Straight Truth

WWW.TEHRANTIMES.COM

TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 100,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 46th year | No. 15006 | Thursday | March 6, 2025 | Esfand 16, 1403 | Ramadan 5, 1446

Trump-Zelensky Spat Proves Why Iran's Mistrust of US Persists

▸ Page 3

European troika has no legal standing to invoke 'snapback mechanism': Iran

TEHRAN – Iran has strongly rejected attempts by the UK, France, and Germany to activate the snapback mechanism under the 2015 nuclear deal, arguing that the three European countries have no legal or moral standing to do so after failing to uphold their own commitments.

In his speech during the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s Board of Governors on Wednesday, Mohsen Naziri-e Asl, Iran's representative to international organizations in Vienna noted the European Troika's violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the JCPOA, rendering their snapback claims baseless.

He reiterated that Iran has never sought nuclear weapons and remains committed to its non-proliferation obligations. However, despite years of patience and restraint, Iran saw no tangible results from its compliance with the JCPOA.

Tehran, he emphasized, is willing to fully restore its commitments—but only if the U.S. and Europe lift sanctions in a verifiable manner.

Snapback claims are 'illegal and delusional': Russia

Russia has also dismissed the European Troika's claims, with Mikhail Ulyanov, Russian Ambassador to the IAEA, condemning the move as illegitimate. ▸ Page 2

Tehran slams UK's 'confrontational policies' as London escalates tensions with unprecedented move

TEHRAN – The United Kingdom has intensified its confrontational posture toward Iran, designating the country under the "enhanced tier" of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS), a move requiring Iranian state-linked entities to register activities in the UK or face severe penalties, including imprisonment.

Security Minister Dan Jarvis justified the decision by alleging Iranian threats against Jewish communities, Israeli-affiliated individuals, and anti-Iran Persian-language media.

Iran has vehemently rejected the claims as "baseless," saying UK's actions are part of a decades-long campaign of imperialist hostility now amplified by pro-Israel lobbying groups within British politics.

Esmail Baqaei, spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry, condemned the FIRS designation as politically motivated.

"These accusations lack any credible foundation and are deliberately deflecting from Britain's own destabilizing role in our region," he stated, noting that the UK hypocritically hosts "anti-Iranian terrorist groups" while leveling unproven security threats. ▸ Page 3

3rd Palestine World Prize for Literature opens call for entries

TEHRAN – The secretariat of the Palestine World Prize for Literature has officially published a call for entries for its 3rd edition, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

Established in 2018 as a non-governmental initiative, this prestigious award aims to recognize literary works related to Palestine and will be held every two years in collaboration with cultural and literary unions, as well as various associations and institutions across Islamic countries.

The 2026 edition of the award seeks to introduce and celebrate literary books published worldwide that focus on Palestine, honoring writers, poets, and publishers who advocate for the oppressed Palestinian people through their work.

A portion of the call highlights the enduring struggle for freedom: "The awakened conscience of freedom-loving people around the world bears witness to the heroic resistance of the Palestinian nation, particularly the steadfastness of the people of Gaza over the past eight decades. Today, more than ever, free peoples around the globe are concerned for the people of Palestine." ▸ Page 8

Arab League endorses Gaza plan

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – An emergency Arab summit in Cairo has approved Egypt's plan to rebuild the Gaza Strip.

The Egyptian government outlined its highly anticipated Gaza reconstruction plan in a detailed 112-page document.

The summit concluded with a final statement addressing key issues related to occupied Palestine.

The statement emphasized that the reconstruction plan seeks to keep Gaza and the West Bank under a single, unified authority.

The summit stressed the importance of finalizing the ceasefire in Gaza, acknowledging it as a major challenge.

The statement also reaffirmed the Arab position against any attempts to displace the Palestinian people, regardless of the pretext.

In a rebuke to U.S. President Donald Trump's Gaza relocation plan, the statement rejected any alternative that involves the forced displacement of Palestinians and reaffirmed support for a Palestinian state. ▸ Page 5

Syrian Druze between the pursuit of autonomy and Israeli threats

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – Netanyahu's statements regarding southern Syria reveal an explicit Israeli desire to establish a loyal Syrian Druze ally in order not to lose the support of the Palestinian Druze, who form an essential part of the Israeli border forces.

The Palestinian Druze hold fake "Israeli" citizenship and are led by Sheikh Muwaffaq Tarif, one of the Druze spiritual references loyal to the occupation entity.

In recent years, Sheikh Tarif has turned into an octopus working for the Israeli agenda. He has managed to establish extensive relationships with Arab countries, especially those on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf.

In 2022, the Lebanese security forces arrested the representative of the Maronite Patriarchate in Lebanon and all of Antioch in Jerusalem, Bishop Moussa al-Hajj, while he was transferring money from the occupation entity to Lebanon. ▸ Page 5

Tehran hosts Iran-China talks on promoting women's scientific co-op

TEHRAN – Female Iranian and Chinese academicians held talks at Tehran's Al-Zahra University on Wednesday, discussing ways to expand international and scientific cooperation among women.

Zahra Nazem-Bokaee, the president of Al-Zahra University, highlighted the potential of the two nations in fostering joint scientific collaborations and the scientific research capacities of women in the two countries.

For her part, LI Ying, the vice president of China Women's University, expressed optimism that genius Iranian and Chinese women would play a stronger role in promoting peace and expanding societies. ▸ Page 7

Leader says tree planting shows foresight for future generations

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has said planting trees is a beneficial act that highlights the nation's foresight for creating wealth for future generations.

All people should participate in planting trees as a good and righteous act so that with the increase of trees, the living environment will be refreshed and clean, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed.

The Leader made the remarks while planting tree saplings to mark the National Tree Planting Day, which is marked each year on March 5.

"Planting trees is not only related to young people. All people of different ages should find enthusiasm and motivation towards this important, necessary, and beautiful work." President Masoud Pezeshkian, Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf, and Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei planted trees to mark the National Tree Planting Day.

The religious and moral duty of Muslim nations

By Najah Mohammad Ali

LONDON – The Holy Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said: "Whoever among you sees a wrong should change it with their hand; if they cannot, then with their tongue; if they cannot, then with their heart, and that is the weakest level of faith." This noble saying highlights a fundamental principle in combating corruption and deviation: every believer has a duty to stand against wrongdoings and strive to correct them to the best of their ability.

In our time, one of the ugliest and most dangerous wrongs is the act of treason and serving the enemies of Islam. Those who place themselves at the service of foreigners and act as hidden tools and soldiers within the Islamic community are not only betraying Islam and Muslims but also aiding the power and dominance of the enemies over Islamic lands. These individuals are, in truth, enabling the enemies' crimes against the Islamic community. ▸ Page 3

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Russia, a mediator between Iran and America

In a commentary, Arman-e-Emrooz analyzed Russia's proposal for mediating between Iran and America based on a Tuesday report by Bloomberg: Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Russia believes that America and Iran should solve all their problems through negotiations and that Russia is ready to do everything it can to achieve this. Russia has agreed to help the Trump administration establish contacts with Iran on issues including Iran's nuclear program and its regional activities. Trump, who expressed his willingness to reach an agreement with Iran during the election campaigns and after returning to the White House, said in a message, "I would prefer to have a verifiable nuclear peace agreement that allows Iran to grow and develop peacefully." Regarding the nuclear negotiations, Iran's position is clear. It will not negotiate under pressure, and there will be no possibility of direct negotiations between Iran and America on the nuclear issue as long as Trump's maximum pressure is applied.

Shargh: Uncertainty in Trump's policy and Iran's ambiguous nuclear situation

Shargh argued that Trump's policy towards Tehran is uncertain. To cast light on its analysis it sees the views Pirouz Mousavi, a senior international commentator. He said: Although the Iran issue is once again on the agenda in the new round of the quarterly meeting of the Board of Governors, no progress has been seen in resolving the differences, and three issues have exacerbated this deadlock: increase in 60% enriched uranium reserves, the Agency's unanswered questions, and the dispute over the authorization of European inspectors. Trump's policy towards Iran is based on a maximum pressure strategy, but at the same time, he is willing to negotiate a new agreement. In such an ambiguous atmosphere, the gap between Europe and the United States over Zelensky and the war in Ukraine could add to these complications. We may witness a serious crisis in the next three months in case the snapback mechanism is activated and a consequent intensification of the sanctions unless the parties can prevent the activation of the snapback and the escalation of the crisis to an uncontrollable point through a diplomatic initiative.

Ettelaat: Trump's behavior with Zelensky has nothing to do with Iran

Ettelaat interviewed Ali Bigdeli, an expert on international affairs, about the connection between Trump's behavior toward Zelensky and a possible similar behavior with Iran. He said: The Ukraine case has its complexities due to the wide-ranging effects it could have on relations between Europe and the whole world, which must be resolved anyway. Therefore, when Donald Trump considers the continuation of the situation to be a sign of World War III, it is somehow believable and probable. The continuation of the current situation will deepen and intensify Europe's hostility towards Russia. The persistence of the war atmosphere is not in the interest of Europe, nor in the interest of Ukraine, and certainly not in the interest of the world. Iran's negotiation with Trump and the conversation between Trump and Zelensky are two completely different discussions with contradictory circumstances. Therefore, comparing the behavior of the U.S. President toward Zelensky a few days ago with Iran is meaningless. This can only be rooted in the political work of a group that, despite the damaging nature of their thinking and approach, continues to insist that we do not need dialogue and understanding with the West to solve small and large issues!

=Ham Mihan: Iran seeks to expand its power at sea

Ham Mihan wrote about the new Iranian warship. It said: The Shahid Bagheri warship may seem technically and structurally inferior to modern aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships, but a careful assessment of the ship's design philosophy shows that Iran has learned lessons from the success of the Yemeni Ansarullah and has implemented these lessons on a larger scale. The Houthi militias have shown what Iran's anti-ship missile technologies can do when used alongside robotic naval warfare equipment. Iran's aircraft carriers could cause greater damage to global shipping and maritime trade, especially if the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps aligns with the Ansarullah. Lessons from Yemen and Ukraine have provided Tehran with valuable real-world knowledge, and as Iran has diversified its logistics network with existing commercial components, traditional arms control frameworks can do little to stop this threat.

European troika has no legal standing to invoke 'snapback mechanism': Iran

TEHRAN – Iran has strongly rejected attempts by the UK, France, and Germany to activate the snapback mechanism under the 2015 nuclear deal, arguing that the three European countries have no legal or moral standing to do so after failing to uphold their own commitments.

In his speech during the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s Board of Governors on Wednesday, Mohsen Naziri-e Asl, Iran's representative to international organizations in Vienna noted the European Troika's violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the JCPOA, rendering their snapback claims baseless.

He reiterated that Iran has never sought nuclear weapons and remains committed to its non-proliferation obligations. However, despite years of patience and restraint, Iran saw no tangible results from its compliance with the JCPOA.

Tehran, he emphasized, is willing to fully restore its commitments—but only if the U.S. and Europe lift sanctions in a verifiable manner.

Snapback claims are 'illegal and delusional': Russia

Russia has also dismissed the European Troika's claims, with Mikhail Ulyanov, Russian Ambassador to the IAEA, condemning the move as illegitimate.

Speaking at an IAEA Board of Governors meeting on Tuesday, he urged the three European countries to abandon their "illusions" about reinstating sanctions and instead focus on diplomatic solutions.

Ulyanov underscored that the JCPOA was a delicate diplomatic compromise requiring all parties to honor their obligations. He pointed out that the United States violated Resolution 2231 in 2018 when it withdrew from the deal, imposed sanctions, and launched its "maximum pressure" policy against Iran.

The UK, Germany, and France, he added, initially failed to counteract U.S. sanctions and later aligned themselves with Washington by illegally reinstating expired restrictions from Resolution 2231 (which ended in October 2023) into their national laws.

Iran, according to Ulyanov, exercised "maximum patience" for over a year by complying with its JCPOA commitments, the Additional Protocol, and the Modified Code 3.1, despite Washington's violations. Only after repeated diplomatic efforts failed did Tehran begin rolling back its commitments in 2021.

The Russian diplomat argued that Iran's uranium enrichment to 60% was not an aggressive move but a direct response to Western violations of the agreement. He then posed a rhetorical question: "Under such circumstances, does Iran have the right to activate JCPOA's protective mechanisms?" His answer was unequivocal: "Absolutely, yes."

Referring to the latest IAEA Director General's report, Ulyanov noted that most allegations against Iran stem from its legal right to adjust nuclear activities under Resolution 2231.

He highlighted that Iran is subject to the most extensive IAEA monitoring among member states, with oversight costs exceeding €10 million annually. He also accused Western nations of deliberately undermining agreements reached between the IAEA and Tehran in November.

Dismissing European threats to invoke snapback sanctions, Ulyanov called such rhetoric both irresponsible and unlawful.

He argued that any country that violates Resolution 2231 loses the right to invoke its mechanisms, including the snapback clause.

This stance, he emphasized, is backed by the 1971 International Court of Justice ruling and was reaffirmed by the 2020 UN Security Council decision, which rejected a similar attempt by the Trump administration. He urged European leaders to abandon coercive tactics and focus on diplomacy.

With only six months remaining until October 18, 2025—the JCPOA Implementation Day—Russia is pushing for renewed diplomatic engagement.

Ulyanov stressed that a constructive approach between Iran and the remaining JCPOA parties is essential, and that the IAEA Director General could play a key role in facilitating talks.

However, he warned that any further Western escalation could eliminate the chances of a diplomatic resolution.

Ulyanov cautioned that ongoing accusations and military threats against Iran are unacceptable and could lead to severe military and political crises. He argued that historical precedent demonstrates that successful arms control agreements are achieved through diplomacy, not pressure campaigns.

Since the JCPOA was signed, Iran fully complied with its commitments, yet the U.S. unilaterally withdrew in 2018, and European nations failed to uphold their obligations.

In response, Iran legally reduced its commitments under the deal. Revival talks for the JCPOA have stalled due to Western hesitation and excessive demands. Despite these challenges, Iran has continued its diplomatic engagement with the IAEA and has shown willingness to restore the JCPOA—provided that sanctions relief is guaranteed.

Recent negotiations with the European Troika in Geneva highlight Tehran's continued preference for diplomacy.

The issue of the snapback mechanism has been a contentious one for years. During his previous administration, Donald Trump pressured Europe to activate snapback sanctions before Iran had even begun enriching uranium to 60%. Under the mechanism, pre-JCPOA sanctions could be reinstated, forcing Iran to halt all uranium enrichment, reprocessing, and heavy-water projects.

Meanwhile, Europe's latest resolution at the IAEA Board of Governors has increased tensions further by demanding a comprehensive report on Iran's nuclear activities by Spring 2025. Tehran has called this move a sign of European hostility.

In response to these latest threats, Iran has warned that it may withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) if the snapback mechanism is fully reinstated.

This warning was conveyed by Iranian diplomat Majid Takht-Ravanchi following Geneva talks with UK, French, and German representatives in December 2024.

Pashinyan says Armenia will never take part in actions that could harm Iran

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during an interview with Iran's national television aired on March 5, 2025

TEHRAN – Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has reaffirmed Yerevan's commitment to not engaging in any actions against Iran, highlighting the strategic importance of their bilateral ties.

"Armenia will not engage in any action against the Islamic Republic of Iran," he stated in an interview with Iran's national television which aired on Wednesday.

Pashinyan emphasized the "natural alignment" of bilateral interests, stating, "Our natural interests make us sensitive to the interests of the other side. The development and security of Iran are significant to us."

His remarks suggest Armenia may be considering strengthening ties with Tehran amid evolving regional dynamics.

The two nations share a bond forged over millennia, with Armenia once part of the Persian Empire. Linguistic, religious, and cultural exchanges persist today, reinforced by a 35-kilometer border that serves as a lifeline for trade and connectivity.

Pashinyan highlighted this shared heritage, noting that Armenia's "unique position as a bridge between East and West" is bolstered by its relationship with Iran.

Regional stability and mutual support

Iran has long been a stabilizing force for Armenia during crises, including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts, where Tehran provided humanitarian aid and supply routes.More recently, Iran's support during the 2021 border standoff with Azerbaijan and solidarity following the 2024 helicopter crash involving President Ebrahim Raisi have strengthened trust.

"When Iran achieves better economic growth and security, it directly benefits us," Pashinyan said, linking regional stability to Armenia's tourism and trade ambitions.

Economic synergy: trade corridors and infrastructure

Economic collaboration is a cornerstone of the partnership. Iranian firms are pivotal in constructing a new Armenia-Iran customs terminal and developing the North-South transport corridor, a critical artery connecting Iran to Eurasian markets.

"Despite existing barriers, trade growth is robust," Pashinyan said, praising Tehran's role in regional connectivity.

Bilateral trade has surged in recent years, with both sides eyeing expanded energy and technology cooperation. The Prime Minister dismissed external concerns about deepening ties, asserting that mutual interests provide a "natural shield" against destabilization.

"Our relationship is not a threat to anyone. It thrives on shared goals, from economic development to cultural exchange," he added, citing rising tourism and joint infrastructure ventures as proof of resilience. As Nowruz, the Persian New Year, approaches, Pashinyan extended wishes for "prosperity, peace, and happiness" to Iranians, reflecting cultural solidarity.

"Geography is destiny, the Armenian PM stated, —a nod to the inescapable reality that binds these ancient neighbors in an ever-shifting geopolitical landscape.

"What we wish for Armenia, we equally wish for our Iranian friends," he concluded.

Cultural cooperation key to strengthening Iran-Austria relations: deputy FM

TEHRAN – Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, underscored the importance of cultural cooperation in fostering stronger ties between Iran and Austria.

He emphasized that such collaborations serve as a vital bridge between the two nations, deepening mutual understanding and people-to-people connections.

Takht-Ravanchi made these remarks in a post on his social media account X, where he shared details about his participation in a conference titled "The History of Cultural and Diplomatic Relations Between Iran and Austria" at the University of Tehran. The event brought together academics, diplomats, and cultural experts to discuss the historical and contemporary significance of Iran-Austria relations, particularly in the fields of education, research, and cultural exchange.

During his speech, the deputy foreign minister highlighted Iran's long history of cultural engagement with Austria, noting that their collaboration extends beyond political and economic ties. He pointed out that thousands of Iranians residing in Austria, including doctors, professors, students, and business professionals, play a crucial role in bridging the two nations and fostering a deeper cultural dialogue.

Their presence, he said, has contributed significantly to enhancing mutual understanding, promoting respect, and strengthening people-to-people diplomacy between Iran and Austria.

Takht-Ravanchi also addressed the challenges hindering cultural and academic cooperation, particularly the unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union. He criticized these sanctions as unjust measures that directly affect Iran's cultural and academic exchanges, limiting opportunities for collaboration in science, arts, and education. He called for the immediate removal of these restrictions, arguing that lifting them would pave the way for broader and more effective cultural and educational partnerships.

In outlining Iran's proactive approach to cultural diplomacy, he highlighted Tehran's extensive efforts to expand ties with Austrian institutions. These efforts include collaborations with academic and research organizations, engagement with Austrian cultural and Islamic centers, and partnerships with media and cultural associations. He also noted that Iran's cultural attaché offices in Austria have played an essential role in promoting Iranian culture, literature, and academic exchange programs.

Yemen's Ambassador to Tehran Ibrahim Mohammed al-Dailami visited the Tehran Times on March 5, 2025

Trump-Zelensky spat proves why Iran's mistrust of US persists

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – The Trump-Zelensky meeting was a political car crash so spectacular it briefly eclipsed all other global headlines. Eyewitness accounts from the Oval Office painted a picture of a meeting unlike any other – a clash of personalities, egos, and geopolitical agendas so raw, so unfiltered, it left seasoned journalists speechless.

As the drama unfolded on screens worldwide, battle lines were drawn. Was Zelensky reckless to poke the bear, knowing Trump's famously thin-skinned narcissism? Or was Trump's behavior bordering on bullying? The world watched, gasped, and took sides as the foundations of diplomacy seemed to crack before their very eyes.

But for Iranians watching the spat unfold, the question wasn't who was right or wrong; it was about whether the fallout could be a mirror of their own potential future.

Trump has been asking Iranians to sit at the negotiation table since he returned as the president. In doing so he isn't removing the sanctions he imposed against Iran, or returning to the nuclear deal in left in shambles in 2018, instead he is coming up with more embargoes and punctuating them with occasional threats of military action.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said early last month that Tehran will not be engaging in any negotiations with Washington. "We are open to dialogue with all countries but there is one exception: America," he said, adding, "The reason? Experience!"

Iranian officials from different political group all rallied out behind the Leader. Still, there were some analysts who believed Iran should enter talks with Washington because it won't hurt. Zelensky's meeting with Trump showed them that it could very much do.

Lessons for Iran

The drama between Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky wasn't just a fleeting news item; it was a stark morality play, a neon-lit warning sign for nations like Iran that dare to believe in the promises of the West. While Western media may spin it as a unique Trumpian spectacle, for Iran, it's just the latest verse in a familiar, bitter song of betrayal and exploitation

The idea that America offers genuine security guarantees is a dangerous delusion, a mirage shimmering in the desert of geopolitics. Ukraine, lured by the promise of Western support, finds itself dangling, vulnerable and exposed. Just as Afghanistan was abandoned to its fate, Ukraine is being used as a pawn in a larger game of power, its needs secondary to the strategic calculations of Washington.

The inherent arrogance and self-interest of American foreign policy transcends partisan lines. The hunger for access to Ukrainian resources, barely veiled beneath the diplomatic niceties, reveals the true nature of the beast: a colonial power dressed in the garb of democracy.

The future

After what happened at the Oval Office, Iran's path forward is clearer now: self-reliance. Iran cannot afford to be seduced by the siren song of Western promises. The lessons from the JCPOA, a dead letter thanks to American perfidy, should be etched in stone: trust only in our own strength.

This means investing in domestic industries, forging alliances with nations that share our distrust of Western hegemony, and fostering a society united in its commitment to national independence. The success of Iranian volunteers in defeating ISIS in Iraq proves the power of a mobilized and determined populace. That same spirit must be harnessed to build a resilient and self-sufficient Iran, impervious to the machinations of foreign powers.

The Trump-Zelensky encounter wasn't just an international incident; it was a gift. It was a stark, undeniable reminder that our destiny is in our own hands. Let us heed the warning, cast off the shackles of dependency, and forge a future where Iran is the master of its own fate. The time for illusions is over. The time for self-reliance is now.

The religious and moral duty of Muslim nations

Muslims should resist and denounce traitors and agents of the enemies of Islam

From Page 1 ▸ **Denouncing polytheists: a Quranic and religious principle**

One of the fundamental principles of Islam is the denunciation of polytheists and the enemies of God. The Holy Quran clearly expresses this truth in Surah At-Tawbah:

"An announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage that Allah and His Messenger are disassociated from the polytheists..." (Surah At-Tawbah, Verse 3)

This verse clearly declares that Allah and His Messenger are disassociated from the polytheists, and this denunciation must be ingrained within the Islamic community. One manifestation of this principle is the ceremony of denouncing the polytheists during Hajj, which Imam Khomeini (RAH) revived.

The importance of the ceremony of denouncing polytheists and traitors

Imam Khomeini always emphasized that denouncing the polytheists is a religious and political duty. He proclaimed that Muslims must strengthen their unity alongside the rituals of Hajj with the slogan of denouncing polytheists and distance themselves from the enemies of Islam and their agents.

This ceremony, held as a rally during Hajj, faced severe attacks and suppression by American agents and traitors to the Islamic world. They well understood that if Muslims unite and stand against global arrogance and its internal agents, the dominance of foreigners over the Islamic world would end. Hence, they attempted to stop this movement with the massacre of pilgrims and suppression of the denunciation ceremony. However, Imam Khomeini's message remains alive, and the Islamic community must continue this path.

Betraying Islam and collaborating with the enemies of Muslims can manifest in various forms. Below are some of them.

Political treason: Some politicians and officials serve the plans of foreigners instead of defending the interests of the Islamic community and implement their policies in Islamic lands.

Cultural treason: Those who strive to promote Western and non-Islamic values in Muslim societies, distancing the nations from their Islamic identity.

Security and espionage treason: Individuals who provide important and vital information about Islamic countries to the enemies and help them in their sinister plans against the Islamic community.

Religious treason: Those who wear the garb of religion but distort religious thoughts and teachings and steer Muslims towards dependence on foreign powers.

How Muslims should react

According to the noble hadith of the Prophet (PBUH), we must not remain indifferent to this great wrong. It is the duty of Muslims to confront these traitors and reveal their true nature.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tehran slams UK's 'confrontational policies' as London escalates tensions with unprecedented move

UK Security Minister Dan Jarvis

TEHRAN – The United Kingdom has intensified its confrontational posture toward Iran, designating the country under the "enhanced tier" of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS), a move requiring Iranian state-linked entities to register activities in the UK or face severe penalties, including imprisonment.

Security Minister Dan Jarvis justified the decision by alleging Iranian threats against Jewish communities, Israeli-affiliated individuals, and anti-Iran Persian-language media. Iran has vehemently rejected the claims as "baseless," saying UK's actions are part of a decades-long campaign of imperialist hostility now amplified by pro-Israel lobbying groups within British politics.

Esmail Baqaei, spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry, condemned the FIRS designation as politically motivated.

"These accusations lack any credible foundation and are deliberately deflecting from Britain's own destabilizing role in our region," he stated, noting that the UK hypocritically hosts "anti-Iranian terrorist groups" while leveling unproven security threats.

Baqaei emphasized Iran's adherence to the UN Charter and international law, particularly the principles of sovereignty and non-interference.

He urged London to abandon its "confrontational policies" and engage in "equitable dialogue," warning that the UK's alignment with Israel risks further regional instability.

The enhanced FIRS measures, unprecedented in scope, empower British authorities to arrest individuals accused of assisting foreign intelligence services, with penalties reaching 14 years imprisonment.

Critics argue the policy criminalizes ordinary diplomatic and cultural exchanges, with Iran's Foreign Ministry labeling it a "destructive agenda" aimed at isolating Tehran.

"The path to regional stability lies in equitable engagement, not fabricated threats," Baqaei stated—a plea unlikely to resonate in Westminster, where historical grievances and foreign influence remain entrenched drivers of policy. Meanwhile, the UK's National Crime Agency has pledged to target financial networks allegedly linked to the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), further straining bilateral relations.

A Century of Imperial exploitation

Before 1953, British imperialism in Iran was already laying deep and lasting scars on the nation's sovereignty and economic prosperity. From the 19th century onward, the United Kingdom pursued its strategic interests through a series of unequal treaties and economic interventions.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

SPORTS

Tractor held by Al Taawoun in 2024/25 ACL quarter-final

TEHRAN - Iran's Tractor and Saudi Arabia's Al Taawoun football teams played out an entertaining 0-0 draw in their AFC Champions League Two 2024/25 quarter-final first leg tie at the Yadegar-E-Imam Stadium on Tuesday.

Al Taawoun keeper Abdulquddus Atiiay had to be at his best, making saves from Tractor's Tomislav Strkalj, Ricardo Alves and Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh to keep his team in the game going into the second leg.

Both sides had looks at goal within the first five minutes, with Al Taawoun's Fayçal Fajr's shot from outside the box and Tractor's Tomislav Strkalj's header from the centre missing the target.

Al Taawoun's Abdelhamid Sabiri then tried with a stiff grounder from outside the box in the seventh minute that forced Tractor custodian Alireza Beiranvand into a full stretch save.

The hosts kept pressing, with keeper Atiiay standing his ground to block consecutive shots from Strkalj in the centre of the box and then Alves from the left in the 20th minute.

Mehdi Torabi then set up Hosseinzadeh in the 23rd minute, who saw his stinger from the centre saved, the-afc.com reported.

Strkalj waltzed between two defenders in the 35th minute to latch on to a cross from Mohammad Naderi but his header from inside the box again found Atiiay in the way.

Tractor came close again after the break when Hosseinzadeh evaded his marker and with the keeper stranded, saw his shot rattle off the crossbar.

They missed another chance in the 76th minute when Hosseinzadeh made a run down the right, only to see his shot across the face of the goal go to waste.

Tractor's Domagoj Drozdek then saw his close-range header from the centre of the box off a pass from Danial Esmaeilifar just go wide in the 88th minute, ensuring next week's return leg will be a blockbuster affair.

Tabiat edge Sagesse for triumphant WASL debut

TEHRAN - Tabiat Basketball hung on to beat Sagesse, 88-87, for a successful debut in the 2024/2025 FIBA West Asia Super League (WASL), Tuesday night at the Nouhad Nawfal Stadium.

Stedmon Lemon broke the 86-all deadlock to give themselves the lead for good with 33.7 seconds left to play and some stroke of luck afterward would enable the reigning Iran Basketball League champions to come away with the narrow win, joining Amman United Club as the first winners of the West Asia League contest.

The crew will now turn their focus on Wednesday's match against Al Difaa Al Jawi, who are coming off a 96-87 defeat to Amman United Club earlier in the evening in a battle between league newcomers.

Game heroes: Ivan Buva showed the way with 26 points, 11 rebounds, and 4 assists, delivering solidly in the endgame that saw him engage in a shootout with Zach Lofton as both squads went back and forth.

Lemon produced 21 points and 6 rebound. Sina Vahedi - who finds himself back in the league after starring for Gorgan last season - delivered 11 points and 7 assists, while Rasoul Mozafari chipped in 10 markers.

Turning point: Mozafari himself was responsible for pushing Tabiat ahead, nailing a three-pointer first before following it up with a deuce to give themselves the 86-81 advantage with 2:12 remaining.

But Sagesse, of course, refused to quit, with Jad Khalil and Omar Jamaleddine joining hands to tie the game at 86-all with 1:18 to go - much to the delight of the Green Castle faithful that trooped to the venue, fiba.basketball reported.

Lemon, though, broke the tie with a layup to give the crew the lead for good, and it helped them a great deal that Shabazz Muhammad failed to tie it up again as he only split his foul shots with 28 ticks left.

Sagesse appeared to have gotten a big break when they forced a 5-second inbound violation on Lemon, but couldn't maximize the possession they got back as Omar Jamaleddine missed his potential game-winning trey.

Al Taawoun's Al Abdali content with draw against Tractor

TEHRAN - Al Taawoun football team head coach Mohammed Al Abdali was content with the result after the Saudi Arabia side walked away with a goalless draw against Tractor in their AFC Champions League Two 2024-25 quarter-final first leg on Tuesday.

Tractor dominated the tie but failed to find a breakthrough with Abdali confident his team will complete its task in next week's return leg at home.

"I am very happy with the result. The ball is still in the field. This was the first half of the match and I hope we advance to the next stage. I would like to thank the players," said Abdali.

"To be honest, one of the factors was the playing field. I don't know what the problem was, but the field affected our performance. We always play possession football, but the field didn't allow us to do that," he added.

"The same problem occurred for Tractor. I don't know if it was because of the hardness of the field or the cold weather but in the second leg, you can be sure that we will have more possession of the ball on our own field," he concluded.

Tractor's Skocic rues stalemate against Al Taawoun

TEHRAN - Tractor head coach Dragan Skocic did not hide his disappointment after his team walked away with a goalless draw against Al Taawoun in the AFC Champions League Two 2024-25 quarter-final first leg on Tuesday.

In the match held in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Emam Stadium, Tractor's players failed to capitalize their chances.

"I am not satisfied with the result. I said yesterday that this match is not going to end today. We created many chances, but unfortunately, we missed them. We had a strong rhythm, but unfortunately, we did not score. We showed how good a team we are and we are going to win the second leg," said Skocic.

"No, it's not a cause for concern that the opportunities were not scored. It doesn't worry me. Whenever the players give everything, they can on the field, I'm happy. I know we'll have the same chances in the next game and I hope we write fate differently," he said.

Abdi a leading candidate for Iran U23 coaching role

TEHRAN – Hossein Abdi is a leading candidate to become the head coach of Iran's U23 football team.

Abdi has a strong track record with Iran's youth teams, having previously coached both the U17 and U20 squads.

The U23 team are currently without a coach following the departure of Reza Enayati.

Most recently, Abdi led Iran in the 2025 AFC U20 Asian Cup, where they were eliminated by Japan on penalties in the quarter-finals.

Abdi, a former captain of Persepolis football club, has not commented on the speculation.

Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber signs arbitration agreement with ICCIMA

TEHRAN – The Arbitration Center of Iran Chamber (ACIC) and the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber of Commerce have signed a cooperation agreement to promote commercial arbitration and mediation among joint chamber members and enhance arbitration services.

During the signing ceremony, Ali Moghadam Abrishami, Secretary General of ACIC, emphasized the center's longstanding role in institutional arbitration in Iran. "Since its establishment, ACIC has gained the trust of the private sector, but many businesses are still unaware of its advantages," he said.

He highlighted the importance of collaboration with joint chambers to familiarize businesses with arbitration services, noting that ACIC handles the highest number of international arbitration cases in Iran. He also stressed the significance of cooperation with foreign arbitration centers, particularly Kazakhstan's reputable arbitration body, to expand dispute resolution mechanisms.

Abrishami announced special benefits, including discounts on arbitration fees for joint chamber members, and expressed ACIC's readiness to hold training programs and seminars for the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber.

Also during the ceremony, Amir Abedi, President of the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Chamber of Commerce, underscored the need to promote arbitration in the private sector. "Joint chambers act as ambassadors of the private sector in international trade and can play a crucial role in raising awareness about arbitration benefits," he stated.

Abedi noted that the chamber has 280 members and is committed to informing them about ACIC services. He also criticized the lack of commercial expertise in courts and expressed hope that ACIC could help businesses overcome legal challenges.

At the conclusion of the event, both parties signed the agreement and reaffirmed their commitment to implementing its provisions and expanding bilateral cooperation in arbitration and mediation.

Iran's power plant capacity to exceed 100,000 megawatts

TEHRAN - Iran's Energy Minister said the country's power plant capacity will increase by around 10,000 megawatts by next summer (starting in late June)

Abbas Aliabadi told IRIB that electricity consumption fluctuates significantly throughout the year, with a difference of about 35,000 megawatts between peak summer and winter demand.

He noted that such a consumption gap is unprecedented in Iran's climate, adding that if cooling-related demand is reduced by one-third, the current 20,000-megawatt supply-demand imbalance can be effectively addressed.

The official said the Energy Ministry has devised plans for both thermal and renewable power plants while also focusing on efficient consumption. "We have appointed dedicated managers for each sector, and a task force is monitoring progress to ensure we reach our targets," he said.

One of the ministry's key initiatives is converting gas-fired power units into combined-cycle plants, Aliabadi said. "These plants operate without additional fuel consumption and achieve efficiency rates of over 80%, whereas solar and wind power plants typically reach 40% to 50% efficiency."

Although combined-cycle units require more time and higher initial costs to build, they are ultimately more reliable, the minister added.

The minister also stressed the importance of energy conservation. "I urge the public to use energy responsibly, as emphasized by the government, the system, and the global community. Excessive consumption contributes to global warming, so reducing energy use has both local and global benefits."

As winter comes to an end, Aliabadi said, "With a little cooperation from the public, we will navigate this period without difficulty and prepare for summer demand."

He acknowledged Iran's high energy and water consumption intensity, saying, "Unfortunately, we are not in a good position in terms of energy and water use."

On the significance of combined-cycle power plants, the minister said that in the past, incentives were offered to encourage their development, but economic challenges in the industry prevented full implementation. "We are now working to create the right conditions for their expansion."

He added that the government has outlined short-, medium-, and long-term plans for expanding combined-cycle plants. "Facilities like the Ferdowsi and Assaluyeh power plants will be completed next year, while others will be commissioned in subsequent years."

Aliabadi emphasized that the Energy Ministry does not supply the entire electricity market. "We provide power for consumption levels defined by law, while the rest is supplied through the energy exchange. Investors can convert their power plants to combined-cycle systems and sell electricity on the exchange. Those with renewable energy facilities can either export their electricity or sell it to industries, generating substantial revenue with minimal risk."

The minister underscored Iran's strong position in the power sector. "Iran is among the world's top countries in electricity production. Sanctions cannot hinder us—we are constructing power plants in various locations and are a serious competitor to major nations. Our plants are cost-effective, high-quality, and built on schedule."

Tehran, Moscow agree to expand aviation cooperation

TEHRAN – Iranian Deputy Minister of Transport and head of the Civil Aviation Organization, Hossein Pourfarzaneh, met in Moscow with Dmitry Yadrov, Russia's Deputy Minister of Transport and head of Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency.

According to a statement from Iran's embassy in Moscow on Wednesday, the visit aimed to strengthen aviation cooperation between the two countries and advance the implementation of a bilateral agreement on flight standards and airworthiness, as well as the Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty.

Under the agreement, both sides will recognize each other's aviation standards, paving the way for Iranian companies to expand their exports of technical and engineering services to Russia.

Also on Tuesday, Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, hosted the Iranian delegation accompanying Pourfarzaenh, during which both sides discussed ways to enhance Iran-Russia cooperation in the aviation sector.

Accoridng to Jalali, the agreement on air transport cooperation between Iran and Russia, covering aviation and flight standards, has now entered the implementation phase.

Earlier that day, Pourfarzaneh, who led the Iranian delegation to Russia, met with Patashkin, Russia's deputy transport minister for aviation, to discuss aviation-related matters, including flight standardization.

During the two-hour meeting, attended by senior aviation officials from both countries, the parties followed up on upgrading a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on airworthiness—originally signed in December—into a formal agreement. Plans were made to expand this cooperation at higher levels.

It was also agreed that flight safety and airworthiness matters would be pursued through Russia's deputy transport minister for aviation to elevate the MOU to a more substantial and operational level.

Additionally, both sides discussed coordinating their positions in international aviation organizations and aligning aviation standards as part of their broader cooperation efforts.

Iran's non-oil export to Qatar up 24% in 10 months on year

TEHRAN- The value of Iran's non-oil export to Qatar increased by 24 percent during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024-January 19, 2025), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesperson for the Trade Development Committee of the House of Industry, Mining, and Trade announced.

Ruhollah Latifi said that Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at $112.416 million to Qatar in the ten-month period.

During a meeting between Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati and Qatari Minister of Finance Ali Ahmed Al-Kuwari, on February 17, 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 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.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Banking system issues $127.5 billion in loans over 11 months

TEHRAN – Iran's banking network issued 63.74 quadrillion rials ($127.5 billion) in loans over the first 11 months of the current Iranian year (March 2024-February 2025), marking a 29.8 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

According to data from the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), total loans disbursed from March 2024 to February 2025 amounted to 63.7435 quadrillion rials. This represents a 14.6176 quadrillion rial ($29.2 billion) increase from the previous year's figure.

Of the total loans issued, 48.4906 quadrillion rials ($96.98 billion), or 76.1 percent, went to businesses (both legal entities and individuals), while 15.252 quadrillion rials (about $30.5 billion), or 23.9 percent, were allocated to households.

In the same period last year, total loans disbursed stood at 49.125.9 quadrillion rials, which was later adjusted by the banking network to 47.948.0 quadrillion rials.

A breakdown of loan distribution across economic sectors shows that 37.19 quadrillion rials ($743.8 billion), equivalent to 76.7 percent of business loans, were allocated for working capital.

Additionally, consumer loans issued under the Qarz-al-Hasaneh (interest-free) scheme amounted to 5.707 quadrillion rials ($11.42 billion), accounting for 37.4 percent of all household loans.

The industrial and mining sector received 16.191 quadrillion rials ($32.38 billion) in working capital loans over the 11-month period, making up 43.5 percent of all working capital financing across economic sectors.

Iran, Cuba discuss strengthening trade relations

TEHRAN – The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) met with Cuba's ambassador to discuss expanding trade ties, emphasizing the need to update the preferential trade agreement's product list and accelerate barter trade agreements between the two countries.

According to TPO's public relations office, Mohammadali Dehghan Dehnavi met with Jorge Fernando Nicolás to review trade cooperation. "We have taken positive steps in our collaboration, but given the high-level political relations between Iran and Cuba, our trade volume must see a significant increase," Dehnavi stated.

The deputy minister of industry, mining, and trade stressed the need to expand economic cooperation, highlighting potential areas such as modernizing and investing in Cuba's sugar industry, food production and distribution chains, energy, technical and engineering services, power plant construction and maintenance, water and electricity industries, tourism, mining, and transportation.

Dehnavi noted that Iran has developed aircraft maintenance expertise despite sanctions. "No country has faced as many sanctions as Iran. While the costs have been high, we have found ways to overcome these challenges," he said.

He invited Cuba's Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, the president of Cuba's Chamber of Commerce, and Cuban companies to participate in Iran Expo 2025.

Ambassador Nicolás praised Iran's progress despite sanctions and expressed Cuba's commitment to maintaining trade with its allies. He emphasized Cuba's interest in continuing trade delegations and collaborating in power generation, transportation, water and electricity industries, food production, rail and air transport, and adopting Iranian technologies in these sectors.

The Cuban envoy also highlighted the membership of both Iran and Cuba in BRICS as an opportunity to expand bilateral trade interactions.

Parliament votes for Thursdays to become Iran's 2nd weekend day

TEHRAN - In a Parliament open session on Wednesday, Iranian lawmakers approved a bill, voting for Thursdays to become the second weekend day of the week besides Fridays.

The voting has yet to be approved by the Guardian Council to turn into a law and become legally binding.

Based on the new Parliament decision, all executive agencies of the country have to operate from Saturday to Wednesday during the week.

Military and security agencies as well as the police and some Service-providing entities such as banks, the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), sports places and hospitals and other medical centers have been exempt from the new ruling.

Iran's former government sent a bill to the Parliament calling for setting a second weekend day, raising a lot of quarrel across the country on those days, with private sector operators arguing that it would be better for the country to make Saturdays a weekend day as they said it could help maintain Iran's trade with other world countries with Saturdays and Sundays being the weekend days in most parts of the world.

On May 15, 2024, the lawmakers in the previous edition of the Parliament voted for Saturdays to become the country's second weekend day. the decision was later rejected by the Guardian Council and returned to the Parliament to be revised.

NPC 2025 kicks off in Beijing: China's economic might, resilience on full display

By Shahrokh Saei

BEIJIG- China's national legislature convened its annual session in Beijing on Wednesday, attracting international attention due to the nation's significant advancements despite the ongoing trade conflict with the United States.

The 14th National People's Congress (NPC) opened its third session at the Great Hall of the People.

President Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders attended the opening meeting. Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang delivered a government work report at the NPC's annual session which saw the participation of a large number of journalists from across the globe.

The premier set out goals for economic growth among other objectives.

China has set a target of "around 5%" growth for 2025 amid the fallout from escalating American tariffs on the East Asian country's exports. Its economy grew 5% last year, driven by stimulus measures, strong exports and high-tech investment.

"In setting the growth rate at around 5 percent, we have taken into account the need to stabilize employment, prevent risks, and improve the people's wellbeing, as well as the potential for growth and the conditions supporting growth. A target of around 5 percent is well aligned with our mid- and long-term development goals and underscores our resolve to meet difficulties head-on and strive hard to deliver," Li said.

The premier added, "What we have achieved once again proves that under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core and with the dedicated efforts of our people across the country, we can prevail over any difficulty in pursuing development.... The giant ship of China's economy will continue to cleave the waves and sail steadily toward the future."

Further in his remarks, Li said the central government supports Hong Kong and Macau in improving their economies and livelihoods of the people. On Taiwan, he said, "We will stay committed to the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus and resolutely oppose separatist activities aimed at Taiwan independence and external interference, so as to promote the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations."

Li gave his speech shortly before President Donald Trump began his first address to a joint session of US Congress in his second term.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Syrian Druze between the pursuit of autonomy and Israeli threats

From page 1 ▶ It was later revealed that the bishop was transferring money to the families of Lebanese collaborators fleeing to the occupied Palestinian territories. He also admitted that he was transferring other sums from Sheikh Tarif to Druze clerics in Lebanon to encourage them to separate under the protection of the occupation entity.

This was also aimed at weakening the resistance project that emerged among the Druze community under the leadership of Samir al-Kuntar, who was assassinated by Israel on December 19, 2015, in Quneitra, a few meters from the occupied Syrian Golan. The community was backed by Hezbollah under the Kuntar leadership.

Between 1925-1927, during the French occupation of the Levant, the Druze were offered self-rule, but they led a fierce resistance against it and played a prominent role in achieving independence in 1947 under the leadership of the well-known Druze leader Sultan Pasha al-Atrash.

After the 1967 war, the Israeli occupation entity did its utmost to push the Druze to rebel against the Syrian state, because "such a rebellion would be a stab in the back of Arab unity that fights us with a poisoned knife," as the Israeli labor minister at the time, Yigal Allon, put it in a letter to then-Prime Minister Levi Eshkol.

Today, the Druze find themselves once again facing a fateful decision in light of the fragmentation of the Syrian state.

The Druze community is concentrated in Sweida Governorate. Since the fall of the government of President Bashar al-Assad, the Israeli occupation entity has widely penetrated southern Syria under the pretext of supporting the Druze.

This week, the Jaramana neighborhood near Damascus witnessed bloody confrontations between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the Druze factions, which resulted in the death of one person and the injury of nine others.

About 18 months before the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government, the Druze of Sweida rebelled, raising slogans of freedom. However, they have been systematically marginalized by the self-appointed president of Syria's transitional government, Abu Mohammad al-Julani (Ahmad al-Sharaa).

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Arab League endorses Gaza plan

From page 1 ▶ The final statement highlighted that the Egyptian plan will ensure the connection between the occupied West Bank and Gaza and that "peace is the Arabs' strategic choice."

The summit also explored the creation of a new security and political framework for Gaza and urged the UN Security Council to deploy international peacekeeping forces in both Gaza and the West Bank.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa voiced support for the proposed Arab plan, affirming that efforts would be made with all parties to ensure its implementation.

At the summit's conclusion, Mustafa announced initiatives for a national dialogue aimed at addressing all issues, emphasizing the importance of relying on "the patriotism of all parties."

The Palestinian resistance group Hamas welcomed the reconstruction plan adopted by the Arab summit and called for ensuring all necessary conditions for its success.

Hamas also viewed the summit's call for implementing the ceasefire agreement as political support for the Palestinian people and as pressure on the Israeli occupation to prevent any efforts to undermine the agreement.

Hamas also saw the summit's call for implementing the ceasefire agreement as political backing for the Palestinian people and pressure on the Israeli regime to prevent it from undermining the agreement.

The movement added, "Holding the Arab summit today marks an advanced stage of Arab and Islamic alignment with the just Palestinian cause."

The Gaza-baaed resistance added that "holding the Arab summit today represents an advanced stage of Arab and Islamic unity in support of the just Palestinian cause."

Hamas reaffirmed its commitment to the national cause and the rights of the Palestinian people "until the establishment of the Palestinian state with al-Quds as its capital."

A draft communique stated that the Arab League would support the establishment of a Palestinian administrative committee.

During the summit, leaders, especially from Egypt and Jordan, expressed their support for the Gaza reconstruction plan and rejected the resumption of war and the displacement of Palestinians.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

A new security order: The Arab world's opportunity to challenge 'Greater Israel'

By Nasim Ahmed

The world is changing rapidly. The rules-based system is breaking down, insecurity is growing, and major powers are once again competing with each other directly.

For the Arab world, this means facing difficult challenges to ensure its future. The US, which once guaranteed security in the region, has ostensibly stepped back from its global role. President Donald Trump's "America First" approach signals a retreat from international commitments.

We've seen this in Ukraine, where Washington has negotiated with Russia without fully involving Kyiv or European allies, leaving them to sort out their own security concerns.

This isn't a one-off situation. It reflects a fundamental shift in how America sees its role in the world, with serious implications for the Middle East.

For decades, Arab states have relied on American power to maintain security. That has to end.

The Trump administration has shown it will not only walk away from European allies, but also demand payment for whatever security support it does provide. Ukraine serves as a warning; if Washington is willing to compromise Ukrainian sovereignty in behind-closed-doors talks with Russia, what might this mean for Arab countries?

It is no exaggeration to say that the Middle East stands at a historic crossroads. As Arab leaders gathered in Cairo for an emergency summit to discuss the Gaza Strip while America turns inward under Trump, the region faces a crucial decision: create a security framework that can stand up to Israel's ongoing expansion or watch helplessly as the occupation regime continues to reshape the region unchecked and "Greater Israel" becomes a reality.

If Arab states prioritized the interests of their own populations rather than merely serving as guardians of Israel's security, they would see that Zionism and its regime threatens them far more than Russia threatens Western Europe.

Assuming that Israel would limit its ambitions to Palestine has always been a dangerous mistake.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israel, US reject Egypt's Gaza plan, Hamas welcomes it

Arab leaders unanimously agree on a five-year $53bn plan to rebuild Gaza without displacing Palestinians, to counter US President Donald Trump's proposal to "take over" the coastal enclave.

Israel, which is maintaining a blockade on all food, medicine and aid into Gaza, slams the proposal, while the White House says Trump stands by his vision for the Strip, Al Jazeera reported.

Hamas says it appreciates the Egypt-led proposal and welcomes calls to hold legislative and presidential elections as soon as possible.

5 soldiers, 13 civilians killed in twin suicide bombings in Pakistan

Five soldiers and at least 13 civilians, including women and children, were killed in a twin suicide bombing Tuesday that targeted a military compound in northwestern Pakistan, according to the military.

The attack in Bannu district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province injured at least 32 others, the military's media wing, Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), said in a statement Wednesday.

"The assailants sought to breach the cantonment's security," the ISPR said. "The attackers rammed two explosive-laden vehicles into the perimeter wall," after the security forces responded to the intrusion.

The military said five soldiers died in the ensuing gun battle that killed 12 militants. Four suicide bombers were also killed.

Most of the civilian casualties occurred as buildings, including a mosque and a residential compound, collapsed with the force of the blasts.

"The multiple suicide blasts resulted in the partial collapse of the perimeter wall, causing damage to the adjacent infrastructure," ISPR said.

The Associated Press reported that a relatively lesser-known militant group, Jaish Al-Fursan, claimed responsibility for the attack.

The military said Afghan nationals were involved in the attack. It said ring leaders of the Khawarij, an Arabic term the military uses to describe fighters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Taliban, planned and executed the attack from Afghanistan.

Kabul Airport bombing suspect during Afghanistan pullout caught

A suspected senior planner in the suicide bombing at the Kabul airport that killed 13 American service members during the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has been taken into custody and is being brought to the United States to face charges, President Donald Trump announced Tuesday night.

Senior Pakistani intelligence officers on Wednesday confirmed the arrest and said the suspect was captured in the country's restive southwest Baluchistan province near the border with Afghanistan after multiple operations had failed to seize him, the Time magazine reported.

Canada FM takes Trump 51st state line 'very seriously'

Canada's Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly has told the BBC she takes US President Donald Trump's remarks on making Canada the 51st state of his country "very seriously".

"This is not a joke anymore," Joly told Newsnight. "There's a reason why Canadians, when they go out on a hockey game, are booing the American national anthem... We're insulted. We're mad. We're angry."

Her comments come after Trump imposed 25% tariffs on products entering the US from Canada on Tuesday. Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called that a "very dumb thing to do" and announced retaliatory tariffs.

However, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said Trump would "probably" announce a deal to reduce tariffs.

In response, Joly told the BBC that "at the end of the day, the only one that really takes a decision is President Trump".

She said no Trump administration secretaries had contacted their Canadian counterparts on Monday or Tuesday about tariffs.

Trump announced 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico on February 4, but delayed implementation until March 4. Canadian energy imports face a 10% tariff.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford implemented a 25% surcharge on electricity exports to three US states, and if tariffs escalated, said he would consider cutting Michigan, New York and Minnesota off from Canadian power.

EU's von der Leyen proposes €800bn defense plan

The European Commission president says increasing defense spending is necessary in "an era of rearmament."

A European summit on defense and Ukraine is planned this week amid tense transatlantic relations, Reuters reported.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Tuesday presented a plan to bolster Europe's defense industry and increase military capabilities. "We are in an era of rearmament, and Europe is ready to massively boost its defense spending," Von der Leyen said. She said the plan, dubbed "ReArm Europe," could mobilize around €800 billion ($841.5 billion).

The announcement comes after Washington suspended all military aid to Ukraine, days after US President Donald Trump clashed with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Oval Office.

Von der Leyen had suggested the rearmament plan after emerging from the closed-door meeting on Ukraine at Lancaster House in London over the weekend.

Merz promises to do 'whatever it takes' on defense

Friedrich Merz, who's expected to become Germany's next chancellor, has announced a political deal to raise hundreds of billions of euros in extra spending on defense and infrastructure.

"In view of the threats to our freedom and peace on our continent, the rule for our defense now has to be 'whatever it takes'," he said, BBC reported. Merz, whose conservatives won Germany's election last month, said he and his likely coalition partners from the center left would put new proposals to parliament next week.

He has spoken of a need for urgency on German spending in light of "recent decisions by the American government".

Ancient city of Belqeys undergoes cleanup ahead of Nowruz

TEHRAN - The historical site of Shahr-e Belqeys, an ancient citadel in North Khorasan province, has been cleaned in preparation for the upcoming Nowruz holidays. The initiative was carried out by the Belqeys Cultural and Sports Club to enhance the site's appeal for visitors.

According to Hossein Rahmani, director of the Belqeys heritage site, the impressive mudbrick and adobe structure spans approximately 51,000 square meters. Once protected by 29 towers of varying sizes, the site now attracts both domestic and international tourists keen to explore its historical significance.

Shahr-e Belqeys is considered the remnants of the ancient city of Esfarayen, dating back to the early Islamic centuries. It remained inhabited until the late Safavid and early Qajar periods, encapsulating over a thousand years of history within its walls.

Archaeological excavations and research have played a crucial role in highlighting the cultural importance of the site, leading to the

establishment of the Belqeys Heritage Base in 2009.

Rahmani emphasized the significance of collaborative efforts in preserving historical sites, noting that community involvement, including environmental and heritage conservation groups, contributes to maintaining the site's integrity and ensuring a welcoming atmosphere for tourists.

He further stated that promoting a clean environment, waste collection, and safeguarding valuable historical heritage are the primary objectives of such initiatives.

Ancient Roman villa emerges from Lake Fusaro in Italy

A remarkable finding has emerged in Italy, where the remains of a luxurious Roman villa have arisen from the waters of Lake Fusaro, which is near Naples. This phenomenon has been attributed to bradyseism, which is a geological process brought about by the movements of magma or hydrothermal fluids beneath the Earth's surface.

Lake Fusaro is located in the comune of Bacoli in the province of Naples, an area known for its geological volatility. This lake is part of the Phlegraean Fields, a huge volcanic caldera dotted with fumaroles and volcanic structures such as the Solfatara volcano. Bradyseism has, for centuries, affected the region, with ground levels rising and falling periodically, primarily due to subsurface magma movements. Since 2005, the land in this area has risen by approximately 138 centimeters, including a 20-centimeter increase recorded in 2024, according to a study by the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology.

Rapid uplift has led to the retreat of the shoreline and the elevation of the seabed, negatively impacting local ports and marinas. However, it has also uncovered the foundation of a Roman villa, which was previously submerged beneath the lake's waters. The villa was identified through aerial photography and is under examination by the Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts, and Landscape of Naples.

Josi Gerardo Della Ragione, the Mayor of Bacoli, confirmed the significance of the discovery: "They were under the water! Walls and rooms from the Roman era have been discovered in Lake Fusaro. They probably belonged to a luxurious mansion," he said. He further speculated that the building presumably had thermal baths, a feature of elite Roman residences.

This region, first settled during the 8th century BCE by Greek colonists, has been shaped by continuous volcanic and seismic activity. As a result, the Greeks named it "Campi Ardenti" or "Campi Flegrei" (the Burning Fields) in recognition of its steaming craters and restless geology.

The area around Lake Fusaro has long been known for its Roman heritage. Nearby, the partially submerged ruins of Baiae remain, an ancient Roman resort town that prospered during the late Republic and early Empire. Baiae was famous for its opulent villas and lavish lifestyle, often frequented by Roman aristocrats and emperors. As the poet Sextus Propertius described it, Baiae was a "vortex of luxury" and a "harbor of vice," a reputation that has persisted through historical accounts.

(Source: Archaeology Magazine)

Echoes of Iran

Earthenware bowl with white slip and polychrome decoration, 11th century, Iran, being kept at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Tehran to host 5th Intl. Conference on Nowruz Diplomacy

TEHRAN - Tehran is set to host the Fifth International Conference on Nowruz Diplomacy and the Nowruz Trophy on March 8 at the Niavaran Cultural-Historical Center.

Organized by the Nowruz Trophy Cultural Institute in collaboration with the Art Credit Fund and Niavaran Cultural Center, the event is set to bring together government officials, ambassadors, diplomatic delegations, international artists, and members of the media.

According to organizers, the conference will feature a diverse range of programs, including the presentation of The Nowruz Trophy, performances of local and international music, a special Nowruz theater production, and speeches by experts in Nowruz culture.

The event will commence at 16:00 local time with an expert panel discussion titled "Nowruz Peace" led by Shirin Tajik. Key speakers include Nematollah Fazeli, who will discuss "Nowruz Peace," and Mahtab Haji Mohammadi, who will speak on "Nowruz Rituals and Teaching Peace to Children."

Following the panel, an exhibition showcasing Nowruz-related cultural artifacts and artworks will open at 18:00. The official opening ceremony will take place from 19:00 to 21:00, featuring cultural performances and the prestigious Nowruz Trophy award presentation.

According to the Niavaran Cultural Center's public relations office, this cultural and artistic event is open to the public, inviting attendees to celebrate the rich heritage of Nowruz and its

message of peace and unity.

The ancient UNESCO-registered festivity of Nowruz that marks the new year, ushers in spring, and celebrates the rebirth of nature. Variously known as Novruz, Nowrouz, Nooruz, Navruz, Nauroz or Nevruz, this historic celebration is observed on the 20th or 21st of March in many countries along the Silk Roads, including Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The name of this cross-cultural custom means No - 'new', and rouz - 'day' in Persian. It celebrates new beginnings and the return of spring which is of great spiritual significance as it symbolizes the triumph of good over evil, and joy over sorrow. Nowruz includes rituals, ceremonies and cultural events, as well as the enjoyment of a special meal with loved ones.

Marking one of the holiest days of the ancient Zoroastrian calendar, Nowruz is an annual event that honors the shared heritage of the Silk Roads, its traditions, and the culture, associated with the birth of spring. Nowruz is celebrated by people from different religious and cultural backgrounds, and its customs have been passed down from generation to generation along the Silk Roads. Over time, Nowruz has developed and expanded, incorporating new social, religious, and cultural influences. Although the traditions and customs of Nowruz vary from country to country, there are many unifying features. For example, in most regions, before the festival people perform ritual dances such as leaping over fire and streams and many households also replenish their water supplies on the last Wednesday of the year.

In particular with relation to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Nowruz was inscribed as an element in 2009, and extended in 2016, on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, at the joint initiative of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In 2010, the "International Day of Nowruz" was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly. This Resolution welcomes the efforts of Member States where Nowruz is celebrated to preserve and develop the culture and traditions related to Nowruz, and encourages Member States to make efforts to raise awareness about Nowruz and to organize annual events in commemoration of this festivity.

In December 2024, Iran's tourism minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri said the global registration of Nowruz transformed its cultural scope from a national and regional level to a global status that serves a sustainable foundation for enhancing peace and stability in today's world, both for Iran and neighboring countries. He also emphasized that Nowruz connects the shared culture of Iranian ethnicities within the country, fostering national unity. On a regional level, it links the intangible heritage of 13 countries in the Asian continent.

Salehi-Amiri added that Nowruz is a key component of Iran's cultural capacity, rooted in nature and shaped by a system of beliefs and calendrical calculations. Over time, it has evolved into a cultural identity and heritage. Thus, Nowruz symbolizes the creation of the world—earth, sky, water, plants, animals, and humans. It signifies the renewal of life, as the creative energy of spring revitalizes humanity's cultural and social systems."

3,000 rarely-seen artifacts to go on show at museums in northeast Iran during Nowruz holidays

TEHRAN - North Khorasan's cultural heritage museums are set to display approximately 3,000 historical artifacts during the two-week Nowruz holidays, offering visitors a unique opportunity to explore the region's rich history.

According to Qasem Talebzadeh, head of museums at the North Khorasan Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the province's museum collections hold around 8,000 artifacts, of which 3,000 will be showcased for public viewing.

Six museums in the province will be open to visitors during the Nowruz celebrations, with preparations already underway. The designated museums include the Jajarm Anthropology Museum, Jalal al-Din Garmeh Castle Anthropology Museum, Mofakham Complex Museum in Bojnurd, Shirvan Carpet and Archaeology Museum, Faruj Anthropology Museum, and the Mirror House Mofakham Mu-

seum, which houses historical manuscripts and documents.

In addition to these museums, three significant historical sites in the province; Rivi Archaeological Site, the ancient city of Belqeys, and the historical fabric of Royin Village, will also welcome Nowruz travelers.

Talebzadeh noted that some artifacts from the Rivi site have been transferred to the Bojnurd Museum, while others will remain on display at the site for visitors.

Last year, during the Nowruz holidays, 5,817 people visited the province's museums, and officials anticipate an increase in cultural tourism this year.

Khorasan -- meaning the "Land of the Sun" -- is a historical region and realm comprising a vast territory now lying in northeastern Iran, southern Turkmenistan, and northern Afghanistan. The historical region extended along the north, from the Amu Darya (Oxus River) westward to the Caspian Sea and, along the south, from the fringes of the central Iranian deserts eastward to the mountains of central Afghanistan.

The history of the area stretches back to very ancient times. It was part of the Achaemenian Empire of the 6th to 4th century BC and the Parthian empire, which spanned from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century CE.

Ten Bronze Age artifacts from Kerman registered as national heritage

TEHRAN - Ten ancient artifacts from the Bronze Age have been officially registered in Iran's National List of Movable Heritage, according to Nader Alidadi-Soleimani, head of the Registration Office for Cultural Heritage in Kerman province.

Soleimani on Wednesday announced that the artifacts were inscribed during a session of the Central Council for the Registration of Movable Cultural-Historical Properties at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

The artifacts, which date back to the third millennium BC, belong to the Bronze Age culture of Jiroft plain, a region known for its rich archaeological significance in southern Iran.

Soleimani highlighted the importance of Jiroft's civilization, stating that in the early third millennium BC, rural communities of the region transitioned from the Chalcolithic period to an advanced stage of urban development. "This transformation led to the establishment of early cities and the emergence of a structured civilization."

He further emphasized that the Jiroft civilization is considered one of the few early human civilizations that flourished in present-day Iran, playing a crucial role in the growth and advancement of ancient societies.

Until the very early 21st century, no one had ever dreamed that a refined forgotten culture could re-emerge from the sands of a remote and arid region in southeast Iran. The story started when rounds of heavy flood swept the topsoil off thousands of previously unknown tombs in a Bronze Age cemetery in Jiroft. Arrays of remarkable findings at Jiroft demanded a reassessment of a previous interpretation, based on which Mesopotamia was considered the cradle of civilization.

According to a National Geographic article, a flood of archaeological objects began appearing in the antiquities market seemingly out of nowhere in 2001. In a short time, distinctive pieces of jewelry, weapons, finely crafted ceramics, drinking vessels, and game boards—featuring unusual artistry and magnificent inlays of carnelian and lapis lazuli found their ways to antique markets for sale.

These extraordinary pieces featured a complex symbology of animals, both wild and domesticated, depicted fighting among themselves or with human figures, the humans always triumphant. There were beautifully realized bucolic scenes of animals grazing in vast palm groves and architectural reproductions of temples or palaces.

Tehran hosts Iran-China talks on promoting women's scientific co-op

From page 1 ▶During the meeting, Khadijeh Joda, an advisor to the vice president for science and technology, proposed enhancing cooperation through the following three key initiatives.

1. Developing technology and innovation centers specifically for women in Iran and China in the fields of clean technologies, digital energy, and digital health.

2. Launching a joint program to share knowledge and implement scientific research cooperation by women technologists from the two countries. It includes launching joint research projects, holding visits, and specialized training courses.

3. Establishing a joint development and empowerment fund among women technologists of the two countries to support joint projects, including start-ups and innovative projects.

Iranian women making headway in technology

Having made great strides in manufacturing high-tech products and growing the knowledge-based economy, Iranian women are conveying to the world the message that they have the potential to shine in the field of technology, the same as in other fields.

They have managed to shine brilliantly in different global events, featuring Iranian women's abilities to the world.

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

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

However, despite the rise in the presence of leading women in the technology and innovation sector in the country in recent decades, they have remained a significant minority, compared to men, in the research and scientific sectors, the private sector, as well as technological businesses.

According to Ahmad Fazelzadeh, the head of the Islamic World Science Citation (ISC) Institute, female scholars constitute 665 out of 4,818 most-cited researchers of the country, more than 13 percent of the total,

In the past Iranian calendar year (March 2023 – March 2024), women accounted for 12.75 percent of most-cited researchers.

With 29.57 percent share, the Ministry of Health has the highest number of the most-cited female researchers, IRNA quoted Fazelzadeh as saying.

Moreover, 375 female Iranian highly-cited researchers are among the top two percent of the world (one-year performance) in 13 subject areas of Clinical Medicine, Biomedicine, Chemistry, Engineering, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Strategic Technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Nanotechnology, etc.), Information Technology and Communication, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Physics and Astronomy, Public Health and Health Services, Biology, Statistics and Mathematics, Communication and Textual Research have obtained the necessary points.

Majlis approves membership in Intl. Solar Energy Society

TEHRAN – The Iranian parliament (Majlis) approved on Tuesday the country's membership in the International Solar Energy Society (ISES), ISNA reported.

Founded in 1954, ISES is a UN-accredited membership organization promoting and envisioning a world with 100 percent renewable energy for everyone used wisely and efficiently.

The ISES Headquarters are based in Germany. ISES is the largest international solar organization, with extensive membership worldwide. It has members in more than 110 countries, and Global contacts and partners in over 50 countries with thousands of associate members, and almost 100 company and institutional members throughout the world.

ISES has a track record of strongly supporting the solar industry, helping shape public opinion through education and outreach activities, and providing informed comment on global issues.

Solar farms to raise capacity by 4,000MW

The capacity of Iran's solar farms is going to increase by 4,000 megawatts (MW) by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2026), the country's energy minister announced.

Abbas Ali-Abadi said that the power network of the country is large, and with the annual generation and consumption capacity of about 350 billion kilowatt hours of electricity, it has the potential for attracting more than 30,000 megawatts of solar energy.

"We are trying to realize this potential with the cooperation of the private sector and we provide an attractive investment environment and a suitable market to attract investors to cooperate, while significant contracts have been concluded in this field since the beginning of the government", the minister added.

He further stated that considering that the current capacity of the country's solar power plants is 1,200 megawatts, with this increase, it is expected that this figure will reach more than 3,000 to 4,000 megawatts by next year, which is a significant figure.

As announced by an official with Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), the capacity of Iran's renewable power plants is going to increase by 500 megawatts (MW) by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2025).

"Considering the capacity of the new power plants under construction, the capacity of renewable power plants will increase by 500 megawatts by the end of the current year," Ali Shabnavard, the director general of SATBA's Office for Supervision of Construction and Production of Power Plants said.

Japan supports WFP to host refugees in Iran

TEHRAN– The government of Japan has contributed $360,000 to the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) to help the organization in supporting the refugees in Iran.

WFP will utilize the generous contribution to purchase essential wheat flour to support the most vulnerable refugees living in settlements in Iran. Wheat flour is a staple food and a vital source of energy, making it an essential part of the diet for many refugees, the WFP website announced in a press release on March 4.

By providing wheat flour, WFP ensures that refugees have access to a versatile and nutritious ingredient that can be used to prepare bread. This support not only helps to meet their immediate food needs but also promotes food security and stability within refugee settlements.

"We deeply appreciate the unwavering generosity and solidarity of the Government and people of Japan in supporting our operations in Iran," said Maysaa Alghribawy, WFP Representative and Country Director in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"This vital contribution reflects Japan's steadfast commitment to improving the lives of the most vulnerable refugees, and we are truly grateful for their partnership and trust in our work."

WFP currently supports 33,000 Afghan and Iraqi refugees living in 20 settlements across the country with food, education, and livelihood assistance.

"Japan has been supporting Afghan refugees living in Iran for over 40 years and commends the Iranian government for its long-standing commitment to providing Afghan refugees the same level of healthcare and education as Iranian citizens," said Tamaki Tsukada, the Japanese Ambassador to Iran.

"At the same time, we recognise that the increasing number of Afghan refugees in Iran presents a significant challenge for the Iranian government. We hope this contribution will help alleviate the nutritional needs of Afghan refugees," added Tsukada.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the world's largest hosts of refugees, having provided essential support to 3.8 million refugees and refugee-like individuals over the past four decades. The country has offered displaced communities – primarily from Afghanistan and Iraq- access to health care, education, and livelihood opportunities, demonstrating a strong commitment to refugee welfare.

The United Nations World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian organization saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability, and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters, and the impact of climate change.

Japan remains committed to support Iran

In January, Tsukada highlighted the Japanese government's determination to support Iran in hosting Afghan refugees.

Referring to the high number of Afghan refugees residing in Iran and the astronomical costs in different fields, including education, health, and treatment, Tsukada announced Japan's readiness to provide educational services to the Afghan refugees living in Iran, IRNA reported.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with Nader Yar-Ahmadi, the head of the National Organization for Migration, in Tehran.

Lauding Iran's efforts in hosting refugees, the Japanese official stressed the importance of boosting collaborative efforts between the two countries, as well as attracting other international organizations' support to be able to address the problems, particularly the issue of drug abuse and addiction.

Yar-Ahmadi, for his part, announced the country's readiness to cooperate with Japan in the mentioned areas.

The official went on to say that "we expect Japan, along with other countries, to provide more humanitarian services to refugees, particularly, in infrastructure areas such as health and education."

Highlighting that there is no more capacity for face-to-face education of foreign nationals in the country, Yar-Ahmadi asked Japan's ambassador to cooperate with the country to implement a virtual educational program for refugees in Iran.

Harm reduction efforts transforming lives of vulnerable populations

TEHRAN – Harm reduction workers, whose mission is to provide essential services to marginalized individuals, people who use drugs, the homeless, and those at risk of HIV in south Tehran, are quietly transforming lives.

Through a combination of treatment referrals, hygienic services, and compassionate support, their efforts are offering a lifeline to those in need, channeled through the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Iran.

The UNODC Country Office in Iran has been at the forefront of introducing and implementing drug and HIV prevention, treatment, and care programs under the Country Partnership Programme for Iran. These initiatives aim to reduce drug demand, mitigate public health consequences, and protect vulnerable populations from addiction and HIV, UNODC website announced in a press release in March.

A key focus has been empowering Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to play a stronger role in prevention, treatment, and care efforts, ensuring a more inclusive and effective response.

The services provided were both immediate and life-changing, including hygienic support such as clean clothes and bathing facilities, medical and treatment referrals for those with respiratory illnesses or injuries, and methadone treatment for individuals seeking to quit drugs. Counseling and recovery support were also offered, addressing behavioral issues and providing pathways to rehabilitation through referrals to specialized centers.

Women, often at higher risk, received targeted attention, including support for those who had stopped using drugs but needed further assistance or had relapsed. Men, many of whom were homeless, were provided with critical services such as wound care, hygienic supplies, and access to methadone treatment. These interventions not only address immediate needs but also restore dignity and hope to those who have long been neglected.

> The UNODC Country Office in Iran has been at the forefront of implementing drug and HIV prevention, treatment, and care programs.

One important aspect of these efforts is that the program incorporates a holistic approach to treatment and prevention, focusing on individualized care and empowering individuals through various methods such as providing tailored treatment methods for different types of addiction ensuring that each individual receives care suited to their specific needs; promoting self-belief and personal empowerment – as a critical component of treatment and prevention, helping individuals build confidence in their ability to recover; examining the impact of education and employment on the treatment process, recognizing that stability and purpose are key to long-term recovery; and comparing existing treatment methods to identify the most effective approaches and improve treatment retention rates.

Techniques such as individual and group psychotherapy are used alongside medication-assisted treatment to address the physical, psychological, and social aspects of addiction.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iranian COVID-19 diagnostic kits to be released

Iran will commercialize domestically-made COVID-19 diagnostic kits by the Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 22), secretary of biotechnology development of Vice Presidency for Science and Technology announced.

Following a call by the headquarters for the production of COVID-19 diagnostic kits, a contract was signed with five knowledge-based companies and manufacturing process began, ISNA quoted Mostafa Qane'ei as saying on Monday.

Diagnosis is the most important part of coronavirus treatment, he highlighted.

Patients suspected to coronavirus are currently being identified by diagnostic kits that have entered Iran in the form of assistance and purchases by the World Health Organization, China and UNICEF, he said.

کیت‌های ایرانی تشخیص کووید ۱۹ ماه آینده روانه بازار می‌شوند

دبیر ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری گفت: کیت‌های تشخیصی کووید ۱۹، فروردین ماه وارد بازار می‌شوند.

مصطفی قانعی، اظهار داشت: به دنبال فراخوان این ستاد برای ساخت کیت‌های آزمایشگاهی تشخیص کووید ۱۹، با پنج شرکت دانش‌بنیان برای ساخت این کیت‌ها قرارداد منعقد شده است.

به گفته او، تشخیص، مهم‌ترین راه ورود به درمان بیماری کرونا است.

در حال حاضر بیماران مبتلا به کرونا به وسیله کیت‌های تشخیصی که در قالب مساعدت و خرید از طریق سازمان بهداشت جهانی، کشور چین و یونیسف وارد ایران شده‌اند شناسایی می‌شوند.

TEHRAN TIMES

www.tehrantimes.com

Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**

Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

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

Tehrantimes79

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

MARCH 6, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Be not like the hypocrite who, when he talks, tells lies; when he gives a promise, he breaks it; and when he is trusted, he proves dishonest.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:16 Evening: 18:22 Dawn: 5:03 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:26 (tomorrow)

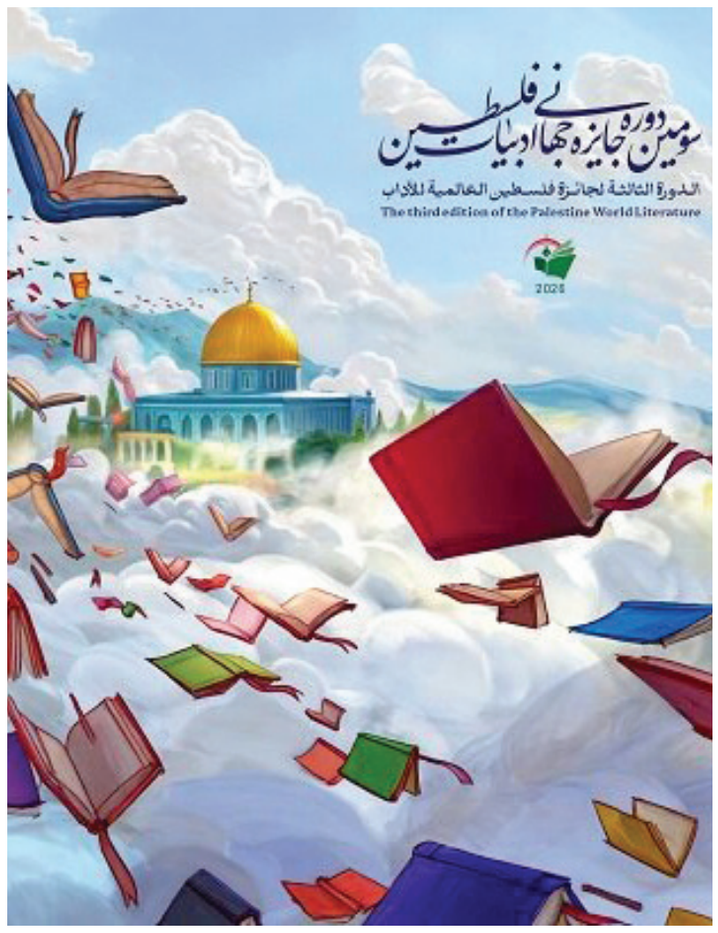
3rd Palestine World Prize for Literature opens call for entries

Frome Page **1** ▸ The Palestine World Prize for Literature has been established in memory of the martyrs of the Palestinian struggle and to support the Palestinian people against the atrocities and genocides perpetrated by the Israeli regime.

The award aims to identify and promote the finest literary works written on themes of Palestine, the resilience of its people, and the crimes committed against them. It invites authors, poets, and publishers from around the world to join this cultural and literary movement in support of Palestine and to honor the memory of countless innocent victims, including women and children.

Eligible works must be published between 2023 and 2026 and can be submitted in various categories, including children's stories, short story collections, novels, memoirs, and published plays. The total prize amount will be $120,000.

Interested participants must submit scanned texts of their works in multiple languages—including Persian, Arabic, English, French, Russian, Malay, Urdu, Turkish, Spanish, and Chinese—either as a PDF or Word file or as two physical copies of the original book. Submissions should be made by the end of May 2026, via the award's official website at www.palintaward.com or sent to the award's secretariat offices in Tehran or Beirut.



A summary of the book must also be provided in either English or Arabic upon registration. The closing ceremony and announcement of the second International Palestine Literary Award will take place in 2026, with the exact date and location to be announced on the award's official platform.

The Palestine World Prize for Literature was established in 2018 in Iran by a collective decision of cultural organizations, writers' unions, and publications from various countries. This biennial award aims to recognize the best works published about Palestine. The first edition of this prize took place in 2022 in Beirut, followed by the second edition held in 2024 in Tehran.

"The Wife of Martin Guerre" comes to Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN- American novelist and poet Janet Lewis' novel "The Wife of Martin Guerre" has recently been published in Persian.

Translated by Vahid Tabatabai, the book has been published by Mahi Publications in Tehran.

"The Wife of Martin Guerre," first published in 1941, is a compelling short novel. Set in 16th-century France, the story revolves around Martin Guerre, a peasant who mysteriously returns home to his wife after a lengthy absence, only to be later exposed as an impostor.

Lewis' inspiration for the novel stemmed from her extensive research into historical trials reliant on circumstantial evidence. Following her deep dive into these trials, she authored a pamphlet discussing the significant risks associated with such evidence, ultimately leading to the creation of this rich narrative.

The novel unfolds from the perspective of Bertrande, Martin's devoted wife, who finds herself faced with an intricate moral dilemma when a man claiming to be her husband returns home.

The original Martin is portrayed as a harsh and unloving man, contributing to Bertrande's conflicted feelings when confronted with the warmth and affection of the impostor, who appears to be the antithesis of her true husband. This presents her with a profound ethical question: should she expose the impostor and risk enduring a lifetime of misery, or should she remain silent and uphold the facade?

As the narrative progresses, the real Martin Guerre eventually reappears, forcing Bertrande to confront her inner turmoil and moral responsibilities. In a dramatic twist, she decides to reveal the truth about the impostor, a choice that leads to her emotional unraveling.

The real Martin, however, rejects her, delivering a stern rebuke that underscores the weight of her decision.

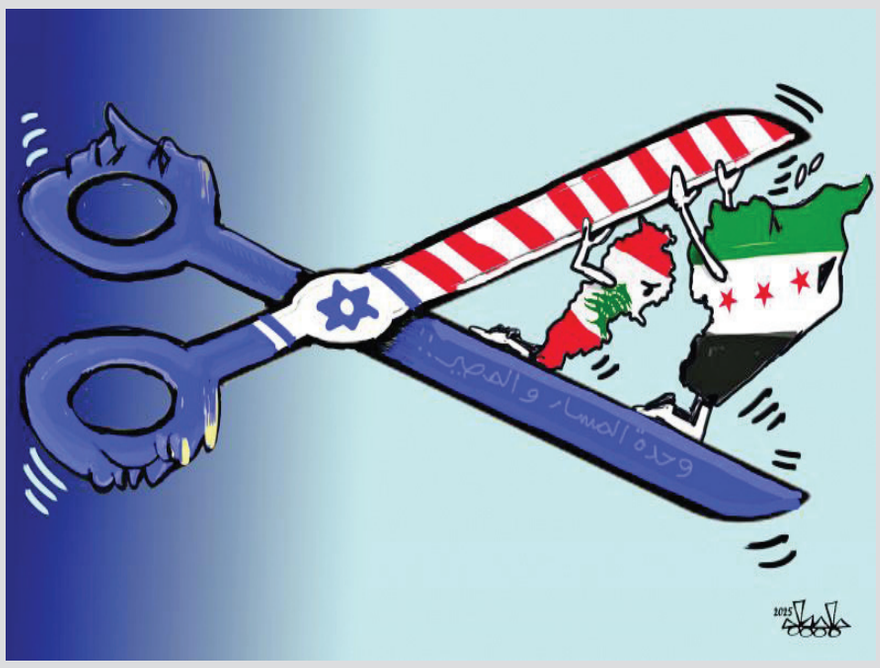
Beyond its literary merits, Lewis transformed "The Wife of Martin Guerre" into a three-act opera libretto for composer William Bergsma, which premiered at the Juilliard School on February 15, 1956. This adaptation further solidified the novel's impact and relevance, allowing its poignant themes of identity, morality, and the complexities of human relationships to resonate in yet another artistic medium.

Janet Loxley Lewis (1899 – 1998) was a distinguished American novelist, poet, and librettist. Born in Chicago, she graduated from the University of Chicago, where she engaged with literary figures like Glenway Wescott and Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and eventually married poet Yvor Winters. Lewis was an influential member of the University of Chicago Poetry Club and later taught at Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley.

Her literary contributions include novels such as "The Invasion: A Narrative of Events Concerning the Johnston Family of St. Mary's" (1932) and "The Wife of Martin Guerre" (1941), along with other notable works like "The Trial of Soren Qvist" (1947) and "The Ghost of Monsieur Scarron" (1959). Additionally, her poetry, characterized by vivid imagery and lyrical rhythm, is represented in collections like "The Indians in the Woods" (1922) and "Poems Old and New, 1918–1978" (1981).

Collaborating with composer Alva Henderson, she wrote several libretti for operas, including "The Last of the Mohicans" (1976) and "The Birthday of the Infanta" (1979). In 1992, she was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Lewis passed away at 99 in Los Altos, California.

Cartoon of Day



Scissoring Syria-Lebanon

Cartoonist: Hassan Bleibel from Lebanon

Iranshahr Theater hosting Martin McDonagh's "The Lonesome West"

TEHRAN-Iranshahr Theater Complex in Tehran is hosting the play "The Lonesome West" written by British-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh.

Fuad Kharabati has directed the 75-minute play, which has Roozbeh Hesari, Mohammad Sedighi Mehr, Behafarid Ghafarian, and Soheil Mostajabian in the cast.

"The Lonesome West" is a part of McDonagh's Connemara trilogy, which includes "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" and "A Skull in Connemara". All three plays depict the murderous occurrences in the western Irish town of Leenane.

In the play, Valene and Coleman, two brothers living alone in their father's house after his recent death, find it impossible to exist without the most massive and violent disputes over the most mundane and innocent of topics. Only Father Welsh, the local young priest, is prepared to try to reconcile the two before their petty squabbling spiral into vicious and bloody carnage.

Martin McDonagh, 54, is a British-Irish playwright and filmmaker. He is known for his absurdist dark humor which often challenges the modern theater aesthetic. He has won numerous accolades including an Academy Award, six BAFTA Awards, two Golden Globe Awards, and three Olivier Awards in addition to nominations for five Tony Awards.

His plays, many of which have been produced on the West End and on Broadway, include "The Beauty Queen of Leenane," "The Cripple of Inishmaan" (both 1996), "The Lieutenant of Inishmore" (2001), "The Pillowman" (2003), "A Behanding in Spokane" (2010), and "Hangmen" (2015).

McDonagh won the Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film for "Six Shooter" and has received nominations for six other Academy Awards for his work on "In Bruges" (2007), "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" (2017), and "The Banshees of Inisherin" (2022).

He is the most controversial Irish dramatist working today, with his explorations of Irish national identity which look at the darker side of provincial life. His bleak but blackly comic portrayal of modern, rural Ireland courts debate with its dark farce, caricatures of violence and barbarism, and an exaggerated, poeticized dialect of Hiberno-English.

"The Lonesome West" will remain on stage until March 14 at Iranshahr Theater, located in Artists Park on North Mousavi Street, Taleqani Street.

Growing opposition to Zionist censorship of Venice Biennale artist and curator

Opposition to Creative Australia's ejection of artist Khaled Sabsabi and curator Michael Dagostino from the 2026 Venice Biennale continues to mount in Australia with hundreds of creative workers publicly denouncing the Labor government and its arts funding agency.

Over 4,350 artists and other creative workers have now signed a petition demanding reinstatement of the artist and curator, World Socialist Web Site reported.

On February 7, Sabsabi and Dagostino were selected to represent Australia at Venice from a list of 50 applicants and a final short list of six.

Creative Australia's decision is part of escalating bi-partisan government and corporate media attacks on all public opponents of Israel's Gaza genocide. Artist, writers, actors, academic and health workers have been frontline targets in this widening antidemocratic assault.

Last Friday, around 30 artists, several of them holding placards stating, "Stop silencing pro-Palestine voices," demonstrated outside Creative Australia's headquarters in Sydney. The protest is just a small indication of the deep-going hostility of thousands of artists and creative workers nationally over the sacking of Sabsabi and Dagostino.

Addressing the demonstration, Omar Sakr, a well-known poet, denounced Creative Australia's attack on freedom of artistic expression. "When art must serve the government's political agenda, it's no longer art, it's propaganda," he said.

Sakr is one of three writers whose teen-writing workshops were shut down in early 2024 by the Victorian State Library after they publicly denounced the Gaza genocide. Library management bogusly claimed that the writers' classes posed "child and cultural safety concerns."

Last week Sabsabi and Dagostino declared that they were determined to present their work to the 2026 Venice Biennale. "The overwhelming support from the arts community, colleagues, and the public has reinforced the fundamental role of artists in shaping discourse and pushing boundaries," they said.

"This project is about art, unity, and dialogue—a vision that challenges, inspires, and reflects the complexities of our world. We are determined to see it realized and need your support to make it happen."

The artist and curator were dropped by Creative Australia on February 13, less than a week since their appointment and just six hours after the Liberal Party's shadow minister for the arts Claire Chandler used the Senate to question their appointment.

Chandler falsely claimed that two of Sabsabi's video installations—You in 2007 and Thank You Very Much in 2006—supported terrorism. Her bogus allegations followed a gossip column article the previous day by Yoni Bashan in the Murdoch-owned Australian newspaper.

Half an hour after Chandler's question, Arts Minister Tony Burke called Creative Australia chief Adrian Collette, who told him that a board meeting would be held that night. While Burke disingenuously claims he had no role in the removal of Sabsabi and Dagostino, the board meeting was all over in 90 minutes with a media statement issued soon after.

The artist and curator were given no right of appeal or the opportunity to address the board, nor were any members of the panel that recommended them for the Venice Biennale invited to address the meeting.

Denunciations of this flagrant political censorship erupted the next day with the protest resignation of board member and artist Lindy Lee and two other leading figures from Creative Australia's visual arts department.

Five of the artists shortlisted to represent Australia at Venice declared that they would not accept any invitation to replace Sabsabi and Dagostino, which means there will be no Australian artist represented at Venice in 2026. Last year Australia won Venice's Golden Lion award for Archie Moore's exhibit.

This powerful statement of solidarity was followed by an open letter from leading figures in Australian contemporary art—Mike Parr, Imants Tillers, Patricia Piccinini, Ricky Swallow, Shaun Gladwell, Callum Morton and Tracey Moffatt—and curators who previously represented Australia at Venice.

Suzanne Cotter and Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, current and past directors respectively of Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Arts, which holds several of Sabsabi's works, also condemned Creative Australia.