

Bullying Governments Want Negotiations to Impose Their Will



Iran says OIC must move from 'rhetoric' to 'action' as it demands collective sanctions on Israel

TEHRAN – At the extraordinary Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) meeting in Jeddah on Friday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi delivered a harsh condemnation of Israel's ongoing military campaign in Gaza and demanded immediate collective sanctions against the regime.

The meeting, convened at Iran's request, saw Araghchi accuse Western powers of complicity in a "genocidal campaign" against Palestinians.

"Collective sanctions against Israel should be imposed as a practical and immediate measure to halt its crimes," Araghchi asserted, emphasizing that the OIC must translate rhetoric into action.

He criticized the U.S. for enabling Israel's aggression through military and diplomatic support, stating, "The Zionist regime, emboldened by unconditional U.S. backing, has committed unimaginable atrocities—including war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide—while evading accountability." ▶ Page 2

Steadfast and resilient: Widow of terror victim on love, loss, and life after terrorism

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – On the occasion of International Women's Day, we reached out to a woman whose life has been intertwined with the pain and anguish of terrorism.

Kobra Mahluj, the steadfast and resilient wife of the esteemed martyr Abbas Goudarzi, lost her husband in a cruel terrorist attack that forever changed the trajectory of her existence.

In a heartfelt interview, she shared the story of her martyred husband's life, the circumstances of his martyrdom, and the profound impact this tragedy has had on her.

Below is the full text of the interview:

Could you please tell us about your late husband and the circumstances surrounding his martyrdom?

I am Kobra Mahluj, wife of the revered martyr Abbas Goudarzi and sister of the esteemed martyr Mohammad Hossein Mahluj. ▶ Page 3

Iran announces nominees for Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava

TEHRAN- Iran has chosen 12 books to represent the country in the 30th Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB), scheduled to take place from October 3 to January 10, 2026, at Bratislava Castle in Slovakia.

The nominees were picked by a jury comprising experts from the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults – Kanoon, the Children's Book Council of Iran and Iranian Illustrators Society, Kanoon has announced.

"The Da'al's Daughter," illustrated by Noushin Sadeghian and written by Ahmad Akbarpour; "Bahram and the Tale of Seven Domes," illustrated by Narges Mohammadi and written by Zahra Nematollahi; and "The Marvelous Zippy Whiz Cubs Academy," illustrated by Ghazaleh Bigdelou and written by Payam Ebrahimi are the highlights of the list.

"The Da'al's Daughter" is a folk tale that tells the story of a girl raised by a vulture known as Da'al. The narrative unfolds as the king's son falls in love with her and employs an old woman to locate the mysterious girl. However, the old woman deceives him, tying the true Da'al's Daughter to a tree, while marrying her own daughter to the prince instead. ▶ Page 8

Why the fragmentation of the Islamic nation

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — In the first ten days of Ramadan, Muslims commemorate the passing of two founding Islamic figures who played a pivotal role in defending Prophet Muhammad and Islam: His uncle Abu Talib and his wife Sayyeda Khadija. From their exceptional struggle, there are many lessons that the nation can learn.

Abu Talib (ra) challenged the enemies of the Prophet, believing that the religion he brought was to liberate the Quraysh society from ignorance, domination, savagery and slavery. Likewise, Sayyeda Khadija devoted her money, herself and all her energies to building the Islamic society.

This is the reality of Islam, which has been fought since the passing of Prophet Muhammad. The enemy is one, the goal is one, which is to prevent the establishment of a unified Islamic entity that preserves the nation's capabilities, wealth and sovereignty.

Indeed, the dear price we are paying today is due to our negligence and deviation from the supreme values of Islam.

Over 400 civilians killed near Syria's coast

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Hundreds of Alawite civilians have been executed in cold blood by Syrian security forces along the western coast.

Monitoring groups have sounded the alarm, warning of a potential genocide against the minority group as massacres in various cities continue to escalate.

In the city of Baniyas in Tartous province, Alawite residents have issued urgent pleas for help.

They are calling for rescue from widespread killings targeting families at the hands of armed militants from the Turkistan group.

Reports emerging from Syria have cited sources as saying, "The Turkistan Islamic Party began a sectarian cleansing operation in Baniyas on Saturday morning, targeting people indiscriminately — whether children or the elderly."

The residents urged security forces and anyone who could help to intervene and stop the ongoing sectarian executions.

Syria is on the brink again

By Parviz Rashidi

TEHRAN – That violence has returned to some parts of Syria is extremely annoying. If calm is not restored to Syria's western coastal cities and villages, the entire country may burn in flames.

The Syrian people have suffered greatly in more than a decade of civil war and Takfiri terrorism.

The HTS, under the leadership of Abu Mohammad al-Julani, took control of Syria in December 2024 in just a few weeks as the army refused to resist.

Julani, now called Ahmed al-Sharaa, asked his loyalists not to act violently when its militiamen first took control of Syria. This created hope among people, especially Syrians, that a new page was opening up in Syrian history.

It was reported that the HTS had said goodbye to its violent and terrorist past. But the massacre of Alawites, a minority group who were loyal to the Assad regime, is sending shivers into the hearts of the countries in the region and beyond.

Forbes reported on Saturday that security forces and pro-government militiamen backed by armor and artillery killed at least 38 Alawites execution-style in the town of al-Mukhtareyah. Eyewitnesses also said security forces were indiscriminately targeting civilians.

▶ Page 5

Intl. Women's Day highlights rights, equality, and empowerment for all women

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – Observed on March 8 annually, International Women's Day is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political.

Officially recognized by the United Nations in 1977, International Women's Day first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe. ▶ Page 7



Iran signs \$17b deal to boost pressure at South Pars gas field

TEHRAN – Iran signed a \$17 billion contract on Saturday to implement a pressure-boosting project at the South Pars gas field, with President Masoud Pezeshkian and senior oil industry officials in attendance.

The agreement was signed between the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and domestic firms Petropars, Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, Oil Industries' Engineering and Construction (OIEC), and MAPNA Group.

The project aims to compensate for pressure declines, maintain maximum gas production, reduce imbalances in gas and gasoline supply, and prevent gas migration to Qatar from the shared field. With the signing of these contracts, the project has officially entered its operational phase. ▶ Page 4

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Maximum pressure policy as a tool for negotiation?!

In a commentary, Shargh wrote about Trump's dual approach: Donald Trump announced in a recent interview that he had written a letter to the Iranian leader, expressing hope that Tehran would be ready for negotiations. These statements indicate the White House's dual approach, which simultaneously uses a maximum pressure campaign and diplomacy to achieve its goals. Washington hopes to force Tehran to accept its conditions by applying pressure and limiting Iran's financial resources. The current state of relations between Iran and the United States is a combination of intense economic pressure and covert diplomatic efforts. Russia's diplomatic moves and Trump's recent statements about sending a letter to Iran indicate a desire to create space for possible negotiations. In the meantime, Iran insists on its positions and rejects any negotiations under pressure. The future of these tensions depends on complex diplomatic interactions and regional developments, but it seems that a lasting solution will only be possible through dialogue and de-escalation.

Donya-e-Eqtasad: The atmosphere is getting more complicated

Donya-e-Eqtasad discussed Trump's letter to the Leader of the Revolution in an interview with Kourosh Ahmadi, a former Iranian diplomat. He said: Speculation about negotiations between Iran and the United States has intensified once again. On the one side, the Iranian president referred to the efforts of Moscow and Washington to prepare the ground for negotiations, and on the other, news was released that Trump wrote a letter to the Leader of the Revolution of Iran and expressed his willingness to negotiate. This letter is a continuation of Trump's efforts to negotiate, which have been going on since his first round. The only difference is that it makes the matter a little more serious, and apparently the letter also has a threatening tone. Russia's efforts were predictable after Sergey Lavrov's visit to Iran. The problem is that Trump has given Putin a huge concession on the Ukraine issue. Russia wants more than 20 percent of Ukraine and is looking to influence Eastern Europe. Therefore, Putin needs to be able to do Trump a favor, and this complicates the matter.

Canada doubles down on sanctions against Iran

TEHRAN – Canada has announced a new round of sanctions against Iran, targeting individuals and entities it says support Tehran's military activities.

Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly revealed that the sanctions affect three individuals and four entities, which Canada claims are linked to procurement networks supplying advanced military technology to the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC). Ottawa asserts that these networks facilitate arms transfers to Russia for use in the Ukraine war, a claim Iran has repeatedly denied and one that the West has yet to substantiate with evidence.

The Canadian government emphasized that the new measures are in alignment with similar actions taken by its Western allies, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. The move reflects growing Western efforts to limit Iran's military and economic influence.

Just prior to Canada's announcement, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) imposed sanctions on six entities based in Hong Kong and China, citing their connections to Iran's military procurement activities.

Beyond military ties to Russia, Joly also talked about Iran's activities in West Asia, accusing it of "supporting terrorist groups and threatening regional and international security." Canada sees Resistance groups fighting Israeli occupation as terrorists.



Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly claimed that the new round of sanctions against Iran aims to curb Tehran's "destabilizing influence," a claim that Iran has repeatedly rejected.

The latest sanctions specifically target networks that Canada claims assist the IRGC in acquiring advanced weaponry.

The newly announced restrictions add to Canada's growing list of sanctions against Iran. With these latest measures, Canada has now sanctioned 208 individuals and 254 Iranian entities. The sanctions block any assets held in Canada and prohibit transactions involving the listed individuals and organizations.

Iran says OIC must move from 'rhetoric' to 'action' as it demands collective sanctions on Israel

TEHRAN – At the extraordinary Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) meeting in Jeddah on Friday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi delivered a harsh condemnation of Israel's ongoing military campaign in Gaza and demanded immediate collective sanctions against the regime.

The meeting, convened at Iran's request, saw Araghchi accuse Western powers of complicity in a "genocidal campaign" against Palestinians.

"Collective sanctions against Israel should be imposed as a practical and immediate measure to halt its crimes," Araghchi asserted, emphasizing that the OIC must translate rhetoric into action.

He criticized the U.S. for enabling Israel's aggression through military and diplomatic support, stating, "The Zionist regime, emboldened by unconditional U.S. backing, has committed unimaginable atrocities—including war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide—while evading accountability."

Iran's top diplomat condemned



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi at the extraordinary Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) meeting in Jeddah on March 7, 2025

recent U.S. proposals to forcibly relocate Gaza's population as a violation of international law, warning that such plans would "erase Palestine" and deepen regional instability.

"Any measure altering Gaza's demographic fabric is inadmissible," he stressed, calling for an OIC-led resolution at the UN General Assembly to reject displacement schemes.

Araghchi also targeted cor-

porations complicit in sustaining Israel's occupation, urging OIC states to "halt operations of entities directly or indirectly supporting Israeli crimes" and develop a blacklist of such companies.

He reiterated Iran's unwavering support for Palestinian Resistance, stating, "Palestinians have an inalienable right to defend themselves—a right enshrined in international law, not subject to Western hypocrisy."

The minister further demanded Tel Aviv's expulsion from the UN, citing its obstruction of UN-RWA operations, defiance of resolutions, and designation of the UN Secretary-General as persona non grata.

"The 21st century's only apartheid regime must not enjoy legitimacy in this body," he declared.

While backing the meeting's resolution, where the countries endorsed an Egyptian-proposed plan for Gaza reconstruction, Araghchi outlined Iran's reservations, including opposition to a two-state solution.

"One democratic state representing all Palestinians is the only viable path to justice," he argued, rejecting any implicit recognition of the Israeli regime.

The OIC session concluded with calls for an international Gaza reconstruction campaign and a UN-recognized Gaza Victims' Remembrance Day.

"Our commitment to Palestine is unshakable," he affirmed, urging the OIC to uphold its founding principles. "This meeting must mark a turning point—not just in words, but in deeds."

Muslim unity necessary to counter forced displacement of Palestinians by Israel: Iran FM



TEHRAN – The foreign ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia have emphasized the urgent need for unity within the Muslim world to counter Israel's efforts to forcibly displace Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, on the sidelines of an extraordinary session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Jeddah on Friday.

The two top diplomats reaffirmed the necessity for the Islamic world to remain focused on the Palestinian cause and resist attempts to erase Palestine through mass displacement.

During their talks, Araghchi and Faisal bin Farhan also assessed the progress of Iran-Saudi relations and expressed their nations' commitment to strengthening diplomatic, economic, and strategic ties in accordance with the vision of their respective leaders.

Araghchi had arrived in Jeddah a day earlier to participate in the high-stakes OIC meeting, which was convened to address Israel's military actions in Gaza and its broader campaign against Palestinians.

A key topic of discussion was a recent proposal by former U.S. President Donald Trump, suggesting that Washington, potentially with U.S. military support, could take control of Gaza and transform it into a so-called "Riviera of West Asia." The proposal was widely condemned by Arab and Islamic nations but received backing from Israel.

Attack on Iran's nuclear facilities a recipe for 'regional catastrophe', warns Qatari PM



TEHRAN – Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani has issued a stark plea to the United States and Israel to abandon threats of military action against Iran's nuclear facilities, describing such escalation as a direct threat to regional survival.

In an interview with American Journalist Tucker Carlson published on Friday, the Qatari leader warned that strikes would trigger "a war spreading across the region" and unleash an "environmental catastrophe" endangering millions.

"If Washington signs off on an attack on Iran's nuclear sites, expect retaliation," the PM declared, emphasizing that military action would destabilize U.S. strategic interests in West Asia.

Beyond geopolitics, the PM underscored the ecological apocalypse such an attack could unleash.

Contamination from struck nuclear sites, such as the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant would cripple desalination infrastructure, leaving arid Persian Gulf states without drinkable water.

"It's not just Qatar—Kuwait, the UAE, all of us face this risk," he said, adding that environmental security is a unifying regional priority.

"Without clean water, Qatar would run dry in three days. This isn't hypothetical—it's existential," he said.

U.S. intelligence agencies, as reported in the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal in February, "warned" the Trump administration that the Israeli regime is likely to attempt strikes

on Iranian nuclear facilities this year, potentially increasing the risk of a wider regional war.

In response to these threats, Iranian officials have sounded the alarm, with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stating on Saturday that "an attack on Iran could turn into a widespread fire in the region."

"This is precisely an Israeli plan to drag America into war, and America is extremely vulnerable if it enters a war in the region. They [the Americans] know it," the Iranian top diplomat added.

Last month, Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Division, warned that a devastating response would follow any strikes on Iranian nuclear sites: "The fire we ignite in the region will be of unquantifiable scale and scope."

Strategic partnership: gas, geography, and unity

Tehran and Doha co-manage the South Pars/North Dome natural-gas condensate field, the world's largest, which the PM called "non-negotiable for regional energy security."

He added, "Iran is our next-door neighbor—just 120 miles across the [Persian] Gulf. You can reach them by boat in 90 minutes. Our partnership transcends politics."

While reiterating Doha's opposition to nuclear weapons, he argued, "Peace requires working with neighbors, even when challenges arise."

He also mentioned recent diplomatic engagements between Iran and Qatar.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Bullying governments want negotiations to impose their will: Leader

TEHRAN – When bullying governments insist on negotiations, it's a calculated move to impose their will, not a genuine attempt to solve problems, said Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, as U.S. President Donald Trump continues to express willingness to engage in talks with Iran despite keeping sanctions in place.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with heads of the three branches of government and a number of Iranian officials in Tehran on Saturday. "The persistence of some bullying governments in wanting negotiations is not to solve issues but to impose their own expectations. The Islamic Republic of Iran will undoubtedly reject their demands," the Leader stated.

Trump has been asking Iran to sit at the negotiating table on its nuclear program since 2018, the year he left the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and re-imposed heavy sanctions against Tehran. The 2015 deal, which was in the making for multiple years, limited Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. In addition to Iran and the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia, and Germany were also signatories to the deal.

Most recently, Trump said he has written a letter to Ayatollah Khamenei, asking him to engage in talks with Washington. The Leader said back in February that negotiating with the U.S. would be "unwise, unintelligent, and dishonorable."

The same day Trump talked about



the alleged letter, his Treasury Secretary, Scott Bessent, said the president's new sanctions are going to "shut down Iran's oil sector and drone manufacturing capabilities."

Washington's withdrawal from the JCPOA also spurred European states to begin shunning the deal despite remaining as official signatories. Iran began scaling back on some of its own commitments in 2020, after it became clear that Europe had also decided to scrap the nuclear pact.

"Now, those three European countries issue statements, claiming that Iran hasn't fulfilled its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA. Well, did you fulfill yours? You never did from the start. After the U.S. withdrew, you promised to compensate in some way, but you

broke that promise too," Ayatollah Khamenei said, adding, "There are limits to shamelessness!"

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader emphasized that the principles of Western civilization are contrary to the principles of Islam and "we cannot follow them."

"We can and should use any benefit [available] anywhere in the world but we cannot rely on the principles of Western civilization," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that double standards in the West are truly a "disgrace" to Western civilization and cited the claim of free dissemination of information as an example of such dual policies.

"They claim to have the free circulation of information. Is that really the case? Is there free circulation of

information in the West now? Can you mention the names of Haj Qassem, Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, or Martyr Haniyeh in Western virtual spaces? Can you protest against the crimes committed in Palestine and Lebanon? Can you deny the alleged events of Nazi Germany against the Jews? This is their free circulation of information! This civilization has revealed its true nature today."

The Leader also pointed to Iran's economic woes and stressed the importance of making reforms in the country's monetary policies and strengthening national currency.

Ayatollah Khamenei urged all Iranian officials to foster coherence to solve problems, saying the three branches of government and the Armed Forces should strengthen cooperation.

Steadfast and resilient: Widow of terror victim on love, loss, and life after terrorism



Martyr Abbas Goudarzi and his daughter

TEHRAN – On the occasion of International Women's Day, we reached out to a woman whose life has been intertwined with the pain and anguish of terrorism.

Kobra Mahluj, the steadfast and resilient wife of the esteemed martyr Abbas Goudarzi, lost her husband in a cruel terrorist attack that forever changed the trajectory of her existence.

In a heartfelt interview, she shared the story of her martyred husband's life, the circumstances of his martyrdom, and the profound impact this tragedy has had on her.

Below is the full text of the interview:

Could you please tell us about your late husband and the circumstances surrounding his martyrdom?

I am Kobra Mahluj, wife of the revered martyr Abbas Goudarzi and sister of the esteemed martyr Mohammad Hossein Mahluj.

Martyr Abbas Goudarzi was a documentary filmmaker and director who captured the essence of the Sacred Defense (Iran's fight against Saddam Hussein's invasion during the 1980s). He was born on April 29, 1962, in Shahr-e Rey, Tehran, and was martyred on October 18, 2009, in Sistan and Baluchestan by the Jundallah terrorist group.

Abbas spent his childhood, middle school, and high school years in Shahr-e Rey. Before the Islamic Revolution, he began his cultural activities at the Imam Hassan Askari Mosque, where he met Hojjatolislam Ghayouri. It was there that his struggle against the Pahlavi regime took root. A sharp and resourceful individual, Abbas worked as a truck driver's ap-

prentice to evade the watchful eyes of SAVAK agents, secretly distributing Imam Khomeini's (RA) declarations along various routes.

With the onset of the Islamic Revolution, Abbas played a vital role in the people's struggle against the Shah's regime. After the revolution's triumph in 1979, he joined the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) and dedicated himself to defending Islamic ideals. When enemies stirred unrest in Kurdistan, he was deployed there alongside IRGC forces. During those clashes, Abbas was wounded in the leg, and his comrade, Martyr Azizollah Askari from the Shahr-e Rey IRGC, attained martyrdom.

We married on August 28, 1980, and our 29 years together blessed us with four children: two daughters, Zeinab and Mohaddeseh, and two sons, Hossein and Abolfazl. Just 24 days after our wedding, the Iran-Iraq War broke out, and Abbas left for the battlefield. Throughout the eight years of the Sacred Defense, he worked as a war photographer and documentary filmmaker on the southern and western fronts, with his works broadcast on the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

But on October 18, 2009, in Sistan and Baluchestan, Abbas Goudarzi was martyred in a cowardly suicide attack orchestrated by members of the Jundallah terrorist group.

How did your life change after your husband's martyrdom? What were the greatest challenges you faced?

The martyrdom of Abbas transformed the course of our lives, yet it did not deter us from the path we had chosen. Instead, it strength-

ened our resolve to remain steadfast in the revolution's journey. Just as I stood by his side before his martyrdom, working to convey the message and mission of the martyrs, I continued this path alongside our children with even greater determination after his loss. This bitter tragedy deepened our insight into recognizing and resisting the enemies of Islam and Iran, and the spiritual presence of the martyr has remained a guiding light in our family ever since.

Abbas Goudarzi dedicated eight years of the Sacred Defense to documenting, recording, and broadcasting the valor of Islamic warriors across various IRIB networks and the IRGC television archives. While the people and officials were preoccupied with defending the nation, the MEK (Mojahedin-e-Khalq) terrorists exploited the chaos, secretly recruiting high school students into their ranks. With his media expertise, Abbas recognized this plot. Each time he returned to Tehran on leave, he and I would voluntarily organize awareness sessions in high schools and elementary schools. Through storytelling and screenings of the films and photographs he had captured of the fighters, he sought to guide the youth toward the right path, protecting them from falling prey to the MEK's propaganda.

Because of these efforts, Abbas was repeatedly threatened with assassination by the MEK, forcing us to relocate multiple times. Though those threats never materialized, their enmity toward him never waned. During the Iran-Iraq War, Abbas was injured several times and hospitalized in Tehran, but upon recovery, he returned to the frontlines without a moment of hesitation.

After his martyrdom, my greatest challenges were twofold: first, preserving the archive of films and documentaries he had painstakingly created, and second, supporting our children, for whom this martyrdom was a profound shock. Losing their father was like the collapse of a pillar in our home. Alongside the weight of this grief, I felt a deep responsibility to carry his message to a rapidly changing society. Abbas was a jihadist in media, a chronicler of the Sacred Defense. After him, it became my duty to keep the banner of Islam aloft, to illuminate the path of the martyrs, and to pass down his vision—and that of all martyrs—to future generations.

Thanks be to God, with divine assistance and the support of my children, we stand more determined than ever in this mission, placing the fight against the enemies of Islam and Muslims at the forefront of our lives.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Al Riyadi defeat undefeated Tabiat: 2024/25 WASL

TEHRAN – Al Riyadi found their extra gear in overtime and left behind the erstwhile unbeaten Tabiat, 110-100, to go 2-0 in the 2024/2025 FIBA WASL-West Asia League, Friday night.

Now they will turn their focus on easily the most awaited duel of the tilt as the crew takes on long-time rivals Sagesse Saturday night in a rematch of last season's WASL Final 8 championship bout.

King powered Al Riyadi with 33 points on 6-of-10 shooting from beyond the arc and 7 rebounds, making his presence felt as early as the first half that saw him score 19 of his output, fiba.basketball reported.

"It was a tough game ... we had a chance near the end of regulation, but maybe we should have made a better decision. But in overtime they managed the game better than us. Each possession, they made the best decision, and they won," Tabiat coach Mehran Shahintab said.

"The last possession, I had the ball in my hands to take a shot, so I'm kinda disappointed in not being able to finish the game for my team. But we came out against a great team in their home, and I think we fought together. That's all I can ask for. Another game in 17 hours so short-term memory, try to be ready to get the W tomorrow," Stedmon Lemon said.

Tantashev to officiate Al Nassr vs Esteghlal match

TEHRAN – Uzbekistan's Ilgiz Tantashev was appointed as the referee of the match between Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr and Esteghlal.

The match will be held at the Al-Awwal Park Stadium in Riyadh on Monday.

The 41-year-old official has been active as a professional referee since 2012.

Esteghlal and Al Nassr Club settled for a goalless stalemate in their AFC Champions League Elite 2024-25 Round of 16 first leg at the Azadi Stadium last week.

Iran down Greenland in Copa Intercontinental de Selecoes

TEHRAN – Iran futsal team defeated Greenland 11-2 at the Copa Intercontinental de Selecoes.

Mehdi Karimi (three goals), Behrouz Azimi (three goals), Abolfazl Afzali (two goals), Moslem Oladghobad, Hossein Sabzi and Ali Akrami scored for Team Melli.

Iran had lost to Brazil 5-2 in its first match.

The competition takes place from March 5 to 9 at the Ginasio De Esportes e Lazer Max Rosenmann in Sao Jose dos Pinhais (State of Parana) in Brazil.

Iran second in 2025 Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship

TEHRAN – Iran lost to India 32-25 in the final match of the Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship 2025 on Saturday.

The sixth edition of the Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship was held from March 6 to 8.

India have now won the title in five of the six editions held so far, with South Korea winning the other on home soil in 2016.

Tehran was the first city to hold the Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship twice, having previously hosted the tournament in 2007.

The Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship 2025 featured seven teams divided into two groups. Iran were clubbed in Group B alongside Nepal

and Iraq, while India, Thailand, Bangladesh and Malaysia were in Group A.

After round-robin matches, the top two teams from each group progressed to the semi-finals, where India beat Nepal 56-18 while Iran handed Bangladesh a 41-18 defeat.

Persepolis edge Chadormalou: PGPL

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team narrowed the gap on league leaders Tractor and Sepahan to one point after edging past Chadormalou in the 2024/25 Iran Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Friday.

Serdar Dursun scored the winning goal in the 15th minute at the Shahid Nasiri Stadium in Yazd.

Elsewhere, Aluminum defeated Zob Ahan 2-0 in Arak, Malavan edged past Nassaji 1-0 in Bandar Anzali and Shams Azar defeated Mes 3-1 in Qazvin.

Tractor, who have one game in their hands, lead the table with 45 points thanks to a better goal difference than Sepahan.

Persepolis are third with 44 points.

Iran learn fate at Asian Water Polo U20 Water Polo Championships

TEHRAN – Iran have been drawn in China in the Asian Water Polo U20 Championships.

Iran are pitted against China, Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Iran will start the campaign on March 25. The team will also play China and Malaysia in the following days.

Group B consists of hosts Singapore, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Chinese Taipei.

The Asian Water Polo Championships 2025 (U20) will be held at the Singapore Aquatics from March 25 to 30 at the OCBC Aquatics Centre.

Vafaei out of World Grand Prix

TEHRAN – Judd Trump breezed past Hossein Vafaei in the quarter-finals of the World Grand Prix on Friday.

Tournament favourite Trump won the clash 5-0.

The world No1 has set up a semi-final clash with Stuart Bingham, putting his shock World Open exit behind him in Hong Kong.

The Iranian athlete was not expecting to play in Hong Kong but got a spot in the 32-man draw after Ronnie O'Sullivan withdrew due to medical reasons.

Gholizadeh's goal among Best AFC U20 Asian Cup 2025 goals

TEHRAN – The AFC U-20 Asian Cup China 2025 drew to a conclusion on Saturday, with Australia crowned the new champion after defeating Saudi Arabia on penalties in the final.

As many as 93 goals were scored in just 31 matches as Asia's next generation of talent delivered a tournament to remember.

Following the final in Shenzhen, the-AFC.com picks 10 of the best strikes from across the competition.

Iran got its campaign off to a winning start with a 3-0 win against Indonesia. Just past the hour mark, Esmail Gholizadeh scored one of the goals of the tournament with a jaw-dropping bicycle kick much to the jubilation of his teammates.

Goals from Kosei Ogura (Japan), Aland Abdi (Syria), Abduqafur Haydarov (Uzbekistan), Amoori Faisal (Iraq), Kim Tae-won (Korea Republic), Kuai Jiwen (China), Han Jae Yong (DPR Korea), Amar Al Yuhaybi (Saudi Arabia) and Alexander Badolato (Australia) are shortlisted for the best goal.

Azar oil field gas facilities successfully commissioned

TEHRAN – The project manager for the development of the Azar oil field has announced the successful completion of the commissioning and operational launch of the field's gas facilities.

According to the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), Keyvan Yarahmadi stated on Saturday that the commissioning and startup process, which began in early February, was successfully completed.

He noted that associated gas from the shared field, after undergoing three stages of pressure boosting and dehydration, was injected into the newly constructed pipeline on March 2 at a rate of 15 million cubic feet per day and a pressure of 25 bar.

He explained that the pressure boosting process was carried out gradually and in phases, ultimately reaching the end of the project's 130-kilometer pipeline at the Dehloran associated gas collection facility on March 6. With this achievement, the final remaining task in the first phase of the Azar field's development has been completed, bringing the project's physical progress to 100 percent.

The successful completion of Azar field's first development phase has paved the way for negotiations and the signing of a contract for the second phase with Sarvak Azar Engineering and Development Company (SAED). Yarahmadi expressed hope that, through divine blessings and effective collaboration

among project stakeholders, the planned targets and production forecasts for this shared field would be realized.

He stressed that this accomplishment represents not only a significant step toward the sustainable development of Iran's oil and gas industry but also a testament to the capabilities of domestic experts in executing complex projects under challenging conditions.

The Azar oil field is located in the Anaran exploration block in Ilam Province, along the Iran-Iraq border. Approximately one-third of the field's reserves lie within Iran, with the remainder in Iraq. It is considered one of the most geologically complex and challenging fields in the region.

The development plan included drilling 19 wells, along with the design and construction of surface facilities, separation units, and transmission pipelines.

The project's ultimate goal was to produce 65,000 barrels of crude oil per day, with an early production target of 30,000 barrels per day.

This early production was achieved in March 2017 through the continuous efforts of SAED, a subsidiary of the Oil Industries' Engineering and Construction (OIEC) group. The full development of the field was officially inaugurated in March 2021 in a ceremony attended by Iran's then-president.

Electricity consumption rises 7% year-on-year

TEHRAN – Iran's peak electricity demand reached 47,902 megawatts on March 1, marking a seven percent increase compared to the same period last year, according to the country's Power Network Performance Analysis Group.

During the 51st week of the year, electricity demand surged from 44,770 megawatts recorded on the same date in the previous year.

Additionally, total electricity consumption

on March 1 amounted to 991,126 megawatt-hours, reflecting a 5.21 percent rise compared to the corresponding day last year.

According to the report, overall electricity demand growth since the beginning of the year has been recorded at 4.93 percent.

Meanwhile, the weighted average national temperature on that day was 5.16 degrees Celsius, showing a 0.55-degree increase compared to the same day last year.

Iran's non-oil export to Afghanistan up 31% in 10 months on year

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's non-oil export to Afghanistan increased by 31 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 \$1.972 billion to Afghanistan in the ten-month period.

He said that Afghanistan was the fourth top export destination of Iranian products among Iran's neighbors in the mentioned ten months.

In a meeting with an Iranian trade delegation in Kabul in last August, Afghanistan's interim Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund said that his country is eager to attract Iranian investors in order to develop Afghan mining industry, generate solar electricity and expand railway connectivity.

The Iranian delegation also proposed to launch a joint special industrial zone with Afghanistan.

Noting that Afghanistan has turned into a good place for making investment, Mullah said that the relevant ministries and organizations there, will cooperate and work closely with the investors.

The Iranian delegation, made up of economic and trade players, also held a separate meeting with Afghanistan's acting minister of commerce Haji Nooruddin Azizi. They called for the formation of a joint economic-mining zone between the two neighboring countries.

At the same time, Iran's commercial attaché in Afghanistan said that in order to improve Iran's presence in Afghanistan's markets, the trade between the two countries should move towards newer models of cooperation.

"Afghanistan supplies more than 80 per-

cent of its market needs through imports, and imports from Iran constitute 25 percent of this amount," Hossein Roustaei said in a meeting on opportunities and challenges of the Afghan market, held by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

Referring to Afghanistan's import priorities, including food, agriculture, fuel, basic goods such as flour, oil, eggs, day-old chickens, medicine, medical equipment, and construction equipment, he continued: "Iran exported more than 724 million dollars of goods to Afghanistan in the first four months of the current [Iranian calendar year] (March 20–July 21, 2024) which has increased by 28 percent compared to the same period last year."

"The establishment of national security and the central government in Afghanistan over the past two years have improved the conditions of trade with this country," he added.

Afghanistan has prioritized the exploitation of the country's mines. Therefore, Iran's traditional economic relation with Afghanistan should enter into newer models of cooperation, he stressed.

According to Roustaei, investment and operation of mines, technical and engineering services, mechanization of agriculture and smart agriculture, construction of transportation infrastructure, and renewable energies are among the new fields that should be considered for cooperation between the two countries.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government has been pursuing in recent years.

Iran shares land or water borders with 15 countries namely UAE, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Iran, Turkmenistan form economic consortium to boost trade

TEHRAN – The Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce has announced the formation of a special economic consortium aimed at enhancing exports and trade exchanges between the two countries, with support from their joint chambers of commerce.

According to IRNA, Ramezan Bahrami, head of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, said on Saturday that the establishment of the consortium has been met with broad support from economic operators and provides a valuable opportunity to streamline trade, facilitate investment, and remove commercial barriers between the two nations.

Bahrami emphasized the consortium's role in fostering sustainable trade relations, describing it as an effective tool for increasing exports, attracting investment, and easing economic interactions. He noted that the initiative creates a structured



platform for Iranian businesses to enter the Turkmen market strategically and unlocks new opportunities for bilateral cooperation.

He added that the consortium, developed with private-sector participation under the framework of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, is expected to expand trade volume, reduce business costs, and strengthen regional economic

ties.

Bahrami welcomed the broad participation of Iranian companies in the initiative, saying their involvement would pave the way for sustainable trade growth and facilitate access to Central Asian markets.

Iran and Turkmenistan, two neighboring countries sharing a border of over 1,000 kilometers, have developed strong trade and economic relations over

the years. Since Turkmenistan's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the two nations have collaborated in various sectors, including energy, transportation, and infrastructure development.

In terms of trade, Iran is Turkmenistan's second-largest trading partner after Russia. Joint projects such as the Friendship Dam and the Korpeje-Kordkuy gas pipeline highlight the extensive cooperation between the two countries.

However, trade volumes have fluctuated in recent years. For instance, trade between the two nations reached \$3.2 billion in 2008 but dropped to \$1.2 billion in 2009 due to declining oil and gas prices.

These wide-ranging collaborations in energy, transportation, and infrastructure underscore the significance of Iran-Turkmenistan economic ties, contributing to regional economic integration and development.

Iran signs \$17b deal to boost pressure at South Pars gas field



TEHRAN – Iran signed a \$17 billion contract on Saturday to implement a pressure-boosting project at the South Pars gas field, with President Masoud Pezeshkian and senior oil industry officials in attendance.

The agreement was signed between the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and domestic firms Petropars, Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, Oil Industries' Engineering and Construction (OIEC), and MAPNA Group.

The project aims to compensate for pressure declines, maintain maximum gas pro-

duction, reduce imbalances in gas and gasoline supply, and prevent gas migration to Qatar from the shared field. With the signing of these contracts, the project has officially entered its operational phase.

The \$17 billion project is expected to enhance Iran's energy security and create 17,000 direct and 50,000 indirect jobs.

According to the project plan, the South Pars field will be divided into seven pressure-boosting hubs, each requiring the construction of approximately 60,000 tons of structures.

In total, 420,000 tons of infrastructure will be built, with 70 percent of the necessary materials sourced domestically.

With this agreement, Iran's oil and gas sector enters a new phase of sustainable development in the world's largest gas field, ensuring long-term energy security and supporting economic growth.

Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, speaking at the signing ceremony, highlighted the strategic importance of the project.

He noted that after seven months under the

new administration, Iran has taken a major step toward realizing its long-standing goal of implementing a pressure-boosting system at the South Pars field.

He added that, under Iran's Seventh Development Plan, the country aims to increase raw gas production to 1.34 billion cubic meters per day by the end of the program.

Achieving this target requires both the development of new gas fields and maintenance projects to prevent production decline.

Experts estimate that reaching this production goal will require a total investment of \$75 billion. Of this, \$53 billion will be allocated for new gas field developments, while \$22 billion will be dedicated to maintaining production capacity, including the South Pars pressure-boosting project.

Paknejad emphasized that to reach the 1.34 billion cubic meters per day target within the next four years, Iran will need to invest approximately \$19 billion annually. Securing this investment will require precise planning and the optimal use of financial and monetary resources.

Iran's daily gas production reaches 856 mcm

TEHRAN – Iran's gas production reached 856 million cubic meters (mcm) over the past 24 hours, with 68 percent of the supply consumed by households, commercial units, and small industries, the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) reported.

According to the report, 578 million cubic meters of gas were used in these sectors, highlighting the significant share of residential and commercial consumption in the country's total gas demand.

The NIGC has urged citizens to set indoor temperatures between 18 and 21 degrees Celsius, wear warm clothing at home, and use thick curtains to help optimize gas consumption.

Iran, endowed with some of the world's largest natural gas reserves, has historically been a dominant player in global energy markets. However, recent developments have highlighted significant challenges in its gas production and consumption landscape.

In 2023, Iran's natural gas production reached approximately 245 billion cubic meters (bcm), marking a 1.6 percent increase from the previous year.

Despite this uptick, the nation's consumption surged to 245 bcm, indicating a consumption-to-production parity. This trend underscores Iran's escalating domestic energy demands, primarily driven by residential heating, electricity generation, and vehicular fuel.

The burgeoning consumption has strained Iran's energy infrastructure, leading to frequent power outages and gas shortages. Outdated facilities, coupled with inefficiencies such as flaring and transmission losses, exacerbate the situation.

Notably, in late 2024, the Iranian government imposed nationwide blackouts, affecting industries and daily life.

The crisis was further intensified by the IRGC's involvement in key energy sectors, hindering efficient management and strategic development.

In a bid to bolster its energy sector, Iran has engaged in regional collaborations.

A significant development is the agreement facilitating Turkmenistan's natural gas transit through Iran to Turkey, effective from March 1, 2025. This deal not only positions Iran as a



crucial energy transit hub but also offers potential economic benefits amid its domestic challenges.

Addressing Iran's energy challenges necessitates substantial investments in infrastructure modernization, adoption of efficient technologies, and strategic policy reforms.

Such measures are essential to meet domestic demands, enhance export potentials, and stabilize the national economy.

The recent Turkmenistan-Turkey-Iran gas transit agreement exemplifies the potential of regional cooperation in strengthening Iran's position in the global energy arena.

Sistan-Baluchestan province records lowest inflation rate

TEHRAN – A review of the data released by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) shows that Sistan-Baluchestan province with 23.6 percent recorded the lowest inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on February 20, which marks the end of the eleventh Iranian calendar month Bahman.

The highest 12-month inflation rate is related to Semnan province with 35.4 percent, based on the SCI's statistics.

The Statistical Center of Iran has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on February 20, at 32 percent,

with no change from the figure for the twelve-month ended to the tenth month.

The center put the country's point-to-point inflation rate at 35.3 percent in the eleventh month, which means families have paid an average of 35.3 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the preceding year.

The point-to-point inflation rate rose 3.5 percent in the eleventh month from the previous month.

The SCI has announced that Iran's economy grew by 5.7 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2024), marking the highest growth since 2017.

In its latest report, the SCI said the growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) for the year ending in March 2024 at the constant prices of 2017 is equivalent to 5.7 percent of the total GDP and 3.4 percent of the GDP minus oil. The field of activities of industries and mines group grew by 6.9 percent, the services group by 5.7 percent, and the agriculture group by 2.2 percent compared to the previous year.

Over 400 civilians killed near Syria's coast

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Hundreds of Alawite civilians have been executed in cold blood by Syrian security forces along the western coast.

Monitoring groups have sounded the alarm, warning of a potential genocide against the minority group as massacres in various cities continue to escalate.

In the city of Baniyas in Tartous province, Alawite residents have issued urgent pleas for help.

They are calling for rescue from widespread killings targeting families at the hands of armed militants from the Turkistan group.

Reports emerging from Syria have cited sources as saying, "The Turkistan Islamic Party began a sectarian cleansing operation in Baniyas on Saturday morning, targeting people indiscriminately – whether children or the elderly."

The residents urged security forces and anyone who could help to intervene and stop the ongoing sectarian executions.

Local sources reported to regional media that more than 400 civilians were killed in massacres and field executions in Syria's coastal region.

Other reports indicate that the number of casualties and kidnappings could be in the thousands. Numerous videos showing summary executions and detentions have been circulating online.



Experts note that while the Alawite community has not demanded the return of the former government, they have begun protesting against ongoing human rights violations, including abductions.

Reports have noted that, as of now, no security forces have taken action to restore order in the area.

Residents are reportedly too afraid to leave their homes due to the continued killings carried out by Turkistans, Chechen, and Syrian militants.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented "large-scale field executions of men and young adults, without any clear distinction between civilians and combatants" in northwest Syria.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported earlier on Saturday that more than 300 Alawite civilians had been killed since Thursday by Syrian security forces and allied groups.

These deaths occurred during security sweeps and clashes with Alawite groups who had taken up arms in the coastal region of western Syria.

The Observatory stated that "311 Alawite civilians were killed in the coastal region by security forces and allied groups" since Thursday, AFP reported.

The Observatory said these individuals were killed in "executions" carried out by security forces or their allied fighters, accompanied by "looting of homes and properties."

This brings the total death toll since the clashes began to 524, including 213 fighters from both sides.

The Observatory added that the number of fatalities among "military personnel in the Ministries of Interior and Defense" reached 93, while "120 armed fighters" were also killed.

Clashes between security forces and armed groups broke out on Thursday in Latakia province, a re-

gion with a significant Alawite population.

The Observatory said the area experienced "relative calm" on Saturday, though security forces continued "pursuit and combing operations in areas where militants were hiding" and had sent additional reinforcements.

On Saturday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed that five massacres occurred in villages and towns across the Syrian coast on Friday, claiming the lives of 163 civilians who were killed in field executions by members of the Syrian Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior.

The head of the transitional government, Ahmed Al-Sharaa, urged fighters on Friday night to surrender "before it's too late."

In a televised address broadcast on the Syrian presidential Telegram channel, Al-Sharaa warned:

"You have attacked all Syrians, and by doing so, you have committed a grave, unforgivable sin. The response you are facing now is one you cannot withstand. Surrender your weapons and yourselves before it's too late."

Since the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government, the new authorities have launched armed campaigns targeting what they describe as "remnants of the previous regime," focusing particularly on Alawite-populated areas in central and western Syria.

Hamas censures Israeli killing of over 12,000 women as 'stain on humanity'

As the world marks International Women's Day, Palestinian resistance movement Hamas condemns Israel's killing of more than 12,000 Palestinian women in Gaza as a "stain on humanity."

"The killing of 12,000 women in Gaza, the injury and arrest of thousands, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands are a stain on humanity," Hamas said in a statement on Saturday, Press TV reported. It said female Palestinian abductees are "subjected to psychological and physical torture in flagrant violation of all international norms and conventions."

Hamas added that the suffering endured by these women exposed the "double standards" of Western countries, including the United States, in dealing with Palestinian abductees.

The statement came shortly after the head of the Government Media Office in the Gaza Strip, Salama Maarouf, said 12,316 women had been killed due to the Israeli regime's genocidal war in the besieged territory.

"Women's Day coincides with the continuation of the Israeli siege and the prevention of aid, as women live in catastrophic humanitarian conditions and suffer from starvation and thirst," Maarouf said. According to the Gaza government tally, the bloody Israeli onslaught also left 2,000 women and girls with permanent disabilities due to amputations.

Moreover, 13,901 women were widowed and at least 17,000 mothers lost their offspring, while over 50,000 pregnant women lost their unborn babies.

Syria is on the brink again

By Parviz Rashidi

TEHRAN – That violence has returned to some parts of Syria is extremely annoying. If calm is not restored to Syria's western coastal cities and villages, the entire country may burn in flames again.

The Syrian people have suffered greatly in more than a decade of civil war and Takfiri terrorism.

The HTS, under the leadership of Abu Mohammad al-Julani, took control of Syria in December 2024 in just a few weeks as the army refused to resist.

Julani, now called Ahmed al-Sharaa, asked his loyalists not to act violently when its militiamen first took control of Syria. This created hope among people, especially Syrians, that a new page was opening up in Syrian history.

It was reported that the HTS had said goodbye to its violent and terrorist past. But the massacre of Alawites, a minority group who were loyal to the Assad regime, is sending shivers into the hearts of the countries in the region and beyond.

Forbes reported on Saturday that security forces and pro-government militiamen backed by armor and artillery killed at least 38 Alawites execution-style in the town of al-Mukhtareyah. Eyewitnesses also said security forces were indiscriminately targeting civilians.

Terrorists, including those from the Turkistan Islamic Party, who poured into Syria during the civil war and, unfortunately, some of them have been appointed to top military posts in the country, are now enjoying a free hand to vent their anger on the Alawites and Christians.

Before it is too late, Sharaa must declare general amnesty. He must abdicate his dark past in action and not just words. He must avoid making the mistakes that Bashar al-Assad made when he crushed protests triggered under the influence of the Arab Spring and pushed the country toward anarchy.

Again, Syria will degenerate into a new cycle of violence if all Syrians, with different religious and ethnic backgrounds, are not seen equally.

Why the fragmentation of the Islamic nation

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – In the first ten days of Ramadan, Muslims commemorate the passing of two founding Islamic figures who played a pivotal role in defending Prophet Muhammad and Islam: His uncle Abu Talib and his wife Sayyeda Khadija. From their exceptional struggle, there are many lessons that the nation can learn.

Abu Talib (ra) challenged the enemies of the Prophet, believing that the religion he brought was to liberate the Quraysh society from ignorance, domination, savagery and slavery. Likewise, Sayyeda Khadija devoted her money, herself and all her energies to building the Islamic society.

This is the reality of Islam, which has been fought since the passing of Prophet Muhammad. The enemy is one, the goal is one, which is to prevent the establishment of a unified Islamic entity that preserves the nation's capabilities, wealth and sovereignty.

Indeed, the dear price we are paying today is due to our negligence and deviation from the supreme values of Islam.

At a time when the traitorous "Muslim" rulers deliberately neglect the starvation of the fasting and hungry Sunni Muslims in Gaza, Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Sayyid Abdul Malik al-Houthi, came out to threaten the tyrants of the age to resume the entry of humanitarian aid to the besieged enclave.

On the Syrian coast, the mass massacres against defenseless civilians expanded after the HTS-led regime hired non-Syrian mercenaries to slaughter innocent families instead of repelling the Israeli occupation in southern Syria.

The extent of concern expressed by multiple analysts about the future of Syrian unity and its entry into the stage of Somalization due to the seditious behaviour of al-Julani's regime is striking!

As for Lebanon, Israeli raids escalated amid its wide infringement of Lebanon's sovereignty. Observers wondered about the usefulness of betting on diplomacy; seemingly, it is easier to revive the dead than reviving the UN Supervisory Committee.

Obviously, Lebanon is on the brink of a collapse of civil peace, especially in light of what the US-drafted PAGER bill (Preventing Armed Groups for Engaging in Radicalism) orchestrated against the Shiite duo.

Besides, the bloody events on the Syrian coast, if they continue and develop, will undoubtedly have negative repercussions on Lebanon, whether among the displaced Syrians or in the Lebanese regions where the Alawite sect is focused (Tripoli).

Meanwhile, security reports have transmitted information about the movements of Druze groups between the two countries, which adds to the concern that Syria's spark of strife will likely delve into Lebanon.

In parallel, Israel's insistence on occupying the 9+ sites; liquidating citizens with raids; continuing the dredging work to create a buffer zone will not be long before citizens move and resist even if the Lebanese government tried to stop them in response to the American "den of espionage" in Beirut.

The invasion of the southern town of Houla by Zionist colonial settlers under the pretext of honouring the grave of an alleged rabbi was a prelude to further incursion into Lebanese territory in the future.

In light of these bleak facts that Presidents Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam know, it has become urgent to hold a national conference to consolidate Lebanon's righteous constants and agree on a defensive strategy against US-led Israeli expansionist policy. However, it seems that they have leaned towards succumbing to external pressure!

To replicate what we have stated at the beginning is incumbent upon us in the month of the holy Quran to contemplate its verses. To preserve the Islamic entity, it is best to follow the example of Abu Talib and Khadija, not Muawiyah! The Almighty says: Whoever takes Allah and His Messenger and those who believe as allies – then indeed, the party of Allah – they will be the predominant [Surat Al-Ma'idah 56].

Blockade breeds breakthrough: US trade war against China backfires

By Shahrokh Saei

BEIJING – Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has come down hard on the United States over its trade war and the imposition of tariffs against the giant Asian nation.

Speaking at a press conference held on the sidelines of the ongoing session of the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing on Friday, the top diplomat said China would "firmly counter" US pressure.

Since returning to the White House on January 20, US President Donald Trump has been engaged in a trade conflict with Beijing.

On Tuesday, his administration imposed an extra 10% tariff on Chinese goods, taking the cumulative duty to 20%. China has responded by imposing duties of up to 15% on various US agricultural products.

"No country should fantasize that it can suppress China on the one hand and develop good relations with China on the other. This two-faced approach is not only not conducive to the stability



of bilateral relations, but also unable to establish mutual trust," Wang said in response to Trump's decision to increase tariffs on Chinese exports.

The veteran Chinese diplomat further denounced Trump's "America First" policy. "Should everyone stress my country first and obsess over a position of strength, the law of the jungle would reign again, smaller and weaker countries would bear the brunt first, and international norms and order would take a body blow."

Wang highlighted China's technological achievements as proof that US sanctions would be ineffective.

"Where there is blockade, there is breakthrough; where there is suppression, there is innovation," he said.

Referring to Washington's strategy to restrict Beijing's access to key technologies, Wang pointed out that "high fences and small yards" cannot suppress the spirit of innovation, and decoupling and supply chains disruption will only lead to self-isolation."

China's remarkable technological progress has been under the spotlight since DeepSeek unveiled its latest artificial intelligence (AI) models in late January.

The Chinese AI company shocked global financial markets after it topped app download charts and caused US tech stocks to plunge.

The popularity of DeepSeek has challenged the US hegemony in the global tech market.

China's innovation in the tech industry can serve as a fortress against US coercive measures and push Trump to bite the bullet and address his conflicts with Beijing through diplomatic discussions

First Announcement

International Tender announcement

The company of Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar, Marine and Port Services Development as a supplier of equipment for the First phase Shahid Beheshti port of Chabahar port development hold, International Tender for manufacture, shipment, training and delivery of the following equipment in two stages and after Qualitative Assessment.

All manufacturers with experience of manufacturing the above said equipment are invited to obtain the CD filled with assessment qualitative forms and tendering documents, with introductory letter and the original copy of the paid amount for Rials 10.000.000 for each bid to the account No. 275187119 in the name of Aria Banader Iranian Chabahar, Marine and Port Services Development with Bank of Tejarat with the following address:

The deadline for purchasing quality assessment documents and worksheets is 10:00 AM on Tuesday, 1403/12/28 (corresponding to 03/18/2025).

Add: 40. Kish St., Jahankodak Crossroads, Nelson Mandela Blvd., Tehran, Iran. Postal code: 1518814111, Tel: +98 21 88190677-8, Fax: +98 21 88190679 E-Mail: ABIC@abiports.com

Tender participation deposits Bank Guarantee with No term and condition extendable for many times for the following Tenders is needed. The above Guarantee will be received along with Technical and price proposal for the qualitative bidders.

- To abide the delivery Date of documents, any Question shall be answered 72 hours before the permitted date of delivery.
- All manufacturers are obliged to abide by the Maximum Utilization of Local Capabilities Law.
- Advertisement price of tender will be paid by the successful applicant.
- The tender participants would first assessed qualitative and after obtaining the minimum score will be participated to the continues stages of tender.

1- Four unites of Ship to Shore Gantry Crane (STS) with Tender No. PE/1001/03 (Amount of Guarantee Euro 561.000 or IR-Rials 403.000.000.000)

2- Ten unites of Rubber Tyred Gantry Container Crane (RTG) with Tender No. PE/1002/03 (Amount of Guarantee Euro 291.000 or IR-Rials 209.000.000.000)

3- Two vessel of Trailing Hopper Suction Dredgers 4000 CUBIC METER (THSD) with Tender No. ME/1001/03 (Amount of Guarantee Euro 911.000 or IR-Rials 655.000.000.000)



Iran set to implement comprehensive system for medical tourism



TEHRAN – Iran is set to roll out a comprehensive management system dedicated to medical tourism across the country, following a successful pilot program in Khorasan Razavi province.

According to Hossein Nikounam, head of the Khorasan Razavi Health Tourism Association, the comprehensive system will be implemented from the beginning of the upcoming Iranian year (1404), which starts on March 21. “The pilot project, which began in October 2024 under the directive of the Ministry of Tourism, has yielded positive results. Due to its success, implementation will be mandatory nationwide in early 1404.”

Nikounam highlighted significant challenges affecting Iran's health tourism industry, including political and security tensions, the cancellation of flights, and negative media campaigns. “These factors led to a 30% decline in medical tourism in 1403 compared to the previous year. Additionally, the diversity of medical tourists has decreased, with 85% now coming from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan, primarily due to geographic proximity and religious tourism in Mashhad. Discrepancies in official statistics further complicate the situation. Nikounam noted that some government agencies count foreign nationals who have lived in Iran for more than six months as health tourists, which distorts actual figures.

Impact of religious and national holidays

Iran's health tourism sector experiences fluctuations during religious and national holidays. During Ramadan, medical tourist numbers typ-

ically decline as many patients from neighboring Muslim-majority countries postpone treatment. Similarly, the Nowruz (Persian New Year) holiday sees reduced foreign patient visits due to hospital closures and doctor vacations.

To address these challenges, hospitals and health tourism firms are being urged to ensure the availability of medical professionals for emergency cases and to continue providing free services to critical patients during peak holiday seasons.

The need for a unified strategy

Nikounam emphasized that the lack of coordination between key governmental bodies—including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Tourism, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs—remains a major obstacle to developing Iran's health tourism industry.

He further pointed out that over 80% of the sector's issues stem from domestic mismanagement rather than international sanctions or security concerns. One pressing issue is the strain on public hospitals, where Iranian patients face long waiting times for essential surgeries while foreign medical tourists receive expedited treatment. Redirecting foreign patients to private hospitals could alleviate this burden and boost the industry's growth.

For sustainable development, Nikounam urged policymakers to streamline administrative processes, enhance inter-agency collaboration, and maximize the potential of private healthcare institutions.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Bryggen

Bryggen is a historic harbour district in Bergen, one of North Europe's oldest port cities on the west coast of Norway which was established as a centre for trade by the 12th century.

In 1350 the Hanseatic League established a “Hanseatic Office” in Bergen. They gradually acquired ownership of Bryggen and controlled the trade in stockfish from Northern Norway through privileges granted by the Crown. The Hanseatic League established a total of four overseas Hanseatic Offices, Bryggen being the only one preserved today.

The UNESCO-designated property has been damaged by a number of fires through the centuries and has been rebuilt after every fire, closely following the previous property structure and plan as well as building techniques. Bryggen's appearance today stems from the time after the fire in 1702. The buildings are made of wood in keeping with vernacular building traditions. The original compact medieval urban structure is preserved with its long narrow rows of buildings facing the harbour, separated by narrow wooden passages.

Today, some 62 buildings remain of this former townscape and these contain sufficient elements to demonstrate how this colony of bachelor German merchants lived and worked, and illustrate the use of space in the district. It is characterized by the construction of buildings along the narrow passages running parallel to the docks. The urban units are rows of two- to three-story buildings signified by the medieval name “gård”. They have gabled facades towards the harbor and lie on either one or both sides of the narrow passages that have the functions of a private courtyard. The houses are built in a combination of traditional timber log construction, and galleries with column and beam construction with horizontal wooden panel cladding. The roofs have original brick tiling or sheets, a result of fast repairs after an explosion during World War II. Towards the back of the gård, there are small fireproof warehouses or storerooms (kjellere) built of stone, for the protection of special goods and valuables

against fire. This repetitive structure was adapted to the living conditions of the Hanseatic trading post. The German merchants took up winter residence in the small individual wooden houses and the storerooms were used as individual or collective warehouses. A true colony, Bryggen enjoyed quasi-extraterritoriality which continued beyond the departure of the Hanseatic merchants until the creation of a Norwegian trading post in 1754, on the impetus of fishermen and ship owners of German origin. Today, Bryggen is a significant part of the historic wooden city of Bergen. Bryggen, including its cultural deposits, is listed pursuant to the Norwegian Cultural Heritage Act and is also protected through the Norwegian Planning and Building Act. The adopted protection plan includes an extensive area that functions as a buffer zone.

Bryggen is privately owned and the majority of the buildings are owned by the Bryggen Foundation, which was established in 1962 with the objective of preserving Bryggen. The remaining owners have established a separate association to secure their interests. The stakeholders at Bryggen collaborate in different constellations of owners and authorities.

“The Bryggen Project” was established formally in 2000. This is an extensive and long-term project for monitoring, safeguarding and restoring Bryggen, including both archaeological deposits and standing buildings.

Bryggen is managed according to a management plan that is revised regularly. A fire protection system with detection and suppression has been installed and is continually being improved. Climate conditions are a key issue and measures have been taken to prepare for future changes. Possible impacts resulting from tourism are monitored. There is ongoing pressure for urban development in the vicinity of Bryggen. Any development which may have visual impact on the World Heritage property is monitored closely by the cultural heritage authorities.

(Source: UNESCO)

Hasht Behesht Palace: a jewel of Safavid architecture

TEHRAN – Nestled in the heart of Isfahan, Hasht Behesht Palace stands as one of the most exquisite remnants of the Safavid era.

Known as one of the last royal residences of the Safavid kings, this majestic palace has long been celebrated as one of the most beautiful of that epoch.

The name “Hasht Behesht,” meaning “Eight Paradises,” evokes an image of divine splendor, and the palace lives up to its title through its remarkable architectural brilliance and intricate decorations.

A palace amidst a garden

The Hasht Behesht Palace is located within a vast garden, originally part of the Naghsh-e Jahan Garden, also referred to as the Nightingale Garden.

This green oasis was established under the orders of Shah Ismail I, the founder of the Safavid dynasty.

Though much of the original garden has vanished over time, the surrounding park remains one of Isfahan's most famous promenades, offering visitors a glimpse into the grandeur of the past.

Architectural marvel and unique design

Completed in 1080 AH (1669 CE), the palace is an octagonal masterpiece, distinct for its four façades, each sharing similarities yet possessing unique characteristics.

While the northern façade appears to be the main entrance, the presence of a beautifully designed pool on the eastern side suggests that the main façade is



indeed located there.

Elevated two meters above ground, the two-story structure features staircases on all four sides, allowing easy access to the upper level.

The first-floor rooms at each of the four corners are adorned with elaborate stucco and delicate paintings, showcasing the finest Safavid artistic traditions.

At the heart of the palace lies an intricately carved octagonal marble pond, known as the “Pearl Pool.” Its unique design allows water to seep through tiny perforations, creating a mesmerizing effect resembling scattered pearls.

A royal residence

Hasht Behesht Palace was more than an architectural wonder; it was also a royal dwelling.

Historical accounts suggest that it housed eight wives of Shah Abbas, with four residing on the first floor and the other four on the second.

The palace's design masterfully combined opulence with func-

tionality, ensuring comfort while maintaining an air of regality.

Tiling and decorative splendor

One of the most captivating aspects of Hasht Behesht Palace is its magnificent tiling.

The intricate patterns feature an array of birds, reptiles, and predatory animals, all rendered in vibrant colors and extraordinary detail.

These motifs not only demonstrate the artisans' exceptional skill but also reflect the deep connection between Persian art and nature.

Historical significance and modern-day legacy

Isfahan flourished under the Safavid rulers, particularly during the reign of Shah Abbas I, who envisioned the city as a cultural and architectural hub.

The construction of Chahar Bagh Street, meaning “Four Gardens,” played a crucial role in shaping Isfahan's landscape.

While most of the gardens that once adorned the city have faded into history, Hasht Behesht and

Chehel Sotoun remain as enduring symbols of Safavid architectural ingenuity.

In 1964, Hasht Behesht Palace and its surrounding garden were entrusted to Iran's then Ministry of Culture and Art.

Today, the palace continues to captivate visitors with its timeless beauty, standing as a testament to the artistic and architectural mastery of the Safavid era.

Visiting the palace

Situated in the western part of Chahar Bagh Street, across from Sheykh Bahaei Street, Hasht Behesht Palace is easily accessible by public transportation.

The closest stop is the Municipal Bus Station, making it a convenient destination for tourists.

Moreover, its proximity to other historical landmarks such as Naghsh-e Jahan Square, Chehel Sotoun Palace, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Ali Qapu, Qeysarieh Gate, and the Imam Mosque makes it an essential stop on any journey through Isfahan's rich cultural heritage.

Some local guides say the palace is a mesmerizing example of Persian architectural excellence, blending artistic elegance with historical grandeur.

Whether admired for its intricate designs, captivating history, or serene surroundings, the palace remains an unmissable treasure in the heart of Isfahan.

A visit to this legendary site offers a journey through time, allowing one to experience the opulence and ingenuity of the Safavid dynasty firsthand.

Silk Road intl. youth photography competition opens call for entries



TEHRAN – The 4th Silk Road International Youth Photography and Short Video Competition has opened a call for entries.

The competition is set to take place in China in close collaboration with Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs intended to promote cultural exchange among young people along the ancient route that once connected China to Iran and Europe, Mehr reported on Saturday.

According to the news agency citing the public relations of the Fuzhou Municipal People's Government in Fujian province will be hosting the competition under the theme “Bridging Cultures.”

The initiative aims to enhance youth exchanges along the historical trade route.

The competition is open to teenagers and young adults aged 12 to 20. Participation is

free, and each contestant is allowed to submit up to two entries. The deadline for submission is August 31.

The competition welcomes submissions inspired by cultural heritage, traditional cuisine, historical sites, traditional clothing, folk art, maritime culture, natural environments, historical figures, and more. Entries must be original and previously unpublished.

Black-and-white photographs are accepted, and submissions should be in JPG format with a file size of less than 1MB. Each submission must include a title, the creator's name, and contact information.

For short video submissions, the duration must not exceed three minutes. Videos should be in MP4 format with a minimum resolution of 720P.

If the video is in a language other than Chinese or English, subtitles in either of these languages are required.

In addition to awards, winners may be invited to attend the prize-giving ceremony in Fuzhou, with all travel expenses covered by the organizers.

The ancient Silk Road has existed for thousands of years, passing through many different empires, kingdoms, reigns and societies throughout history.

At certain times in its long history, traders could travel freely along these routes, where-

as at others, travel was difficult or dangerous.

According to UNESCO, the Silk Road enriched the countries it passed through, transporting cultures, religions, languages and of course material goods into societies across Europe, Asia and Africa, and uniting them all with a common thread of cultural heritage and plural identities.

There are over 40 countries today alongside the historic Land and Maritime Silk Roads, all still bearing witness to the impact of these routes in their culture, traditions and customs.

These vast networks carried more than just merchandise and precious commodities however: the constant movement and mixing of populations also brought about the transmission of knowledge, ideas, cultures, and beliefs, which had a profound impact on the history and civilizations of the Eurasian peoples.

Travelers along the Silk Roads were attracted not only by trade but also by the intellectual and cultural exchange that was taking place in cities along the Silk Roads, many of which developed into hubs of culture and learning.

Science, arts, and literature, as well as crafts and technologies, were thus shared and disseminated into societies along the lengths of these routes, and in this way, languages, religions, and cultures developed and influenced each other.

North Korea halts tourism just weeks after reopening

North Korea has stopped tourists from visiting, just weeks after the first Western tourists entered the country for the first time in five years.

North Korea sealed itself off at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, and started to scale back restrictions in the middle of 2023.

It opened up to Russian visitors in 2024, but it was only last month that Western tourists were allowed into the remote, eastern city Rason.

However several tour companies now say that trips to the

reclusive country have been cancelled until further notice. Pyongyang has not given a reason for the sudden halt.

“Just received news from our Korean partners that Rason is closed to everyone.

We will keep you posted,” China-based KTG Tours, which specialises in North Korean tours, said Wednesday on Facebook.

Young Pioneer Tours and Koryo Tours were among the other agencies that have announced the suspension.

Those planning tours in April and May should refrain from

booking flights “until we have more information”, Young Pioneer Tours said in a Facebook post.

On 20 February, the first Western tourists started arriving in Rason, a city earmarked by the North as a special economic zone, to trial new financial policies.

Tour operators told the BBC the visitors' movements were even more restricted than on pre-pandemic trips – they had fewer opportunities to wander the streets and talk to locals.

Phone signals and internet access were also not available in the hermit state.

One tour leader said he suspects Rason was picked because the area is relatively contained and easy to control.

Earlier this week, Koryo Tours said it was accepting international applications for the Pyongyang Marathon for the first time in five years.

The event is scheduled for 6 April but it is now unclear if these can still be processed.

North Korea saw some 350,000 foreign tourists in 2019, of whom 90% were Chinese, according to media reports.

(Source: BBC)

Intl. Women's Day highlights rights, equality, and empowerment for all women

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – Observed on March 8 annually, International Women's Day is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political.

Officially recognized by the United Nations in 1977, International Women's Day first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe.

This year, the Day is celebrated under the theme "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment." It calls for action that can unlock equal rights, power, and opportunities for all and a feminist future where no one is left behind. Central to this vision is empowering the next generation—youth, particularly young women and adolescent girls—as catalysts for lasting change.

Besides, the year 2025 is a pivotal moment as it marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This document is the most progressive and widely endorsed blueprint for women's and girls' rights worldwide that transformed the women's rights agenda in terms of legal



protection, access to services, youth engagement, and change in social norms, stereotypes and ideas stuck in the past.

The day urges everyone to engage media, corporate leaders, governments, community leaders, civil society and youth, and others with influence to take actions and invest in promoting women's rights and gender equality.

In Iran, the birthday of Prophet Muhammad's daughter, Hazrat Fatima (SA), is marked as National Women's Day in Iran every year.

This year, the day fell on December 22. On National Women's Day, Iranian officials highlighted the critical role of women in

shaping the country's progress and called for the unwavering protection of human rights.

President Masoud Pezeshkian, along with other key figures, reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality, justice, and the empowerment of women, both in domestic policy and international diplomacy.

The official also stated that violations of human rights, no matter who commits them or their position, must be addressed through dialogue, legal action, or other appropriate measures.

In his address, President Pezeshkian reflected on societal norms during the time of Prophet Muhammad, when the birth of daughters was often viewed as

shameful.

He highlighted the transformative significance of Lady Fatimah Zahra's birth, calling her a beacon of dignity and progress in Islamic history. He quoted the Quran extensively to underscore the importance of justice, equity, and the defense of human rights, stressing that these principles are universal and foundational.

Addressing the audience, Pezeshkian reaffirmed women's equality, praising their potential to lead and excel. He called for creating more opportunities for women and girls to participate in the country's development, emphasizing that their contributions are vital for a just society.

"Women are not only equal to men but often excel in many areas," he said. "Superiority lies in piety, not in gender." He highlighted the role of mothers in shaping future generations and stressed that no nation can thrive without the support of capable and dedicated women.

Concluding his speech, Pezeshkian called for greater inclusion of women in leadership roles and a renewed commitment to addressing the nation's challenges. "Women have a unique ability to nurture and shape the next generation," he said. "This must be recognized as a cornerstone of national progress."

Lake Urmia's water volume increases by 80 mcm



TEHRAN –According to the CEO of West Azarbaijan regional water company, the volume of water in Lake Urmia has risen by 80 million cubic meters compared to the same time last year, reaching 1,630 billion cubic meters.

Lake Urmia in the north-western West Azarbaijan province started to dry up in the 2000s. The lake is the largest in West Asia and the sixth-largest salt lake in the world, with a water surface area of 5,000 to 6,000 square kilometers.

The current level of Lake Urmia is 1270.28 meters, showing a rise of 3 centimeters compared to the last year, IRNA quoted Majid Rastegari as saying. The area of Lake Urmia is now around 1,140 square kilometers, which has expanded by 30 square kilometers in comparison to the last year, he added.

Effective restoration

Through a joint project led by the United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by the Government of Japan, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is going to join to promote sustainable agricultural practices and solutions for the conservation of Lake Urmia.

On December 1, 2024, the Government of Japan and UNDP signed an exchange of notes to launch "The Project for Developing Conservation Systems of Wetlands in Lake Urmia and Other Wetlands, Including

Their Surrounding Communities." The project, which runs from 2024 to 2028, will be implemented in partnership with the Department of Environment and FAO.

Focusing on sustainable agriculture and climate-adapted livelihoods, the initiative seeks to deliver long-term benefits for local communities while preserving the biodiversity of wetlands as critical ecosystems.

Lake Urmia faces significant challenges due to the overconsumption of water resources magnified by climate change impacts, which has severely impacted its ecosystem.

Agricultural activities in the region are increasingly vulnerable to water shortages, a situation exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Studies indicate that these climatic changes could further disrupt agrifood systems and the lake's fragile environment in the future.

FAO with the support of the government of Japan, identified technical agricultural solu-

tions to increase water efficiency in the agriculture sector at the Lake Urmia basin, which may be efficient in saving the internationally known biosphere reserves.

Since 1995, Lake Urmia has been shrinking due to rapid upstream agricultural expansion and climate change. These forces have pushed the precious lake to the verge of depletion and have put the region's health, economy, environment, industry, and agriculture at risk.

Despite the efforts of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program National Committee and its focus on the Lake's restoration since 2013, the continuation of the critical situation demonstrates that sustainability, macro and micro, management solutions should be considered as the main essence of action plans.

In a concerted effort to address the challenges facing the Lake Urmia Basin in 2016, FAO launched the "Integrated Program for Sustainable Water Resources Management in the Lake Urmia Basin," which was funded by the Government of Japan.

Key technical outcomes of this initiative included the implementation of a water accounting plus project in the Lake Urmia Basin and the identification of water-consuming hotspots within the basin. Notably, water accounting revealed the significant contribution of irrigated and rainfed agriculture to the Lake's total evapotranspiration, emphasizing the importance of water-saving measures for the Lake's restoration.

Ellen Award proposed to honor 'the mother of Siberian cranes'

TEHRAN – Environmentalists have proposed establishing a special award in recognition of the dedicated Finnish conservationist Ellen Vuosalo, who made great efforts for over fifty years in Iran's Mazandaran province for preserving migratory birds, especially Siberian cranes.

Known as the mother of Siberian cranes, Vuosalo's extensive and constant efforts made her a well-known and influential figure in preserving migratory birds in Mazandaran.

She was the first researcher to begin studying cranes in Iran. She was invited to attend numerous scientific conferences to present her experiences, and her efforts have always been honored and appreciated during her lifetime and continued to be appreciated even after that, IRNA reported.

Dedicating more than five decades of her life to the protection of these cranes was not motivated by a desire for recognition but by an unrelenting passion for wildlife. Despite frequent visits to her home country, she always returned to the Fereydun-Kenar wetlands, the final migratory stop for the western population of Siberian Cranes. She supported the formation of Mazandaran Crane Conservation Association.

During all these fifty years, Vuosalo attended the Hariri Scientific Foundation in Babol several times each year, teaching and introducing migratory birds and the Siberian crane to students and all those interested.

In addition to carrying out numerous research

and scientific activities on zoology, migratory birds, biotechnology, biochemistry, nanotechnology, and chemistry, Vuosalo also collaborated with several universities in the country, including the University of Mazandaran.

Apart from her scientific activities, she did her best to educate and convince hunters, ranchers, and local communities to stop hunting. Ellen's work also focused on preserving damgahs—traditional wetland-farming systems in Iran.

These areas, critical for migratory birds, were also a source of livelihood for local communities. She believed that these systems, if managed sustainably, could protect the cranes while supporting local people. She taught us that conservation is as much about resilience and learning from failure as it is about success. Her life's work challenges future conservationists to adapt, innovate, and address the deeper systemic issues that threaten biodiversity. In honoring Ellen's memory, we also honor the lessons she left behind—a call to persist, even when the odds seem insurmountable.

She passed away at the age of 95 in Royan, Mazandaran province, just as the extinction of the species in Iran was confirmed. Her life reminds us that love and determination, while essential, are not sufficient in conservation. The interplay of unpredictable and uncontrollable variables—from climate change to species-specific behaviors—demands adaptive strategies and systemic approaches.

Over 350 individuals benefitted from IRCS rescue services in 3 days

TEHRAN –Over the past three days, the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) provided rescue services to 357 people.

From March 5 to 7, 320 IRCS teams conducted 257 operations. A total of 357 people received pre-hospital emergency care, 105 of whom were transferred to medical centers, IRNA quoted Mohammad Kobadi, an official with the IRCS, as saying. Since December 6, 2024, the IRCS has started a winter relief program. The program is scheduled to continue till March 10.

A total of 4,500 relief teams are attending the program to ensure road safety by providing life-saving aid and reducing road accidents.

IRCS is a top organization

In September 2024, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) project manager, Faisal Mahboob, lauded the capabilities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) as outstanding.

The official said he was really impressed by the capacity and the wide range of activities carried out by the IRCS. The IRCS is recognized as one of the five prominent societies worldwide thanks to its wide range of activities and great achievements both nationally and internationally.

"The International Federation will support the activities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society to

commence a new phase of collaboration with the society," Mahboob added, the IRCS website reported. In May 2023, Pir-hossein Kolivand, head of the IRCS, said the IRCS has been recognized as one of the five prominent societies worldwide thanks to its wide range of activities and great achievements both nationally and internationally.

Referring to health, treatment, and rehabilitation as one of the parts of the IRCS activities, Kolivand said the IRCS hospitals, pharmacies, and clinics meet the medical and therapeutic needs of thousands of citizens every day.

The IRCS medical centers abroad are reputable worldwide. As a humanitarian organization, the IRCS is trying to alleviate the suffering of the people involved in accidents, emergencies, and conflicts. "Today, collaborations with knowledge-based firms have resulted in advancements in manufacturing orthoses, prostheses, artificial organs, and new medications, with plans to extend cooperation to rescue and relief efforts as well," the official noted.

According to a report released by the IFRC on the most important achievements of the Iranian Red Crescent Society during January-December 2023, the IRCS continues to tackle the impacts of climate change, program adaptability, and preparedness efforts that have been triggered by the climate crisis.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

\$7b to be allocated to retrofit, rebuild flood-devastated houses

A budget of 290 trillion rials (nearly \$7 billion) will be allotted to reconstruct and repair housing units destroyed by flood in 18 provinces across the country, Mehdi Jamalnejad, deputy interior minister for urban and rural development has announced.

Flood has devastated some 169,377 housing units, 68,333 of which are beyond repair and must be reconstructed, he stated.

Moreover, household appliances of 109,832 families also have suffered damages, he further regretted. He went on to say that 20,000 housing units, undergone devastation by recent flooding in Aq-Oala county in northern Golestan province, are under construction.

اختصاص بیش از ۲۹ هزار میلیارد تومان برای بازسازی خانه های سیل زده

معاون عمران و توسعه امور شهری و روستایی وزیر کشور گفت: براساس مصوبه اخیر هیات وزیران مبلغ ۲۹ هزار و ۱۳۰ میلیارد ریال برای بازسازی و جبران خسارات ناشی از سیل در بخشهای مختلف ۱۸ استان پرداخت می شود.

بر اساس ارزیابی های انجام شده در ۲۱ استان کشور، بیش از ۱۶۹ هزار و ۳۷۷ واحد مسکونی شهری و روستایی در سیل های اخیر در کشور آسیب دیده اند که باید دوباره احداث شوند.

جمالی نژاد بیان داشت: در اثر سیل به ۱۰۹ هزار و ۸۳۲ واحد مسکونی نیز خسارت معیشتی وارد شده است.

وی اضافه کرد: امروز ساخت ۲۰ هزار دستگاه واحد مسکونی که در سیل آسیب دیده بودند نیز در آق قلا شروع شد.



Imam Reza shrine hosts pilgrims for Iftar

Pilgrims from all over the country are attending an Iftar meal at the holy shrine of Imam Reza in the city of Mashhad, March 5.

Historical documents indicate that the oldest known Iftar meal was served at the Imam Reza shrine in 1111 AH.



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

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



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

MARCH 9, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Wisdom is the noblest heritage; theoretical and practical knowledge are the best signs of distinction; deep thinking will present the clearest picture of every problem.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon: 12:15 Evening: 18:25 Dawn: 4:59 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:22 (tomorrow)

Five Iranian short films to attend 19th West Chester Film Festival



One morning, their lives change forever when an unforeseen event occurs. Whether this event proves to be a newfound source of hope or an additional burden remains to be seen.

In "Like A Secret," Baran, a nine-year-old girl, suffers severe trauma due to a bitter family incident and her mother's neglect.

She experiences horrifying nightmares both in her sleep and while awake, living on the edge between dreams and reality. Baran strives to find someone she can trust and confide in, someone to share her secret with.

The story of "47:10:00" happens after a devastating accident, when Hossein learns his wife needs a heart transplant within 48 hours to survive.

Desperate, he turns to the black market, where he is forced to make an unthinkable decision: sell his son to an infertile family to afford the surgery. With no other choice, Hossein agrees, hoping this sacrifice will be enough to save his wife as the operation begins.

"P.O.V." shows a young boy who suffers from some of his bullied classmates because they annoy him at the end he decides to do something dangerous to make them feel sorry.

In the art/experimental animation "60=1," the story of birth, growth, hope, love, and death is narrated in 60 seconds.

The films at the West Chester Film Festival come from filmmakers around the world, showcasing stories from diverse cultures, backgrounds, genres, and points of view.

The festival aims to celebrate the filmmaking experience as well as cultivate a festival that encourages a love of short film for all ages.

It presents a wide range of events, from a young filmmaker festival to filmmaking workshops, pop-up themed blocks to press red carpets, and much more during the three-day festival.

TEHRAN-Five short films from Iran will take part in the 19th West Chester Film Festival, which is set to be held in Pennsylvania, the U.S., next month.

This year's edition of the festival will take place from April 25 to 27, showing short films (30 minutes or less). The Iranian participants include "In the Shadow of the Cypress" co-directed by Hossein Molayemi and Shirin Sohani, "Like A Secret" by Saeed Zamanian, "47:10:00" by Serina Amini, "P.O.V." by Sam Abbasi, and "60=1" by Iman Davari, Honaronline reported.

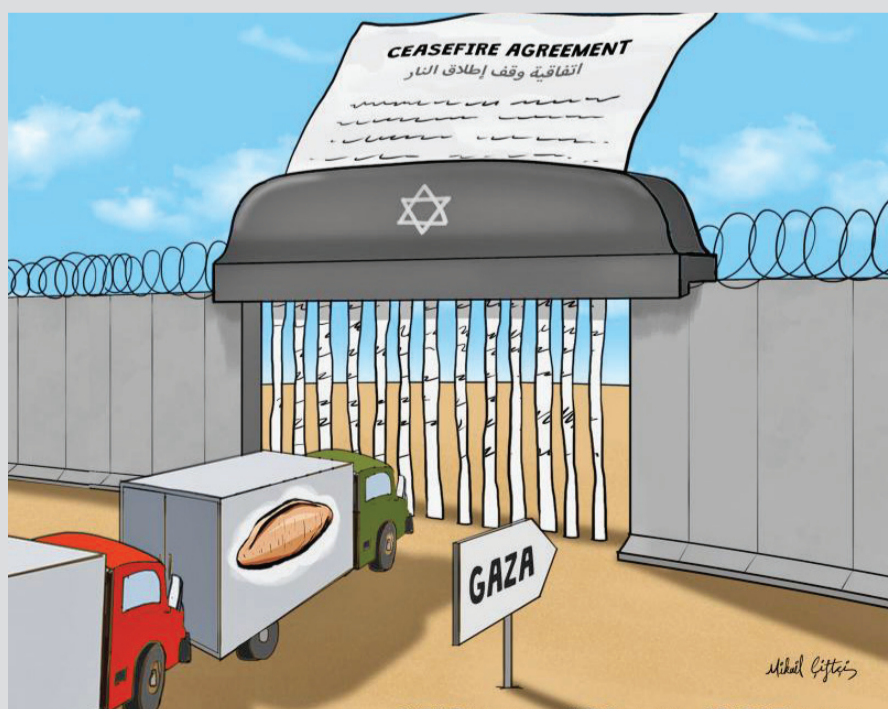
"In the Shadow of the Cypress" was named Iran's third Oscar winner and the first animation to win the award.

It grabbed the 2025 Oscar for Best Animated Short Film at the 97th Academy Awards, which was held on March 2.

The animation depicts a former captain, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, who lives with his daughter in a humble house located by the sea. Together, they live an isolated life and have to confront the challenges of a harsh life.

Despite the captain's deep desire to be a devoted and caring father, he finds himself unable to fulfill his role and connect with his daughter in the way that he longs to.

Cartoon of Day



Ceasefire Violation
Cartoonist: Mikail Çiftçi from Turkey

Iran announces nominees for Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava



TEHRAN- Iran has chosen 12 books to represent the country in the 30th Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BiB), scheduled to take place from October 3 to January 10, 2026, at Bratislava Castle in Slovakia.

The nominees were picked by a jury comprising experts from the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults - Kanoon, the Children's Book Council of Iran and Iranian Illustrators Society, Kanoon has announced.

"The Da'al's Daughter," illustrated by Noushin Sadeghian and written by Ahmad Akbarpour; "Bahram and the Tale of Seven Domes," illustrated by Narges Mohammadi and written by Zahra Nematollahi; and "The Marvelous Zippy Whiz Cubs Academy," illustrated by Ghazaleh Bigdelou and written by Payam Ebrahimi are the highlights of the list.

"The Da'al's Daughter" is a folk tale that tells the story of a girl raised by a vulture known as Da'al. The narrative unfolds as the king's son falls in love with her and employs an old woman to locate the mysterious girl.

However, the old woman deceives him, tying the true Da'al's Daughter to a tree, while marrying her own daughter to the prince instead. Realizing he has been tricked; the prince sets off in search of the true girl. Meanwhile, a lion arrives and consumes the Da'al's Daughter, from which two branches of reeds sprout from her blood.

Eventually, a shepherd discovers the reeds and plays them, only to find they sing the tale of the girl.

In "Bahram and the Tale of Sev-

en Domes," a modern retelling of Nizami Ganjavi's fable "The Seven Portraits," King Bahram, an avid hunter, mysteriously disappears while pursuing a prey.

After a long absence, he returns to find his kingdom changed, and his devoted princesses assign him a vital mission: to protect endangered animals and preserve their habitats.

"The Marvelous Zippy Whiz Cubs Academy" is a vibrant tale set in a lively jungle where various animal parents are eager to secure certificates for their children.

However, they all struggle to understand the true significance of these accolades.

At the Zippy Whiz Cub Academy, the headmaster enforces a standard curriculum that encourages all students to acquire the same skills, regardless of their natural abilities. This raises the question: Can a fish truly learn to fly, or a turtle run quickly?

"The Unexpected Guest," illustrated by Maryam Tahmasbi and written by Ghazal Mousavi; "Dad Is Right Here," written and illustrated by Mahshid Raghemi; and "Milloo's Mind" and "Imagine a Garden," both illustrated by Hoda Hadadi, have also been nominated.

The story of "Unexpected Guest" unfolds on an ordinary day that takes an enchanting twist with the arrival of a mysterious guest named O. O has the remarkable ability to transform mundane objects into extraordinary creations, encouraging everyone to think creatively and embrace the power of imagination.

"Dad Is Right Here" is a heart-

felt story centered around a little

girl celebrating her birthday. As she eagerly awaits her guests, she and her mother have whipped up a delightful cake and prepared for the special day. When her mother reminds her, it is time to blow out the candles, the girl takes a moment to close her eyes and makes a wish.

In this moment, she reflects on her desire to reunite with her dad, highlighting the emotional bond she cherishes with him.

"Milloo's Mind", written by Reem Faruqi, is an inspiring picture book biography that tells the story of Maryam Faruqi, a pioneering education advocate and the founder of the Happy Home Schools in Pakistan.

Set against a backdrop where societal norms often discouraged girls from attending school, the book illustrates Maryam's unwavering commitment to education and empowerment.

Through vivid illustrations and engaging prose, it captures her determination to create a safe, welcoming learning environment for girls, highlighting the challenges she faced and the positive impact she made in the lives of countless students.

"Imagine a Garden", written by Rina Singh, is a collection of stories that celebrates courage, resilience, and the transformative power of beauty.

Through a series of poetic vignettes written in free verse, the book shares the real-life stories of seven remarkable individuals from diverse corners of the world.

Each narrative highlights how these people, in the face of adversity such as war, poverty, and violence, have made a positive

impact in their communities.

"Sweet Salt" illustrated by Negar Orang, "It's All Mine" and "I Saw It Myself", both illustrated by Pedram Kazerooni, "A Sun in the Turkmen Sahara" illustrated by Najla Mahdavi, and "Lion King" illustrated by Amir Shabanipour are also among nominees.

The selected works will be included in the Bratislava illustration exhibition catalog and will undergo international evaluation during the final judging phase to determine the winners.

Additionally, Fatemeh (Parisa) Behabadi has been selected to participate in the symposium, while Melika Jamali has been chosen for the illustration workshop, both representing Iran in the Bratislava competition.

This esteemed competition, held every two years under the auspices of UNESCO and in collaboration with the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, takes place in Bratislava, Slovakia, and is considered one of the most significant events in the illustration world.

In each edition, a call for publishers is made to collect the best works of Iranian illustrators, culminating in a national judging session featuring prominent figures in the field.

Prizes for the illustration competition include a grand prize valued at \$3,000, five golden apples worth \$1,500 each, and five special medals worth \$1,000. Furthermore, the first-place winner will have the opportunity to showcase their work independently at the next exhibition.

Erich Maria Remarque's "Heaven Has No Favorites"

available in Persian

TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the book "Heaven Has No Favorites" written by the German writer Erich Maria Remarque has been released in the Bookstores across Iran.

Ajdar Angoshtari has translated the book and Ofogh Publication has brought it out in 360 pages, Mehr reported.

The novel is a bittersweet story of unconventional love that sweeps across Europe from one of the twentieth century's master novelists, the author of the classic "All Quiet on the Western Front."

It is a story about passion and love, set in 1948 with a background of automobile racing. Inspired by racing driver Alfonso de Portago.

The main figure, Clerfayt, is an automobile racer who goes to a Swiss sanatorium to visit a fellow racer, Hollmann, who has tuberculosis. There he meets the young Belgian woman Lillian suffering from tuberculosis.

She is in its terminal stage with no chance of a cure, and she wants to enjoy her last months rather than waiting for her death. She has been talking about leaving the hospital for months and has never gone through with it.

This changes when a friend of hers dies in that hospital and she realizes that the corps-

es aren't named, they're given numbers and treated like cargo.

Unwilling to become an unnamed body, she decides to leave the Bela Vista sanatorium with Clerfayt after having gone out with him the night before.

Together they travel over Europe, while Lillian indulges in lavish dresses and food, using the money she inherited and that was saved for her by her uncle.

Eventually they fall in love and Clerfayt starts to hope for a future with her.

However, when he expresses his wish to settle down and wants to get her visited by a doctor, she internally realizes that marrying Clerfayt would be to make him a widower within months and refuses the idea.

Although she loves him, she decides to leave him before they start an actual life together. In one race, after the racer in front of him crashes, Clerfayt is seriously injured and dies in the hospital.

Lillian, devastated, returns to Switzerland. On her way there she encounters Hollmann, now healed, who has been offered the former job of Clerfayt. Six weeks later, Lillian dies.

It is described as a peaceful moment, as if even the landscape had stopped breathing.

Erich Maria Remarque (1898-1970) was a German novelist.

His landmark novel "All Quiet on the Western Front" (1928), based on his experience in the Imperial German Army during World War I, was an international bestseller which created a new literary genre of veterans writing about conflict. The book was adapted to film several times.

Remarque's anti-war themes led to his condemnation by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels as "unpatriotic".

He was able to use his literary success and fame to relocate to Switzerland as a refugee, and to the United States, where he became a naturalized citizen.

People most widely read literature of the author with his pen name of Erich Paul Remark in the 20th century.

German history of the 20th century essentially marks biography of Remarque and fundamentally influences his writing: Childhood and youth, the Weimar Republic, and most of all his exile in Switzerland and the United States. The first publication attained worldwide recognition, continuing today.

Remarque's novels have been translated in more than 50 languages; globally the total edition comes up to several million copies.