

With special issue

On the Path to Friendship

Pezeshkian's one-day visit to Baku results in seven cooperation agreements and commitment to strategic relationship program



■ Iran's President calls Azerbaijan 'second home' as he urges deeper Tehran-Baku ties

■ Between the East and West: Azerbaijan's playbook for strategic pragmatism

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian(L) meets Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev during his official visit to Baku on April 28, 2025.

Detention of Iranian citizens in France violates freedom of expression: Foreign Ministry

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Ministry condemned the detention of Iranian citizens in France, calling the actions a violation of freedom of expression and urging French authorities to resolve the matter promptly.

Speaking at his weekly press conference on Monday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei expressed serious concern over the detention of Iranian citizen Mahdieh Esfandiari and another Iranian citizen in Paris, describing the arrests as a violation of freedom of expression and a form of complicity with crimes occurring in the region.

Baghaei said Tehran had formally raised the issue with French authorities and pursued it through relevant diplomatic channels. He announced that Iran had secured agreement for a consular meeting with Esfandiari and called on the French government to swiftly clarify the situation.

"Our citizens have committed no crime other than expressing their emotions regarding the atrocities currently unfolding in the region," Baghaei stressed. ► Page 2

'Future of Iran-Tunisia relations holds great promise'

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – Iran and Tunisia may not be close in distance. But between the two capitals located in West Asia and North Africa exists deep mutual respect and common interests.

Both countries have endured years of foreign intervention in their modern history, only reclaiming control over their destinies in recent decades. Alongside shared religious and humanitarian values, this historical parallel has fostered a friendship between Iran and Tunisia—one that still holds untapped potential for deeper ties.

One area where cooperation remains underdeveloped is economic relations. Trade volumes between the two nations fall far short of their true potential, analysts say. In an interview with Tunisia's Minister of Trade and Export Development, Samir Abid, the Tehran Times explored the reasons behind this stagnation and how economic collaboration can be strengthened. Minister Abid arrived in Tehran earlier this week to attend the 3rd Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Summit. ► Page 2

The New Horizon of Nader Talebzadeh

By Sander Hicks

Nader Talebzadeh hosted hot debates on Iranian TV shows, and made films on the front lines of wars. He was an active participant in the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Ayatollah Khomeini was a bit like Gandhi, he said, in that he told people, "Stay home, don't work, stop the economy, and the Shah will leave, without violence," and he did. He told me stories about how the US Embassy takeover there was utterly spontaneous. He made it sound like something from Occupy Wall Street.

Nader's contribution to world peace was his international conference, called "New Horizon." Here, he annually brought together American and international dissidents. His team flew us into Iran, for speeches, interviews, dialogue, creating a vantage point from which one could see a new kind of horizon beyond war and empire. It was a chance to see Middle East politics up close, and to see how much Iran wanted to help the people of Palestine. I participated in Tehran in 2017. ► Page 8

New stage of Israel's pressure on Lebanon

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — In a flagrant violation of the ceasefire and the Lebanese sovereignty, and in continuation of the U.S.-Israeli strategy pursued since the ceasefire agreement last November, the Israeli regime launched an aerial attack on the southern suburbs of Beirut on Sunday evening. The air raid comes as both Tel Aviv and Washington are convinced that the September-November war on Lebanon failed to weaken Hezbollah or end its threat.

The focus initially was on bombing all vital facilities, homes, infrastructure, and houses in the villages on the front line with occupied Palestine. The attacks then extended north of the Litani River, reaching the Bekaa Valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Undoubtedly, the new aggression coincided with massive political and media propaganda led by Lebanon's anti-Resistance team. ► Page 3



Rescue, relief operations underway at Shahid Rajaei Port

Medical staff are providing rescue and relief services to people who were injured during the massive explosion that occurred at Shahid Rajaei Port on Saturday.

The tragic incident has left 70 dead and some 1,200 injured so far. The strategically important port lies around 15 kilometers southwest of the port of Bandar Abbas on the northern shore of the Strait of Hormuz.

The exact cause of the explosion has yet to be known. However, Fatemeh Mohajerani, the government spokeswoman, said some containers that had been stored at the port and contained chemicals had probably exploded.

The government declared Monday a day of mourning across the country.

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Conflicting signals from Washington

In a commentary, Etemad addressed the challenging conditions of the Iran-U.S. negotiations and wrote: A group of observers believe that Trump's unique instincts and his special negotiating style could possibly lead to a positive outcome, preventing war with Iran and weakening extremists in Washington and Tel Aviv.

Trump has realized in his second term that Netanyahu could be one of the biggest obstacles to an agreement with Iran.

Now, if Trump continues to resist Netanyahu, warmongering Republicans, and some of his advisors, he may be able to reach a significant agreement with Iran. However, observers consider another variable affecting Donald Trump's approach to negotiations with Iran. Although Steve Witkoff led the U.S. delegation, as in the previous two rounds of talks in Oman and Italy, the appointment of senior State Department official Michael Anton as the chief of the U.S. technical team has once again prompted analysts to assess Trump's real approach.

Arman-e-Melli: Trump is looking for achievement

In a note, Arman-e-Melli discussed Trump's efforts to reach an agreement with Iran after his failure on the issue of tariffs.

The paper said: What attracts attention amidst the comments of the negotiating officials, while emphasizing the complexity of the negotiations, are the data and codes that the Omani Foreign Minister announced after the third round of negotiations.

While emphasizing the constructive nature of the talks, he announced that high-level negotiations would be held between the parties on May 3. Now, the suspicion comes to mind as to whether the Iranian and American presidents are going to meet, or whether the Iranian and American foreign ministers are set to sit for negotiations.

Of course, some experts have also stated that since Trump has not been able to achieve success in tariff disputes with China, Canada, Panama, and other foreign policy priorities, he intends to reach a good agreement with Tehran to have an acceptable record that can be presented to the American public.

Therefore, he needs an understanding with Tehran to make a deal.

Iran: Relationship with Africa should be purposeful

In an analysis, the Iran newspaper discussed the third Iran-Africa cooperation

summit in Tehran and wrote: Africa is a collection of countries with huge economic, mineral, agricultural, political, and cultural capacities, which have prompted major powers to compete for influence in the continent. Given its needs and capacities, Iran can also play a role in the continent.

From a political point of view, Africa, with 54 countries, enjoys a significant place in international forums such as the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Cooperation with African countries can provide Iran with effective political support. Relying solely on governments and ignoring the role of the private sector has limited Iran's success in Africa.

To gain a foothold in African markets and enjoy the capacities of the continent, we must develop our relations with selected African countries with more accurate knowledge, proper planning, and active participation of the private sector.

Shargh: The impact of regional tensions on Iran's national security

Shargh devoted its headline to the increasing tension between India and Pakistan. It wrote: Any tension or conflict in the geopolitical sphere surrounding Iran, especially in a region where two nuclear powers such as India and Pakistan are present, will have direct and ripple effects on the national security of our country.

Iran, as a country that shares borders with Pakistan and has established long-standing and strong economic, commercial, and cultural relations with India, cannot be indifferent to developments in this region.

The escalation of the conflict between India and Pakistan, especially if it leads to a full-scale military confrontation, could create a wave of instability in the region that will directly affect Iran's eastern borders.

Given the highly volatile situation, Iran needs to play a mediating role. By accepting this role, Tehran can prevent the region from becoming a crisis center and protect its national interests and security from the adverse consequences of a potential conflict.

This security motive drives Iranian foreign policy towards a more active approach to managing regional tensions.

Iran successfully defends against 'sophisticated' cyberattack



TEHRAN – Iran has thwarted a major cyberattack targeting its critical national infrastructure, according to a senior official.

Behzad Akbari, Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology, announced the successful defense on social media, stating that the attack was sophisticated but was quickly detected and neutralized before causing any damage.

While Akbari did not provide specific details about the nature or origin of the cyber intrusion, he credited the swift response of security and technical teams at the Telecommunication Infrastructure Company and the Ministry of Communications for preventing any harm to the targeted systems.

Iran has increasingly become a frequent target of cyber warfare, with the United

States and Israel often cited as potential aggressors.

In response to these persistent threats, a strong cyber defense program has been developed over the past decade.

This program aims to safeguard crucial infrastructure, including banking systems, communication networks, and the energy sector.

One of the most notable past incidents includes the Stuxnet malware attack around 2010, a joint US-Israeli operation that targeted Iran's nuclear facilities.

More recently, in January 2023, Iran's Central Bank and popular messaging applications were also targeted in extensive cyberattacks. Iran's cyber defense systems were able to minimize the disruptions.

'Future of Iran-Tunisia relations holds great promise'

Tunisian trade minister discusses political and economic cooperation with Tehran Times

From page 1 ▶

Below is the full text of the interview:

We have observed that political relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Tunisia have become warmer in recent years. However, economic ties have not reached the expected level. What is the reason behind this discrepancy?

I want to emphasize that political relations between our countries are at a very high level, sophisticated, and strategic. As for economic relations, several factors have contributed to their lower level. One of the reasons is that, for a certain period, there were fewer direct engagements.

Additionally, Iran has had other geographical and political priorities, particularly in Africa. Political pressures and global challenges also had a direct impact on economic cooperation, as diplomatic discussions often prioritize political matters over economic concerns.

Yesterday, we had a working session with our Iranian counterparts to address this issue. Together, we examined mechanisms to enhance economic relations and raise them to the level of our strong political



ties. There are significant opportunities in both countries. Tunisia and Iran can benefit mutually, as the global economic landscape provides ample space for collaboration. We have agreed on concrete steps to elevate our economic cooperation.

So, are national priorities the main reason behind the relatively low economic engagement between the two countries?

I wouldn't say economic engagement has declined, but rather that each country had different priorities. Iran was under intense international pressure, which made direct economic coordination more difficult. However, the upcoming joint committee meeting in Tunisia will serve as a practical framework for strengthening ties. This meet-

ing will allow us to examine all economic sectors, explore available opportunities, and develop new approaches to deepen our collaboration.

What specific economic opportunities can both countries leverage to enter new markets?

As I previously mentioned, our economic environments provide promising opportunities. Tunisia serves as a gateway to Africa, given its strong relations with several African nations. Iran, on the other hand, has a significant presence in Asian markets and strategic ties with Russia and other distant economies. By working together, Iran and Tunisia can create new avenues for market expansion and trade.

Furthermore, tourism is one sector we've identified as prom-

ising. Beyond that, there are other industries where joint ventures could be explored. For example, Iranian and Tunisian businesses could collaborate to develop new products or services that can be introduced to third markets. Establishing partnerships in strategic industries would enhance mutual economic growth.

Based on your engagements in Iran so far, how do you envision the future of economic cooperation between Iran and Tunisia?

The strong political will between our nations provides a solid foundation for economic expansion. Given the willingness I've observed from my Iranian counterparts, I believe we have every reason to be optimistic. Our political relations are at an exemplary level, and we are committed to ensuring economic cooperation reaches similar heights.

Achieving these goals will require active private-sector engagement. While government institutions play a crucial role, fostering business exchanges will be essential. We need to encourage visits and dialogues between Iranian and Tunisian enterprises, not only to boost direct trade but also to explore opportunities in broader international markets.

Araghchi blasts Netanyahu's 'brazen' interference in Iran-US diplomacy, vows reciprocal response to any aggression

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi issued a scathing rebuke of Israeli regime's Benjamin Netanyahu's calls for dismantling Iran's nuclear infrastructure, denouncing the remarks as "detached from reality" and a brazen attempt to sabotage Tehran's diplomatic engagements.

In a Monday post on X, Araghchi responded to Netanyahu's Sunday speech at the Jewish News Syndicate (JNS) conference in al-Quds (Jerusalem), where the Israeli official insisted that Iran must lose all uranium enrichment capabilities, invoking the provocative "Libyan model" of disarmament.

"Israel's fantasy that it can dictate what Iran may or may not do is so detached from reality that it hardly merits a response," Araghchi wrote, noting that Netanyahu has overstepped into U.S. policymaking.

Iran's top diplomat continued: "What is striking is how brazenly Netanyahu is now dictating what President Trump can and cannot do in his diplomacy with Iran."

Netanyahu had said that "any agreement allowing Iran to resume enrichment later would lead to the opposite result," contending, "One way or another, Iran will not have nuclear weapons."

He had demanded the destruction of Iranian centrifuges and the removal of enriched uranium, framing it as the only path to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

Araghchi dismissed these demands as "malicious" interference, criticizing Netanyahu's "Allies in the Failed Biden Team" for falsely equating recent indirect Iran-U.S. negotiations to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

(JCPOA).

"Let me be clear: Iran is strong and confident enough in its capabilities to thwart any attempt by external actors to sabotage its foreign policy or dictate its course," he stated, urging U.S. counterparts to resist Israeli pressure.

The Foreign Minister's remarks were echoed by his spokesman, Esmail Baqaei, during his weekly press briefing on Monday.

Baqaei noted that the Israeli regime's officials use inflammatory rhetoric to divert attention from "their ongoing genocidal actions in Gaza" and obstruct diplomatic progress.

"Any reckless misadventure or misguided action will provoke a forceful Iranian response," he warned, calling on Western nations to cease enabling the "regime built on perpetual conflict."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Detention of Iranian citizens in France violates freedom of expression: Foreign Ministry

From page 1 ▶ Responding to a question about Iran's broader efforts to protect its nationals abroad, Baghaei emphasized that the Foreign Ministry considers it a duty to follow up on any challenges faced by Iranian citizens internationally. "We are pleased that a step has been taken in Ms. Esfandiari's case, and we expect France to honor its international human rights obligations," he said.

'Iran committed to red lines in negotiations'

Baghaei outlined Tehran's diplomatic activities, stressed adherence to national interests, and responded to recent international developments.

He emphasized that no details of any negotiation would be finalized unless Iran's overarching framework and red lines are strictly observed. "We will seriously uphold our red lines," he noted.

Highlighting Iran's diplomatic outreach, Baghaei said Iran's extensive dialogue with neighboring countries and JCPOA parties demonstrates the country's goodwill and constructive intentions. He expressed hope that European countries would adopt a positive role in ongoing discussions.

Regarding the scheduling of further negotiations, Baghaei said timing would be determined by mutual agreement, reaffirming Iran's seriousness in pursuing talks aimed at lifting sanctions that have targeted the Iranian people.

Reviewing the past week's dip-

lomatic activities, Baghaei highlighted the Foreign Minister's trips to China and Russia, during which intensive consultations were held regarding developments in Gaza and the West Bank. "Unfortunately, the genocide in Gaza continues with increasing brutality," he said, adding that nearly 300 innocent people were killed there last week alone. He criticized the international community for failing the humanitarian test, blaming American and certain Western support for Israel.

'Access to Iranian assets abroad a key demand of talks'

Baghaei stressed that unfreezing Iran's assets abroad is an essential part of ongoing negotiations.

He said Tehran is relying on expert consultations during the process, including seasoned economic and nuclear specialists, and will insist on full access to the nation's frozen funds.

'European countries not ousted from talks'

Baghaei rejected claims that Iran sought to exclude European countries from diplomatic efforts, saying, "Their absence is a result of their own decisions, not Iran's."

'Iran-China relations a model of respectful partnership'

In response to Western criticisms of Iran's growing relations with China, Baghaei said Iran's partnership with Beijing is based on mutual respect and shared interests, contrasting it with the destabilizing role of Western powers in the re-



gion. "China's engagement has been constructive, while certain Western countries have been complicit in genocide and regional interventions," he said.

'IAEA technical delegation visits Tehran'

Baghaei confirmed the arrival of a technical delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Tehran, following agreements reached during Director General Rafael Grossi's recent talks with Iranian officials.

Discussions will focus on remaining safeguards issues. "We expect the Agency to act professionally and steer clear of political behavior," he stressed.

'Iran values its long-standing relations with both India and Pakistan'

Addressing recent tensions between India and Pakistan following a terrorist attack in India, Baghaei expressed sympathy with the Indian people and emphasized that Iran values its long-standing relations with both countries. "We hope ten-

sions subside; we do not welcome instability between these two important Asian neighbors," he said, noting that both the President and Foreign Minister had reached out to their counterparts.

'Tehran, Baku relations on path of progress'

Baghaei described President Pezeshkian's upcoming visit to Azerbaijan as highly significant, noting that months of preparation had gone into the trip. He said the visit would open a new chapter in bilateral relations and stressed the importance of stability in the South Caucasus.

'Iran-Africa Summit and Iran Expo highlight economic potential'

Baghaei praised the successful organization of the Iran-Africa Summit and Iran Expo, where over 100 countries participated.

He said the events showcased Iran's economic and technological capabilities and strengthened ties with African nations, although greater potential remains to be tapped.

From Page 1 ▶ threatening Hezbollah with disarmament, otherwise, its popular base would face further bombing campaigns, pressure, and the obstruction of reconstruction.

It is noteworthy that in the Sunday evening attack, the Israeli enemy did not claim—as it did previously—that it was an alleged response to rockets fired from Lebanon into the occupied Palestinian territories.

Given the international silence and inaction by the Lebanese government, this move could translate into the enemy launching more attacks in the future.

In terms of the timing and scope of the attack, the aggression was intended to intimidate and pressure the pro-Resistance popular base into believing that this bombardment campaign was just one in a series of ongoing attacks.

However, it has become clear that the Israelis understand the importance of time in achieving the strategic political objectives of the war.



A man takes pictures of the aftermath of Israeli strikes in Beirut's southern suburb on April 27, 2025

Hence, they and Washington appear to be in a hurry, realizing that Hezbollah is in the process of full recovery, a fact that is neither hidden nor secret. This has long been one of Hezbollah's most important advantages in all previous confrontations.

Besides, it seems that these concerns have also spread to Lebanon's anti-Resistance faction, which is highly betting on Israel and openly expressing

the need to disarm Hezbollah as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the urgent question that pops up is: When will the Lebanese government move to the stage of curbing Israeli attacks, given that what it is doing now is what prompted the people of the south to take up arms and resist Israel in the last decade?

It is no longer acceptable for Lebanon to remain under the threats of the enemy's army

spokesman, Avichay Adraee.

However, what is regrettable is that the Lebanese government has taken no actual diplomatic action in protest against Israel's violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and the ceasefire agreement.

How many times has the Lebanese foreign minister summoned both the American and French ambassadors to convey Lebanon's official protest against what the Israeli enemy is doing?!

Undeniably, the attack on Beirut's southern suburb not only targeted the popular base of the Resistance, but also targeted the Lebanese state, with all its institutions, government, sovereignty, independence, and security. It speaks well that Israel and those behind it do not take the alleged "peace" seriously.

Therefore, when the state is unable to protect its people, it is necessary to seek ways for protection, as martyr Sayyed Musa al-Sadr suggested in 1974, before the founding of the current Resistance movement and even before the Israeli invasion!

U.S. airstrike kills scores in Yemen

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – U.S. airstrike kills and injures scores of African migrants in Yemen, marking the latest civilian casualties in America's aggression.

According to Yemeni civil defense officials, the attack on the detention center in Saada province killed at least 68 African migrants and injured 47 others, with the death toll expected to rise.

The attack is one of the deadliest so far in six weeks of intensified U.S. airstrikes. Local hospitals reported being overwhelmed with casualties following the strike.

The Yemeni Interior Ministry confirmed the shelter housed 115 migrants of various African nationalities and was operating under the supervision of the International Organization for

Migration (IOM) and Red Cross.

In a strongly-worded statement, the ministry condemned the attack as "a full-fledged war crime" and a "blatant violation of international humanitarian law," holding the U.S. government fully responsible for what it said was a "heinous crime against innocent civilians."

The American administration had committed a "brutal crime" by bombing the Saada center, which held more than 100 undocumented African migrants, Ansarallah spokesperson Mohammed Abdulsalam said in a social media post.

The massacre follows a series of U.S. airstrikes in Yemen, including four consecutive raids on a district in al-Jawf governorate earlier.

The Yemeni Health Ministry also report-

ed that 12 civilians, including two women and three children, were killed or wounded in a separate U.S. strike near the capital city of Sanaa two days ago.

Local officials described the Saada attack as yet another example of what they called "American criminality and recklessness" in "support of the Zionist regime". Rescue operations continued at the site as emergency workers struggled to retrieve victims from the rubble.

The targeted shelter was reportedly being used as a holding center for African migrants attempting to travel through Yemen, many of whom were likely fleeing conflict or poverty in their home countries.

Humanitarian organizations have repeatedly warned about the vulnerability of migrant populations in Yemen's war zones.

Canadians vote in an election upturned by Trump

Canadians head to the polls in a federal election overshadowed by fury at Donald Trump's threats to the country's sovereignty and fears over his escalating trade war.

In the final days of a month-long campaign – described by all party leaders as the most consequential general election in a lifetime – the US president yet again re-inserted himself into the national discussion, with fresh threats to annex the country. "We don't need anything from Canada. And I say the only way this thing really works is for Canada to become a state," he told Time magazine on Friday.

Also overshadowing the final day of electioneering was a deadly attack at a bustling street festival in Vancouver that left the country reeling and forced the prime minister, Mark Carney, to briefly suspend his campaign in order to make sombre remarks to the nation.

"Those families are living every family's nightmare," Carney said

on Sunday morning, after a driver killed at least 11 people and injured more at the Filipino community's Lapu Lapu festival. "I know that I join all Canadians in mourning with you. I know that Canadians are united with you."

A visibly emotional Carney spoke of "Bayanihan", the Filipino value of community serving those in need.

"This spirit upon which we must draw in this incredibly difficult time. We will comfort the grieving. We will care for each other. We will unite in common purpose," he added.

As recently as January, Canadian pollsters and political pundits struggled to find fresh ways to describe the bleak prospects for the then prime minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal party, which seemed on track for a catastrophic blowout. The party trailed the rival Conservatives by as many as 27 points in some polls. The Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, was poised for the largest and most re-



sounding electoral victory in more than half a century. That strength was the result of a laser-focused, years-long campaign to weaken the governing Liberals and the parties that supported their minority government.

But Trump's detonation of the US's closest diplomatic and economic relationship has fundamentally reshaped how many feel about

their southern neighbour and heavily influenced how Carney, the former central banker who inherited control of the Liberal party in mid-March, has shaped his electoral bid.

That framing has the possibility of producing a result that would have been unfathomable three months ago.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Pope Francis defied Western silence on Gaza, but Vatican complicity endures

The last time Pope Francis called the Palestinians of Gaza and gave them his blessings was two days before he passed away on 21 April. His funeral was held on Saturday in St Peter's Basilica, drawing mourners from around the world.

Ever since Israel embarked on its extermination campaign in Gaza in October 2023, the Pope – unlike the majority of western leaders complicit in the genocide – maintained close and consistent video contact with the colonised Palestinians.

He offered prayers, encouragement and solidarity to Gaza's small Christian community and to the besieged population more broadly.

A lone western voice in their defence, he is being mourned in Gaza with deep sorrow – even as some in Israel celebrate his death.

In his final months, the Argentinian Pope became increasingly condemnatory of Israel's war on the Palestinian people. He decried its

extermination of Gaza's civilians, tens of thousands of whom have been killed, describing its crimes bluntly: "This is cruelty, this is not war."

At the Nativity Scene and Christmas Tree inauguration last December in St Peter's Square, he displayed a baby Jesus wrapped in a keffiyeh in solidarity with the Palestinians.

Earlier in 2024, he wrote: "According to some experts, what is happening in Gaza has the characteristics of a genocide. It should be carefully investigated to determine whether it fits into the technical definition formulated by jurists and international bodies."

Last month, after Israel resumed its genocidal war, the Pope expressed his concern yet again: "I am saddened by the resumption of heavy Israeli bombing on the Gaza Strip, causing many deaths and injuries. I call for an immediate halt to the weapons; and for the courage to resume dialogue, so that all hostages may be released and a final ceasefire reached."

Changing relations

The Vatican's relations with the Palestinian people have changed enormously over the last millennium.

Pope Francis is a far cry from Pope Urban II, who declared in November 1095 the necessity of conquering Palestine by launching the First Crusade. Addressing the European converts to the Palestinian religion of Christianity, the Crusading Pope declared:

Enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre; wrest that land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourselves...This royal city, therefore, situated at the centre of the world, is now held captive by His enemies, and is in subjection to those who do not know God, to the worship of the heathens. She seeks therefore and desires to be liberated and does not cease to implore you to come to her aid. From you especially, she asks succour.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israel kills 71 Palestinians in the past 24 hours

Gaza's Health Ministry on Monday just issued its daily statistical report on Palestinian casualties in Israel's war on the enclave.

In the past 24 hours, Gaza hospitals reported 71 people killed by Israeli forces, including 14 bodies recovered from under the rubble, and 153 injured.

Israel has killed at least 52,314 Palestinians since launching its military offensive on October 7, 2023. A further 17,792 people have been injured.

Since resuming its offensive on March 18, Israel has killed at least 2,222 people.

Putin announces three-day truce in Ukraine from May 8

Russian President Vladimir Putin has unilaterally declared a three-day ceasefire in Ukraine from May 8 to coincide with World War II Victory Day commemorations, the Kremlin said Monday, according to CNN.

The Kremlin said the decision was based on "humanitarian considerations" and that "all military actions" would be suspended from midnight May 8 to midnight May 11. Russia marks the defeat of Nazi Germany in a holiday celebrated on May 9.

An adviser to the head of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's office responded by saying that "the ceasefire must be uncon-

ditional, because everything else is just Putin's tactical games."

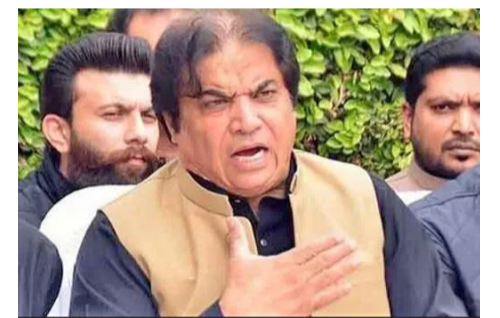
Moscow has previously rejected a U.S. proposal for a 30-day ceasefire in the conflict that was agreed to by Ukraine.

Putin also unilaterally declared a 30-hour truce around Easter, which Kyiv met with immediate skepticism but did agree to. The Ukrainian military later accused Russia of violating that ceasefire with more than 2,900 attacks along the expansive frontlines. Moscow also accused Ukraine of violating that truce.

130 nuclear warheads, missiles targeted at India: Pakistan minister

Pakistani Railway Minister Hanif Abbasi, in a dramatic escalation of tensions, threatened India with nuclear retaliation, claiming that Pakistan's missile arsenal, including Ghorri, Shaheen, and Ghaznavi missiles, along with 130 nuclear warheads, has been kept "only for India." The new Indian Express reported. Abbasi issued this threat in a reply to India's recent decision to suspend the Indus Water Treaty following the deadly Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

Abbasi openly declared that if India decides to halt Pakistan's water supply, it should "prepare for a full-scale war," stating that Pakistan's nuclear weapons are not merely symbolic but are positioned across the country and ready to be used. "If they stop the water supply to us, then they should be ready for a war. The military equipment we have, the missiles we have, they're not for display. Nobody knows where we have placed our nuclear weapons across the country. I say it



again, these ballistic missiles, all of them are targeted at you," he warned.

This sharp rhetoric from Abbasi followed India's countermeasures in response to the tragic Pahalgam attack, which included suspending the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty and revoking visas for Pakistani nationals. The Pakistani Minister mocked India's decision, insinuating that India was beginning to realize the repercussions of its actions.

Israel's foreign minister blasts ICJ hearing on Gaza

The Israeli foreign minister says the top UN court's hearing on humanitarian aid to Gaza was part of a "systematic persecution and delegitimization" of his country.

In a live briefing, Gideon Saar claimed the court was "becoming completely politicized". He called the proceedings being held in The Hague "shameful".

The ICJ opened hearings into Israel's ob-

ligation to "ensure and facilitate" urgently needed humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories, bringing the ongoing conflict in Gaza back into focus in The Hague.

Israel has blocked the entry of aid, including food and medicines, since March 2. The UN food agency has warned of mass starvation in Gaza.

Mahmoud Abbas names Hussein al-Sheikh as vice president and likely successor

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas has named a deputy and likely successor, Middle East Eye reported.

Hussein al-Sheikh was appointed vice president of the state of Palestine and the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) – two newly created positions.

His appointment was approved during a session of the PLO's executive committee on Saturday.

Sheikh, a close confidant of Abbas, previously served as the minister responsible for coordinating security matters with the Israeli occupation.

As a result, he enjoys close ties with Israeli military leaders and maintains good relations with American diplomats.

In 2022, Abbas appointed Sheikh as the secretary-general of the PLO's executive



committee, the second-highest position in the organisation.

Despite his high standing within the PA and with Israeli and American officials, Sheikh enjoys little popular support among Palestinians.



The road to peace: Iran's continued support for Armenia-Azerbaijan diplomacy



By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh has been a source of tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan for decades.

The region, internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, was seized by Armenian forces in the early 1990s, triggering a war that left thousands dead and displaced many more.

Though a ceasefire was brokered in 1994, the dispute remained unresolved, with occasional flare-ups, culminating in a brutal conflict in 2020. The 2020 war resulted in heavy casualties on both sides and a ceasefire agreement that saw Azerbaijan regain control over much of the region. However, the underlying issue of Nagorno-Karabakh remained unresolved, continuing to threaten stability in the South Caucasus.

In March 2025, Armenia and Azerbaijan made a significant step toward ending nearly four decades of conflict when they agreed on the text of a peace treaty. The agreement saw Armenia relinquish its claim over Nagorno-Karabakh, acknowledging the region as part of Azerbaijan. This momentous step brought hope for a lasting peace in a region long fraught with hostilities.

Iran, a key regional player with close historical and cultural ties to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, has long advocated for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Iran's diplomatic approach has consistently emphasized dialogue, respect for territorial integrity, and regional cooperation. As such, Tehran welcomed the peace agreement, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei describing it as "a necessary and important step" for achieving long-term peace in the South Caucasus.

Iran's support for the peace process was further underscored by the visit of Masoud Pezeshkian, Iranian president, to Baku on April 28. During his visit, Pezeshkian met with high-ranking Azerbaijani officials to discuss the strengthening of bilateral relations and the implementation of various agreements, particularly in trade and security. He also reiterated Iran's commitment to promoting stability and peace in the South Caucasus.

However, while the peace agreement has been welcomed by many, the region's fragile diplomatic environment was briefly shaken by allegations of Iranian double-dealing. In July 2024, an UK-based opposition media outlet published a report alleging that Tehran had sold \$500 million worth of arms, including suicide drones, to Armenia.

The report, which cited alleged anonymous sources, claimed that Iran and Armenia had engaged in military cooperation, including intelligence-sharing and the establishment of

bases on Armenian soil.

The report caused a stir in Azerbaijan, where the allegation was seen as a threat to the country's relations with Iran. However, both Iranian and Armenian officials quickly denied the arms deal allegations. Iranian authorities condemned the report as part of a wider misinformation campaign designed to undermine Iran's diplomatic efforts in the region.

Iranian media outlets also pointed out the questionable background of Iran International, which has been accused of receiving funding from entities linked to Saudi Arabia and Israel. Tehran has consistently maintained that it adheres to a neutral stance in the South Caucasus and seeks to avoid taking sides in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Iran's stance on the Karabakh issue has remained consistent over the years. In 2020, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei made it clear that the territories occupied by Armenia must be returned to Azerbaijan, emphasizing that Azerbaijan had every right to its internationally recognized lands. This position was reaffirmed in several public statements, including a televised address in which Ayatollah Khamenei warned that the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh posed a serious threat to regional security.

Tehran's diplomatic efforts have been crucial in fostering dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Iran has continually advocated for direct negotiations between the two countries, urging them to resolve their differences peacefully. Iran's efforts have been guided by its broader vision for a stable, secure, and cooperative South Caucasus, which is essential for regional prosperity.

In his recent remarks, Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-e-Ravanchi emphasized that Iran remains committed to supporting the peace process. He highlighted the importance of the peace agreement for regional stability and expressed Iran's willingness to assist both Armenia and Azerbaijan in finalizing and implementing the deal. Takht-e-Ravanchi also reiterated that Iran believes in the importance of respecting territorial integrity and international law, stressing that any attempts to occupy another nation's territory through military force must be condemned.

As a neighbor to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, Iran has always sought to be a stabilizing force in the South Caucasus. The country's commitment to peace and diplomacy is evident in its ongoing support for the peace agreement and its efforts to facilitate cooperation between the two countries.

Azerbaijan: a rising star in regional trade and global energy markets

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN - Azerbaijan stands at the crossroads of continents, cultures, and commerce. Today, the country is fast transforming from a regional player into a pivotal hub for international trade and energy, driven by a dynamic economy, strategic partnerships, and visionary infrastructure development.

With a market value exceeding \$80 billion, Azerbaijan's economy is both resilient and ambitious.

The country has diversified its economic base in recent years, expanding beyond hydrocarbons to sectors like transportation, agriculture, technology, and services.

Yet energy remains a cornerstone, with Azerbaijan ranking among the top oil and gas producers in the region, thanks to major projects

like the Shah Deniz field and the Southern Gas Corridor.

Azerbaijan's trade landscape is vibrant and expanding. In 2024, the country's exports totaled nearly \$40 billion, with crude oil, natural gas, and petrochemical products leading the way.

Non-oil exports, such as fruits, vegetables, aluminum, and cotton, are also gaining momentum, reflecting Baku's commitment to economic diversification. Imports reached around \$16 billion, dominated by machinery, vehicles, electronics, and pharmaceuticals — sectors that support the country's modernization drive.

The country maintains strong trade ties with its neighbors. Turkey and Iran are among Azerbaijan's largest trading partners, bolstered by shared cultural ties and strategic agreements such as the Preferential Trade Agreement.

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian concluded a one-day visit to Baku, Azerbaijan, on Monday, marking a significant step towards revitalizing and strengthening relations between the two neighboring nations.

The visit, was characterized by official welcomes, high-level meetings, and the signing of key cooperation agreements, and signaled a shared commitment to enhanced regional cooperation and mutual prosperity. President Pezeshkian was greeted upon arrival at Heydar Aliyev International Airport by Azerbaijan's First Deputy Prime Minister Yagub Eyubov and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Samir Sharifov. He was then officially welcomed by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev at the Zagulba Presidential Palace in a formal ceremony complete with national anthems and a guard of honor.

During a private bilateral meeting, followed by discussions between Iranian and Azerbaijani delegations, President Pezeshkian emphasized the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and familial bonds between the people of Iran and Azerbaijan. He stated that these connections form the foundation for a strategic path toward expanding regional cooperation. He also conveyed the



By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- Trade relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan have seen remarkable growth in recent years. By leveraging their cultural, historical, and geographical commonalities, the two countries have worked to expand their economic cooperation through joint projects, border trade exchanges, and the development of transit corridors.

The Republic of Azerbaijan holds an important position in Iran's neighborhood policies. Beyond the bonds of neighborhood and historical connections, the two nations share familial ties.

Fortunately, a new chapter has been opened in the relations between the two countries, which is promising for both nations. There are numerous opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation ahead of them. The agreements reached and the joint projects currently underway between Iran and Azerbaijan in the fields of trade, energy, and transportation, as well as the continuation and strengthening of these collaborations, will transform Iran and Azerbaijan into strategic partners for one another.

Iran and Azerbaijan signed Persian and Azeri versions of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on April 8 during the 16th Joint Economic Committee meeting, co-chaired by Iran's minister of transport and urban development and Azerbaijan's deputy prime minister.

The meeting between Iranian Minister Farzaneh Sadegh and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev focused on reviewing bilateral projects and cooperation in economic, transport, trade, energy, and banking sectors. The signed Persian and Azeri texts of the memorandum were appended to the English

Russia, and Georgia also feature prominently, enabling Azerbaijan to play a bridging role between major markets. The country's growing ties with the European Union and China further highlight its global economic ambitions.

Azerbaijan's geographic location is a critical asset. As a linchpin of the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC), Azerbaijan connects South Asia and West Asia to Europe and Russia.

The INSTC's multimodal network — combining rail, road, and maritime routes — is turning Azerbaijan into a logistical powerhouse.

The Port of Baku, the largest in the Caspian Sea, is undergoing rapid expansion, positioning itself as a key node for East-West and North-South freight movement.

Baku's forward-looking investments in transit

On the path to friendship

Pezeshkian's visit to Baku results in seven cooperation agreements and commitment to strategic relationship program



warm greetings of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and reiterated Iran's support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, affirming that the Karabakh region is an inseparable part of Azerbaijan.

"I hope this visit, along with the agreements reached in previous expert-level talks, will mark the beginning of greater strides in strengthening relations between the two countries," President Pezeshkian said. President Aliyev echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the strategic importance of the relationship and expressing confidence that the visit would further enhance bilateral cooperation. "The people of our two

countries have enjoyed friendly relations for a long time, and our inter-governmental ties are firmly based on this foundation," he stated.

The visit culminated in the signing of seven cooperation documents, signifying a shared commitment to advancing comprehensive cooperation across various sectors. These included memorandums of understanding in areas such as political consultations, transportation, cultural exchanges, health, media, and investment cooperation.

During a joint press conference, President Pezeshkian expressed gratitude for the hospitality of his Azeri counterpart and highlighted the potential for Iran and Azerbaijan

to collaborate in establishing peace and security in the region and resolving issues through mutual cooperation. "We can cooperate in all possible fields," he affirmed. He further described the agreements signed as strategic and important, committing to their full implementation.

President Aliyev highlighted the strategic importance of the relations and agreed on working towards deepening ties across all sectors.

The agenda also included plans for President Pezeshkian to participate in a joint business meeting alongside President Aliyev and engage with Azerbaijan's Iranian diaspora, further cementing the people-to-people connections between the two nations.

President Pezeshkian's trip to Baku represents a strategic milestone in Iran's foreign policy, aimed at fostering stronger ties with its northern neighbor and promoting stability and prosperity in the region. Both leaders expressed optimism about the future of Iran-Azerbaijan relations and their potential to contribute to a more peaceful and prosperous West Asia. President Pezeshkian addressed Aliyev as a "brother" throughout their engagements.

New chapter opens in Iran-Azerbaijan trade, transport, energy ties

version of the MOU, which had been previously signed in Tehran in February 2025.

As part of her official visit, Minister Sadegh also inspected joint transport infrastructure projects between the two countries.

Sadegh, who also chairs the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee, also met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku to discuss bilateral ties and economic cooperation. The meeting focused on expanding joint projects across key sectors including transportation, customs, water and energy, oil and gas, and preferential trade.

Delegations visits to strengthen friendship between the two countries

At the beginning of the meeting, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev appreciated the recent reciprocal visits of high-level delegations from Azerbaijan and Iran, noting that these visits provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen friendship between the two countries and promote bilateral cooperation. He mentioned the holding of the meeting of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee and emphasized that the meeting's agenda includes important projects aimed at expanding cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, energy, and transportation.

The Iranian minister, for her part, emphasized her country's interest in developing relations with Azerbaijan in all areas, and pointed to the strong historical, cultural, and religious ties between the two nations.

Sadegh led a high-level Iranian delegation to Azerbaijan from April 7 to 10 to review progress on past agreements, remove barriers to joint ventures, and lay the groundwork for an upcoming visit by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his accompanying delegation to Baku (on Monday, April 28).

Amin Tarafo, advisor to the minister and head of the ministry's international affairs office, said the trip was made at the formal invitation of Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev.

'Iran determined to expand trade ties with

Azerbaijan'

In a previous meeting between Mustafayev and Iran's Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Abdolnaser Hemmati, the Iranian side said the country is determined to expand its trade ties with neighboring Azerbaijan.

Hemmati said the size of trade between Iran and Azerbaijan, which is around \$400 million per year, is very low and does not match the state of relations between the two countries.

After the meeting, the official said that he and Mustafayev had agreed in their meeting that communication between the banking and insurance institutions of Iran and Azerbaijan should expand to allow an increase in trade relations between the two countries.

Trade, economic co-op central pillars of Iran-Azerbaijan relations

Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, as neighboring countries, have long maintained close relations. Cultural, linguistic, and historical commonalities between the two nations have provided a strong foundation for economic development. In recent years, influenced by regional and global developments, trade and economic cooperation have become central pillars of their bilateral relationship. The volume of trade between Iran and Azerbaijan has shown an upward trend, reflecting the strengthening ties between the two countries.

Despite challenges, the future of trade between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan appears promising. Relying on their cultural and historical commonalities, the two nations have strived to broaden their cooperation across various economic sectors.

In the coming years, joint projects in the fields of energy, transportation, and industry could significantly contribute to the growth of bilateral trade.

Additionally, the development of border infrastructure and the simplification of customs regulations are among the key factors that could play a crucial role in boosting trade exchanges.

infrastructure are paying off. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway offers a direct link to Turkey and Europe, while the Alat Free Economic Zone provides tax incentives to attract international logistics and manufacturing companies.

These initiatives are not only boosting Azerbaijan's competitiveness but also reshaping the entire region's trade dynamics.

Energy exchange is another field where Azerbaijan exerts strong influence. Through its oil pipelines — notably the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) — and gas pipelines such as TANAP and TAP, Azerbaijan ensures energy security for both regional neighbors and European consumers.

Its strategic exports of clean-burning natural gas are especially crucial in a world increasingly focused on sustainable energy transition. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan is investing heavily in renew-

ables, aiming to derive thirty percent of its energy mix from green sources by 2030.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan's hosting of COP29 in 2024 signals its intention to take a leadership role in global climate discussions, leveraging its energy expertise while championing environmental stewardship.

In sum, Azerbaijan's economic ascent is no accident. It is the result of strategic planning, regional cooperation, and bold investment in infrastructure and energy diversification. As the world seeks new trade routes, stable energy supplies, and resilient economic partners, Azerbaijan offers a compelling story — and an even brighter future.

From the Caspian shores to global markets, Azerbaijan is not just participating in the future of trade and energy — it is helping to shape it.

Iran's President calls Azerbaijan 'second home' as he urges deeper Tehran-Baku ties

TEHRAN – In a recent interview with Azerbaijani Television (AzTV), President Masoud Pezeshkian of Iran articulated Iran's unwavering commitment to the principles of international law, particularly the respect for the rights and territorial integrity of all nations, calling it "the first and foremost principle of international law."

His remarks, delivered against the backdrop of ongoing disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan, underscored Iran's role as a mediator and advocate for peaceful resolution in the region. Pezeshkian emphasized that adherence to these fundamental principles is paramount to maintaining stability and preventing conflicts arising from territorial ambitions, stating that "we must respect each other's territorial integrity and not have any aspirations for the territory."

Addressing the specific context of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, President Pezeshkian reiterated Iran's long-held position that disputes should be resolved through dialogue and mutual respect for territorial boundaries.

He cautioned against unilateral attempts to seize territory, asserting that such actions are the root cause of instability and conflict, adding that "disputes begin when one side wants to take over the lands of others."

The president affirmed Iran's support for the peace process between the two nations, stating that Iran, along with other international actors, recognizes and adheres to the established international framework for resolving the outstanding differences between Baku and Yerevan.



He explicitly stated that Iran has consistently defended the rights of Azerbaijan and, within the same framework of international law and respect for sovereignty, also defends the rights of Armenia, saying, "We have always defended the rights of Azerbaijan and, naturally, within the same framework, we also defend the rights of Armenia."

Beyond the immediate context of the Armenia-Azerbaijan situation, President Pezeshkian highlighted the deep and growing relationship between Iran and Azerbaijan.

He emphasized the shared cultural and historical ties, characterizing Azerbaijan as a second homeland for Iranians. In anticipation of his official visit to Azerbaijan, he expressed a sense of familiarity and belonging, noting that despite physical borders, the two nations remain closely connected as neighbors.

He articulated his intentions to engage in discussions with his Azerbaijani counterpart, President Ilham Aliyev, on a wide range of issues aimed at further strengthening bilateral relations, commenting, "We are traveling to Azerbaijan because we never

feel alienated there... neighbors always have walls to separate them, but they are still together."

He envisioned a future where the two nations actively support and complement each other's development through enhanced communication and cooperation, adding, "Given the capabilities and skills we have in terms of science, economy, industry, culture, health, medicine, and trade, we can communicate and help with each other."

Addressing the critical infrastructure project aimed at establishing a land connection between Azerbaijan's mainland and the Nakhchivan region via Iranian territory, President Pezeshkian expressed optimism and progress.

He stated that the project is advancing rapidly, with agreements already in place to facilitate the creation of a seamless land link connecting Azerbaijan's mainland to Nakhchivan through Iran, affirming, "The project is progressing rapidly."

It has already been agreed upon, and there will be no issues in creating a land link between Iran's territory and Azerbaijan's mainland with Nakhchivan."

He further noted the significance of the railway route, currently under discussion, in strengthening trade, cultural, and economic ties between the two nations, and as part of a wider North-South transportation corridor.

In addition to transportation infrastructure, President Pezeshkian highlighted the potential for collaboration in the energy sector, particularly in the realm of green energy.

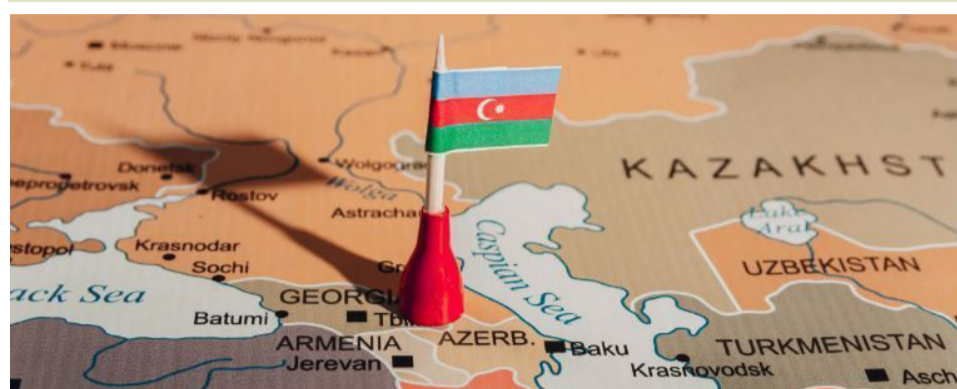
He noted the opportunity to harness clean energy from existing dams and those currently under construction, presenting a pathway for sustainable energy cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan, saying, "We can obtain clean energy from existing dams and some under construction."

President Pezeshkian concluded his remarks by emphasizing the shared perspectives and common ground between Iran and Azerbaijan in international forums such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations.

He underscored the potential for closer collaboration in various multilateral organizations, including BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Eurasian Economic Union, concluding that "If we strengthen our connections, BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Eurasian Economic Union are the next step in cooperation."

His overall message conveyed a strong commitment to regional stability, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the enhancement of bilateral relations between Iran and Azerbaijan across a broad spectrum of areas.

Between the East and West: Azerbaijan's playbook for strategic pragmatism



By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN - Azerbaijan's foreign policy is characterized by a strategic balance between major global powers and its regional neighbors. This approach allows Azerbaijan to keep its independence and use its geopolitical position as a leverage.

The country's foreign policy has been formed by its energy resources, strategic location, and historical conflicts, particularly the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Azerbaijan's relations with the West, Russia, and neighboring countries are complicated and multifaceted which reflects its pragmatic view to diplomacy and economic cooperation.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy has been focused on the re-establishment of territorial integrity since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, especially regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia. National leader Heydar Aliyev began to pursue a foreign policy based on the principle of state sovereignty, secularism and a balance of international relations. President Ilham Aliyev has continued this effort with a focus on independence in foreign affairs and refusing to receive direction from external actors, trying to promote Azerbaijan as a center of regional cooperation and peace.

Energy diplomacy, security modernization, and diplomatic balancing are the three main factors of Azerbaijan's foreign policy.

Azerbaijan is working hard to be a dependable energy supplier for Europe by using its own resources and investing in renewable energy. On the military front, it wants to build a strong and independent defense with help from key partners.

Diplomatically, Baku is trying to keep a good balance between its ties with Russia and its dealings with Western countries, all while maintaining a close partnership with Turkey. This well-rounded strategy is aimed at boosting Azerbaijan's independence, encouraging cooperation in the region, and improving stability in the South Caucasus.

Energy, pragmatism, and political friction with West

Azerbaijan is working hard to position itself as a dependable energy source for Europe, while also focusing on renewable energy and the energy transition. On the military front, the country aims to strengthen its forces with help from key allies.

Diplomatically, Baku is balancing its ties with Russia and engaging with Western nations, while maintaining a strong partnership with Turkey. This approach not only boosts Azerbaijan's independence but also sets the stage for better regional cooperation and stability in the South Caucasus.

Azerbaijan's energy supplies play a crucial role in its relationship with the West. Key projects like the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor have helped reduce Europe's reliance on Russian energy, making Azerbaijan more valuable strategically.

In July 2022, the EU and Azerbaijan agreed to double gas exports to Europe by 2027 as part of efforts to diversify energy sources following the Ukraine crisis. Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, stated Azerbaijan is a key partner for our energy security. Reports show that Azerbaijani gas made up about 5% of EU imports in 2023, with plans for further growth.

Azerbaijan isn't part of NATO, but it has sent troops to help out in missions like the one in Afghanistan. It keeps a good relationship with NATO through the Partnership for Peace, but is careful not to get too close to the West because of tensions with Russia and Iran.

When it comes to the U.S., their relationship is pretty practical. The U.S. appreciates what Azerbaijan does for energy and counterterrorism, but there have been some bumps due to human rights and democracy issues. Groups like

Freedom House and Human Rights Watch often criticize Azerbaijan's policies, but those concerns haven't really taken over their discussions.

Azerbaijan's economic and military ties with Russia

Russia is a key partner for Azerbaijan, but the relationship is complicated. In 2023, trade between the two reached over \$4 billion, making Russia Azerbaijan's second-biggest trading partner after Turkey, according to local customs data.

There's also military cooperation, with Azerbaijan buying advanced weaponry from Russia. But in recent years, they've been looking more to Turkey and Israel for supplies.

Azerbaijan is cautious about Russia's political influence. Unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan hasn't joined organizations like the Collective Security Treaty Organization or the Eurasian Economic Union, which helps them keep some distance from Moscow.

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War changed things up. Azerbaijan won decisively with help from Turkey and Israeli drones, which shifted the balance in the region. But Russia stepped back in by brokering the ceasefire and sending 2,000 peacekeepers to the area. While their presence is meant to keep things stable, it also gives Russia some leverage over both Baku and Yerevan. Azerbaijan has been careful to stress that the Russian peacekeepers are there temporarily, as per the ceasefire agreement.

The war in Ukraine has added another layer of complexity. Azerbaijan has stayed neutral and hasn't outright condemned Russia's actions. Still, they have provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine and are involved in post-war rebuilding efforts, showing support for Kyiv while trying not to upset Moscow.

Bridges and borders in relations with neighbors

Azerbaijan is focusing on building strong relationships with its neighbors, mainly Iran and Turkey, while considering historical, cultural, and economic factors. Recently, its ties with Iran have gotten a boost through high-level visits and more economic cooperation, showing that both countries care about stability and trade in the region. Iran sees Azerbaijan as an important partner, especially given their shared culture and religion, and both are looking to work together more amid wider geopolitical challenges.

Turkey is a key ally for Azerbaijan, sharing close ties in politics, military, and energy. Their teamwork is clear in joint energy projects and mutual support during regional issues. Azerbaijan also uses its relationship with Turkey to grow its influence in the Middle East and elsewhere, using diplomatic efforts to connect with other nations.

On the other hand, the relationship with Armenia is still tense due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Despite this, recent diplomatic moves and EU involvement show there might be a cautious step towards normalization. Armenia's attempts to engage with Russia, especially as tensions with Azerbaijan grow, reflect ongoing regional power struggles.

Azerbaijan's foreign policy is all about keeping balance in a world that's increasingly divided. By using its energy resources wisely, forming strategic alliances, and being flexible in its diplomacy, Baku has made significant strides in maintaining its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and relevance on the international stage.

Still, challenges are ahead. The future of Nagorno-Karabakh is uncertain, regional peace is fragile, and there's rising competition between Russia and the West alongside persistent tensions with Iran. How well Baku manages these challenges without leaning too much towards one side will be crucial for its role as a regional power broker in the South Caucasus.

For now, Azerbaijan's foreign policy is a reminder of both the opportunities and dangers small countries face in today's complex world.

Diplomatic dawn in the Caucasus: How Iran-Azerbaijan unity exposes Israel's fraying playbook

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN – When Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian landed in Baku on Monday, his visit did more than yield seven signed cooperation agreements—it exposed the cracks in a decades-old foreign strategy to Balkanize the Caucasus.

As the two nations deepen their strategic ties, the Israeli regime's palpable unease—exemplified by Prime Minister Netanyahu's hastily announced follow-up visit to Azerbaijan—lays bare a truth often obscured by geopolitical posturing: the stronger Iran and Azerbaijan grow as partners, the weaker external efforts to pit them against one another become. This is not merely diplomacy—it is a reckoning.

Israel's pan-Turkist gambit unravels

For years, Tel Aviv positioned Azerbaijan as a linchpin in its campaign to "contain" Iran, leveraging arms sales (providing over 60% of Baku's defense imports since the 1990s) and intelligence-sharing facilities near Iran's borders.

Central to this strategy was amplifying Pan-Turkist narratives—an ideology promoting unity among Turkic-speaking nations—to drive a wedge between Baku and Tehran.

As Pezeshkian noted during his visit, however, such efforts ignore an immutable reality: Iran and Azerbaijan are "bound by brotherhood, friendship, and familial ties," with shared Shia traditions and Persianate cultural legacies stretching back centuries.

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict revealed the limits of this divide-and-rule approach. While Azerbaijan celebrated its military successes with Turkey and Israel's alleged backing, the subsequent regional instability underscored the risks of overreliance on external actors.

Iran, by contrast, positioned itself as a pragmatic mediator, advocating for lasting peace—a stance that resonated in Baku as reconstruction challenges mounted.

Brenda Shaffer and the industry of division

Israeli scholar Brenda Shaffer epitomizes the intellectual arm of this foreign interference. Her work, notably the 2002 book *Borders and Brethren*, has long been weaponized to frame Azerbaijani identity in opposition to Iran, downplaying centuries of coexistence.

By making absurd allegations such as "cultural genocide" against Azerbaijanis in Iran—a claim refuted by millions of Iranian Azerbaijanis—Shaffer's rhetoric served as a pretext for sanctions campaigns and separatist provocations.

Moreover, Shaffer and those who share her views fail to recognize that Iranian identity, rooted in one of the world's oldest civilizations, transcends narrow ethnic and racial divisions. Imposing a European framework to interpret Iran not only misrepresents its rich cultural tapestry but also undermines any credible analysis of the nation's multifaceted heritage.

Yet Pezeshkian's visit dismantled these narratives. His meetings with President Ilham Aliyev emphasized cultural synergy.

From friction to pragmatism: Security beyond proxies

Skeptics often cite incidents like the 2023 incident in Azerbaijan's embassy in Tehran as evidence of irreparable tensions. Yet both nations have deliberately sidestepped such flare-ups to prioritize shared interests.

Collaboration on border security, counterterrorism, and other issues reflects a pragmatic understanding: regional stability cannot be outsourced.

For Azerbaijan, this partnership reduces dependence on Turkish and Israeli security guarantees, bolstering its autonomy.

For Iran, it secures its northwestern flank while countering U.S.-led sanctions through increased trade.

Netanyahu's anachronistic counterplay

Israel's anxiety is palpable. Once able to position Azerbaijan as a "listening post" against Iran, Tel Aviv now watches as Baku negotiates directly with Tehran on everything from Caspian pollution to transit corridors.

The proposed Zangezur route—a transportation link connecting Azerbaijan to Turkey—was initially touted as a Pan-Turkic project, excluding Iran.

Now, Tehran's involvement in talks underscores a stark shift: Azerbaijan no longer re-



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian meets Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev during his official visit to Baku on April 28, 2025.

quires Israel as an intermediary.

Netanyahu's announced rushed visit feels increasingly desperate.

Meanwhile, Iran's focus on infrastructure, such as expanding the North-South Transport Corridor to connect the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf, threatens to marginalize Israel's "periphery doctrine," which relies on encircling Tehran with hostile neighbors.

Additionally, Pezeshkian's consultations with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, before the trip were no mere formality.

"We emphasized the necessity for deepening and strengthening the relations between the two countries," the Iranian president said about his meeting with the leader before visiting Baku.

Israel's scramble to reassert influence, exemplified by Netanyahu's reactive diplomacy, underscores a fading era. The Caucasus no longer needs translators.

In Baku and Tehran, the future is being written in a language of kinship that outsiders struggle to comprehend.

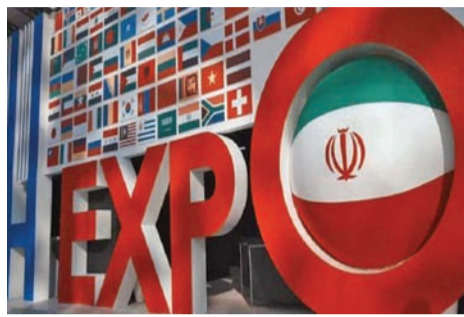
100 artisans take part at IRAN EXPO 2025

TEHRAN--Farzad Ojani, an official with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said 100 artisans and producers of handicrafts have taken part at the 7th Exhibition of Export Capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, IRAN EXPO 2025.

The fair, kicked off at Tehran International Permanent Fairgrounds in April 28, will run until May 2, IRNA reported.

Ojani added that the fair creates a unique opportunity to introduce handicrafts and tourism capacities as well as investment prospects in these fields. The ongoing event seeks to introduce commercial, exports and marketing opportunities for handicrafts and tourism products, he said.

He explained that 100 artisans from various fields have put on display their products. Fars



province with 20 participants has the highest number of artisans in the fair, he added.

Also, Iran's potentials in tourism sector and investment opportunities in this field have been put on display for introducing to businesspersons and merchants, he said.

Darsajin village in Zanjan resembles historical Abyaneh

TEHRAN--Darsajin village is located 15 km off Abhar, Zanjan province. It is known as Zanjan's Abyaneh due to its historical texture, rich culture and pristine nature.

This beautiful village is considered target tourism village of Zanjan province, CHTN reported.

The history of Darsajin Village dates back to pre-Islamic era.

The village has mountainous climate. It is cool in summer and spring. The cool weather is due to abundance of springs, rivers and underground water resources. It hosts many tourists annually due to its numerous natural and historical attractions.

Some historians say that the village was built during the rulership of Darab Kiani from Kayanids Dynasty.

Thatched houses, stone platforms, cobblestone alleys, old districts, sycamore and cypress trees as well as central square of the village which is the gathering place of locals have designated Darsajin Village as Zanjan's final candidate to be registered in the list of world's top tourist villages.

Darsajin people speak in Lori Bakhtiari dialect.

Davoud Abyan, the deputy director of Zanjan's tourism directorate, said local houses, which have been built in traditional forms, have balconies with railings. Platforms have been built around the square for people to sit, talk to each other or trade, he added.

Also, Davoud Azizkhani, governor of Darsajin rural district said although Darsajin is considered one of Zanjan's tourist villages, shortage of tourism infrastructures such parking space, public toilets and proper accommodation sites has created challenges for the village.



There were 168 households including 320 persons in Darsajin village in the 2016 census, he said.

He added that the villagers are involved in farming and livestock breeding.

He continued that rural development plan has been implemented in Darsajin village. Also, the streets and alleys were stone-paved, he added.

Azizkhani said over 5,700 tourists visited Darsajin village during Nowruz 1404 holidays.

Tourists have to use toilets of the schools, health house, and mosques, he said. But the village's resting facilities don't meet the demands of tourists particularly in high season, he added.

Abyaneh, located in Isfahan province, is renowned for its ancient roots, distinct red mud-brick architecture, and rich cultural heritage. Dating back over 1800 years, the village boasts a unique charm that has captivated travelers and historians alike.

One of the most striking features of Abyaneh is its architecture, characterized by houses made from reddish-brown clay. This traditional building style not only blends harmoniously with the surrounding landscape but also provides natural insulation against the region's weather conditions.

UK tourism faces critical setback as government policies slash revenue by £2.2bn

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has issued a stark warning regarding the UK's declining international tourism revenue, revealing that the country lost over £2.2 billion in exports as foreign visitors' spending plummeted in comparison to 2019. This drop in tourism spending coincides with the UK government's ongoing imposition of taxes, red tape, and significant budget cuts to VisitBritain, the nation's official tourism marketing body, TTW reported.

According to the WTTC's 2025 Economic Impact Research (EIR), the travel and tourism sector contributed £286 billion to the UK economy last year—3.9% more than in 2019—representing 10% of the nation's total GDP. In addition, the sector supported 4.2 million jobs in 2024, though this still lags behind pre-pandemic employment figures.

Despite these positive figures, international spending on tourism in the UK remained a staggering 5.3% below pre-pandemic levels, totaling just £40.3 billion. This represents a £2.2 billion loss—roughly equivalent to the £2.3 billion allocated by the government to hire 6,500 new teachers in England or the £2.1 billion earmarked for improving schools nationwide. WTTC contends that these missed opportunities are the direct result of policies that continue to burden the UK's tourism industry, such as the introduction of the Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA), the absence of VAT-free shopping for visitors, the escalation of Air Passenger Duty (APD), rising business taxes, and the more than 40% reduc-

tion in VisitBritain's budget.

The cuts to VisitBritain's funding are particularly concerning, as they make it increasingly difficult for regions outside of London to receive the necessary support to attract international tourists, deepening the inequality between London and the rest of the UK. WTTC argues that these policies are not the result of external pressures but rather deliberate choices made by the government. The council claims that these choices are actively undermining the UK's tourism growth prospects and its ability to capitalize on global tourism trends.

Despite the UK government's recent endorsements of high-profile projects such as Europe's first Universal theme park and plans for expansion at Heathrow, Gatwick, and Luton airports, WTTC cautions that these projects will not provide substantial benefits in the short term. In fact, they may only bear fruit in the coming years, and that too only if the barriers to travel, such as taxes and administrative hurdles, are dismantled.

The pressure is mounting as global tourism continues its recovery, with travelers spending more than ever before. The latest figures underscore the widening gap between the potential of the UK's tourism sector and its actual performance. Without urgent intervention, the WTTC warns that the UK risks being left behind by global competitors who are embracing tourism as a key pillar of their economies.

Iran, Pakistan urge for rise in direct flights

TEHRAN – Iranian Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpei and Managing Director of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) Aftab ur Rehman Rana urged on rise in number of direct flights between Iran and Pakistan, using health tourism capacities of Iran and holding sightseeing tours.

According to Mehr News Agency, Mohseni Bandpei met with Aftab ur Rehman Rana and Ali Zahid Hamid, a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan on the sidelines of the 6th Ministerial Meeting on Tourism of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Erzurum, the designated ECO Tourism Capital for 2025.

Both sides expressed willingness to promote tourism transactions.

Also, the Pakistani part declared that it will dispatch pilgrimage tours to Iran. In addition, it wants to hold group tours and family tours and organize cultural and recreational tourism to Iran destination.

The Pakistani officials expressed the hope that Iran would



take steps for issuing visa for Pakistani citizens.

Both sides urged for increasing ties between Iranian and Pakistani tour guides. They also urged for promoting health tourism, increasing facilities at the land borders of Iran and Pakistan to facilitate the movement of tourists.

According to organizers, Erzurum meeting brought together tourism leaders from nine ECO Member States, alongside representatives from the ECO Secretariat, the Organization of Turkic

States, and the Turkish Cypriot State, to discuss strategies for enhancing regional tourism cooperation and development.

The session opened with remarks by ECO Secretary General Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan, who underscored the critical role of tourism in promoting regional integration and highlighted ECO's ongoing initiatives to strengthen tourism collaboration.

Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, also addressed the gathering, presenting Tur-

key's achievements and strategic outlook for its tourism sector.

During the meeting, ministers approved the designation of Lahore, Pakistan, as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027, Mary, Turkmenistan, for 2028, and Karakol for 2029, recognizing the unique cultural heritage and tourism potential of these cities.

The discussions further reviewed the progress of tourism cooperation within the ECO framework and explored the development of tourism-related components for ECO's new strategic vision for the coming decade.

A key highlight of the event was the official launch of the 1st Edition of the ECO Tourism Investment Guide, a publication aimed at attracting investment and promoting tourism opportunities across the ECO region.

The meeting concluded with the adoption of the "Erzurum Declaration," setting forth collective commitments and outlining future directions to enhance regional tourism cooperation and sustainable development.

Inverted tulips blossom in Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad province

TEHRAN--Inverted tulips are stunningly in tune with spring and are a delight in the lap of four-season nature of Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad province and in slopes of Dena Mountain, Sarchenar, Margoon, Kakan, and Sisakht.

The flower, also known as the crown imperial tulip, has red, yellow or orange blooms often with a crown on top, hence the name, and have been adding a colorful touch to the local landscape, CHTN reported.

Inverted tulips or "Fritillaria" is one of the 120,000 identified plants in Iran. There are more than 170 species of tulips in the country. It is said that the tulip has some remedial use for arthritis and rheumatic pains.

As the tourism experts say an area over 2,000 hectares is habitat of inverted tulips in Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad province.

The inverted tulip grows between 100 and 120 centimeters above the ground and is a perennial bulbous herbaceous plant of the lily family.

There are between 120 and 140 species of inverted tulips in the world, of which 14 or 15 species have been identified in Iran.

Inverted tulips grow in high altitudes and mountainous and rocky areas. For this reason, it is said that this flower symbolizes resistance and endurance in the cold. On the other hand, in ancient Iran, you see images of this flower next to the tree of life and next to the king. It seems that at that time, the inverted tulip was a symbol of immortality.

Inverted tulips plain in Kakan region is one of the most beautiful tourism attractions of Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad province. It is filled with colorful natural flowers during spring season. It is located 40 kilometers from Yasuj.

Dasht-e Ragh region is the other habitat of inverted tulips in Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad province.

Extended in an area of 100,000 hectares, it is also home to numerous plant species such as jashir, chovil, tul-



There are between 120 and 140 species of inverted tulips in the world, of which 14 or 15 species have been identified in Iran.

si, cardamom, oregano, chook, bilhar, mushrooms, millet, and guinea.

Head of Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad Natural Resources and Watershed Management Department's Office for the Rangelands and Desert Affairs Soleiman Mohammadi urged tourists to take care of these beautiful flowers.

He added that inverted tulips

are not on the verge of extinction. But, in case of misbehaviors of tourists and nomadic pastoralists, inverted tulips may be exposed to extinction, he warned.

In addition, some valuable species of inverted tulips are destroyed during early migration of tribal people to the grasslands with the movement of livestock, he said.

Farewell to the Pyramid of Giza: tourists disappointed to discover reality behind it

Egypt wants the world to keep marveling at the pyramids for many more generations, but it knows that the tourist overcrowding they are experiencing puts their most precious jewel at risk: the Giza Necropolis. With nearly 17.5 million tourists in 2024 and the ambitious goal of reaching 30 million by 2030, the country has decided to act.

Egypt is one of the favorite destinations for tourists, but just like some places in Europe or Asia, it has started to become excessively crowded, making the situation practically unbearable for the locals, Times of India reported.

So, the country has launched a plan that reorganizes access points, introduces eco-friendly transport, eradicates bad commercial practices, and promotes animal welfare so that the tourist experience does not pollute or cause discomfort to other citizens, being fully aware that tourism generates, on average, 10% of the country's GDP with 6.6 billion dollars.

Egypt is one of the most magical places on Earth, it has something very few places can match, it has a connection to the oldest history of humanity. It mixes history and conspiracy theories with its pyramids of Giza and the temple of Luxor, it has a living culture in its markets, it has the Nile, and most importantly, its residents enjoy a hospitality that is found in very few places in the world. In Egypt, the old and the new come together, the magic of the desert with imposing architecture... It is normal that everyone wants to travel to this country.

A wonder of the ancient world, it remains



Egypt is one of the favorite destinations for tourists, but it has started to become excessively crowded.

the main attraction for anyone setting foot in Egypt, but, as it is trendy, its surroundings have become even more chaotic than the country itself: guides, tourist cars, tour operators, street vendors... making the experience of observing this stunning scene something uncomfortable for other tourists.

A reorganization plan to end the chaos, they want to establish a new access point on the Cairo-Fayum Road, reorganize the surroundings, restore the tombs, boost online sales, and promote eco-friendly transport.

Orascom Pyramids is one of the key figures in this change, investing millions of dollars to transform this area and turn it into a true tourist landmark, keeping in mind that this pyramid is the last wonder of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

On social media, criticisms abounded. Tourists feeling harassed by resellers, expe-

riences ruined by scams, and a general sense of chaos in key areas like Cairo. Not long ago, in a viral Reddit thread about places people would not return to, a traveler directly cited the Egyptian capital: "The pyramids are beautiful, but the scammers ruin the experience."

And that discomfort is no longer just an anecdote. Platforms like TikTok amplify visitors' bad experiences, and bad reviews are starting to impact the destination's reputation. Something that, in the middle of the global tourism recovery, Egypt cannot afford.

Another big pending issue was the treatment of animals used for tourist rides. Horses, donkeys, and camels were offered to tourists in conditions that have drawn harsh criticism. Organizations like PETA have been denouncing it for years: malnourished, injured, and mistreated animals treated like tools.

But something is starting to change. The Egyptian government launched a specific animal welfare program last fall in the main tourist spots, including Giza, and now it is betting on electric buses inside the necropolis. This offers a comfortable and sustainable alternative to animal rides.

The facelift of the Giza plateau is much more than a cosmetic operation. Egypt has understood that, in the era of social media, every bad experience multiplies and can cost millions in tourism losses. Modernizing access, ending bad practices, and protecting animals is not just an ethical issue: it is a matter of survival as a top-tier tourist destination.

2nd national congress on Persian medicine slated for November

TEHRAN –The second national congress on Persian medicine is scheduled to be held from November 12 to 14 in Tehran.

The event will bring together experts in Persian medicine, traditional pharmacy, and the history of Iranian traditional medicine, the health ministry reported.

It will serve as a platform for experts to share knowledge and expertise and discuss and review the latest scientific and research achievements in the field.

The second congress will be centered around Preventive medicine and lifestyle medicine; Personalized medicine, precision medicine, reticulocyte and Persian medicine; Food, nutrition, medicinal cuisine; Traditional, herbal, natural medicines, and pharmaceutical formulations; Rational prescription of drugs in Persian medicine; Technology, diagnostic and therapeutic tools; manual therapy techniques; Persian medicine tourism; History of Persian medicine and medical sciences; Persian medicine and the art of living; as well as Integrative and complementary medicine.

The first national congress was held in May 2024. The main goal of the congress is to pro-



mote a better understanding of traditional medicine and to boost collaboration between specialists in different fields of medicine. It also aims to globalize Iranian medicine by showcasing the latest achievements and findings to scientific communities worldwide.

Iran ranks third in traditional medicine trials in ICTRP

According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), Iran ranks third in traditional medicine trials in the International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP), highlighting the country's status as one of the world's pioneers in traditional and complementary medicine.

China and India rank first and second, respectively, the health ministry's website reported.

The share of clinical trials in traditional and complementary medicine in Iran makes up about three percent of all clinical trials registered in the country, while just about 0.3 percent of the healthcare staff are experts in traditional and complementary medicine. The report shows the high capacity of Iranian researchers to move towards evidence-based medicine.

Persian traditional medicine strongly focuses on prioritizing health maintenance and disease prevention over treatment.

It is one of the most ancient forms of traditional medicine. It is grounded in the concept of four senses of humor: phlegm (Balgham), blood (Dam), yellow bile (Safra'), and black bile (Sauda'). The concept of the four senses of humor is based on the teachings of Rhazes and Avicenna in an elaborate medical system.

So far, about 30,000 plant species have been identified in the world, with Iran's share of about 8,000 species which is more than the whole of species found in Europe.

Around 500 Persian medicine experts are providing health and medical treatment services across the country. More than 1,000 general practitioners who have passed the Persian medicine courses approved by the health ministry are also offering services, Mehr news agency quoted Nafiseh Hosseini-Yekta, the director of the health ministry's Persian medicine office, as saying.

Training Persian medicine experts has always been at the top of the Persian medicine office's agenda. Therefore, different skill courses have been developed and held under the supervision of the health ministry.

Iranian schoolchildren succeed in Intl. Mathematics Olympiad

TEHRAN –Attending the second International Mathematics Olympiad for high school students in Turkmenistan, Iranian students managed to win seven bronze medals.

Hosted by Ashgabat specialised General Education School, the event was held from April 21 to 26.

More than 230 talented students from 15 countries, including Russia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Armenia, Bulgaria, Nepal, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Qatar, and Turkmenistan, took part in the competition.

Thirty-one students from North Khorasan represented Iran in the second Olympiad. Mohammad-Javad Kamali Kalati, Arya Mohammadi Razi, Mahsa Abron, Sajjad Azizi, Mahyar Forooghifar, Yalda Mesrzadeh, and Setayesh Rahimi won bronze medals, Tasnim news agency reported.

The Olympiad aims to strengthen peace, friendly and fraternal relations between peoples, and intensify international scientific and educational cooperation.

Recent achievements

Iranian students won two silver and two bronze medals, ranking fourth at the Turkic International Mathematics Olympiad (TIMO)



held from April 17 to 22, in Antalya.

TIMO is an international event that is open to students from grades 3 to 12. The competition is held in two rounds, including the preliminary and global rounds.

In the preliminary round, over 27,350 students from 35 countries competed against each other online in December. The offline qualifying exam had 25 multiple-choice questions, administered for 60 minutes.

In the Global round, which was held paper-based, 1,500 selected participants attended the event.

Parnian Heydarian and Anusha Abdi grabbed silver medals and won the world star awards, while Fatemeh Mazini and Ava Dejagah won bronze medals.

In November 2024, Students of Iran University of Science and Technology managed to win first place in Eurasia Federation of International RoboSports Association (FIRA) Open competition.

The competition was held from November 6 to 9 in Van, Turkey, bringing together 130 teams from eight countries.

The Iranian team comprised Alireza Abbasi, Mobina Lashgari, Alireza Mikaeili, and Shayan Ansarian. They ranked first in innovation and entrepreneurship, for designing 'infravision drones'.

Iran grabbed five gold medals and two special awards in the International Science and Invention Fair (SIF) 2024, which was held in Indonesia from November 5 to 10.

The competition brought together 1,980 teams from 24 countries competing in eight fields including technical- engineering, chemistry and nanotechnology, biotechnology and environment, energy engineering, physics and astronomy, artificial intelligence and technology, social sciences, education, and educational technologies, IRNA reported.

A total of 18 students from Iran attended the 47th WorldSkills Competition, winning 9 medals including a silver medal and medallions for excellence.

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Iran gets ready for two-week coronavirus closure

The National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control will implement a plan, according to which all occupations, except for emergency services and basic food suppliers, will be closed for two weeks in more than 100 cities in an attempt to curb the coronavirus.

Alireza Reisi, a spokesman for the Headquarters, said that "the plan will go into effect on November 21."

The plan divides cities into three levels of alert, according to which, if a city is in a state of high alert, all other occupations will be closed, except for the most essential jobs, which are related to the provision of basic necessities, security, and health.

Deputy health minister Iraj Harirchi has predicted that the COVID-19 death toll would double in the next two weeks.

"Unfortunately, daily deaths reached over 450 in the past 10 days, and an upward trend in infection, hospitalization, and death is predicted," he lamented.

اجرای طرح تعطیلی دو هفته ای سراسری برای مقابله با کرونا هفته آینده

ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا در ایران طرحی را اجرا خواهد کرد که بر مبنای آن بیش از ۱۰۰ شهر از جمله تهران با وضعیت هشدار بالای کرونا به مدت دو هفته تعطیل خواهند بود.

به گزارش ایسنا، علیرضا ریسی سخنگوی ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا گفت: این طرح از اول آذرماه آغاز می شود.

این طرح شهرها را به سه سطح هشدار تقسیم بندی می کند که بر اساس آن، اگر شهری در وضعیت هشدار بالا قرار گیرد به جز مشاغل خیلی ضروری که مربوط به تهیه مایحتاج ضروری مردم، امنیت و سلامت می شوند، بقیه مشاغل همه تعطیل هستند.

ایرج حریرچی معاون وزیر بهداشت از پیش بینیها در دو برابر شدن مرگ ناشی از کرونا در دو هفته آینده خبر داد. به گزارش ایرنا، حریرچی گفت: متأسفانه بیش از ۱۰ روز است که مرگ های بالای ۴۵۰ مورد را تجربه کردیم و پیش بینی ها این است که فعلاً روند صعودی در ابتلا و در بستری و در مرگ را خواهیم داشت.

Iran, Turkey explore paths to beef up scientific ties



TEHRAN –Iranian and Turkish officials have conferred on ways to further scientific and technological collaborations, focusing on setting up a joint research center for digital economy.

In a meeting held on Saturday, Mohammad Nabi Shahiki, the deputy science minister of innovation and technology, and Mustafa Aydin, the president of the Eurasian Universities Union (EURAS), elaborated on the capacities of each country, and explored the potentials for expanding scientific cooperation, the ministry of science, research, and technology reported.

The officials proposed the establishment of a technology transfer office, cooperation in the fields of water technology, energy, artificial intelligence, and the implementation of joint projects between the Scientific and Industrial Research Organizations of Iran and Turkey, with a priority on transferring technology to the industrial sector.

The two sides agreed on launching a joint digital economy research center. Partnership in holding start-up events, periodically, as well as defining collaborative postdoc projects in modern agriculture, biomaterials, and biotechnology sectors were among the other agreed programs.

The officials also announced their readiness to foster ties among universities of the two countries to further enhance scientific and technological collaborations.

Mazandaran, Istanbul sci-tech parks to boost ties

In February, Mazandaran's science and technology park, and Istanbul's Biruni Teknopark, discussed ways to broaden their technological and scientific interactions.

During the online meeting, Karim Soleimani, head of Mazandaran's science and technology park, and Sezgin Erzan, general manager of Biruni Teknopark, stressed the significance of enhancing cooperation in the fields of technology, the science ministry reported.

The two sides agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) focusing on establishing technology transfer offices, supporting the establishment of Iranian and Turkish companies in the two countries, as well as facilitating Iranian companies' entrance into new markets.

Attracting domestic and foreign investment to support Turkish, and Iranian start-ups will be a new step in the globalization of knowledge-based companies. The cooperation will be a turning point in the development of international markets for the companies operating in Mazandaran's science and technology park.

By creating a suitable platform for knowledge exchange, investment and establishment of companies, unique opportunities will be provided for the growth and technological progress of Iranian companies at the global level.

The meeting is supposed to be the beginning of a strategic cooperation between the two sides. Iranian knowledge-based companies and start-ups will be able to benefit from the MOU to develop their business in Turkey and Europe.

Tehran, Moscow hold talks on promoting health co-op

TEHRAN – Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi and Russia's deputy health minister Oleg Salagay have discussed ways of enhancing ties in the health sector.

The officials met on Sunday on the sidelines of the eighth meeting of health ministries of member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Xi'an, China, the health ministry reported.

During the meeting, Salagay voiced Russia's readiness to expand cooperation with Iran, highlighting the need for the development of interactions among the universities of the two countries, including exchanging students.

The official expressed optimism that signing a memorandum of understanding will lay the basis for the implementation of the reached agreements.

For his part, Zafarqandi stressed promoting joint activities focusing on communicable and non-communicable diseases, manufacturing pharmaceutical products and medical

tools, modern and digital health technologies, holding joint scientific conferences, as well as training students based on international standards to achieve high-quality education.

expanding health ties in line with 'strategic partnership'

Following the signing of the Treaty on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation, the two countries will boost their cooperation in the health sector.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the agreement during an official ceremony in Moscow on January 17.

As per the agreement, Mohammad-Hossein Niknam, the deputy health minister for international affairs, and Hadi Goudarzi, the counselor of the Iranian Embassy in the Russian Federation, highlighted the significance of fostering collaborations in scientific, research, technology, and educational fields.



Blood donors help people injured in port explosion

Following the massive explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port on Saturday, many people rushed to donate blood to help the people injured during the incident.

The huge inferno occurred at around 12.30 pm local time, leaving at least 70 dead and 1,200 injured.



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APRIL 29, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Wealth converts a strange land into homeland and poverty turns a native place into a strange land.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:02 Evening: 19:09 Dawn: 3:41 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:13 (tomorrow)

Iran's cultural community mourns over Shahid Rajaei Port tragedy



TEHRAN-Following the huge explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port in southern Hormozgan Province, which resulted in the death and injury of over 1,200 people, cultural figures have reacted to the unfortunate incident by issuing messages, offering condolences to the Iranian nation and the grieving families.

The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi expressed sympathy with the injured and the families of the victims of the tragic event, and wished success for the rescue teams on the scene, ISNA reported.

"The cultural and artistic community of Iran stands in solidarity with the noble people of Bandar Abbas and the affected families; just as in the early hours of this painful event, the mournful drumming by artists at the Iran's Regional Music Festival became the background music to this national mourning, echoing the collective grief to all," Salehi said in his message.

"I beseech Almighty God to grant forgiveness and divine mercy to the deceased, patience and solace to the bereaved, and recovery and health to the injured," he added.

The 17th Iran's Regional Music Festival, which had started on April 24 in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province, ended its performances on Sunday, following the announcement of three days of public mourning in the province.

The festival was to wrap up on April 28, how-

ever, after the closure of Bandar Abbas city was declared and considering the concerning air pollution situation, continuing the performances and gathering audiences in the concert halls was deemed inappropriate. Therefore, the organizers of the festival, while expressing sympathy with the grieving families and wishing health for the injured, concluded its performances.

Mohammadreza Saberi, Secretary and Spokesperson of the Cinema Owners Association, while offering condolences for the deaths of several of our dear compatriots in the Shahid Rajaei Port tragedy and expressing sympathy with the injured, announced: "In an extraordinary meeting of the Central Board of the Association held today (Sunday), it was decided that all cinemas across the country will be closed tomorrow, Monday, April 28."

"The cinema community, cinema owners, and we at the Cinema Owners Association are deeply mourning this great tragedy, and we hope that the injured from this bitter incident will recover as soon as possible," He emphasized.

Theater artists, like other segments of society, share in the deep sorrow over the loss of dear compatriots in the Shahid Rajaei Port tragedy, the Public Relations Office of the General Directorate of Performing Arts said in a message. "Out of sympathy for this incident, performances of comedy plays will not be staged on Monday, April 28".

Cartoon of Day



Childhood Dreams in Wars
 Cartoonist: Nidal Khalil from Syria

Iraq designated as Guest of Honor at 36th TIBF

TEHRAN-Iraq will be the Guest of Honor at the 36th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF), Ebrahim Heidari, Deputy Director of the fair, said at a press conference held on Sunday in Tehran.

"Iraq will participate with over 15 publishers and a 30-member delegation. The Iraqi Minister of Culture will attend the opening ceremony of the TIBF," he was quoted as saying by Mehr.

According to Thaeer Jaafar Al-Asami, Deputy Head of the National Publishers Association of Iraq: "This participation is a source of pride for our country. We are confident that our presence at this fair will strengthen cultural interaction and relations between the two nations."

"Of the 15 publishing houses from Iraq planned to attend the TIBF. Among these, one publisher is affiliated with the Iraqi Council of Ministers, and the other 14 are members of the Iraqi Publishers Association," he added.

Speaking about the domestic and international sections of the book fair, Heidari said, "2,363 Iranian publishers have registered for the fair, including 1,589 publishers from Tehran and 774 from other provinces. Moreover, 50 applicants from other countries have registered. Their books will be displayed in the Arabic and Latin sections of the exhibition, mostly published between 2023 and 2025."

"This year, we have launched a new and special initiative called



Tehran Publishing Fellowship Program, aiming to support Iranian works and facilitate their translation into other languages. A total of 81 publishers from 34 countries have registered to participate in the first edition of the program. Additionally, 64 Iranian publishers have registered for the fellowship."

The foreign publishers hail from countries including Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Algeria, Brazil, China, Egypt, Hungary, India, Iraq, Italy, Malaysia, Russia, Spain, Syria, and Turkey among others.

The fellowship aims to enhance Iran's presence in the global publishing arena, focus-

ing initially on children's and young adult literature.

The term 'publishing fellowship' refers to the collaboration among publishers, authors, and literary agents for the sale of book rights.

Heidari further underlined the presence of international guests and said: "Thirty foreign authors will attend the fair, coming from various parts of the world. We hope that our engagement with these esteemed guests will continue after the Book Fair as well."

Recognized as a national heritage and event, Tehran International Book Fair not only invigorates and enriches the country's culture but also attracts the attention of cultural figures and book lovers from across the globe.

The cultural event has turned into a landmark, momentous book fair in West Asia after 35 editions in a row. Millions of visitors inspect the fair every year, including thousands of university students, scholars, and their families.

The event currently serves as the most significant cultural event in Iran. The foreign publishers substantially offer their materials in English or Arabic; however, titles in French, German, Chinese, Korean, Russian, or Japanese are also available.

The 36th TIBF is set to take place from May 7 to 17 at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla. "Let's Read for Iran" has been chosen as the slogan for the upcoming edition of the book fair.

The New Horizon of Nader Talebzadeh

By Sander Hicks

Nader Talebzadeh hosted hot debates on Iranian TV shows, and made films on the front lines of wars. He was an active participant in the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Ayatollah Khomeini was a bit like Gandhi, he said, in that he told people, "Stay home, don't work, stop the economy, and the Shah will leave, without violence," and he did. He told me stories about how the US Embassy takeover there was utterly spontaneous. He made it sound like something from Occupy Wall Street.

Nader's contribution to world peace was his international conference, called "New Horizon." Here, he annually brought together American and international dissidents. His team flew us into Iran, for speeches, interviews, dialogue, creating a vantage point from which one could see a new kind of horizon beyond war and empire. It was a chance to see Middle East politics up close, and to see how much Iran wanted to help the people of Palestine. I participated in Tehran in 2017, and then in the shrine city of Mashhad, in 2018. I wanted to come to New Horizon in Beirut in 2019, but in February of that year the Trump White House went to extraordinary lengths to attack Talebzadeh, and all of us who came to his conferences. The USA levied severe sanctions against him which remain in effect today, despite his death from heart failure on April 30th, 2022.

Back in 2019, the US Treasury claimed that Nader, through New Horizon, hosted "international conferences that have provided Iranian intelligence officers a platform to recruit and collect intelligence information from attendees, while propagating anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial." I am not sure any of that is true.

As someone who attended two New Horizon conferences, I was never asked to provide information to Iranian intelligence. My compatriots agree. I never witnessed Holocaust denial or any hate, and I wouldn't have attended if that was what New Horizon was all about.

I asked Nader about that accusation, and he was passionate, "We never had Holocaust deniers, ...We are not anti-Semites... In every conference we had, we had two or three or four Jewish participants, Jewish thinkers, the last one you were in, we had Rabbi Weiss in it, we had Miko Paled, who was born in Israel, wrote the book "The General's Son," we had Norman Finkelstein. So no, this is untrue."

In the days of New Horizon, we all felt that it was our job to try to help our country make peace, in some small way, with Iran. Peace was the patriotic mission of all of my compatriots, fellow speakers who were veterans of the Pentagon, CIA and State Department, plus a few writers and academics. International dialogue is powerful, and our countries have lacked the courage to re-establish formal diplomatic relations for far too long.

It's true that US/Iran relations have been in the toilet, ever since the Islamic Revolution, and the taking of American hostages, when the young muslim students took the US Embassy in 1979. But the more you study Iranian history, you realize that the US Embassy was a symbol of espionage, it was that center of US power which had propped up an evil king, Shah Pahlavi, and helped him torture his people with his secret police, SAVAK.

We need a moral USA that has the guts to apologize for its greed and its blunders. When Madeleine Albright acknowledged the USA's 1953 coup against Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh, that was astonishing. And that kind of integrity is a path to peace. The Iran Nuclear Deal, as created by President Obama and Secretary Kerry, was a great step forward.

But Trump in 2019 was on a warpath to demonize Nader Talebzadeh, and his country, with lies. They tore up Obama's Iran Nuclear Deal, and then attacked New Horizon, tearing up a seedbed for fresh diplomacy. Trump then killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani with a drone missile and escalated the world to the brink of global war.



Sander Hicks (L) and Nader Talebzadeh in an undated photo

Along the way, the Trump Administration sent the FBI into our homes, to intimidate all US citizens from attending the 2019 New Horizon conference in Beirut. In person, the FBI seemed a little bit confused. They showed me pictures of Nader and some of his co-organizers of the Conference. After he was sanctioned by US Treasury, Nader told me in a Zoom interview, the attack from Trump was because, he thought, US Government veterans were now coming to New Horizon. Attending the conference afforded us all ample opportunity to chat with ex CIA insiders from our own government, informally, in hotel lobbies. New Horizon was a rare chance to have conversations about the deeper reality of the world's true order of global powers, voices unafraid to challenge AIPAC, the US war machine, and Israel.

Today in 2025, the new Trump Administration reaffirmed the "Maximum Pressure" policy of extreme sanctions on Iran. But some say that Trump may want a different policy direction, soon. The US does still need a new nuclear deal with Iran. Maybe the US should lead by dismantling all of its genocidal weapons of mass killing.

It's ironic that the right wing in America tries to act in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was a lot like Nader, in many ways. He was an organizer, he created dialogue, rather than war, he was a peace-maker, and he created a movement of peace-makers. Nader's film about Jesus, "The Mes-

siah" shows a strong, prophetic teacher, fearlessly speaking truth to power, predicting the coming of a new advocate of truth.

Today, I drive a rented car through Front Royal, Virginia, with my young son, on the beautiful winding paths up at the summits of the Blue Ridge Mountains. I am up on the horizon, looking down on the valleys, on the Skyline Drive. In the most peaceful views, I feel the spirit of Nader here, because he lived here long ago, in Front Royal, when he was young and in the USA.

In my prayer and meditation space in Brooklyn, on the floor is a yellow and blue vivid rainbow of my Islamic prayer rug. I bought it in the airport coming back from Iran, a magic carpet from a psychedelic spiritual paradigm shift, a trip without drugs, a dreamland world, the forbidden city, a place closer to God, the Holy City of Mashhad, the Reza Shrine, so glorious in the golden dawn of that new day, with no jet lag and no sleep, cleaned out and buzzing, praying, seeing a new horizon. I wouldn't have that prayer mat, or that divine experience, if Nader the great diplomat hadn't invited us all to his New Horizon.

* Sander Hicks is a progressive activist and writer, who is involved with the Democratic Socialists of America and serves as a County Committee Member in the Brooklyn Democratic Party, and he was a friend of the late Nader Talebzadeh.