



Iran Welcomes Nowruz, a Season of Renewal

▶ Page 6

Iranian women thrive despite Western-imposed sanctions: envoy

TEHRAN – Iran's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, Zahra Ershadi, has reaffirmed the unwavering determination of Iranian women in the face of Western-imposed sanctions, emphasizing their role in shaping a more just and progressive society.

Speaking at the 69th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York, Ershadi underscored Iran's commitment to advancing women's rights and acknowledged the significant contributions women make in strengthening the nation's social and economic fabric.

"Iranian women continue to drive progress despite the detrimental impact of unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) and the failed Maximum Pressure campaign," Ershadi stated. "Their resilience has been instrumental in fostering advancements across various spheres of life. While external pressures attempt to undermine their rights, they persist in building a fairer future for themselves and their communities."

Highlighting the growing presence of Iranian women in key sectors, Ershadi pointed out that women now make up 33% of university faculty, 40% of medical science professionals, and over 50% of healthcare workers. Additionally, they account for 40% of specialist doctors and 30% of subspecialist doctors in Iran. ▶ Page 2

World leaders could learn a lesson from Ayatollah Khamenei

By Professor Hossein Askari

PORTLAND – How can a rational person seriously negotiate with an American president:

A man who today abrogates an agreement that he signed in 2020 (the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement or USMCA) after he did not like the 1994 agreement (the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA) signed by an earlier president?

A man who changes his mind on tariffs on an hourly basis—on the products and on the countries he is targeting—seemingly ignorant of the impact of uncertainty on both goods and financial markets and the fact that changing tariffs cause profound changes in production and supply chains around the world? ▶ Page 3

Iran's "Mahfel" Quranic program kicks off in Indonesia

TEHRAN-The popular Iranian Quranic program "Mahfel" is currently taking place in Indonesia.

Organized by the Cultural Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Indonesia, the program began on Friday and will run for five days, Mehr reported.

Two international reciters from the Iran, Ahmad Abolqasemi and Hamed Shakernejad, hosts of the acclaimed program "Mahfel", will be visiting Indonesia to host various programs in collaboration with organizations and Quranic elites in the country, the report added.

Mohammadreza Ebrahimi, Iranian Cultural Attaché in Indonesia, who is managing this event, emphasized that their efforts in executing this initiative are focused on holding programs at major mosques in Indonesia.

"As such, the Istiqlal Mosque — the largest mosque in Southeast Asia, where the Imam is the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs — and Al-Azhar Mosque, a branch of the famous Al-Azhar Mosque in Egypt, have been selected to host this grand Quranic gathering." ▶ Page 8



America and manufacturing of terrorism: From supporting al-Qaeda to protecting Julani

By Najah Mohammed Ali

LONDON – Once again, Washington returns to its old game: accusing others of terrorism while it is the one fueling and exploiting it to serve its interests. The statements made by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio during his recent meeting in Al-Quds with Benjamin Netanyahu are merely a continuation of an American policy aimed at covering up its primary role in destabilizing West Asia by supporting terrorist groups and using them as tools in its political projects.

American Admissions: From al-Qaeda to ISIS

The U.S. support for terrorism is not just an accusation made by its rivals—it is a reality confirmed by key figures within the American administration itself. In a famous statement in 2016,

Why demarcate the Lebanon-occupied Palestine border now!

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON — In preparation to impose normalization, the anti-Hezbollah media is promoting the initiation of negotiations between Lebanon and the Israeli occupation regime on demarcating the land border.

This is despite the fact that the border has been internationally demarcated; all that is required is withdrawal from every inch of the Lebanese lands without any negotiations or conditions.

The sites occupied during the recent US-backed Israeli aggression of Lebanon, in addition to the Lebanese part of Ghajar and the 13 disputed points, are supposed to be freed from the Israeli occupation in accordance with the implementation of UN Resolution 1701.

These include the Shebaa Farms, from which Resolution 1701 required Israel to withdraw and place them under UN control until a settlement is reached with Syria.

The apparent positive aspect of this situation may lie in ulterior motives; Tel Aviv is considering the timing as opportune to impose its hegemony over West Asia.

Hamas agrees to release U.S. captive

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Hamas has agreed to release an Israeli captive with U.S. citizenship but "major gaps" remain with the Israeli regime on phase 2 of the ceasefire.

A Palestinian leader stated that there is still a significant gap between proposals by Hamas and the Israeli regime on how to carry out the second phase of the ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement.

The unnamed resistance leader explained that the Israeli occupation regime is demanding the release of about ten living prisoners before starting negotiations on the second phase of the agreement.

Hamas maintains that there must be clear and firm guarantees to ensure that negotiations will begin before they agree to release the prisoners in second phase.

The resistance group is making clear the need for a solid commitment to the next stage of talks to avoid delays or setbacks during the process. ▶ Page 5

Iran unveils national AI platform

TEHRAN –The first national artificial intelligence platform was unveiled on Saturday, a significant milestone in the country's advancements in AI technology.

An open-source system has been used to design and develop the national platform. Accordingly, the global source used in the project has been optimized, and local electronic circuits or modules have been included. Moreover, its Iranian base and passive defense issues have been taken into account, IRNA reported.

Some 16 faculty members and over 70 researchers have cooperated to build the platform. No external application programming interfaces (APIs) have been used for this platform. Once launched, the platform's service won't be disrupted even if the internet gets disconnected. ▶ Page 7



Leader hosts poets and cultural figures

TEHRAN- On the night of the birth anniversary of Imam Hasan (AS), a gathering of poets, cultural figures, and professors of Persian literature was hosted by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

The meeting, which was held on Saturday, featured a selection of both young and veteran poets from Iran, alongside cultural figures and literati.

Additionally, several Persian-speaking poets from abroad were in attendance, with some set to recite their poems.

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Nuclear issue from New York to Beijing

Donya-e-Eqtasad, in an analysis, addressed the formation of a new JCPOA arrangement and wrote: The Iranian nuclear case has once again become the focus of high-level talks from New York to Beijing, which has demonstrated a new JCPOA arrangement in a 3-vs-4 confrontation. It seems that in the next few months and ahead of schedule, the snapback mechanism and threats will become more practical, technical, and significant. This means that the parties will try to find a credible diplomatic solution for a new (nuclear) agreement or update the 2015 JCPOA agreement or prepare themselves for new risks with the possibility of an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities by the United States and Israel and a reciprocal decisive response from Iran. However, we must wait and see what response Iran will give to Trump's letter. The first assumption is that this letter is nothing more than an escalation of pressure in a new format; but the second hypothesis argues that since the letter is under review, it provides important details that take Trump's message beyond an invitation to negotiate or a threat.

Ham Mihan: Strategy to counter maximum pressure

In a note, Ham Mihan discussed Iran's strategy against Trump. The paper said: Donald Trump's re-imposition of maximum pressure on Iran and his ultimatum to the Iranian government have raised concerns about escalating tensions in the Middle East. However, the United States is facing an Iran that has learned lessons from the first Trump administration, so it can anticipate Trump's policies. Iran's strategy to counter Trump involves first forming a circle of friendly relations with neighboring countries in the Middle East. Second, strategic overture and readiness to cooperate with the West. Third, deepening relations with Russia and China, which are a support if the previous two strategies fail. Under the "neighbors first" policy, Iran has established friendly relations with the Persian Gulf countries to weaken America's ability to strike Iran. Also, Russia and China represent Iran's key partners, who collectively face U.S. sanctions and U.S. efforts to limit their influence. Hence, this "axis" has been trying to build economic and military relations independent of U.S. pressure.

Shargh: Peacemaking or power-showing?

Shargh wrote about the trilateral meeting in Beijing: China delicately balances support for Iran and maintaining relations with Arab countries and Trump. However, Beijing knows that it cannot completely be a supporter of one side, as this could harm its economic and political interests. Therefore, by presenting itself as a neutral but powerful mediator, China is simultaneously trying to gain the trust of Tehran and the Arab countries. This approach not only allows China to strengthen its role as a global peacemaker but also allows it to use regional rivalries to advance its strategic goals. Ultimately, China's entry into the mediation process in the Tehran-Washington tension in the Middle East marks an important development in global diplomacy. Beijing, with a combination of economic interests and strategic goals, is trying to simultaneously prevent regional crises and take advantage of upcoming opportunities to strengthen its position against global competitors. This move will affect not only the future of the Middle East but also the balance of power in the world.

Etemad: Joining FATF is effective with revival of JCPOA

Etemad discussed the issue of the FATF in an interview with Mohammad Ali Vakili, a political activist. He said: In order to solve its fundamental economic problems, Iran must prepare the ground for the revival of the JCPOA and improve communication and economic relations with the world. In a situation where Trump has chosen the language of threats against Iran, joining the FATF may not be able to fulfill all of Iran's demands. However, if it is combined with a revival of the JCPOA, it will greatly help improve the economic situation. The maximum benefits of the FATF for Iran will be realized when the prospect for the revival of the JCPOA becomes clear and our foreign relations enter a new level. In this case, joining the FATF and leaving the blacklist would help Iran. But in the current circumstances, joining the FATF would not be of much help to Iran. Iran must first revive the content of the JCPOA and then look for solutions that can maximize the benefits from the JCPOA. In this case, the FATF is one of the solutions that will help Iran realize its interests.

Iran envoy condemns Israel's use of Islamophobia as a political tool

TEHRAN - In an address marking the International Day against Islamophobia, Amir Saeed Iravani, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, criticized Israel for perpetuating Islamophobia to justify its actions and policies. He called for global unity in combating religious discrimination and intolerance.

Iravani highlighted the adoption of General Assembly resolution 76/254 as a pivotal step in addressing Islamophobia, emphasizing the need for legislative and policy measures to counter hate speech and discrimination. He also praised the resolution on "measures to combat Islamophobia," which underscored the importance of raising awareness and eradicating Islamophobia in all its forms.

The ambassador expressed deep concern over the widespread anti-Muslim campaigns propagated through media and social platforms, noting

their detrimental impact on vulnerable Muslim communities. He specifically condemned Israel's actions, stating, "The world continues to witness daily aggressions against Palestinians," and highlighted that Israel is fabricating a link between Islam and terrorism to justify its crimes against Palestinians.

Iravani also addressed the defamation of Islamic values and desecration of holy symbols in Western countries, urging nations to criminalize such acts and engage in collective efforts to combat Islamophobia.

The ambassador also reaffirmed Iran's commitment to combating religious extremism and expressed support for the newly appointed Secretary-General's Special Envoy to combat Islamophobia, H.E. Mr. Moratinos. He emphasized Iran's readiness to collaborate closely with the Special Envoy in advancing these efforts.

Tehran says prioritizes constructive engagement with Europe based on mutual respect

TEHRAN - Abbas Araghchi, the Foreign Minister of Iran, has reaffirmed Iran's commitment to fostering strong diplomatic ties with other nations, emphasizing that the Iranian government prioritizes constructive engagement with European countries based on mutual respect and shared interests.

In a telephone conversation with his Dutch counterpart Kasper Veldekamp on Saturday, Araghchi highlighted Iran's willingness to hold discussions with European partners on matters of common concern and cooperation.

The two ministers discussed various aspects of bilateral relations as well as key regional and international developments.

Veldekamp acknowledged the historical and long-standing relationship between the Netherlands and Iran, emphasizing Iran's significant role in regional affairs.

He underscored the importance of leveraging diplomatic channels to promote mutual un-



derstanding, enhance intergovernmental relations, and address outstanding differences through dialogue.

One of the key topics discussed was the issue of the three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf.

Veldekamp stated that the matter is a bilateral issue between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and reaffirmed the Netherlands' position in supporting direct negotiations between the two countries.

He stressed that any disputes should be resolved in accordance with international law, reiterating the Dutch government's longstanding support for diplomatic engagement as the best path forward.

Tensions between Iran and European countries have escalated over the past two years due to European accusations.

European nations claim Iran has supplied ballistic missiles to Russia for use in the Ukraine conflict, an allegation that Teh-

ran has categorically rejected.

In a recent action against Tehran, the European troika pushed the adoption of a resolution in the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The resolution accused Tehran of poor cooperation with the agency and demanded a "comprehensive" report on its nuclear activities by spring 2025. In response, Iran said it has activated a "series of new and advanced centrifuges."

Iranian officials, including Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, maintain that diplomacy remains an option if genuine political will exists on the other side. Otherwise, alternative paths will be considered, emphasizing Iran's foreign policy principles of dignity, wisdom, and expediency.

On January, Iran and the European trio (E3) had a series of talks in Geneva. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Kazem Gharibabadi, described the talks as "constructive."

Iran will stay in the oil market, sanctions won't work: government



TEHRAN - Donald Trump's latest attempt to move towards eliminating Iran's oil exports met with a rebuke from government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani, who declared that Iranians would continue to sell their oil as they had for the past decades, undeterred by Washington's unrelenting sanctions.

"Under the sanctions regime, several ministries are on the front lines, with the Ministry of Oil being a key target. The hasty and targeted sanctions against Mr. Paknejad demonstrate their concern about the Ministry's activities and effectiveness," Mohajerani wrote on X.

On Thursday, the U.S. Treasury Department issued sanctions against Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, and some vessels that it said are part of a fleet involved in the Iranian crude oil exports.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott

Bessent said in a statement that the sanctions designated Paknejad and three entities engaged in the Iranian oil trade in China, and named three shipping vessels as blocked property for their use in the transactions.

The fact that the U.S. needs to impose new and updated sanctions suggests that previous efforts have failed, Mohajerani noted. "Oil exports will continue; we will not surrender Iran's share of the global oil market."

The new sanctions were announced a day after Trump's long-awaited letter was finally delivered to Iran via a visiting Emirati diplomat. The president has been saying that he wants a new deal with Iran on its nuclear program ever since unraveling one signed in 2015. He has meanwhile attempted to straddle Iran economically through the "maximum pressure campaign" beginning during his first term in 2018.

The maximum pressure campaign created a sharp plunge in Iran's oil exports in the beginning. But Iran managed to pick up on sales in the following years, with its biggest customer being China. China imported a record amount of Iranian oil in February after Trump ordered his administration to bring Iran's oil exports to "zero".

Analysts point out that after decades of debilitating sanctions, Iran has now honed the art of circumventing or neutralizing them.

Araghchi calls for stronger cooperation as Iran, India celebrate 75 years of diplomatic ties



TEHRAN - Tuesday marked a significant milestone in the history of Iran-India relations as the two nations celebrated 75 years of diplomatic ties. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi commemorated the occasion with a message shared on his X account.

"Today, we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations between modern states of Iran and India.

Of course, our shared history and cultural bonds go back centuries if not millennia, joining our nations at the hip. These ties have been paramount in paving the way for mutual growth and cooperation.

Looking forward to further strengthening our partnership for the prosperity of our nations," the top diplomat stated.

The relationship between Iran and India is rooted in centuries of shared history, cultural exchanges, and mutual respect. Modern diplomatic ties were officially established on March 15, 1950, and have since evolved into a multifaceted partnership encompassing trade, energy, and regional connectivity.

One of the most notable projects symbolizing this cooperation is the development of the Chabahar Port in southern Iran. This strategic port serves as a vital trade hub, connecting India to Afghanistan and Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan. It is also a key component of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which aims to enhance trade links between Asia and Europe. India has invested in the modernization of the port, including a 10-year operational agreement signed in 2024.

The partnership between the countries is not without its difficulties, notably the U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran. These sanctions create complications for financial transactions and investments, which could affect the progress of collaborative ventures such as the Chabahar port project. The U.S. is also reportedly poised to eliminate the sanction waivers that allowed India's involvement in Chabahar.

Indian authorities have said in the past that their bilateral ties are shaped by their own strategic interests, independent of outside influence.

Trump administration reportedly eyeing visa ban for Iranians, a move likely to escalate tensions

TEHRAN - U.S. President Donald Trump is reportedly considering barring citizens from 43 countries from entering the United States, with the strictest limitations proposed for countries like Iran.

Leaked internal government documents reveal a tiered system categorizing countries as "red," "orange," or "yellow" based on the severity of restrictions.

The "red" list, including Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, and Venezuela, would face a complete travel ban.

The "orange" tier, potentially affecting countries like Belarus, Russia, and Pakistan, would impose significant visa limitations, though exemptions for wealthy business travelers are under consideration.

Finally, the "yellow" group, which includes Cambodia and Zimbabwe, would face partial visa suspensions unless specific security deficiencies are addressed within a 60-day timeframe.

The proposed measures, stemming from a January executive order mandating stricter security vetting, mirror Trump's controversial policies during his first term, which included a highly contested travel ban targeting predominantly Muslim nations that eventually reached and was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2018.

Citizens from Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, and Venezuela, could face a complete travel ban

That ban also affected the Iranians already integrated into the American society, as they were unable to travel back home to meet their families.

Amidst reports of the new potential visa bans, the plight of Iranian immigrants de-

ported by the U.S. has resurfaced.

Earlier this year, Trump's administration faced scrutiny for its handling of Iranian migrants, many of whom are now enduring harsh conditions in Panama. Under a US-Panama agreement, dozens of Iranians were among nearly 100 migrants moved to a remote detention camp in the Panamanian jungle in February.

These deported individuals, including children, were initially confined to a locked hotel before being relocated to the Darien province, a region notorious for its difficult environment and prevalent diseases like dengue fever. One of the migrants likened the facility to a "zoo" with "fenced cages" and inadequate provisions.

The relationship between Iran and the U.S. is at a critical low point. While analysts argue that regaining the trust of Iranians is essential to resolving the ongoing tensions, Trump's rhetoric, aggressive policies, and past actions actively undermine that goal.



Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard, commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Joint Air Defense Base, said during a Tehran ceremony on March 15, 2025, that enemies are trying to fabricate the truth regarding Iran's military capabilities

Iranian women thrive despite Western-imposed sanctions: envoy

TEHRAN – Iran's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, Zahra Ershadi, has reaffirmed the unwavering determination of Iranian women in the face of Western-imposed sanctions, emphasizing their role in shaping a more just and progressive society.

Speaking at the 69th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York, Ershadi underscored Iran's commitment to advancing women's rights and acknowledged the significant contributions women make in strengthening the nation's social and economic fabric.

"Iranian women continue to drive progress despite the detrimental impact of unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) and the failed Maximum Pressure campaign," Ershadi stated.

"Their resilience has been instrumental in fostering advancements across various spheres of life. While external pressures attempt to undermine their rights, they persist in building a fairer future for themselves and their communities."

Highlighting the growing presence of Iranian women in key sectors, Ershadi pointed out that women now make up 33% of university faculty, 40% of medical science profes-



sionals, and over 50% of healthcare workers. Additionally, they account for 40% of specialist doctors and 30% of subspecialist doctors in Iran.

Their influence extends beyond academia and healthcare. Women constitute 45% of the public sector workforce and 74% of private sector employees, while also owning 32,000 businesses.

Each year, 300,000 rural and nomadic women undergo entrepreneurship training, contributing to a rise in women-led businesses and employment. Women have also secured 41% of newly created jobs in the country.

Ershadi highlighted Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's commitment to increasing women's participation in governance, noting that

over 190 women have been appointed to managerial positions nationwide. Pezeshkian has also instructed efforts to boost women's leadership in provincial and municipal offices, as well as other key government sectors.

In addition to discussing Iran's progress in women's empowerment, Ershadi strongly condemned Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza, describing it as a "systematic effort" to erase Palestinian identity and suppress women's rights.

"In my region, the Israeli apartheid regime's relentless aggression in Gaza amounts to genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity," Ershadi declared.

"The mass killing of innocent civilians—including women, children,

and the elderly—the destruction of critical infrastructure, and the forced displacement of entire communities represent egregious violations of basic human rights."

She stressed that Palestinian women and girls remain among the most vulnerable victims of Israel's attacks, as the violence deprives them of fundamental rights and impedes their empowerment.

"The international community must recognize these atrocities for what they are and take urgent, decisive action to hold those responsible accountable," she urged.

The conflict in Gaza escalated following Hamas' Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023, a response to decades of Israeli oppression. Since then, Israel's military offensive has resulted in the deaths of at least 48,524 Palestinians, the majority of whom are women and children, with over 111,955 others wounded. Thousands remain missing, buried under the rubble of destroyed homes and infrastructure.

Backed by the United States and its Western allies, Israel's war against Gaza has sparked growing international condemnation, with calls for immediate intervention to end the violence and address the unfolding humanitarian disaster.

World leaders could learn a lesson from Ayatollah Khamenei Don't negotiate with Trump!

From Page 1 ▶ **A man who** pardons those he calls "patriots" who stormed the U.S. Capitol, including some guilty of other crimes, but says that violent demonstrations against Tesla are domestic terrorism?

A man who orders the assassination of a top general (Soleimani) of an adversary in a foreign country (Iraq)?

A man who abrogates an agreement (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action also known as the Iran nuclear deal) that a previous American president signed along with Russia, China, Great Britain, France, Germany and the European Union and that was ratified by the UN Security Council, then imposes more economic sanctions and now threatens you if you don't come to the table and sign a new accord?

A man who threatens an adversary of Israel (Hamas) with hell if it does not obey his demands?

A man who threatens to take over what America does not own—Greenland, Panama, Canada, Gaza—by

force if needed in some cases?

A man who claims that Ukraine started the war with Russia after Russia bombed and invaded Ukraine and had earlier annexed parts of Western Ukraine and its Crimea Peninsula?

A man who cuts off intelligence to an ally of the United States, Ukraine, in the middle of a war?

A man who, in return for large campaign contributions, has ceded much of America's domestic and foreign policy initiatives to two financial donors (Musk and Adelson)?

A man who is in the process of evicting a legal American resident (the holder of a Green Card) who is married to an American citizen simply because he organized demonstrations at a major university and spoke out against Israel's ongoing war and destruction of Gaza?

So, an agreement with **such a President** is not worth the paper it would be written on. The best hope for countries singled out for "negotiation," aka "readied for bullying



and extortion" by President Trump, is uniting with similarly targeted countries and refusing to negotiate unless Trump stops his threats and agrees to have eventual agreements ratified by the U.S. Senate.

In a New York Times column on March 13, David Brooks summed up Trump's rampage of threats and extortion and their impact:

"Trumpian incompetence will provoke a counterreaction, which will prove to be an opportunity and rebirth. When that happens people will be ready to hear the truth that Trump will never understand—that when you

turn America into a vast extortion machine, you will get some short-term wins as weaker powers bend to your gangsterism, but you will burn the relationships, at home and abroad, that are actually the source of America's long-term might."

Ayatollah Khamenei has learned his lesson well. Bravo. There is no point in negotiating and signing an agreement with a man such as President Trump!

Hossein Askari is an emeritus professor of business and international affairs, George Washington University

IAEA chief: Iran's nuclear situation 'relatively controlled' despite tensions



TEHRAN – The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, has stated that the situation in Iran remains "relatively controlled."

In an interview with an Argentine media outlet on Saturday, Grossi addressed concerns that Iran is nearing the capability to produce a nuclear weapon. He described Iran's nuclear program as "highly ambitious and extensive," claiming that the country is enriching uranium to levels "almost suitable for military use."

"Iran remains a permanent item on the IAEA's agenda," Grossi emphasized. He noted that Iran has shown fluctuations in its nuclear commitments, sometimes failing to fully adhere to international agreements, which has fueled tensions with the global community.

"In this period of intense international instability, particularly in the Middle East, the IAEA's role in negotiations is absolutely essential," he added. "In Iran, we have a relatively controlled situation, though we are very close to the nuclear threshold."

His remarks come despite repeated assurances from Tehran that its nuclear program is strictly peaceful and remains under continuous IAEA monitoring. Iran has long maintained that its enrichment activities comply with international regulations and are not aimed at developing nuclear weapons.

During the interview, Grossi also addressed the IAEA's involvement in Ukraine amid its ongoing war with Russia, stressing the agency's critical role in ensuring nuclear safety.

"The IAEA has a very important responsibility in safeguarding nu-

clear facilities," he said. "During the war between Russia and Ukraine, we have actively worked to prevent a nuclear incident with radiological consequences."

Shortly after returning to the White House in 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed a presidential memorandum accusing Iran of "destabilizing behavior." The directive reinstated sanctions against the country and outlined plans to further strangle its economy.

The stated goal of the new directive is to bring Iran's oil exports to "zero" by reviving the "maximum pressure" campaign—first introduced in 2018 after Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

This campaign included the re-imposition and intensification of sanctions that had been lifted under the JCPOA in exchange for limits on Iran's nuclear activities. The unilateral U.S. withdrawal and subsequent sanctions were widely criticized as destabilizing and counterproductive.

Despite Iran's continued adherence to the deal's nuclear restrictions—repeatedly confirmed by the IAEA—the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" strategy tar-

geted key sectors such as oil, banking, and shipping, severely impacting Iran's economy and exacerbating humanitarian challenges.

The sanctions disproportionately harmed civilians, driving inflation higher and reducing access to essential medicines, while failing to produce meaningful diplomatic progress. European signatories, despite advocating for the deal's preservation, have struggled to counter U.S. pressure or offer Iran tangible economic relief.

The Biden administration's efforts to revive the JCPOA since 2021 were initially seen as a step toward easing tensions. However, these attempts largely failed to yield concrete results. In response to mounting pressure, Iran has gradually rolled back its JCPOA commitments, increasing uranium enrichment levels and restricting IAEA inspections—a move Tehran justifies as a lawful reaction to the deal's erosion.

On November 22, Iran announced its decision to activate advanced centrifuges and expand its uranium enrichment capacity. This move directly defied a resolution from the IAEA Board of Governors that criticized Iran's nuclear activities, despite Tehran's offer of new concessions.

Iran beach soccer team named for 2025 Asian Cup

TEHRAN – Iran beach soccer coach head coach Ali Naderi announced his 12-man side for the 2025 AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup.

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

The competition will be held in Pattaya, Thailand from March 20 to 30.

Squad:

Mehdi Mirjalili, Abbas Rezaei, Reza Amirizadeh, Saeid Piramoon, Ali Nazem, Mehdi Shirmohammadi, Ali Mirshekari, Movahed Mohammadpour, Mohammadali Mokhtari, Mohammadali Nazarzadeh, Mohammad Masoumizadeh, Mohammad Dastan

three points above Uzbekistan. The UAE are third with 10 points.

Iran squad:

Goalkeepers: Payam Niazmand, Mohammad Khalifeh

Defenders: Milad Mohammadi, Omid Noorafkan, Ali Nemati, Dania Iri, Mohammadhossein Kananzadegan, Amin Hazbavi, Arya Yousefi

Midfielders: Mohammad Mohebbi, Mehdi Ghaedi, Saman Ghoddos, Saeid Ezatollahi, Mohammad Ghorbani, Mohammad Karimi, Alireza Jahanbakhsh, Ali Gholizadeh

Forwards: Mehdi Taremi, Javad Hsseinnejad, Ali Alipour, Sardar Azmoun

Iran, Japan at top of AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup

TEHRAN – The AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2025 is just around the corner, with 16 teams set to vie for the coveted title.

Japan and Iran have each emerged champions three times. Japan clinched the title in 2009, 2011 and 2019, while Iran emerged victorious in 2013, 2017 and 2023.

The United Arab Emirates have won the title twice, achieving back-to-back successes in 2007 and 2008. Japan are the only other team to emerge victorious in successive editions.

Bahrain won the inaugural edition in 2006 while Oman are the third West Asian nation to have lifted the trophy, emerging champions in 2015. With the 2021 edition cancelled due to the COVID 19 pandemic, Asia's finest gathered in Pattaya in 2023 with Iran simply unstoppable, cruising to a 6-0 win over Japan to claim their third title. Iran hold the record for the most goals scored in a single edition, netting an astonishing 50 during their run to their 2017 title.

Japanese player Ozu Moreira is the tournament's all-time leading goal scorer with 31 goals.

Thailand made history in the 2023 edition by advancing past the group stage for the first time, defeating former champions Bahrain 2-0 on Jomtien Beach in Pattaya.

The 2023 edition featured 16 teams, the highest number of participants since 2013, surpassing the 15 teams in 2019 and 13 in 2017. The same number will compete in the upcoming edition.

Iran handball fall short to Belarus in Shiraz tournament

TEHRAN – Iran lost to Belarus 30-24 in the international four-team handball tournament in Shiraz on Friday.

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

Iran had defeated China 36-23 on Wednesday.

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

The tournament has been organized by the Iranian Handball Federation. 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.

Wissam Ben Yedder linked with Sepahan

TEHRAN – Former Monaco striker Wissam Ben Yedder is reportedly in talks to join the Sepahan football team. The 34-year-old has traveled to Iran to discuss a potential move to the Iranian top-flight club.

Currently, Sepahan, managed by French coach Patrice Carteron, sits in second place in the Iranian football league.

Sepahan has previously signed French midfielder Steven Nzonzi.

Ben Yedder was part of the French national team from 2018 to 2022, making 19 appearances and scoring three goals.

Iran win gold medal at FIVB Snow Volleyball World Tour

TEHRAN – Iranian men teams won a gold and bronze medal at the FIVB Snow Volleyball World Tour debut.

The first FIVB Snow Volleyball World Tour event in almost six years is over and nations that have never been on the World Tour podiums before collected all the medals.

The team of Iran 4 triumphed in the men's tournament in the winter sports resort of Erzurum Palandoken in northeastern Turkey, while Italy and Iran 2 picked up the silver and the bronze, respectively.

Home teams swept the entire women's podium, with Türkiye 1, Türkiye 2 and Türkiye 3, in that order, lining up with gold, silver and bronze, fivb.com reported. Iran had a memorable World Tour debut. The Asian country had four teams taking to the snow courts in the men's tournament. Three of them made it to the quarterfinals and two of them earned medals.

Iran 4, featuring Arshia Ahmadi, Fazel Valipour Gorji, Mahdi Alizadeh Koyakhi and Seyed Ali Talebzadeh, lost to Italy in a tight Pool B three-setter, but finished pool runners-up, advancing to the elimination rounds. They never lost a set again. In the quarterfinals, Iran 4 beat Turkey 2. Then they produced a 2-0 (20-18, 15-11) semifinal upset of top-seeded France 1, before getting back at Italy in Friday's gold medal showdown with a 2-0 (15-6, 15-10) sweep.

Persepolis move provisionally top: PGPL

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team defeated Malavan 2-0 on Friday to move top of 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

Ali Alipour opened the scoring for the hosts in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in the 16th minute and Serdar Dursun made it 2-0 in the 67th minute.

Elsewhere, Foolad defeated Aluminum 2-0 in Ahvaz and Mes and Esteghlal Khuzestan shared the spoils in a goalless draw.

On Sunday, Tractor will host Gol Gohar in Tabriz and Zob Ahan play Esteghlal in Isfahan.

Persepolis moved provisionally top of the standing with 47 points, one point above Sepahan.

Tractor are third with 45 points with two games in hand.

Iran team announced for Uzbekistan and UAE matches

TEHRAN – Iran national football team head coach Amir Ghalenoei has named his 21-man squad for two matches against Uzbekistan and the UAE in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers.

Iran will host the UAE on March 20 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium and play Uzbekistan at the same stadium five days later.

Team Melli sit top of Group A with 16 points,

Over 4,900 National Housing Movement units inaugurated in West Azarbaijan

TEHRAN – Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development inaugurated 4,980 residential units under the National Housing Movement in West Azarbaijan Province during his visit to the region.

In a symbolic ceremony held in Urmia on Saturday, Minister Farzaneh Sadegh, alongside West Azarbaijan Governor Reza Rahmani and several homeowners, officially opened 68 units.

According to Peyman Aramoun, acting head of the provincial Transport and Urban Development Department, the construction of these units began three years ago, with an investment of 34 trillion rials (approximately \$68 million).

Aramoun stated that out of the 68 newly completed units in Urmia, residents have already moved into 30. The project's funding was evenly split between personal contributions and government support, with each homeowner investing 5.5 billion rials (\$11,000).

The Abolfathi housing complex, which represents the broader 4,980-unit project, consists of three blocks—two five-story buildings with pilot floors and one six-story block. The complex spans 3,400 square meters of land and has a total built-up area of 8,200 square meters.

Minister Sadegh's two-day visit to West Azarbaijan included discussions on housing projects and urban renewal efforts. She also participated in the inauguration of key infrastructure projects, including the Khoy-Qotur-Razi highway, major roads, and rural transport networks.

Additionally, the minister reviewed progress on regional transportation projects, including the Urmia-Tabriz freeway and the Razi border terminal in Khoy, highlighting the government's focus on improving connectivity and urban development.

Iran's National Housing Movement is a pivotal

initiative by the 13th government, aiming to address the housing needs of the nation's growing population by constructing four million residential units over four years. This ambitious plan seeks to provide affordable housing solutions, particularly for low-income citizens, with 3.2 million units designated for urban areas and 800,000 for rural regions.

As of July 2024, the Minister of Transport and Urban Development announced that 2.6 million units are currently under construction across the country.

To support this extensive development, Bank Maskan has financed the construction of 378,880 housing units, signing contracts worth over 17.5 quadrillion rials (approximately \$3.5 billion) by March 2025.

Land allocation has been a critical component of the movement's progress. In the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-August 21), 2,333 hectares were allocated to National Housing Movement projects through approvals by the Urban Development and Architecture Supreme Council.

Additionally, the Islamic Revolution Housing Foundation (IRHF) is constructing over 730,000 units nationwide, with more than 250,000 units already completed and handed over to their new owners.

The government's commitment to this initiative is further underscored by President Masoud Pezeshkian's directive to relevant organizations to prioritize the National Housing Movement, emphasizing its significance in meeting the housing needs of the Iranian populace.

This concerted effort reflects a comprehensive strategy to enhance living standards and ensure equitable access to housing across Iran.

Home appliance production estimated to reach 20m units this year

TEHRAN – The secretary of Iran's Home Appliance Industries Association said domestic production of home appliances is expected to reach 20 million units by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (late March). The significant increase in production follows the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and the exit of foreign brands from Iran, indicating an improvement in both quality and quantity of local products.

Nasrin Ojaghi told IRNA in an exclusive interview that, according to the Seventh National Development Plan, production of home appliances is projected to grow by 8.0 to 10 percent in the current year. Previously, the country's annual production stood at around 6.0 to 7.0 million units.

Despite this growth, the market is facing stagnation due to a decline in purchasing power. Ojaghi expressed hope that measures taken by authorities would help revive the market next year.

She noted that due to economic difficulties, including currency fluctuations and reduced purchasing power, most television and outdoor advertisements in the previous year were focused on installment sales of home appliances. This trend highlights the demand crisis and increasing competition among domestic manufacturers, as the sector remains highly dependent on consumers' financial conditions. However, local produc-

ers have managed to adapt by offering products tailored to different consumer preferences and budgets.

Ojaghi also pointed to energy challenges in industrial zones, stating that power and gas outages in certain regions have caused partial shutdowns of many manufacturing units.

Regarding smuggling, the secretary of the association stressed that nearly 30 percent of home appliances in Iran enter the market illegally, avoiding customs duties, insurance, and taxes. She urged for regulatory reforms to create a fairer competitive environment for domestic manufacturers.

On exports, Ojaghi noted that Iranian home appliances are shipped to neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Iraq, Russia, and Kazakhstan. However, high transportation costs and sanctions-related restrictions pose serious challenges to export growth.

She highlighted foreign currency allocation as one of the main issues for manufacturers, explaining that it takes nearly four months from the time of order registration to receive allocated funds. Additionally, liquidity shortages and working capital constraints remain key concerns for producers, requiring urgent government intervention to facilitate financial support.

IMIDRO's exploratory excavation increases by 27% in 10 months

TEHRAN – The exploratory excavation conducted by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) increased by 27 percent in the first 10 months of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2024 – January 20, 2025), an official said.

According to a Saturday report by IMIDRO, Ahmad Fattahi Mejlaj, the organization's exploration director, said IMIDRO and its subsidiaries—including the Iranian Minerals Production and Supply Company, Sangan Complex, Iran Alumina Company, the Exploration Empowerment Project, Zarshouran Gold, National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO), the Copper Value Chain Project, and the Paya Consortium—conducted approximately 592,000 meters of exploration drilling from March through January.

He added that in the same period last year,

exploration drilling amounted to about 467,000 meters.

IMIDRO's exploration drilling target for the current year is set at 653,000 meters, Fattahi Mejlaj said, noting that 90.7 percent of the plan has been achieved in the past 10 months.

The total drilling completed in the previous full year amounted to 556,000 meters, he added.

Fattahi Mejlaj also highlighted IMIDRO's investment in exploration, stating that the organization allocated 36.072 trillion rials (approximately \$72.14 million) to exploration projects during the 10-month period.

He noted that IMIDRO's exploration investment covers geological mapping, geochemistry, geophysics, trenching and small-scale drilling, core drilling, as well as sampling and analysis.

Iran says its crude oil exports meet global standards

TEHRAN – Iran's National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has dismissed claims in some media outlets about the production of low-quality crude, stating that Iran's oil exports meet global standards and urging "biased media" to prioritize national interests.

According to a report by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), NIOC emphasized that it consistently prioritizes crude oil quality to maintain its brand and meet the expectations of its customers. The company stated that refineries—both domestic and international—are the primary consumers of Iranian crude, and maintaining quality is essential, as any decline would disrupt export and transportation operations.



NIOC further noted that during periods of peak production or when output expansion is a policy focus, fluctuations in crude oil's water and salt content may occur. However, the company stressed that such variations are not a cause for concern and

do not impact the global price of Iranian crude.

Iran's oil exports have risen significantly in recent months, driven by increased shipments to China and other Asian buyers. According to OPEC's latest monthly report, the Islamic Republic's

crude oil production increased by 37,000 barrels per day (bpd) in February.

China remains the top destination for Iranian crude, with independent refiners in Shandong province being key buyers. Iran has also strengthened its energy ties with Russia and Venezuela, engaging in barter trade and joint refining projects to expand its market reach.

Tehran has ramped up oil production while navigating sanctions through intermediaries and alternative payment mechanisms. The increased output has positioned Iran as a more prominent supplier in global energy markets, with analysts noting that its crude remains competitively priced compared to other West Asian producers.

Electricity consumption demand rises by 5%

TEHRAN – In the beginning of the final week of the Iranian year 1403 (Saturday March 15), the country's peak electricity demand reached 46,680 megawatts—a five percent increase compared to the same period last year, when the peak was 44,468 megawatts.

As IRIB reported, this surge in demand highlights the ongoing upward trend in national energy consumption.

Based on this peak figure, the total electricity consumption on the mentioned day amounted to 1,006,847 megawatt-hours, reflecting a 6.54 percent growth over the corresponding day in the previous year. Moreover, since the beginning of the current year, overall electricity energy consumption has increased by 4.95 percent.

The weighted average temperature across the country on the said day was recorded at 13.39 degrees Celsius, which is 2.38 degrees higher than on the same day last year. This noticeable rise in temperature may have contributed to the increased electricity usage, as warmer weather typically drives higher energy consumption for cooling and related activities.

In recent months, Iran has faced significant electricity shortages, leading to power outages in several cities. Rising demand, coupled with insufficient investment in power generation infrastructure, has strained the national grid. Officials have attributed the supply-demand gap to higher-than-expected industrial and household consumption, along with reduced hydropower output due

to lower rainfall levels.

The country has also struggled with issues related to aging power plants and insufficient natural gas supply for electricity generation, especially during peak winter and summer seasons. In some regions, authorities have resorted to scheduled blackouts to manage grid stability, affecting businesses and residential areas.

To address these challenges, the government has announced plans to expand renewable energy capacity and improve grid efficiency. However, experts argue that without substantial investment and modernization efforts, Iran's electricity sector may continue to face supply disruptions in the coming years.

Persian Gulf Saba Steel launches €200m expansion project

TEHRAN – The National Pension Fund of Iran, the owner of Persian Gulf Saba Steel Company, which produces 1.3 million tons of steel briquettes annually, has launched a €200 million expansion project aimed at boosting production capacity.

According to IRNA, Persian Gulf Saba Steel is Iran's first producer of hot briquetted iron (HBI). As part of the company's phased expansion plan, the construction of a second direct reduction unit has been set as a key objective.

The second direct reduction unit, with an investment of €200 million, will add 1.76 million tons of HBI production capacity per year. The facility, currently under construction on a 10-hectare site, is expected to create 400 direct and 5,000 indirect jobs.

Hojjat Mirzaei, head of the National Pension Fund, visited the Saba Steel plant in Hormozgan Province on Thursday, touring

various sections, including the production line, control center, and expansion project site.

During a meeting with Hormozgan Governor Mohammad Ashouri Taziani and local industry officials, Mirzaei highlighted the pension fund's commitment to industrial development. He stated that the expansion will increase the company's production capacity to 1.7 million tons, further strengthening Iran's steel sector.

Mirzaei also announced plans to ensure a stable energy supply for the plant, including the potential construction of a dedicated power plant to meet the electricity needs of Saba Steel and nearby industries.

Hormozgan's governor welcomed the pension fund's investments, emphasizing their role in national development, job creation, and economic growth. He pointed out that the fund's

presence in multiple sectors, including steel, tourism, fisheries, and energy, is a significant driver of regional progress.

Ashouri Taziani noted that ongoing steel projects in the province have a combined capacity of approximately three million tons. One of these projects, currently 22 percent complete, is expected to contribute substantially to national production and revenue.

The governor also highlighted the construction of a 500-megawatt power plant as part of efforts to ensure a stable electricity supply for industrial operations in the region. Additionally, the pension fund is expanding investments in fisheries and coastal tourism, leveraging Hormozgan's unique geographical advantages.

"These projects will not only enhance production and employment but also improve the livelihoods of pensioners by generat-

ing sustainable revenues for the fund," Ashouri Taziani said.

He further outlined plans for residential development and the establishment of an executive club for managers, adding that Hormozgan's strategic location in maritime transport presents additional investment opportunities in port infrastructure.

Persian Gulf Saba Steel is a subsidiary of the National Pension Fund's investment arm. The company operates 13 kilometers from the Persian Gulf Mining and Metal Industries Special Economic Zone in Bandar Abbas.

Briquettes, a compressed form of sponge iron, play a crucial role in the steel industry. Many foundries and manufacturing plants convert metal scraps into briquettes, which are then reintegrated into production cycles, improving efficiency and sustainability in the sector.

Iran's non-oil export to Azerbaijan up 14.5% in 10 months on year

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's non-oil export to Azerbaijan increased by 14.5 percent during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024-January 19, 2025), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesperson for the Trade Development Committee of the House of Industry, Mining, and Trade announced.

Ruhollah Latifi said that Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$572.953 million to Azerbaijan in the ten-month period.

In late January, the 16th meeting of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee was held with the participation of Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister in Tehran.

According to the news portal of Iran's Transport and Urban Development Ministry, the second day of the meeting took place on January 22, with the presence of Farzaneh Sadegh, Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development, and Shahin Mustafayev, Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister.

The Iranian minister expressed her satisfaction with the renewed collaboration, stating, "I am delighted to meet again with the esteemed Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan and his



accompanying delegation. I hope this meeting marks the beginning of a new chapter in economic cooperation between our two friendly and neighboring nations. The government of President Masoud Pezeshkian is committed to expanding bilateral relations and removing obstacles to cooperation."

She added, "After a hiatus of over three years due to various circumstances, I am pleased that we successfully convened the 16th session of the Joint Economic Committee in Tehran. I hope that by following up on agreements in transportation, customs, energy, oil, gas, electricity, water, banking, preferential trade, investment, and other areas, we can open new

avenues of collaboration and witness further growth in bilateral trade relations."

The Iranian head of the committee stated: "In 2023, trade volume between the two countries amounted to \$487 million, with Iran exporting \$473 million to Azerbaijan and importing \$14 million. Over the first 11 months of 2024, bilateral trade rose to \$583 million, with Iran's exports to Azerbaijan at \$570 million and imports at \$12.9 million."

"The trade potential between our two countries exceeds these figures. A five-year roadmap should be developed to achieve a target of \$10 billion in trade. In this context, I propose drafting a roadmap to resume negotiations for finalizing the preferential trade agreement, thereby expanding the volume of trade," Sadegh emphasized.

She highlighted transit cooperation opportunities, stating: "While notable steps have been taken in recent years to enhance this aspect of our relations, the current capacity in road, rail, air, and maritime transportation between the two nations is far greater than what is currently utilized."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Why demarcate the Lebanon-occupied Palestine border now!

From page 1 ▶ Obviously, what is motivating the Israeli enemy are the dramatic developments on the Syrian scene and the proposal of US presidential envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, regarding “the possibility of both Syria and Lebanon joining the normalization train.”

It further coincides with a call by the chairman of the Israeli Knesset National Security Committee, Boaz Bismuth, for imposing full Israeli control over Syria.

Observers confirm that Washington is seeking to convince the Israeli regime that it will not be able to return settlers and restore security and economic life to the occupied Palestinian north by signing a peace agreement with the Lebanese state.

Washington's goal in releasing the five Lebanese prisoners last week as a “goodwill gesture toward the Lebanese president,” according to Netanyahu's office, was to embarrass Hezbollah.

The move aimed at claiming that diplomacy is more effective than armed resistance!

As it turns out, negotiations



are futile because UN resolutions have long failed to oblige the occupying regime to withdraw from various occupied lands.

Apparently, the Israeli regime is planning to expand the geographic scope of its occupation to strengthen its negotiating position and impose a “peace” agreement on Lebanon under the pretext of “preserving security interests.”

This will coincide with an escalation in security, military, diplomatic, and financial targeting of

Hezbollah to weaken its ability to disrupt the alleged “peace” plot!

Meanwhile, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is expected to visit Beirut next week, upon US-Israeli orders, to secure an official Lebanese decision to disarm the refugee camps—by force if necessary—and take measures to contain any activity by Palestinian resistance factions in Lebanon.

Less than two weeks ago, the head of Palestinian Authority General Intelligence, Majed Faraj, secretly met with Lebanese Pres-

ident Joseph Aoun.

Reportedly, a series of meetings between Palestinian intelligence officers and the Lebanese Army Intelligence Directorate were also held.

The meetings focused on disarmament of all Palestinian refugee camps throughout Lebanon under the exclusive supervision of Palestinian Authority security personnel.

A list of decisions related to the social and humanitarian conditions of Palestinian refugees will then be drawn up for approval by the Lebanese government. Reportedly, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam has reassigned Basil al-Hassan to manage the Palestinian-Lebanese dialogue.

Al-Hassan is among those promoting a plan that primarily calls for disarming the camps. Accordingly, they would be integrated into residential surroundings and then subjected to the supervision of the Lebanese civil, administrative, judicial, and military authorities, which observers believe constitutes a covert settlement process!

America and manufacturing of terrorism: From supporting al-Qaeda to protecting Julani

From page 1 ▶ President Donald Trump openly declared that “Obama is the founder of ISIS, and Clinton is his co-founder.” This was not a slip of the tongue but a fact backed by evidence.

At the start of the Syrian crisis, Washington, through the CIA, provided financial and logistical support to terrorist groups under the guise of supporting the so-called “moderate opposition.” Reports by The Washington Post have repeatedly exposed this strategy.

Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry admitted in a leaked recording that the U.S. deliberately allowed ISIS to expand in Syria in the hopes of pressuring Damascus into political concessions. In 2019, Congresswoman and current Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard revealed that the U.S. government was directly arming and funding al-Qaeda in Syria, stating that “our government was supporting al-Qaeda directly in the Syrian war.”

Just days ago, former Senator Richard Black dropped another bombshell about direct U.S. support for groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS in Syria, making one of the boldest statements yet about the hidden aspects of the Syrian conflict.

Black highlighted the role of terrorist groups as tools in the Syrian war, a point that has long been debated by politicians and analysts.

His statement aligns with re-

ports revealing direct U.S. support for some armed factions that committed atrocities in Syria, either through funding by regional allies or by turning a blind eye to their financial sources.

• His admission that these groups “carried out all of America's missions” strengthens the argument that Washington used them as proxy forces against the former Syrian regime and its allies.

Historical evidence supporting the claim

Senator Black's claims are not new but serve as further proof from an insider within the American system. United Nations reports over the past decade have pointed to U.S. support for groups like Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Qaeda's branch in Syria) through channels in Turkey and Qatar, as part of a strategy to overthrow the Assad government.

• This support included funding and weaponry, despite these groups' well-known ties to terrorism.

• Western intelligence reports confirmed that some American weapons ended up in the hands of ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra after being funneled through the so-called “moderate opposition.”

Thus, Black's statement is not surprising, but it serves as an internal confirmation from a former U.S. official, making it harder to ignore and further exposing the American agenda in Syria.



Al-Julani: From wanted terrorist to Syria's U.S.-backed ruler

When Rubio talks about “instability in Syria,” he conveniently ignores the fact that Washington is directly supporting one of the world's most dangerous terrorists: Abu Mohammed al-Julani, the leader of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's official branch in Syria.

Al-Julani, once on America's terrorist list, is now the de facto ruler of Syria after the fall of former President Bashar al-Assad.

He enjoys direct and indirect American support, no longer merely the commander of a militant group but the face of a broader U.S. project to reshape Syria's political landscape in favor of Western interests.

American media outlets like PBS have even conducted promotional interviews with him, presenting a false image of a “moderate opposition leader,” despite his long record of massacres and human rights abuses in Iraq and Syria—especially against Alawites, Christians, and

Druze communities.

Meanwhile, a report by the RAND Corporation revealed that Washington sees him as a “potential partner” for future cooperation, exposing the U.S.'s blatant double standards in dealing with terrorism.

Al-Julani—who has now become President Ahmad al-Sharaa—was responsible for horrific massacres along Syria's coastal regions, where over 22,000 Alawites were killed. Yet, he has never been held accountable.

Instead, he enjoys indirect U.S. support, which translates into political and media facilitation, as well as a deliberate overlooking of his crimes. Yesterday, he was a wanted terrorist—today, he is Syria's president under American sponsorship.

The goal is clear: keeping the country in chaos and preventing any stability that might return sovereign decision-making to Damascus, free from Western domination.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Hamas agrees to release U.S. captive

“Significant gap still exists between Hamas and Israel”

From page 1 ▶ It has also made clear that any negotiations must lift the siege and ban on humanitarian aid entering Gaza.

Human rights groups accuse the occupation regime of using starvation as a weapon against the 2.3 million Gazan population to pressure them to abdicate their resistance.

Senior official Hossam Badran reaffirmed Hamas's commitment to maintaining the ceasefire agreement.

He stated on Saturday that “the Palestinian people are steadfast and committed to their land and will not abandon their homeland, regardless of the stance taken by U.S. President Donald Trump.”

Badran emphasized that “the Palestinian people will thwart all

displacement plans and remain the protective shield for al-Aqsa Mosque against occupation attacks and attempts to alter its identity.”

He added, “We are committed to implementing the ceasefire agreement in all its phases, and any breach by the occupation will bring us back to square one.”

Badran also stressed that Hamas had urged mediators to ensure the Israeli regime adheres to the ceasefire agreement, stops violations, and fully implements all agreed terms.

He welcomed any proposals that would help ensure the successful implementation of the ceasefire agreement, as long as they also protect Palestinian rights.

Meanwhile, in a statement, Hamas confirmed that it had re-

ceived a mediation proposal on Thursday to resume ceasefire talks and the prisoner exchange deal.

Reports say the movement has responded positively and responsibly to this proposal that has been described as “separate talks.”

On Friday, the Hamas agreed to release the Israeli soldier Aidan Alexander along with the bodies of four other dual nationals.

The resistance movement once again reiterated its willingness to negotiate and reach a comprehensive agreement on phase-two issues, while urging the Israeli occupation regime to fully fulfill its obligations.

The resistance front added that it had submitted its response on Friday, confirming its agreement to release the Israeli soldier, Aidan

Alexander, who also holds U.S. citizenship, as well as the remains of four other dual nationals.

According to Hamas, mediators from the United States, Egypt, and Qatar would take necessary steps to ensure the completion of negotiations and achieve a comprehensive deal that includes a ceasefire and full Israeli military withdrawal.

Experts argue that while the Israeli regime has threatened to resume war on Gaza, it is unlikely to succeed in confronting the resistance fighters.

They point out that Israeli forces backed by U.S. weapons to the tune of tens of billions of dollars was unable to defeat it during the 16-month genocidal war and suffered heavy losses in the process.

Rubio says South Africa's ambassador to US 'no longer welcome'

The United States is in effect expelling South Africa's ambassador to Washington, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio accusing the envoy of hating the country and President Donald Trump.

“South Africa's ambassador to the United States is no longer welcome in our great country,” Rubio posted on X on Friday, The Guardian reported.

Rubio accused ambassador Ebrahim Rasool of being “a race-baiting politician who hates America and hates @POTUS”, referring to Trump by his White House X account handle. “We have nothing to discuss with him and so he is considered persona non grata.”

Neither Rubio nor the State Department gave an immediate explanation for the decision. However, Rubio linked to a Breitbart story about a talk Rasool gave earlier on Friday as part of a South African think tank's webinar in which he spoke about actions taken by the Trump administration in the context of a US where white people would soon no longer be a majority.

Rasool pointed to Elon Musk's outreach to far-right figures in Europe, calling it a “dog whistle”

in a global movement trying to rally people who see themselves as part of an “embattled white community”.

Rasool is a former anti-apartheid campaigner who served time in prison for his activism and went on to become a politician in the African National Congress, the party of Nelson Mandela, the country's first post-apartheid president.

The expulsion of an ambassador is a very rare move by the US, although lower-ranking diplomats are more frequently targeted with persona non grata status.

In response, South Africa's presidency said in an online post that it had noted the “regrettable expulsion of South Africa's ambassador” and urged everyone to maintain the “established diplomatic decorum” on the matter.

It is the latest development in rising tensions between Washington and Pretoria. In February, Trump froze US aid to South Africa, citing a law in the country that he alleges allows land to be seized from white farmers.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Trump admin considers sweeping travel ban on 41 countries, memo reveals

The Trump administration is weighing new travel restrictions for citizens of dozens of nations, according to sources and an internal memo seen by Reuters.

The proposal would impose different levels of visa suspensions across 41 countries, Tasnim reported.

An internal memo divides the 41 nations into three distinct groups.

In the first group, 10 countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Cuba, and North Korea would face a full visa suspension.

The second group comprises five nations—Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar, and South Sudan—that would encounter partial suspensions affecting tourist, student, and certain immigrant visas.

The third group lists 26 countries such as Belarus, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan, which may see a partial suspension of US visa issuance if their governments “do not make efforts to address deficiencies within 60 days,” the memo states.

A US official speaking on condition of ano-

nymity warned that the list might change and noted that it has not yet been approved by the administration, including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The New York Times was the first to report on the list of countries.

The move echoes US President Donald Trump's first-term travel ban on seven majority-Muslim nations, a policy that evolved through several iterations before being upheld by the Supreme Court in 2018.

On January 20, Trump issued an executive order mandating intensified security vetting for any foreign national seeking entry into the US to identify potential national security threats.

That order directed several cabinet members to submit a list of countries by March 21 from which travel should be partly or fully suspended due to “vetting and screening information” being so deficient.

The directive is part of a broader immigration crackdown initiated at the start of Trump's second term.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tensions rise between Washington, Tel Aviv over US-Hamas Talks

US and Israeli officials are attempting to contain the escalating tensions behind the scenes following the unprecedented direct talks held by the US President Donald Trump administration with the Palestinian movement Hamas ahead of crucial negotiations on Gaza this week.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told Axios news site on Monday that “President Trump fully backs and supports” the talks his hostage envoy Adam Boehler held with Hamas,

Middle East Monitor reported.

“But the administration is also signaling it doesn't want those talks — and Israel's anger over them — to block other paths to a Gaza deal,” added the news site.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has refrained from publicly criticizing Trump since Axios revealed the US-Hamas talks last Wednesday.

Second Columbia student arrested amid anti-Palestine crackdown

The Trump administration has announced the arrest of a second pro-Palestine student activist at the US prestigious university Columbia University, following the widely protested detention of Palestinian student Mahmoud Khalil.

In a press release on Friday, the Department of Homeland Security accused Leqaa Kordia, an occupied West Bank Palestinian student at Columbia University, of overstaying her F-1 student visa, which was revoked in January 2022 due to “lack of attendance”, The New Arab reported.

The statement also revealed that agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had detained her for deportation.

Kordia was arrested in April 2024 for participating in antiwar protests at Columbia University.

Meanwhile, the visa of another doctoral student, Indian citizen Ranjani Srinivasan, was re-

voked on March 5 for “advocating for violence and terrorism”.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, Srinivasan chose to “self-deport”.

The Associated Press reported that Department of Homeland Security agents also searched the on-campus residences of two Columbia University students on Thursday, although no arrests were made during the searches.

The announcement followed remarks by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who stated that the US would likely revoke more student visas in the coming days.

The Trump administration has consistently equated participation in protests against Israel's war in Gaza with support for Hamas and has accused demonstrators of backing “terrorists.”

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tehran, Astrakhan discuss cultural and health tourism co-op



TEHRAN - In a recent meeting, Seyyed Mohammad Kazem Abedi, the Acting Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Astrakhan, exchanged views with Hamza Davudov, a member of the Duma of Astrakhan Oblast, discussing ways to strengthen bilateral relations in cultural and health tourism.

According to ISNA, one of the key topics raised was the establishment of a direct flight route between Astrakhan and Rasht, which could serve as a catalyst for expanding

economic, political, and cultural ties with the Russian region.

The officials also reviewed the potential participation of an Astrakhan delegation in the upcoming Iran Expo, emphasizing the importance of involving local officials and leading business representatives from Astrakhan in this significant economic event.

Furthermore, they underscored the necessity of following up on past agreements and accelerating the implementation of joint projects.

Trump administration weighs travel ban on dozens of countries, memo says

The Trump administration is considering issuing sweeping travel restrictions for the citizens of dozens of countries as part of a new ban, according to sources familiar with the matter and an internal memo seen by Reuters.

The memo lists a total of 41 countries divided into three separate groups. The first group of 10 countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Cuba and North Korea among others, would be set for a full visa suspension.

In the second group, five countries -- Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar and South Sudan -- would face partial suspensions that would impact tourist and student visas as well as

other immigrant visas, with some exceptions.

In the third group, a total of 26 countries that includes Belarus, Pakistan and Turkmenistan among others would be considered for a partial suspension of U.S. visa issuance if their governments "do not make efforts to address deficiencies within 60 days", the memo said.

A U.S. official speaking on the condition of anonymity cautioned there could be changes on the list and that it was yet to be approved by the administration, including U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

(Source: Reuters)

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Cueva de las Manos, Río Pinturas

The Cueva de las Manos, Río Pinturas, contains an exceptional assemblage of cave art, with many painted rock shelters, including a cave, with magnificent pictographies surrounded by an outstanding landscape, with the river running through a deep canyon, which were executed between 9,300 and 1,300 years ago.

The property takes its name (Cave of the Hands) from the stencilled outlines of human hands in the cave, but there are also many depictions of animals, such as guanacos (Lama guanicoe), still commonly found in the region, as well as hunting scenes that depict animals and human figures interacting in a dynamic and naturalistic manner.

The entrance to the Cueva is screened by a rock wall covered by many hand stencils. Within the rock shelter itself there are five concentrations of rock art, later figures and motifs often superimposed upon those from earlier periods. The paintings were executed with natural mineral pigments - iron oxides (red and purple), kaolin (white), and natrojarosite (yellow), manganese oxide (black) - ground and mixed with some form of binder.

The artistic sequence, which includes three main stylistic groups, began as early as the 10th millennium BP [Before Present]. The sequence is a long one: archaeological investigations have shown that the site was last inhabited around 700 CE by the possible ancestors of the first Tehuelche people of Patagonia. The Cueva is considered by the international scientific community to be one of the most important sites of the earliest hunter-gatherer groups in South America during Early Holocene that still maintains a good state of preservation and has a singular environment formation, unique at Santa Cruz province.

The rock art, its natural environment and the archaeological sites on this region are some of the very important reasons that made this area a focus for archaeological research for more than 25 years. They made an impact on the observer due not only the deep gorge walls surrounded by a privileged landscape, but also by the artistic compositions, variety of motifs and its polychromies.

These scenes represent a unique evidence to know about the first Patagonian hunters' behaviour and their hunting techniques. Cueva de las Manos, Río Pinturas contains an exceptional assemblage of cave art, unique in the world, for its age and continuity throughout time, the beauty and the preservation conditions of the paintings, the magnificence of the collection of stencilled outlines of human hands and the hunting scenes, as well as the environment that surrounds the place of exciting beauty and for being part of the cultural value of the site itself.

(Source: UNESCO)

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Iran welcomes Nowruz, a season of renewal



By Afshin Majlesi

With the countdown to Nowruz underway, Iran is buzzing with preparations for one of the most significant and cherished celebrations in Iranian culture. Millions plan to travel across the country or beyond to historical sites, natural landscapes, and family homes, while others will remain in their hometowns to observe traditional family gatherings.

According to the tourism minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, extensive arrangements have been made to ensure vibrant Nowruz celebrations nationwide. For instance, some 1,000 Nowruzgahs (special Nowruz-themed festivals) are set to take place across the country, providing cultural performances, storytelling, traditional music, and folk dances. These events, which officially started last Friday at Tehran's Milad Tower, will continue throughout the Nowruz period, except for the three spiritually significant Nights of Qadr during the holy month of Ramadan, when Iranians dedicate themselves to prayer and reflection.

Regarding the convergence of Nowruz and the holy month of Ramadan this year, the tourism minister has highlighted that overlap as a rare and unique occurrence, allowing for the integration of cultural and religious values in a harmonious manner. He emphasized that Nowruz symbolizes Iran's national identity, while Ramadan reflects the country's deep-rooted religious traditions, and historically, Iranians have celebrated both without conflict.

Iran also serves as a central hub for Nowruz-related diplomatic meetings and cultural exchanges. Representatives from various countries that observe Nowruz, including Turkey, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan, participate in special gatherings and discussions aimed at promoting cultural ties and strengthening the international significance of Nowruz.

Foreign minister: Nowruz is a symbol of friendship between nations and respect for nature

Addressing the attendees at

Tehran's Milad Tower, the Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi said that Nowruz is more than a national celebration; it is a symbol of cultural bonds, friendship between nations, and respect for nature and time.

"It is a great honor for me today to be with you--the representatives of the nations who celebrate Nowruz as their shared cultural heritage. Nowruz goes beyond a national celebration; it is a symbol of cultural bonds, fraternity among nations, and respect for nature and time. Nowruz, this ancient ritual, has been celebrated for centuries in a wide geography from South Asia to the Balkans and from Central Asia to the Caucasus as inspiring for hope, renewal, and consolidation. This celebration reminds us of an age-old wisdom arising from the heart of history, and a harbinger of tranquility, transformation, and peaceful co-existence."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Araghchi added that in the present challenging world, the need for dialogue, understanding, and cooperation is sensed more than before. The Nowruz ritual, per se, carries the message of friendship and interaction. "The Islamic Republic of Iran, as one of the birthplaces of this ancient tradition, has consistently emphasized the significance of dialogue and cultural cooperation among the Nowruz-celebrating states. Therefore, we believe that this common heritage can provide a ground for expanding regional and international cooperation in cultural, economic and social spheres."

Tourism minister: Nowruz is a catalyst for global peace and cultural unity

Another speaker at the ceremony, the tourism minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, underlined the principal role of Nowruz as a catalyst for fostering international solidarity, cultural cohesion, and a peace-oriented dialogue. Speaking at Tehran's Azadi cultural complex, Salehi-Amiri described Nowruz as more than just a calendrical event. He underscored its significance as a longstanding



Iranian discourse capable of driving global peace and strengthening cultural ties. The event was attended by ambassadors and diplomats from countries that share Nowruz as a UNESCO-registered intangible cultural heritage with Iran.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister highlighted the convergence of Nowruz and Ramadan this year, portraying it as a testament to the adaptability and resilience of Iranian civilization. He also asserted that Nowruz not only holds a distinguished place in Iranian cultural life but also has the potential to serve as a global model for peaceful coexistence.

A symbol of cultural convergence and identity

The minister reaffirmed that Nowruz embodies Iranian identity, the Persian language, and traditional customs, uniting Iranians beyond ethnic and religious distinctions under a shared cultural heritage. He described it as a reflection of peaceful cohabitation among neighboring nations and communities with common cultural roots.

"In an era marked by identity crises and global conflicts, Nowruz can serve as a comprehensive framework for fostering social cohesion and intercultural dialogue," Salehi-Amiri remarked. He further emphasized Nowruz's capacity to connect diverse ethnicities, nations, and cultures, likening it to a unifying thread that transcends race, ethnicity, and religion.

A transnational legacy and a tool for global solidarity

Salehi-Amiri asserted that Nowruz is not confined to geographical boundaries but stands as a manifestation of knowledge, dignity, humanity, and ethics. "Now, more than ever, we need the fundamental philosophy of Nowruz, which is unity, harmony, and mutual understanding," he said.

He concluded by stressing that Nowruz is not merely a theoretical or abstract concept but an active social practice that promotes cultural synergy and sustainable interaction among societies.

Cultural festivities enrich the global Nowruz celebration

The ceremony featured an array of cultural performances, including Kurdish daf music, traditional Nowruz songs performed by various Iranian ethnic groups, artistic video projections, and a fire display.

As part of its broader vision, like in previous years, multi-national Nowruz celebrations will be held to mark the arrival of the Persian New Year, providing a unique opportunity to elevate the ancient tradition on the international stage.

A UN label

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

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

In the days leading up to Nowruz, nearly every Iranian household engages in Khaneh-Tekani, or spring cleaning, a deep cleansing of homes to welcome the new year with purity and renewal. Families also purchase new clothing, dried nuts, sweets, and decorations to create a festive atmosphere in their homes. Markets and bazaars are bustling with activity as people shop for items to complete their Haft-Seen, the symbolic table setting featuring seven essential elements representing prosperity, health, and happiness.

Iran to host Shahnameh recitations by ethnic storytellers for Nowruz celebrations



TEHRAN - A number of storytellers and narrators from various Iranian ethnic groups have been invited to hold Shahnameh recitations in Tehran during Nowruz celebrations.

The special initiative, announced by the Tehran Provincial Office of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, aims to showcase the diversity of Shahnameh khani (Shahnameh recitation) in different regional dialects and styles. ILNA reported.

According to Ali-Akbar Toloui, Direc-

tor-General of the Tehran Cultural Heritage Office, Shahnameh khani will serve as a central theme of this year's Nowruz programs across Tehran. He emphasized that Shahnameh khani is not just a form of entertainment but an integral part of Iran's intangible heritage, deeply rooted in the oral traditions of various ethnic groups.

"With the convergence of Nowruz and the holy month of Ramadan this year, we recognize both as UNESCO-registered intangible cultural heritage elements. Shahnameh khani is a significant bridge between these two sacred traditions, as Ferdowsi's masterpiece contains themes of wisdom, morality, and cultural continuity," Toloui stated.

The initiative will feature Shahnameh recitations in multiple dialects, including those of the Lurs, Kurds, Bakhtiari, and Qashqais, among others. Additionally, a special performance will highlight the unique Shahnameh recitation style of the people of Bushehr.

According to organizers, the events will take place at designated Nowruzgah sites

across Tehran province, with the main venue set at Laleh Park and Keshavarz Boulevard. Recitation groups will also perform at various museums, ensuring wider public access to this cultural spectacle.

As one of the greatest literary works in Persian history, Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, which is comprised of nearly 60,000 verses, holds a profound role in preserving Iran's national identity, language, and cultural ethos. Traditionally, Shahnameh khani has been passed down orally, with storytellers learning the verses in village schools or from elder narrators within their tribes. Among Iranian ethnic groups, the Bakhtiari are particularly known for their longstanding tradition of Shahnameh khani, a practice that dates back over 400 years.

Due to the poem's epic nature, Shahnameh khani is considered a challenging art form requiring skill, rhythm, and a deep understanding of its literary nuances. The event in Tehran seeks to pay tribute to this enduring tradition while offering the public an opportunity to engage with Iran's literary and oral heritage

Intl. Conference of Iranian Aerospace Society slated for May

TEHRAN – The 23rd International Conference of the Iranian Aerospace Society is scheduled to be held from May 20 to 22 in Tehran.

The conference is centered around Aerodynamic, Propulsion, Flight dynamic and control, Space Science and Technology, Aerospace structure, Electronic and Communication, Management and Law, Security and Reliability, Artificial Intelligence, Environment and Remote sensing, Climate and Space Radiation, and Economics.

The conference will bring together prominent scientists and experts in Aerospace; it will also include articles, speeches, technical meetings, an exhibition of industrial products, and educational workshops for students and those interested.

Iran's aerospace at a glance

Iran took its initial steps in the aerospace industry in 1959, along with Iran becoming a member of the United Nations. It opened a national remote sensing center in Tehran under a program named "human use in outer space".

In addition to performing remote sensing, the national remote sensing center was also responsible for determining suitable sites for launching various space sectors, including information receiving and satellite



launching bases.

Iran experienced many ups and downs in launching satellites. In 1977, Iranian experts decided to launch a satellite after passing various courses, but the decision was postponed until 1986 when the sanctions fell short in comparison with Iranian experts' will and Iran booked three orbits for its three satellites.

According to the fourth development plan, Iran must launch one satellite every year. Currently, the three orbital points (26, 34, 47 degrees east) are registered in the name of Iran in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Importance of aerospace

The aerospace industry is crucial for the global economy, generating billions of dollars in revenue and employing millions of people. This industry supports the civilian aviation sector, providing passenger aircraft and cargo planes for travel and commerce.

Aerospace industries design, manufacture, test, sell, and maintain airplanes, helicopters, rockets, satellites, spacecraft, and their parts. This industry is also a scientific, engineering and commercial effort by humans to travel to the atmosphere and beyond the atmosphere to exploit its benefits.

The comprehensive document of Iran's aerospace development includes plans in the aerospace field; for example, paragraph 1 of the 5th chapter emphasizes space discoveries. According to the second paragraph, Iran should achieve the top rank in the region in the field of space conquest and mastery through relevant sciences and technologies by using the capabilities of the country's universities and scientific and research centers. The third paragraph focuses on sending humans to space.

On August 24, 2016, during a meeting with President Rouhani and his cabinet members, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution pointed to the progress in aerospace, nuclear issues, nano, and biotechnology.

The launching of the Omid satellite on February 2, 2009, is called National Aerospace Day.

In the past century, the world has witnessed the rapid progress of science and technology. This rapid progress has enhanced the level of well-being for people. It has improved the standards of living and provided services to citizens in the aviation industry.

The United States Space Force (US SF) was founded on December 20, 2019. It is the space branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and the world's only dedicated independent space force.

IRCS, ICRC explore avenues for boosting services in underprivileged areas

TEHRAN –The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have discussed ways for expanding collaborations to promote supportive and medical services, particularly rehabilitation services, in different provinces of the country.

During a meeting held on March 13, Vincent Cassard, the representative of the ICRC in Iran, stressed the need to prevent disabilities and develop psychosocial support services in less privileged areas. These valuable actions can pave the way for further cooperation.

For her part, the director of the IRCS for international affairs, Razieh Alishvandi, highlighted the successful partnership between the two organizations. Lauding ICRC endeavours in the country, the official stressed the importance of holding training courses on international humanitarian law (IHL) and the need to get acquainted with the Red Cross movement.

The IRCS has taken various measures to serve the people utilizing the capacity of 270,000 personnel, relief workers, and volunteers, she noted.

Cassard commended the IRCS for taking measures during Nowruz holidays and announced the ICRC's readiness to support IRCS in organizing the World Red Crescent Day and expanding medical, rehabilitation, and hu-

manitarian services in underprivileged areas.

Joint secretariat on rehabilitation services

In February, the IRCS and the ICRC agreed on setting up a joint secretariat on rehabilitation services in Tehran.

During a meeting in Tehran to prepare for the first international conference on physical disability and rehabilitation, Pirhossein Kolivand, the head of the IRCS, said rehabilitation is an essential part of universal health coverage.

"Due to war and other accidents, rehabilitation services are greatly needed in the country. That's why the Society started providing rehabilitation services and manufacturing prostheses and orthotics. Currently, 200 rehabilitation centers are operating in Iran, and the conference will focus on the activities of these centers," he added.

This meeting should focus on modern initiatives and strategies, policy making, and macro planning in the rehabilitation sector. Promoting public awareness of rehabilitation is also essential, Kolivand stressed, the IRCS website reported.

Utilizing artificial intelligence and new technologies in rehabilitation, fostering synergy and participation among national societies, developing new products, and global solidarity to provide rehabilitation services



should be prioritized.

"We look forward to expanding international collaborations. It is essential to establish a secretariat to follow up on the issues. We will do our best to help those who need rehabilitation services," Kolivand further noted.

François Friedel, the head of the ICRC physical rehabilitation, for his part, said "Social and psychological aspects of rehabilitation are highly important. Undoubtedly, the establishment of the secretariat in Tehran can help address the problems, and enhance cooperation among societies. The issue of rehabilitation is important for the International Red Cross Committee, and we are ready to cooperate with the Iranian Red Crescent Society in this field."

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Iran will defeat COVID-19, we believe: Chinese envoy

Chinese Ambassador in Iran, Chang Hua, has said he believes that Iran would overcome the crisis of coronavirus outbreak.

"We believe that by sending humanitarian aid, Iran will overcome the crisis," he said in a meeting with Mahmoud Reza Peyravi, secretary general of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, IRNA reported.

The envoy praised Iran's Red Crescent Society as the first organization affiliated with the Red Cross and the Red Crescent societies which sent humanitarian shipments of aid to the Chinese people.

A delegation of Chinese medical experts arrived in Tehran on Saturday with a cargo of aid to help combat the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19.

سفیر چین: باور داریم ایران بر بحران کرونا غلبه خواهد کرد

سفیر جمهوری خلق چین در تهران ابراز امیدواری کرد ایران بر بحران شیوع ویروس کرونا غلبه خواهد کرد. به گزارش ایرنا، چانگ هوا روز دوشنبه در حاشیه دیدار با محمودرضا پیروی دبیرکل جمعیت هلال احمر ایران گفت: ما باور داریم که با ارسال کمک های انساندوستانه از سوی دوستان دولت ایران از بحران این بیماری عبور خواهد کرد.

دیپلمات ارشد چین در ادامه ضمن قدردانی از جمعیت هلال احمر ایران به عنوان نخستین سازمان بشردوستانه عضو جمعیت های ملی صلیب سرخ و هلال احمر که محموله های کمک را برای مردم چین ارسال کرد، گفت: ما هم با شدت گرفتن ویروس کرونا در کنار ایران هستیم.

Yazd University joins CINVU

TEHRAN –Yazd University has become a new member of the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTech) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Inter-Islamic Network on Virtual Universities (CINVU).

CINVU is an international educational, research, knowledge-based, and technology network affiliated with the Ministerial Standing COMSTech which operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology of Iran.

COMSTech of the OIC established CINVU to improve the scientific, educational, academic research, and technological collaborations among the Islamic countries, and to support the educational and research networks based on technology and knowledge engineering, promoting joint venture and collaboration culture and expedition of cooperation and sympathy among entrepreneurs and Muslim scientists, scholars, students and researches of Islamic countries.

CINVU aims to develop educational equity, promote universal education utilizing smart technologies, and networking capacities. It leverages education, research, innovation, and technology to further advance and empower Islamic nations.

The network facilitates interactions among students, professors, and universities, as well as the exchange of information and resources. It also aims to strengthen strategic management models in higher education in the Islamic world, especially in the member countries.

Promoting the position and featuring the role of virtual and smart universities in national and regional development, providing a ground for joint cooperation to benefit from the synergy among universities, scientific, cultural and research centers in the Islamic world, conducting joint scientific, research, cultural, and management projects within and outside the organization, as well as developing knowledge network, and knowledge-based researches, and preventing brain drain are among other main objectives of CINVU.

COMSTech secretariats in Iran to be strengthened

The Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology is planning to strengthen the three secretariats affiliated with the Ministerial Standing COMSTech, whose headquarters are in the country.

These three secretariats are the network of virtual universities of the Islamic world, the network of nanotechnology, and the network of science and technology parks, IRNA quoted science minister Hossein Simaei-Sarraf as saying.

The official made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran in December 2024 with Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, the coordinator general of COMSTech.

During the meeting, Simaei-Sarraf highlighted the high capacities of Iranian scientists in conducting scientific and technological projects and called for mutual and synergistic relations between Iran and COMSTech.

Iran unveils national AI platform

From page 1 ▶ High speed, low cost, scalability, and security are the main features of the national AI platform. The project kicked off on October 20, 2024, and is planned to be completed by the end of the summer.

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.

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.



Carnival of joy held to welcome Nowruz

The Municipality of Tehran organized a carnival of joy on Friday to welcome the Nowruz holidays that start officially on March 21.

The event featured traditional characters and symbols of Nowruz as well as live classical music.



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MARCH 16, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

If you overpower your enemy, then pardon him by way of thankfulness to Allah, for being able to subdue him.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:13 Evening: 18:31 Dawn: 4:49 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:12 (tomorrow)

Gaza's Eltiqa collective holds show in exile in Dubai

One of Gaza's first contemporary art collectives, whose space in Gaza City was destroyed by bombing in December 2023, has been given a show in Dubai.

The exhibition "Eltiqa: How to Work Together?" opened last month at the Jameel Arts Centre and includes more than 180 works by six of the founding members of Eltiqa Group for Contemporary Art: Mohammed al-Hawajri, Mohamed Abusal, Abdel Raouf al-Ajouri, Raed Issa, Dina Matar and Sohail Salem.

Displaced across Gaza and beyond, the artists have collaborated with Art Jameel on the show, which will run until July 20, offering visitors a rare glimpse into the war-torn region.

"We did it because we feel we have to show something different during this situation in Gaza," Mohammed al-Hawajri, an Eltiqa co-founder, tells The Art Newspaper from Sharjah, UAE.

"The media shows millions of videos and images, but it doesn't talk about art," he says. "I think it's our job, our work now, to talk about artistic life in this situation—before and after our dreams."

Guest-curated by The Question of Funding—a collective of artists and cultural producers from Palestine and beyond—the exhibition incorporates each artist's personal story, with more than 500 accompanying captions focusing on the past three years.

Many of the works by Hawajri and Matar, his wife, come from a collection of around 500 pieces salvaged from the ruins of their home. When the couple fled Gaza in April 2024 with their four children, they left their belongings behind. The decision to leave Gaza, Hawajri says, followed several close calls with death that now shape their work.

One of the most terrifying moments took place while the family sheltered at Hawajri's sister's house. At 2 a.m., Israeli warplanes unleashed a wave of bombs on their quiet neighborhood, destroying around 20 homes, including theirs.

Trapped in darkness beneath the rubble, Hawajri was unable to reach his children until sunrise,

when they were pulled to safety. But 16 members of Hawajri's family, including his cousin and their children, were killed that night.

"It was a terrible night for us," he says, adding that he was unable to say goodbye to loved ones because there was no body left to hold.

Describing the next few weeks, Hawajri says: "The bombs were from everywhere: from the sky, from the sea, from the tanks." Out of options, the family fled to Rafah, in the far south of Gaza, and began living in a tent. "We had no water, no bathroom, no electricity—nothing," he says.

Building a new life from scratch and working in the safety and abundance of the UAE while his relatives remain in Gaza has not been easy for Hawajri. A common response from his sisters, friends and other family members has been "We are OK, but we hope to die"—a sentiment Hawajri says he understands all too well.

These emotions have become the foundation of his latest pieces, where he paints "colorful and beautiful" figures with wings, symbolizing a painful truth: people in Gaza are simply too tired to keep going.

Hawajri's new life has also brought unexpected changes to how he works. After years of rationing his acrylic paints and reusing canvases due to Israeli-imposed restrictions, he is now experiencing what it means to create art without limits.

"I make what I want; I can swim in the paint," he says, explaining that this new-found freedom gives him the energy and excitement to create.

The response to the Dubai exhibition has given Hawajri and his co-founders—some of whom joined the opening night via a video link from Gaza—fresh inspiration to continue creating and exhibiting Eltiqa's work globally.

Antonia Carver, the director of Art Jameel, says that the exhibition's title refers not only to the collective itself but is also "a provocation or invitation to the art world at large: how do we respond when artists, colleagues and culture itself is under bombardment?"

Iran's "Mahfel" Quranic program kicks off in Indonesia

TEHRAN—The popular Iranian Quranic program "Mahfel" is currently taking place in Indonesia.

Organized by the Cultural Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Indonesia, the program began on Friday and will run for five days, Mehr reported.

Two international reciters from the Iran, Ahmad Abolqasemi and Hamed Shakernejad, hosts of the acclaimed program "Mahfel", will be visiting Indonesia to host various programs in collaboration with organizations and Quranic elites in the country, the report added.

Mohammadreza Ebrahimi, Iranian Cultural Attaché in Indonesia, who is managing this event, emphasized that their efforts in executing this initiative are focused on holding programs at major mosques in Indonesia.

"As such, the Istiqlal Mosque — the largest mosque in Southeast Asia, where the Imam is the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs — and Al-Azhar Mosque, a branch of the famous Al-Azhar Mosque in Egypt, have been selected to host this grand Quranic gathering."

The presence of approximately 280 million Muslims in Indonesia has elevated the significance of Quranic activities, he stated.

"Additionally, various organizations in this country work tirelessly to cultivate human resources based on Quranic culture. Therefore, this year, the Cultural Attaché's office of Iran has placed special emphasis on Quranic activities and cultural interactions centered around the Holy Quran," he added.

Highlighting the special status of the holy month of Ramadan among the people of Indonesia, Ebrahimi added that diverse programs revolving around the Holy Quran will take place across various regions of Indonesia during



this period.

He underscored the cultural and linguistic similarities shared by Iran and Indonesia.

"In the realm of religion, the Holy Quran serves as a significant point of commonality between the two nations. Despite the challenges faced in bringing the "Mahfel" group to Indonesia, we have achieved this great event in collaboration with Iranian and Indonesian organizations."

He also mentioned one of the key features of this gathering is showcasing unity among Shia and Sunni Muslims.

"While the Indonesian people are aware of Iran's cultural capacities, there is limited awareness of the religious commonalities between the two nations. The objective of this Quranic gathering is to bring the hearts of Muslims from both countries closer together."

The Holy Quran is the axis of unity and coexistence among

various sects, he said and added: "We aim to highlight the Quranic potentials of both countries to their officials and peoples. The excellent and impactful program 'Mahfel' has garnered support among diverse movements in Indonesia, and we have leveraged the presence of these two reciters to foster unity among the Muslims of the two nations."

Therefore, the Iranian group will spend five days in Indonesia, where they will conduct programs in the attractive format of 'Mahfel' with the involvement of Indonesian elites across four cities, he noted.

Meetings with high-ranking Indonesian officials, including the Minister of Religious Affairs and other related authorities, are part of the "Mahfel" group's itinerary, he explained.

Moreover, over a hundred journalists will be present at the programs, which will be broadcast on reputable and widely viewed state and private television net-

works. Additionally, news agencies and print media outlets will cover this event extensively.

Ahmad Abolqasemi, renowned for his international Quran recitations across 36 countries, brings a wealth of experience and a captivating presence to the program. As a war veteran, Abolqasemi's beautiful recitations and engaging demeanor resonate with audiences, particularly young people and teenagers.

Hamed Shakernejad, a top-ranking contestant in international Quranic competitions in Saudi Arabia, has garnered popularity among the youth for his distinctive recitation style. Shakernejad's dynamic approach adds diversity to the "Mahfel" program, drawing significant attention.

The "Mahfel" program stands out for its diverse lineup of individuals from various fields, setting it apart from traditional Quran-centric shows. In addition to Quran memorizers and reciters, the program incorporates group singing, recitation, and declamation, adding a unique flair and energy that captivates viewers and keeps the program dynamic.

The carefully crafted rhythm and varied topics, coupled with the expertise of the host and editing team in shaping rhythmic structures, ensure a seamless transition from slow-paced moments to lively segments, preventing monotony and fatigue.

By featuring participants from different countries, "Mahfel" aims to provide a global perspective and showcase diverse cultural representations. The inclusion of individuals from various nations highlights the Quran's role as a unifying force, fostering solidarity and interconnectedness among Muslims worldwide.

Iranian filmmaker to judge at Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival

TEHRAN—An Iranian filmmaker will serve as a juror in the upcoming edition of the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival (SDFF), set to be held in California, the U.S., from March 27 to 30.

The documentary filmmaker Mostafa Salehi Nezhad will be in the jury of the Short Film section, judging films which are from 10 to 39 minutes in length. The winner in this section will qualify for the Academy Award, IRNA reported.

Mostafa Salehi Nezhad, 37, is a documentary filmmaker, journalist, and university professor with over 13 years of experience in cinema and media based in Iran.

His works have been screened at numer-

ous festivals, including Oscar and Canadian Screen Awards-qualifying festivals. Collaboration with organizations such as UNICEF and the World Food Program (WFP), has allowed delving into critical human and social issues on an international scale.

Founded in 2007, the first ever Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival boldly curated 44 films that brought into focus a wealth of talented filmmakers from Sonoma County and the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

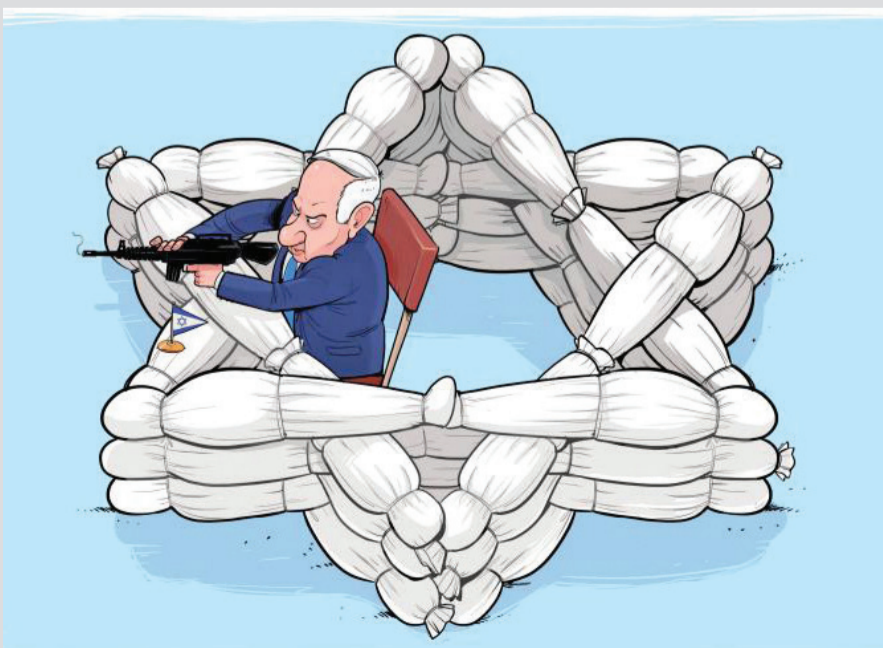
Sixteen years later, nearly 700 titles from 62 countries were openly submitted for SDFF 2023. Sixty-three films were programmed, attended by 93 filmmakers and an impressive audience.

SDFF honors diversity in all forms. It continues to provide equal opportunity for filmmakers through open calls for entry; explore what it's like for any life to wake to its existence.

It is an Oscar qualifying Film Festival for documentaries in the short form. It is proudly progressive, often featuring spotlights on social justice, journalism, and current issues. Films are chosen for excellence in craft, character, storytelling and authenticity.

The festival relishes diversity in all its forms, colors and capacities. Attending filmmakers often comment they come to see films here that they can't find anywhere else.

Cartoon of Day



Netanyahu

Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

Lars Svendsen's "A Philosophy of Freedom" published in Persian

TEHRAN—The Persian translation of the book "A Philosophy of Freedom" written by the Norwegian author and philosopher Lars Svendsen has been released in bookstores across Iran.

Navid Rashidian has translated the book and Nashr-e Now has brought it out in 391 pages. It is the latest title from the series "Library of Philosophy of Life" published by the publisher, Mehr reported.

Freedom of speech, religion, choice, will—humans have fought, and continue to fight, for all of these. But what is human freedom really? Taking a broad approach across metaphysics, politics, and ethics, Lars Svendsen explores this question in his engaging book, while also looking at the threats freedom faces today.

Though our behaviors,

thoughts, and actions are restricted by social and legal rules, deadlines, and burdens, Svendsen argues that the fundamental requirement for living a human life is the ability to be free.

Originally published in 2013, "A Philosophy of Freedom" questions how we can successfully create meaningful lives when we are estranged from the very concept of freedom.

Svendsen tackles such issues as the nature of free agency and the possibility of freedom in a universe governed by natural laws. He concludes that the true definition of personal freedom is first and foremost the liberty to devote yourself to what really matters to you—to realize the true value of the life you are living.

Drawing on the fascinating debates around the possibility of



freedom and its limits within society, this comprehensive investigation provides an accessible and insightful overview that will appeal to academics and general readers alike.

Lars Svendsen, 54, is a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Bergen, Norway. He has published sever-

al books translated into 25 languages. In 2008, he was awarded the Meltzer Prize for outstanding research.

"A Philosophy of Boredom" (2005), "Fashion: a Philosophy" (2006), and "A Philosophy of Fear" (2008) are among his other well-known books.