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Leader meets with senior Islamic Jihad officials

Idiotic Gaza Plan by US Will Get Nowhere



Araghchi says 'no negotiations under pressure'

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New generation of Iranian drones smaller and more dangerous

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – Iranian drones have made a name for themselves in recent years. They are fast, precise, cheap, and reportedly have many avid customers in different continents.

Despite the impressive success, however, the country showed it's still ambitious about its drone program, as it unveiled a new generation of the weapons on Tuesday. These new drones have a noticeable difference compared to their predecessors: they are significantly smaller.

Micro Aerial Vehicles (MAVs) are small, lightweight drones designed for specialized tasks. These miniature UAVs excel in situations where larger drones can't operate, such as indoor environments or tight spaces. Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Ground Force, Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour, told the Tehran Times that MAVs have entered direct combat in recent years as well. ▶ Page 2

Iran reaffirms support for Iraq as top security official meets with Hashd al-Sha'abi chief

TEHRAN – Ali Akbar Ahmadian, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), met with Falih al-Fayyadh, the head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also known as Hashd al-Sha'abi, to discuss pressing regional developments and shared security concerns.

During their meeting on Tuesday, Ahmadian and al-Fayyadh examined the latest geopolitical shifts in the region and explored avenues for deepening Tehran-Baghdad cooperation. High on the agenda were the persistent threats facing both nations, including the resurgence of Daesh militants.

Reaffirming Iran's unwavering support for Iraq, Ahmadian emphasized the "brotherly and close" ties between the two neighboring countries. He acknowledged the pivotal role of Hashd al-Sha'abi in reclaiming Iraqi territories from Daesh, underscoring the PMU's contribution to regional stability.

Despite Daesh's formal defeat in Syria in late 2019 by the Damascus government and its allies, the terrorist group remains active, launching sporadic attacks in both Iraq and Syria. Concerns over its resurgence have grown following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in December. Iraq has since declared its readiness to confront any threats that arise in the wake of this power shift. ▶ Page 3

Trump's Gaza plot a prelude to depopulating Palestine from native Palestinians

By Matin Jamshidi

TEHRAN – Bibi Netanyahu reiterated in a statement on Monday that "there will be neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority" in Gaza after the war there ends. The statement came after reports that Hamas had agreed to hand over the ruling in Gaza to the Palestinian Authority.

In a later statement, Netanyahu also said that he was "committed to US President Trump's plan" to drive out Gazans from the rest of their motherland.

The plan for Gaza, which was announced in a joint press conference of Trump and Netanyahu at the White House on Feb. 4, is intended to drive out roughly two million residents from the coastal enclave.

With his extremely bizarre proposal which came as a shock to the world, Trump officially gave the green light to Israel to ethnically cleanse Gaza from its population.

US keen to ignite a Lebanon-Iran diplomatic crisis

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – Under direct American orders, and contrary to what has been the norm in successive governments since 2000, Nawaf Salam's government approved its ministerial statement without the main clause related to the right of the Lebanese to resist the Israeli occupation, replacing it with "Lebanon's right to self-defense in accordance with the United Nations Charter."

The statement limited Lebanon's right to self-defense only "in the event of any aggression in accordance with the UN Charter," stressing "the state's right to monopolize the carrying of weapons."

The statement called for "a state that has the decision of war and peace, whose army has a defensive combat doctrine that fights any war in accordance with the provisions of the constitution."

It added that the government's first task is "to reform the state and fortify its sovereignty after the state had been plagued in the past decades by numerous flaws that had confounded its effectiveness, reduced its influence, and diminished its prestige."

Recipe for occupation: Israeli soldiers will remain in the crosshairs

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – Israel is cooking up excuses to justify its illegal presence in southern Lebanon after the deadline for its full withdrawal from the Mediterranean country expired on Tuesday.

The Israeli military has partially pulled out of some towns and villages in southern Lebanon but has maintained its troops in five locations beyond the established deadline.

"We need to remain at those points at the moment to defend Israeli citizens, to make sure this process is complete and eventually hand it over to the Lebanese armed forces," Israeli military spokesperson Nadav Shoshani said on Monday.

He noted that the "temporary measure" was approved by the US-led body monitoring the truce agreement.

UN envoy Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and the UNIFIL peacekeeping force said in a joint statement that Israel's delay in pulling out of southern Lebanon amounts to the violation of a 2006 Security Council resolution that ended the war between Hezbollah and Israel in that year.

▶ Page 5

40th Fajr International Music Festival concludes at Vahdat Hall

TEHRAN – The closing ceremony of the 40th Fajr International Music Festival was held on Monday at Vahdat Hall in Tehran.

This year's edition of the festival featured performances by 106 music groups and 1,771 musicians and singers in 10 venues across Tehran.

The ceremony began with the performance of the piece "Melody of Peace and Friendship" by the Avay-e Mehr music group.

Acord and singer Nima Reisi hosted the ceremony and, upon entering the stage, performed the song "Ey Iran," written by the late writer Nader Ebrahimi and originally sung by the late folk and pop singer Mohammad Nouri. ▶ Page 8



Caspian Sea officials visit Iran's sci-tech exhibition

TEHRAN – The prime ministers and senior officials of Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, paid a visit to an exhibition of Iran's scientific and technological products in Tehran on Tuesday.

The exhibition is being held on the sidelines of the two-day Caspian Economic Forum.

The Caspian Sea, as the world's largest enclosed lake, plays a pivotal role in the region's economic, geopolitical, and environmental landscape.

The exhibition showcases the latest scientific and technological achievements of Iran's knowledge-based companies in the fields of medicine and health, agriculture, petrochemicals, food, wastewater treatment, and energy.

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Revolutionary rationality is the path to future

In a note, Sobh-e-No discussed the manifestations of revolutionary rationality and wrote: One of the manifestations of revolutionary rationality is standing by the Axis of Resistance. Contrary to the efforts of some to create a false dichotomy between the battlefield and diplomacy, the current government, relying on the establishment's macro policies, has prioritized supporting the resistance.

The result of this approach has been the successive victories of the resistance front and the strengthening of Iran's regional position. Convergence among political forces within the country, especially on issues such as foreign policy, can help consolidate the achievements of the Axis of Resistance. The support of Pezeshkian for the establishment's macro policies indicates a deep understanding of international conditions and the necessity of maintaining unity against foreign pressure.

Revolutionary rationality is the future path of the country. The existence of a leadership that determines the country's path with devalis is the greatest asset of the Islamic Revolution. Although there are challenges and obstacles on the path, these obstacles can be overcome and a bright future can be created for the country by relying on revolutionary rationality.

Ettelaat: Is an Israeli military attack on Iran feasible?

In an analysis, Ettelaat addressed the option of an Israeli military attack on Iran. It wrote: Can Netanyahu launch an attack on Tehran's nuclear facilities alone?

This option seems unrealistic. The U.S. president has repeatedly said that he wants a new agreement with Iran, the biggest regional enemy of the U.S. and Israel. Netanyahu has dedicated most of his political career to his main ideology, which is to confront Iran. By all accounts, Israel's preferred option is military action. Israeli radicals, both inside and outside the country, have been advocating an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities for years.

Now, suffering from the illusion that Iran has been weakened after recent military developments in the region, they feel more empowered. If Trump takes the path of diplomacy, Netanyahu will be disappointed.

There is no guarantee that diplomacy will work. Therefore, Netanyahu may be saved from the dilemma of either standing up to Trump or surrendering.

New generation of Iranian drones smaller and more dangerous

Tehran Times talks to IRGC as Iran unveils new micro-drones in ongoing military drills

From page 1 ▶ Micro Aerial Vehicles (MAVs) are small, lightweight drones designed for specialized tasks. These miniature UAVs excel in situations where larger drones can't operate, such as indoor environments or tight spaces. Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Ground Force, Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour, told the Tehran Times that MAVs have entered direct combat in recent years as well.

"Over the past two to three years, developments around the world have made it clear that MAVs can be used for more than just surveillance and reconnaissance efforts," General Pakpour stated, "I remember I heard about a case where a group of micro drones were used to attack tanks. Naturally, it would be very difficult for tanks to target these comparably smaller weapons. MAVs, even in large numbers, would also cost a lot less than even one tank."

The interview was conducted as the IRGC commander was overseeing drills in Iran's southwestern regions.

"The conflicts in Ukraine and between Armenia and Azerbaijan have highlighted the potential benefits of micro drones. As a result, we decided to develop a more sophisticated generation of MAVs.

We are incorporating them into our military exercises and since they have successfully



completed their missions so far, I can say that they are some of the best in the world," General Pakpour stated.

The Tehran Times understands "Saber" is one of the MAV's used in the course of the drills so far. They can carry various anti-tank and anti-personnel weapons within a range of 5 km.

The general did not specify the current extent of Iran's or potential customers' use of these new weapons.

However, given the attention surrounding Iranian UAVs, these micro drones could become equally valuable to the country and scary for its adversaries.

Araghchi says 'no negotiations under pressure'

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"Our foreign policy is clear: we will never negotiate with anyone under pressure or threats," Araghchi said during a joint press conference with his Sudanese counterpart, Ali Yusuf Ahmed, in Tehran. "This is a fundamental principle upheld by every independent nation," Iran's top diplomat noted.

U.S. President Donald Trump signed a National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM) in his first Iran-related actions since taking office, which reinstated the "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran and rolled out plans to further straddle the country's economy.

While it lacked explicit orders, the directive is expected to encourage more sanctions on shipping, insurance, and port sectors. The U.S. might also try to slash Iran's oil revenue by threatening its customers. Furthermore, reports suggest sanctions waivers related to Iran's relations with Iraq, India, and some Persian Gulf states will be cancelled in Trump's second attempt with the infamous "maximum pressure campaign". The president introduced the campaign during his first term in 2018, after leaving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. His successor and now predecessor Joe Biden maintained the anti-Iran policies.

Since signing the memorandum and making a few provocative remarks about the possibility of "bombing the hell out of Iran", Trump has said that he wants a new nuclear



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi during a joint press conference with his Sudanese counterpart, Ali Yusuf Ahmed, in Tehran on February 18, 2025

deal with Iran and is also looking to make agreements on some "non-nuclear" issues.

During his press conference on Monday, Araghchi emphasized that what holds true value is adherence to commitments, not "beautiful statements or interviews." He slammed the U.S. for its "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran, pointing to U.S. President Donald Trump's February 4 memo.

"The document speaks for itself," he stated, adding that such tactics have historically failed to sway Iran. "Our nation has always defended its dignity, and imposed resolutions against us have never been effective."

He further stressed that mutual respect would guide Iran's responses, saying, "If the Iranian people are addressed with respect and honor, they will respond in kind."

Shortly after the U.S. President issued the directive, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, dismissed the idea of negotiating with Washington. He emphasized that such discussions

would be "neither prudent, wise, nor honorable" in light of Trump's antagonistic stance and Iran's previous negative experiences.

The leader underscored Washington's history of failing to uphold agreements, particularly pointing to the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018 as a key reason for his perspective on negotiations with the U.S.

The JCPOA, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, was an agreement reached between Iran and world powers, including the United States. That aimed to limit Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for the termination of sanctions. The deal is now defunct as the so-called maximum pressure campaign brought back all the embargoes and also added new ones.

'IAEA must avoid political pressures'

Elsewhere in his latest remarks, Araghchi revealed that Iran has engaged in ongoing consultations with the UN nuclear watchdog. The

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors previously requested Director General Rafael Grossi to submit a comprehensive report on Iran's nuclear program, a process Araghchi described as "complex."

During a recent phone call with Grossi, Araghchi insisted that the report should not reopen closed cases, a position he said Iran continues to deliberate. "We welcome the Director General's decision not to include this report in the upcoming Board of Governors meeting," he noted.

The minister urged the IAEA to remain a "technical and specialized body" free from political interference. "Reports must be based on professional principles and not deviate from their technical path," he asserted, calling for objectivity in the agency's assessments.

'Iran backs Sudan's government against rebels'

Araghchi also highlighted strengthened ties with Sudan, announcing the signing of two memoranda of understanding. The first abolishes visa requirements for diplomatic and service passport holders, while the second establishes a bilateral political consultation committee. A joint economic cooperation commission is also slated for the coming months.

"One key area agreed upon for the commission is the participation of Iranian companies in Sudan's reconstruction efforts," he said.

He affirmed Iran's support for Sudan's government and military in combating rebel groups, expressing solidarity with civilians affected by the conflict. "We stand with the defenseless people harmed by these attacks," he said, pledging continued diplomatic and economic collaboration with Khartoum.

Upgraded systems ready to counter any threat: Iranian air defense chief



TEHRAN – Iran's top air defense commander has declared the country fully prepared to counter any threat, emphasizing recent advancements in its defense capabilities.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Fourth International Conference of Mahdavi Activists at the Shahid Khezravi Specialized Training Center on Tuesday, Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard told reporters

that Iran's air defense forces are equipped with entirely domestically produced systems.

"Our armed forces and air defense are ready to confront any threat. All of our current equipment is 100% homegrown, designed and manufactured by our own experts. This technology surpasses potential threats," Sabahifard stated. "Look at our military exercises—the Bavar-373 system is a prime example." He further highlighted ongoing upgrades, saying, "We have enhanced all our defense systems. The current and next-generation Bavar-373 are unmatched by any air defense system in the world."

In early February, with approval from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the Chief of Staff appointed Brigadier General Sabahifard as the head of the Joint National Air Defense Headquarters while retaining his command of the Army's Air Defense Force. Brigadier General Rahimzadeh previously held the post.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Threats, threats, and more threats... Rubio shows US has yet to come to its senses as he mimics Netanyahu's war rhetoric

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated on Monday that Israel would "definitively resolve" the issue with Iran, with the backing of the United States. His remarks came after a meeting in the occupied al-Quds with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in a context of growing tensions with Tehran.

Over the past 16 months, Israel has dealt "significant blows" to the Axis of Resistance, Netanyahu claimed in a joint press conference. According to the Israeli politician, under the "strong leadership" of Donald Trump and with Washington's "unwavering" support, Israel will be able to "finish the job."

Netanyahu described his meeting with Rubio as "very productive" and emphasized that Iran was the central topic of discussion. Both Israel and the United States, he stressed, share a coordinated strategy to prevent Tehran from acquiring "nuclear weapons".

The U.S. Secretary of State reinforced this stance. "A nuclear-armed Iran will never happen. An Iran with nuclear capabilities that can shield itself from sanctions and external pressure is simply not an option," Rubio asserted. "President Trump has been clear on this matter," he added.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Two Brits arrested in Iran for spying in multiple provinces

TEHRAN – Iran's judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir says that two British nationals recently arrested in the country's southeastern city of Kerman are accused of spying for Western intelligence services.

Judiciary spokesman announced on Wednesday that the arrests were carried out by the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) in Kerman Province, in coordination with security agencies.

According to Jahangir, the two suspects, identified as Craig and Lindsay Foreman, had been operating under the guise of conducting research and investigative work while secretly collecting classified information across multiple provinces. Investigations revealed their links to covert institutions associated with Western intelligence services.

The UK government has confirmed the identities of the detained individuals, and last week, the British ambassador to Iran, Hugo Shorter, met with them at the Prosecutor's Office in Kerman. The meeting took place at the request of the UK embassy and was facilitated by Iranian judicial authorities in coordination with security officials.

This is not the first time Iranian security forces have arrested individuals suspected of being Western spies disguised as tourists or researchers. Over the past decade, authorities apprehended two people for photographing sensitive military sites in a remote border province, detained another for collecting soil samples near a nuclear facility in a desert, and taken some others into custody following similar actions.

Iranian intelligence agencies are usually able to identify links to foreign intelligence services quickly. However, Western states consistently deny any of those arrested are spies, without addressing the individuals' exposed ties. They also refrain from explaining why a tourist or researcher would opt to gather information on a remote military or nuclear facility instead of spending time at the countless tourist, historical, and cultural sites across Iran.

Tehran ready to establish more direct flights between Iranian and Chinese cities

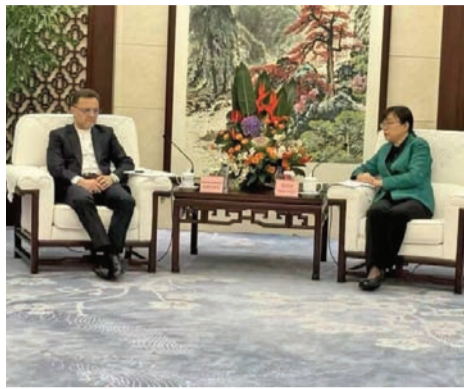
TEHRAN - The Iranian ambassador to China has announced Tehran's readiness to develop the tourism industry between the two countries and also increase direct flights from different Iranian cities to different regions of China.

In a meeting with Zhang Guozhi, a permanent member of the Party Committee and deputy executive director of Guangdong Province, Mohsen Bakhtiar called for increasing cooperation in various economic, commercial, and cultural fields, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

Their consultations also touched upon ways to facilitate the export of agricultural and aquatic products from Iran to China, especially Guangdong Province.

Moreover, the Iranian envoy announced his country's readiness to hold loan or bilateral exhibitions, and cultural weeks, especially in different cities of Guangdong Province, as well as the development of media interactions and the production of joint products, including films and series, were discussed and exchanged.

Zhang, for her part, welcomed the proposals made in the meeting and announced the willingness of Guangdong Province to increase bilateral interactions with Iran.



Guangdong Province, centered on Guangzhou, is one of the most important provinces in China, with a GDP of more than \$2,000 billion and has had the highest GDP growth among Chinese provinces over the past three decades. The province's foreign trade volume is more than \$1,200 billion, accounting for 20 percent of China's foreign trade, the report said.

Many important Chinese companies, such as BYD Automobile and the giant Huawei, are located in this province. Shenzhen, with its 12,000 knowledge-based companies, is considered the center of China's new technology production.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Ohrid region

The Lake Ohrid region, a mixed World Heritage property covering c. 94,729 ha, was first inscribed for its nature conservation values in 1979 and for its cultural heritage values a year later. These inscriptions related to the part of the lake located in North Macedonia. The property was extended to include the rest of Lake Ohrid, located in Albania, in 2019.

Lake Ohrid is a superlative natural phenomenon, providing refuge for numerous endemic and relict freshwater species of flora and fauna dating from the tertiary period. As a deep and ancient lake of tectonic origin, Lake Ohrid has existed continuously for approximately two to three million years. Its oligotrophic waters conserve over 200 species of plants and animals unique to the lake, including algae, turbellarian flatworms, snails, crustaceans and 17 endemic species of fish including two species of trout, as well as a rich birdlife.

Situated on the shores of Lake Ohrid, the town of Ohrid is one of the oldest human settlements in Europe. Built mostly between the 7th and 19th centuries, Ohrid is home to the oldest Slav monastery (dedicated to St. Pantelejmon) and more than 800 Byzantine-style icons of worldwide fame dating from the 11th century to the end of the 14th century. Ohrid's architecture represents the best preserved and most complete ensemble

of ancient urban architecture of this part of Europe. Slav culture spread from Ohrid to other parts of Europe. Seven basilicas have thus far been discovered in archaeological excavations in the old part of Ohrid. These basilicas were built during the 4th, 5th and beginning of the 6th centuries and contain architectural and decorative characteristics that indisputably point to a strong ascent and glory of Lychnidos, the former name of the town. The structure of the city nucleus is also enriched by a large number of archaeological sites, with an emphasis on early Christian basilicas, which are also known for their mosaic floors. Special emphasis regarding Ohrid's old urban architecture must be given to the town's masonry heritage. In particular, Ohrid's traditional local influence can be seen among its well-preserved late-Ottoman urban residential architecture dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. The limited space for construction activities has led to the formation of a very narrow network of streets.

On the Lin Peninsula, in the west of the Lake, the Early Christian Lin church, founded in the mid-6th century, is related to the basilicas of Ohrid town in terms of its architectural form and decorative floor mosaics, and possibly also through liturgical links.

(Source: UNESCO)

Echoes of Iran



Belt adornment with an eagle and its prey, gold and turquoise inlay, Parthian or Kushan period, ca.1st–2nd century CE, Iran or Central Asia, H. 6.3 cm, W. 8.7 cm, being kept at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fajr Festival of Handicrafts to showcase works from 20 countries

TEHRAN—The 9th Fajr Festival of Handicrafts, known as Sarv-e Simin, will take place in Tehran from February 20 to 24. It will feature a selection of works from 20 countries.

Over 7,000 works, including 198 pieces from 60 international artists representing 20 countries, have been submitted to the secretary's office of the festival, the deputy minister for handicrafts said on Monday.

Speaking at a press conference, Maryam Jalali-Dehkordi announced the details during a press conference, noting that out of the submitted entries, 200 works have been selected for exhibition during the festival.

Moreover, the event will feature a Diplomatic Gifts Exhibition held at three levels, alongside exhibitions from all 31 Iranian provinces and a handicraft marketplace at the Sa'dabad Palace Museum.

The opening ceremony will be held at Sa'dabad Palace Museum



on Thursday, while the closing ceremony is set to be held at the Milad Tower.

In addition, the festival will feature expert panels, special discussions led by judges from Thailand and India, as well as a special program titled "From Word to Pattern" with contributions from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. A panel of four international and five

Iranian judges will assess submissions based on artistic message and storytelling, quality of raw materials, creativity, authenticity, and identity.

According to organizers, the 9th International Fajr Festival of Handicrafts promises to be a major cultural event, fostering international exchange and celebrating Iran's rich artistic heritage.

It is intended to highlight traditional skills passed down through centuries.

It also seeks to inspire future generations to embrace these time-honored practices while facilitating new economic opportunities for artisans.

Available data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Iran's annual handicraft exports currently stand at about \$250 million, with an additional \$250 million in informal "suitcase" exports.

However, the global market for handicrafts is valued at \$770 billion, underscoring a significant opportunity for growth.

Currently, a selection of 13 cities and three villages in Iran have been registered by the World Council of Handicrafts as "world cities of handicrafts".

Indonesia seeks to boost Iranian tourist arrivals amid travel challenges

TEHRAN - Indonesia is aiming to attract more Iranian travelers as the number of Iranian tourists visiting the Southeast Asian nation continues to rise, despite challenges such as the absence of direct flights and high airfare costs.

According to Adfikri Kevin Marvel, a diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, a total of 9,230 Iranians traveled to Indonesia in 2024, marking a 28% increase from the 7,177 visitors recorded in 2023.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number stood at approximately 10,440 annually.

"We are optimistic that we can surpass pre-pandemic figures and are implementing strategies to achieve this goal," Marvel told in an interview with ISNA.

One key initiative has been organizing familiarization tours for Iranian travel agencies and tour operators.

"Last year, we hosted Iranian travel representatives in Bali and Lombok, where they engaged with local tour operators and government officials.

These efforts help ensure that hotels and restaurants regulate their services to Iranian travelers' needs," he explained.

Challenges of direct flights and airfare costs

Addressing concerns about the high cost of flights and the lack of direct air connectivity between the two countries, Marvel acknowledged that these factors have affected tourism growth.

"Despite these challenges, Iranian tourism to Indonesia is increasing.

We have noticed that Iranians are becoming more familiar with Southeast Asia, though



Malaysia remains a more well-known destination compared to Indonesia," he said.

When asked about Indonesian tourists visiting Iran, Marvel admitted that misconceptions about Iran in Indonesian media have influenced public perception.

Efforts to establish direct flights between Iran and Indonesia have been ongoing, but political and logistical hurdles have prevented progress. "We have worked hard to resolve this issue, but unfortunately, direct flights have not yet been realized. The key obstacle is political, requiring high-level discussions and agreements with airlines and travel service providers," he stated.

Marvel also cited fuel supply as another significant challenge in launching direct flights. However, he noted that some Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand, have previously operated direct routes to Iran, and there is speculation that Malaysia may reestablish direct flights soon.

Expanding Indonesia's tourism appeal

Beyond Bali, which remains the most popular Indonesian destination among Iranian travelers, Marvel emphasized the country's diverse attractions and affordability. "Indonesia offers a variety of travel experiences, and once visitors arrive, they find costs to be quite reasonable compared to other destinations," he said.

Iran-Indonesia travel relations and perceptions

When asked about Indonesian tourists visiting Iran, Marvel admitted that misconceptions about Iran in Indonesian media have influenced public perception.

There is a lot of misinformation about Iran in Indonesian media, but both embassies are working hard to change that narrative and promote Iran as a travel destination, he noted.

Regarding the historical practice of Indonesian pilgrims traveling through Iran en route to Saudi Arabia for Hajj, Marvel acknowledged that such journeys have declined in recent years.

"Previously, many Indonesian pilgrims visited Iran before continuing to Saudi Arabia, but this has not happened for a long time.

The main reason appears to be the lack of direct flights between the two countries," he explained.

Oldest section of China's Great Wall discovered, pushing back its origin by 300 years

Archaeologists have unearthed what is now believed to be the earliest section of the Great Wall of China, predating previous estimates by approximately 300 years.

This section dates back to the late Western Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC–771 BC) and the early Spring and Autumn Period (770 BCE–476 BCE).

This groundbreaking discovery was made in Changqing District, Jinan, Shandong Province.

Other discoveries revealed residential structure remains under the early walls in the northern excavation area.

These semi-subterranean dwellings with square foundations and rounded corners elicit an image of small settlement life before the construction of the fortifications.

This proves that the walls served not just defensive purposes but were also linked to the daily lives of local inhabitants.

An ancient settlement, Pingyin City, was also identified about 1.5 kilometers north of the Qi Great Wall by the team.

Historical texts, including Zuo Zhuan and Water Classic Commentary, refer to Pingyin as a critical stronghold of the Qi State.

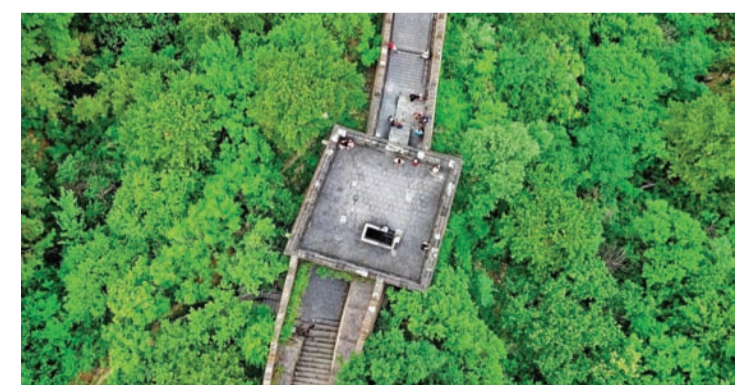
Pingyin City served to protect transportation routes and maintain border security.

Historical records show that Pingyin was a pivotal military site involved in the conflicts between Qi and the Three Jin states.

Archaeological excavations have confirmed the existence of the western city wall, stretching at least 500 meters in length, along with evidence in the form of trenches and fortified gates mentioned in ancient texts.

The latest discoveries address longstanding questions regarding the age, construction techniques, and function of the Qi Great Wall.

Previous research efforts from



2008 to 2010 focused on surveying the wall's distribution and preservation status, while further exploration in 2022 helped identify underground remnants of missing sections.

The current excavation, the first systematic archaeological study of the site, has provided crucial insights into the early phases of the Great Wall construction.

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and function of the Qi Great Wall. Between 2008 and 2010, research focused on surveying the wall to determine its distribution and condition. Further explorations in 2022 identified some underground remains of missing sections.

The recent excavation, the first systematic archaeological study of the site, has yielded valuable insights into the early phases of the construction of the Great Wall.

(Source: Archaeology Magazine)

New Delhi earthquake: seismicity increasing with land subsidence

By Mehdi Zare

In the early hours of 17 February 2025, an earthquake with a magnitude 4 occurred near Jail Park in Dhola Kawan, New Delhi, at a depth of 5 km, which was strongly felt throughout the Indian National Capital Region.

The seismicity of the New Delhi region has shown remarkable characteristics over the past 30 years. Out of 26 earthquakes with a magnitude of more than 4 in the area around New Delhi in the past 20 years, 14 events are related to the last 12 years and after 2012.

This seismicity shows a focus on the western side of Delhi in the vicinity of the extensive groundwater abstraction area.

This area is in the moderate to high earthquake hazard category in the seismic zoning map of India New Delhi.

Historically, New Delhi has experienced several major earthquakes. For example, notable earthquakes include the 1720 magnitude 6.5 earthquake and the 1956 magnitude 6.7 Bulandshahr earthquake. In the past 30 years, especially from the mid-1990s to 2025, minor to moderate earthquakes have affected New Delhi.

The Uttarakhand earthquake (1991) of magnitude 6.8 affected northern India. The 1999 Chamoli earthquake (6.6) also had repercussions in New Delhi.

The 2015 Gorkha-Nepal earthquake (7.8) caused tremors in northern India, including New Delhi. Thus, in recent decades, these events indicate that New Delhi itself has



not experienced major earthquakes directly, but has been shaken and vulnerable to tremors from nearby areas such as the Himalayas.

Over-extraction of groundwater in Delhi has led to significant land subsidence. Radar sensors have shown that Delhi has been undergoing an average deformation of 15 mm per year.

Groundwater level data also show a subsidence of 20 cm in some areas over the past two decades. The subsidence rate of 11-17 cm per year near Indira Gandhi International Airport is linked to the compaction of aquifers as the groundwater table drops.

This subsidence alters the distribution of subsurface stress and potentially destabilizes fault systems.

Excessive pumping reduces the negative pressure in aquifers, causing clay layers to compress and the ground to sink. Land subsidence in the New Delhi region has been a growing concern over the past three decades, influenced by various human and natural factors. The rate of

land subsidence is mainly influenced by groundwater extraction, urbanization, and geological conditions.

Historically, New Delhi has experienced significant land subsidence due to rapid urban development and increasing demand for water resources. Groundwater extraction has been a major contributor to this phenomenon.

Studies conducted in the early 1990s showed that the city was experiencing subsidence rates of 1 to 2 cm per year in certain areas. In recent years, satellite-based remote sensing technologies, such as Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR), have provided more accurate measurements of land subsidence in urban areas, including New Delhi.

Research published around 2020 showed that certain parts of New Delhi are experiencing higher rates of subsidence, with some areas showing rates of more than 5 cm per year to about 20 cm per year.

As of February 2025, studies show that while some areas continue to

experience significant ground subsidence, ongoing research using advanced technologies suggests that ground subsidence remains a critical issue for urban planning and sustainability in New Delhi.

While subsidence itself does not directly cause earthquakes, it can modulate stress on pre-existing faults. For example, the Delhi ridge and the Aravalli fault system are currently seismically active, and stress changes due to subsidence may affect fault stability. Rapid urbanization in Delhi has introduced non-tectonic horizontal compression due to the cumulative weight of buildings and infrastructures. Groundwater dynamics can stabilize or destabilize faults.

In areas with heavy groundwater withdrawal (such as Kapashera), stress due to subsidence can dominate, and seismic vulnerability also increases.

Delhi's location in seismic zone IV (moderate to high risk) and its soft alluvial soil amplify seismic waves, making even moderate tremors (e.g. the 2025 Dhowla Kwan earthquake of magnitude 4) more strongly felt.

The shallow depth of the 2025 earthquake (5 km) amplified its impact around the epicenter, as the seismic waves dissipated less energy before reaching the surface. Areas like Kapashera, which are currently subsiding due to the loss of groundwater, are located near a fault zone.

Changes in stress in this area can reactivate dormant faults. More than 80% of buildings in Delhi are not earthquake-resistant, increasing the risk of collapse during shaking.

Mazandaran, Istanbul sci-tech parks to beef up ties



TEHRAN – Mazandaran's science and technology park, and Istanbul's Biruni Teknopark, have discussed ways to broaden their technological and scientific interactions.

During the online meeting, Karim Soleimani, head of Mazandaran's science and technology park, and Sezgin Erzan, general manager of Biruni Teknopark, stressed the significance of enhancing cooperation in the fields of technology, the ministry of science, research, and technology has reported.

The two sides have agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) focusing on establishing technology transfer offices, supporting the establishment of Iranian and Turkish companies in the two countries, as well as facilitating Iranian companies' entrance into new markets.

Attracting domestic and foreign investment to support Turkish, and Iranian start-ups will be a new step in the globalization of knowledge-based companies. The cooperation will be a turning point in the development of international markets for the companies operating in Mazandaran's science and technology park.

By creating a suitable platform for knowledge exchange, investment and establishment of companies, unique opportunities will be provided for the growth and technological progress of Iranian companies at the global level.

The meeting is supposed to be the beginning of a strategic cooperation between the two sides. Iranian knowledge-based companies and start-ups will be able to benefit from the MOU to develop their business in Turkey and Europe.

Iran, Turkey to boost technological co-op

In 2023, the Turkish ambassador to Iran, Hicabi Kirlangic, and the Iranian deputy science minister, Vahid Haddadi-Asl, stressed boosting technological cooperation, particularly joint scientific collaboration.

"Iran's scientific and technological relations have not developed in parallel with its political and economic ones. We are ready to expand our

relations with Turkey in study opportunities, student exchange, scholarships, technology, and knowledge-based companies," IRIB quoted Haddadi-Asl as saying.

During a meeting that was held in Tehran on September 12, 2023, Haddadi-Asl highlighted the importance of scientific relations between Iran and Turkey as two neighboring Muslim countries.

"Before the coronavirus outbreak, we had Persian language and literature chairs in Turkey. There are still several [academic] chairs in this country," he added.

"In case Turkish universities agree to establish a Persian language and literature chair, we are willing to dispatch professors and pay for all expenses."

"Also, we are ready to receive and review Turkey's proposals for teaching the Turkish language, needed by companies working in Iran."

"A large number of Iranian students are studying in Turkey, at their own expense, and we would like to study and solve problems in the joint committee."

Pointing to the recent earthquakes in Iran and Turkey, he stated, "Several Iranian seismologists are interested in conducting research in the earthquake-affected areas of Turkey, and we hope that with the help of the Turkish embassy, the necessary preparations will be made for their presence in Turkey."

Kirlangic, who has been working in Iran since February, appreciated Iran for extensive assistance to Turkey as the earthquake hit this country and related that to the close relations between the two nations.

He, for his part, stated: "To conduct scientific research on earthquakes, a joint project can be defined by professors and research centers of the two sides."

Highlighting the cultural, historical, and religious commonalities of Iran and Turkey, he added scientific cooperation between the two countries should be much more than the current level.

Kids to get vaccinated against polio in high-risk areas

TEHRAN – The health ministry is planning to launch a campaign in the coming spring in high-risk areas to vaccinate children against polio.

Polio is a highly infectious viral disease that largely affects children under 5 years of age. The virus is transmitted by person-to-person spread mainly through the fecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (for example contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and cause paralysis.

Polio can be prevented through immunization. The Polio vaccine, given multiple times, almost always protects a child for life. The development of effective vaccines to prevent paralytic polio was one of the major medical breakthroughs of the 20th century.

The supplementary immunization campaign to eradicate polio in Iran started in 1994. Thanks to the campaign, the country has been polio-free since 2000.

However, in Iran's two neighboring countries, namely Afghanistan and Pakistan, endemic transmission of wild poliovirus is still prevalent. Due to frequent traverse to these countries, as well as intensified migration of Afghans to the country because of political changes in Afghanistan in recent years, Iran is exposed to the re-

surgence of the disease, Borna quoted Alireza Raeisi, an official with the health ministry, as saying.

Moreover, the fact that in 2024, the number of wild poliovirus positives in Afghanistan and Pakistan increased by four and twelve times, respectively, compared to 2023, indicates that the country is highly at risk, Raeisi noted.

This year, the annual door-to-door polio vaccination campaign was implemented in two phases, with a month interval between them, targeting children under the age of five in high-risk regions.

The first phase was conducted from January 4 to 6. During the campaign, some 840,000 Iranian and foreign national children under the age of 5 were immunized against polio by medical universities in Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman, Fars, Hormozgan, Bushehr, Khuzestan, South Khorasan, and Yazd provinces, Raeisi added.

He noted that the second phase started on February 15 and concluded on February 17.

The official went on to say that the campaign will target the rest of the at-risk regions in spring.

Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute has produced millions of doses of the polio vaccine, saving millions of children so far.

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\$22m earmarked for equipping technical-vocational schools

A total budget of 900 billion rials (nearly \$22 million) has been requested to develop and equip technical-vocational high schools across the country in the current Iranian calendar year (ending March 20, 2019), Mohsen Hosseini, an official with the Ministry of Education has announced.

Describing some of the programs and priorities of the technical and vocational training organization affiliated with the Ministry, Hosseini pointed to the improvement of technical and vocational training plans as the Ministry's main priority. Competency-based education and assessment is among the most important programs of the technical and vocational organization, which must be well implemented in all career and technical education high schools, he added, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

تخصیص ۹۰ میلیارد تومان اعتبار برای تجهیز هنرستان های کشور

مدیرکل فنی و حرفه‌ای دفتر متوسطه وزارت آموزش و پرورش از تخصیص ۹۰ میلیارد تومان اعتبار برای تجهیز هنرستان‌های کشور در سال جاری خبر داد.

به گزارش خبرگزاری مهر، سیدمحسن حسینی مقدم در دیدار با مدیران هنرستان‌های فنی و حرفه‌ای شهر شیراز و برخی از مناطق استان فارس با تشریح برخی از برنامه‌ها و اولویت‌های وزارت آموزش و پرورش در بخش فنی و حرفه‌ای، گفت: کیفیت‌بخشی برنامه‌های دفتر فنی و حرفه‌ای اولویت اصلی آموزش و پرورش است.

حسینی مقدم اظهار کرد: آموزش و ارزشیابی مبتنی بر شایستگی از مهمترین برنامه‌هایی است که در آموزش‌های فنی و حرفه‌ای دنبال می‌شود و باید این شیوه آموزش به خوبی مراقبت شده و در همه هنرستان‌ها اجرا شود.

