



Iran, Russia, China Begin Annual Joint Exercise in Indian Ocean

Araghchi dismisses US demands as 'coercive diktats,' affirms peaceful nuclear program

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has resolutely rejected U.S. attempts to impose negotiations under its “maximum pressure” campaign, describing American demands as coercive diktats incompatible with sovereign diplomacy.

In a Monday statement on X, Araghchi declared, “We will NOT negotiate under pressure and intimidation. We will NOT even consider it, no matter what the subject may be,” emphasizing that dialogue must be rooted in mutual respect, not threats.

The remarks come amid escalating tensions as the U.S. escalates its hostile rhetoric, with President Donald Trump claiming in a recent Fox News interview that Iran could only be “handled” through military action or a unilateral nuclear deal.

Araghchi dismissed such posturing as “bullying,” stressing that Iran’s nuclear program — a cornerstone of its scientific sovereignty — remains irrevocably peaceful.

“There is fundamentally no such thing as its ‘potential militarization,’” he stated, echoing the country’s decades-long commitment to non-proliferation under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. ▶ Page 2

Tehran not involved in Syria’s affairs, violence must stop: foreign ministry spokesperson

TEHRAN – Tehran has dismissed accusations of interference in Syria, calling them “Baseless and unfounded.”

Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei responded to allegations against Iran’s role in Syrian affairs, emphasizing that all parties involved bear responsibility for the ongoing crisis.

“Such claims reflect a stereotypical and politically motivated approach to Syrian developments,” Baqaei stated, reaffirming Iran’s commitment to stability in the region.

Regarding the escalating violence in Syria, particularly the recent attacks on Alawites, Baqaei condemned the killings, calling them a “distressing and tragic event.” He urged the Syrian government to protect civilians and emphasized that Iran has conveyed its concerns to influential stakeholders.

“We strongly condemn these actions. Any form of violence and the killing of civilians is unjustifiable. This is a critical test for Syria’s leadership to ensure the safety of all its citizens,” he added. ▶ Page 2

Tjeknavorian to perform “Rostam and Sohrab” opera in Armenia

TEHRAN-The renowned Iranian-Armenian musician and conductor Loris Tjeknavorian will conduct a concert and an opera based on Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh in Armenia later this month.

He will first stage a gala concert at the Armenian National Opera and Ballet Theater on March 22 and a week later, he will conduct the “Rostam and Sohrab” opera at the same venue for three nights, from March 31 to April 2, ISNA reported.

According to Tjeknavorian, he has used folklore and traditional music of Iran in the opera. “I have been very fond of the stories of Iranian poet Abolqasem Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh since my childhood. Shahnameh is not merely a book, it is the national history of Iran and all the people of Iran know Rostam and Sohrab legend.”

He believes Ferdowsi (940-1020) is the greatest poet of the world and whatever is found in the works of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) exists in Ferdowsi’s works too. ▶ Page 8

Syria between terrorism and collusion: The Alawite genocide under Arab silence

By Najah Mohammed Ali

LONDON - Syria is witnessing a dangerous escalation of armed violence by the new government and its militant factions, most of which come from outside the country, particularly in the coastal regions that were, until recently, considered among the most stable areas in the nation.

The brutal massacres committed against the Alawites and other minorities are unfolding before the eyes of the international community, amid clear regional collusion and a suspicious Arab media silence. What is happening today is not merely an internal conflict; it is a systematic sectarian and ethnic cleansing campaign led by armed groups, with political governmental cover and military support from regional and international powers. In this analysis, we will examine the various dimensions of this humanitarian catastrophe and shed light on the dubious role of certain forces while refuting the false claims accusing Iran or the so-called “remnants of the previous regime” of involvement in these events.

World Bank complicating reconstruction process in Lebanon

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — At a malicious political timing that matches the anti-resistance conspiracy to prevent the reconstruction of what has been left behind by the US-led Israeli aggression, the World Bank issued a report titled “Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment in Lebanon”.

Undoubtedly, the main goal of the World Bank report is to exaggerate and magnify the losses, as the content of the report is completely consistent with the intensive efforts led by Western and Persian Gulf Arab capitals to prevent the reconstruction of the war-ravaged Lebanese territories.

The report indicates that the governorates of Nabatieh and South Lebanon are the most affected, followed by the governorate of Mount Lebanon (the southern suburb of Beirut, a stronghold of Hezbollah).

During an interview, Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hezbollah’s Secretary General, confirmed that the resistance movement will not allow the Israelis to remain in the occupied areas.

Sykes-Picot Agreement II: From social engineering to separatist projects in Western Asia

By Farhad Pashavand

TEHRAN – The Zionist regime that has always faced security threats in its borders is seeking to exploit the domestic crises faced by neighboring nations, particularly Syria, to bolster its strategic situation and enhance its strategic projects.

After the fall of the Bashar Assad government, the Zionist regime intends to trigger religious and ethnic divisions through adopting dangerous policies, particularly in strategic regions such as the Golan Heights and southern borders of Syria.

Israel not only seeks to weaken the central Syrian government but also aims to change the domestic atmosphere in Syria through political and social engineering to its own interest.

In this regard, the Zionist regime has increased pressure on sensitive areas such as the Golan Heights and the linking routes, including the Damascus-Beirut Road. It seeks to gain control of these regions. ▶ Page 5

Bank Maskan delivers 91,000 national housing units, awaits \$2b capital boost

TEHRAN – Iran’s Bank Maskan (Housing Bank) has facilitated installment sales for 91,000 units under the National Housing Movement, using its financial resources, out of a total of 378,000 contracted units, the bank’s CEO said.

Speaking at a press conference on Sunday night, Ali Khorsandian emphasized the importance of housing, calling it a fundamental necessity that has become an unattainable dream for many young Iranians. He noted that while around 20 banks are involved in the National Housing Movement, 90 percent of the financial obligations set by the central bank fall on the Bank Maskan. ▶ Page 4



People lift placards during a rally called for by Syrian activists “to mourn for the civilian and security personnel casualties,” at al-Marjeh square in Damascus on March 9.

“Entire Families” killed in Syria

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The UN Human Rights chief has condemned the Syrian government for escalating massacres against civilians.

Volker Turk has called on authorities in Damascus to swiftly investigate the killings and ensure those responsible are held accountable.

“We are receiving extremely disturbing reports of entire families – including women, children, and surrendered fighters – being killed,” Turk warned in a statement.

He called for an immediate end to the violence in northwestern Syria’s coastal regions. ▶ Page 5

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Negotiation or dictating demands?

In a commentary, Sobh-e-No addressed Trump's purpose in sending a letter to Iran's Leader for negotiations. It wrote: In addition to proposing negotiations, Trump is openly making military threats and stricter sanctions against Iran. He emphasizes reducing Iran's regional influence, tougher restrictions on its missile program, and changes in the country's domestic policies. In fact, the negotiations he is seeking are nothing more than "accepting all of Washington's demands." In other words, he expects Iran to accept the conditions set by the United States in advance and then enter into negotiations. Trump's behavioral pattern in foreign policy is quite clear: he first pressures countries with economic, commercial, and even military threats and then offers negotiations; these negotiations are not intended to find a fair solution but to impose Washington's demands. Trump's statements show that his proposal for negotiations is not out of a desire to solve problems but to pressure the other side.

Iran: Rally at sea

In a note, the Iran newspaper discussed the "Maritime Security Belt" drill between Iran, Russia, and China. The paper said: This year's joint naval drill of Iran, China, and Russia should be considered a response to the U.S. military movements in the Red Sea and the Middle East. The United States, while trying to force Iran to choose between negotiations over its nuclear capability or military action, has been busy conducting military exercises in the region in recent weeks. The Zionist regime's media assessed these actions within the context of developments and threats in the region and, of course, as a direct message to Iran. Israel and the U.S. have threatened in recent months that a military attack is one of the options to confront Iran's nuclear capability. In such circumstances, this drill in the northern Indian Ocean should be considered a "rally" of the three allies and their response to U.S. military intervention in the region and an appropriate response to these threats.

Javan: "Bullying America" is a familiar term in the world

In an analysis, Javan discussed Iran's position against the United States and the affirmation of this position by some countries

around the world. It wrote: The White House, in a statement, once again reiterated Donald Trump's position toward Iran and said there are only two ways to deal with Tehran: military confrontation or agreement. Apparently, it depends on Tehran to negotiate with the United States to eliminate the risk of military confrontation, but Western media outlets implicitly confirmed Iran's position by highlighting the keyword "bullying". In Tehran, discussions continue to revolve around whether Tehran should choose the option of negotiation and avoid confrontation or take a step towards confrontation by rejecting Trump's negotiation proposal. It seems that the public opinion and media atmosphere in the U.S. do not approve of Trump's foreign policy team because from Ukraine to Western Europe and from there to Canada and Mexico, the keyword "bully" has been given more attention than ever in the Leader's (Saturday) speech.

Arman-e-Melli: An unclear future

Arman-e-Melli analyzed the developments surrounding the possible sending of a letter from Trump to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution in an interview with former legislator Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh. He said: Whether there was a letter or not, Trump tried to send a message to Iran in his own way. The response that the Leader gave was somehow a diplomatic rejection of Trump's message. Two groups were waiting for the Leader to give an unconventional response to Trump. One was the Zionists who were in a hurry to start a war with Iran, and on the side were the extremists and hardliners inside the country who rejected any negotiations and welcomed an increase in tensions and creating war conditions between Iran and Israel. So, we conclude from this exchange of open messages between the two sides that the (two) parties are trying to keep the door open for negotiations. The Iranian side is waiting for Trump's second message to come. Given the overall circumstances, there is still a possibility to use diplomacy. Of course, this time it depends on whether Trump does not give another "open" message so that diplomats from both sides can declare their positions.

Hezbollah leader demands restart of Iran flights, warns against US-Israeli 'military gambles'



TEHRAN – Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem has renewed calls to reinstate suspended flights between Iran and Lebanon, describing the move as vital for strengthening bilateral ties.

In an interview with Lebanon's Al-Manar TV on Sunday, Qassem stated, "We are determined to resume flights with Iran, our steadfast ally, and are working with the Lebanese government to resolve this issue."

The suspension, imposed in February, came after the Israeli military claimed that flights were being used to transport supplies to Hezbollah, with reports indicating that the U.S. pressured Lebanon to extend the ban.

Analysts contend that the suspension was designed to isolate Hezbollah and limit Iranian involvement in the funeral ceremonies of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and his deputy, Sayyed Hashim Safieddine.

Newly appointed Lebanese authorities later attributed the cancellations to "European sanctions," though they provided no clarity on how

such sanctions—targeting Iran—legally apply to Lebanon.

Elsewhere in his interview, Qassem emphasized the symbolic significance of Iranian solidarity during the funeral of martyrs Nasrallah and Safi al-Din, where tens of thousands defied borders.

"Even as roads were blocked, Iranians poured in to honor our martyrs," he said, referencing reports of Iranian delegations and citizens crossing land routes to Beirut.

Furthermore, the Lebanese leader issued a sharp warning to the U.S. and Israel, declaring, "Any military adventurism against Iran will unleash catastrophic consequences across the region."

Senior Iranian officials, including Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, led delegations to the ceremonies, reinforcing Tehran's "unbreakable bonds" with Lebanese Resistance.

Following their participation in the delayed funeral of the martyrs Nasrallah and Safi al-Din, they held a meeting with Sheikh Qassem.

Araghchi dismisses US demands as 'coercive diktats,' affirms peaceful nuclear program

From page 1 ▶ Earlier on Saturday, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei reinforced Tehran's stance in a speech addressing the country's senior officials, asserting that Western powers' insistence on talks aims not to resolve disputes but to extract concessions.

"The expectations of bullying states will never be accepted," he said, condemning U.S. efforts to frame negotiations as a zero-sum game.

This follows the leader's February warning against "unwise, unintelligent, and dishonorable" engagement with Washington, a principle now enshrined in Iran's foreign policy.

Diplomacy on equal footing

Contrary to U.S. unilateralism, Araghchi highlighted ongoing consultations with the European troika (France, Germany, Britain), Russia, and China, conducted "on equal footing and mutual respect."

These talks, he explained, seek to address concerns about Iran's nuclear activities through transparency measures in exchange for the lifting of "unlawful sanctions."

However, he cautioned that di-



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi

alogue must not serve as a pretext for undermining Iran's rights. "If the aim is to dismantle our peaceful program, such negotiations will never take place," Iran's UN mission warned Sunday, alluding to U.S. attempts to resurrect Obama-era pressures.

"Negotiation is not submission," Araghchi affirmed, framing diplomacy as a partnership among equals.

A history of broken promises

The collapse of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

(JCPOA) looms large in Tehran's calculus.

After Trump abandoned the multi-lateral accord in 2018, European signatories failed to counter U.S. sanctions, prompting Iran to scale back some of its commitments gradually.

Tehran has noted that these steps were pre-announced and clear, reflecting measured resistance to economic warfare.

Meanwhile, Trump's recent assertions about pursuing a "deal" echo his 2018-2020 approach, which

blended sanctions with performative gestures masquerading as diplomacy. This included a failed 2019 attempt involving a letter delivered by Japan's then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, which Ayatollah Khamenei dismissed as undeserving of a reply.

Escalating sanctions, escalating resolve

The Trump administration's latest threats have proved ineffective against Tehran. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent recently vowed to "shut down Iran's oil sector and drone manufacturing" while severing access to global finance.

Furthermore, Trump's recent unsent letter to Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, threatening military action in the event of failed negotiations, echoes the combative stance of figures like National Security Advisor Mike Waltz ("all options on the table") and the Israeli regime's convicted war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu, who has pledged to "finish the job" with U.S. support.

Such measures exemplify the U.S. preference for coercion over cooperation.

Tehran not involved in Syria's affairs, violence must stop: foreign ministry

From page 1 ▶ Iran denies receiving a letter from Trump

Addressing rumors about a letter from former U.S. President Donald Trump to Iran, Baqaei categorically denied such claims.

"No, no letter has been received," he stated when asked about the matter.

Baqaei also responded to renewed U.S. threats against Iran, dismissing them as violations of international law. He criticized Washington's dual approach of negotiation and coercion, asserting that Iran will not engage in talks under pressure.

"Threats and the use of force are prohibited under all laws. The Iranian nation has always responded to such threats with resistance and determination. Negotiations under pressure are meaningless," he asserted.

Iran condemns U.S. sanctions on Iraq's gas purchases

The Foreign Ministry spokesperson also criticized the U.S. decision not to extend Iraq's waiver for purchasing gas from Iran, labeling it an "admission of lawlessness and crimes against humanity."

"These unilateral sanctions have no legal or juridical justification. The U.S. government must be held accountable for such actions," Baqaei stated.

He urged regional countries to prioritize their national interests and resist illegal pressures that could impact their economic ties with Iran.

'Switzerland's decision to cancel humanitarian meeting on Gaza is disappointing'

Switzerland's decision to cancel a planned meeting on international humanitarian law in Gaza sparked criticism from Tehran. The meeting, mandated by a 2024 UN General Assembly resolution, aimed to address the legal protections for civilians in conflict zones.

"Despite months of diplomatic efforts, Switzerland's decision is disappointing. This was also discussed in Jeddah, where ministers expressed their regret," Baghaei stated.

He pointed out that human rights organizations have failed to provide an adequate response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza over the past two years, despite mounting violations.

'Iran investigating the deaths of two citizens in France'

Iran is actively following up on the murder of two Iranian citizens in France, which occurred under unclear circumstances three months ago. Baqaei expressed gratitude for media attention to the case and reiterated that the Foreign Ministry considers the protection of Iranian nationals a top priority.

"We are closely monitoring the situation, but it remains unclear whether French authorities have initiated judicial proceedings," he said.

Additionally, Baqaei confirmed that an Iranian university professor has gone missing in France, stating that Tehran is in contact with the French embassy for further updates.

'Islamic countries must act against Palestinian displacement'

Baqaei highlighted Iran's stance on the forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, emphasizing the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting in Jeddah.



"The Jeddah Declaration is one of the strongest statements by the OIC, reaffirming that Palestine remains a central issue for the Islamic world. The forced displacement of Gazans is unacceptable and amounts to genocide," he asserted.

The declaration calls for stronger humanitarian aid, protection of Palestinian civilians, and collective action to end Israeli occupation. One of the most distressing aspects, Baqaei noted, was the focus on Gaza's orphans, as tens of thousands of children have lost their families due to ongoing violence.

'Iran-China relations remain strong'

Baqaei reaffirmed Tehran's strong ties with China, describing the relationship as deeply rooted in historical and civilizational connections.

"China plays a constructive role in our region and shares a vision of development with the Global South. We value this partnership and hope to see continued cooperation," he said.

'Foreign interference in the Balkans is unacceptable'

Regarding the Balkan region, Baqaei emphasized the importance of dialogue over foreign intervention.

"Security and stability in the Balkans are crucial. We believe that stakeholders in Bosnia and Her-

zegovina should resolve their differences through dialogue, without external interference," he stated.

Iran has long opposed foreign involvement in sensitive geopolitical regions, arguing that such actions only prolong conflicts and hinder diplomatic solutions.

'Iran' against negotiations under coercion with the U.S.'

Amid reports that the U.S. has reached out for negotiations, Baqaei reiterated Tehran's firm stance against "negotiations under coercion."

"Negotiation is a serious diplomatic process, not a tool for psychological and media manipulation. Iran's position has always been clear," he asserted.

He also dismissed allegations by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about Iran's nuclear program, calling them "politically motivated and counterproductive."

"The IAEA's repeated claims do nothing but escalate tensions. Under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), there are no restrictions on uranium enrichment. Iran has remained committed to inspections, and even the IAEA itself acknowledges this," he concluded.



General Kioumars Heydari, Commander of the Ground Forces of the Islamic Republic Army (Artesh), inaugurated Iran's first comprehensive shooting exhibition on Sunday. During the event, he evaluated various domestically-produced weapons, including the Mesaf-2, an advanced system equipped with the Ghadir-4 camera featuring a 12A— optical zoom designed for precision targeting.

Iran, Russia, China begin annual joint exercise in Indian Ocean

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN- The Iranian Navy, alongside naval forces from Russia and China, has commenced the seventh iteration of the "Combined Maritime Security Belt" exercise in the northern Indian Ocean. The exercise, designed to bolster maritime security and foster closer naval cooperation, involves twelve countries, including nine observer nations.

Second Flotilla Admiral Mustafa Tajaldini, the Deputy Operations Commander of the Iranian Navy and spokesperson for the drill, highlighted the exercise's core objectives during an interview with the Tehran Times. "The primary goal of this exercise is to enhance maritime security in the northern Indian Ocean and to increase naval interactions between the Iranian Navy, the Chinese Navy, and the Russian Navy," he stated. "This is aimed at boosting cooperation, skill training, and experience sharing."

The multi-phase exercise began on Monday as Iran received guests and participants at its southern shores. "We are currently in the first phase, receiving visiting vessels and conducting comprehensive briefings and specialized sessions," Admiral Tajaldini said to the Tehran Times. The second phase, scheduled for Tuesday, will involve twenty scenarios designed to improve coordination and response capabilities, includ-



ing rescue operations for hijacked vessels, search and rescue drills, firefighting exercises, and helicopter operations. A naval parade will conclude the maritime phase. The last segment will focus on debriefing.

More than just a few nations

The exercise's potential impact extends beyond the immediate participating nations. It also influences the maritime security of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member countries and the broader region, according to Admiral Tajaldini. "Global trade depends on the golden triangle and the straits of Malacca, Hormuz, and Bab-el-Mandeb," he noted. "The preservation and enhancement of collective security is our motto, and we have invited and announced to SCO member countries and all countries in the region that their presence can lead to enhanced collective securi-

ty."

This year's exercise boasts an impressive display of international collaboration, with nine countries



Second Flotilla Admiral Mustafa Tajaldini says the primary goal of the exercise is to enhance maritime security in the northern Indian Ocean

participating as observers: Qatar, Iraq, South Africa, Oman, the UAE, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Azerbaijan,

and Kazakhstan. Admiral Tajaldini noted that these observer nations are potentially considering joining future exercises, stating, "The idea is that countries interested in potentially joining the drills send observers to evaluate them. In future years, they may decide to send their own vessels and play a more active role. We hope to host more ships next year."

The military official added that in the vast oceanic expanse, it is necessary for like-minded and interested countries to form coalitions to combat the scourge of piracy and maritime terrorism. "We are carrying out this coalition to protect the interests of Iran and like-minded and interested countries in the northern Indian Ocean."

Iran is showcasing its naval capabilities in the Combined Maritime Security Belt exercise with the participation of several vessels. Leading the way is the Shahid Sayyad Shirazi, a stealthy warship fresh out of the shipyard (February 2024, to be exact). This high-speed catamaran isn't just for show; it's loaded with the latest missile tech. And alongside this sleek new vessel is the Iranian Navy's reliable Jamaran destroyer. The ship's seen action, patrolling the sea lanes and going after pirates. It's a combination of new tech and seasoned experience that Iran's bringing to drill.

Trump's American Dream for world: becoming Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde?



By Habib Ahmadzadeh

TEHRAN - When Donald Trump and his newly emboldened vice president, J.D. Vance, stood in the White House and delivered their condescending remarks as those broadcasted across the globe, many saw Trump attempting to cast himself as a figure of moral authority, perhaps in the mold of Martin Luther King Jr. or Mother Teresa, where he spoke as if he were a man deeply concerned with global peace, even going so far as to blame Volodymyr Zelenskyy for the tragic deaths of innocent people in Ukraine's war with Vladimir Putin.

This performance, disorienting for Zelenskyy who has for the longest time the role of a victim - which may explain his difficulty in comprehending the situation -, was nothing new for those in West Asia. Whenever American arms manufacturers and the imperial ambitions of U.S. leaders come into play, these displays of virtue and peace are just another act in a well-rehearsed script.

Consider, for example, the United States' extensive history of intervening in foreign nations under the guise of promoting democracy. Certain allies—like Saudi Arabia, the "trillion-dollar milk cow"—are conveniently exempt from these democratic crusades.

The façade of noble intentions is vital for the U.S., yet reality often reveals the underlying truth. When George W. Bush launched the invasion of Afghanistan, the supposed commitment to human rights collapsed in plain sight. Suspected Al-Qaeda affiliates weren't detained on American soil, where they might have legal protections, but instead were shipped to Guantanamo Bay, a prison on leased Cuban land. The reason was obvious—to deny them even the most basic human rights. A person's legal status, it seemed, depended entirely on geography, dictated by the strategic whims of U.S. policymakers.

Currently, Trump and his obsequious aide, Vance, have seamlessly adopted the dual personas of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. By day, they present themselves at the podium, delivering lofty speeches about peace and reprimanding Zelenskyy for perceived financial mismanage-

ment. By night, they discard this façade, revealing their true selves—turning into political Draculas, baring their fangs at the people of Gaza. Their message is clear: surrender to Netanyahu, the Frankenstein of the region, or be condemned to destruction.

The only constant in all of this is the pursuit of power and wealth. Frankenstein remains Frankenstein. Dracula, no matter how convincingly he wears a human face, is still Dracula. Even when they pretend, for brief moments, to be something else.

In this context, Zelenskyy has consistently been relegated to the role of a pawn—much like a rabbit ensnared in the ongoing conflict between East and West. His desperate bid to join NATO or the European Union only ensured that his country would be pulled into one side's grip, oblivious to the reality that these superpowers were never fighting for him, only fighting over him. Their concern was not for Ukraine's survival, but for the biggest piece of it they could take.

Thus, in this recent display at the White House, Zelenskyy found himself assuming an unexpected role—not as the valiant champion of the West, but as a clown, gradually coming to the realization that he was fated to fail, regardless of the side he chose to support.

In the decades to come, when future generations reflect on this period, they will undoubtedly express disbelief. They will read about an American president who, in the same breath, dreamed of taking over Canada, Greenland, the Panama Canal, and Gaza. A man who, like his predecessors, claimed to be a fair mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—while binding one side's hands and arming the other with two-ton bombs to slaughter tens of thousands. A man who strutted like Mussolini while insisting he was a peacemaker, audacious enough to think he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize.

Our descendants will likely feel a sense of pity for us, having endured such figures. However, they will find solace in the knowledge that the era of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde has concluded. For history has shown us that even the most egregious figures eventually fade into obscurity.

Iran summons Swedish ambassador over 'provocative' remarks by minister



TEHRAN - Iran has summoned Sweden's ambassador to Tehran in response to the "provocative and baseless" statements made by Sweden's Minister of Education, Johan Pehrson, regarding the Islamic Republic.

On Monday, Swedish diplomat Mattias Otterstedt was called to the Iranian Foreign Ministry, where Shahram Qazizadeh, head of the ministry's Third Department for Western Europe, delivered a formal protest against Pehrson's comments. The Swedish minister had referred to Iran as a "rogue state" and a "sponsor of terrorism" in an interview with Swedish daily Expressen.

Qazizadeh dismissed Pehrson's remarks as "unfounded, interventionist, and a violation of international norms." He further criticized the Swedish government for its pattern of engaging in baseless accusations and hostile rhetoric against Iran, warning that such statements could further strain diplomatic relations between the two nations.

Pehrson's remarks came in response to a report by Expressen, which alleged that an Iranian student at Sweden's Lund University had previously worked for Iran's intelligence services. Iran has strongly denied these claims, calling them part of a broader Western effort to tarnish the country's image and hinder academic and scientific cooperation.

Qazizadeh also condemned Sweden's recent summoning of Iran's ambassador to Stockholm. Swedish authorities had demanded the immediate release of Ahmadreza Jalali, an Iranian-born Swedish resident who was convicted in Iran for espionage on behalf of Israel's Mossad, an operation that was linked to the assassination of two Iranian nuclear scientists.

Qazizadeh emphasized that Sweden had no right to interfere in Iran's legal proceedings or question the rulings of its judiciary. "The Swedish government is in no position to challenge the legal decisions of another country or advocate for individuals whose crimes have been established through due process," he stated.

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Bright future ahead of young women kabaddi team: official

TEHRAN - Sedigheh Khadem, the vice president of Iran's Kabaddi Federation, says that Iran participated in the Asian Championships with a young team, but they could have won the title.

The Iranian Kabaddi team finished as the runners-up in the sixth edition of the Asian Championships, which was held at the Pardis Technology Park, located east of Tehran.

In Group B of the competitions, the Iranian national women's team defeated Iraq (58-13), and Bangladesh (41-18). In the semi-final match, Team Melli beat Nepal with 47-14 but they were defeated by defending champions India 32-25 in the final.

"As you know, we participated in these competitions with young players. Except for one or two players, all the players were playing in an international event for the first time," Khadem said in an interview with Tehran Times.

"Unfortunately, we could not win against the powerful Indian team in the final game, however, winning a silver medal is also valuable. We had short time to prepare our team for the competition, but we are confident that we will win the titles in future competitions.

"Six strong teams participated in these competitions, all of whom are powerful in Kabaddi. We are happy that we managed to play with four teams out of these six teams. Out of these four matches, we won in three matches and lost against India. In fact, all these four matches were like preparatory matches for the World Championships for us," she said.

"These matches were a good test for the World Championships, which will be hosted by India in June. We are determined to win the title, although it is a difficult task," Khadem concluded.

Kabaddi is a contact team sport played between two teams of seven players. It is one of the traditional games of South Asia.

In this game, a raider enters the opposing half to tag defenders and return within 30 seconds while avoiding tackles.

Al Taawoun, Tractor to lock horns in 2024/25 ACL 2

TEHRAN - Al Taawoun will expect to comfortably see off the challenge of Tractor when the sides meet in the return leg of their AFC Champions League Two 2024/25 quarter-final on Tuesday.

Last week's goalless draw was the first time either side failed to score in the competition this season and both would have worked on their finishing in the buildup to Tuesday's return encounter.

Al Taawoun would have been the happier with the first leg result, with the Saudi Arabia side having to cope with incessant pressure for most of its match.

Their defensive resilience meant walking away without conceding and Al Taawoun will count on their fans to push them through at the Wolves Park.

Iran's Tractor would have been disappointed with the first leg result, peppering Al Taawoun's goalmouth with 16 shots - six of which were on target.

Tractor, however, will be optimistic of their chances as Al Taawoun are beatable at home - as shown by Iraq's Air Force SC who beat the team 2-1 in the group stage.

The match will be held at the Al Taawoun Club Stadium in Buraidah.

Iran to meet China in Shiraz Handball Tournament's opener

TEHRAN - Iran will play China in the opening

match of the international four-team handball tournament in Shiraz on Wednesday.

The event brings together national teams from Iran, China, Belarus, and Russia.

The competition is part of Iran's preparations for major upcoming handball events.

Team Melli will also play Belarus and Russia on Friday and Saturday, respectively.

The tournament is organized by the Iranian Handball Federation. This high-profile event is expected to showcase competitive matches between some of the strongest teams in the region.

Iran's national handball team, led by head coach Rafael Guijosa Castillo, is using the tournament as a key opportunity to fine-tune its squad ahead of major international competitions.

The team is currently preparing for the 2026 Asian Handball Championship, the Asian Games, and future Olympic qualifiers.

This event is expected to boost Iran's handball scene by providing valuable experience against strong international opponents. The matches will also contribute to the development of handball in the region, enhancing the sport's visibility and competitiveness, the source claims.

Iranian football club Shahr-dari Astara were relegated for match-fixing

TEHRAN - The Ethics Committee of the Football Federation of Iran found Shahr-dari Astara team guilty of match-fixing.

The Iranian club were relegated to Division B.

The team lost to Palayesh Naft 7-1 while their players made no effort to prevent the opposing team from scoring.

Shahr-dari Astara coach Ghasem Dehnavi, who has been banned for one year, has said that this behavior was merely a protest against the referee's decisions in the first half.

Iran runners-up in Copa Intercontinental de Seleções

TEHRAN - Iran lost to Brazil 3-0 to finish runners-up in the Copa Intercontinental de Seleções on Sunday.

Felipe Valério and Neguinho (two goals) were on target for Brazil.

Afghanistan came third after beating Greenland 6-4.

Iran had previously lost to Brazil 5-2 in the tournament but defeated Greenland 11-2 and Afghanistan 4-3.

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

Russia beach soccer team beat Iran: friendly

TEHRAN - Russia beach soccer team defeated Iran 5-1 in a friendly match held in Bushehr, Iran.

Seyed Ali Nazem scored Iran's solitary goal from the penalty spot.

Iran will play Russia once again on Tuesday.

Led by head coach Ali Naderi, the Iran beach soccer team are preparing for the 2025 AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup, scheduled for March 20 to 30 in Thailand.

Team Melli have been drawn in Group C alongside the UAE, Indonesia, and Afghanistan.

Tehran-Van train resumes service after five-year halt

TEHRAN – The first Tehran-Van international train departed from the Iranian capital on Sunday, resuming service after a five-year suspension, the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) announced.

The train, with a capacity of 280 passengers, departs from Tehran, makes a stop in Tabriz, and ultimately reaches the Turkish city of Van, IRNA reported.

Customs and passport procedures for Iranian travelers are conducted at Razi Station before the train crosses into Turkey, where a Turkish locomotive takes over at Kapıköy Station, followed by Turkish customs and passport checks.

Under the new agreement, two weekly trains will operate on this route. Departures from Tehran to Van are scheduled for Sundays and Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m., with return trips from Van to Tehran on Mondays and Thursdays.

Including customs procedures at the Razi and Kapıköy border stations, the journey takes approximately 22 hours. The train service is operated using four-bed Sarir sleeper cars, accom-



modating 280 passengers.

Tickets can be purchased through the Raja Rail Transportation Company's website at www.raja.ir, other authorized online platforms, or designated ticket sales offices.

Passengers are advised to comply with the travel regulations of both Iran and Turkey to avoid any issues during their journey. For more information on ticket prices and departure times, travelers can contact Raja's customer service hotline at 1539 or visit the company's website.

Majlis holds first session on reforming Chamber of Commerce Law

TEHRAN – Iran's Parliament (Majlis) has held its first session to review proposed amendments to the Chamber of Commerce Law, according to a senior Member of Parliament.

Jafar Qaderi, chairman of the Special Commission for Production Support and Overseeing the Implementation of the General Policies of Article 44 of the Constitution, stated that the session was convened to assess the draft amendments after receiving input from specialized committees. "Following this review, we will prepare the final report and submit it as a secondary commission," he said.

Qaderi, who represents the cities of Shiraz and Zarqan in Parliament, emphasized the

necessity of revising the law, which he said has remained unchanged for three to four decades. "The existing flaws have led to disputes and conflicts," he noted.

The proposal to reform the law was initially introduced during the previous round of the Parliament, but despite extensive deliberations, the Economic Commission failed to reach a conclusive outcome. The bill has since been reintroduced in the new Parliament and referred again to the Economic Commission.

As a secondary commission, Qaderi's committee will oversee necessary revisions. "We hope that, in collaboration with the Economic Commission, we can finalize this bill," he added.

Pezeshkian warns of improper energy use, apologizes for power outages

TEHRAN – President Masoud Pezeshkian says improper energy consumption is among the primary challenges facing the country, while at the same time apologizing for the inconveniences caused by energy imbalances and recent power outages.

Speaking during the signing ceremony of contracts for the pressure enhancement of the South Pars joint gas field on Saturday, Pezeshkian stressed the necessity of management and avoidance of wasteful usage to resolve problems arising from energy shortages.

In recent months, Iran has faced significant energy challenges, including critical shortages, which have led to the occasional shutdown of schools, banks, and institutions across various provinces.

The president acknowledged the hardships faced by people and industries in the winter, yet expressed confidence that with public cooperation and participation, these issues can be effectively addressed.

"We went through a harsh winter, during which,



for whatever reason, the oil and gas reserves were insufficient to cover the power plant," he said.

"Of course, the dear people at the ministries of oil and energy, with great effort, managed to compensate for the shortages by increasing production and cover this difficult period, and people were not left without gas in the winter," he added.

He underscored that the substantial investment of over \$17 billion in this sector reflects a commitment to meeting future needs and achieving stability and sustainability in the energy domain.

Bank Maskan delivers 91,000 national housing units, awaits \$2b capital boost

TEHRAN – Iran's Bank Maskan (Housing Bank) has facilitated installment sales for 91,000 units under the National Housing Movement, using its financial resources, out of a total of 378,000 contracted units, the bank's CEO said.

Speaking at a press conference on Sunday night, Ali Khorsandian emphasized the importance of housing, calling it a fundamental necessity that has become an unattainable dream for many young Iranians. He noted that while around 20 banks are involved in the National Housing Movement, 90 percent of the financial obligations set by the central bank fall on the Bank Maskan.

Khorsandian said that financing agreements for approximately 378,000 units have been signed under the program, amounting to more than 1.7 quadrillion rials (\$3.4 billion). So far, 1.2 quadrillion rials (\$2.4 billion) of this funding



has been secured and is being disbursed.

Despite financial imbalances, the bank has managed to obtain a credit line from the central bank of Iran (CBI), with the strong backing of the Economy Ministry, he said. Khorsandian added that in the next year's budget bill, the government has proposed a cap-

ital increase of one quadrillion rials (\$2 billion) for the Housing Bank, with the support of the Transport and Urban Development Ministry and the Economy Ministry.

He also announced that the bank disbursed 140 trillion rials (\$280 million) in interest-free loans in the current Iranian year

for marriage and childbirth, in accordance with central bank mandates.

Additionally, the bank's board has recently introduced a framework to attract small-scale investments while also expanding services to large companies and industrial units. Bank Maskan is also planning to enter supply chain financing for construction materials and leverage the capital market by securitizing its assets, Khorsandian said.

Touching on Iran's inflationary economy, he noted that despite an increase in housing construction loans from 5.5 billion to 6.5 billion rials (\$110,000 to \$130,000), the inflation rate in the housing sector remains higher than loan growth. This could pose repayment challenges for borrowers, he cautioned, but stressed that the planned capital increase would significantly support the bank's commitments.

South Pars gas complex indigenizes over 11,000 equipment items



TEHRAN – Iran's South Pars Gas Complex has localized the production of 11,589 equipment items, the company's managing director announced on Sunday.

According to a statement from the complex, Gholamabbas Hosseini highlighted the extensive support provided to domestic manufacturers and knowledge-based companies, leading to cost savings of 4.0 trillion rials

(\$8.0 million) through the local production of strategic parts and equipment.

Among the key achievements, Hosseini pointed to the successful domestic manufacturing of a gas transmission turbine by an Iranian company, which has reduced reliance on foreign suppliers.

In recent months, the complex has procured domestically produced goods and equipment worth 24 trillion rials (\$480 million) for South Pars refineries, preventing significant foreign currency outflows. This initiative has resulted in foreign exchange savings of 4.8 million euros (\$5.2 million).

As the country's and the West Asia's largest gas producer, South Pars Gas Complex has prioritized the rapid localization of high-tech and high-consumption components, Hosseini said. To accelerate this process, the company has identified critical parts and proposed their production to knowledge-based firms.

Iran has increasingly focused on domestic production of oil and gas equipment in recent

years, particularly in response to international sanctions that have restricted access to foreign technology and components. The government has encouraged local manufacturers to step in and meet the industry's demands, reducing dependence on imports and enhancing self-sufficiency in the energy sector.

The localization drive has led to the successful production of key equipment such as compressors, turbines, drilling rigs, and control systems. Several Iranian companies, in collaboration with research institutes and universities, have been able to reverse-engineer and manufacture complex machinery that was previously sourced from foreign suppliers.

Despite facing challenges such as limited access to advanced raw materials and specialized machinery, Iran's oil and gas sector continues to expand its domestic capabilities. The push for local production not only strengthens the industry's resilience but also contributes to job creation and technological advancement within the country.

Iran's monthly PMI drops again despite hopes for demand recovery

TEHRAN – Iran's monthly PMI has experienced a third decline in a row which happened despite expectations for an uptick in demand ahead of the country's New Year holidays.

Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) released the country's new PMI data for the fiscal month of Bahman (January 20 – February 18, 2025), reflecting a fall in major sub-indexes.

The seasonally adjusted PMI was reported at 46.4, below the 50 mark that separates growth from contraction. The figure stood at 49.2 before the application of seasonal adjustment.

Seasonal adjustment, or deseasonalization, is a statistical method used to remove the seasonal component from a time series, allowing for the independent analysis of trends and cyclical deviations. After preparing dozens of PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index) reports, the Research Center of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture has now identified the seasonal components of these time series and prioritized seasonal adjustment in its monthly

PMI reports.

The PMI reading of this month has dropped with a sharper slope compared to that of the preceding month, driven by persisting energy shortages, increasing foreign exchange rates and rising output prices which has caused the production units to produce at levels lower than their actual capacity.

The Statistics and Economic Analysis Center of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, the sponsor and coordinator of the survey, announces the whole economy PMI data in a report every month.

The headline PMI is a number from 0 to 100, such that over 50 shows an expansion of the economy when compared with the previous month. A PMI reading under 50 indicates contraction and a reading of 50 implies no change.

PMI is an index of the prevailing direction of economic trends, aiming to provide information about business conditions to company directors, analysts and purchasing managers.

The "business activities" sub-index (46.2) has

declined from 47.2 reported in the preceding month. Power and gas outages have interrupted the production process. In addition, concerns about shrinking foreign exchange revenues due to intensified sanctions, rising forex rates, as well as fluctuations in the forex market have slowed the activities of many businesses.

Rising import costs for raw materials have led to an increase in production costs, ultimately driving up the final prices of commodities. This has caused the "new order" sub-index to drop to 42.1, despite expectations of improved demand ahead of the country's New Year holidays.

The "exports of goods and services" was also reported under the threshold (under 50). The fall was mainly driven by sharp increases in the foreign exchange rate, energy shortages, as well as overnight regulations which have had a significant impact on the decline in exports of goods and services.

According to the new PMI reading, the "raw materials price" sub-index has registered its highest in 22 months.

Non-oil export from Fars province up 12% in 10 months on year

TEHRAN – The value of non-oil export from Fars province rose 12 percent in 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, a provincial official announced.

Mohammad-Sadeq Hamidian, the head of the province's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, said that 3.435 million tons of non-oil goods valued at \$1.136 billion were exported from the province in the ten-month period, also indicating 15 percent growth in terms of weight, year on year.

As previously announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran's non-oil exports reached approximately \$48

billion in the first 10 months of the current Iranian year, marking an 18 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

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

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

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

During the same period, Iran import-

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

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

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

Asgari, who also serves as deputy

economy minister, emphasized the role of trade in bolstering the national economy amid ongoing international sanctions.

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

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

He noted that the council had played a key role in national decision-making processes before falling into disuse.

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

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

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

The council reviewed the statistical performance of the country's non-oil

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

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

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

Sykes-Picot Agreement II: From social engineering to separatist projects in West Asia

From page 1 ► The Zionist regime has enhanced its relations with Syria's religious and ethnic minorities, especially Druze in the Sweida and Golan regions. Therefore, following the fall of Bashar Assad, Israeli authorities, including Netanyahu, are seeking to prepare the grounds for establishing a federal government in Syria through wooing the Druze community.

One of the Zionist tools is financial investment. The Zionist regime intends to invest over 1 billion dollars to support Syria's Druze community to encourage them to oppose the new government and trigger chaos in the country's domestic policies.

As serious threats to Syria's stability, these measures can intensify ethnic and religious divisions and increase domestic tensions.

Israel seeks to beef up its security position and expand its penetration in the region. The main goal of the Zionist regime is to bolster its expansionist policies and prevent any strategic threat from Arab nations. Druze, as one of the important minorities in Syria, have a pivot-



al role in materializing these goals.

If Israel accomplishes this project, Syria's domestic crises will intensify, minimizing the possibility of Syria's reconstruction and stability. It will also have disastrous consequences for the region.

If Israel can fully control the border regions through establishing autonomous states in Syria, the same thing will happen in other regional countries, resulting in instability and civil wars.

The international community should take serious and effective measures for preventing the expansion of these crises.

The world community opposes these conspiracies. The Zionist regime, which lacks any religious, political and moral legitimacy, has always used the bullying strategy to expand its dominance in the region.

Therefore, these projects are in line with strengthening Israeli foothold in the region with the US support. They seek to redefine the political maps of Western Asia and exercise power over Arabian countries.

The main goal behind these measures is to strengthen the Israeli position and guarantee the permanent dominance of this regime in

occupied lands and its surrounding regions.

In this regard, a plan that can be considered as Sykes-Picot Agreement II has been compiled to change the borders and political map of the region. The plan not only seeks to stabilize the security of the Zionist regime but also intends to change the political and geographical shape of the region to the interest of Israel and protect it against security threats from Arab nations and resistance groups.

This project focuses particularly on dividing the regional countries, forming autonomous governments in strategic regions, and creating new borders that guarantee Israel's security.

By implementing this project, the Zionist regime wants to impose its hegemony on the region, where Arab nations, as weak players, will be exposed to serious threats, and any cooperation among them will be prevented.

Pashavand is an expert in international affairs.

Syria between terrorism and collusion: The Alawite genocide under Arab silence

From page 1 ► **First: The escalation of massacres against Alawites**

1. The expansion of military operations in Syria's coastal region

The coastal areas, particularly Latakia and Tartous, have witnessed a significant escalation in military operations targeting Alawites under the pretext that they are loyal to the former regime. Armed factions, led by the Jolani group (Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham), have intensified their attacks against Alawite villages and towns, using heavy weaponry in mass killings and systematic destruction. Reports from within Syria indicate that field executions have been carried out against civilians solely based on their sectarian identity, in addition to organized kidnappings aimed at terrorizing the population and forcing them into mass displacement.

2. Systematic destruction of property and infrastructure

The crimes committed by these armed factions are not limited to direct killings; they also include the destruction of Alawite homes, the burning of marketplaces, and the targeting of infrastructure in Alawite-majority areas. The goal of these actions is not just political revenge but an ethnic cleansing strategy aimed at altering the demographic composition of these regions, revealing a clear agenda of systematic population displacement.

Second: Regional and international complicity in crimes against Alawites

1. Turkey's role: Military and logistical support for armed factions

The atrocities being committed in Syria today cannot be separated from Turkey's clear role in supporting armed groups, especially Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. Intelligence reports confirm that Turkey has supplied these factions with weapons and ammunition and has even facilitated the passage of foreign fighters into Syria. The Turkish government, which has long claimed to seek a political solution, is in reality one of the main instigators of the sectarian war, exploiting Syria's chaos to achieve its expansionist ambitions even after it established control over the central government.

2. Arab media silence and suspicious double standards

Despite the unprecedented scale of the massacres against Alawites, Arab media deliberately ignores them, reflecting blatant hypocrisy. While media outlets have provided extensive coverage of any incident that could be used against the former Syrian government, the crimes committed by the ruling armed factions today are met with complete silence. Some media channels actively propagate false narratives, attempting to portray the events as a "popular revolution" supported from outside—implying Iranian involvement—when in reality, what is happening on the ground is pure sectarian cleansing.

3. The United States and the West: Double Standards in Counterterrorism

The Western stance on Syria clearly illustrates a double standard. Although the armed factions controlling Syria (Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and its current leader) are classified as terrorist organizations under international law, the West turns a blind eye to their crimes, treating them as a legitimate political entity. The United States and the European Union, despite their claims of fighting terrorism, have taken no serious steps to halt the massacres against Alawites, reinforcing suspicions about their true intentions in Syria.

Third: Iran is not involved in the ongoing conflict

1. Debunking the accusations against Iran

Despite media propaganda attempting to implicate Iran in recent events, the facts on the ground prove otherwise. Tehran has not intervened in these conflicts, even when the Syrian crisis was at its peak before the fall of the previous regime. Instead, it has repeatedly called for a political resolution that preserves Syria's unity and prevents further bloodshed. Claims about Iranian involvement in supporting Alawites are nothing more than a transparent attempt to justify sectarian crimes.

2. "Remnants of the former regime": A lie to justify ethnic cleansing

One of the most dangerous falsehoods propagated by armed groups and their supporters is the claim that those being targeted in the current massacres are merely remnants of the previous Syrian regime. This narrative is designed to legitimize the mass killings of Alawites, despite the fact that most of the victims are civilians with no political affiliations. This fabricated media discourse is being used to obscure the reality that what is happening is not political retribution but outright sectarian genocide.

Fourth: The international community faces a new moral test

1. The responsibility of the United Nations and human rights organizations

Despite human rights reports documenting the crimes committed by armed factions under governmental cover in Syria, the international community remains negligent in taking any serious action to stop these violations. The United Nations, which is supposed to be an impartial body protecting civilians, has yet to issue a clear condemnation of these atrocities. This international silence raises questions about the integrity of these institutions and their ability to protect human rights in the face of clear political complicity.

2. The urgent need for immediate international action

As massacres against Alawites continue, the need for urgent international intervention has become more pressing than ever. Major powers must abandon their narrow self-interests and assume their moral responsibilities. Strict sanctions should be imposed on states supporting armed groups and on the government that is openly con-

ducting field executions. Additionally, an international investigation committee should be established to hold those responsible for these crimes accountable.

Conclusion: A collective responsibility to confront sectarian genocide

What is happening in Syria today is not just a political conflict; it is a systematic sectarian genocide unfolding in front of the world. The massacres against Alawites, supported directly by regional powers and shielded by Arab media silence, represent a humanitarian catastrophe that cannot be ignored. International and regional complicity is evident, and the Arab media silence is highly suspicious, making it imperative to expose these crimes and uncover the forces that support them.

• These horrific crimes highlight the failure of the interim government led by Ahmad al-Shar'a (Jolani) to achieve stability, as divisions among armed factions continue to grow. Foreign interventions further complicate the Syrian scene, weakening the chances for a political resolution.

The current situation suggests ongoing tensions with a high probability of further escalation unless an internal consensus is reached or an effective international intervention is made to halt the massacres.

The international community, key global actors, and human rights organizations must assume their responsibilities to prevent the recurrence of past genocides. Ignoring these crimes will only lead to more chaos and extremism and will forever remain a stain on the conscience of all who remained silent or were complicit in these atrocities.

World Bank complicating reconstruction process in Lebanon

From page 1 ► "We are giving the [Lebanese] state the opportunity to work politically to prove to the whole world that Israel does not withdraw through politics but through resistance," he stated.

His Eminence stressed, "The reconstruction process is an integral part of the reform and rescue process in the country. There is targeting of a sect or groups because of their affiliation with the resistance movement. The government must carefully study how to carry out the reconstruction process in line with the reform and rescue steps to revive the country."

Sheikh Qassem added, "Sheltering people is a great achievement that we have accomplished ... although this is part of the state's responsibility."

The World Bank's report claimed that the

volume of direct damages resulting from the September-October US-led Israeli aggression, which affected physical assets, amounts to \$6.8 billion, while economic losses amount to \$7.2 billion.

This means that the total losses are \$14 billion, noting that a preliminary report by the World Bank had estimated the cost at \$8.5 billion (an increase of 65%).

Further, this is without taking into account the value of the compensation paid by Hezbollah in a short period of time, which is worth about \$650 million so far, which are donations provided by the Iranian people.

The World Bank's report estimated that "recovery and reconstruction needs" would reach \$11 billion. 8.4 billion must be secured in the period 2025-2027.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

"Entire Families" killed in Syria

From page 1 ► "There must be prompt, transparent, and impartial investigations into all the killings and other violations," he emphasized.

"Those responsible must be brought to justice in accordance with international law. Groups terrorizing civilians must also be held accountable."

The attacks, now in their fourth day, have targeted the Alawite community in Syria, leaving at least 1,311 people dead, according to human rights groups.

Some organizations fear the true death toll could be even higher, with many people still missing.

This wave of violence is believed to be the deadliest since Syria's war began in 2011.

Government forces have been accused of us-

ing genocidal tactics against the Alawite community, which comprises roughly 20% of the population.

Turk reported that there were accounts of summary executions carried out on sectarian grounds by unidentified perpetrators, including members of Syria's caretaker authorities' security forces.

Experts blame authorities in Syria of either failing to control the deadly actions of extremist armed groups or endorsing them.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the cities of Latakia, Jableh, and Baniyas were bombarded with artillery shells and drones.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Second 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 is 10:00 AM (Local time) on Tuesday, 1403/12/28 (corresponding to 2025/03/18).

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)



Museum of Persian pottery to open soon in Tehran



Hamidreza Soleimani, CEO of the Dafineh museum group, in an undated photo

TEHRAN - The CEO of the Dafineh museum group has announced the repurposing of a historic building into a new museum, stating that the Iranian Pottery Museum ("Mouzeh Sofalineha-ye Iran") will soon be inaugurated in Laleh Street, downtown Tehran.

This historic site, which is a nationally registered building, is undergoing renovation to accommodate the museum's exhibits, Hamidreza Soleimani told the Tehran Times.

Sharing details about the project, Soleimani highlighted that construction work on the site has already commenced. The CEO also discussed other museum projects under the Dafineh umbrella and revealed plans for an upcoming scientific seminar titled Tar-o-Pud, to be held at the newly inaugurated Tar-o-Pud Museum in Yazd. "A pre-opening meeting attracted university scholars from neighboring provinces, and a call for papers has been issued, with final reviews scheduled for May."

About the Tar-o-Pud Museum, Soleimani noted that several traditional weaving and carpet-making devices have been revived for public display. Among them is the traditional Ikat and Daraei-bafi loom, which is rarely used today.

Discussing Iran's historical automobile museum, Soleimani disclosed that 70 classic and vin-

tage cars have recently been put on public display for the first time. "Other 80 vehicles are still remaining in the museum's treasure trove. They are in a row to put on view at the museum," he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the CEO noted that some events related to historic automobiles will be organized after the lunar month of Ramadan, with possible exhibitions in regions such as Kish or Qeshm islands.

Regarding the Museum of Time, Soleimani announced that antique clocks over 80 years old will be showcased for the first time. Additionally, a collection of pottery pieces from the Dafineh Museum reserves will be exhibited, alongside local and international paintings at the Dafineh Gallery during and after the Nowruz celebrations.

Addressing museum ticket prices, Soleimani stated that there are no plans for price increases. Instead, special discounts will be offered on various occasions. He emphasized efforts to ensure museums remain accessible to the public, keeping them open during holidays when other attractions might be closed. Operating hours typically run from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm, though extended hours have been observed during Ramadan.

In response to a question about possible cooperation with other museums, he voiced readiness for discussing joint exhibitions and events with other museums nationwide, adding: "Despite administrative differences, all share the common goal of preserving cultural heritage."

Finally, he referred to the Hunting Museum, which was inaugurated in Ramsar, northern Iran, concurrently with Yazd's Tar-o-Pud Museum on March 1. "A number of related historical artifacts such as antique pistols and bows, will be added to the museum's collection after Eid al-Fitr (early in April)."

The Dafineh museums operate under the ownership and supervision of the Mostazafan Foundation of the Islamic Revolution, with a mission announced to help preserve and showcase Iran's rich cultural heritage.

Ancient Roman theatre of Laodicea recovers its glory 2,200 years later

The ancient Roman theatre of Laodicea, located in the Turkish province of Denizli and a candidate for UNESCO World Heritage Site status, has finally been restored to its former glory after 2,200 years, thanks to an ambitious restoration project that began in 2019 and is now in its final stages.

Built in the second century BC and with a capacity for 15,000 spectators, it was used for cultural and artistic events during the Hellenistic[am1] and Roman periods, but was abandoned in the fifth century CE with the arrival of Christianity in the region. Over the centuries and after several earthquakes, it ended up in a state of ruin.

Located to the west of Laodicea - home to one of the seven churches of Asia mentioned in the Bible - from it you can see the famous travertine terraces of Pamukkale, just a few kilometres away.

The restoration work on the historic theatre has been directed by Professor Celal Simsek,

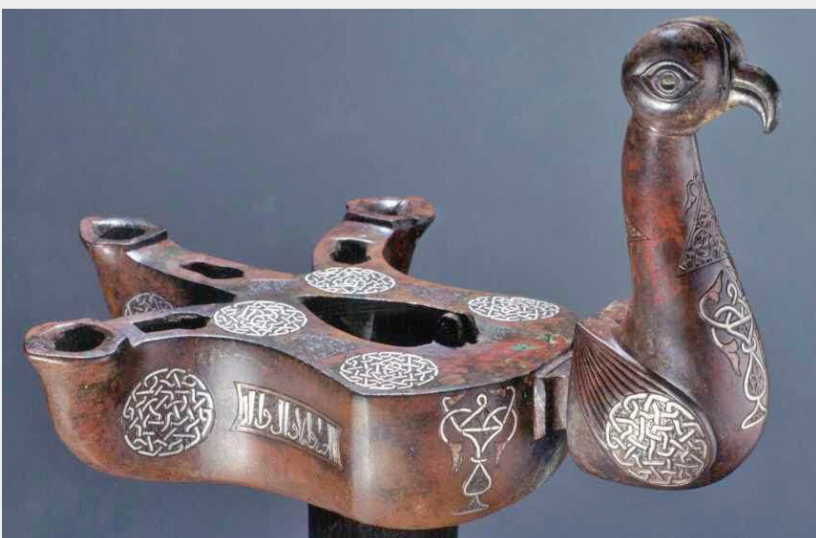
head of the Department of Archaeology at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pamukkale, who is also in charge of the archaeological excavations in Laodicea, and has received financial support from Denizli City Council and the South Aegean Development Agency.

In statements to the Turkish newspaper Hürriyet, Simsek emphasised the importance of a restoration that is 'almost 90% faithful to its original structure, complying with international standards', thus allowing the theatre's past to be recovered while maintaining its authenticity: 'We have been carrying out excavations here for 21

years... The western theatre is important because it was the city's first theatre of the Hellenistic period. It was built in the 2nd century BC, underwent reconstruction after an earthquake in the 3rd century, and was destroyed again by an earthquake in 368 AD that devastated western Anatolia, and then was rebuilt again.'

(Source: hispanatolia.com)

Echoes of Iran



A bird-shaped oil lamp, bronze, cast, engraved, inlaid with silver and copper, late 12th-early 13th century, excavated from the Khorasan region of northeast Iran, being kept at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Arg-e Rayen: 'world's second-largest adobe citadel'

TEHRAN - Arg-e Rayen stands as one of Iran's most magnificent historical landmarks and is famed as the "second-largest adobe citadel in the world" after the UNESCO-designated Arg-e Bam.

Located in the ancient city of Rayen in Kerman province, the mud-brick fortress spans over 22,000 square meters, and for centuries it remained inhabited until the mid-19th century and served as a strategic stronghold throughout various historical periods.

However, the citadel played a crucial role during the rule of Nader Shah Afshar and later under the Zand dynasty, functioning as a center of governance and commerce due to its location on the trade route connecting Kerman, Jiroft, and Bandar Abbas.

Although often overshadowed by the larger Arg-e Bam, Rayen Citadel has gained recognition as a crucial historical monument. Its well-preserved structure, despite numerous earthquakes and natural disasters, offers invaluable insight into ancient Persian military architecture and urban planning.

Architectural marvel

Built entirely of mudbrick, the citadel is an extraordinary example of traditional Iranian citadel construction. Its structure



consists of high walls, 16 defensive towers, and a single grand entrance located on the eastern side. The citadel is divided into distinct sections, including residential areas, a central fortress, a marketplace, a mosque, a school, a bathhouse, and a governing complex.

The aristocratic quarters within the fortress feature intricate architectural elements, including multi-story buildings, courtyards, and large halls.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the citadel is its hidden escape routes, designed to allow the ruling elite to flee during enemy invasions.

The octagonal pavilion, known

as the governor's residence, is another architectural highlight, reflecting the grandeur and ingenuity of Persian design.

Cultural and historical significance

Rayen Citadel is not just a historic site; it is a testament to Iran's ancient civilization. The fortress exemplifies the social structure of its time, with separate quarters for the ruling class, military personnel, and common residents. The city of Rayen itself was historically known for its craftsmanship, particularly in sword and knife making, which contributed to its economic prosperity.

Other attractions

Visitors to Rayen can explore several other attractions in the region, including: Rayen Waterfall, a scenic natural wonder near the citadel; Gishigan, a village known for its cool climate and lush landscapes; Jameh Mosque of Rayen, an architectural gem reflecting Persian-Islamic artistry; Mount Hezar, Iran's fourth-highest peak, offering breathtaking hiking and trekking opportunities.

Best time to visit

The best seasons to visit Rayen Citadel are spring and autumn when the weather is mild and ideal for exploring both the fortress and its surrounding attractions.

A full tour of the citadel typically takes two to three hours.

A melting pot of culture

Kerman is something of a cultural melting pot, blending various regional cultures over time. It is also home to rich tourist spots and historical sites, including bazaars, mosques, caravanserais and ruins of ancient urban areas.

It is bounded by the provinces of Fars in the west, Yazd in the north, South Khorasan in the northeast, Sistan-Baluchestan in the east, and Hormozgan in the south. It includes the southern part of the central Iranian desert, the Dasht-e Lut.

Excavation work starts on ruins of Valerian's Palace in Bishapur



TEHRAN - A new phase of archaeological excavations has commenced on the ruins of Valerian's Palace in the ancient city of Bishapur, located in Kazerun county of Fars province. The palace is believed to have once served as a residence for the captured Roman Emperor Valerian during the Sassanid era.

Afshin Ebrahimi, the deputy director of the Fars province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, announced the launch of the excavation project on Monday. He stated that with the approval of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, the latest excavation season in Bishapur has begun through efforts by the provincial department and the Sassanid Landscape World Heritage base.

Ebrahimi noted that the excavation project would focus on uncovering the structural layout and primary function of the palace. The last recorded excavation on this site dates back to the 1990s when archaeologist Ali Akbar Sarfaraz conducted a phase of excavation that partially unearthed sections of the palace.

He further explained that the façade of the palace features precisely cut stones, and over the centuries, various modifications have been made to the original structure. In later periods, stones from the palace were repurposed to create additional architectural spaces within the site.

Due to the extensive amount of debris covering the ruins and the complexity of the excavation, Ebrahimi emphasized that a long-term research and restoration plan has been developed in collaboration with specialists in relevant fields. The project aims to preserve and better understand this significant historical site, shedding new light on its architectural and historical importance.

The Palace of Valerian, situated approximately 150 meters east of Shapur's Palace, is now little more than a mass of crumbling ruins.

Originally constructed to house the Roman Emperor Valerian after his capture by Shapur I, the structure played a crucial role in the Sassanid Empire's history.

Following a decisive Persian victory over the Roman legions, Valerian and 70,000 of his soldiers were taken prisoner, and the palace was built to keep the emperor under close watch.

Those of the captives who had some knowledge of architecture and construction were brought to the western part of Iran to participate in the Persians' building projects, and many palaces, dams, and bridges were built using the experience of Roman soldiers.

Valerian himself is said to have been familiar with construction techniques and may have contributed to the design of his palace in Bishapur. The palace is known to have occupied an area of more than 3,000 sq. m. It was the only structure in pre-Islamic Iran made entirely of stone.

The stones, all of equal size and shape, were of the same quality as the stones used in the Temple of Anahita, and many were bonded together with clamps. Shallow depressions, which can be seen in the stone bonding, and which impart an interesting look to the palace, were originally filled with molten lead to give more solidity to the structure.

Bishapur (literally, "The city of Shapur") was the grand capital of the Sassanid king, Shapur I whose armies defeated the Romans three times. Like an

arch bridge at Shushtar, much of Bishapur was allegedly built by Roman soldiers taken captive after their Emperor Valerian was defeated in c. 260 CE.

Bishapur is situated south of modern Faliyan, just off the ancient road between Persis and Elam, which connected the Sasanian capitals Istakhr (close to Persepolis) and Firuzabad to Susa and Ctesiphon. The city was built near a river crossing.

Many architectural aspects of Bishapur look Roman and do not belong to Iranian building traditions. An example is what specialists call the "Hippodamian Plan", which means that the city looks like a gridiron, while Iranian cities usually were circular in design, according to Livius.org; a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

Bishapur remained an important city until the Arab invasion of Persia and the rise of Islam in the second quarter of the seventh century.

It became a center of Islamic learning (a madrasah has been excavated) and there were still people living over here in the tenth century, but the decline had started in the seventh century.

In 2018, UNESCO added an ensemble of Sassanian historical cities in southern Iran -- titled "Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region"-- to its World Heritage list.

The ensemble is comprised of eight archaeological sites situated in three geographical parts of Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan. It reflects the optimized utilization of natural topography and bears witness to the influence of Achaemenid and Parthian cultural traditions and of Roman art, which later had a significant impact on the architecture and artistic styles of the Islamic era.

The Sassanid archaeological landscape represents a highly efficient system of land use and strategic utilization of natural topography in the creation of the earliest cultural centers of the Sassanid civilization.

Foreign tourists to pay more as Japan rolls out dual-pricing system

Aimed at managing over-tourism and boosting revenue, the policy has sparked a fierce debate over fairness and practicality.

Thais heading to Japan should prepare for potentially spending more, as the country is set to introduce a "two-tier" pricing system at major tourist attractions from July.

The policy will set different rates for Japanese citizens and foreign visitors in a bid to tackle over-tourism while generating additional revenue.

Japan, which has set a target of 60 million foreign tourists

annually by 2030, has seen record-breaking visitor numbers, particularly from China, South Korea.

The weak yen has further fuelled tourism, with 36.86 million international arrivals recorded last year, surpassing Thailand's 35 million for the first time.

Japanese authorities argue that the dual-pricing model will help alleviate pressure on overcrowded sites and improve tourism infrastructure.

Under the system, foreign visitors will pay higher entry fees than Japanese residents, reflecting differences in economic con-

ditions and the cost of living.

One example of this policy is Junguria Okinawa, a nature-themed park opening in July. Foreign tourists will be charged 8,800 yen, while locals will pay 6,930 yen.

The park's management justified the pricing by comparing it to international theme parks and highlighting its role in funding site improvements.

The policy, however, has sparked debate over fairness and the feasibility of distinguishing tourists from local residents.

Some attractions, like the Himeji Castle, have opted for a

regional pricing model, which differentiates between city residents and other visitors rather than based on nationality.

Dual-pricing is not unique to Japan. For instance, the Emerald Buddha Temple in Thailand and the Taj Mahal in India have long charged foreigners higher fees.

Additionally, tourism taxes are becoming increasingly common, with destinations like Venice and Hawaii imposing visitor levies.

Thailand is also planning to introduce a 300-baht tourism fee for foreign arrivals later this year.

(Source: The Nation)

Iran attending 68th session of UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs

TEHRAN – Brigadier General Hossein Zolfaqari, the Secretary General of Iranian Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), is participating in the 68th session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), which is being held from March 10 to 14 in Vienna, Austria.

The CND is the central policy-making body within the United Nations system for dealing with all drug-related issues.

It examines the global drug situation, promotes the international drug control mechanism, and identifies the satisfaction of international institutions in the field of drug control.

Through reviewing the global drug situation, taking balanced approach to interrelated issues of illegal drugs demand, supply and trafficking, monitoring the implementation of international conventions on narcotics, psychotropic substances and chemical precursors, providing recommendations to strengthen international drug control activities, facilitating scientific research and exchanging information, CND assists the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations in performing its tasks, and establish the policies governing the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



(UNODC) activities, and its financial resources.

The CND is the central policy-making body within the United Nations for dealing with drug-related issues.

Zolfaqari is scheduled to deliver a speech at a high level segment, as well as hold bilateral and multilateral meetings with officials of the Narcotics Com-

mission, the Executive Director of the UNODC, the President of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), Jallal Toufiq's, ministers, and heads of delegations from other countries, IRNA reported.

Moreover, with the support and participation of the UNODC, it is planned to share the country's experiences on measures taken in the field of harm reduction, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and the reunification of recovered people to society in the form of a "scientific event" to participants, specialists, and experts in the field.

UNODC fully prepared to continue close cooperation with Iran

Alexander Fedulov, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) representative in Iran, has said the UNODC remains fully prepared to continue close cooperation with the country.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is a key and constructive partner in its engagement with the UNODC," the UN website quoted Fedulov as saying. The official made the remarks on February 17 in a meeting in Tehran with Zolfaqari.

Fedulov described the ongoing cooperation and joint initiatives between the UNODC and Drug Control Headquarters as highly positive and commendable.

He affirmed his and the UNODC's commitment to expanding collaboration and securing additional financial resources to support Iran's programs. He further emphasized Iran's significant role in regional and international efforts to combat drug trafficking.

For his part, Zolfaqari highlighted the severe and irreparable human losses and the immense financial damages that the Islamic Republic of Iran has endured in its humanitarian fight against the global drug problem.

Over 135 earthquakes shake Iran in a week

TEHRAN – A total of 136 earthquakes were recorded across the country from March 1 to 7, according to the seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Statistically, 116 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3; 15 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4; four earthquakes with magnitude between 4 and 5; and one earthquake with magnitude between 5 and 6 have occurred in the country, IRNA reported.

Of the total quakes, one had a magnitude of 5.2 on the Richter scale, which occurred on March 3 in Iranshahr, Sistan-Baluchestan province.

Among the provinces of the country, Kermanshah, with 22, experienced the highest number of earthquakes, followed by Khorasan Razavi with 15, and Kermanshah with 13 earthquakes.

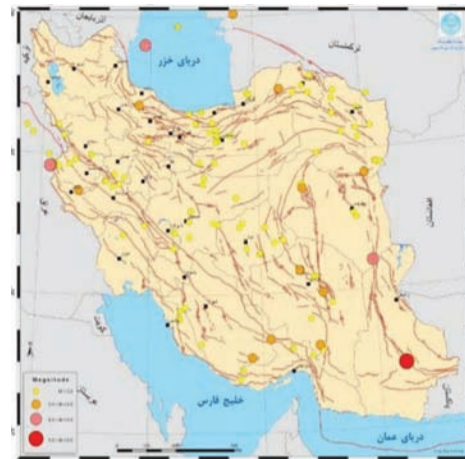
During the same period, no earthquakes were recorded in East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Ardabil, Alborz, Znan, Qzvin, and Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad provinces.

A total of 6,949 earthquakes were recorded across the country over the past calendar year (March 2023 – March 2024), according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Most of the earthquakes happened respectively in the north-eastern Khorasan Razavi, south-eastern Kerman, north-western West Azarbaijan, and eastern South Khorasan provinces, ISNA reported.

Statistically, 2,268 earthquakes were less than 2 on the Richter scale; 3,685 were between 2 and 3; 796 were between 3 and 4; 181 were between 4 and 5; 22 were between 5 and 6; and 5 were between 6 and 7.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.



About 2 percent of the earthquakes in the world occur in Iran, but more than 6% of the victims of the world earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes.

This shows the high level of vulnerability in Iran, according to Mehdi Zare, a professor of engineering seismology.

Iran has entered a decade of earthquakes since the [Iranian calendar] year 1396 (March 2017– March 2018), as the Iranian plateau is shrinking by 30 millimetres per year, Mehdi Zare, professor of engineering seismology at the International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES), has said.

The Strait of Hormuz region in the south of Iran has the highest seismic activity in the region, and its formation is related to the continuation of the convergent movement between the Arabian plate and the central continental plate of Iran.

Tehran is also one of the most hazardous metropolises in the world in terms of the risk of different natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, subsidence, drought, landslides, fire following an earthquake, etc.

On the other hand, Tehran has a night-time population of over 8,300,000, with a mixture of old non-resistant structures as well as modern high-rise buildings that affect the vulnerability of this city.

First sports AI innovation center inaugurated



Iran's ranking improves in Government AI Readiness

According to the latest report by Oxford Insights index, which measures government readiness for implementing artificial intelligence (AI) in public services, Iran ranks 91st among 188 countries, moving up three positions compared to 94th in 2023.

AI has a key role to play – not just in governing the technology, but in helping governments perform better.

The Government AI Readiness Index has become a trusted resource for policymakers, adopted as an official benchmark by national governments. In this year's edition, the AI readiness of 188 countries at a time of growing complexity, where governments face evolving citizen needs and challenges like economic uncertainty, climate risks, and rising inequalities.

The 2024 index examines 40 indicators across three pillars: Government, Technology Sector, and Data & Infrastructure. It highlights progress, identifies gaps, and provides actionable insights for policymakers working to integrate AI into public service delivery. At its core, the index asks 'how ready are governments to implement AI in the delivery of public services?' By answering this question, it aims to offer a practical tool that supports evidence-based decision-making and helps policymakers unlock AI's potential to serve citizens better worldwide.

According to the index, the country's best ranking is in the Data and Infrastructure pillar, 66.29 which has improved compared to 55.88 last year. It includes infrastructure (70), data availability (43), and data representativeness (121) indicators.

The country's score in the Technology pillar is 38.82, it was 38.77 in 2023. It includes human capital (54), innovation capacity (62), and maturity (82) indicators.

The main objective is to attract the participation of technology experts in addressing the needs of sports at all levels.

Iran's lowest score is in the Government pillar, 26.54, which has decreased compared to 31.56 in 2023. It includes vision (84), governance and ethics (145), digital capacity (92), and adaptability (177).

According to this year's report, Iran's ranking in the region has improved by one position, rising from 17 in 2023 to 16 in 2024.

The top ten countries are the United States, Singapore, South Korea, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, and Australia.

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Precipitation forecast to reach above normal in next 3 months

The country is predicted to receive above normal rainfall over the next three months (February 20–May 21), head of the climatological research institute affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization (IMO) has said.

The whole country will meet normal and above normal rainfalls, the northern parts will receive above normal rainfall while southern provinces will receive normal to lower-than-normal rainfall, IRNA quoted Iman Babaeian as saying on Sunday.

This month, northern and eastern provinces will receive rain above normal averages, while in the first month of spring precipitation will be at normal amounts across the country, he noted, adding, during the second month of spring rainfall will reach its peak.

بارش‌های کشور در سه ماه پیش رو بیش از نرمال است

رئیس پژوهشکده اقلیم‌شناسی سازمان هواشناسی گفت: پیش‌بینی‌ها نشان می‌دهد میزان بارش در کشور در سه ماهه پیش رو (اسفند ۹۷، فروردین و اردیبهشت ۹۸) در حد نرمال و متمایل به بیش از نرمال خواهد بود.

ایمان باباییان روز یکشنبه در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: مجموع بارش‌ها در سطح کشور نرمال و متمایل به بیشتر از نرمال است اما در نیمه شمالی، بیشتر از نرمال و در نیمه جنوبی در محدوده نرمال تا کمتر از نرمال خواهد بود.

وی اظهار داشت: بارش‌ها در اسفندماه ۹۷ در نیمه شمالی و شرقی بیشتر از نرمال است، در فروردین ماه ۹۸ نیز بارش‌ها در محدوده نرمال و برای اردیبهشت بیشتر از نرمال پیش‌بینی شده است.

Officials contribute to releasing prisoners of involuntary crimes

TEHRAN – Judiciary Chief, Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, has donated 500 million rials (about 555 dollars) to help release prisoners of unintentional crimes.

Also, the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, Zahra Behrouz-Azar, in cooperation with the benefactors have earmarked 40 billion rials (around 44,000 dollars) for releasing 14 female prisoners.

Each year in the holy month of Ramadan, officials and benefactors hold gatherings to raise money to help release prisoners of unintentional crime.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, allotted 40 billion rials to help release prisoners of unintentional crimes on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan (started on March 2nd).

In March 2024, the Leader earmarked 20 billion rials (some \$22,000) for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes.

Over 7,000 prisoners freed in 9 months

During the first nine months of the current Iranian year (March 20 – December 20, 2024), a total of 7,706 prisoners of unintentional crimes were released.

Of the total prisoners who were in prison due to financial crimes, 7,282 were male, and 424 were female, Mehr news agency reported.

Tehran, Fars, and Isfahan provinces had the highest number of prisoners of involuntary crimes with 2,570, 1,295, and 1,186 cases, respectively.

On the occasion of National Mother's Day, which fell on December 22 this year, a total of 1,000 female prisoners of unintentional crimes were released across the country.

National Woman's Day (also called Mother's Day), coincides with the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatemeh, the daughter of the holy

prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

Currently, there are over 600 women imprisoned for unintentional crimes, IRIB reported.

In the last three decades, benefactors have helped release more than 170,000 prisoners of unintentional crimes in the country.

On the occasion of National Father's Day, which fell on January 14 this year, a total of 603 prisoners of unintentional crimes were freed across the country.

In Iran, Father's Day falls on the thirteenth day of the lunar calendar month of Rajab, the birthday anniversary of Imam Ali (AS), the first Shia Imam.

In this line, a nationwide campaign, titled 'Hello dad', is being held from December 21 to January 19. A third of the released prisoners of involuntary crimes (171 individuals) were from Isfahan, Khorasan Razavi, and Fars provinces, IRNA reported.

The total debt of the released prisoners was over 14 trillion rials.

In January, there were over 15,061 prisoners of involuntary crimes, including 14,301 men and 760 women.

Tehran, Fars, and Isfahan provinces had the highest number of prisoners of involuntary crimes with 2,570, 1,295, and 1,186 cases, respectively.

Freeing prisoners of involuntary crimes is done in three ways. The first way is granting prisoners leave and the second way is providing a number of them with loans to be paid inside the prison.

The third way of assistance is the release of unintentional convicts by paying their debt.

The Blood Money Organization was established in 1990. Since then, a large number of prisoners of unintentional crimes who had debts have been freed.



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MARCH 11, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Failures are often the results of timidity and fears; disappointments are the results of bashfulness; hours of leisure pass away like summer-clouds, therefore, do not waste opportunity of doing good.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:14 Evening: 18:08 Dawn: 4:56 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:19 (tomorrow)

Tehran theater to host reading performance of Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie"

TEHRAN- Medea Theater Hall in Tehran will be playing host to a reading performance of American playwright Tennessee Williams' memory play "The Glass Menagerie".

The performance will take place on Saturday and will be directed by Niloufar Torabi.

The cast will include Sarina Kian, Hossein Darabi, Mehregan Tehrani and Ata Baqerzadeh.

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

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

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

The story is set in the aftermath of the Great Depression and reflects the economic struggles and societal changes of the time. The play also



delves into the impact of World War II, exploring the tensions and uncertainties that characterized the period.

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

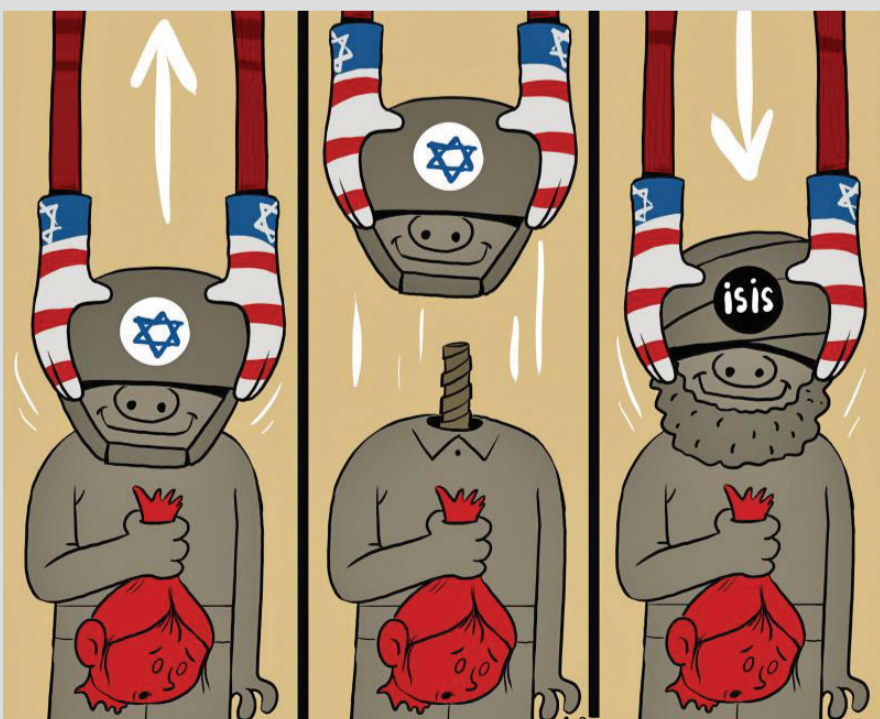
"The Glass Menagerie" is considered a classic of American theater, admired for its innovative use of symbolism and its timeless portrayal of the human condition.

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

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

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

Cartoon of Day



Cartoonist: Kamal Sharaf from Yemen

Tjeknavorian to perform "Rostam and Sohrab" opera in Armenia

TEHRAN-The renowned Iranian-Armenian musician and conductor Loris Tjeknavorian will conduct a concert and an opera based on Ferdowsi's Shahnameh in Armenia later this month.

He will first stage a gala concert at the Armenian National Opera and Ballet Theater on March 22 and a week later, he will conduct the "Rostam and Sohrab" opera at the same venue for three nights, from March 31 to April 2, ISNA reported.

According to Tjeknavorian, he has used folklore and traditional music of Iran in the opera. "I have been very fond of the stories of Iranian poet Abolqassem Ferdowsi's Shahnameh since my childhood. Shahnameh is not merely a book, it is the national history of Iran and all the people of Iran know Rostam and Sohrab legend".

He believes Ferdowsi (940-1020) is the greatest poet of the world and whatever is found in the works of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) exists in Ferdowsi's works too.

The composition of "Rostam and Sohrab" opera took 25 years. In 1963, German composer and music educator Carl Orff granted Loris Tjeknavorian a scholarship which allowed him to reside in Salzburg and to complete his opera in Austria. The 140-minute opera has since been performed in Austria and Iran.

Born in Borujerd, Lorestan Province, Loris Tjeknavorian, 87, is one



of the most celebrated cultural figures in Armenia and Iran. As one of the leading conductors of his generation, he has led international orchestras throughout the world and been awarded numerous times in different music events.

As a composer Tjeknavorian has

performed by major orchestras, including London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Halle Orchestra, Philharmonic Orchestra Helsinki, American Symphony Orchestra in New York, Tehran Symphony Orchestra, Johannesburg Symphony Orchestra, Haifa Symphony Orchestra, the Mexico Symphony Orchestra, London Percussion Virtuosi, Strasbourg Percussion Ensemble, and English Chamber Orchestra.

From 2009 to the present, Tjeknavorian has continued to devote his time to composing, as well as painting and writing short stories. Among his most recent works are the operas "Zahak" (libretto based on Ferdowsi's Shahnameh) and "Mowlana and Shams-e Tabriz" (libretto based on the poetry of Rumi), as well as the chamber opera "The Final Hour of Sadegh Hedayat" (libretto based on "The Blind Owl" and other works by the Iranian poet Sadegh Hedayat).

Other works include his second concerto for violin and chamber orchestra, a work for solo piano titled "1915", and two major symphonic suites: "King Cyrus," about the ancient Persian king, and "Takhti," dedicated to the celebrated Iranian wrestler.

Tjeknavorian's paintings were exhibited at the Shirin Gallery in Tehran, Maryam Seyhoun Gallery in Los Angeles, and twice at the Iranian Artists' Forum in Tehran.

International Holy Quran Exhibition launches virtual book sales



TEHRAN- The virtual book sales section of the 32nd edition of the International Holy Quran Exhibition featuring 221 publishers and 14,282 titles comprising a total of 1,831,542 volumes, is accessible on the official website of the event.

Visitors nationwide can take advantage of a 20 percent discount while acquiring their resources through this platform, alongside ben-

efiting from postal support services, IRNA reported on Monday.

The 32nd International Holy Quran Exhibition commenced at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla on Wednesday under the theme "Quran: The Way of Life," with the presence of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi, alongside several cultural officials.

This year's exhibition spans a 20,000-square-meter area, smaller than previous years, yet boasting 37 content sections. It includes the participation of 15 governmental entities and 40 public institutions, with 120 publishers in the religious sector showcasing 4,300 books.

Notable sections of this year's exhibition include booths from religious sites, the Karbala Kazem Sarouqi section, the Institute for the

Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, a section on Life through the Verses, a section on the Quran and Resistance, and a section promoting modest clothing. Additionally, there are areas dedicated to children and youth, mosques and community hubs, as well as theological studies and artificial intelligence.

In the international section, 15 countries have confirmed their participation, and special guests are expected to attend. More than 58 specialized sessions and 26 Quranic gatherings are planned for this year's exhibition, culminating in a ceremony to honor Quranic service providers, to be held in the presence of Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian during the closing days of the exhibition.

The International Holy Quran Exhibition will run until March 16.

Brussels film festival to screen Iranian short "The Mold"

TEHRAN-Iranian director Mohammadreza Nourmandipour's "The Mold" will go on screen at the 28th edition of Brussels Short Film Festival (BSFF), which will be held in the Belgian capital from April 23 to May 3, Mehr reported.

The film follows Reza, who faces challenges with his only son after the death of his wife, as he tries to

raise his child in his own way.

Brussels Short Film Festival serves as a gathering for film enthusiasts, catering to both audiences and industry professionals. The primary aim of the festival is to showcase and circulate short films while fostering connections between viewers, emerging filmmakers, and established industry

figures.

The festival will feature films in international, national, and Next Generation competitions, alongside special programs like a Short Film Night and free Open-Air screenings.

Notably, as of 2018, the recipient of the Great Prize in the International competition has the unique

opportunity to be considered for entry into the Animated Short Film/Live Action Short Film category at the prestigious Academy Awards. This special consideration allows the winning film to bypass the typical requirement of a theatrical release, provided that it meets all other eligibility criteria outlined by the Academy.

Jean-Baptiste Andrea's 2023 Prix Goncourt winner available in Persian

TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the book "Watching Over Her" written by French author Jean-Baptiste Andrea has been released in the Iranian book market.

Mehdi Behnoush is the translator of the book that is full of passion and brilliance, inhabited by grace and beauty. Afkar Publication has brought it out in 422 pages, ILNA reported.

Spanning several decades in 20th-century Italy, the novel focuses on a poor sculptor named Michelangelo "Mimo" Vitaliani, and his tumultuous relationship with Viola Orsini, the daughter of a powerful aristocratic family.

In an Italian monastery, an infamous sculptor lies on his death bed. During Mimo's final hours, he reveals his life story: his impoverished childhood, his unlikely rise to fame and most importantly, his meeting with Viola.

Born poor, Mimo is apprenticed to a stone sculptor without stature. But he is a genius with his hands. On the other hand, almost all the fairies have looked at Viola Orsini. Heiress of a prestigious family, she spent her childhood in the shadow of a Genoese palace. But she is

too ambitious to resign herself to the place assigned to her.

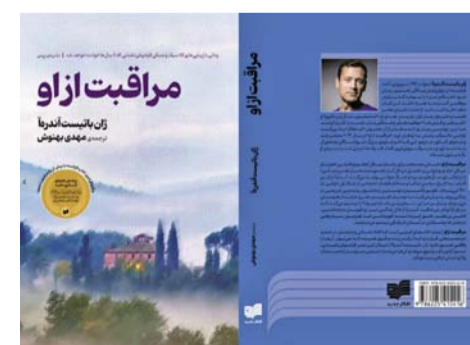
Mimo and Viola are instantly drawn to one another. Together, they traverse the unrest of the 20th century. While Mimo becomes a celebrated artist, Viola fights to claim her education and independence.

At first glance, they recognize each other and swear never to leave each other. Viola and Mimo can neither live together nor stay away from each other for long. Bound by an unwavering attraction, they go through years of fury when Italy falls into fascism.

Over the decades, they will lose and find each other, but never will they give up on the love they share.

The 2023 novel received the Prix Goncourt in November 2023. It has sold over 700,000 copies, making it one of the best-selling Goncourt winners. The novel was also recipient of the Prix du roman Fnac and the Grand Prix des Lectrices de Elle. It has been translated into 34 different languages.

Jean-Baptiste Andrea, 53, is a French novel-



ist, film director, and screenwriter. He grew up in Cannes, where he started making short films. He later moved to Paris and graduated in political science and economics. In Paris, he met Fabrice Canepa, and the two of them began writing films together.

His debut novel "My Queen" was published in 2017 and won a dozen awards, including Best French Debut Novel and the Students Femina. His third novel "Devils and Saints" also received multiple awards, including the Grand Prix RTL-Lire.