

## 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