 million tons. Kyrgyzstan had the smallest share in Iran's imports.

The Eurasian Economic Union, an intergovernmental economic bloc, comprises Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia, with Uzbekistan, Moldova, and Cuba as observer members.

The EAEU was established in 2014, and its most recent summit was held in early January in St. Petersburg, Russia, where members approved Iran's observer status in the bloc.

Iran and EAEU have recently strengthened their economic ties by signing a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This agreement, finalized on December 25, 2023, aims to eliminate customs duties on nearly 90 percent of goods traded between Iran and EAEU member states, significantly enhancing trade flows and economic cooperation.

The FTA builds upon a prior interim agreement that had been in place since October 2019, which covered a limited range of 360 commodity items. The new agreement expands this scope considerably, with expectations to boost total trade to \$18-20 billion over the next five to seven years. Notably, Iran's average import tariff, previously at 30 percent, will be reduced to 4.5 percent, resulting in annual savings of approximately \$380 million in duties. Similarly, tariffs on Iranian goods entering EAEU markets will decrease from an average of 6.6 percent to 0.8 percent.

The EAEU views this agreement as a strategic move to deepen economic integration with Iran. The FTA is anticipated to come into effect in early 2025, following the finalization and communication of the agreement by the end of January 2025.

This development is part of a broader effort by both Iran and the EAEU to enhance regional economic cooperation and reduce trade barriers. The agreement is expected to facilitate increased market access, diversify export portfolios, and strengthen economic resilience amid global economic challenges.

Esmaili highlighted that the modernization and development of Iran's fleet require government-backed financing tailored to the maritime industry. One key aspect of the plan involves consolidating demand and cooperating with local manufacturers.

Currently, locally produced components make up about 30 percent of Iranian vessels. For smaller vessels, this figure rises to 50-60 percent. The plan aims to increase the domestic production share of some equipment to 70-90 percent and propulsion systems to 50 percent.

According to the official, the initiative would provide long-term employment, boost cargo transportation capacity, and help Iran reclaim its lost market share in international shipping, particularly in bunkering and fuel supply. It would also enhance the country's fishing industry, increase domestic manufacturing depth, and facilitate technology transfer.

Iran's maritime fleet includes commercial, service, tourism, and fishing vessels, with nearly 1,000 Iranian-flagged ships.

Esmaili noted that Iran operates around 200 commercial vessels transporting exports and imports, including oil and essential goods. Due to sanctions, Iranian companies have struggled to upgrade their fleets, often forced to purchase vessels at inflated prices or lease them at high costs.

Tehran, Ashgabat emphasize expansion of gas cooperation

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, the chairman of the People's Council of Turkmenistan, have underscored the importance of strengthening gas cooperation and promoting peace and trust in the region.

As Shana reported, Pezeshkian, in a phone call with Berdimuhamedow, commended Turkmenistan's initiative to designate 2025 as the "Year of Peace and Trust." He expressed hope for the establishment of peace, friendship, and stability in the region and across the world, emphasizing that the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes cooperation with Turkmenistan and other nations to achieve this goal.

Pezeshkian also thanked the National Leader of the Turkmen People for inviting him to the "Peace and Trust" conference in the country. He highlighted the deep-rooted cultural ties between Iran and Turkmenistan and expressed Iran's desire to expand cultural cooperation between the two nations.

The Iranian president stressed the significance of collaboration among Caspian Sea littoral states, stating that Iran supports enhanced regional cooperation to secure mutual interests and protect the environment.

Berdimuhamedow, for his part, congratulated Iran on the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and wished success for its government and people. He reiterated his invitation for Pezeshkian to attend the "Peace and Trust" conference in Turkmenistan and called for joint efforts to deepen peace and friendship in the region and beyond.

The Turkmen leader also advocated for stronger bilateral cooperation in transportation, energy, and gas swaps. He emphasized



the importance of regularly convening the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Committee, noting that it plays a crucial role in strengthening economic ties.

Highlighting the shared cultural heritage of the two nations, Berdimuhamedow called for expanded cultural and artistic exchanges between Iran and Turkmenistan.

The value of Iran's export to Turkmenistan increased 14.6 percent in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21, 2024) compared to the same period in the previous year, according to the spokesman of the International Relations and Trade Development Committee of Iran's House of Industry, Mining and Trade Ruhollah Latifi.

Ruhollah Latifi has said that Iran exported 702,000 tons of commodities worth \$239.879 million to Turkmenistan in the six-month period, which was also 12.1 percent more than the previous year in terms of weight, IRIB reported.

Agricultural and food products, medicine, household appliances, construction materials, electrical appliances, industrial equipment, plastic, consumer goods, and ma-

chinery were among the goods exported to Turkmenistan in the mentioned period, Latifi said.

Based on customs data, Iran also imported 10,000 tons of goods valued at \$12,285,660 in the first half of the current Iranian year, and the main imported goods were textiles, cloth, and yarn.

According to the official, Iran exported 1.359 million tons of commodities worth \$445.17 million to Turkmenistan in the previous Iranian calendar year, most of which were agricultural and dairy products.

Last year, more than 38,000 tons of goods valued at \$38.657 million were also imported from Turkmenistan, he added.

Turkmenistan's total imports in 2023 stood at about \$3.5 billion, of which the Islamic Republic of Iran's share was \$445 million. According to Latifi, Iran accounted for about 12.5 percent of Turkmenistan's market share in 2023.

Back in August 2024, customs officials from Iran and Turkmenistan agreed to enhance customs cooperation and also the volume of the trade exchanges between the two countries.

In a meeting held between the

former Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mohammad Rezvanifar and the Chairman of the State Customs Service of Turkmenistan Maksat Khudaikulyev in Tehran, the two sides emphasized expanding and broadening cooperation in various fields.

In this meeting, the IRICA head expressed his satisfaction with the increase in the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries and stated that Iran and Turkmenistan exchanged 14 million tons of products, valued at \$450 million in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023 to March 20, 2024).

Rezvanifar pointed out that bilateral meetings between the traders and officials of the two countries will play an effective role in increasing the volume of trade between the two sides and called for setting up such meetings.

The chairman of the State Customs Service of Turkmenistan, for his part, welcomed the development of trade exchanges between the two countries in recent years, adding that the trade volume between Iran and Turkmenistan is on an upward trajectory.

Maksat Khudaikulyev called for the exchange of experiences and the development of educational-training cooperation between the customs of the two countries, an offer that was welcomed by the head of Iran's customs chief.

The borders of the two countries have great potential and Turkmenistan Customs Office is ready to provide customs services at Sarakhs border crossing around the clock, he stressed.

During the meeting, the two sides decided to hold expert-level meetings between the two countries within the next month.

'Unblocking Iran's frozen funds key to strengthening ties with South Korea'



TEHRAN – A senior South Korean diplomat said resolving the issue of Iran's frozen assets in South Korea has been a key factor in enhancing bilateral relations, along with high-level visits and diplomatic engagements between the two countries.

Speaking at an event in Seoul marking the 46th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Chang Ki-yong, South Korea's Deputy Foreign Minister for Climate Change, highlighted the improvement in Tehran-Seoul relations over the past two years.

He pointed to the release of Iran's blocked funds, meetings between the two countries' foreign ministers on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, and official visits to Tehran as milestones in bilateral ties.

The ceremony, held on February 10, was attended by Iranian Ambassador to South Korea Saeed Kouzechi, Chang Kwan-young, Director-General for West Asia and North Africa at South Korea's Foreign Ministry, as well as foreign diplomats, cultural figures, and jour-

nalists. In his remarks, Ambassador Kouzechi emphasized Iran's commitment to an independent foreign policy, recalling the Iranian people's struggle against all challenges.

He said Iran's scientific and technological achievements were a testament to national resilience and unity.

He reiterated Iran's "neighborhood-first" policy and its engagement with international organizations such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and the D-8 group. Iran, he said, remains committed to regional peace and security through dialogue and cooperation.

The envoy also stressed that combating terrorism and opposing U.S. sanctions are central to Iran's foreign policy strategy.

He underscored Iran's vision of fostering balanced political, economic, and cultural relations with all nations while prioritizing de-escalation and collective security.

13 new CNG stations to be launched across Iran

TEHRAN – National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) announced the launch of 13 new CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) stations across the country on Tuesday, Feb. 11.

Saeed Rahman Salari, the project manager for CNG at NIOPDC, stated that the company has now established a total of 2,360 CNG stations nationwide, IRNA reported.

He added that 4.4 million vehicles have been converted to run

on CNG, and a total of 117 billion cubic meters of CNG has been distributed in Iran so far.

Salari emphasized that over 90 percent of the country's taxis and 50 percent of pickup trucks are now equipped with CNG engines.

He also noted that the country's daily gasoline consumption stands at 124 million liters, but without the use of CNG-powered vehicles, this figure would rise to 143 million liters.

He concluded that the launch of these new CNG stations will prevent the consumption of 126 million liters of gasoline annually.

Expanding the use of compressed natural gas in Iran could save 20 million liters of gasoline annually within three years, according to Ali Mahmoodian, head of the National Association of Alternative Fuels and Related Services.

Speaking at the national conference "Green Prosperity: Ener-

gy Innovations and Clean Transportation" in last December, Mahmoodian emphasized that increasing CNG usage would significantly reduce the need for gasoline imports and address energy challenges.

"CNG currently accounts for 17 percent of the country's fuel mix, which is inadequate for a natural gas-producing nation with the infrastructure capacity to supply 50 million cubic meters daily," he said.

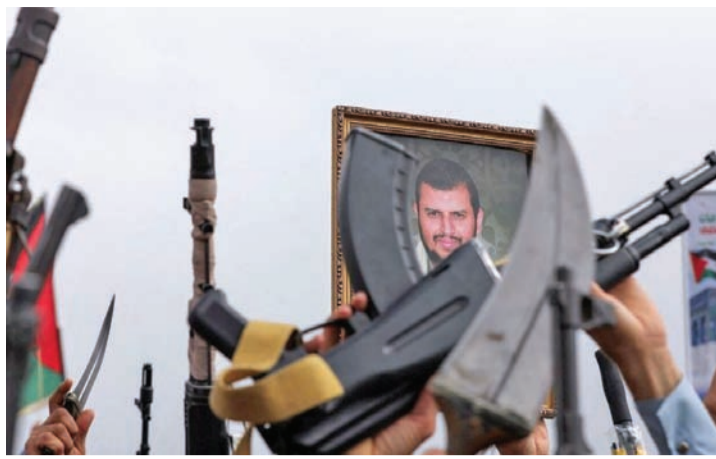
Ansarullah warns Israel Yemeni army's "hand on the trigger"

TEHRAN - Leader of Yemen's Ansarullah movement Abdul Malik Al-Houthi has warned that the country's army is prepared to launch attacks on Israel if the regime resumes strikes on Gaza.

In a televised address, he cautioned Israel regarding the potential consequences of violating a ceasefire with Hamas which took effect on January 19, stating "our hand is on the trigger".

The warning comes after US President Donald Trump said on Monday that Hamas should release all captives held by the resistance group in Gaza by midday Saturday or he would propose canceling the ceasefire and "let hell break out."

Soon after Israel launched war on Gaza in October 2023, the Ye-



meni army began firing missiles and drones toward Israel in solidarity with Palestinians in the enclave. It also hit Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea.

The Ansarullah movement has paused attacks against Israel

The Ansarullah leader warned that the Arab world's inaction over Gaza is further fueling Washington's ambitions in the West Asia region.

He called on Arab nations to maintain a firm stance against any plans for the forced displacement of Palestinians.

He added Washington's approach threatens the stability of the entire region "without exception".

He was referring to Trump's repeated calls to forcibly displace Palestinians in Gaza.

Trump has floated the idea for the United States to take control of Gaza and relocate its population to countries such as Egypt and Jordan. His plan has caused an international backlash.

after the implementation of the truce deal.

Al-Houthi also condemned Arab nations for their disunity on the Palestinian issue, accusing them of aligning with the US agenda.

Firing blanks: Trump's ultimatum demands hell freeze over

From page 1 ▶ "As far as I'm concerned, if all of the hostages aren't returned by Saturday at 12 o'clock - I think it's an appropriate time - I would say, cancel it and all bets are off and let hell break out," he said.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, Trump added, "I'd say they ought to be returned by 12 o'clock on Saturday, and if they're not returned - all of them, not in drips and drabs, not two and one and three and four and two. Saturday at 12 o'clock, and after that, I would say, all hell is going to break out."

Trump's warning came after Hamas accused Israel of violating the ceasefire deal threatening to delay the release of more captives planned for Saturday "until further notice".

"These violations include delaying the return of displaced persons to northern Gaza, targeting them with shelling and gunfire in various areas of the Gaza Strip, and failing to allow the entry of relief materials in all forms as agreed upon. Meanwhile, the resistance has fulfilled all its obligations," Abu Obeida, the spokesman for the Qassam Brigades, wrote on X.

Hamas has freed 21 captives since the first phase of the January ceasefire deal went into force. In exchange, more than 700 Palestinians have walked free from Israeli jails.

The three-phase ceasefire is expected to lead to the release of all captives and the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza. It should ultimately pave the way for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip which has been devastated during Israel's war on Gaza.

Israel launched war on Gaza on October 7, 2023, shortly after Hamas carried out a



President Donald Trump said the January ceasefire should be canceled if Hamas doesn't release all captives by midday on Saturday.

surprise military operation in southern Israel dubbed the Al-Aqsa Storm. More than 1,100 people were killed and about 250 others were taken captive during the Hamas operation. Hamas freed over 100 captives following a weeklong truce agreement in November 2023.

In light of the anticipated release of additional captives, Trump stunned the world with his controversial remarks in a meeting with Netanyahu at the White House earlier this month.

He floated the idea for the United States to take control of the Gaza Strip and demanded Palestinians leave the territory.

"The US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it too," Trump said during a joint press conference alongside the Israeli premier on February 4.

He had also suggested the option of sending American troops to Gaza to implement his plan; however, he later stated that

such action is unnecessary.

At the weekend, Trump doubled down on his proposal to depopulate Gaza.

"I think that it's a big mistake to allow people - the Palestinians, or the people living in Gaza - to go back yet another time, and we don't want Hamas going back. And think of it as a big real estate site, and the United States is going to own it and we'll slowly - very slowly, we're in no rush - develop it. We're going to bring stability to the Middle East soon," he said on Sunday.

Trump who helped broker the January ceasefire with Egypt and Jordan, is now urging Israel to pull out of the deal.

Since the implementation of the ceasefire, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who had been internally displaced have returned to their homes, in particular to the north of the enclave.

Hamas has also displayed its military strength by pouring cold water on Israel's claims about dismantling the movement's capabilities during more than 15 months of war on Gaza.

Netanyahu had repeatedly vowed to continue the Gaza war until eliminating Hamas and securing the release of captives. But he ultimately signed the ceasefire as he failed to meet his military objectives.

Trump's call on Israel to back out of the ceasefire is in line with his plan to forcibly displace Palestinians and ethnically cleanse Gaza.

Trump's ultimatum for releasing captives amounts to holding resistance fighters' feet to the fire in a desperate attempt to develop his scheme. He can achieve his goals through threats but only if pigs can fly.

Trump is making a mockery of MAGA so far...

By Martin Love

NORTH CAROLINA - Iranians honestly must count themselves lucky to be Iranians. And all the rest of the world lucky not to be American with citizens stuck in an "empire" that is decaying and dying and has done little real good in decades for the planet and humanity generally.

This death of a sordid empire is being done not by alleged enemies of the U.S. but by Washington itself no matter what political party is marginally in charge. And Washington has no clue who its "enemies" really are! Iran has never been an "enemy" and has tried mightily, some Americans at least see, to mend relations with the U.S., but even so Iran has also stood up for justice like in Palestine and for decades against ill and misguided treatment by the U.S. and its allies. We have learned recently, for one thing, that the U.S. has spent billions via the USAID agency seeding the entire world with bought "journalists" spouting empire propaganda. A free mainstream press in the U.S.? That is a huge

joke. Leaders condemning and threatening Iran in Washington, for example, for Iran's efforts to castrate Apartheid bloody cancerous Israel are insane. Little do they know that they lose credibility weekly, that they are chipping away at U.S. hegemonies across the globe. What we see now in America or in Washington is absolute desperation to MAGA, but the entire Trump project is doomed to fail because it's bellicose, based on power projection and stupidity, with not a sliver of what really counts: morality.

Personally, like it or not and no objection to it here, the simple policy of mandating hijab in Iran is seized upon in the West but especially in the U.S. as some sort of crime. One must ask: is that mostly all the West has to gripe about regarding Iran's social policies? When free speech, a cornerstone of the U.S. Constitution, is being eviscerated and in parts of Europe, too, including in Ukraine where Zelensky is the fool of fools?

And Trump has the gall to glorify sending the MOAB bomb to Israel, and its 11 tons of ex-

plodes, equivalent to a small nuclear bomb in destructive yield. (Yet I am reminded by a friend of Iran, Philip Giraldo, for decades a CIA hire but retired now, that Israel does not have an aircraft capable of delivering this bomb.) Which begs the question: is an American aircraft going to deliver it someday onto Palestinians, or onto Iran? Did Trump threaten Iran by giving this bomb to Israel as a substitute for Zionist nukes? It seems so. Because if the Zionists ever did drop a nuke anywhere, somehow it would destroy a decaying Israel, too. And Mr. Moab might accomplish the same end result at enormous costs to innocent lives.

Biden was a disaster, and Trump is, too, even though he is trying to reduce the red ink, to dent the profligacy in what is or will eventually prove to be U.S. bankruptcy no matter what Trump does. Trump is fast turning Washington into a dictatorship, not a democratic republic, and mostly on Israel's behalf.

Students of history know this much: All dying empires follow the same path. The Roman

Empire is a good example and the U.S. is showing the same diseases: Buffoonery, deep corruption, costly military adventures, economic decay headed to economic collapse and wild state repression of average people. We feel these things in the U.S. even while Trump's MAGA plan allegedly aims to reverse these ills even while, at the same time, it is exemplifying them on steroids. And again, this is evident because there is NO sensibility in the MAGA plan that includes justice and morality on a wide scale. Were Trump and the bizarre minions in his administration also aiming to throttle back the Zionists as a core principle, and they are not, Trump's Presidency would likely blossom into the best since World War 2 and Trump would become a Nobel laureate and be feted across humanity as one super leader. And America would be freed from the curse of Zionists and in fact the entire world, too, with huge rewards both economic and in its foreign relations. That's what a real MAGA effort simply constitutes.

Hamas: The language of threats has no value

US President Donald Trump must remember that the only way to bring home Israeli captives is to respect the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said.

"Trump must remember that there is an agreement that must be respected by both parties, and this is the only way to bring back the prisoners. The language of threats has no

value and only complicates matters," he told Reuters.

Trump has warned Palestinians that "hell will break loose" if Israeli captives are not released on Saturday as scheduled under the ceasefire.

Hamas has postponed the release of captives, accusing Israel of violating the ceasefire's terms.

Syria's al-Sharaa: Trump's Gaza plan a 'serious crime' that is bound to fail

Syria's transitional President Ahmed al-Sharaa has said Donald Trump's plan to displace Palestinians and take over Gaza is a "serious crime that will ultimately fail".

"I believe no power can drive people from their land. Many countries have tried to do it and they have all failed, especially during the recent war in Gaza over the past year and a

half," the leader of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group said in an interview with a British podcast.

"Over 80 years of this conflict, all attempts to displace them have failed; those who left have regretted their decision. The Palestinian lesson that every generation has learned is the importance of holding on to their land."

Why do US proxies accuse Hezbollah of implementing 'Iranian occupation' agenda?

From page 1 ▶ Hezbollah then did not announce the name of martyr Ahmad Qasir until after the liberation of the southern town of Deir Qanoun al-Nahr in April 1985 to avoid possible retaliation against his family by the enemy as the city was under the occupation regime's control.

Later, Hezbollah escalated its operations to confirm that the expulsion of the Palestinian resistance leaders from Lebanon to Tunisia did not achieve the goal of ending the resistance in Lebanon.

Israel realized that religious scholars played a major role in mobilizing the people, so it assassinated Sheikh Ragheb Harb on February 16, 1984. 9 months later, it assassinated Sayyed Abdul Latif al-Amin too.

However, Hezbollah's operations continued until Israel was forced to withdraw from Sidon, Tyre, Nabatieh, and the Western Bekaa district, leaving a buffer zone of about 1,100 km² (55% of southern Lebanon's area and 11% of Lebanon's general area).

On the first anniversary of Sheikh Ragheb's martyrdom, Hezbollah's Open Letter was announced, which embodies its ideological, social, and political constants.

At the time, Hezbollah faced Shiite-Shiite skirmishes with the Amal Movement fueled by foreign parties. Unfortunately, the fighting lasted for about 18 months. It ended on November 9, 1990, to ushers an ongoing alliance aka the Shiite duo.

In 1992, by the end of Lebanon's civil war and the reactivation of constitutional institutions, Hezbollah contested the elections securing a parliamentary bloc consisting of 12 MPs.

Then, the anti-resistance political forc-

es believed that Hezbollah would gradually lay down arms in the hope of political gains; strikingly, the resistance operations surged.

The anti-resistance team was deluded that Hezbollah's involvement in politics was to maintain authoritarian gains.

Nevertheless, Hezbollah's main goal was to meet the needs of the marginalized classes it represents and to constitutionally protect the resistance project by participating in successive governments and drafting ministerial statements that guarantee the right to resistance against "Israel".

This angered the Zionist enemy, so it assassinated Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Abbas al-Mousawi in February 1992, thinking that assassinating the head of the pyramid would end the resistance.

The election of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah as his successor moved Hezbollah to a stage in which its capabilities -locally, regionally and internationally - accumulated.

On July 25, 1993, a US-led Israeli aggression was launched against Lebanon in a bid to "pressure the Lebanese government to end Hezbollah's activity" according to what Shimon Peres said but the effectiveness of Hezbollah's Katyusha rockets rapidly forced it to retreat.

In the aftermath of the notorious Sharm el-Sheikh summit in support of Israel on March 13, 1996, another US-led Israeli aggression was launched on April 11, 1996.

The US-Israeli enemy was surprised once again by the development of Hezbollah's capabilities which forced it to retreat after 16 days.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israeli occupation 'expands' in Syria

From page 1 ▶ The presence of the Israeli military sparked panic among local residents, particularly as incursions expanded and Israeli patrols increased throughout the Quneitra countryside and Mount Hermon.

This comes just days after residents of another village in Quneitra rejected any aid from the Israeli occupation forces, firmly stating that they would not accept assistance from an entity that occupies their land.

Locals told regional news agencies that Israeli occupation soldiers enter and exit the village more than ten times a day, conducting home searches and instilling fear among women and children.

Quneitra is viewed as a crucial region in Israeli territorial ambitions, particularly after the downfall of the previous Syrian government in December 2024.

Its strategic location and proximity to key borders make it vital for the regime's broader geopolitical objectives.

The region sits next to the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights and stretches down to the capital Damascus, encompassing its countryside and extending to a neighboring province bordering Jordan. Its geographic positioning makes it strategically significant.

The Israeli military captured the entire Golan Heights and destroyed over 80 percent of Syria's military assets following the overthrow of the Assad government. This marked a significant shift in the balance of power between Syria and its longtime enemy.

The new rulers in Damascus have shown no resistance to Israeli expansion and the ongoing occupation of Syrian territory, allowing Israeli control to solidify without opposition.

Earlier this month, The Washington Post reported that the Israeli army is constructing a series of permanent military settlements in several Syrian villages under its occupation, further entrenching its control over the region.

Saudi ambassador lauds Isfahan as a top travel destination



TEHRAN - The Saudi ambassador to Iran, Abdullah bin Saud Al-Anzi, has highlighted the significant tourism potential of Isfahan, describing it as a city with vast cultural and historical attractions for international visitors.

During his visit to Isfahan's pavilion at the 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition, Al-Anzi praised the rich cultural and artistic heritage of Isfahan and the hospitality of its people.

The envoy stated, "Iran, and particularly Isfahan, has enormous tourism capacities that can attract global travelers. Due to its historical background, unique architecture, and distinctive cultural atmosphere, this city has always been one of the most important tourist destinations in the region."

Al-Anzi further emphasized that Isfahan has long been recognized as a symbol of Iranian civilization and culture.

Its presence at the Tehran tourism exhibition underscores its vital role in the growth of the industry. "Many international tourists consider Isfahan one of the most valuable destinations in Iran," he added.

Saudi Arabia's focus on tourism development

The ambassador also pointed to Saudi Arabia's strategic focus on expanding its tourism sector and strengthening regional interactions. He noted, "In recent years, Saudi Arabia has placed a strong emphasis on developing its tourism sector and enhancing engagement with neighboring countries, making it one of its top priorities."

However, he acknowledged that despite the extensive potential for tourism collaboration between Iran and Saudi Arabia, no comprehensive plan has yet been established to formalize these interactions.

Prospects for future cooperation

Al-Anzi's visit to the exhibition signals the mutual interest of both nations in fostering tourism ties. Given the growing trend of regional cooperation and the emphasis on tourism as a strategic industry, experts anticipate that specific initiatives will be developed to enhance Iran-Saudi Arabia tourism relations in the future. The four-day tourism fair provides a platform for tourism professionals to exchange ideas and explore opportunities for collaboration in advancing the regional tourism sector.

Spain's Calvia Unleashes Bold Tourism Overhaul, Elevating Luxury Travel

Calvia, a prominent town in Mallorca's western region, has launched an ambitious tourism transformation initiative set to reshape the destination by 2027. With a €20 million investment, the town is focusing on upgrading infrastructure and enhancing its appeal to high-spending international visitors. Regional authorities anticipate that this investment will grow as additional projects are approved.

Major Redevelopment Projects Underway

One of the most significant developments is the overhaul of Magaluf's Promenade, a key attraction for visitors. The €3.9 million renovation—funded by European grants and the Balearic Islands Tourism Strategy Agency (AETIB)—will modernize a 650-meter stretch, with completion set for May to minimize disruptions during peak travel seasons.

Meanwhile, the transformation of the Bulevar de Peguera is progressing with a €4.15 million budget. Supported by Next Generation funds (€2 million), the Consell de Mallorca (€750,000), and local government (€1.4 million), the project will unfold in two phases during the winter periods of

2025–2026 and 2026–2027, ensuring a seamless tourist experience.

Another critical infrastructure upgrade includes the €5.4 million refurbishment of Avenida Rei Jaume I in Santa Ponca, a joint investment by the Balearic and central governments. The project is scheduled for completion between 2024 and 2025.

Additionally, efforts to enhance natural spaces and pedestrian accessibility are gaining momentum. Next Generation funds have allocated €600,000 to renaturalize Tora Beach, while €6 million is earmarked for improving pavements and walkways, with a 2025 completion target.

Spain's Mallorca Shifts Focus to Elite Tourism

Calvia's redevelopment aligns with a broader goal of attracting high-net-worth travelers and extending the tourism season beyond summer. The town's authorities are keen on luring affluent visitors from the United States, Australia, and South Korea, particularly in prime locations such as Bendenat, Portals Nous, and Illetes.

(Source: *The Travel and Tourism World*)

Echoes of Iran



Bowl with radial design of ibex horns, ceramic and paint, excavated from Iran, ca. 4500–4100 BC, being kept at the Metropolitan Museum of Art
Diameter: 7.38 in. (18.75 cm); Height: 4.00 in. (10.16 cm)

Tehran tourism fair opens with great enthusiasm

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN - The 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition opened this morning amid a diverse crowd of high-ranking officials, business leaders, travel enthusiasts, and avid visitors.

The grand opening ceremony was attended by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his tourism minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, alongside tens of foreign diplomats and representatives from the travel industry.

Pezeshkian underscored in the opening ceremony of the tourism fair the necessity of fostering tourism and strengthening ties with friendly and neighboring countries.

"Only in peace and harmony can we truly host and welcome each other," he said. "Anyone visiting Iran is our esteemed guest. By the grace of God, we have close and deep relations with all our neighbors, and we will continue this closeness."

Moreover, the Iranian president criticized the spread of false narratives about Iran, saying, "If people come and see for themselves, they will realize that what is said against Iran from certain tribunes is untrue. Iran has a friendly, loving, and humane people. Every corner of Iran is full of friendliness and harmony, and Iranian hospitality is exemplary."

Salehi-Amiri, for his part, emphasized Iran's commitment to strengthening the travel industry. Iran has a wealth of cultural and natural attractions that deserve global recognition.

This exhibition is a step toward attracting more tourists and fostering cooperation among travel businesses, the minister underlined.

Salehi-Amiri referred to all tourism sector stakeholders, including investors, hoteliers, travel agencies, and ecotourism operators, as pillars of Iran's tourism industry. He stated that the ancient land possesses vast tourism potential and encompasses all types of tourism worldwide.

Moreover, the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts highlighted various tourism capacities in Iran, including religious, natural, and rural ecotourism, maritime, agricultural, historical, and cultural tourism. He added that ecotourism, as an emerging attraction, introduces tourists to local culture, lifestyle, customs, attire, and cuisine.

This year's exhibition features hundreds of booths and stands representing all 31 provinces of Iran, each highlighting its unique cultural, historical, and natural attractions.

Visitors are welcomed into halls filled with colorful banners, traditional handicrafts, regional



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c), encircled with a number of exhibitors and travel insiders, poses for a photo in the early hours of the 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition, February 11, 2025.

delicacies, and interactive displays showcasing Iran's rich tourism potential.

From the pristine beaches of Kish Island to the snow-capped mountains of Alborz, and from the architectural marvels of Isfahan to the ancient ruins of Persepolis, the exhibition serves as a vibrant window into Iran's tourism landscape.

Provinces such as Yazd, Kerman, and Fars have dedicated sections where visitors can explore their UNESCO-listed heritage sites through digital presentations and guided sessions by local experts.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Reza, a travel agent representing Yazd's tourism board, spoke about the city's attraction for history lovers.

"Yazd has gained a reputation as an architectural gem, and with its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage City, we have seen a steady increase in international tourists. We hope events like this will help attract more visitors."

Beyond traditional tourism, the exhibition has also attracted travel tech startups, eco-tourism initiatives, and hospitality businesses showcasing innovative services.

Companies specializing in digital travel solutions, online booking platforms, and adventure tourism have set up booths to introduce new ways of exploring Iran.

One of the most visited booths belongs to a startup focused on sustainable tourism.

Marzieh, one of the representatives, explained the mission behind their project. "We are working on responsible travel programs that minimize environmental impact and support local communities."

Iran has such diverse natural beauty, from the Lut Desert to the lush forests of Gilan, and we want to ensure these places remain protected for future generations."

Similarly, representatives from the northern province of Mazandaran are promoting their eco-lodges nestled in the Hyrcanian forests.

"More people are seeking nature-based experiences, and we are offering guided tours, rural homestays, and adventure packages to showcase the hidden gems of our region," said Ali, an exhibitor from Mazandaran's tourism board.

Held at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, the exhibition, in its early hours, attracted hundreds of ordinary citizens and travel enthusiasts eager to plan their next domestic or international trip.

Beyond business and networking, the exhibition has taken on a festival-like atmosphere, with live performances, traditional music, and food stalls offering samples of regional specialties.

Many attendees have gathered around Virtual Reality booths offering virtual tours of Iran's major tourist destinations, from Persepolis to the Caspian Sea coastline.

Zahra, a university student who loves traveling, shared her excitement after trying a VR tour of Kish Island.

"I had no idea Iran had such colorful landscapes! This exhibition has inspired me to plan a trip to southern Iran."

Hossein, a retired teacher from Tehran, explored the handicrafts section and admired the intricate Persian rugs on display.

"This exhibition is not just about tourism; it's about culture and heritage. Every province has something unique to offer, and it makes me appreciate the diversity of our country."

Following the global pandemic's impact on travel, Iran's tourism sector is seeking to revitalize itself through initiatives like this exhibition.

Government officials and industry leaders have stressed the importance of boosting domestic and international tourism, highlighting Iran's visa facilitation policies and improved infrastructure.

In addition, the fair provides a platform for international media personnel, social media influencers, and tourism representatives, with delegations from neighboring countries such as Iraq, Turkey, and Tajikistan participating in discussions on regional travel cooperation.

Beyond business and networking, the exhibition has taken on a festival-like atmosphere, with live performances, traditional music, and food stalls offering samples of regional specialties. The scent of saffron-infused dishes and freshly baked bread fills the air as visitors move between different halls, stopping to watch artisans create calligraphy, pottery, and miniature paintings.

A major highlight of the exhibition is the live Persian music performances, drawing large crowds eager to experience Iran's rich artistic heritage.

"It's not just an exhibition; it's a celebration of Iran's identity," said Mahdi, a visitor who attended the event with his family. "I came for tourism information, but I'm staying for the amazing cultural displays."

As the exhibition continues over the next few days, organizers expect tens of thousands of visitors to explore the venue, engage with exhibitors, and participate in scheduled panel discussions on tourism development and industry challenges.

With its successful opening, the 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition is proving to be a key event in promoting Iran as a travel destination and fostering business growth within the industry. Attendees leave with brochures, new travel ideas, and a renewed appreciation for the country's rich tourism offerings.

The exhibition will remain open to the public until its closing ceremony on February 14, providing a wide experience for all those eager to explore the wonders of Iran and beyond.

Centuries-old Yazd passageway recreated at Tehran fair

TEHRAN - A model of a centuries-old passageway, which is located in the UNESCO-registered city of Yazd, has been installed at the Yazd's pavilion during the 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition, which opened in the Iranian capital on Tuesday morning.

Among the visitors of that work of art was Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian who was accompanied by Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, after they delivered their opening remarks and started a brief tour of the exhibition.

It is an imitation of "Gozar-e Yuzdaran" (Cheetah Keepers' Passage) aimed to introduce visitors to the traditional ambiance of Yazd's historic fabric, an exhibitor told the Tehran Times on Tuesday.

The recreated passageway highlights cultural and historical elements of Yazd and symbolically features the Asiatic cheetah, an endangered species closely linked to the region's heritage. Organizers designed the alleyway to evoke the atmosphere of one of Yazd's oldest neighborhoods, allowing attendees to experience a piece of the city's history within the exhibition space.

During the visit, a local artist presented Pezeshkian and Salehi-Amiri with a portrait painting as a token of appreciation.

Gozar-e Yuzdaran is situated within the Fahadan neighborhood which embraces many historical gems inside the historical core of Yazd.

A don't miss destination

With its atmospheric bazaars, winding lanes, a forest of badgirs, mud-brick houses, and delightful places to stay, Yazd is a don't miss destination.

Heritage experts believe that Yazd is a living testament to the intelligent use of the limited resources available in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city through the ancient qanat system.

Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center. In addition, the use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs through the construction of vaults and domes. Homes are built with underground courtyards that serve underground areas. Wind catchers, inner courtyards, and thick earth walls ensure a pleasant microclimate. From a divine point of view, the city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

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Women's share in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – The International Day of Women and Girls in Science is celebrated every February 11 to promote full and equal access to and participation in science for women and girls.

A significant gender gap has persisted throughout the years at all levels of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines all over the world. 2025 marks the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. This year the event is observed with the theme of 'Unpacking STEM careers: Her Voice in Science'.

Gender equality in science is crucial for building a better future for all, yet women and girls continue to face systemic barriers and biases in pursuing scientific careers.

Closing the gender gap in science requires breaking stereotypes, promoting role models to inspire girls, supporting women's advancement through targeted programs, and fostering inclusive environments through policies and actions that promote inclusion, diversity, and equity.

The status of Iranian women in various fields has improved after the Islamic Revolution and women, as half of the country's population, have been leading in many fields.

After the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, women were given equal rights to shape their futures. The Islamic Revolution provided them a chance to build their distinct identity and they have been tremendously successful in doing that.

There were extensive changes in the fields of science, education, economy, employment, and presence in management positions for women. Now a large part of activists in various fields of academia, business, and management are made up of capable Iranian women.

Education as a social value for



11 February
International Day of Women and Girls in Science



women is seen as real freedom for them. Illiteracy among women and girls has been nearly eradicated as the literacy rate reached 99.3 percent and the ratio of female to male students has increased by 28 percent.

According to the latest data, nearly 60 percent of all university students are females today. The percentage of women in higher education has increased nearly 21 times since the Revolution.

The notable presence of women in the education sector has had a remarkable impact on the job market of the country as well, with women taking more jobs in both the public and private sectors.

The country has always underscored the economic, cultural, social, and political empowerment of women as a key element in policy-making, legislation, and national planning.

Currently, more than 70 women are acting as vice president, minister, spokesperson, and other key positions in the government, and four women hold top managerial positions in the cabinet, namely transport and urban development minister, Farzaneh Sadeq, government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani, Department of Environment head, Shina Ansari, and vice president for women and family affairs, Zahra Behrouz-azar.

Technology and Communication, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Physics and Astronomy, Public Health and Health Services, Biology, Statistics and Mathematics, Communication and Textual Research have obtained the necessary points.

In Iran, women account for more than 24 percent of inventions in the country, compared to the global average of 17 percent.

Having made great strides in manufacturing high-tech products and growing the knowledge-based economy, Iranian women are conveying to the world the message that they have the potential to shine in the field of 'technology', the same as other fields. They have managed to shine brilliantly in different global events, featuring Iranian women's abilities to the world.

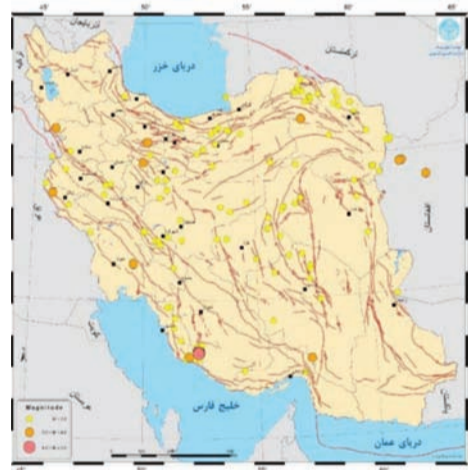
The percentage of female CEOs and chairpersons of the board of directors of knowledge-based companies has increased noticeably over the past three years.

The number of female managers has almost doubled, rising from 1,092 in the Iranian calendar year 1400 (2021-2022) to 2,250 by the end of the first nine months of the current Iranian year that started on March 20, 2024.

Only 12 percent of entrepreneurship and start-ups are founded by women. Out of 27,237 individuals who are members of the board of directors of knowledge-based companies, only 5,154, making up 19 percent of the members, are women.

In the latest international event, four Iranian women namely Azam Karami, Mahvash Abyari, Marzieh Ebrahimi, and Fatemeh Hosseini made history. They were among the winners of the BRICS Women's Startups Contest 2024, which is one of the main programs of the BRICS Entrepreneurs Forum. The contest's international panel of judges considered more than 1,000 applications from 30 countries.

165 earthquakes occur in a week



TEHRAN – A total of 165 earthquakes were recorded across the country in the third week of Bahman, the 11th Iranian calendar month, which falls from February 1 to 7, according to the seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Statistically, 139 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3; 24 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4; and 2 earthquakes with magnitudes between 4 and 5 magnitudes have occurred in the country, IRNA reported. Of the total quakes, 1 had a magnitude of 4.2 on the Richter scale which occurred on February 4th with the epicenter in Bushehr province.

Among the provinces of the country, Bushehr with 34 (of which 18 earthquakes just occurred in

Jam county) experienced the highest number of earthquakes, followed by North Khorasan with 19, and Khorasan Razavi with 17 earthquakes.

During the same period, no earthquakes were recorded in Tehran, East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Ardabil, Alborz, and Kohgiluyeh-Boyer-Ahmad provinces.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes in the world occur in Iran but more than six percent of the victims of the world earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

'Green taxes not used for environmental development'

While the Municipality of Tehran receives green taxes paid by pollutant industries, the money is not used for developing the environment or improving the industries, Ali Moridi, head of department of environment's (DOE) soil and water office has said.

The DOE is trying to revise the law and receive green taxes to use it toward eradicating air and water pollution, wastewater treatment and environmental issues, along with technology and industries improvement, he said, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Referring to proper laws adopted on waste management, he stated that there are rules which obliges the waste management affairs of the DOE to make the manufacturing and import industries pay taxes and spend the taxes on waste management and recycling.

"Accordingly, if industries do not produce contaminated or hazardous waste, they will be subjected to tax exemptions," he added.

عوارض آلاینده‌گی صرف ارتقای محیط زیست نمی شود

مدیرکل دفتر آب و خاک سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: عوارض اخذ شده از صنایع آلاینده در محل خودش و با هدف رفع چالش محیط زیست هزینه نمی شود. به گزارش خبرنگار علمی ایرنا، «علی مریدی» سه شنبه افزود: در سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست در تلاش برای بازنگری این قانون هستیم تا زمینه ای فراهم شود عوارض آلاینده‌گی به حساب صندوق ملی محیط زیست وارد و صرف حل مسایل زیست محیطی شود و بتوانیم به صنایع برای ارتقای فناوری و تصفیه پساب ها کمک کنیم.

مدیر کل دفتر آب و خاک سازمان حفاظت ادامه داد: البته قوانین خوبی در زمینه مدیریت پسماند تصویب شده است که سازمان محیط زیست را مکلف کرده تا از صنایع تولیدی و وارداتی درصدی را به عنوان مالیات اخذ و به صندوق ملی محیط زیست واریز کند تا صرف هزینه پسماند و بازیافت شود. وی خاطرنشان کرد: بر همین اساس اگر صنایعی، آلودگی و پسماند آلوده یا خطرناک ایجاد نکنند شامل معافیت مالیاتی می شوند.

Health ministry plans to prevent cancers by promoting healthy diets

TEHRAN— As nutrition contributes to 10-70 percent of cancers, the health ministry plans to promote healthy lifestyle habits, particularly healthy diets, to significantly protect individuals against cancers.

"Dietary modification through developing the culture of healthy eating is on the agenda of the health ministry," ISNA quoted Ahmad Esmaeilzadeh, an official with the health ministry, has said.

Nutrition affects the risk of developing a number of cancers including colon and stomach cancers; it is also known to influence the incidence of breast cancer occurrence.

However, nutrition plays a key role in the prevention of cancers, as well.

Some cancer-causing food includes regular intake of foods rich in sugar, and fat, consumption of processed food, and salty food. Obesity, which is getting more and more prevalent in the country, is also associated with a higher risk of cancer.

Salt consumption in Iran is twice as much as global standards. Excess salt consumption is one of the causes of gastric cancer in Iran, the official noted.

Adopting different policies to reduce salt intake in the food industry and home consumption, including fiber bread, which is a whole wheat or whole grain bread that is enriched with extra fiber, in daily diet are among health ministry programs.

Increasing fiber intake can help reduce the incidence of many cancers, such as colon cancer.

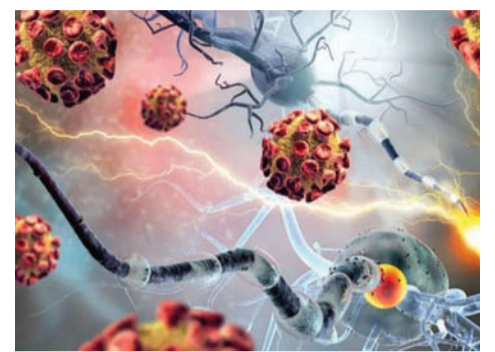
The health ministry is also preparing food-based dietary guidelines for children and adults; it provides guidance on healthy diets and recommends limiting daily intakes of salt, sugar, and fat which will consequently help lower the risk of getting cancers.

National campaign to fight against cancer

A national campaign to fight against cancer was held from January 20 to 26 across the country.

The weeklong event was celebrated with the theme of 'hand in hand, prevent and fight against cancer', the health ministry's website reported.

Cancer as one of the global health challenges affects the lives of many people annually. They are the leading cause of premature mortality in the country, according to the health



ministry.

Cancers account for more than 55 thousand deaths annually. Some 34 thousand deaths out of 122 thousand premature deaths (under 70 years of age) and 11 thousand deaths out of 85 thousand very premature deaths (under 50 years of age) are caused by various cancers.

The latest national cancer census shows that the number of new cancer cases in Iran is expected to increase to 160,000 by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025-March 2026), indicating an increase of 43 percent.

The first 10 most common cancers in Iran are breast, prostate, colon, stomach, lung, bladder, thyroid, uterus, brain, and spine cancers.

The most common cancers of Iranian women include breast, colon, thyroid, stomach, uterine, leukemia, ovary, brain and spine, lungs and esophagus.

Around 250,000 Iranians are now living with cancer. Half of cancers can be almost treated and the rest can be avoided.

Concerning the importance of prevention, early diagnosis, and timely treatment of cancer, the national campaign aims to raise public awareness about cancer, and risk factors. It also seeks to encourage prevention, early detection and treatment, and promotes support for the patients.

The campaign will raise awareness by educating people on ways to prevent cancer, such as adopting a healthy lifestyle, as well as the risks, symptoms, and the significance of early diagnosis.

Changing misbeliefs associated with cancer, including the idea that cancer is not treatable; encouraging individuals to get screened for breast and colon cancers; and improving inter-departmental coordination for prevention and treatment of cancer are among the other main objectives of the campaign.

Russian official lauds Iran's progress as 'role model for world'

TEHRAN – Russian Presidential Aide Andrei Fursenko has lauded Iran's independence, self-sufficiency, progress, and achievements in different fields, saying that Iran is a role model for many countries and even the globe.

Expressing satisfaction with the sustained development of relations between Moscow and Tehran, particularly the signing of the strategic cooperation treaty between the two countries, the official said, "Iran and Russia are complementary and similar to each other in some ways. Therefore, there are many opportunities for the development of relations between the two countries," IRNA reported.

The official made the remarks on Monday in Moscow in a ceremony held to commemorate the 46th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali, as well as some other Russian officials, attended the ceremony.

On the sidelines of the event, an exhibition of Iran's accomplishments in science and technology was held which was well received by the participants.

Russia highlights cooperation with Iran

In 2023, Fursenko emphasized the need to expand scientific and technological cooperation with Iran, especially in the field of artificial intelligence.

"We pay serious attention to the field of artificial intelligence as a widely used scientific and technological field, considering the technological capabilities that exist in Iran, we are ready to cooperate in these fields," IRNA quoted Fursenko as saying.

He made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran with Rouhollah Dehqani, the former vice president for science and technology.

"In the field of environment, where we are facing challenges, we can make positive changes and reforms with the help of technology and at the same time adapt ourselves to the changes that are inevitable," Fursenko added.

Tehran, Moscow can thrive without Western influence

In a recent interview with Russian TV, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran and Russia will maintain their course of development and action even in the face of Western pressure.

The president's interview, recorded during the visit to Moscow where he signed a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty alongside Vladimir Putin, conveyed that both nations will not tolerate external pressure and are committed to ensuring regional security.

"Tehran and Moscow don't want anyone from outside to determine their roles," Pezeshkian stated.

He added that the two countries are capable of pursuing independent policies and are ready to develop security and economic cooperation in the region to bring peace and stability.

Pezeshkian emphasized the significance of the comprehensive strategic partnership treaty between Iran and Russia.

The president also highlighted that the signing of the treaty demonstrated the two countries' shared approach to independence and cooperation.



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FEBRUARY 12, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:19 Evening: 18:02 Dawn: 5:29 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:05 (tomorrow)

International Storytelling Festival to honor themes of sacrifice and resistance with special award

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN- The 26th International Storytelling Festival has dedicated a special award to works with sacrifice and resistance themes, the organizers have announced. The special award in the international section of the festival, set for its upcoming edition, will be dedicated to works with resistance themes and in support of Gaza and Lebanese children, Alieh Qavami, the secretary of the festival, said during a press conference in Tehran on Tuesday.

"This year's festival features international participants, a significant boost compared to previous years," Qavami stated.

Over 34,000 submissions have been received this year, a substantial increase from previous years, with 25 participating countries now compared to last year's 14. The festival will welcome 15 foreign guests, showcasing a diverse array of storytelling talents. The main theme for this year's festival focuses on supporting children in Gaza and Lebanon, along with a special section dedicated to sacrifice and resistance, she mentioned.

The city of Yazd, which has established itself as a successful venue for the festival, will once again serve as the host of the event, and its reputation as a global hub for storytelling is being solidified by the upcoming festival, the secretary noted.

"As a result, Yazd has been designated as the capital of storytelling," she said.

She noted that the festival has expanded from four storytelling categories to 13, emphasizing the importance of making the event more accessible and inclusive for the public. Additionally, a mobile theater will be set up in Yazd to enhance audience engagement, she concluded. For his part, Hassan Sadrari Aref, the secretary of the international section, highlighted the universal nature of storytelling, mentioning that the international category was added to the festival in late autumn.

Notable submissions for the festival, totaling 70 works from 25 countries, have been narrowed down to 50 selected entries following a thorough judging and evaluation process. This year's lineup will feature 15 talented storytellers from Italy, Lebanon, Tanzania, Syria, Thailand, India, Niger, Congo, Japan, and Brazil, set to take the stage.

In a highlight of this edition, renowned storyteller Sara Kassir from Lebanon will engage

in both workshops and performances, bringing her wealth of experience to share with festival attendees, he added. During his address at the conference, Hamed Alamati, director of the Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), emphasized the importance of storytelling as a potent tool for organizing knowledge and information, underscoring its unique ability to engage and convey complex ideas in a compelling manner.

"The storytelling embodies a profound cultural approach that transforms content into message."

He further explained that this year marks a quarter-century of the storytelling festival, and over the years the event has expanded its outreach beyond children and teenagers to include grandparents, thereby enriching the storytelling narrative. "We consider it our duty to utilize storytelling as an educational tool. We believe that it should be incorporated into educational packages, and even specific curriculum topics can be connected with storytelling," Alamati added.

This year, the festival also includes themed storytelling, with storytellers being sent to venues such as hospitals and children's educational centers during special occasions.

He noted that the priority lies in the content over form in storytelling, stressing that the essence of the story matters more than its presentation.

Regarding the festival's diverse sections, Alamati mentioned the inclusion of traditional, classic, modern, and innovative storytelling, as well as podcasts, minimalistic storytelling, 90-second tales, and additional categories such as poetic, environmental, religious, scientific, and heroic stories. He added that this year saw 34,000 submitted stories, with 600 selected for the national section, ultimately narrowing down to 98 stories that reached the final evaluation stage.

Continuing, he noted that this festival is one of the oldest of its kind, with significant storytelling events around the globe. However, the Institute's festival is among the most inclusive, as stories emanate from the alleys and byways of Iran, rich in tradition. He expressed the hope that the media will support better awareness surrounding this event. The 26th edition of International Storytelling Festival will be held in Yazd, from February 15 to 18, with the motto "The Secret of Stories Shapes Life."

Winners of 43rd Fajr Film Festival receive Crystal Simorgh awards



Left to right: Mostafa Zamani, Linda Kiani, Farhad Aesh, Fariba Naderi

TEHRAN-The 43rd Fajr Film Festival concluded at the Milad Tower Conference Center in Tehran on Monday night, presenting the Crystal Simorgh awards to the winners of various sections.

At the closing ceremony of the most significant cinematic event in Iran, the major awards in the competition section were distributed among seven films and "Moses the Kalimullah: At Dawn" received most of the technical awards, Honaronline reported.

The Crystal Simorgh for Best Film was awarded to Seyed Maziar Hashemi, for his production "Call Me Ziba".

After receiving the Simorgh, Hashemi paid tribute to the late film producer Ali Moallem and dedicated his award to all the cast and crew members of the film and especially its director Rasoul Sadrameli.

"I would also like to express my gratitude to Ebrahim Hatamikia, whose works we grew up with," the producer added. Hatamikia's "Moses the Kalimullah: At Dawn" was another nominee in the Best Film category.

Hamid Zargamezhad received the Crystal Simorgh for Best Director for his film "North by Southwest" and Mahmoud Karimi was awarded the Crystal Simorgh for Best First-Time Filmmaker for "People's Children".

Karimi also received the Crystal Simorgh for Best Screenplay together with his wife Fa'ezeh Yarmohammadi for "People's Children".

The Crystal Simorgh for Best First Film was awarded to Saeed Khani for his production "Raha" and the Jury's Special Award was presented to Reza Jamali for directing "A Childless Village".

Two Crystal Simorgh awards for Best National Film were awarded to Saeed Sa'di for his production "God of War" and Mehdi Faraji for producing "Guardian of the Field".

Mohammad Amin Hamedani and

Mohammad Kheirandish won the Crystal Simorgh for Best Animation for their joint production "Dolphin Boy 2".

The animation also won the Crystal Simorgh for Audience Choice of Best Film together with the film "Devotee" produced by Arash Zeynal Kheyri.

The Crystal Simorgh for Best Leading Actress was awarded to Fariba Naderi for her role in "Setareh's Husband".

Receiving her award, Naderi said: "After 20 years, I finally saw the results of all my hard work. When I first received the printed script, I was told by the producer Ali Owji to be careful not to let the Simorgh fall from between the pages. Now that I have it, I will cherish it and strive to follow the best path forward".

Pointing to other nominees, one of the jury members Mastaneh Mohajer noted: "We had three young actresses in this category, all of whom were brilliant. I also want to applaud Merila Zarei, who cheered for every winner tonight with love".

Zarei was a nominee in the Best Leading Actress category for playing the role of Jochebd, Prophet Moses' mother in the movie "Moses the Kalimullah: At Dawn".

The Crystal Simorgh for Best Leading Actor was awarded to Mostafa Zamani for his performance in "North by Southwest".

"If Hassan Pourshirazi were in competition, nobody else would receive this award," Zamani said after receiving his statuette.

He was referring to the film "The Old Bachelor" by Oktay Baraehni, which was shown in the special screening section of the festival, with the veteran actor Pourshirazi in the lead role, whose brilliant performance was praised by all the critics and audience.

"I want to share this award with Hassan Pourshirazi and hope it

is recognized as a joint Simorgh award," Zamani noted.

One of the jury members Ezzatollah Zarghami praised the late director Farajollah Salahshoor for discovering Mostafa Zamani for the role of Prophet Joseph, which was his first role in cinema and TV. "Zamani has now gained international recognition," he said.

The 2008 historical drama series "Prophet Joseph" has been dubbed in several languages such as English, Arabic, Urdu, and Turkish. It is sometimes regarded as the world's most watched Iranian TV series.

The Crystal Simorgh for Best Supporting Actress was presented to Linda Kiani for her role in "1968".

Upon receiving the award, Kiani said: "I am very happy that after so many years, my work has finally been recognized. This Simorgh is very valuable to me, and I hope it opens many doors for me. I also thank those who ignored my work because their indifference pushed me to improve".

Veteran actor Farhad Aesh won the Crystal Simorgh for Best Supporting Actor for his role in "Moses the Kalimullah: At Dawn".

After receiving the award, he said: "I have always believed that art is subjective, and judging it is even more subjective. But now this Simorgh is objectively in my hands! This is my first Simorgh, and I'm very happy. I loved the role I played and had a great time".

"I never take myself seriously, but I always take my work seriously and give my best in front of the camera. The role I played was one that could have earned any actor a Crystal Simorgh. I thank all the crew members for bringing this character to life," he added.

During the ceremony, "Moses the Kalimullah: At Dawn" won four more awards including the Crystal Simorgh awards for Best Techni-

cal Achievement for Alireza Vaezi, Best Makeup for Shahram Khalaj, Best Production Design for Keyvan Moghadam, and Best Costume Design for Azar Mohammadi.

After receiving the award, Mohammadi said: "I am honored to be among cinema masters tonight. I have been involved in this project for four years and thank all the team members".

"People's Children" and "North by Southwest" each won another award as well; the former received the Crystal Simorgh for Best Editing for Emad Khodabakhsh and the latter was awarded the Crystal Simorgh for Best Cinematography for Ali Mohammad Ghasemi.

"Sayyad" was another film with two awards. It received the Crystal Simorgh for Best Visual Effects for Amir Valikhani and the Crystal Simorgh for Best Special Effects for Hamid Rasouliaan.

The Crystal Simorgh for Best Sound (Recording & Sound Design) was awarded to Meisam Yardiloo and Hossein Ghourchian for "Highway Deer" and Karen Homayounfar received the Crystal Simorgh for Best Music for "Esfand".

The 43rd Fajr Film Festival was held from January 31 to February 10. The lineup of films in the competition section included 33 films, with 13 being directorial debuts. Additionally, four animated films were chosen for a special competition category.

Jury members featured prominent figures such as filmmaker Kamal Tabrizi, actor and producer Bahram Radan, veteran critic Reza Dorostkar, director Alireza Raeesian, and filmmaker Narges Abyar.

Iran's annual Fajr Film Festival has been held every February in Tehran since 1983. The festival is supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. It takes place on the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

"War with the Newts" at Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN- "War with the Newts" written by Czech writer and playwright Karel Čapek has recently been published in Persian.

Translated by Zohreh Sabouhi, the book has been published by Saless Publications in Tehran.

"War with the Newts" (Válka s Mloky), a 1936 satirical science fiction novel, explores the ironic consequences of human interaction with an intelligent race of sea-dwelling Newts discovered in the Indian Ocean.

The narrative unfolds, portraying the rise, exploitation, and eventual conflict between humans and Newts, culminating in a global war for supremacy.

The protagonist's role is fragmented, with the story examining societal developments rather than focusing on a single character. Key figures include Captain J. van Toch, who discovers the Newts on the island of Tanahmasa, Mr. Gussie H. Bondy, an industrialist spearheading the Newt industry, and Mr. Povondra, Bondy's doorman.

The novel's early tone is light-hearted and satirical, ridiculing human arrogance and prejudice, such as the underestimation of the Newts' capabilities and the superficial attitudes of society, particularly regarding race and scientific certainty.

As the story progresses, however, the tone darkens, reflecting the growing tensions and conflicts between humans and Newts. The Newts, initially exploited for their labor, begin to acquire human knowledge and assert their independence, leading to a series of skirmishes that eventually escalate into full-blown war.

Čapek's satire sharpens, criticizing nationalism, racial ideologies, and the failures of international diplomacy, as the world teeters on the brink of chaos.

The narrative culminates in a metafictional dialogue between the Author and the Writer, contemplating the future of both Newts and humanity. As the Newts ravage the Earth's landmass for their survival, they ironically mirror humanity's own destructive tendencies.

Ultimately, the remaining humans face a bleak existence, potentially reduced to a mere memory within a transformed world.

Through "War with the Newts," Čapek weaves a commentary on colonialism, ethical responsibility, and the cyclical nature of history, leaving readers with reflections on autonomy, exploitation, and the consequences of hubris in the face of perceived superiority.

The novel's themes and warnings remain eerily relevant today, serving as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked ambition and the importance of empathy and understanding in a complex, interconnected world.

The novel's exploration of the Newts' rise to sentience and their subsequent conflict with humanity raises important questions about the nature of intelligence, consciousness, and the human condition.

Čapek's use of satire and social commentary adds depth and complexity to the narrative, inviting readers to consider the implications of human actions and the consequences of playing god with other species.

As the Newts navigate their newfound intelligence and assert their place in the world, they challenge human assumptions about superiority and dominance, forcing readers to confront the darker aspects of human nature and the destructive tendencies that threaten the planet.

Through its thought-provoking themes and timely warnings, "War with the Newts" remains a powerful and enduring work of science fiction, continues to captivate readers with its eerie relevance and profound insights into the human condition.

Cartoon of Day



Palestine Not for Sale

Cartoonist: TAYO Fatunla from Nigeria