

TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 100,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 46th year | No. 14991 | Monday | February 17, 2025 | Bahman 29, 1403 | Sha'ban 18, 1446



Lebanese resistance says the gov. should reverse the ban on Iranian flights

Hezbollah Warns Against Israel's Plot

► Page 5

Lebanese army fired tear gas during a protest by supporters of Hezbollah in front of the entrance to Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut, Lebanon, Feb. 15, 2025.

A new era of US-Israeli guardianship over Lebanon has begun!

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – Hezbollah called on Saturday for a demonstration with the slogan of “Protecting Sovereignty and Rejecting Guardianship” in solidarity with the Lebanese citizens stranded in Iran, after the Lebanese government refused to allow the Iranian Mahan Air plane to land at Beirut airport.

During a speech by Mahmoud Qamati, a member of Hezbollah's Political Council, the Lebanese army, with an official Lebanese signal and American order, targeted peaceful demonstrators with tear gas canisters, rubber bullets, and stones.

“This is Beirut airport, not Ben Gurion airport. Those who want to face peaceful citizens should face the Israeli occupation soldiers in the south,” one of the wounded protesters told the Tehran Times.

Another protester commented, “All the masks have fallen. The disgraceful failure during the war has been exposed. We will not accept the betrayal of the blood of our martyrs. We will not accept American-Israeli guardianship.”

Palestinian prisoners were beaten ahead of release

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Palestinian prisoners released on Saturday were “deliberately” assaulted by the Israeli regime's prison guards.

Many of the Palestinians recently freed by the resistance movement in Gaza as part of the latest prisoner exchange deal were rushed to hospitals, with several in critical condition.

According to the Palestinian Prisoners' Media Office, Israeli authorities “deliberately insulted and assaulted” Palestinian prisoners and detainees right up until the moment of their release.

The organization, which monitors prisoner releases, stated that the condition of the freed prisoners highlights the “extent of the crimes and violations” committed inside the prisons.

In a statement, the monitoring group urged the international community to condemn double standards and take a firm stance against these violations.

Rubio's regional ruckus: Pushing Trump's Gaza vision amid global backlash

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- US Secretary of State Marco Rubio kicked off his first visit to West Asia at the weekend amid global anger over President Donald Trump's controversial proposal for the Gaza Strip.

The top American diplomat met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem (al-Quds) on Sunday, marking the initial phase of his regional tour, which includes visits to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Rubio seeks to push Trump's widely condemned plan to take control of the Gaza Strip and transfer the territory's 2.3 million population to other countries.

“The president has also been very bold about his view of what the future for Gaza should be. Not the same tired ideas of the past, but something that's bold and something that, frankly, took courage and vision in order to outline. And it may have shocked and surprised many, but what cannot continue is the same cycle we'll repeat over and over again and wind up in the exact same place,” Rubio said during the meeting with Netanyahu.

► Page 5

No place for global power struggles in Indian Ocean, says Iran FM

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has cautioned against the influence of external powers in the Indian Ocean region, warning that geopolitical rivalries must not dictate its future.

Speaking at the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in Muscat, Oman, Araghchi stressed that the destiny of the region should be shaped by its own nations, serving the interests of their people rather than being manipulated by foreign actors seeking to exploit political, economic, and security gaps.

He emphasized the need for regional cooperation to counter external interference, urging Indian Ocean nations to take control of their collective future through mutual trust and collaboration. ► Page 2

40,000 people visit four-day tourism fair in Tehran

TEHRAN – The 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition set a new attendance record, drawing nearly 40,000 visitors over its four-day run from February 11 to 14, an official with the tourism ministry announced on Sunday.

According to Mostafa Fatemi, the director-general of the Domestic Tourism Development Office, the exhibition witnessed unprecedented visitor numbers, breaking many previous records for international exhibitions in the country.

“The exhibition hosted 700 domestic and international companies, with notable participation from Russia, Turkey, Malaysia, Thailand, and Madagascar, among others,” Fatemi stated. He also highlighted the presence of high-level delegations from various countries and several key industry figures. ► Page 6

Iranian female student wins BRICS, SCO 'Young Researcher of the Year' award

TEHRAN – Hosna Salimi, a student of the Faculty of World Studies at University of Tehran, has been named the ‘Young Researcher of the Year’ in BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization Young Leaders Award 2025, held on January 24–26 in Kazan, Russia.

Over 400 participants from 13 countries including Iran, India, China, the UAE, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, South Africa, Brazil, Ethiopia, Tajikistan, and Russia competed against each other, IRNA reported. ► Page 7

Russian writer praises General Soleimani: “A commander with a heart for Iran”

By Ali Hamedin

TEHRAN- He was more than just a soldier—he was a guardian, a protector. A hero in the realm of truth whose fight was never confined to his own homeland but extended to others, standing resolutely against the terrorists who were, in truth, the offspring of the United States and Israel. A warrior who was martyred by the very empire that sought to erase his legacy, to bury his name in the shadows of oblivion.

Yet, even Zuckerberg's algorithms could not silence him. His name broke through the digital iron curtain, whispered from lips to lips, etched into the hearts of millions; An Iranian hero named General Qassem Soleimani.

Qassem Soleimani was a warrior whose name is known across many lands, revered as an international hero—precisely the opposite of what the United States wished people to believe about him. ► Page 8



Max Blumenthal tells Tehran Times: For Egypt and Jordan, Trump's Gaza plan is a choice between regime collapse or economic ruin

TEHRAN – Officials in Egypt and Jordan are between a rock and a hard place when it comes to Donald Trump's Gaza displacement plan, said Max Blumenthal, an award-winning journalist, author, and editor-in-chief of The Grayzone, during an interview with the Tehran Times.

Blumenthal argues that Trump's Gaza displacement plan puts Egypt and Jordan in an impossible bind. Agreeing to help displace over 2 million Palestinians risks widespread domestic revolt that could eventually lead to government collapse. Refusal, however, invites crippling U.S. economic punishments in the form of aid cuts.

In his remarks to the Tehran Times, Blumenthal also addressed Western media reports about alleged Iranian efforts to assassinate Trump. Influential Zionist figures in U.S. politics, as well as a Grayzone journalist' arrest by Israel last year were some of the other topics he discussed. ► Page 3



TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Smart diplomacy toward America

In a note, Ham Mihan addressed the approach of the Iranian foreign policy towards Trump's America and wrote: Many analysts believe that the stance of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the rejection of negotiations with America was a direct result of Trump's recent move in imposing new sanctions against Iran and reviving the policy of maximum pressure. The document that Donald Trump signed is a threatening document with maximum demands from Iran, which is significantly different from his claim. The complex problem of America with Iran's foreign policy has not been solved for 45 years.

However, within the framework of international relations, every government is responsible for its actions, and Iran cannot blame the weaknesses and lack of planning in its foreign policy on the hostile policies of America. In fact, Tehran must find a path that in the first step would neutralize the effects of America's hostile policies, and in the second step put an end to Washington's hostile position. If Tehran wants to free itself from this situation, it must adopt a "wise, intelligent, and honorable" stance, as the Leadership has said.

Siasat-e-Rooz: Enemy active in conspiring but intelligence forces are aware

Siasat-e-Rooz dedicated its editorial to the enemy's efforts to create insecurity in Iran. The paper said: The threats from intelligence agencies such as the CIA, Mossad, MI6, and other spy services are serious and numerous. Iran's intelligence forces have so far thwarted many conspiracies and terrorist acts to defend the country. If we see that terrorist operations are sometimes carried out, this is just one or more examples of hundreds of planned actions. If it were not for the efforts of intelligence forces, the country's security would be at risk.

The enemy is seeking to make the country insecure, but so far it has not achieved this goal and it will not, and Islamic Iran will continue to be secure. People also play a role in advancing and creating public security.

They have helped greatly by cooperating with intelligence agencies and providing information and news about suspicious events because they know that the country's intelligence forces are "awake day and night" for their safety and comfort.

Kayhan: Multilateralism, balanced diplomacy

Kayhan, in its editorial, suggested it is needed to pursue balanced diplomacy and tap the capacities of economic blocs such as BRICS to counter Trump's sanctions against Iran. It said: What has been revealed to the world today, more than ever, the true nature of America's extremist policies is Trump's unconditional support for the genocidal project in Gaza. Trump had previously pursued bullying foreign policy by withdrawing from the JCPOA and imposing illegal sanctions against Iran. In such circumstances, the main strategy for the Islamic Republic of Iran is to continue and strengthen multilateralism, balanced diplomacy, and adopt legal approaches to contain Washington. Legal diplomacy, as a tool for challenging the legitimacy of unilateral sanctions in international courts and legal institutions, can help reduce the effects of these measures. In addition, strengthening economic cooperation independent of the dollar and utilizing the capacities of organizations such as Shanghai and BRICS, along with expanding relations with regional countries, are considered the most important measures to overcome this period of global tension.

Iran: Congressional efforts for 'trigger mechanism'

The Iran newspaper wrote about the pressure by the American Congress on the European trio to activate the trigger mechanism and thereby restore the UN sanctions lifted under the JCPOA. It wrote: A number of Congresspersons from the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate have submitted proposals urging three European countries that are parties to the JCPOA to follow the maximum pressure policy against Iran and activate the trigger mechanism to restore all (UN) sanctions against Tehran. U.S. Senator Pete Ricketts has considered the restoration of all sanctions against Iran and the trigger mechanism key to the success of the maximum pressure policy. U.S. lawmakers have called on the Europeans to focus on activating the trigger mechanism in a situation in which the U.S. government does not want the JCPOA to remain in place. The request to the European troika to activate this mechanism reflects a failure that Trump had previously experienced in his first presidential term when the United States, despite withdrawing from the JCPOA, was still trying to use the mechanism as a weapon against Iran.

Iran to launch 'Navak' micro-class satellite, continuing series of space missions



TEHRAN – Iran's Minister of Information and Communications Technology, Sattar Hashemi, announced plans to launch the domestically developed Navak micro-class satellite in the coming days, marking a milestone in the country's pursuit of advanced aerospace capabilities.

The 40-kilogram satellite, designed by the Iranian Space Research Institute, will be propelled into orbit using the upgraded Simorgh rocket.

This launch signals progress toward accessing geostationary orbit (GEO) and bolstering national communication infrastructure. Iran's space program, which has faced international sanctions and technical hurdles over the past decade, has prioritized self-reliance in satellite technology. The country has recently achieved notable advancements in satellite technology. In January 2024, the Soraya satellite was launched into a record 750 km orbit.

By September, the Chamran-1 satellite reached a 550 km orbit using the domestically-developed Qaem-100 carrier. Additionally, the unveiling of the Pars-1 and Pars-2 satellites promises to enhance Earth's remote sensing capabilities.

5G, digital economy, and e-government reforms

Speaking at a high-level meeting attended by First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, Hashemi outlined parallel priorities, including accelerating 5G network deployment through the auction of 3600 MHz frequency bands.

"Enhancing regulatory transparency and network quality are public demands we take seriously," he said, emphasizing that resolving bureaucratic bottlenecks would "uniquely align stakeholders" to fast-track 5G development.

The minister also stressed goals to grow Iran's digital economy to 10% of GDP under the Seventh Development Plan, advocating for public-private partnerships. "Our approach to e-government is transformative," Hashemi stated, referencing a soon-to-be-implemented initiative redesigning bureaucratic systems. Despite ongoing U.S.-led sanctions, Hashemi highlighted "defensible achievements" in tech diplomacy, including partnerships with Latin American and Gulf states.

First Vice President Aref closed the meeting by urging faster implementation of strategic projects, endorsing the ministry's "pioneering" role in Iran's tech-driven economic agenda.

Tehran, Baghdad emphasize security cooperation in diplomatic talks

TEHRAN – Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, Majid Takht-Ravanchi, has emphasized the need for continued high-level consultations and coordination between Tehran and Baghdad to enhance shared security and regional stability. His remarks came during an official visit to Iraq, where he met with senior Iraqi officials to discuss mutual security concerns and broader bilateral cooperation.

Following his meeting with Iraq's National Security Advisor, Qasim al-Araji, on Sunday, Takht-Ravanchi reaffirmed the importance of maintaining close ties between the two neighboring countries.

He noted that their discussions focused on security issues affecting both nations, stressing the necessity of joint efforts to combat regional threats.

Speaking to Al-Alam News Net-



Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, Majid Takht-Ravanchi(L), meets with Iraq's National Security Advisor, Qasim al-Araji, in Baghdad on Feb. 16, 2025.

work, Takht-Ravanchi stated that his visit to Iraq was part of a long-standing framework of political consultations between the two governments.

He underscored that regional security remains a top priority for

both Iran and Iraq, highlighting that effective security strategies require continuous dialogue and coordination at various levels.

Iran and Iraq share deep historical, religious, and economic ties, and both countries have faced

common security challenges in recent years, including terrorism, border security issues, and geopolitical tensions.

The Iranian diplomat stressed that enhanced cooperation and intelligence-sharing would be critical to addressing these challenges and ensuring long-term stability in the region.

During his trip, Takht-Ravanchi also met with Mohsen Al-Mandalawi, Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, where they discussed pressing regional developments and explored avenues for deepening cooperation in multiple fields.

He expressed satisfaction with the ongoing exchange of high-level visits between Iranian and Iraqi officials, calling them essential for reinforcing diplomatic ties and fostering economic, political, and security collaboration.

No place for global power struggles in Indian Ocean, says Iran FM



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks during the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in Muscat, Oman, Feb. 16, 2025.

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has cautioned against the influence of external powers in the Indian Ocean region, warning that geopolitical rivalries must not dictate its future.

Speaking at the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in Muscat, Oman, Araghchi stressed that the destiny of the region should be shaped by its own nations, serving the interests of their people rather than being manipulated by foreign actors seeking to exploit political, economic, and security gaps.

He emphasized the need for regional cooperation to counter external interference, urging Indian Ocean nations to take control of their collective future through mutual trust and collaboration.

The Iranian Navy, he added, has consistently worked alongside neighboring states to combat piracy, drug trafficking, and organized crime, ensuring safe navigation in the region's waters.

However, he cautioned that foreign powers are seeking to exploit economic, political, and security vulnerabilities in the region, potentially undermining natural cooperation among Indian Ocean nations.

"We cannot allow the geopolitical rivalries of global powers to dictate the future of this region," Araghchi warned. "The destiny of the Indian Ocean must be decided by the countries within it, serving the interests of their people."

Iran's involvement in multilateral organizations such as the Indian

Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), Araghchi noted, reflects the country's dedication to fostering regional cooperation.

He warned that certain external actors have sought to exploit divisions in the region for their own political and economic gain, emphasizing that the future of the Indian Ocean should be determined by the countries within it.

Araghchi expressed appreciation for Oman's role as a longstanding mediator and advocate of dialogue in the region. He called for greater unity among Indian Ocean nations, asserting that sustainable development and regional stability could only be achieved through mutual trust and cooperation.

Addressing an audience of regional leaders and policymakers, Araghchi underscored the historical role of the Indian Ocean as a vital link between civilizations, serving as a major route for trade and cultural exchange for thousands of years.

However, he stressed that in today's rapidly evolving global economy, traditional trade routes alone are insufficient. Instead, he argued, the Indian Ocean should serve as a strategic center for economic collaboration, regional security, and technological advancement.

Iran, he noted, is well-positioned to play a leading role in this transformation, given its 5,800 kilometers of coastline, including 4,900 kilometers along the Indian Ocean. The Iranian government has adopted a "maritime-oriented" policy, aiming to turn the country's southern coast into a gateway for global economic integration.

Araghchi also underscored the strategic importance of Iran's Makran coast, calling for its transformation into a major economic hub for both Iran and the wider region.

He described the coastal area along the Sea of Oman as a "lost paradise" with untapped economic potential that must be prioritized for development.

"The Makran coast holds a special place," Araghchi stated. "For centuries, its natural and economic potential has been overlooked, but it is now a national development priority. This region must become the future economic hub of Iran and the region."

The 8th Indian Ocean Conference, hosted in Muscat, brings together leaders, diplomats, and experts from across the region to discuss the future of maritime trade, security, and economic integration.

Iranian flights to Lebanon suspended until February 18

TEHRAN – Hossein Pourfarzaneh, head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization, announced on Sunday that all flights to Lebanon have been temporarily halted until February 18 due to "security conditions" at Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport, following a formal request from Lebanese authorities.

"In light of the exceptional security situation in Beirut and the cancellation of all international flights, Lebanese officials have asked Iran to suspend its flights until the 18th of February," Pourfarzaneh stated during a press briefing.

He emphasized that Tehran is closely monitoring developments, adding that it awaits "clarity on how the situation will unfold by the specified date." When questioned about unverified Israeli threats to "down Iranian planes" bound for Lebanon, Pourfarzaneh said no written warnings had been received by Iranian authorities on such matter.

Foreign Ministry condemns "irresponsible" G7 statements against Iran

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baqaei has firmly condemned the G7 group of countries for alleging that Iran is playing a "destructive" role in West Asia, while the West continues to fund a regime looking to ethnically cleanse Palestinians.

In a joint statement following an informal meeting on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, the Group of Seven (G7) nations said they condemn Iran's "destabilizing actions", including its uranium enrichment and support for Resistance groups across West Asia.

On Sunday, Baqaei described the allegation of

However, he reiterated that the suspension was strictly based on Lebanon's security assessment, reflecting Tehran's adherence to diplomatic protocols.

The suspension comes amid recent developments in Lebanon, where the country canceled a Thursday flight that was supposed to carry Lebanese pilgrims from Tehran to Beirut. With the funeral of the martyred Resistance Leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah approaching, many are viewing the move as influenced by Israel and Washington.

Thousands of Lebanese citizens protested the suspensions on Thursday night by blocking roads leading to the Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport. Demonstrators also took to the streets on Friday and Saturday.

A Lebanese source informed AFP on Saturday that Lebanon twice denied permission for Iranian flights to land last week. Iranian

officials reportedly urged Lebanon to prioritize national sovereignty and resist external pressures.

The situation has drawn heavy criticism from both Lebanese citizens and political groups within the Arab country.

Hezbollah said in a statement that it "demands that the government reverse its decision to ban Iranian planes from landing at Beirut airport and take serious mea-

asures to prevent the Israeli enemy from imposing its dictates."

Additionally, Pourfarzaneh confirmed that passengers stranded at Iran's Imam Khomeini International Airport had been accommodated in airport hotels, underscoring Tehran's "duty of care" to both Iranian and Lebanese citizens. He further described Beirut's airport as "unsafe," pledging to restore normal operations once security conditions improve.

"Iran has a pioneering role in advocating for a West Asia free of nuclear weapons, while the Zionist regime is the primary obstacle to this goal," he stated.



Planes at the Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut, Lebanon

U.S. sanctions and the future of Iran-India cooperation in Chabahar port

TEHRAN – Donald Trump's recent directive, which instructs the Secretary of State to "modify or rescind sanctions waivers" for Iran's Chabahar port project, has sparked debate about the future of Iran-India cooperation.

In May 2024, India and Iran signed a 10-year contract for the operation of Iran's Chabahar port, eight years after agreeing on the general framework for cooperation.

With Trump's intensified anti-Iran "maximum pressure" campaign, observers now question whether New Delhi will be able to keep its promise to prevent the U.S. from influencing its bilateral ties with Tehran, or whether India was ever genuinely committed to developing the Chabahar port in the first place.

When asked about the potential removal of U.S. sanction waivers on the Chabahar port, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told an Indian journalist on Sunday that the two countries are determined to continue bilateral cooperation. "The challenges between Iran and India have always occurred due to the interference of third parties," the top diplomat said, adding that India is currently engaged in talks with Washington on the development



of the Chabahar port. "Regarding the cancellation of the Chabahar port exemption, we know that the Indians are consulting with the Americans, so we leave them free to make their decisions."

In a subsequent meeting with his Indian counterpart taking place on the sidelines of an international conference in Muscat, Araghchi said Iran is willing to expand economic, political, and cultural talks with the South Asian country, a sentiment reciprocated by Subrahmanyam Jaisankar.

Who's at fault? The U.S., India, or Iran?

The development of the Cha-

bahar port by India has always been a source of debate within Iran. In India, the perceived lack of progress is often attributed to alleged Iranian indecisiveness and the impact of sanctions. Some Indian voices also argue that a 10-year contract is insufficient to justify large-scale investment. However, in contrast to Araghchi's remarks in Muscat about full commitment on both sides, many Iranian critics believe that India has never been dedicated enough to the project.

According to economic and trade analyst Majid Shakeri, the U.S. sanctions waivers related to Chabahar were primarily focused on facilitating the transit of Indi-

an goods to Afghanistan, not on enabling Indian work on the port itself. "Rescinding the waivers would mainly impact the regular transfer of Indian goods like flour and fuel to Afghanistan," he stated.

Shakeri said the Chabahar port can have important benefits for India once substantially developed: It can serve as a counterweight to Pakistan's Gwadar port and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), connect India to Central Asia, and increase India's engagements with Russia which have grown since the Ukraine War.

"I believe India can certainly allocate more energy and resources to developing the Chabahar port, even with sanctions in place," Shakeri noted, adding, "India has a big economy, and many governmental entities are capable of undertaking the project. Prime Minister Modi's relationships with Indian families running major private firms could also facilitate private sector involvement."

Under the current circumstances, Iran should either seek a comprehensive development plan from India or look for domestic and foreign alternatives, the analyst stated.

Max Blumenthal:

For Egypt and Jordan, Trump's Gaza plan is a choice between regime collapse or economic ruin



U.S. President Donald Trump meets with Jordanian King Abdullah II in the Oval Office at the White House on February 11, 2025.

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

Q: U.S. media recently claimed that Donald Trump had to use a decoy plane during his campaign days to protect himself from alleged Iran agents looking to down his aircraft with missiles. The Tehran Times knows through its sources that these claims are lies. Regardless, what are your thoughts on such fabricated narratives?

A: Israel's intelligence services are attempting to convince Donald Trump, through media leaks, that Iran is planning to assassinate him.

Members of Trump's inner circle seem to believe that Air Force One, or Trump's plane, was tailed by Iranian drones, which makes no sense. We also saw Republican members of Congress claim that Iranian drones were operating off the coast of New Jersey when, in fact, these were American drones conducting experimental operations surveilling the American coastline. This is delusional but typical for a faction of the American national security elite that seeks war with Iran.

There are members within Trump's inner circle, such as Tucker Carlson and J.D. Vance, who do not believe these claims and oppose war with Iran. However, there is a faction, led by National Security Director Mike Waltz, that seeks war with Iran.

U.S. intelligence has assessed that within the next six months, Israel will attempt to strike Iran and will require U.S. assistance, either with bunker-buster guidance or in-air refueling of its planes.

The "leaks" about an Iranian assassination attempt on Trump are clearly designed to sway the pro-war faction within the administration to authorize or participate directly in these strikes.

Q: Do you think Trump is surrounded and influenced more by Zionists and the Israeli lobby than his predecessor Joe Biden was?

A: Both Trump and Biden were surrounded by influential Zionists heavily funded by Haim Saban, the Israeli-American billionaire. Saban had a de facto agreement with Sheldon Adelson, the late American Zionist billionaire whose fortune is now controlled by his Israeli wife, Miriam, that they would both fund both parties: Haim Saban funding the Democrats and Sheldon Adelson funding the Republicans, in order to maximize Israeli influence over both parties.

The difference lies in the type of Zionists who influenced Donald Trump. These people are more oriented towards the religious nationalist, messianic elements in Israel—the "Greater Israel" faction—and the forces that surround Benjamin Netanyahu and hold his coalition together. They are more inclined to support Israel's annexation of the West Bank, large parts of Lebanon and Syria, and the ethnic cleansing of the Gaza Strip.

On the other hand, another faction of Zionists, the liberal Zionists represented by figures like Antony Blinken, would prefer to support Jordan and Egypt, as well as the Palestinian Authority, as imperial proxies or occupation subcontractors. In the case of the Pales-

tinian Authority, this means that the forces around Donald Trump are more likely to lift the mask on apartheid Israel and remove the proxies and subcontractors who have made it seem like there is Arab consent for what Israel is doing.

Q: What are your thoughts on Trump's plan to relocate Gazans to Jordan and Egypt, and how do you see it affecting the authorities in those countries?

A: Donald Trump's threats against King Abdullah of Jordan and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt place both leaders in an existential bind. If they accept Trump's plan, they risk being toppled either by a Palestinian rebellion inside Jordan or by a Muslim Brotherhood upsurge in Egypt. It is important to remember that the Muslim Brotherhood's party in Jordan outperformed expectations in recent elections, which served as a real referendum on disapproval of King Abdullah's handling, or mishandling, of the Gaza genocide.

If these leaders accept Trump's plan, they could fall, and if they do not accept it, Trump could potentially destroy them because they rely heavily on U.S. military and humanitarian assistance. The problem for them is that they have done nothing, nor has Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman done anything of substance, to challenge U.S. policy on Gaza or the support of the genocide during the more malleable Biden administration. They did not set up economic boycotts as King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz did when he ruled Saudi Arabia in the early 1970s, which actually helped Egypt regain its own territory from Israel after 1973. They did nothing.

As a result, when Trump sees weakness, he moves in for the kill. This is what he is doing to all allies around the board who seem weak, whether it's Denmark over Greenland or Panama over some Chinese holdings in the Panama Canal. Trump preys on weak allies, understanding that they are actually vassals, and extracts as many concessions as possible. The Sunni regimes have shown so much weakness that Trump has seized all the leverage in the world over them and placed them in this ex-

istential bind.

In contrast, for example, the Ansarullah government in Yemen stood firm and resisted the genocide. The Trump administration has no leverage over Yemen now, only a military option. The only thing standing in the way of Trump's ethnic cleansing plan in Gaza is the resistance inside Gaza and its allies in the Axis of Resistance.

Q: Could you provide more information about the arrest of a Grayzone journalist by Israeli authorities while he was attempting to report on the aftermath of Iran's attack in October?

A: Our reporter at The Greyzone, Jeremy Loffredo, was arrested by the Israeli authorities late last year and placed on trial, accused of assisting an enemy in wartime for doing reporting that other reporters credentialed by the Israeli government had done. His reporting was on Iran's retaliation against Israeli military and intelligence sites for Israel's attacks on Iran's sovereignty, including the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh on Iranian soil and Israel's attack on Iran's consulate in Damascus, among other events.

Jeremy didn't uncover anything new; he simply confirmed that Iran's attacks were targeting military sites, whereas Israel's attacks target civilians or involve the assassination of leaders through decapitation strikes. I believe Jeremy was arrested for political reasons because he contributes to The Greyzone, and they don't like our politics. The charges against him have not been dropped, but he was essentially told to self-deport; they told him to leave the country.

During his detention, Jeremy witnessed abuse in Jerusalem's Russian Compound, where he heard Palestinian detainees screaming. He was held alone in a cell for days with very little food and water. Soldiers taunted him, took photos of him, and mocked him. This treatment is consistent with how Israel treats reporters. Had he been Palestinian, he would have been much more harshly abused, or as we've seen in Gaza, many Palestinian reporters have been simply assassinated for bringing the truth to light.

Iran crowned champions of 2025 CAFA Women's Futsal Championship

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Tajikistan 10-1 on Sunday to win the 2025 CAFA Women's Futsal Championship for fourth time.

Maral Torkman (two goals), Fereshteh Karimi (two goals), Roghayeh Soume'eh, Nasimeh Gholami, Zahra Kianimanesh, Fatemeh Hosseini, and Mahsa Alimadadi were on target for Team Melli.

Iran defeated Uzbekistan 9-0, Kyrgyzstan 10-0, and Turkmenistan 5-1.

Iran have won four titles out of four editions.

The tournament, organized by the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA), was held in Dushanbe for the third time on Feb. 9 to 16.

Faraji wins silver at 2025 WTT Youth Contender Cappadocia

TEHRAN – Iranian rising table tennis star Benyamin Faraji claimed a silver medal at the 2025 WTT Youth Contender Cappadocia.

He lost to India's Ankur Bhattacharjee 3-0 (11-9, 16-14, 14-12) in the final of U-19 Boys Singles.

The competition was held at the Nev?ehir Hac? Bekta? Veli University Sport Center in Cappadocia, Nevsehir, Turkey from February 12 to 15.

Yakhchali to miss two matches in 2025 Asia Cup qualifiers

TEHRAN – Behnam Yakhchali will most likely miss two matches against India and Kazakhstan at the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup qualification.

Team Melli are scheduled to play India on Feb. 21 in Tehran in Group E and meet Kazakhstan three days later in Astana.

Iran sit first in the group with seven points, followed by Qatar (six), India (5) and Kazakhstan (5).

The 29-year-old guard had also missed the match against Qatar, where Iran lost to Qatar 78-77 after 19 years.

Iranian women win golds at 2025 Karate1 Series A

TEHRAN – Fatemeh Sadeghi and Fatemeh Saadati of Iran claimed two gold medals at the Karate1 Series A - Larnaca 2025.

Sadeghi seized the gold medal after defeating her Japanese rival Sasara Eguchi in the female kata.

Egyptians Habiba Mousa and Jana Khamis won two bronze medals.

Saadati also seized a gold medal, beating Japanese opponent Ruan Mukai 5-2 in the Female Kumite -55Kg.

Japan's Akari Harada and Tzu-Yun Chen from Chinese Taipei clinched two bronze medals.

The 2025 Karate1 Series A is being held in Larnaca, Cyprus from Feb. 14 to 16.

Iran down Yemen at 2025 AFC U20 Asian Cup

TEHRAN – Iran closed in on a place in the knockout stage of the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2025 after cruising 6-0 past Yemen in their Group C tie at the Shenzhen Youth Football Training Base Pitch 1 on Sunday.

Iran led from start to finish with Abolfazl Zamani starring with a brace with the Central

Asian side to be sure of advancing should Indonesia fail to beat Uzbekistan in Sunday's later game.

Abolfazl Zamani opened the scoring for Iran in the 26th minute after he pounced on a loose ball at the top of the box before sending a stinging shot into the top left corner.

Zamani netted his second in the 34th minute after Yemen failed to deal with a cross from Yaghoob Barajeh, leaving the Iran No 16 to head home past a rooted Mokref, the-afc.com report-ed.

Yemen fell further behind in the 42nd minute after Esmaeil Gholizadeh pounced on a poor pass from Ahmed Al Hajj before slotting the ball into the bottom right corner.

Yemen conceded the fourth following Mohammed Moqbel's own goal, leaving the West Asian side on the ropes going into the break.

Iran stretched their lead a minute after the restart when Abbas Kahrizi sent a perfect cross for Ghandipour to nod home.

Yemen suffered further agony, conceding again in the 72nd minute after Nima Andarz supplied a cross for Abolfazl Zoleikhaei to finish with a close-range diving header.

Iran fall to Kazakhstan at Development Cup-2025

TEHRAN – Iran were defeated by Kazakhstan 2-0 in the Development Cup 2025 on Sunday.

The tournament is taking place in Minsk, Belarus, from Feb. 15 to 21.

Coached by Abbas Chamanian, the Iranian team are set to face Azerbaijan and Russia on Monday and Wednesday, respectively.

The competition features youth teams from Belarus, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, along with the Block-chain Sports Academies Team from Brazil.

Iran's women's football team to play Puerto Rico

TEHRAN – Iran's women's football team will meet Puerto Rico in two friendly matches next week.

Team Melli Banovan will first play Puerto Rico on Feb. 23 in Istanbul, Turkey and play the team three days later.

The friendlies will be held as part of preparation for the 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup qualification.

Maryam Azmoun, Iran's women head coach, has called up 20 players to the team.

Persepolis to meet Al Nassr in must-win Game: ACL MD8

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team have to overcome Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr Club on Monday if the team are to keep their hopes of advancing to the AFC Champions League Elite 2024/25 knockout stage.

The Iran side will head into their final League Stage tie on six points and out of the qualification spots, with their fate also no longer in their hands.

The 4-1 defeat to Al Hilal SFC was a body blow for two-time AFC Champions League runners-up Persepolis, with the Saudi Arabian side simply too strong on the night.

The Iranian giants, however, can't afford to have another off day as Al Nassr have also been firing on all cylinders and will be tough opponents to overcome.

Ronaldo led with two goals in the 4-0 win over UAE's Al Wasl FC as Al Nassr consolidated their third-place position in the standings.

It has an outside chance of finishing higher and will be looking for a win to end the League Stage campaign with a bang.

The match will be held at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran Monday night.

South Pars pressure boosting project: a strategic step in developing shared fields

TEHRAN – Iran's First Vice President has highlighted the strategic importance of the South Pars pressure boosting project, emphasizing its role in increasing production and creating jobs.

According to a report by Shana, on February 16, Mohammad Reza Aref, during a meeting on the execution plan for the South Pars gas field pressure boosting project, praised the coordination between the Ministry of Oil and the National Development Fund to establish a financial framework for this critical project.

Aref stated that the development and utilization of shared oil and gas fields remain a top priority for the 14th government, underscoring that the implementation of this project will contribute



significantly to boosting the oil industry's growth, increasing the country's GDP, and, most importantly, generating employment.

Iran, an economic investment, commercial production paradise

By Seyed Parsa Alavi

TEHRAN – In recent years, the global economy has been seeking new investment opportunities and expanding commercial production.

With its vast natural resources, educated workforce, and strategic geographical location, Iran has the potential to be one of the best destinations for foreign investment.

With the lifting of sanctions and the establishment of favorable economic conditions, investing in Iran will not only be feasible but also cost-effective and profitable.

One of the key indicators for justifying foreign investment is labor costs, which, compared to leading production countries such as China and India, make Iran a competitive option.

1) Affordable Labor: A Primary Incentive for Foreign Investment

One of the most important criteria for investment in manufacturing industries is labor costs.

Studies indicate that, despite domestic inflation, labor costs in Iran remain more affordable than in many Asian countries.

In past decades, China has been known as the world's factory. However, with economic growth and an improved standard of living, labor costs in the country have increased significantly. Currently, the average monthly wage of a Chinese worker in the manufacturing sector ranges between \$600 and \$800, a substantial rise compared to previous years.

India is also a key investment destination in the manufacturing sector. Labor costs in India are lower than in China, yet an Indian worker still earns an average of \$300 to \$500 per month.

In Iran, however, given the current exchange rate, wages are relatively lower than in both China and India. The average monthly wage of an Iranian worker in the manufacturing sector, depending on the type of job, ranges between \$200 and \$350. This makes Iran one of the most attractive countries for foreign investors.

Furthermore, Iran has one of the youngest workforces in the region, with many individuals possessing university degrees and technical skills. Unlike some developed countries facing an aging population, Iran benefits from a young, dynamic, and highly productive workforce. Foreign investors can leverage this affordable yet skilled labor force to reduce production costs and increase profitability.

2) Natural Resources and Cheap Energy

Iran is one of the largest holders of oil and gas reserves in the world, and the cost of en-

ergy production and distribution in the country is significantly lower than in many industrialized nations.

This provides a competitive advantage for energy-intensive industries such as petrochemicals, steel, and automotive manufacturing.

Foreign investors can benefit from inexpensive electricity and gas to reduce operational costs—a challenge in countries like China and India due to increasing demand.

3) Iran's Geopolitical and Strategic Location

Iran is situated at the crossroads of three continents—Asia, Europe, and Africa—and offers rapid and cost-effective access to major global markets through the Silk Road, international railways, southern ports, and the North-South Corridor.

This strategic position makes Iran a regional trade and transit hub.

Investors can use Iran as a production base for exports to surrounding markets, including the Persian Gulf countries, Russia, Europe, and Central Asia.

4) Developed Industrial Infrastructure

Iran has over 500 industrial parks, strategic ports, and an extensive transportation network. Its roads, railways, and international airports enable fast and cost-effective exports. Additionally, Iran has a long history of production and exports in various industries, including automotive, petrochemicals, mining, and agriculture. These infrastructures, combined with low production costs, make Iran an ideal destination for foreign investors.

5) A Large and Growing Domestic Market

With a population of over 85 million, Iran represents one of the largest consumer markets in the region.

This vast domestic market creates numerous opportunities for foreign companies looking to introduce their products to Iranian consumers. Additionally, the expanding middle class and modern lifestyle trends in major cities have increased domestic demand for high-quality goods.

Investors can take advantage of this domestic market for product distribution and re-export to regional countries.

Conclusion: Iran—One of the Most Affordable Destinations for Commercial Production

Considering the factors mentioned above, Iran can be one of the most cost-effective destinations for commercial production. If international agreements are reached and sanctions are lifted, Iran could become one of the most attractive centers for production and investment worldwide.

Tehran hosts intl. masterbatch, polymer compounds exhibition

TEHRAN – Iran's 9th International Masterbatch and Polymer Compounds Conference and Exhibition opened with the presence of Ebrahim Sheikh, Deputy Minister of Public Industries at the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade.

The two-day event, held on February 16-17 at the Olympic Hotel in Tehran, is organized by the Iranian Association of Masterbatch and Polymer Compound Producers.

The conference focuses on advancements in the masterbatch and polymer compounds industry, future trends in compounding, new technological and economic tools aligned with global markets, and the role of the industry in the sustainable development of the plastic value chain.

According to Khorasani, the conference secretary, the sector's production capacity stands at five million tons, with 500 manufacturers, including over 100 knowledge-based companies.

Iran, Kazakhstan strengthen trade ties, aim for \$3b in exchanges

TEHRAN – Iran and Kazakhstan have reaffirmed their commitment to expanding economic and trade relations, with both countries aiming to increase bilateral trade to \$3.0 billion.

During a business forum in Tehran attended by Iranian Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji and Kazakh Trade and Integration Minister Arman Shakkaliyev, officials and private sector representatives discussed economic cooperation.

Nouri emphasized that while Iran and Kazakhstan have made continuous efforts to enhance political, economic, and cultural ties, their collaboration still falls short of its full potential.

He highlighted the importance of bilateral trade in sectors such as agriculture, mining, tourism, and industry, noting that Iran's strategic position in West Asia and Kazakhstan's role in Central Asia create exceptional opportunities for businesses.

He also stressed the need for stronger trade infrastructure, enhanced transport links, and supportive policies to facilitate sustainable economic growth.

Nouri pointed to the roadmap agreement signed between the two governments, which sets a \$3.0 billion trade target, as a sign of their serious commitment to expanding ties.

He also underscored the importance of addressing banking and trade regulations, resolving quarantine issues related to livestock and plant products, and fostering mutual trust to support commercial exchanges.

Also, during the forum, Shahpour Alaei-Moghaddam, Iran's deputy minister of agriculture, described the growing trade between Iran and Kazakhstan as a reflection of Tehran's broader regional engagement strategy.

He noted that bilateral trade reached \$302 million in the first 11 months of 2024, marking an 8.1 percent increase compared to the previous year.

He also pointed to the formation of joint agricultural committees,



trade agreements, and research collaborations as key tools in strengthening economic ties.

Tehran, Astana to boost trade under EAEU agreement

During his visit to Tehran, Shakkaliyev also met with Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Mohammad Atabak in which Atabak also reiterated that that Tehran and Astana aim to increase their economic and trade exchanges to \$3.0 billion, in line with agreements reached by the leaders of both countries.

He emphasized that the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) trade agreement would facilitate interbank transactions between Iranian and Kazakh traders.

In the meeting, which was also attended by the Kazakh ambassador to Tehran, and an accompanying economic and trade delegation, Atabak noted that despite the long-standing economic and commercial ties between Iran and Kazakhstan, the current trade volume does not reflect the full potential of their relationship.

Atabak highlighted that senior officials from both countries are committed to expanding trade in line with their industrial and economic capabilities, stating that achieving a \$3.0 billion trade volume is within reach.

He pointed out that banking obstacles remain a major challenge in bilateral trade, but under the EAEU agreement, these barriers are expected to be removed.

The official emphasized Iran's extensive mineral resources, stat-

ing that Iran can supply all types of metallic and non-metallic minerals required by Astana.

He also noted that barter trade could be an option based on mutual needs.

He also highlighted Iran's expertise in various fields, including technical and engineering services, and expressed interest in expanding knowledge exchange and cooperation in these sectors.

He stressed the importance of logistics and railway transport in boosting trade volume between the two countries.

Atabak welcomed the prospect of mutual food exports and underscored the need to meet agreed-upon standards.

He concluded by announcing the formation of a working group to operationalize areas of cooperation at the expert level, assigning specialized deputy ministers from the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry to oversee various aspects of Iran-Kazakhstan collaboration.

Challenges in banking and transport hinder trade growth

In a separate meeting, Iranian Chamber of Commerce Head Samad Hassanzadeh stressed that trade volume between the two countries does not reflect their full industrial and commercial potential.

He noted that Iran currently imports agricultural products and semi-assembled engines from Kazakhstan, while Iran has strong export potential in food industries, petrochemicals, engineering ser-

vices, and construction projects.

Hassanzadeh called for the swift implementation of previous trade agreements, pointing out that many signed memorandums have not been effectively put into practice.

He also suggested expanding tourism and academic exchanges, including student scholarships, to deepen bilateral cooperation.

He emphasized that overcoming logistical and banking hurdles would be essential to reaching the \$3 billion trade target.

Amir Abedi, head of the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber of Commerce, identified financial transactions as the main barrier to trade expansion, urging both governments to facilitate banking operations and ensure Iranian businesses can operate smoothly in Kazakhstan.

Meanwhile, Amir Yousefi, head of the Gorgan Chamber of Commerce, noted that around 7,000 ethnic Kazakhs reside in Iran's Golestan province and suggested greater Kazakh investment in the Incheh-Borun Free Trade Zone.

Shakkaliyev, for his part, reiterated his country's commitment to increasing trade volume, highlighting a delegation of over 50 Kazakh companies from 14 provinces that attended the Tehran forum.

He identified construction materials, medical equipment, machinery, and food industries as key areas for boosting bilateral trade, suggesting that engineering services alone could add \$500 million to annual trade.

He stressed that banking issues must be resolved to facilitate higher trade volumes and said Kazakhstan has proposed solutions to improve financial cooperation. He also underscored the importance of transportation infrastructure, calling for better utilization of the International North-South Transit Corridor to streamline logistics.

As a step toward deeper economic integration, Shakkaliyev proposed launching ten large-scale joint industrial projects, with implementation plans to be finalized in an upcoming Iran-Kazakhstan Economic Committee meeting in April.

Iran's non-oil exports to neighbors rise by 28%

TEHRAN – Iran exported 75.38 million tons of non-oil goods to its 15 neighboring countries in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024-January 19, 2025), valued at \$29.78 billion—an increase of 24 percent in weight and 28 percent in value compared to the previous year.

These exports accounted for 59.2 percent of Iran's total export weight and 62.4 percent of its total export value during this period, according to Ruhollah Latifi, spokesperson for the Trade Development Committee of the House of Industry, Mining, and Trade.

Overall trade between Iran and its neighbors reached \$59.7 billion, marking a 19.2 percent in-

crease in value and a 16.2 percent rise in weight compared to the same period last year.

Latifi noted that from the beginning of the year until late January, Iran exchanged 93.57 million tons of non-oil goods with its neighbors, representing 59.2 percent of the country's total trade volume and 57.5 percent of its total trade value.

Iraq was Iran's top export market, purchasing \$10.18 billion worth of goods, reflecting a 31 percent growth. The UAE followed with \$5.96 billion, up 12 percent, and Turkey ranked third with \$5.54 billion, an increase of 43 percent. Afghanistan and Pakistan were the next largest buyers, importing \$1.97 billion and \$1.94 billion, with growth rates of 31 percent and 16 percent, respectively.

Iran secures Chinese financing for 1,758 MW solar power plant project

TEHRAN – Iran's Economic Council has approved a financial foreign loan (financing) of 3.897 billion yuan to fund the construction of solar power plants with a total capacity of 1,758 megawatts (MW) across the country.

The approval, signed by Hamid Pourmohammadi, head of the Planning and Budget Organization (PBO), was sent to the Ministry of Energy on February 16.

It authorizes the ministry to utilize the financing for the solar plants, based on Article "C" of Note 1 of the National Budget Law.

The project aims to supply the necessary equipment for building 586 solar plants with a capacity of 3.0 MW each nationwide.

The total project cost is 4.585 billion yuan, with 3.897 billion yuan constituting the principal foreign loan, equivalent to 85 percent of the total contract amount.

The remaining 687.758 million yuan represents the advance payment, making up 15 percent of the contract value.

Foreign financing terms for the project include a repayment cap of 4.893 billion yuan, including 3.897 billion yuan in principal and 996 million yuan in interest and related costs.

The Ministry of Energy is responsible for repaying the loan from revenues generated by electricity sales through the green energy market, bilateral contracts with industries, or electricity exports, without burdening the government's financial resources.

The advance payment will be funded through electricity exports or other resources from the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA).

Meanwhile, Iran has signed an

agreement with private investors to develop solar power plants by the summer of 2025, aiming to address the country's electricity supply imbalance.

Mohsen Tarzatab, Deputy Energy Minister and Head of SATBA stated during the signing ceremony that private sector involvement is a positive step and that all efforts must be directed toward resolving power shortages.

"Our priority is to entrust existing infrastructure to the private sector before the government intervenes," Tarzatab said.

He added that Iran is pursuing special permits from the Supreme National Security Council to expedite private sector projects.

Addressing concerns about power distribution companies, Tarzatab assured that any arising issues would be promptly resolved.

He also noted that private firms generating export revenues would be eligible for foreign currency obligation waivers.

Last week, the head of Tehran Regional Electricity Company said that a three-megawatt solar power plant worth approximately 900 billion rials (\$1.8 million) will be constructed in the Iranian capital.

Farhad Shabihi announced the launch of construction for 120 megawatts of renewable power plants, each with a capacity of three megawatts or less, in Tehran Province, IRIB reported.

"In conjunction with the 46th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, construction of the three-megawatt solar power plant, valued at 900 billion rials, has begun in northern Tehran. Once operational, it will be connected to the national power grid," he said.

Hezbollah warns against Israel's plot

TEHRAN - Israel is stirring the pot and causing trouble in Lebanon in line with its attempts to demonize the Hezbollah resistance movement.

Lebanon has recently experienced protests following the authorities' decision to stop two Iranian flights from landing at the Rafik Hariri International Airport.

One of the flights had been scheduled for Thursday and another for Friday.

Lebanese Minister of Public Works and Transport Faye Rasamni ordered the cancellation under pressure from Israel.

Citing a private warning from the United States, a Lebanese security source claimed that Israel would target the airport should the aircraft land.

According to AFP, the White House had also warned Lebanon that Israel could shoot down the two Iranian flights.

The regime has accused Iran of using civilian planes to smuggle cash to Hezbollah without providing any evidence to back up its claim.

Dozens of Lebanese nationals were stranded in Tehran after Mahan Air was informed that its aircraft to Beirut would not be able to land.

The refusal to let Iranian planes to land in Beirut sparked protests in the Mediterranean nation. Protesters took to the streets to condemn the cancellation of the civilian flights.

The demonstrators chanted slogans against the United States and Israel.



The Lebanese army clashed with protesters on Saturday. Security forces threw tear gas at protesters who had staged a sit-in on the airport road.

They were angry at the government for enforcing the ban under the influence of Tel Aviv and Washington.

A UNIFIL convoy in Beirut was also attacked. Israel and the United States put the blame on pro-Hezbollah protesters. But the resistance movement condemned the attack on the international peacekeeping force.

Hezbollah said in a statement on Sunday it "affirms its firm rejection of any targeting of [UNIFIL] as well as any harm to public and private property."

The resistance group criticized the army for clashing with demonstrators urging Lebanon's government to "assume its responsibility in protecting the peaceful protesters."

It called on the Lebanese government to "reverse its decision to prevent Iranian planes from

landing at Beirut Airport, and take serious measures to prevent the Israeli enemy from imposing its dictates and violating national sovereignty."

Hezbollah characterized the protests as "a peaceful movement and a civilized expression of popular opposition to unjustified submission to foreign dictates."

Israel and Hezbollah began exchanging cross-border fire on October 8, 2023. That was a day after Israel launched war on Gaza. The Lebanese resistance movement struck strategic military sites in Israel with drones and missiles in a show of solidarity with Palestinians in the enclave.

On September 23, 2024, Israel launched a massive bombing campaign on Lebanon. The regime martyred Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in an airstrike in Beirut days later. The Israeli army also sent its troops into southern Lebanon on October 1. But the regime was compelled to sign a ceasefire with Hezbollah in late November after failing to meet its military objectives.

Prior to the implementation of the ceasefire, Israel had killed nearly 4,000 people in Lebanon.

Besides, Israel has repeatedly violated the ceasefire, killing civilians and army soldiers.

The Lebanese army, however, has been unable to take any tough measures to retaliate against Israel for its crimes.

Based on the ceasefire deal, Israel must withdraw its troops from Lebanon, but the regime has been spinning a tale to provide justifications for remaining in southern Lebanon.

Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982 and occupied parts of the country until it was driven out by Hezbollah in 2000.

In 2006, Israel also launched a full-scale military offensive against Lebanon. Hezbollah, however, humiliated the regime and forced its military to retreat in disgrace.

Israel has failed to defeat Hezbollah militarily. The regime is now seeking to spark unrest in Lebanon to pit people and the government against each other.

Israel is further attempting to sabotage a funeral that is set to be held for martyr Nasrallah this month.

The funeral is scheduled to take place on February 23 in Beirut.

Israel is concerned that the significant attendance of Lebanese individuals at the ceremony, along with the increasing support for the resistance movement, will underscore the Tel Aviv regime's military setbacks.

Rubio's regional ruckus: Pushing Trump's Gaza vision amid global backlash



Londoners march to the US embassy in the British capital to denounce Trump's controversial proposal for the Gaza Strip

a war-torn area."

Trump has stressed that Palestinians in Gaza should leave the territory, which experts say would amount to ethnic cleansing.

According to the US president, the proposal aims to transform the coastal area into the "Riviera of the Middle East."

The former real estate mogul-turned-president has exerted pressure on regional countries, in particular Jordan and Egypt, to embrace a forced removal. Both Cairo and Amman have dismissed the suggestion.

Some other regional countries, including Saudi Arabia as well as Washington's Western allies have criticized Trump's proposal. Protests have also emerged worldwide in opposition to this action.

On Saturday, pro-Palestine protesters marched through central London to denounce Trump's proposal. Waving Palestinian flags and holding placards that read "hands off Gaza," the protesters marched to the US embassy located in Nine Elms, southwest London. Demonstrators displayed signs that stated, "Stand up to Trump" and "Mr Trump, Canada is not your 51st state. Gaza is not your 52nd."

Similar protests were held in several cities across the United States.

Protesters in the Turkish cities of Ankara and Istanbul also held rallies to express their resentment against the US president's plan. Some other cities across the world saw similar protests.

From page 1 ▶ Trump floated the idea during a joint press conference alongside the visiting Israeli premier on February 4 in the Oval Office, saying, "The US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it too."

Later, the US president also said that he is "committed to buying and owning Gaza."

During a meeting with King Abdullah of Jordan in the Oval Office on Tuesday, he doubled down on his proposal. "We're going to take it. We're going to hold it," he told journalists.

Trump also responded with a dismissive attitude to a question on whether he would consider purchasing Gaza as part of his takeover plan.

"We're not going to buy. There's nothing to buy. We will have Gaza. No reason to buy. It's Gaza. It's

Palestinian prisoners were beaten ahead of release

From page 1 ▶ Last week, the Israeli regime claimed that captives released from Gaza appeared frail. However, critics accused Israel of hypocrisy, pointing out that it has been starving the people of Gaza during the 15-month plus U.S.-backed genocide, leaving most of the 2.3 million population malnourished.

"The effects of torture and oppression were evident on the prisoners' bodies, underscoring the urgent need for a firm stance to hold the occupation accountable for its crimes," stated the Palestinian Prisoners' Media Office.

The statement further emphasized, "Just as the occupation demands the return of its prisoners, our prisoners have the right to freedom and dignity. Denying this right is nothing less than collusion with the executioner."

Ameer Abu Ra'adaha, a 51-year-old Palestinian inmate released on Saturday after 32 years in prison, revealed that prisoners sensed an exchange was imminent days before it happened. He explained that Israeli guards raided their cells and physically assaulted them in the lead-up to their release.

Abu Hamza, the military spokesperson for the Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, stated, "As the Palestinian resistance releases a number of enemy captives, it reaffirms the humane treatment they receive in captivity. Meanwhile, the enemy continues to torment and abuse our prisoners, even spoiling their joy of freedom until the very last moments of their release." He highlighted, "What was witnessed on Saturday, the clear freedom and humane treatment of the Zionist captive Alexander Trufanov by the Al-Quds Brigades, serves as the strongest evidence of this."

"What the enemy did, forcing our captives to wear clothes marked with 'We will not forget, and we will not forgive,' along with the visible signs of their deteriorating health upon release, reveals the truth that the unjust world refuses to see: the brutality of the Zionist enemy and the cruelty of its jailers toward our prisoners."

The Palestinian resistance spokesman added, "The difference is stark between how we treat enemy captives and how the enemy treats the hostages of our free people."

Abu Hamza also noted, "All countries, especially the United States, which demands that the resistance release all enemy captives, must also demand the same from the occupation."

He emphasized that the international community should not turn a blind eye to the "horrific scenes of suffering, abuse, and systematic killing inflicted upon our captives, the rightful owners of the land, the homeland, and the sacred cause, who endure all forms of torture in the occupation's prisons, living within them as if in mass graves."

Condemnation from human rights organizations is steadily growing over the dire health conditions of Palestinian prisoners recently released from Israeli prisons.

Many of these prisoners display physical signs of torture, including scars, bruises, and severe malnutrition. Human rights groups have decried the inhumane treatment endured by these victims, calling for urgent international intervention.

The visible effects of the abuse they suffered serve as a stark reminder of the harsh conditions within notorious Israeli detention centers, sparking widespread calls for accountability and justice for the victims of these mass violations.

A new era of US-Israeli guardianship over Lebanon has begun!

From page 1 ▶ Prime Minister Nawaf Salam claimed that protecting the airport is a priority without mentioning the Lebanese stranded in Iran or those harmed by the army's rabble-rousing attack.

Salam's body language and obvious stuttering revealed the truth: his response was not to the European sanctions on Iranian aviation as he alleged but to decisive foreign orders.

If this is the case, the European sanctions apply to Iranian passenger planes that land in Doha, Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, Istanbul, etc. However, Salam is only responding to the US-Israeli orders.

In a meeting with former US Secretary of State Blinken on October 22 last year Netanyahu stressed the "need to change the political reality in Lebanon."

What is happening today is an implementation of what Netanyahu and Blinken announced, which is a complete political, economic, and

whenever necessary military guardianship over Lebanon.

Before the recent September-November US-led Israeli aggression on Lebanon, Netanyahu did not miss an opportunity to claim that Hezbollah controls Beirut Airport.

Netanyahu's goal was to find a means of pressure on Lebanon, as an Israeli legal committee threatened international airlines and insurance companies, claiming that "flying to Beirut Airport amounts to a war crime due to providing assistance to Hezbollah."

Washington's proxies in Lebanon have decided to take the level of The Escalation & De-escalation Policy to the max.

An informed source confirmed to the Tehran Times that Washington's proxies seek to impose a fait accompli. Despite the dangers it involves, what is happening is a retribution against a key component of the Lebanese, the supporters of the Shiite duo.

In turn, what is required is to confront this anti-Lebanon sovereignty project. One of the results of the recent Israeli war on Lebanon is the emergence of the resistance community's connection to Hezbollah.

This community is the pillar of the resistance's strength in the political and non-political fields; it has defeated the Israeli army and expelled it from our land in 2000, and it will prevent Israeli-American guardianship over Lebanon.

In 1993, the Lebanese army, in a politically motivated decision, opened fire on a peaceful Hezbollah march. Hezbollah dealt with the crime wisely and calmly, emphasizing that the gun should be aimed at the Israeli enemy in the south only.

Today, Hezbollah will also deal wisely and the gun will only be directed at the Israeli enemy in the south. This is a battle to defend Lebanon's sovereignty, the interests of its people, and to preserve the precious blood of the martyrs.

Trump team to start Russia-Ukraine peace talks in Saudi Arabia

A Ukrainian official said Kyiv wasn't informed and doesn't plan to attend

MUNICH — Senior Trump administration officials are heading to Saudi Arabia to start peace talks with Russian and Ukrainian negotiators, according to a Republican lawmaker and two U.S. officials familiar with the plan.

However, a Ukrainian official told POLITICO that the announcement of the Saudi talks came as a surprise to Kyiv, and as of now there were no plans to send a delegation.

The U.S. officials said that National security adviser Mike Waltz will join Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Steve Witkoff, the president's Middle East envoy, in the coming days to start talks on ending the war.

However, Trump's special envoy for Ukraine-Russia talks, retired General Keith Kellogg, will not be in attendance, the officials said.

The officials also said there are no plans for representatives from other major European powers to join the talks. That could rattle NATO allies which have publicly urged President Donald Trump to ensure they have a seat at the negotiating table.

The meeting could mark a major moment in Trump's quest for a peace process, and would also mark the first major meeting of Russian and Ukrainian representatives since the onset of the war in 2022.

Mike McCaul, a Republican lawmaker from Texas, confirmed the plans for Waltz and Witkoff to join Rubio in Saudi Arabia to start talks between the two warring sides during an interview at the POLITICO Pub on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

Two U.S. officials, granted anonymity to discuss sensitive negotiation matters, confirmed the plans but did not elaborate on other details about the meetings, including which Ukrainian or Russian negotiators would take part.

A spokesperson for the Ukrainian government and the State Department didn't respond to a request for comment.

Trump on Wednesday told reporters he expects to hold a face-to-face meeting with Russian leader Vladimir Putin in Saudi Arabia. "We ultimately expect to meet," he said. "We'll meet in Saudi Arabia, see if we can get something something done."

At the Munich conference, top European officials stressed Ukraine must be directly involved in any talks between Trump and Putin.

"There will only be peace if Ukraine's sovereignty is secured," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the conference on Saturday. "A dictated peace will therefore never find our support."

McCaul, who is former chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, agreed. "The president wants peace. But it's got to be a deal where the Ukrainians are at the table in this deal now," he said.

Hundreds of top foreign leaders and national security officials flocked to Munich for the annual security conference. The gathering underscored deep unease and anxiety among Europeans over future American commitment to the transatlantic alliance under Trump, laid bare after a fiery speech by U.S. Vice President JD Vance that shocked many attendees.

European officials and U.S. lawmakers have stressed that any peace deal must be negotiated in a way that doesn't simply pause the fighting and allow Russia to rearm and regroup to launch a new invasion in the future.

Ahead of the conference, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth excluded the prospect of Ukraine joining NATO as part of peace negotiations, and also ruled out American troops or NATO's collective defense provision being extended to any future peacekeeping force. Those comments drew fire even from a top Republican lawmaker, and Hegseth later partly walked the comments back.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

European leaders to hold emergency summit on Ukraine

European leaders are set to gather next week for an emergency summit on the war in Ukraine, in response to concerns the US is moving ahead with Russia on peace talks that will lock out the continent, BBC reported.

Sir Keir Starmer, who is expected to attend the summit in Paris, said it was a "once-in-a-generation moment for our national security" and it was clear Europe must take a greater role in NATO.

It comes after Donald Trump's special envoy to Ukraine said European leaders would be consulted but not take part in any talks between US and Russia over ending the war.

Senior White House figures, including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, are due to meet

Russian negotiators in Saudi Arabia in the coming days. US officials said that Ukraine was also invited - although President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says his country has received no such invitation.

In remarks likely to raise concern in Ukraine and among European allies, special envoy Keith Kellogg said previous negotiations had failed because too many parties had been involved.

"It may be like chalk on the blackboard, it may grate a little bit, but I am telling you something that is really quite honest," he said on Saturday.

Europe remains haunted by the Minsk agreements, a failed ceasefire deal between Ukraine and Russia reached in 2015.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

40,000 people visit four-day tourism fair in Tehran

From Page 1 ▶ Elsewhere in his remarks, Fatemi noted the enthusiastic reception of the event, emphasizing the vibrant atmosphere created by the participation of various Iranian ethnic groups from different provinces. He pointed out that many companies attending the exhibition offered travel discounts, filling their accommodation capacities [for the upcoming Nowruz holidays] and attracting significant public interest.

"Additionally, new air routes to several emerging travel destinations were discussed, and promising agreements were reached between participating countries. One of the key developments from the exhibition was the fostering of new tourism collaborations between Iran and Tajikistan."

Fatemi underscored that this year's exhibition was uniquely focused on Iran, showcasing the diverse tourism potential of each province and the capabilities of the private sector. Notably, a dedicated hall was allocated for health tourism, while two halls highlighted culinary tourism, featuring renowned gastronomy brands. Another hall was devoted to coastal tourism.

Fatemi stressed the need for a diverse range of accommodation options to cater to different economic segments. He acknowledged existing challenges in hospitality, transportation, and other tourism-related services, emphasizing the importance of infrastructural improvements to



make travel accessible to all citizens.

"Until essential conditions are met, achieving widespread tourism success will be difficult. It is crucial to ensure affordability for all social classes while also improving infrastructure and offering travel discounts," Fatemi remarked.

He also emphasized the significance of reorganizing holiday schedules and distributing travel periods more evenly throughout the year, stating that such measures would significantly contribute to the development of the tourism industry in Iran.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 28 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Ancient Sarmatian jewelry and artifacts unearthed in Kazakhstan

Archaeologists in Kazakhstan have made an impressive discovery, unearthing over 1,000 artifacts from burial mounds in the Atyrau region, consisting primarily of gold jewelry, weapons, and ceramics. These findings, dated to the 5th century BCE, suggest that the area was not a peripheral region but rather an important center of Sarmatian culture.

The excavations, conducted between 2023 and 2024, focused on three burial mounds known as kurgans, including the prominent "Karabau-2" site. The kurgan is situated about 10 kilometers north of the pueblo of Karabau in the Qyzylqoga district, measuring 70 meters in diameter and rising three meters in height. Within it, nine graves have been discovered: seven of these were very well preserved. Based on the artifacts and burial customs, experts believe these mounds served as burial sites for the interment of high-status individuals, possibly even Sarmatian royalty.

Perhaps the most striking discovery was a 370-gram gold bracelet with elaborate depictions of mountain leopards, along with more than 100 gold ornaments of Sarmatian animalistic style. Such art designs featured leopards, wild boars, and tigers, which testify to the artistic traditions and symbolic motifs of the ancient nomadic people.

The Sarmatians, an ancient Iranian equestrian nomadic group that dominated the Eurasian steppes from the 5th century BCE to the 4th century CE, were known for their warrior culture and elaborate metalwork. They were significant in the history of the region and at times interacted with bordering civilizations like the Romans and Persians. Some

Sarmatians would later ally with the Goths and serve as cavalry within the Byzantine Empire.

Along with gold artifacts, archaeologists found iron and bronze weapons, silver pictograms depicting a saiga antelope and a wolf, and ceramics. Among these were two wooden bowls that were exceptionally well-preserved, an extraordinary rarity in Kazakhstan due to the tendency of wood to decay. Two black touchstones with gold handles were also recovered, likely used to test the purity of precious metals.

The excavations also extended beyond Karabau-2 to the adjacent Karakuduk-1 and Karakuduk-2 mounds, where further graves were discovered containing jewelry, household items, and weapons. Each mound contained between ten to fifteen graves, indicating the area's further importance within Sarmatian society. The graves reveal that the Sarmatians followed Tengrist religious beliefs and were buried with personal belongings, including weapons and ornamentation.

The archaeological team consisted of 20 workers and five museum staff members, who collaborated with anthropologists from Astana and Almaty. Although the burial mounds near Karabau were first recorded in 2005, the recent excavations have added to the understanding of Sarmatian history. Experts estimate that about 500 Sarmatian burial mounds remain in the Atyrau region.

The importance of these discoveries was emphasized at the "Sarmatian Gold" exhibition, where experts presented their findings to the public.

(Source: Archaeology Magazine)

Echoes of Iran



Earring, Parthian era, Iran, ca. 1st–2nd century CE, gold and garnet (pyrope), dimension 3.81 x 2.11 x 3.91 cm, being kept at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Siah Gav Twin Lake: a lesser-known destination for nature enthusiasts in Ilam

TEHRAN – Lakes have long been treasured as serene and picturesque destinations for travelers worldwide, offering a perfect blend of tranquility and adventure. Siah Gav Twin Lake is no exception.

Surrounded by rolling plains and towering mountains, Siah Gav is a breathtaking natural attraction in Abadan county of Ilam province, western Iran. According to local tour guides, it is a must-visit destination for nature lovers, eco-tourists, and adventure seekers.

What sets it apart from other lakes is its fascinating natural structure: two distinct water bodies connected by a naturally formed canal. This canal, approximately 70 meters long, 8 meters wide, and 4 meters deep, allows water to flow seamlessly between the two lakes, creating a dynamic and ever-changing aquatic ecosystem.

The clear, pristine waters of Siah Gav Twin Lake make it an extraordinary sight. Visitors can see up to 30 meters deep into the water, where fish swim in an environment resembling a giant natural aquarium. The lake's transparent waters are not just visually stunning but also teem-



ing with life, making it a paradise for nature enthusiasts.

Geological and ecological significance

Dating back thousands of years, Siah Gav Twin Lake is considered one of Ilam province's most remarkable paleontological phenomena. The lake was formed due to geological transformations, including erosion and shifts in the Earth's layers.

Such a formation has contributed to the lake's unique composition, including its mineral-rich waters, which contain sulfur and other beneficial elements. The

sweet and drinkable water supports a variety of plant species, which exist along its shores.

Activities and attractions

Siah Gav Twin Lake offers a range of activities for visitors. Fishing is a popular pastime, as the lake is home to various fish species.

Hiking around the lake and the surrounding mountainous terrain provides an opportunity for breathtaking views and an up-close experience with Ilam's diverse flora and fauna. The area's peaceful environment makes it ideal for picnicking, birdwatch-

ing, and photography.

During spring and summer, especially during the two-week vocations of the Persian New Year (Nowruz), nomadic communities set up their traditional black tents, known as Siahchador, around the lake. Such nomadic camps help provide visitors with an authentic cultural experience, offering local delicacies and an opportunity to witness the traditional lifestyle of Iran's indigenous tribes.

Accessibility

Reaching the lake is relatively easy. The property is located about 8 kilometers from Abadan, requiring a short walk after crossing a small bridge.

It is approximately a three-hour drive from the city of Ilam and only about 30 minutes from Abadan, making it an ideal destination for a day trip or a weekend getaway.

As mentioned by the tour guides, due to its crystal-clear waters, rich biodiversity, and cultural significance, and above all, the hospitality of the local people, this twin-lake wonder offers a unique and unforgettable experience.

Lichens on Iran's ancient structures unrelated to pollution, expert confirms

TEHRAN – The presence of lichens on Iran's historical stone carvings and ancient structures is solely due to climatic conditions and moisture, rather than industrial pollution, a prominent cultural heritage expert has confirmed.

Zohreh Bozorgmehr, a distinguished figure in cultural heritage and a member of the cultural heritage board for several of Iran's historical cities, emphasized that lichens on bas-relief carvings and stone structures such as Persepolis, Tang-e Chogan, and Bishapur Palace are a result of environmental factors rather than pollutants like petrochemical emissions.

In an interview with ISNA, Bozorgmehr stated, "The existence and growth of lichens on historical monuments are facilitated by moisture and specific climatic and ecological conditions. There is no connection between this phenomenon and industrial pollution."

She acknowledged that while lichen formation can be prevented, it requires specific conservation methods. "Typically, [a special kind of] resin is applied to protect monuments after lichens are removed. However, due to economic constraints, the quality of the resin used may sometimes be compromised, leading to its deterioration and the eventual regrowth of lichens in the same area."

Bozorgmehr noted that Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism undertakes efforts to preserve monuments from lichen-related damage. However, budget limitations can hinder long-term maintenance, allowing lichens to return after resins degrade over time.

As an esteemed evaluator of historical restoration efforts, Bozorgmehr reaffirmed that the most significant lichen growth occurs in Fars province, attributing this to the area's specific environmental conditions.

Addressing the geographical spread of the issue, the former director of the Office of Technical Preservation and Restoration at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage explained that lichen growth is more prevalent in temperate and humid regions, particularly in Fars province.

"Lichens thrive in moist environments. While they can be found in various regions, their presence is notably higher in Fars due to its moderate climate. Other areas such as Hamadan may also experience lichen growth, but to a lesser extent."

The presence of li-



chens on Iran's ancient monuments remains a conservation challenge, but experts stress that understanding the natural causes behind their growth is crucial in implementing effective preservation strategies.

Last year, the director of the Persepolis World Heritage Site, noted that research and field investigation for combating lichens was still underway on the stones in Persepolis. "Lichens are one of the most damaging factors to historical buildings, especially stone monuments. The operation of cleaning lichen in Persepolis is carried out in workshop format by a team of conservation and restoration experts and continues to this day," Alireza Askari-Chaverdi added.

He stated that lichens come in many different types, adding: "According to biologists, lichens are formed by a close association of fungi and algae. In this symbiosis, algae produce organic

materials through photosynthesis, consumed by fungi, and on the other hand, fungi dissolve mineral materials in the stone through acid secretion, consumed by algae. "Although not all experts agree with this theory, all experts, including cultural heritage specialists and biologists, believe that lichen growth can damage stones."

"Due to the diversity of lichens, a definitive and uniform treatment has not yet been presented. Different countries propose different solutions for their cleaning, and although some appropriate methods have been used, there are also criticisms of them."

In the past, experimental conservators used water and brush to clean lichens, which is the easiest method but has many disadvantages, including the spread of lichens, not removing the roots of lichens, and the emergence of new types of lichens, he explained.

Second Announcement



ESCO
Esfahan Steel Company

Row No.	Type of Tender	Tender No.	Publication Frequency	Tender Subject	Deadline for Receiving Tender Documents and Submitting the Bids
1	International Public Tender	3-163729	2	1 Set XRD Device along with Spare Parts	1 March, 2025 (01.03.2025)

Notes:

1- Tender document must be received through ESCO's website.

2- For more information, please refer to ESCO's website

www.esfahansteel.ir (Sourcing System).

Iranian female student wins BRICS, SCO 'Young Researcher of the Year' award

TEHRAN –Hosna Salimi, a student of the Faculty of World Studies at University of Tehran, has been named the 'Young Researcher of the Year' in BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization Young Leaders Award 2025, held on January 24-26 in Kazan, Russia.

Over 400 participants from 13 countries including Iran, India, China, the UAE, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, South Africa, Brazil, Ethiopia, Tajikistan, and Russia competed against each other, IRNA reported.

The jury chose 10 winners in five nominations including 'Media Influencer of the Year', 'Social Entrepreneur of the Year', 'Public Diplomacy Project of the Year', 'Researcher of the Year', 'Eco-initiative of the Year'.

Candidates in the "Young Researcher of the Year" nomination are authors of scientific research in the fields of history, education, art, information technology (IT), law, philosophy, and finance.

The Award aims to identify talented young people and recognize the contribution of young leaders of the BRICS and SCO countries to socially significant areas, attract young people to cooperation, and provide them with opportunities for self-realization in the BRICS and SCO countries.



Iranian female scholars shine in BRICS startups contest

Four Iranian women namely Azam Karami, Mahvash Abyari, Marzieh Ebrahimi, and Seydeh Fateme Hosseini were chosen among the winners of the BRICS Women's Startups Contest 2024.

The event, which aims to spotlight and support women-led startups across BRICS nations and beyond, was launched in June and extended until October 5.

The contest's international panel of judges considered more than 1,000 applications from 30 countries.

The contest winners included 26 projects in such areas as

innovation in energy and infrastructure facilities; artificial intelligence technologies in medicine, education, agriculture, and the aviation industry; the fight against cancer and infertility; and robotics.

Iranian women rank second in terms of the number of winners in startups contest following Russia.

Karami received the award in the nomination 'Artificial Intelligence' for her project titled 'Automatic Fault Detection in Power Transmission Lines'.

The award in the nomination 'Health and Medicine' went to Abyari, and Ebrahimi for their projects named 'Insightfully

scanned glucose monitoring' and 'Immune cell bank for the treatment of cancer and autoimmune diseases', respectively.

Hosseini received the award in the nomination 'Innovation and Infrastructure' with her project called 'Intelligent spoon for tremor alleviation'.

Promoting women's entrepreneurship and unleashing leadership, ensuring the expansion of women's business networks in the BRICS countries are among the main goals of the contest.

It also aims to deepen B2B cooperation among women entrepreneurs, increase the participation of women in the BRICS countries' economies, and create multilateral projects.

The inclusion of women's businesses in global value chains is another goal of the contest.

The general partner of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance series of events is Sberbank PJSC, Russia's largest bank, and a leading global financial institution.

The strategic partner of the Contest is another leader of Russia's banking industry Gazprombank (Joint Stock Company).

Startups from 14 countries will receive communication support from the BRICS Women's Business Alliance.

Isfahan to host 'NEXT' National Technology Award

TEHRAN – The National Technology Award, known as NEXT, is scheduled to be held on February 19 and 20 in the city of Isfahan with the theme 'advanced Iran with emerging technologies'.

The event provides a great opportunity for leading companies, laying the basis for talented youth to become more active in the innovation and technology sector of the country, IRNA quoted Saeed Sarkar, an official with the vice-presidency for science and technology, as saying.

According to Sarkar, 22 innovative projects in three main fields including advanced materials and manufacturing technologies (seven out of fifty-three submitted projects); optics, quantum, and microelectronic technologies (eight out of thirty-one presented projects) and biotechnology and precision medicine (seven out of fifty-one submitted projects) were selected for the final stage of the second edition of the national award, IRNA reported.

The main objectives of the event include expanding research and development initiatives and focusing on leading and advanced technologies.

NEXT also aims to converge technologies to address economic, social, and environmental challenges; support the development of technology companies; encourage industries and large companies to use emerging technologies; and promote synergy, joint produc-



tion, and competition among the country's technologists.

Iran moves up in GII 2024 ranking

According to the 2024 edition of the Global Innovation Index (GII) report, the Islamic Republic of Iran's ranking in knowledge and technology output, as well as business sophistication has improved from 55 and 117 in 2023 to 49 and 110 in 2024, respectively.

Also, the country's ranking in market sophistication and infrastructure has risen by two positions from 19 and 97 in 2023 to 17 and 95 in 2024.

The Global Innovation Index ranks the world's leading economies according to their innovation capabilities.

According to this year's report, Iran ranks second among the countries of the Central and Southern Asian region, unchanged com-

pared with the last two years.

India and Kazakhstan ranked first and third, respectively.

Iran ranks 5 among the 38 lower-middle-income group economies, which has improved compared to the 2023 ranking (6).

As stated in the 2024 edition, over the past four years (2020-2024), the statistical confidence interval for the ranking of Iran in the GII 2024 is between ranks 56 and 80.

Iran performed better in innovation outputs (48) than in innovation inputs (85) in 2024.

Published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the report ranks Iran first in Market capitalization, and Trademarks by origin.

It ranks 3, 5, 8, 17, 19, 23, and 35 in Software spending, Gross capital formation, Graduates in science and engineering, market sophistication, Domestic market scale, Intangible asset intensity, and Tertiary education, respectively.

Iran (Islamic Republic of) ranks highest in Market sophistication (17), Knowledge and technology outputs (49), Creative outputs (52), and Human capital and research (64).

The GII has ranked Tehran as the world's 38th-largest science and technology (S&T) cluster this year, down from 35 last year, according to a report released on Tuesday by the UN's WIPO.

ENGLISH IN USE LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

'Climate change impact on Iran doubles world average'

The effects of climate change on Iran has more than doubled on average compared to other parts of the world, while southern provinces of the country are more likely to bear the consequences, secretary of environmental policy at the center for strategic studies affiliated to the presidential office has said.

"The Hoomand-Absard station in Damavand county in northeast of Tehran experienced a temperature increase of 2.7 °C over the past 50 years, while over the past 100 years, the temperature rise was about 0.76 °C," ISNA quoted Mohammad Darvish as saying on Tuesday. Climate change impact is increasing in southern part of the country, among which Yazd province's condition has raised concern, he said, adding, the industries operating in the province must reduce their dependency on water, otherwise water scarcity might worsen in the region.

تغییرات اقلیمی در ایران دو تا سه برابر جهان

محمد درویش، دبیر سیاست محیط زیست مرکز بررسی‌های استراتژیک نهاد ریاست جمهوری گفته، ایران با تأثیرات تغییر اقلیمی دو تا سه برابر بیشتر از تأثیرات ایجاد شده در کره زمین روبرو شده است.

محمد درویش، در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایسنا با اشاره به گزارش‌های منتشر شده توسط سازمان هواشناسی، وزارت نیرو و سازمان آب، اظهار کرد: ایستگاه هومند آسرد در دامنه‌های کوه دماوند طی نیم قرن اخیر افزایش دمایی حدود ۲.۷ درجه سلیوس را نشان می‌دهد و این مسئله در حالی رخ داده است که در ۱۰۰ سال گذشته، حدود ۰.۷۶ درجه سلیوس افزایش دما داشته‌ایم.

وی اضافه کرد: هر چقدر به شهرهای جنوبی‌تر کشورمان نزدیک می‌شویم، تغییرات اقلیمی هم بیشتر می‌شود به طوری که از این میان یزد وضعیت نگران‌کننده‌ای دارد. باید میزان وابستگی صنایع در یزد نسبت به آب کاهش پیدا کند چرا که در غیر این صورت می‌تواند شتاب خشک‌سالی‌ها را افزایش دهد.

Tehran proposes ROPME to include SDSs in strategic plan



TEHRAN –Attending the 38th meeting of the Regional Organization for the Protection of Marine Environment (ROPME) executive committee (EXCOME 38), Iran has put forward a proposal to incorporate combating sand and dust storms (SDSs) in the Organization's strategic plan.

The EXCOME 38th was held on February 13 in Kuwait. Ahmad-Reza Lahijanzadeh, an official with the Department of Environment (DOE), represented the country in this year's meeting.

During the meeting, participants conferred on the strategic plan focusing on the three main axes: Persian Gulf pollution, climate change, and the preservation of biodiversity. They also agreed to follow up on Iran's offer in expert meetings, ISNA reported.

Even if SDS is not approved as the fourth axe of the strategic plan, it will be added to the climate change issue, Lahijanzadeh noted.

The participants also reviewed the approvals at the 37th executive committee meeting and discussed the generalities of the executive plan for 2025, the administrative, financial, and technical programs of the Secretariat, and several initiatives aimed at achieving sustainability in the ROPME Sea Area (RSA).

It was also decided to follow up on designing a strategic plan through holding consistent virtual meetings, Lahijanzadeh added.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the Iranian and Kuwaiti officials discussed joint marine issues.

Mohamed bin Mubarak Bin Dainah, Kuwaiti Minister of Oil and Environment and Special Envoy for Climate Affairs, chaired the 38th meeting of the executive committee of the ROPME.

During the meeting, he highlighted the importance of strengthening regional cooperation to protect the marine environment. The official also noted that joint coordination among member states contributes to environmental sustainability and addressing challenges that threaten marine resources.

At the 37th executive committee meeting of ROPME in Kuwait, on January 29, 2024, Iran asked ROPME to help the country set up a regional center for biodiversity.

"We have been cooperating with the ROPME for the protection of the marine environment of the region for more than 40 years," Mojtaba Zoljoodi, an official with DOE, said.

"We have tried to take effective measures to prevent and manage marine pollution and preserve its unique environment. But now it's time to adopt a new approach to tackle the problem more seriously," he added.

He went on to say that one of the most effective policies is the use of a road map. A document that defines the strategic direction and paves the way to achieve our goals.

"Happily, this strategic plan has been developed under ROPME guidance and the cooperation of all executive committee representatives.

We have approved the prepared document and only made minor amendments to it. It was handed to the ROPME before the meeting, which we hope to be accepted by other member states," he noted.

Knowledge-based firms to attend CMEF 2025



TEHRAN –Supported by the Innovation and Prosperity Fund, a delegation of Iranian knowledge-based companies will participate in the 91st edition of China International Medical Equipment Fair (CMEF) 2025, which is scheduled to be held from April 8 to 11 in Shanghai.

A wide range of products and services including medical imaging, medical electronic equipment, in-vitro diagnostics, medical robots, medical optics, orthopedics, medical consumables, hospital construction and logistics, disinfection and infection control, and medical services are presented at CMEF.

It will also include events such as the International Manufacturing and Components Design Show (ICMD), China International Rehabilitation and Personal Health Show (CRS), China International Elderly Care and Nursing Show (CECN), China International Home Care Exhibition (Life care), Intelligent Health China (IHC), International Emergency, Rescue & Safe China (ERSC), and Animal Health China (AHC).

The fair will bring together all stakeholders in the healthcare sector and hosts a wide array of participants and visitors. The event will feature over 5,000 participating companies, 310,000 healthcare professionals, and visitors from more than 150 countries and regions.

It serves as a great opportunity for Knowledge-based firms to showcase their latest

products and expand their markets.

Over 60 countries import Iranian medical equipment

On January 13, the head of Iran's Union of Medical Equipment Manufacturers and Exporters said that medical equipment worth around \$20 million is exported to more than 60 countries annually.

More than 70 percent of medical equipment and 100 percent of normal hospital beds are domestically made, IRNA quoted Abdolreza Yaqoubzadeh as saying.

Also, over 95 percent of specific ICU and CCU beds and more than 85 percent of operating room medical equipment such as anesthesia machines and other equipment are manufactured with cutting-edge technology in the country, he added.

Yaqoubzadeh went on to say that the country's need for medical equipment production is three to four billion dollars per year, some one billion dollars of which is imported.

Some 600 medical equipment companies are active in the country, producing around 99 percent of the medicine supplied to the domestic market.

Medical equipment manufacturers in the country produce and supply over 10,000 types of medical equipment to domestic and foreign markets. Now, various pieces of laboratory equipment are manufactured at prices much lower than the same foreign products.



Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**
Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 43051601
Email: info@tehrantimes.com
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
Advertisements Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 43051505
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430



No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.O. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

FEBRUARY 17, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Wealth converts a strange land into homeland and poverty turns a native place into a strange land.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:18 Evening: 18:07 Dawn: 5:24 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:48 (tomorrow)

Iranian miniseries “At the End of the Night” to compete in France’s Series Mania festival

TEHRAN—The 2024 Iranian drama romance television miniseries “At the End of the Night” directed by Ida Panahandeh will compete in the 2025 edition of the Series Mania festival in France, from March 21 to 28.

Picked for the International Panorama section, the series will have its international premiere and compete with nine other works from Spain, Belgium, Brazil, Norway, South Korea, the UK, Iceland, Sweden, and France, ISNA reported.

Written and produced by the real-life creative couple Panahandeh and Arsalan Amiri, the nine-episode series tells the story of a couple living outside of Tehran who try to improve their lives and finances. However, as their efforts are unsuccessful, they part ways following their divorce.

The only participant from Iran and West Asia in the festival, the miniseries was selected from among 400 series submitted to the event from 56 countries.

It delicately and skillfully dissects the separation of a couple shattered by the disillusionment of their social situation.

A powerful and bitter reflection on the sacrifices of a life together, the Iranian miniseries stands out for its deeply authentic characters and the exceptional performances of its two lead actors, Parsa Pirouzfar and Hoda Zeinolabedin.

The other cast members include Rayan Sarlak, Alireza Davoudnezhad, Reza Behboudi, Ehteram Boroumand, Siamak Safari, Kazem Hajirzad and Nahid Moslemi among others.

Ida Panahandeh, 45, was born in Tehran. She holds a master’s degree in film direction from the Arts University of Tehran. In 2009 she took part in the Berlin Talent Campus.

Throughout her work, she has focused on women’s rights. This she did with her debut feature film “Nahid” (2015), which won her

worldwide acclaim. It was screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival where it won a special prize (Prix DE l’Avenir) and was released in France by Memento Films. “Nahid” was also released in theatres in many European countries afterward.

Her second feature “Israfil” (2017) was screened at the BFI London Film Festival and won several awards at International festivals;

“The Nikaidos’ Fall” (2018), her third feature is a co-production of Japan and Hong Kong with Naomi Kawase as the executive producer. The film debuted at the Nara International Film Festival and was released in Japan in January 2019, and then in a few East Asian countries.

“Titi” (2020) her fourth feature film premiered at the 33rd Tokyo International Film Festival. It won three awards at the national and international festivals in 2022.

Two years ago, at the 2023 edition of the festival, the first Iranian series to be nominated in this section, “The Actor” by Nima Javidi took home the grand prix from the jury.

Based in Lille since 2018, Series Mania has become the biggest event dedicated uniquely to television series in Europe. Its festival offers exclusive world premieres of the greatest international series on the big screen, giving its audience – up to 85,500 spectators – eight days of discoveries, parties and masterclasses with some of the most renowned personalities in the series world.

The festival also continues online with SERIES MANIA+, the digital platform for viewing the series and conferences from the program.

At the same time, Series Mania welcomes 3,800 French and foreign professionals of the TV industry at Series Mania Forum for three days of pitching, networking and high-level conferences.

Cartoon of Day



Staying in Gaza
Cartoonist: Emad Hajaj from Jordan

Russian writer praises General Soleimani: “A commander with a heart for Iran”

From Page 1 ▶ Oleg Roy, the distinguished Russian writer and producer has chosen to immortalize this towering figure—a man whose presence shaped the very tides of Middle Eastern history. Through the pages of Roy’s novel “Jackals Cannot Defeat a Lion”, General Soleimani’s story is told not just as a chronicle of war and resistance, but as a testament to the profound human spirit, unwavering loyalty, and the sacrifices that echo beyond borders.

Unlike many books about General Soleimani, this novel is neither a historical documentary nor merely a personal biography. Instead, it is a literary novel—woven with symbolism and storytelling—that presents the life of General Soleimani in a uniquely profound and unconventional way.

The Tehran Times conducted an interview with Oleg Roy about his novel, “Jackals Cannot Defeat a Lion”. Following is the text of the exclusive interview with Roy:

Where does the story of this novel begin?

The story of “Jackals Cannot Defeat a Lion” follows two different timelines, one in the present and one from the past. In the present day, an American writer, Margarita Valdentshtein, comes to Iran to write a book criticizing General Soleimani. During this process, she faces the fact that reality has nothing in common with her preconceived image of him. As she gets to know the personality of Hajj Qassem, Margarita literally experiences a complete upheaval of her worldview.

Another perspective is the biography of Hajj Qassem Soleimani himself, presented through the prism of his relationships with those close to him. This allows the reader to see his character and experiences in a more personal way, through the eyes of the people who were with him—those who were close to him.

Who are the main characters, and what inspired you to write “Jackals Cannot Defeat a Lion”?

The main characters of the book—on one side, there is Margarita Valdentshtein and Fereshte Kermani-Betani, a police officer in Iran, along with her large family, which endured difficult times in the Middle East. We also see the Iranian people, who are the central figures in this book. But it goes without saying that the entire story is based on Hajj Qassem Soleimani.

What inspired me to write the novel? On one hand, of course, there were two major crimes that happened two years apart—the assassination of General Soleimani himself and the horrific terrorist attack on the second anniversary of his death. I was struck by the fact that the victims of this terrorist act were ordinary people who came to the cemetery to honor Hajj Qassem—people who came of their own free will, bringing their entire families.

This is real love—the kind of love that, in a moment of powerless anger, they tried to destroy through an act of terrorism. Of course, I had an idea of who he



was before, but after this event, I literally felt that there are very few people like Hajj Qassem in each era, and his memory should be preserved.

The book discusses the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani. As a Russian author, what motivated you to explore this event in your narrative?

The contrast between the Iranians’ genuine love for Hajj Qassem (these are not just grand words; this is reality) and the West’s powerless anger in the face of this love. But there was something else that was very important to me personally. The people of Russia and Iran, despite their different religions, their complex historical relationship, and other factors, are very close in spirit.

After all, we also have a tradition of honoring our heroes. Our “Immortal Regiment” is not just an expression of love for our ancestors and the continuity of generations; it is one of the fundamental aspects of our society. Likewise, the Iranians have their own “Immortal Regiment.” They call their Gastello, Matrosov, and Prokhorenko shahids—a word so stigmatized by the West that even in our country, it is perceived negatively.

How does the novel emphasize the spiritual closeness between Russia and Iran?

In fact, I saw many similarities between us and the Iranians, and the more I delved into my work, the stronger my understanding became that we, Russians and Iranians, are very close in spirit. I described the meeting between Hajj Qassem and our President with great courage (this meeting really took place, though its details are, of course, kept secret), and this chapter serves as the quintessence of the idea of the spiritual closeness of our people.

How did you approach the research process for depicting real historical events and figures in your novel?

My Iranian friends gave me great help with this. They recorded interviews with people who personally knew Hajj Qassem and handed over many documents, including some

that had never been published before.

Generally speaking, portraying real people—whether currently living or deceased—as the heroes of a book is a truly delicate process. That is why the main characters of the book (Fereshte and her family), as well as some of the antagonists, are composite figures. However, some other characters in the book are real people—figures whose mention was unavoidable.

How did you ensure historical accuracy while respecting sensitive sources?

I tried, as far as possible, to adhere strictly to the real biography of Hajj Qassem, without fabrication or distortion—out of respect for him and for those who shared their memories with me. Some of the sources I used cannot be published at the present time—this concerns, for example, the use of chemical weapons by Iraq against Iran or the involvement of Western intelligence agencies in the Iran-Iraq war. However, I can say one thing: according to independent experts with the appropriate qualifications, the history presented in the novel is as close to reality as possible. As one of these experts put it, history is like mathematics; any equation can be verified using other equations, and if the system has a solution, it means that the equation was formulated without errors.

What message or insight do you hope readers will take away from your portrayal of Middle Eastern geopolitics?

One well-known figure once referred to the Middle East as the “solar plexus” of humanity. It is the cradle of the three major world religions and the focal point of geopolitical interests for many countries. The events unfolding in the Middle East impact the state of the entire world.

However, the most important thing is not even that, but something else. We are currently building very good, mutually beneficial relations with Iran. But that is not enough. I would like such relations—not only with Iran but also with other great civilizations—to

be built for the long term.

We have much in common with the people of Iran, both historically and in terms of mentality. Moreover, the national character of the Iranians deserves respect, as it has many qualities that I find admirable—for example, their sincerity in everything. Of course, I want us to have strong, productive, and truly fraternal cooperation with Iran. The foundation for this should be mutual respect between our people.

I also want the reader to recognize this similarity, this spiritual closeness to the people of Iran, so that in our multipolar future, our two nations may be bound together by sincere and enduring friendship.

If you were to describe General Soleimani in one sentence, how would you do so?

Qassem Soleimani was a hero, a great warrior, and a defender of his faith, his homeland, and his people. At the same time, he was a loving son, brother, and father to those around him, and these aspects of him are inseparable from one another.

Let me give you a quote from my book:

“You say that Hajj Qassem is not an icon for you, not a big brother—then who is? Where does such love come from? A politician can be loved either out of fear or as an idol—he is too far from the common man.”

“Not Hajj Qassem,” Fereshte protested softly. “That’s the thing—he was never far away. You see in him a formidable figure on the ‘big chessboard,’ you see an image, a function, but for us, he is a father.”

Hajj Qassem Soleimani was a man of great courage and great love. He had a big heart that encompassed the whole of Iran. That is what the man who had known him personally for years told me. And honestly, those are the words that I remember most of all. General Soleimani was a hero, a great warrior, and a defender of his faith, his homeland, and his people. At the same time, he was a loving son and a brother to those who stood by him, inseparable from one another.

Vahdat Hall hosts Iranian, Dutch musical collaboration

TEHRAN— On the fifth night of the 40th International Fajr Music Festival, Tehran’s Vahdat Hall hosted a joint concert by Afro Anatolian Tales from the Netherlands and Nushe Band from Iran.

Sjahin During and Bram Stadhouders from the Netherlands and Bence Huszar from Hungary were the members of the Afro Anatolian Tales.

The Iranian musicians in the Nushe Band included Niusha Barimani, Rokhsareh Rostami, Niloofar Ebrahimi, Donya Fathi, Azin Malekzadeh, and Setareh Hatef.

The event underscored the festival’s commitment to fostering cross-cultural understanding and promoting artistic excellence.

The 40th International Fajr Music Festival is organized by the Deputy of Artistic Affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, in collaboration with the Music Office of the Culture Ministry, the Iran Music Association, and the Rudaki Foundation.

It aims to showcase and honor the best works of Iranian musicians, promote the art of music, enhance the audience’s taste and listening culture,

preserve national identity rooted in religious and Iranian teachings, support creative art—especially ideas and performances by the younger generation—and identify and strengthen the quality of form and content in various genres of music.

In addition to the international participants, this year, 100 Iranian bands comprising over 1,400 musicians will perform at the festival.

The festival, divided into two competitive and non-competitive sections, will continue until February 17 in Tehran.

Two films from Iran to attend Venezuela’s FINDECOIN festival

TEHRAN—Two Iranian films are in the lineup for the 11th edition of the FINDECOIN - Independent International Short & Feature Film Festival “The Day is Short”, slated for February 22 to 24 in Venezuela.

The short film “Armadillo” written, directed, and produced by Mohammad Reza Yarikia and the feature documentary “From the Cradle to the Grave” by Davood Abdolmaleki are in the official selection

of this year’s edition of the festival, ILNA reported.

In “Armadillo,” a research company offers a family the purchase of their father’s brain. Hamed Souri, Iman Hoseini, Atefe McVandi, Parisa Azimifard, Hossein Mirzaei, Parva Afshar, and Mahmoudreza Ferdowsi play in the film.

Abdolmaleki’s 95-minute documentary contains interviews with students at a girls’ high

school who have lived the answers to two important questions: “Are we responsible for our destiny?” and “Do we have the ability to change the circumstances of our lives?”

The FINDECOIN seeks to promote Venezuelan, Latin American, and world cinema. It tries to show cinematographic works that entertain, but above all, that they exert an educative influence on children, young people, and the population in general.