



## Iran Well-Prepared for Hard Warfare Threats

**'The aim is to influence US decision-makers', Iran again rejects media claims of assassination plots**

TEHRAN – Iran has categorically denied allegations resurfacing in Western media about its involvement in assassination plots against American officials.

Speaking at his weekly press conference on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei dismissed these claims as part of a broader disinformation campaign orchestrated by media outlets with ties to the Israeli regime.

"We have denied all these accusations," Baqaei said, noting that certain figures in Western media apparently act as "Svengalis," whispering baseless stories into the ears of decision-makers. "It is evident that these allegations are intended to create a negative atmosphere and influence the mindset of American policymakers." ▶ Page 3

**New IRGC drill to prepare for potential Persian Gulf conflict, spokesman tells Tehran Times**

TEHRAN – General Mohammad Hadi Sefidchian, spokesman for the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) ground force drills, announced to the Tehran Times that the second stage of exercises, which began in early January, will simulate combating an attack by enemy air, ground, and sea forces in the Persian Gulf.

The exercises, slated to commence shortly and continue for four days, will not be conducted directly in the Persian Gulf, instead, it will take place in southwestern Iran, General Sefidchian clarified. "This is to prevent external forces from observing tactics and strategies," he explained.

He stated, "Iran is not seeking war. However, should a war occur, the IRGC ground forces are fully prepared and ready to defend the nation." ▶ Page 2

**Tehran hosting 3rd Caspian Economic Forum**

TEHRAN – The third Caspian Economic Forum kicked off in Tehran on Monday with the presence of the officials of the Caspian Sea littoral states.

The two-day event is being held with the aim of presenting solutions to increase the economic and commercial cooperation between the Caspian Sea littoral states.

According to Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), Akbar Godari, Director General for Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Russia at the TPO, the key topics include healthcare, energy, finance, tourism, investment in free trade zones, and logistics.

Godari noted that Iran's Trade Promotion Organization has organized seven specialized panels for the first day of the event, covering areas such as trade, industry, and agriculture (Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade); economic, customs, banking, and investment cooperation (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance); transportation, transit, and engineering services (Iran's Transport and Urban Development Ministry); environmental, health, and tourism cooperation (Department of Environment); energy collaboration, including oil, gas, electricity, and renewables (Ministry of Oil and Ministry of Energy); scientific and technological cooperation (Vice Presidency for Science and Technology); and discussions among the heads of chambers of commerce (Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture). ▶ Page 4

**Trump's strategy and key players in new Syria**

By Batool Subeiti

LONDON – U.S. policy under Trump significantly differed from Biden's and the broader deep state. The Obama administration gave Turkey the role of sponsoring "Sunni political Islam" to counter the Axis of Resistance, while Trump was firmer in opposing Turkey's Middle East ambitions. Trump views Syria's new rulers as terrorists and prefers a Syrian government backed by the Persian Gulf Arab states over Turkey.

Trump's Plan A for Syria likely involves dialogue between regional sponsors, like Turkey and Qatar versus Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The latter with Egypt are watching developments with suspicion and caution but lack significant control over the situation. Once a Persian Gulf-friendly regime is in place, a peace deal with Israel might follow. The U.S. would monitor Turkey's actions in Syria to protect its allies, and Syria would remain divided until it is stabilized.

Plan B for Syria under Trump, if the conflict continued, could consist of Syria partitioned into four zones: Turkish-controlled, U.S.-backed Kurdish areas,

**Which Lebanese state do Washington and Tel Aviv desire?**

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – It was not without a vicious goal in mind that after meeting Marco Rubio, the US Secretary of State, in the occupied Palestinian territories Netanyahu said "the Israeli-American harmony around a strong Lebanese state capable of confronting Hezbollah and disarming it."

In 1969, following the signing of the Cairo Agreement, the Lebanese villages adjacent to occupied Palestine were transformed into military headquarters for the PLO et. al. Their influence expanded following the eruption of the civil war in 1975.

On March 11, 1978, a PLO group led by female martyr Dalal Mughrabi infiltrated the occupied territories, killing 37 and wounding 76 Zionists.

This operation sparked the "Operation Litani" that lasted 7 days. Around 300,000 Lebanese were displaced and about 1,500 were massacred. An area of 1,100 km<sup>2</sup> of the Lebanese territory was also occupied by the Israeli army.

**Rubio's regional rebuff: US leaves Palestinian Authority out in the cold**

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – The first regional trip of Secretary of State Marco Rubio suggests that the United States has left the Palestinian Authority (PA) high and dry.

Top American diplomats have routinely held meetings with leaders of the Palestinian Authority during their visits to the Middle East (West Asia) after meeting with Israeli officials.

But Rubio broke this tradition. He held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem (al-Quds) on Sunday and then travelled to Saudi Arabia.

Rubio's move means that he is looking down on the Palestinian Authority, notwithstanding the numerous advantages and the extensive cooperation it has offered to Israel.

The PA serves as a governing entity that has administered certain regions of the occupied West Bank since the mid-1990s.

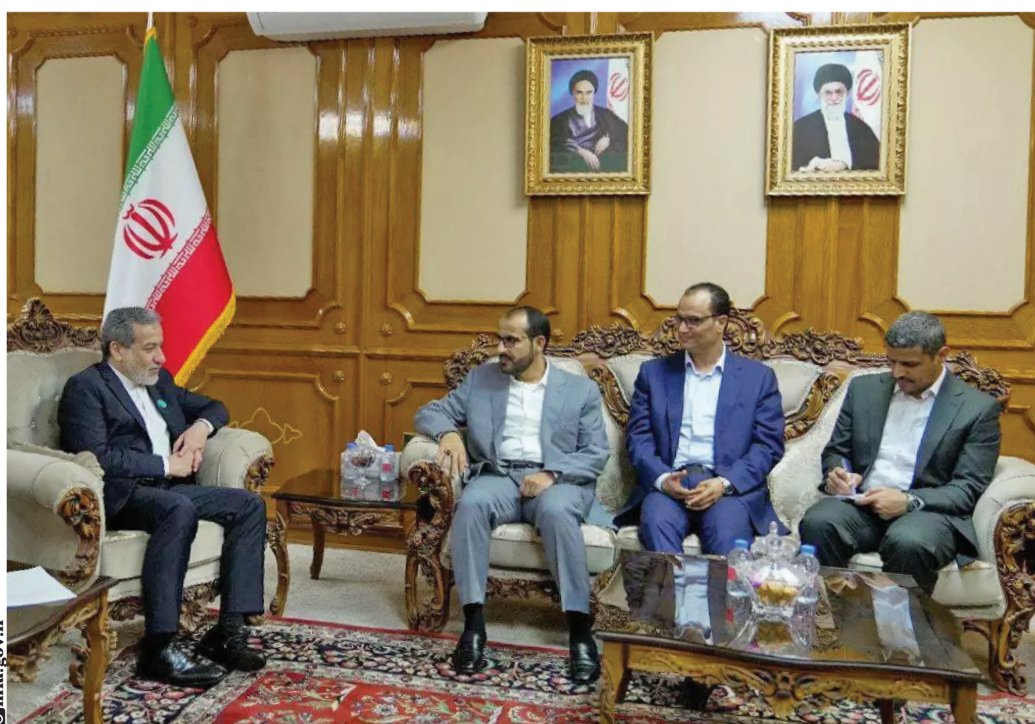
▶ Page 5

**Iranian, Russian universities committed to broadening ties**

TEHRAN –Based on the comprehensive agreements made between the top universities of Iran and Russia, the two sides are committed to furthering long-term and constructive relations in higher education, technology, and innovation.

The establishment of the secretariat for communication between the universities of the two countries is one of the major measures taken. Of course, secretariats and inter-university collaborations should be more active than in the past in deepening scientific communication. Practical and effective steps are expected to be taken to realize common goals.

The main objective, in addition to promoting relations, is to implement the previously made agreements and open up new opportunities for further cooperation. ▶ Page 7



**Yemen's support instrumental in Palestinian Resistance's victory: Iran FM**

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has commended Yemen's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause, emphasizing the critical role played by Yemen in resisting Israeli aggression.

Araghchi's remarks came during a meeting with Mohammed Abdul-Salam, spokesperson and chief negotiator of Yemen's Ansarullah Resistance movement, on the sidelines of the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in Muscat.

Araghchi praised Yemen's solidarity with Palestinians, particularly in countering Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza. ▶ Page 2

## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## The opposition has no funds and is struggling

In a note, Hamshahri analyzed the confusion of the Iranian opposition abroad after the Trump administration cut off their fund. It wrote: In one of his first actions after arriving in the White House, U.S. President Donald Trump decided to suspend most of the United States foreign aid. This executive order, which had wide-ranging effects on U.S. foreign policy, particularly confused Iranian opposition groups abroad, because an important percentage of this aid was used to fund the organizations that carry out anti-Iranian activities under the supervision of the U.S. government.

Reports indicate that more than 30 opposition organizations and Persian-language media outlets outside Iran have held meetings to review the situation and consequences of these changes following Trump's decision. Elon Musk, head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in the second Trump administration, has officially called for the closure of such agencies, including Iran Wire. Musk has described the agency as a "criminal organization."

Although this decision was made mainly due to the waste of U.S. government money by these organizations, the inefficiency of these organizations also played a key role.

### Sharh: Washington seeking secret talks with Tehran

In a commentary, Sharh pointed to the Al Arabiya report on the Iran-U.S. negotiations. The paper said: Following the relatively smooth messages exchanged recently between the United States and Iran, a senior European official revealed that efforts are underway to establish contact between the two countries.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump is seeking direct and secret negotiations with Tehran about the country's nuclear program. The U.S. government will try to reach an agreement with Iran before October when the current nuclear deal signed in July 2015 and Trump withdrew from it in May 2018 expires.

Trump has repeatedly stressed his willingness to negotiate with Iran in recent months but has also raised the possibility of a military confrontation. The U.S. president has repeatedly stressed that he would prefer to reach a "nuclear peace deal" that would allow Tehran to peacefully grow and prosper.

## Tehran, Dushanbe to push for stronger trade and investment: Iran VP

TEHRAN – Mohammad Reza Aref, Iran's First Vice President, highlighted insightful bilateral negotiations with Tajikistan's Prime Minister, Kohir Rasulzoda, during a joint press conference in Tehran on Monday.

Aref highlighted the significance of Rasulzoda's visit, which includes participation in the Caspian Economic Forum and high-level bilateral discussions. Tajikistan is attending the forum as a special guest.

Speaking at the press conference, Aref stated, "We had productive bilateral negotiations today. Political relations between Iran and Tajikistan are at their strongest. The visit of our president to Tajikistan was a memorable event, warmly received by the Tajik government." He further emphasized that the two nations' comprehensive development strategy, established during that visit, has now entered the implementation phase. "We believe that our economies can complement each other, allowing us to meet mutual needs," Aref added.

Aref also stressed the importance of private sector participation, announcing that both governments have agreed to facilitate private sector activities. "The removal of visa requirements will boost travel and enhance private sector engagement. We are committed to continued cooperation in engineering and technical services," he noted.

Additionally, Aref revealed that the Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation is working on a strategic plan to significantly increase trade and economic relations. "It was also agreed that joint tourism initiatives will be a priority," he stated.

For his part, Prime Minister Rasulzoda described



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (R), and Tajikistan's Prime Minister Kohir Rasulzoda, speak during a joint press conference in capital Tehran on Feb. 17, 2025.

the discussions as cordial and constructive. "The Iranian president's visit to Tajikistan marked the start of a new phase in our bilateral relations. The agreements signed will lead to expanded cooperation in trade, culture, and other key areas," he said. He also expressed Tajikistan's interest in increasing investment opportunities between the two countries.

Earlier in the day, Aref formally welcomed Rasulzoda at an official ceremony held at the Sa'dabad Complex. The Tajik prime minister traveled to Tehran to attend the Caspian Economic Forum, which commenced today with participation from Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan.

### Iran: Tehran's goodwill

The Iran newspaper analyzed the IAEA chief's decision to postpone his quarterly report on Iran's nuclear program. The newspaper said: Raphael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, decided to change the date of the report on Iran's nuclear activities to the Board of Governors. What could have added to the IAEA Director General's valid reasons for postponing the date of the report on Iran and linking it to a new form of cooperation with Iran was the tangible signs of our country's cooperation just a few days after the Board of Governors endorsed an anti-Iran resolution. Despite its retaliatory action in response to the West's breach of the nuclear deal and increasing its uranium enrichment to the level of 60 percent, Iran once again demonstrated its goodwill towards the Agency in the form of a temporary understanding. Tehran's focus on utilizing its intellectual and political capacities to resolve the nuclear issue could become an obstacle to the opportunism of extremist Western circles. Therefore, extending the deadline for Iran and the IAEA to reach a common ground provides an opportunity for the two sides to respond differently, based on an applicable mechanism, and of course, in line with the policy of engagement.

### Farhikhtegan: Naive dream of a free world outside home

In an analysis, Farhikhtegan discussed the inhumane deportation of a group of Iranian immigrants from the United States to Panama. It wrote: The immigration policies of Western countries, especially the United States, have shown their true face in an inhumane and racist manner. What happened recently to several Iranian immigrants is a continuation of the same policies that Donald Trump had adopted during his first administration against immigrants from several Muslim countries, including Iran. This incident clearly shows the dual policies towards immigrants by the United States that make claims of support for freedom and human rights. However, in reality, it suppresses and deports immigrants without any regard for their basic rights. The issue of Iranian immigration to Western countries has become a hotly debated issue in recent years. Creating economic opportunities, improving social conditions, supporting talented persons, and creating hope among the younger generation are among the measures that can control the migration process.

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# Yemen's support instrumental in Palestinian Resistance's victory: Iran FM

From page 1 ▶ He credited the steadfast support from Yemen and other regional allies as instrumental in strengthening Palestinian Resistance, ultimately pressuring Israel into accepting a ceasefire.

The Iranian foreign minister reaffirmed Tehran's firm opposition to the displacement of Palestinians and condemned recent remarks made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who suggested that Palestinians should establish their state in Saudi Arabia instead of their homeland.

Araghchi noted the proposal as a direct violation of international law and a continuation of Israel's long-standing policy of forced expulsion.

Abdul-Salam, in response, reiterated Yemen's full commitment to defending Palestinian rights, stating that Yemen remains vigilant against any attempts to displace Gaza's population.

He asserted that Yemen's future actions would be determined by Israel's adherence to the ceasefire agreement, adding that the Resistance movement would not tolerate further violations of Palestinian sovereignty.

### Iran urges unified muslim response to Palestinian crisis



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) and Mohammed Abdul-Salam, spokesperson and chief negotiator of Yemen's Ansarullah Resistance movement, meet in the Omani capital of Muscat on February 17, 2025.

In a separate high-level diplomatic engagement, Araghchi met with Secretary General of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi.

He called on Muslim nations to adopt a unified and resolute stance in defending Palestinian rights.

Araghchi welcomed the opposition voiced by several Arab nations, particularly those in the Persian Gulf region, against the US-Israeli proposal to forcibly relocate the residents of Gaza. He described this relocation effort as part of a broader strategy to dismantle the Palestinian

nation, warning that any attempts to implement such a plan would lead to regional instability.

The GCC secretary general echoed Iran's position, reaffirming the council's opposition to Israel's displacement policies. Al-Budaiwi also welcomed Iran's proposal for an emergency meeting of foreign ministers from Muslim-majority countries to coordinate efforts in addressing the crisis.

According to the media, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has received widespread support for this initiative, with a meeting ex-

pected to take place in the coming days.

### Iran, India reaffirm commitment to strengthening bilateral ties

On the sidelines of the Muscat conference, Araghchi also held talks with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. The two diplomats reviewed recent progress in Iran-India relations and discussed further economic and strategic cooperation.

Araghchi highlighted the successful 19th round of Iran-India political consultations held in New Delhi in January, emphasizing the need to continue high-level discussions to advance mutual interests. He underscored Iran's policy of fostering regional cooperation, particularly among Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean nations, in areas such as trade, energy, and infrastructure development.

Jaishankar, in turn, expressed optimism about deepening Iran-India ties, emphasizing the significance of on-going projects such as the Chabahar Port development. Under a 10-year agreement signed in May, India will invest \$120 million in the port's infrastructure and contribute \$250 million toward expanding its transport capabilities, positioning Chabahar as a key hub for regional trade.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## New IRGC drill to prepare for potential Persian Gulf conflict, spokesman tells Tehran Times



Saberin Brigade members deploy to southwestern Iran for the next stage of IRGC Ground Force drills set to begin this week

From page 1 ▶ The initial stage of the drill, part of broader nationwide maneuvers involving all branches of the Iranian armed forces, concentrated on countering terrorist and smuggler infiltration along Iran's western borders. The Army (Artesh) conducted similar exercises in Iran's eastern regions.

According to General Sefidchian, "The first stage of the drill focused on security and intelligence. The second will focus on

defense. Combatting a conventional enemy force naturally requires more resources and personnel than eliminating terrorist groups. Therefore, the upcoming exercises will engage all branches of the IRGC ground forces and utilize a variety of equipment and weaponry."

The developments come as tensions have been growing between Iran and the United States over a host of issues, including Israel, Iran's nuclear program, and

Washington's attempts to stymie Tehran's oil sales. Analysts believe the risk of a direct confrontation in West Asia could be high if U.S. President Donald Trump goes overboard in pressuring Iran to limit its nuclear and military capabilities, demands Iran says would forever be off the table.

While he did not mention the current state of escalating tensions, General Sefidchian said Iran takes any threat against its security seriously. "In our case, for instance, the ground forces are simulating all potential scenarios that we may one day face in combat with the enemy."

The drill will involve weaponry such as tanks, missiles, anti-armor vehicles, micro aerial vehicles (MAVs), kamikaze drones, and reconnaissance drones, the military official noted. He further explained that operations would include demolition operations, air drop operations, parachute operations, and air assaults.

General Sefidchian particularly highlighted the importance of an upcoming simulated night raid, stating, "Fighting in the dark is significantly more complicated than during the day. Our forces will practice fending off an extremely heavy night raid."

The ongoing nationwide drills in Iran have so far involved various branches of the IRGC, Artesh, and Basij, among others. Air defense units notably practiced intercepting bunker-buster bombs over Iranian nuclear sites at multiple locations in the country.

The Navy also garnered attention during its exercises, unveiling two underground military bases housing numerous weapon-equipped fast-attack craft and advanced missiles along the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. In an interview with the Tehran Times, IRGC Navy Commander, Brigadier General Alireza Tangsiri, said the entirety of Iran's southern coasts are home to such underground bases.

## Sudan FM in Iran as Tehran says it is 'committed to Khartoum's stability and unity'

TEHRAN – Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ali Yusuf Ahmed Al-Sharif, has arrived in Tehran for a two-day visit aimed at deepening bilateral relations and addressing regional challenges.

This trip marks the first high-level diplomatic engagement since the two nations restored ties in October 2023, following a seven-year hiatus. It signals a renewed partnership amid Sudan's ongoing civil war.

On Monday, Al-Sharif met with Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's Parliament Speaker, who underscored Tehran's commitment to Sudan's stability.

"The Islamic Republic emphasizes the establishment of stability in Sudan, the preservation of its territorial integrity, and the formation of a unified government," Ghalibaf stated, expressing hope for a swift resolution to the conflict.

He also highlighted Iran's eagerness to expand economic and trade relations, calling the visit a "significant step" toward strengthening cooperation.

Al-Sharif reciprocated the sentiment, thanking Iran for its support during Sudan's "difficult two

years marked by an international conspiracy to fragment the country and plunder its resources."

He stated that over two million Sudanese have fled as refugees, while tens of thousands of civilians, including women and children, have been killed in the fighting.

Al-Sharif outlined Sudan's post-conflict roadmap, stressing the necessity for internal Sudanese dialogue to define the nation's future.

He praised Iran's electoral experience and expressed interest in fostering parliamentary ties once Sudan's legislative body is reinstated.

"After the war, we hope Iran will play a role in rebuilding our country," he said, inviting Iranian technical and economic delegations to assist in reconstruction efforts.

Ghalibaf confirmed Iran's readiness to bolster political and economic collaboration, noting that parliamentary friendship groups would be activated once Sudan's government is stabilized.

Al-Sharif also met with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Monday. He is set to hold a



Sudan's Foreign Minister Ali Yusuf Ahmed Al-Sharif (L), during a meeting with Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf in Tehran on February 17, 2025

separate meeting with President Masoud Pezeshkian before leaving the country.

His trip follows earlier engagements by Sudan's former foreign minister, Hussein Awad, who attended memorial services for Iran's late President Ebrahim Raisi in 2024.

Iran and Sudan, once close allies, saw relations sour in 2016 when Khartoum severed ties in solidarity with Saudi Arabia after an incident at the Saudi embassy in Tehran.

However, the 2023 Saudi-Iran reconciliation brokered by China paved the way for Sudan to re-en-

gage with Tehran.

Under the leadership of Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan's government has recently strengthened its ties with Russia. Meanwhile, it has accused the UAE of providing substantial support and weaponry to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti.

The 15-month conflict between the Transitional Sovereignty Council and the RSF has resulted in over 150,000 deaths and displaced 11 million people, pushing Sudan to the brink of famine, according to UN estimates.

# Iran well-prepared for hard warfare threats: Leader

TEHRAN – The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, lauded Iran's military and defense sectors for achieving a high level of preparedness against conventional threats, while urging those in the media and entertainment industry to strive for similar levels of assurance and readiness in their respective fields.

In a Monday meeting with thousands of East Azerbaijan citizens in Tehran, the Leader described Iran's hard warfare defense capabilities as extremely high, stating, "Both our allies and enemies are aware of this fact, and the [Iranian] nation feels secure in this matter."

Therefore, our current issue is not the enemy's military threats, but rather the threats posed by soft warfare."

Ayatollah Khamenei defined "soft warfare threats" as the manipulation of public opinion, the instigation of divisions, and the cultivation of doubts regarding the "foundations of the Islamic Revolution and the importance of remaining resolute against enemies."

He noted that adversaries believe that the best way to defeat Iran is through soft warfare, but "these efforts have not been successful thus far, and despite their temptations, they have failed to deter the Iranian nation and youth from their determination and progress."

The Leader particularly characterized this year's massive nationwide rallies marking the 46th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution as proof that soft warfare threats are failing.



"The extraordinary and magnificent turnout, even 46 years after the Revolution's triumph, is unparalleled globally."

The people have shown that their challenges and rightful expectations don't prevent them from participating in support of the Revolution," he declared.

He stressed the greater importance of soft warfare defense over hard warfare defense in the current environment, explaining: "Shortcomings in hard warfare defense can be offset by soft warfare defense, as has often been the case. However, soft-warfare problems cannot be solved with hardware (military) solutions."

Ayatollah Khamenei encouraged the youth to bolster their soft warfare defense by learning about the Revolution's principles, characteristics, and the teachings of the late Imam Khomeini (RA). "Our Revolution, at its core, is a battle of 'light against darkness' and 'truth against falsehood.'"

It seeks to uplift the Iranian

nation, improve its future, and showcase its national identity," he noted.

During the address, the Leader also underscored progress made toward the Revolution's goals. "The Revolution has remained an independent force, a significant source of inspiration for regional nations and some beyond."

The resentment of global powers, colonialists, and those who commit atrocities under false pretenses, stems from the Islamic Republic's demonstrated resilience, steadfastness, and ability to stand strong against them."

Ayatollah Khamenei refuted Western claims that Iran provokes its enemies. He stated that "the hostility from tyrannical U.S. policymakers is not due to the slogan 'Death to America,' but rather because Iran, through its people's determination and sacrifices, liberated itself from colonial oppression and resisted their impositions."

He characterized U.S. rhetoric and territorial demands as a

manifestation of the imperialists' and Zionism's "abhorrent, violent, plundering, and domineering nature."

Ayatollah Khamenei added: "They cannot tolerate the fact that the Iranian nation, by standing on its own feet and protesting against their oppression and aggression, has established a government which, after 46 years, has grown stronger day by day."

'Azerbaijan is Iran's stronghold against foreign aggression'

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader referred to Azerbaijan and Tabriz as the stronghold of Iran against foreign aggression.

"Through their patience, steadfastness, and faith, the people of Tabriz have on multiple occasions forced the enemies to flee" he stated.

Ayatollah Khamenei identified the "Islamic faith" and "religious zeal" of the people of Tabriz as the two primary factors behind the uprising on February 18, 1978, which played a significant role in the subsequent victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The Leader underscored that the significance of this uprising extended beyond the mere fact that it compelled the Pahlavi regime to deploy tanks in the streets.

Its true greatness, he asserted, lay in its role as a model for the entire nation, inspiring individuals from various cities to join the struggle.

He praised the faith and spirit of today's youth in Tabriz as a continuation of the legacy from the 1978 uprising.

## 'The aim is to influence US decision-makers', Iran again rejects media claims of assassination plots



From Page 1 ▶ Iran to participate in high-level commemoration for Hezbollah leader

Iran has confirmed its participation at a senior level in the upcoming commemoration ceremony for Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Baqaei emphasized the significance of the event, calling it "a very important ceremony."

On Tuesday, a Hezbollah official announced that delegations from 79 countries are expected to attend the event, scheduled for February 23, honoring both Nasrallah and Executive Council Chief Sayyid Hashim Safieddine.

Sheikh Ali Daher, the coordinator for the funeral proceedings, described the ceremony as "a day of commemoration for the leader of the oppressed against the arrogant and the martyr of humanity against imperialism."

Nasrallah was assassinated on September 27, 2024, during an Israeli airstrike that leveled six residential buildings in Beirut's Dahiyeh neighborhood. The attack, involving 85 tons of explosives, was part of a week-long Israeli bombardment targeting various locations in southern Lebanon and the capital.

Safieddine was similarly killed in an Israeli strike the following month.

Due to security concerns, Hezbollah had initially postponed

public funeral ceremonies for both leaders, fearing further Israeli attacks.

**Iran-Lebanon flights: a matter of mutual interest**

Baqaei also addressed the recent controversy surrounding the cancellation of two Iranian flights to Lebanon. He confirmed that Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his Lebanese counterpart Youssef Rajji had held discussions regarding the issue, stressing that the decision must be made independently without external interference.

"Both sides agree that third parties must not be allowed to influence this matter. Talks will continue until a reasonable solution is reached," he stated, adding that Iran considers these flights a fundamental part of its strong bilateral relations with Lebanon.

The cancellations, reportedly ordered by the Lebanese Roads Minister under Israeli pressure, have fueled speculation that Israel accused the flights of transporting funds to Hezbollah. Both Iranian and Lebanese officials have rejected such claims, emphasizing their commitment to resolving the matter diplomatically.

**'OIC to hold emergency meeting on Gaza crisis'**

Amid rising concerns over a U.S.-Israeli plan to forcibly re-

locate Palestinians from Gaza, Iran has called for an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) foreign ministers. The meeting, expected within the next two weeks, will focus on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

"Israel, with U.S. support, has waged a 15-month genocide but has failed to expel the people of Gaza from their homeland," Baqaei asserted. "This forced relocation scheme is nothing short of ethnic cleansing."

Former U.S. President Donald Trump recently suggested resettling Gazans in neighboring Arab countries, including Egypt and Jordan, while also proposing that the U.S. could "take over" the region and transform it into a tourist destination. The proposal has sparked global condemnation.

Since January 19, a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement between Israel and Hamas has temporarily paused hostilities in Gaza. However, the conflict has already resulted in over 48,260 deaths, predominantly women and children, leaving the Palestinian territory in ruins.

**Iran condemns Israel's actions in Yemen**

Commenting on Yemen's recent military actions against Israel, Baqaei reaffirmed Iran's position that such measures are justified in defense of Palestine.

"Those who have opposed the genocide in Gaza from the beginning are concerned with regional security and stability," he said, rejecting accusations against Yemen and reiterating that the Israeli occupation remains the root cause of ongoing tensions.

**'Israeli threats against Iran violate international law'**

Iran has also condemned Israel's continued threats against Tehran, calling them a blatant

violation of international law and the United Nations Charter. Baqaei insisted that Israel must be held accountable for its aggressive rhetoric.

"Our response to Israel is clear: they cannot do a damn thing," he said, dismissing the threats as empty provocations.

**Iran calls for swift end to Ukraine war**

Addressing ongoing diplomatic talks between Russia and the United States regarding Ukraine, Baqaei reiterated Iran's support for any initiative that leads to a peaceful resolution.

"We hope this conflict ends as soon as possible. Iran supports any development that contributes to ending the war and stopping further bloodshed," he stated.

**'Iran's nuclear program in compliance with international agreements'**

Following renewed accusations by Israel and the U.S. against Iran's nuclear activities, Baqaei reaffirmed that Tehran's program remains peaceful and fully compliant with the Safeguards Agreement and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"Everything within Iran's nuclear program aligns with our rights under international law," he stated.

Additionally, Baqaei confirmed ongoing consultations with Russia regarding upcoming U.S.-Russia talks on Iran's nuclear program. He noted that as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia has placed Iran's nuclear issue on its agenda and continues to engage in diplomatic discussions with Tehran.

### Al Rayyan, Esteghlal in do-or-die Match: ACL MD8

TEHRAN – Al Rayyan can expect a full throttle charge from Esteghlal when the two sides meet in the AFC Champions League Elite 2024-25 on Tuesday. Both are still in the hunt for a place in the knockout stage, with Qatar's Al Rayyan in a better position heading into the final round of matches.

Al Rayyan ensured their fate remained very much in its own hands with a 2-1 win over UAE's Al Ain FC on Matchday 7 and will be determined to not let its good work go to waste.

Sitting in sixth on eight points after seven matches, victory will confirm Al Rayyan their spot in the next round.

Esteghlal are in a more precarious position although they ended Matchday 7 in the final qualification spot. Iranian rivals Persepolis FC are level on points with them while Pakhtakor will overtake the team if they beat Qatar's Al Sadd SC, making victory a must for Esteghlal.

The match will be held at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.

### Iran's Torkaman named 2025 CAFA Women's Futsal MVP

TEHRAN – Maral Torkaman of Iran was named as 2025 CAFA Women's Futsal Championship's Most Valuable Player (MVP).

Iran won the title for the fourth time in a row on Sunday.

Torkaman was named the best goalscorer of the tournament and MVP.

Turkmenistan's Malika Eminova was named the best goalkeeper of the event.

The four-team event was held in Dushanbe from February 9-16.

### Confident Tractor to host Al Khaldiya in ACL Two

TEHRAN – Tractor will be confident of getting the job done when they host Al Khaldiya SC in the return leg of their AFC Champions League Two 2024-25 last 16 tie on Tuesday.

The Iran side secured an important 2-1 win in the first leg with the winners to face either Al Wakrah of Qatar or Saudi Arabia's Al Taawoun in the quarter-finals. Tractor's confidence will be boosted by the fact that they - alongside Sanfrecce Hiroshima of Japan - are the only unbeaten sides in this year's competition. They are also in good form, currently leading the Iran Pro League standings - sitting a point ahead of Sepahan.

Al Khaldiya lost the first leg despite having taken the lead through Mohamed Al Romaihi, with the Bahraini club left shell-shocked by the defeat.

Head coach Ali Ashour, however, refused to concede defeat and vowed that his players will be mentally and physically ready for the return leg.

The match will be held at the Yaegar E-Imam Stadium on Tuesday.

### Iran U20 coach Abdi expresses his gratitude over win against Yemen

TEHRAN – Iran U20 head coach Hossein Abdi expressed his gratitude following the team's victory against Yemen in the 2025 AFC U20 Asian Cup. On Sunday, Iran defeated Yemen 6-0 in Group C, securing their advancement to the next stage after a 3-0 win over Indonesia in the opener.

The young Persians are scheduled to meet Uzbekistan on Wednesday.

"Our players performed well, and we managed to secure the win against Yemen. The opposing team attempted to provoke ours, but fortunately, one of the Yemeni players was sent off after fouling one of our players. This made the game tougher as they played more defensively, but it also simplified our task with them down to 10 men," Abdi explained.

"The goals we scored would have happened even if Yemen had 11 players on the pitch; they were very dynamic at the start of the match. They ran a lot in the first 10 to 12 minutes and kept their energy up until the end. They managed the ball well, but our aim here is to make an impact in Asia. I hope we succeed in both Asian and global competitions and discover our talented young players through these events," he added.

Looking ahead to the match against Uzbekistan, he noted, "Korea and Japan play after us, so we can't determine our knockout opponents. I will rest most of my players, particularly those who received cards, allowing others to prepare for this game."

"Regardless of the outcome, we will advance, so it's wise to ensure we're prepared and avoid injuries or further bookings as we proceed. We might not have many players available for the next match," Abdi concluded.

### Forouzan Soleymani: CAFA is part of preparation for AFC Futsal Asian Cup

TEHRAN – Iran's women's futsal team head coach, Forouzan Soleymani, stated that the 2025 CAFA Women's Futsal Championship is a crucial part of their preparation for the upcoming 2025 AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup.

Iran clinched the title on Sunday evening after securing four consecutive victories against Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

Soleymani expressed her satisfaction with the competitive level at the CAFA Women's Futsal Championships held in Tajikistan, highlighting these events as valuable opportunities for the team to gear up for the Asian Cup.

"The Iranian women's futsal team have now won the championship for the fourth consecutive time. It's worth noting that the CAFA Championship has shown significant improvement compared to previous editions. Our national futsal team, which are preparing for the Asian Cup in May, have effectively utilized the CAFA Championship to ready themselves for the competition in China," she said.

"In CAFA, we gradually focused on tactical aspects such as power play, ball possession, and counter-attacking against tough defenses. We hope to further prepare the team for the Asian Cup by playing friendly matches against stronger opponents in March or April," she added.

"The current squad is a blend of experienced and young athletes, which gives us hope for building a strong team in the lead-up to the Asian Cup," Soleymani concluded.

### Nemati claims gold at 2025 Karate1 Series A

TEHRAN – Morteza Nemati of Iran claimed a gold medal at the Karate1 Series A - Larnaca 2025 on Sunday. Nemati clinched the Male Kumite -75 Kg title after a tense showdown against Ernest Sharafutdinov of the Individual Neutral Athletes.

The match was decided by a single point, with Nemati securing a 1-0 win.

Fatemeh Sadeghi and Fatemeh Saadati of Iran had previously claimed two gold medals at the event. The 2025 Karate1 Series A was held in Larnaca, Cyprus from Feb. 14 to 16.

### Iran lose to Azerbaijan at Development Cup-2025

TEHRAN – Iran lost to Azerbaijan 1-0 in the Development Cup 2025 on Monday.

The Iranian team, who had lost to Kazakhstan 2-0 in their opening match, are scheduled to meet Russia on Wednesday.

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

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

## Eurasia exhibition, a great marketing to present export capabilities

TEHRAN- The managing director of Iran International Exhibitions Company said that holding Eurasia International Exhibition is the best marketing method and presenting capabilities in the field of export.

Referring to the holding of trade exhibition with Eurasia, Sadif Beikzadeh said: "With the signing of the agreement on free trade cooperation between Iran and Russia, the presence of Iranian companies in the member countries of Eurasia, including Russia, has been provided."

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

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

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

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

Dehnavi noted that extensive planning has



been carried out to facilitate the presence of trade delegations from these nations, allowing them to gain a better understanding of Iranian products and expertise. Responding to a question on the number of participating delegations, he said the event's organizer—appointed by TPO—has begun reviewing participant lists. "What is clear is that promising developments are underway, and trade delegations, particularly from Russia, have expressed their readiness to attend," he added.

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

## Over 12.3m tons of goods exported, imported via border terminals

TEHRAN- As announced by an official with Iran Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (RMTTO), 12,367,117 tons of commodities were exported from the country and imported into the country during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024-January 19, 2025).

Javad Hedayati, the director-general of transit office of the organization, said that of the mentioned figure 10,274,279 tons were the exported items.

As previously announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran's non-oil exports reached approximately \$48 billion in the first 10 months of the current Iranian year, marking an 18 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

Foroud Asgari said the country's total foreign trade during this period amounted to 158.18 million tons, valued at \$103.85 billion.

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

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

During the same period, Iran imported 30.78 million tons of goods worth \$56 billion, showing a 3.0 percent decrease in volume but a 3.0 percent rise in value. Major imports included \$6.3 billion in gold bullion, \$2.3 billion in livestock corn, \$1.8 billion in smartphones, and \$1.6 billion in soybean meal.

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

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

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

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

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

He noted that the council had played a key

role in national decision-making processes before falling into disuse.

Dehnavi explained that the revival of the council was prompted during this year's National Export Day event, where Masoud Pezeshkian instructed its reactivation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Iran, Saudi Arabia stress expansion of commercial cooperation

TEHRAN- Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati and Saudi Arabian Finance Minister Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan emphasized to increase trade and customs cooperation, as well as joint investment, and avoid double taxation, during a meeting in Saudi Arabia.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the ALUla Conference for Emerging Market Economies, held in ALUla city.

The ALUla Conference for Emerging Market Economies is an annual economic policy conference, held in ALUla, Saudi Arabia, organized by the Ministry of Finance of Saudi Arabia and the IMF Regional Office in Riyadh.

The conference convenes a select group of emerging markets' ministers of finance, central bank governors, and policymakers, as well as public and private sector leaders, interna-



tional institutions, and academia.

It offers a unique platform to exchange views on domestic, regional, and global economic developments and discuss policies and reforms to spur inclusive prosperity and build resilience supported by strong international cooperation.

Speaking at a celebration held on the occasion of the Saudi National Day in last September, Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said: "The 14th government, headed by Masoud Pezeshkian, pays special attention to the development of relations with Saudi Arabia, and believes that the cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia as two important countries in the Persian Gulf region and West Asia, can bring stability and security to the countries in the region, and ensure the development and improvement of the welfare of the people of these countries," he stressed.

## Tehran hosting 3rd Caspian Economic Forum

From page 1 ▶ On the second day, the prime ministers of the five Caspian littoral states will sign a final declaration outlining measures to strengthen cooperation and implement agreements through periodic ministerial follow-ups.

The first Caspian trade and economic cooperation agreement was signed in August 2018 in Ka-

zakhstan and ratified by Iran's Parliament in January 2023. Under Article 5 of the agreement, the Caspian Economic Forum is to be held periodically in each of the coastal nations.

The inaugural Caspian Economic Forum and exhibition took place in August 2019 in Awaza, Turkmenistan, with the participation of prime minis-

ters and trade delegations.

The second forum was held in Moscow in October 2022, attended by Iran's former First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber and other leaders.

During that meeting, it was agreed that Iran would host the third edition in 2024.

## Tehran, Doha discuss expansion of economic, financial ties

TEHRAN- During a meeting between Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati and Qatari Minister of Finance Ali Ahmed Al-Kuwari, the two sides discussed the ways to expand the economic and financial relations between the two countries.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the ALUla Conference for Emerging Market Economies, held in ALUla city.

The ALUla Conference for Emerging Market Economies is an annual economic policy conference, held in ALUla, Saudi Arabia, organized by the Ministry of Finance of Saudi Arabia and the IMF Regional Office in Riyadh.

The 10th Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee meeting concluded on December 12, 2024, in Doha, with officials from both nations pledging to enhance bilateral economic ties and increase trade to \$1.0 billion annually.

The meeting, co-chaired by Iran's Minister of Energy Abbas Ali-Abadi and Qatar's Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal Al Thani, focused on expanding cooperation across multiple sectors, including energy, infrastructure, and trade.

The event featured four specialized committees: Trade (covering commerce, banking, and insurance), Infrastructure (transport, agriculture, and ICT), Social and Cultural (tourism, health, and research), and Energy (water, electricity, oil, and gas). Over 60 representatives from public and private sectors of both countries participated in the discussions.

Ali-Abadi emphasized the strategic importance of the partnership, saying, "Today's economic relations between Iran and Qatar require a strategic outlook." He noted that current trade between the two countries stands at approximately \$200 million annually,

with plans to increase it fivefold to \$1 billion in the near future.

The official further highlighted a significant energy project involving a 200-kilometer undersea power line to connect Iran and Qatar's electricity networks. Initiated in March 2023, the feasibility study is in its final stages, with implementation set to follow approval.

"This project will revolutionize power transfer between the two nations during peak demand periods and enable electricity transit to third countries," Ali-Abadi stated.

He also expressed Iran's readiness to welcome Qatari investors, envisioning mutual investments of at least \$1 billion annually. Key focus areas include energy, transport, free trade zones, tourism, healthcare, and agriculture.

The Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee, established in 1995, has facilitated significant achievements, particularly in water and electricity sectors. The 10th session underlined both nations' commitment to translating agreements into tangible outcomes and fostering regional cooperation.

At the end of the meeting, the two sides signed a comprehensive cooperation document to determine the framework of cooperation in the coming year.

Speaking in an online meeting with Saleh Alkhulaifi, the deputy Industry and Commerce minister of Qatar, in late November 2024, Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), said that Iran seeks to reach one billion dollars in annual trade with Qatar.

Referring to the extensive political and cultural relations between the two countries, Dehghan Dehnavi said: "Despite the efforts of both sides, economic relations between Tehran and Doha have

not reached the desired level."

"Fruits and food products are Iran's top exported items to Qatar, and it cannot be expected that the trade between the two countries will exceed one billion dollars with the export of such products, the official said.

According to the TPO head, the challenges in developing trade with Qatar are clear, and Iran is trying to increase the volume of trade with Qatar by developing a well-considered and coherent work plan.

Alkhulaifi for his part stated that the strict customs regulations in Qatar affect all countries, saying: "We will work to expedite the clearance of Iranian goods from Qatari ports and issue visas to Iranian businessmen, and we hope that the prospect of a billion-dollar trade between the two countries will be realized in the near future."

During a meeting between Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Ali-Abadi and Qatar's Ambassador to Iran Saad Abdullah Saad Al Mahmoud Al Shareef, at the place of the ministry in Tehran, in mid-November 2024, the two sides discuss the ways to expand economic and trade ties between the two countries.

In this meeting, the Iranian minister emphasized the implementation of the economic cooperation documents signed by the two sides and offering necessary facilities to the traders and those active in the economy sector.

Addressing the same meeting, Reza Jabari, an Iranian MP and also the chairman of Iran-Qatar Friendship Group, referred to the scientific, technical and economic potential and capacities of Iran and called for the facilitation of the relation between Iranian and Qatari traders.

In early October 2024,

## Annual export of masterbatch, polymer compounds increases 100%

TEHRAN- The export of Iran's masterbatch and polymer compounds increased by 100 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1402 (ended on March 19, 2024), from its previous year, an official with the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry announced.

Ebrahim Sheykh, the deputy industry, mining and trade minister for the public industries, made the remarks in the inaugural ceremony of Iran's 9th International Master-

batch and Polymer Compounds Conference and Exhibition on Sunday.

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

The conference focused 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.

# Rubio's regional rebuff: US leaves Palestinian Authority out in the cold

From page 1 ▶ It was established as a result of the Oslo Accords, which were signed by Palestinian and Israeli leaders in 1993.

The PA was required to recognize Israel and eliminate Palestinian armed groups in exchange for a Palestinian state.

However, Israel has just used the deal as a smokescreen to expand its illegal settlements in the West Bank. The regime still remains opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian Authority is still digging its heels in, insisting on compliance with the Oslo Accords.

Many Palestinians believe the Palestinian Authority's stance amounts to complicity with Israel to maintain its occupation.

The Palestinian Authority has played a significant role in assisting Israel in maintaining strict oversight of the Palestinian populace. The PA is regarded as an Israeli pawn.

Its US-trained forces have been blamed for orchestrating attacks on the Palestinians who target Israeli soldiers. These PA



Secretary of State Marco Rubio has deviated from the conventional practice of US diplomats engaging with the Palestinian Authority during their visits to the region

elements have also detained union leaders, journalists, and social media critics.

The PA's complicity in Israel's actions further came under the spotlight after Hamas carried out a surprise military attack in southern Israel in October 2023.

The Israeli army launched a genocidal war on Gaza after Hamas conducted the operation dubbed the Aqsa Storm.

PA forces have cracked down

on protesters who have taken to the streets in the West Bank to condemn Israel's genocidal war on Gaza which has claimed the lives of nearly 62,000 Palestinians. Israel signed a peace deal with Hamas in January after failing to achieve its goals in the war on Gaza.

President Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, has been under mounting pressure over his position toward the Al-Aqsa Storm.

"Hamas's policies and actions do not represent the Palestinian people, and the policies, programs, and decisions of the (Palestine Liberation Organization) represent the Palestinian people as their sole legitimate representative," Abbas said in mid-October 2023.

Since late last year, the PA has also been assisting Israel to clamp down on Jenin which remains a hotbed of Palestinian resistance.

Palestinians consider the Western-backed Ramallah organization as irredeemably corrupt and a toothless body in the face of its inaction toward Israel's crimes in Gaza and the West Bank.

Rubio's refusal to meet with PA officials clearly indicates that the organization is deadwood.

The US and Israel have used the Palestinian Authority as their stooges to meet their objectives.

Rubio's move has thrown a spotlight on the fact that only resistance, national unity and resilience will contribute to bringing an end to Israel's decades-long occupation and atrocious crimes.

## Which Lebanese state do Washington and Tel Aviv desire?

From page 1 ▶ On March 19, 1978, following a complaint submitted by Lebanon to the Security Council, UN Resolution 425 was issued, which stipulated the withdrawal from the occupied territories.

The Israeli enemy forces, however, kept a 700-km border area under the command of its notorious ally Saad Haddad, on the pretext that the Lebanese army alone was not qualified to take charge.

Later, Haddad announced the establishment of the "State of Free Lebanon" in the areas under his control, which expanded after the 1982 invasion.

Now, after about 4 decades, it seems the enemy is betting on repeating the same scenario that Hezbollah squashed on May 25, 2000.

Netanyahu wants the Lebanese army's sole mission restricted to controlling the border areas and suppressing the voices like what happened on Friday on the airport road in which the army turned against peaceful demonstrators who rejected the US-Israeli tutelage.

Meanwhile, an informed source told the Tehran Times that Nabih Berri, Speaker of the Parliament, urged President Joseph Aoun to pressure Prime Minister Nawaf Salam to find a solution on the landing of Iranian aircraft in Beirut amid fears that Iranian figures, official

and public, would be prevented from attending the funeral of Sayyed Nasrallah and Sayyed Safieddine, two Hezbollah chiefs who were martyred in the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon.

This morning, the occupation forces were supposed to withdraw from Yaroun, Maroun al-Ras, Blida, Mays al-Jabal, Markaba, Houla, Adaisseh, and Kfar Kila, except 5 strategic hills: 1 Labbouneh in the outskirts of Naqoura; Jabal Blat between Marouhin and Ramieh; Jabal al-Bat in the eastern outskirts of Aitaroun; al-Dawair on the Markaba-Houla road; and Tallet al-Hamams in Khiam due to their field importance in terms of surveying the area by sight and fire, as they are higher than the colonial settlements in northern Palestine.

US General Jasper Jeffers, head of the ceasefire supervision committee, had already stated that Israeli forces would withdraw from the internal neighborhoods but stationed on the eastern outskirts of occupied Palestine.

On Sunday, Khadija Atwi, the orphan of Hezbollah martyr Hussein Atwi, was martyred while the residents were trying to liberate her town of Houla.

Until the late hours of the night, enemy soldiers prevented Lebanese army soldiers from evacuating her body and treating the wounded.

The fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime has

confirmed a clear axiom: any regional party that abandons the option of resistance must prepare itself to implement American-Israeli dictates, whether it likes it or not.

Netanyahu wants the Lebanese government to complete the mission that he failed to achieve. This means that the plan is to involve the Lebanese army in fighting the resistance, coinciding with the attempt to displace the people of Gaza.

Now more than ever, their colonial scheme requires escalating the political and media discourse against Hezbollah, with a focus on preventing Iranian donations from financing the reconstruction of destroyed homes and infrastructure, especially in the border villages, from October 2023 to November 2024 in Israeli massive bombardments.

This is the current mission of the spoiled boy in the American embassy in Beirut, who have already launched anti-resistance campaigns to promote the advantages of the "Abrahamic normalization," a task that requires, above all, controlling all decision-making bodies or institutions, and government facilities, including the airport and ports, in addition to hiding the file of demarcating the land and sea borders and the file of returning the displaced Syrians in the drawers of oblivion forever.

## Trump's strategy and key players in new Syria



Syrian new ruler Abu Muhammad Al Jolani held talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara on February 4.

From page 1 ▶ Israeli-controlled, and a lawless zone. Trump will unlikely withdraw U.S. forces unless they are under threat.

Instead, the U.S. would limit Turkish influence without direct intervention, supporting the Kurds in their areas and maintaining a presence in the Euphrates region, including Raqqa, Hasakah, and Deir ez-Zor, with Kurdish control.

Turkey played a central role in ousting the Syrian regime, seeking to dominate Syria's new leadership, that it desires to be fully subservient to its interests. Unlike Iran, Turkey prefers direct interventions, aiming to annex Aleppo and Hama, if granted international approval.

It also aims to dissolve Kurdish groups like the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces.

However, the SDF will not be disbanded or integrated into the Syrian army, as the U.S. still needs them, and Turkey opposes their inclusion.

Israel is involved, extending its presence from the Golan Heights to Daraa. It seized opportunities to expand its influence and gained control over water sources in elevated regions.

It aims to maintain its presence, viewing it as compensation for unfulfilled goals in Lebanon. The new Syrian regime will neither challenge nor confront the entity, even verbally, though local resistance could emerge.

Europe, particularly France, is closely monitoring developments. France may push for partition to limit Turkey's control.

It has already contacted some Druze leaders, encouraging them to seek French protection. A coastal Alawite region could emerge, possibly under French or Turkish oversight.

Russia's role in Syria is uncertain, as its influence in the region wanes. Its presence in Syria had a significant impact and was advantageous for its political, economic, and military influence in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

Its arms sales to the countries in the region had started as a strong competitor to Western weapons. The Russians dreamed of reaching the Mediterranean and warm waters, and they achieved this, therefore it is unclear why Russia withdrew.

Even if the matter is related to a deal about Ukraine with Trump, it does not justify such a significant loss.

Iran has effectively withdrawn from Syria, though it retains networks and individuals it worked with during its long presence.

However, Iran avoids fighting on behalf of those unwilling to defend themselves.

Unlike other powers, Iran pre-

fers to engage locally to form goal-oriented groups for fighting terrorism or the occupation entity, rather than establish permanent military bases.

Iran's presence was invited by the previous regime for defense purposes, but it left months before the fall of the regime.

Iran's previous role ended with the collapse of the regime, and its new role remains undefined.

Julani and his groups, with a history of terrorism, now dominate Syria but face internal divisions. The West and the global order are receptive to Julani, as he complies with their demands, potentially prolonging his rule.

However, military success does not guarantee a lasting political role, and his position may diminish. He is someone who lacks practical depth or a credible public image.

Full compliance with Western demands could extend the government's lifespan but exacerbate internal contradictions. Internal political dialogue tied to regional sponsors is expected but unlikely to succeed.

Instability will likely persist, with chaos ensuing, however official and declared partitioning of Syria is not anticipated.

The views expressed in this article are those of the writer.

## CAIR urges hate crime charges for shooting attack on Palestinian victims

The Florida chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-Florida), the state's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, called on Monday for federal hate crime charges following the arrest of a suspect who allegedly opened fire on a vehicle in Miami Beach after he reportedly saw what he thought were "two Palestinians".

Mordechai Brafman, 27, was charged with two counts of attempted murder after reportedly making a U-turn to stop in front of their vehicle and shooting "17 times, unprovoked, striking both victims." Police say that while he was in custody, Brafman said that "he saw two Palestinians and shot and killed both." One of the victims was shot in the shoulder, while the other's arm was grazed by a bullet.

"We urge state and federal law enforcement authorities to bring hate crime charges in this case based on the alleged perpetrator's statements to police that reportedly indicate an anti-Palestinian motive. It is the alleged shooter's reportedly bias-motivated actions, not the actual ethnicity of the vic-

tims, that should be the determining factor for charges in this disturbing case."

He added that earlier this month, CAIR-FL called for the censure of Palm Bay City Councilman Chandler Langevin for his inflammatory and xenophobic anti-Muslim remarks, in which he claimed that Muslims "do not belong" to the United States.

Last year, CAIR-FL called for the Florida legislature to censure state Rep. Randy Fine after he posted an anti-Muslim tweet celebrating the murder of Turkish-American human rights activist Aysenur Ezgi Eygi and appeared to call for more killing.

Ruiz noted that from January to June 2024, CAIR documented 4,951 incoming bias complaints nationwide, a 69 percent increase over the same period in 2023.

Last year, CAIR's national office released its 2024 civil rights report, which revealed the highest number of complaints it has ever received in its 30-year history. Titled "Fatal: The Resurgence of Anti-Muslim Hate," the report documented 8,061 complaints. Nearly half of all complaints received in 2023 were reported in the final three months of the year.

## Hamas confirms military official martyred

The armed wing of Hamas hailed Muhammad Ibrahim Shaheen, who was killed by an Israeli drone strike in Sidon, as an influential figure in the Palestinian resistance movement

Qassam Brigades said in a statement that he had a "pioneering role and special fingerprints" in the path of resistance against Isra-

el, including during the war on Gaza, according to Al Jazeera.

The Palestinian resistance group said as its members are killed across Palestinian and other territories, it affirms its steadfastness on the path of resistance "until the dream of our people for liberation and return is achieved".

## Palestinian prisoners subjected to 'severe torture' under Israeli detention



The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor said the terrible health conditions in which Palestinians were released from Israeli prisons indicate a pattern of torture and abuse until the very last moments.

"All prisoners and detainees were released

under appalling conditions by the Israeli occupation forces, who also stormed their homes and locations designated to receive and celebrate their release.

They attacked family gatherings, suppressing them with tear gas and bullets and injuring some people," the Geneva-based organization said, Al Jazeera reported.

Israeli violations "turned into a systematic policy of retaliation against all Palestinian prisoners and detainees" who were subjected to "severe torture, intentional starvation, and prolonged solitary confinement as part of punitive measures that ramped up brutally after the events in the Gaza Strip", it added.

## Israel to stay at 'five strategic locations' in southern Lebanon

Israel said its forces would stay in five strategic points in southern Lebanon along its northern border.

The Israeli army must fully withdraw from Lebanon on Tuesday under the terms of the Hezbollah-Israeli ceasefire agreement.

Israel has repeatedly violated the ceasefire with Hezbollah that went into effect in late November last year.



## NGO: Israel plans 1,000-unit expansion for West Bank settlement

Israel has issued a tender for the construction of nearly 1,000 additional settler homes in the occupied West Bank, an Israeli NGO has reported.

Referencing the document, the Peace Now watchdog said on Sunday that the development of 974 new housing units is planned at the Efrat settlement near Jerusalem (al-Quds).

Settlement in the West Bank is being pushed by Israeli hardliners and backed by the Israeli cabinet but is viewed as a major obstacle to peace by Palestinians and by many internationally.

The project would expand the population of the Efrat settlement, located about 12km (7.5 miles) southwest of al-Quds, by around 40 percent and further block the development of the nearby Palestinian city of Bethlehem, Peace Now said.

Hagit Ofra, who leads the group's settlement monitoring, said construction may begin after the contracting process and issuing of permits, which could take another year at least.

Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The settlements are illegal under international law.

## Iran extends historical site visiting hours during Ramadan

TEHRAN - Iran's Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage, Ali Darabi, has announced adjustments to the upcoming Nowruz festivities, ensuring alignment with the holy month of Ramadan, which begins on March 2.

One of the key changes includes extended visiting hours for historical sites and cultural landmarks after Iftar, allowing visitors to explore these locations late into the evening.

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, Darabi emphasized that in recent years, Nowruz celebrations have been hosted at heritage sites and historical monuments, a tradition that will continue this year.

However, given the overlap of Nowruz with Ramadan, special programs have been planned, including the observance of Laylat al-Qadr (the Night of Decree) ceremonies at select historical locations.

Preparations for Nowruz are already underway, and a meeting with provincial directors and heritage site managers is scheduled for next week to finalize plans. Darabi noted that at the exact moment of the Persian New Year, celebrations will be held across 1,000 locations nationwide, welcoming citizens and tourists alike.

Additionally, many cultural heritage sites will remain open for visitors after Iftar, providing an opportunity for people to engage with Iran's rich history while observing Ramadan traditions. Historical mosques and selected heritage sites will also host special religious ceremonies during Laylat al-Qadr.

Last month, the tourism minister, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, also underlined alterations for the upcoming Nowruz festivities



Ali Darabi, Iran's Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage

to respect the holy month of Ramadan. Salehi-Amiri stated that Nowruzgahs, cultural events highlighting Nowruz, the Persian New Year, would be held after the evening Iftar meal until midnight to accommodate Ramadan's spiritual and cultural considerations.

The minister emphasized that these measures aim to provide an opportunity for people to gather and enjoy Nowruz traditions after breaking their fast. "Nowruz is celebrated globally, and we want to create a space where families can come together in harmony with the spirit of the holy month," he added.

Nowruzgahs, launched in 2015, are cultural events designed to revive and promote the ancient traditions of Iran's diverse ethnic groups.

Traditionally, when the rotating lunar month of Ramadan coincides with Nowruz, its celebrations strike a unique balance, reflecting both the joy of the Persian New Year and the spiritual reverence of Ramadan.

## China hopes new fleet of 'silver trains' will encourage its elderly to travel, and spend, more

China will launch a fleet of special "silver trains" specially built for the comfort and safety of elderly people to encourage its rapidly ageing population to travel - and spend - more, as it grapples with a demographic decline and stuttering economy.

Berths in the new trains will be tailored to be more comfortable for elderly travelers and come with features like handrails, oxygen bottles and emergency call buttons, according to state-run national tabloid Global Times.

Also on board will be carers and professional medical staff who can provide limited treatments and prescribe emergency medicines.

The plan is to roll out a nationwide network of the "silver trains" by 2027, according to the plans released Tuesday by China's commerce and tourism ministry and other government departments.

China's gigantic rail network that links its icy northern provinces near Siberia to the subtropical hills bordering Vietnam carried more than four billion passengers last year, according to state media.

In contrast, U.S. national rail operator Amtrak reported carrying just 32.8 million customers during the last fiscal year - and that was a record high.

As part of the 'silver train' plan, Chinese officials also called on popular tourist spots to upgrade their facilities to make it easier for elderly sightseers to access them and invited catering brands and performing groups to pitch their services for the new trains.

For decades, Chinese workers have wrapped up their working lives relatively young: at 60 for men and as early as 50 for women - although last year the government announced plans to push those ages back.

(Source: CNN)

## Echoes of Iran



A group of artists from Kermanshah province perform a local music on the last day 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition, February 14, 2025.

# Discover Dokkan-e Daud: an ancient marvel in western Iran

TEHRAN - Nestled in the rugged landscapes of Kermanshah province in western Iran, Dokkan-e Daud (English: David's Store) is an enigmatic and historically rich site that beckons history enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike. Situated near Sarpol-e Zahab, this late Achaemenid rock site is both a tomb and a relief, offering a glimpse into Iran's ancient past and its evolving artistic and cultural influences.

Perched twelve meters above ground, Dokkan-e Daud is a fascinating rock-cut tomb featuring an intricately carved relief known as Kil-e Daud, or David's Tomb. The site has captivated historians and archaeologists for centuries, with Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, the British Orientalist, having documented it as early as 1836.

The tomb itself consists of a chamber accessed through a wide entrance framed by two cylindrical columns, reminiscent of the grand architectural elements seen in Pasargadae palaces. Although time has eroded much of the structure, the remains of the column bases and capitals still hint at its former grandeur. Inside the chamber, shelves carved into the rock walls once held sacred offerings, while an oval-shaped grave on the left side of the room suggests its function as a burial site.



A mysterious relief with Zoroastrian influences

Beneath the tomb lies the most intriguing feature of Dokkan-e Daud—a full-height relief depicting a robed figure wearing a distinctive Bashlick cap that covers his neck and ears. In his left hand, he holds a Barsom, a bundle of sacred twigs used in Zoroastrian rituals, while his right hand is raised in reverence.

This unfinished relief, possibly intended to include a fire altar, reflects strong Achaemenid artistic traditions, though its precise dating

remains a topic of scholarly debate.

### Achaemenid, Median, or Parthian? A site shrouded in mystery

For years, scholars debated whether Dokkan-e Daud belonged to the Median, Achaemenid, or even Parthian periods. Initially attributed to the Medes due to its stylistic elements, recent studies suggest it was likely created during the late Achaemenid period (4th-3rd centuries BC) or even under the Seleucid or early Parthian rule.

Unlike the Greek-influenced art of the Seleucid era, the reliefs at Dok-

kan-e Daud retain the distinctly Persian style of the Achaemenid Empire.

### Visiting Dokkan-e Daud, a rewarding challenge

For travelers eager to explore this ancient wonder, reaching Dokkan-e Daud requires some effort. Located near a vast historical graveyard along the route between Sarpol-e Zahab and West Kerend, the site is visible from the main road but can only be accessed by climbing the rocky terrain. This added challenge makes visiting the site a thrilling experience for those seeking an off-the-beaten-path adventure.

Dokkan-e Daud was officially registered as a national heritage site in 1931, highlighting its cultural and historical significance. The site remains an essential stop for those interested in Iran's ancient civilizations, offering a breathtaking combination of history, mythology, and archaeology set against the dramatic backdrop of Kermanshah's mountainous terrain.

Dokkan-e Daud stands as a silent witness to centuries of history, embodying Iran's rich heritage and the artistic mastery of its ancient civilizations. Whether you are a history buff, an archaeology enthusiast, or a curious traveler, a visit to this extraordinary rock-cut tomb promises an unforgettable journey into the heart of Persia's past.

## Shiraz hosts meeting on World Heritage nomination for historic mosques

TEHRAN - Shiraz hosted a two-day expert meeting focused on the potential nomination of historic mosques from 26 Iranian provinces for UNESCO World Heritage status.

The event, which started on Sunday, brought together cultural heritage specialists, provincial heritage directors, and officials from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, aimed to review and refine the selection of mosques that may be proposed as a serial property for UNESCO recognition.

According to Mohammad Sabet-Eqlidi, the tourism chief of Fars province, the specialized consultative meeting was held within the framework of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

Sabet-Eqlidi emphasized the cultural and religious significance of Iranian mosques both nationally and internationally. He stated that mosques are not only vital elements of Iran's architectural heritage but also symbols of identity and faith. He highlighted the im-



portance of these meetings in identifying and preparing the most eligible sites for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Eight historic mosques from Fars province, including Moshir Mosque, Vakil Mosque, Nasir al-Mulk Mosque, Jameh Atiq Mosque, Neyriz Mosque, Darab Mosque, Masjed-e Sangi in Darab have been submitted for consideration. "These mosques represent various architectural styles and historical periods, show-

ing the artistic and cultural evolution of mosque construction in Iran," the official said.

The meeting marks a significant step in advancing Iran's efforts to secure UNESCO recognition for its architectural heritage, ensuring the preservation and global appreciation of these historical religious landmarks.

The diverse architectural styles of Iranian mosques reflect regional variations, with intricate geometric designs, vibrant colors, and symbolic motifs that enhance their aesthetic appeal. Each mosque, or "masjed," serves not only as a place of worship but also as a cultural landmark, illustrating the rich heritage of Islamic art and architecture in Iran.

This initiative follows the successful registration of 54 caravanserais in Iran at the 45th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee last year, among other serial properties such as Persian Gardens and Persian Qanats, highlighting the country's ongoing efforts to preserve and promote its cultural heritage on a global stage.

## New Zealand's 'Everyone must go!' tourism campaign ridiculed as emigration hits record high

A New Zealand tourism campaign targeting Australian visitors has been ridiculed for sounding like a clearance sale slogan and for being tone-deaf amid widespread public service job cuts and record numbers of New Zealanders moving overseas.

The government launched its "Everyone must go!" campaign on Sunday, in a bid to encourage Australian holiday-makers to visit New Zealand. The NZD\$500,000 campaign will run on radios and social media in Australia between February and March.

"What this Tourism New Zealand campaign says to our Aussie mates is that we're open for business, there are some great deals on, and we'd love to see you soon," said Louise Upston, the tourism minister.

But the tagline - set

against photographs of people sightseeing - quickly became the subject of derision inside New Zealand, with opposition politicians and social media users likening it to a clearance

sale advertisement, a marketing campaign for the apocalypse, or a desperate plea for access to the lavatory.

The Green Party's tourism spokesperson, Celia Wade-

Brown, told national broadcaster RNZ the tagline "might refer to the need for toilets in some of our high-tourist spots. I mean, the queues are ridiculous".

(Source: The Guardian)

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# Iran's migration organization, Italy's CESVI discuss ways to expand cooperation

TEHRAN – Nader Yar-Ahmadi, the head of the National Organization for Migration, and Marcelo Garcia Dalla Costa, an official with the Italian humanitarian organization, CESVI, have explored the potential for enhancing cooperation.

The meeting, held on February 16, aimed to confer on different aspects to define and implement joint projects, based on a humanitarian approach to support Iran as a refugee-hosting country, ILNA reported.

During the meeting, Dalla Costa commended Iran's efforts in hosting refugees, saying that he was well aware of the heavy burden of hosting refugees and insufficient international aid to the country.

He elaborated on plans that focus on the implementation of various projects in the agricultural sector to produce food, generate income, and provide livelihood assistance to foreign nationals in Iran and Afghans in their home country.

Also, Dalla Costa mentioned his meeting with the Italian ambassador in Iran, saying that Italy has agreed to provide funds to the CESVI foundation to support refugees, foreign nationals, and immigrants residing in Iran.

For his part, Yar-Ahmadi expounded on the activities of the National Organization for Migration, and other partner institutions in hosting Afghan refugees, displaced people, and immigrants, highlighting shortcomings and difficulties.

Referring to the heavy burden



of hosting Afghan refugees, their peaceful living in the country, and benefiting from citizenship services the same as Iranians, the official expressed optimism about implementing joint projects based on the humanitarian approach to help hosting countries.

Moreover, Yar-Ahmadi welcomed the idea of cooperating in the agricultural sector saying that "we will do our best to support the plan by establishing a specialized team of experts in the field of agriculture."

**Iran may rethink refugee policies**

In October 2024, Yar-Ahmadi said, "In case the international community refrains from taking responsibility and fairly sharing the burden of hosting refugees, the Islamic Republic of Iran will probably

revise its immigration policies."

The official made the remarks at a meeting held on the sidelines of the annual session with Flippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The 75th Annual Session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (ExCom) was held from October 14 to 19 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Lauding the support and the efforts of the UNHCR in Iran, the Iranian official said the increase in foreign nationals' population along with educational, economic, cultural-social, and health infrastructure pressure on one hand and the lack of consistency between the UNHCR budget and the needs and costs of refugees in the country on the other hand have

caused numerous problems, IRNA quoted Yar-Ahmadi as saying.

The official emphasized less than one percent of the costs of refugees have been paid for; hosting more refugees is improbable, and they have to return to their home country.

"The priority of the country is to resettle vulnerable refugees in third countries, despite promises made in your last visit to Iran in the calendar year 1400 (2021-2022) to provide more vulnerable refugees with insurance, sadly, not only did the number of those covered not increase, but also decreased from 120,000 to 95,000 individuals.

It should be noted that political issues, including sanctions, must not affect humanitarian activities. Since humanitarian issues are apart from political issues, the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to cooperate with financial supporters of refugees in the country, the official added.

Considering the challenges facing the education system due to the free education of Afghan nationals in the country, it is necessary for the UNHCR to cover the expenses related to their education, including building new schools, refurbishing and equipping schools, and paying teacher recruitment costs.

Some 25,000 classrooms are needed for the education of foreign students, but since 2021, only 21 schools have been built with the support of the UNHCR in the country which does not meet the needs.

## IRCS, ICRC to establish secretariat on rehabilitation services in Tehran

TEHRAN – The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), have agreed on setting up a joint secretariat on rehabilitation services in Tehran.

During a meeting in Tehran on Sunday to prepare for the first international conference on physical disability and rehabilitation, Pirhossein Kolivand, the head of the IRCS, said rehabilitation is an essential part of universal health coverage.

"Due to war and other accidents, rehabilitation services are greatly needed in the country. That's why the Society started providing rehabilitation services and manufacturing prostheses and orthotics. Currently, 200 rehabilitation centers are operating in Iran, and the conference will focus on the activities of these centers," he added.

This meeting should focus on modern initiatives and strategies, policy making, and macro planning in the rehabilitation sector. Promoting public awareness of rehabilitation is also essential, Kolivand stressed, the IRCS website reported.

Utilizing artificial intelligence and new technologies in rehabilitation, fostering synergy and participation among national societies, moving towards new products, and global solidarity to provide rehabilitation services should be prioritized.

"We look forward to expanding international

collaborations. It is essential to establish a secretariat to follow up on the issues. We will do our best to help those who need rehabilitation services," Kolivand further noted.

François Friedel, the head of the ICRC physical rehabilitation, for his part, said "Social and psychological aspects of rehabilitation are highly important. Undoubtedly, the establishment of the secretariat in Tehran can help address the problems, and enhance cooperation among societies. The issue of rehabilitation is important for the International Red Cross Committee, and we are ready to cooperate with the Iranian Red Crescent Society in this field."

**Boosting ties in rehabilitation**

In January, Vincent Cassard, the representative of the ICRC in Iran, in a meeting with Raziieh Alishvandi, the director of the IRCS for international affairs, highlighted the need for expanding cooperation in humanitarian sectors, mainly rehabilitation and mental health.

"The cooperation in rehabilitation and mental health fields has progressed well so far, and we believe that it will provide suitable and effective platforms for enhanced collaborations between the two sides," IRNA quoted Cassard as saying.

The official made the remarks during a meeting held on Monday in Tehran. "We are also ready to expand collaborations in family reunification; it is one of our key priorities, which can play an

effective role in alleviating the pain of families affected by crises," he added.

Referring to the joint courses held on fundamentals of the ICRC and IRCS, Cassard said, "We look forward to similar educational cooperation in the future."

The official went on to laud the IRCS efforts in providing relief services to war-affected people, particularly in Gaza, and Lebanon including Syrian refugees, announcing readiness to enhance cooperation with the IRCS in providing humanitarian protection to Syrian refugees.

Alishvandi, for her part, said the IRCS is ready to promote its cooperation in various humanitarian fields, like rehabilitation, to play a more effective role in improving human living conditions.

"The IRCS is providing rehabilitation services both nationally and globally. These services are provided in cooperation with the ICRC in the eastern provinces of the country which are mainly hosting immigrants," she noted.

Referring to the challenges and problems faced by Syrian and Lebanese refugees, Alishvandi asked for the ICRC support in helping the war victims in the region.

"Along with our international colleagues, we have always done our best to fulfill our humanitarian duties by assisting those in need and those affected by crises, regardless of geographical borders."

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## 5,000 clunker garbage trucks move in Tehran at night

Some 5,000 clunker trucks, aged over 40 years, move across the city of Tehran during the night to collect wastes, Tehran Governor Isa Farhadi has announced.

The renovation of the garbage collection fleet requires high amount of budget; this is while the Municipality of Tehran cannot afford the cost and the issue needs urgent measures, he stated.

He went on to say that the vehicles are extremely old resulting in huge amount of emission and contributing to air pollution.

"We tried to replace the clunker trucks with new ones, however, there is a large number of trucks that replacing the whole fleet is not nearly possible for Tehran traffic and transport affairs directorate," he added.

Clunker garbage trucks aged 40 years or above which travel through the capital at night amounts to 5,000, he concluded.

## ۵۰۰۰ کامیون زباله کش قدیمی شب هادر تهران تردد دارند

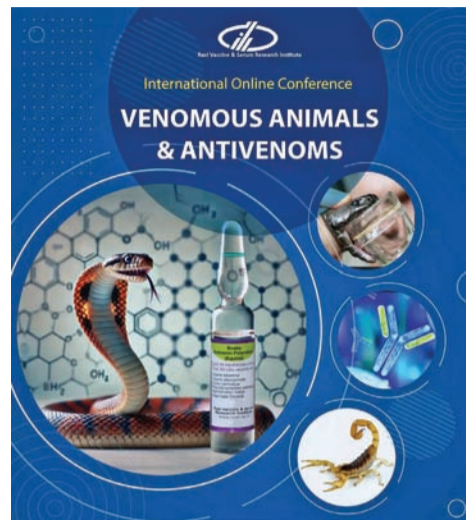
فرماندار تهران از وجود ۵۰۰۰ کامیون زباله کش که شبها در تهران تردد دارند و عمرشان بیش از ۴۰ سال است، خبر داد.

به گزارش خبرنگار اجتماعی خبرگزاری فارس، عیسی فرهادی گفت: نوسازی این ناوگان هزینه بسیاری دارد که از توان ما و سازمان شهرداری خارج است و باید فکری برای آن اندیشیده شود.

اکنون میانگین سن این خودروها بالا رفته است و به تبع آن آلودگی های ایجاد شده نیز افزایش خواهد یافت.

فرماندار تهران افزود: ۵ هزار کامیون زباله کش شبها در تهران تردد دارند که سن آنان بالای ۳۵ تا ۴۰ سال است. در جلسات گذشته تلاش شد که راهکاری اندیشیده شود تا این خودروها جایگزین شوند، ولی متأسفانه خودروهای سنگین تعدد بسیاری دارند که انجام این کار از توان ما و معاونت حمل و نقل ترافیکی شهرداری تهران خارج است.

## Razi Institute holding intl. seminar on venomous animals and antivenoms



These features have made many countries interested in cooperating with the Razi Institute to manufacture antivenoms.

**Razi Institute**

Founded on January 6, 1925, in response to the devastating Rinderpest pandemic, the Razi Institute has been a pioneer in vaccine and serum production in Iran. Today, it offers a diverse portfolio of over 80 biological products, reflecting years of dedicated research and innovation by its scientists.

Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute operates six branches across Iran—in Mashhad, Ahvaz, Shiraz, Kerman, Marand, and Arak—ensuring that local vaccine production and research needs are met, with its main facility located in Karaj.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Razi Cov Pars, the second Iranian-made vaccine for coronavirus, was developed by the Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute.

The vaccine is protein-based, which employs recombinant versions of the spike protein and tutors the immune system against the virus by producing antibodies.

It is developed in 3 doses. The first two doses are injectable and the third dose is intranasal. The second dose of the vaccine will be injected into the volunteers 21 days later and the third dose will be inhaled 51 days later.

The method applied in the production of this vaccine is in accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO) regulations.

The institute started working on the vaccine in February 2020 and after the initial stages, it passed the animal test phase in April 2020. It has developed 8 to 9 months of immunity.

Cov-Pars was developed under the leadership of Iran's Health Ministry and the Food and Drug Organization's expertise.

At the end of the second phase of clinical trials, Cov Pars proved 80 percent of the immunogenicity.

A number of countries have requested to purchase the Iranian-made Cov Pars vaccine for COVID-19.

The Institute (affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture) was capable of producing 20 million doses of vaccine by the end of 2021.

Razi Vaccine and Serum Production Research Institute celebrated its 100th anniversary in a high-level ceremony on Sunday, 05 January 2025, in Tehran.

TEHRAN – An international online seminar titled 'Venomous Animals and Antivenoms: Bridging Science, Innovation and Global Health' is being held at Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute in Tehran on February 17 and 18.

Supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), the event aims to introduce the institute as a manufacturing sci-hub for anti-venoms in the region, as the institute can not only export antivenoms but also transfer the technology to other nations, Mehr news agency reported.

The event has brought together many prominent researchers from different countries including Brazil, Thailand, England, Costa Rica, Nepal, and Oman.

The seminar serves as a platform to showcase the country's scientific capabilities and develop scientific interactions and cooperation with reliable global centers.

It will cover various topics, including the mechanisms of venom action, epidemiology of venomous bites, innovations in anti-venom research, emergency treatments of victims in hospitals, and innovative technologies for anti-venom development.

Lowering production expenses for developing countries, featuring anti-venoms produced by the Razi Institute, and comparing them with those made in foreign countries are among other main goals.

Contrasted with those made in other nations, the domestically produced anti-venoms hold numerous advantages including being polyvalent (multiple) and capable of neutralizing venoms.

## Iranian, Russian universities committed to broadening ties



party in their higher education institutions.

Iranian, Russian universities ink 12 MOUs

In July 2024, Shiraz University and St. Petersburg University signed 12 memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to boost cultural, educational, and research collaborations.

The main subjects of the MOUs included enhancing cooperation among faculty members of the two universities, granting scholarships to ten PhD students, conducting summer school for Iranian students by St. Petersburg University as well as winter schools for Russian students by Shiraz University, Mehr news agency reported.

As a part of the agreement, each university will establish a specialized center within the other institution.

The cooperation will also include utilizing the excavation training and research center of Saint Petersburg University by Shiraz University, conducting joint research, holding joint specialized geological training courses for the students from the two universities, as well as holding specialized training courses for Iranian mining engineers by St. Petersburg Mining University.

According to Forpost-sz, a delegation from the St. Petersburg Mining University visited Shiraz University for the first time back in January.

From page 1 ► Hence Iran-Russia comprehensive agreements will pave the ground for enhancing scientific collaborations through conducting joint scientific and technological projects, fostering interactions among educational institutions, and exchanging faculty, staff, and students.

The contracting parties will facilitate the share of experience and information on regulating activities in the field of scientific, technological, and innovative activities, organizing and holding conferences, meetings, seminars, exhibitions, and other scientific events.

Moreover, according to the agreement, the two parties will promote and facilitate the learning of official languages, and the study of literature, history, and culture of the other



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FEBRUARY 18, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*He is the wisest and the most knowing man who advises people not to lose hope and faith in the Mercy of Allah and not to be too sure and over-confident of immunity from His Wrath and Punishment.*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

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

## Fajr Music Festival ends with homage to composer Javad Maroufi



TEHRAN- The closing night of the 40th International Fajr Music Festival at Tehran's Rudaki Hall hosted a special performance dedicated to the renowned composer and pianist, Javad Maroufi. The evening featured a piano performance by Mohammadreza Amirghasemi.

Amirghasemi, himself a composer and pianist, presented a selection of lesser-known compositions by the late Master Maroufi, offering a unique experience for Iranian piano enthusiasts.

Javad Maroufi, a celebrated Iranian composer and pianist, emerged from a musical lineage. Born in Tehran, his father, Musa Maroufi, and mother, Ozra Maroufi, were both accomplished students of Darvish Khan, a prominent music figure in Iran. The young Maroufi's life took a turn with the early loss of his mother, leading him to be raised within his paternal family.

His musical journey began under the tutelage of his father, where he mastered the tar and violin. At the age of fourteen, Maroufi enrolled at the Academy of Music, directed by Ali-Naqi Vaziri. There, he honed his piano skills under the guidance of Tatiana Kharatian, delving into the works of musical giants like Chopin, Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach. This rigorous training laid the foundation for his future accomplishments.

Maroufi's legacy endures through his composi-

tions, which capture the depth and breadth of his musical vision. Among his most recognized pieces are "Jila Fantasy," a work evoking fantasy, "Golden Dreams," a composition which suggests imagery of happiness and aspirations, and "Ashura," a piece which references a significant historical event for Iranians. These compositions reflect his profound understanding of musical structure, emotional expression, and his deep roots within Iranian culture.

Maroufi passed away on December 7, 1993 in a Tehran hospital, leaving behind a rich and enduring contribution to Iranian music.

The 40th International Fajr Music Festival was 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 aimed 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 performed at the festival.

## Cartoon of Day



BiBi and Trump  
Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

## National Ceramic Art event underway in Tehran

© Tehran Times/ Bahman Vakhshour



TEHRAN - A national event showcasing the works of Iranian students of ceramic art opened at the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran on Friday.

The group exhibition, titled "Variations," features work by students from the universities of Soore, Art, Tabriz, Al-Zahra, and

Kashan, and is being held in six galleries of the IAF, including Mir Miran, Momayyez, Winter, Autumn, Summer and Spring.

The exhibition is organized by the Iranian Ceramists Association, in collaboration with the General Department of Visual Arts of the Ministry of Culture

and Islamic Guidance, the Institute for the Development of Contemporary Visual Arts, and several Iranian universities.

The event showcases a variety of ceramic artworks, providing a platform for students to display their talent and creativity.

The exhibition is a chance for both artists and the public to come together and learn from each other.

Hirbod Hemmat Azad is the secretary of the event, which will run until February 23.

## Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie" to be read in Tehran

TEHRAN-The reading performance of the play "The Glass Menagerie" by Tennessee Williams will be held at Arya Theater Hall in Tehran.

Directed by Heliya Jolaie Moghaddam, the 70-minute performance is set for February 21, 27, and 28, Mehr reported.

The play will be read by Mahmoud Goudarzi, Mehdi Asgharian, Azita Momenian, Mahdieh Zojaei, Elham Mogharaban, Somayeh Hajian, Reyhaneh Rezvani, Sadaf Rafiei, Marzieh Gholami, and Noushin Biglari.

Premiered in 1944 in Chicago, the play catapulted Williams from obscurity to fame. The play has strong autobiographical elements, featuring characters based on its author, his histrionic mother, and his mentally fragile sister. In writing the play, Williams drew on an earlier short story, as well as a screenplay he had written under the title of "The Gentleman Caller".

Moving to Broadway, the play won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1945. "The Glass Menagerie" was Williams' first successful play; he went on to become one of

America's most highly regarded playwrights.

It is a memory play, narrated and partially re-enacted by Tom Wingfield, and it revolves around the lives of Tom, his mother Amanda, and his sister Laura. The family grapples with the challenges of daily life in St. Louis during the 1930s, particularly Amanda's desperate attempts to secure a suitor for the painfully shy and physically disabled Laura.

The story is set in the aftermath of the Great Depression, and reflects the economic struggles and societal changes of the time. The play also delves into the impact of World War II, exploring the tensions and uncertainties that characterized the period.

Williams' play is celebrated for its poetic and poignant exploration of themes such as memory, illusion, and the complexity of familial relationships. The character of Laura, with her fragile glass animal collection, becomes a symbol of the delicate nature of dreams and aspirations.

"The Glass Menagerie" is considered a classic of American theater, admired for its innovative use of symbolism and its timeless

portrayal of the human condition.

Thomas Lanier Williams III (1911-1983), known by his pen name Tennessee Williams, was an American playwright and screenwriter. Along with contemporaries Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller, he is considered among the three foremost playwrights of 20th-century American drama.

At age 33, after years of obscurity, Williams suddenly became famous with the success of "The Glass Menagerie" (1944) in New York City. It was the first of a string of successes, including "A Streetcar Named Desire" (1947), "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (1955), "Sweet Bird of Youth" (1959), and "The Night of the Iguana" (1961).

Much of Williams' most acclaimed work has been adapted for the cinema. He also wrote short stories, poetry, essays, and a volume of memoirs.

Arya Theater Hall is located within the premises of Iran Cinema located at Shariati St. across from Bahar Shiraz St.

## New York arts organization employees claim being fired for supporting pro-Palestine statement

Two former employees of Eyebeam, an art and technology non-profit in Brooklyn, New York, believe they were fired for supporting a call to endorse the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, a claim the organization's leader says is a "misunderstanding".

Two former employees believe they were terminated for publicly supporting a statement in which ten artist fellows called on the organization to endorse the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (Pacbi), The Art Newspaper reported.

Artists in the Eyebeam Democracy Machine cohort installed a single-channel video displaying a statement of dissent during their final showcase on September 28, 2024 at the National Academy of Design in Manhattan.

The video statement came weeks after the artists chose to withdraw the individual projects they applied to the program with from the fellowship's showcase, and followed a statement they released last March urging Eyebeam to call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and to endorse the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (Pacbi).

"We found ourselves at odds with the palace of language constructed to house us, having witnessed the failings of the 'Democracy's Machine' in rising to the call for Palestinian liberation

over the course of our Eyebeam fellowships," the group's video statement reads in part

The Democracy Machine is a six-month initiative that awards artists working between contemporary art, design and technology. In an email to The Art Newspaper, the artist signatories said they witnessed a "culture of repression, silencing and unexplained staff terminations—specifically, related to Palestinian solidarity organizing" throughout their remote six-month fellowship run by the non-profit.

Eyebeam's executive director Roderick Schrock said the organization had been supportive of the 2024 Democracy Machine cohort's public statement in the National Academy of Design showcase.

"The Democracy Machine, launched in 2021, was conceived to be a radical experiment and we intentionally embedded and invited dissent into the cycle. We were greatly supportive of the artist fellows' statement; in fact, we platformed the statement in a specially produced artist showcase," Schrock said.

He also highlighted Eyebeam's Palestine Futures initiative, launched in August 2024, which provided grants of \$12,000 to five US-based Palestinian activists, artists and writers who are "engaged in creating Palestinian futures of equity and liberation".

"Each artist was awarded \$12,000 in unrestricted funding

to support their work in light of the escalating violence against the people of Palestine and the devastating acts of scholasticide and cultural erasure that accompany this violence," he added.

In March 2024, just weeks into the Democracy's Machine cohort's fellowship, the group released a statement calling on Eyebeam to join Pacbi that had been signed by nearly 100 people, half of whom said they were Eyebeam fellowship and residency alumni, former staff or affiliates. The artists say that three of the five Eyebeam staff signatories of the letter have since left the organization—two were terminated and one resigned—an outcome many other signatories believe was retaliatory.

Schrock has categorically denied that any of the staff departures were retaliatory in nature, describing the situation as a misunderstanding.

"We would like to clarify that a termination occurred based on performance; a second position was eliminated as we simply could no longer afford the role; and a beloved fellow resigned to accept a new role elsewhere," Schrock said.

Sharsten Plenge, the former development manager at Eyebeam, was among the staff members who signed the letter in March; she was terminated later in the spring.

"As an organization that claims to uphold a legacy of supporting artists who make 'radical' work

with technology, I experienced Eyebeam in a state of perpetuating its own institutional poly-crisis," Plenge told The Art Newspaper. "From attempts to censor and effectively silence the very artists it has a responsibility to materially respond to; to executive leadership, namely the director, gatekeeping discussions among staff and with the board."

Before Plenge was terminated on June 6, she and other staff members were required to undergo 360-degree employment assessments, which are meant to happen annually at Eyebeam but had not happened in three years. Even though she received a score of 3.8 out of 5, she was still terminated.

Kemi, a former employee who was supportive of the cohort's intervention (and only shared her first name for fear of retribution), was terminated several weeks before Plenge. She had been told in April that her position would no longer be needed but that she would be given ample notice of her position's end date and of future available positions. Instead, she was told her position was being eliminated on April 29.

The week after Kemi was terminated, another employee who had signed the cohort's letter, Brent Bailey, announced his departure. "I stand with the artist fellows unequivocally. No organization can call itself radical if it's unwilling to speak out against an ongoing genocide."