



‘Political statements won’t change reality’: Tehran denounces PGCC remarks on Iranian territories

TEHRAN – Iran’s Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baqaei has strongly rejected as “unfounded and invalid” allegations in the final statement of the 46th summit of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) regarding the three Iranian Persian Gulf Islands of the Greater and Lesser Tunbs as well as Bu Musa.

He expressed regret over a rehash of the UAE’s baseless claims of ownership of the three Iranian islands, saying, “The Iranian islands of Abu [Bu] Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb are inseparable parts of Iran’s territory, and any territorial claim on them blatantly contradict the principle of respect for countries’ territorial integrity and good neighborliness,” he said. ▶ Page 3

Iran stages second major naval drill since war with Israel

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy has launched a large-scale military exercise in the Persian Gulf, unveiling advanced AI-enhanced defensive and offensive systems in what marks the country’s second major naval drill since it fought a war against the U.S. and Israel in June. ▶ Page 2

Professor Azarov argues the West moves Ukraine like a pawn in a grand game

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – The war in Ukraine has emerged as one of the defining struggles of the 21st century, redrawing global fault lines and igniting fierce debate over its origins. While the result of US-mediated talks over the war between Russia and Ukraine remains unclear, the question of how this confrontation began — and why it has endured — has taken on fresh urgency. Many analysts trace its roots back to NATO’s 2008 summit in Bucharest, a turning point that deepened tensions with Russia. In an interview with the Tehran Times, Professor Vladimir Azarov, a member of the Russian Writers’ Union and professor at the Academy of Military Sciences as well as a veteran of local wars and military conflicts, contends that NATO expansion, Cold War intelligence operations, and decades of Western backing for Ukrainian nationalism deliberately set the stage for war. He outlines why, in his view, Western leaders have slowed progress on peace talks, how Ukraine became a geopolitical pawn, and why sanctions have failed to sap Russia’s strength. ▶ Page 5

Is Japan sliding back toward militarism?

By Lucia Hubinská

XIAMEN – Relations between China and Japan are undergoing their most serious shock in a decade. And yet, as recently as 2024—after the lifting of pandemic restrictions—it seemed the two countries were slowly moving toward improved relations. This trend was abruptly disrupted in recent weeks, when a series of diplomatic missteps gave way to open disputes.

The spark came from Tokyo, when Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi publicly declared that a potential Chinese attack on Taiwan would constitute “an existential threat to Japan.” In a region where the Taiwan question is considered the single most sensitive geopolitical fault line in Asia, this statement carries far-reaching implications. Moreover, Takaichi had just visited Taiwanese officials at the APEC summit—only hours after she had affirmed with the Chinese president the need for stable relations. Beijing interpreted her steps not as diplomatic coincidence, but as a deliberate signal.

Lebanon’s art of giving everything away for free

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — For decades, Lebanon’s leaders have embraced a peculiar diplomatic approach: yield concession after concession, gain nothing in return, and feign surprise as the nation’s leverage steadily disappears.

In the span of months, the state revised ceasefire terms, expanded internal inspections up to Beirut, handed over an Israeli abductee and a military vehicle, accepted disarmament clauses, enforced U.S. sanctions on its own people, and refrained from filing a single meaningful complaint at the UN—despite thousands of violations.

This isn’t a negotiating strategy; rather, it is political self-checkout, where the customer rings himself up and still thanks the cashier.

These serial giveaways form the backdrop of Lebanon’s current predicament. A government that repeatedly performs favors without compensation teaches the world exactly how to treat it.

Israel utterly failed to shield its protégé in Gaza

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The occupying Israeli regime suffered a setback after its most prominent militia leader was killed in Gaza.

Yasser Abu Shabab, along with several aides and his deputy, was killed in Rafah in southern Gaza, in what some reports described as a carefully planned ambush carried out by resistance factions.

The Israeli regime’s army radio was among the first to announce the news. According to Hebrew media, the regime’s authorities are examining whether Hamas members infiltrated Abu Shabab’s area of control and assassinated him.

Abu Shabab rose to prominence after investigative reports revealed that he had been collaborating with the IOF (the Israel Occupation Force), who supplied his militia with vehicles, weapons, and luxury goods in an effort to weaken the armed wing of Hamas. It was also found that members of the Israeli-backed militia had fought for Daesh.

A thousand stories under one name, Herbert Karim-Masihi reflects on his new exhibition

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – Iranian-Armenian photographer, and cultural heritage researcher Herbert Karim-Masihi is presenting a new exhibition titled “Iran Thinks of You” at the Sa’dabad Cultural-Historical Complex in northern Tehran.

The show gathers a selection of his long-term photographic projects on Iran’s ancient architecture, sacred sites, and historical landscapes, works created over years of travel through places such as Tchogha Zanbil, Shahr-e Sukhteh, Pasargadae, Persepolis, and the ancient city of Yazd, which is famed for its eye-catching windcatchers. ▶ Page 6



Palestinians celebrate as young couples attend mass wedding

A number of young Palestinians gathered in the war-torn city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza to solidify the love they found amid the ruins. Speaking to reporters, they stated their determination to start a new life despite mass displacement and the devastating living conditions caused by Israeli violence that began in 2023.

Exclusive Interview

Iran’s steadfast stance has transformed resistance politics in West Asia: Malaysian activist

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

The powerful Sahand 2025 military drills

In its commentary, Javan highlighted the significance of the powerful and innovative Sahand 2025 drills. The paper argued: Hosted by the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps and attended by member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the drill carries strategic importance, signaling that Iran is actively shaping both regional and transregional dynamics. The participation of the Shanghai Organization, at a time when regional terrorism led by the Zionist regime is expanding and threatening the entire region, reflects a shared perception of danger and the necessity of collective action. Moreover, the exercise strengthens mutual understanding of interests and threats among SCO members, paving the way for deeper political and economic ties, as well as cooperation and investment in energy projects and transmission routes, including the North–South Corridor. With the slogan “Comprehensive Efforts to Combat Terrorism,” the drill demonstrates that Western attempts to isolate the IRGC have failed. It shows that countries worldwide—especially those with anti-Western orientations—are not swayed by U.S. policies and will cooperate with the IRGC within the framework of collective security.

Siasat-e-Rooz: America's threats are endless

In an analysis, Siasat-e-Rooz addressed America's renewed claim of destroying Iran's nuclear facilities. The paper wrote: These days, the United States once again raises the claim of annihilating Iran's nuclear infrastructure, even though evidence suggests that Washington seeks to break Tehran's resilience in the face of nuclear ambiguity and force it to disclose the status of bombed nuclear sites. Having suffered a severe defeat in the 12?day war with Iran, the U.S. is now engaged in narrative?building to project unilateral power while concealing the costs borne by itself and the Zionist regime. At the same time, Washington, through sanctions and threats, is pressing for IAEA inspectors to enter Iran's nuclear facilities, thereby paving the way for a new military strike. Through humiliation, it aims to compel Iran toward “zero enrichment” and the dismantling of its missile capabilities. Thus, the justification of new military assaults on other countries under the guise of “peace through war” is part of this design. In this context, the Trump administration's Secretary of State once again engaged regarding U.S. aggression against Iran in June, repeating the claim of destroying Iran's nuclear facilities.

Etemad: Why did Turkish and Saudi diplomats visit Tehran simultaneous?

Etemad commented on the simultaneous presence of Turkey's foreign minister and Saudi

Arabia's deputy foreign minister in Tehran. It said: The visits took place at a moment when, after a period of relative calm following the Gaza ceasefire and a temporary reduction in tensions, the region has re?entered a phase of geopolitical realignment. The coincidence of Saudi and Turkish visits should not be interpreted as a sign of lasting trilateral convergence, but rather as a reflection of the vital needs of all three countries to prevent the outbreak of new conflicts. Each actor faces a situation in which the absence of dialogue could bring heavy security and economic costs. Turkey fears that any Iran?Israel confrontation could upset the fragile balance in northern Syria; Saudi Arabia worries about the consequences of a possible war in Lebanon and its impact on energy security and investment; and Iran, under pressure from the U.S. and Israel, must maintain a degree of engagement with regional players to ease external strain. From this perspective, the “tactical synergy” among the three countries is less about building long?term mechanisms of cooperation and more about creating breathing space for crisis management. Even so, this level of synergy is significant, as it signals a return to the logic of regional diplomacy—a logic aimed at preventing unwanted wars.

Jam-e Jam: Gulf sheikhdoms on a confrontational path

Jam-e Jam examined the hostile statement by the Arab states on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf Cooperation against Iran. The paper noted: The (P)GCC released a harsh statement targeting our country. Issuing such a statement under current regional conditions reveals that the Persian Gulf sheikhs misinterpret Tehran's neighborhood policy. The statement not only repeats Abu Dhabi's false sovereignty claims over Iranian territory but also brazenly condemns Iran's military exercises and visits by senior commanders. In recent years, Iran has approached relations with Persian Gulf Arab states with restraint, particularly in light of efforts to repair ties with Saudi Arabia, despite the accusations and positions of (P)GCC members. Nevertheless, it appears that the (P)GCC interprets Tehran's political reservations differently and is moving toward confrontation with Iran. Meanwhile, the U.S. and the Zionist regime, seeking reconstruction after a two?year war, intend to incite the adventurous leaders of the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms against Iran, gradually pushing them toward direct conflict with the Islamic Republic.

Intelligence operation nets armed cell near Tehran

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) in Pardis County announced that an armed cell affiliated with the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) terrorist Organization has been dismantled following an intelligence operation carried out by the IRGC's security units.

The group had been involved in a series of anti-security activities across Tehran and Alborz provinces. IRGC officials said the cell was broken up in Pardis after sustained intelligence surveillance and monitoring.

The statement added that members of the network had carried out attacks on more than 10 government, security, and military facilities in the two provinces. They were detained in Pardis after IRGC intelligence officers tracked their movements and identified their organizational links.

Officials said the individuals had recently been attempting to acquire materials to produce improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for planned attacks targeting civilians and disrupting public security. IRGC intelligence units reportedly foiled the plot through timely intervention.

Pardis County, home to more than 500,000 people, lies to the east of Tehran.

The MEK has been active since the 1980s. The group has killed at least 17,000 Iranians in terrorist attacks. It has also backed foreign aggressions against Iran, including Saddam Hussein's invasion



in the 1980s and Israel's recent war that occurred in June.

A trial in Iran is currently underway to expose the full extent of the terrorist group's atrocities, with victims' families present to testify. Kidnapping, torture and detonating bombs in public places, which represent only a fraction of the group's terrorist activities, have been the focus of the hearings so far.

Intelligence reports show the group receives financial and political backing from a number of Western countries, including the U.S., France, Germany, and the UK. Israel has also become a big sponsor of the MEK in recent years. The terror outfit is, meanwhile, notorious for torturing, imprisoning, and killing its own members, with defectors describing the organization as a “murderous cult.”

Public back-and-forth continues between Araghchi and Lebanese counterpart

Iran's FM reiterates support for Lebanon's sovereignty after Rajji lashes out over concerned warnings

TEHRAN – Tehran moved to calm diplomatic waters on Thursday after Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, firmly reiterated the Islamic Republic's unwavering respect for Lebanese sovereignty, following what appeared to be an excessive and unexpected reaction from Lebanon's top diplomat to an Iranian politician's warning about the whittling away of Lebanon's defense prowess in the face of continued Israeli aggression.

In a written message to his Lebanese counterpart Youssef Rajji, Araghchi touched upon age-old and cordial relations between the two countries, according to a statement released by Iran's foreign ministry.

“He stressed Iran's ongoing support for Lebanon's territorial integrity and sovereignty and its national unity as well as security and stability in the country, especially in the face of the Israeli regime's acts of aggression,” the statement read.

Araghchi also invited Rajji to visit Tehran for talks on the expansion of bilateral ties, as well as regional and international developments.

The invitation marked the second time Iran's foreign minister has asked his Lebanese counterpart to visit in the past weeks; the first occurred after Rajji stated in an interview with Arab media that he wanted to



Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji, foreground, meets with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi in Beirut on June 3, 2025.

sit down with Araghchi and negotiate, despite the long-standing close contacts between the two countries. Multiple Iranian officials, including Araghchi, have visited Beirut and met with the country's leadership this year, a common occurrence in previous years as well.

After extending the first invitation, Araghchi said he would be happy to discuss bilateral ties with his Lebanese counterpart, adding that Iran does not wish to speak on or intervene in Lebanon's internal affairs. Rajji did not respond to the invitation but later took to X to tell Araghchi that an Iranian

politician's recent warning about the dangers of decreasing Lebanon's military prowess was tantamount to meddling.

Ali Akbar Velayati, former foreign minister and current foreign policy advisor to Iran's Leader, had said in an interview that disarming Hezbollah at Washington's request, while the U.S. is unwilling to ensure Israel abides by a 2024 ceasefire, would be very dangerous, as Hezbollah is a “pillar of Lebanon's defense.”

Hezbollah was formed in 1982 during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. It managed to force Israeli forces out of the country after the Lebanese military had

Iran stages second major naval drill since war with Israel



TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy has launched a large-scale military exercise in the Persian Gulf, unveiling advanced AI-enhanced defensive and offensive systems in what marks the country's second major naval drill since it fought a war against the U.S. and Israel in June. m

The exercise began Thursday, with the IRGC emphasizing heightened intelligence readiness and the resolve and preparedness of its naval forces to confront any threat. During the drill, IRGC naval units issued warnings to U.S. vessels operating in the area, signaling a clear message of deterrence.

Advanced air-defense systems—including the Nawab, Majid, and Misagh platforms—were deployed under electronic warfare conditions. According to Iranian military officials, the systems used artificial intelligence to identify aerial and maritime targets within fractions of a second and strike them with high accuracy.

Codenamed Shahid Mohammad Nazeri, the exercise spans wide sections of the Persian Gulf, including Bu Musa, Greater Tumb, Lesser Tumb, and Siri islands, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Sea of Oman.

Nazeri, for whom the drill is named, previously commanded IRGC Navy special forces and is known domestically for his role in the January 12, 2016 capture of 10 U.S. Navy sailors who entered

Iranian territorial waters.

During the drill, advanced air defense systems, including Nawab, Majid, and Misagh were also deployed in electronic warfare conditions.

On August, Iran Navy showcased its formidable and expanding military capabilities during the “Sustainable Power 1404” missile exercise, conducted across the strategic northern Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman.

Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, commander of the IRGC Navy, said the force maintains “continuous intelligence dominance” across the Persian Gulf and leverages this oversight in a structured manner during exercises.

“In this drill, we carry out subsurface, surface, and aerial monitoring,” he said. “We have permanent intelligence dominance, but in exercises we employ it purposefully, defining its paths and directions and determining how operations should unfold.”

At the same time, Iran is pursuing enhancements to its defense capabilities across all areas. Chief Commander of Iran's Army [Artesh], Major General Amir Hatami, told members of Parliament's Planning, Budget, and Accounting Commission on Thursday that Iran has “not wasted a moment” in enhancing its military capabilities.

Hatami said safeguarding the Islamic Republic is inseparable



from preserving Iran's independence and territorial integrity, adding, “The least harm to the Islamic system is harm to the independence and territorial integrity of our beloved country, Iran.”

Addressing longstanding tensions with the United States and Israel, Hatami said hostility from global arrogance has persisted since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and has intensified over time.

He referenced the recent 12-day war in June, saying Iran was in negotiations with the United States when Israel launched a sudden attack with U.S. support. According to Hatami, Israel's June 13 assault killed senior Iranian commanders, nuclear scientists, and civilians. More than a week later, he said, the United States joined the conflict by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites.

Iran's armed forces retaliated by striking strategic targets across the occupied territories as well as the al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar, the largest U.S. military base in West Asia.

Hatami said the attacks against Iran were intended to cripple its nuclear, missile, and defense programs and eliminate key commanders as part of a broader effort to topple the Islamic Republic. He asserted that Iran “won the war” because its adversaries failed to achieve their objectives.

He added that Israel views Iran as an existential threat,

struggled to stand up to the regime. Hezbollah is still believed to be more powerful than the Lebanese army, which receives its arms and training from Western patrons of Israel.

Lebanese authorities have not managed to force Israel to abide by the 2024 ceasefire that the regime has been violating on an almost daily basis. Israeli airstrikes have killed dozens of Lebanese people since last November. Hezbollah has so far refrained from responding to these violations, appearing to want the government to take responsibility for the matter.

The Lebanese foreign minister's remarks on “Iranian meddling” drew negative responses from the Lebanese people. In replies to his X post, one citizen asked Rajji to “now do the same for the U.S. and Israel.” Another user said: “Isn't it Israel that is bombing our country again and again with Washington's support?”

The U.S. has been pressuring Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah, even providing the country with an implementation plan and timeline. It has, however, made no demands for Israel to stop its attacks.

Iran has warned against disarmament but says it will abide by any collective conclusion reached by the Lebanese.

stating: “Since the war, we have not wasted a single moment in strengthening our defense capabilities and enhancing our military readiness. Becoming stronger has been our top priority.”

While Iranian officials say the country's military response has established a deterrent balance, analysts warn that any renewed confrontation could expand into the maritime domain—particularly in the Strait of Hormuz.

The narrow waterway at the mouth of the Persian Gulf is the world's most critical energy chokepoint. Roughly 20 percent of global oil supplies—some 17 to 18 million barrels per day—pass through the strait, along with significant liquefied natural gas exports, especially from Qatar.

Experts caution that any disruption could trigger a rapid spike in energy prices and destabilize global markets. Some forecasts suggest oil prices could surge by up to 80 percent within the first week of a closure, with industries worldwide facing shutdowns within days due to fuel shortages.

Military sources in Tehran say Iran is closely monitoring the movements of U.S. and Israeli forces in the region. Officials have hinted that if hostilities escalate, Tehran may consider restricting navigation through the Strait of Hormuz as part of its defensive strategy.

Sahand 2025 showcases Iran’s role as hub for counter-terrorism cooperation

Drill comes despite Western attempts at stigmatizing IRGC

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Ground Force concluded its hosting of a five-day multinational military exercise on Iranian soil, with drills that not only sent a message to terrorist factions in the region but also delivered a political message to Western states seeking to isolate and stigmatize the unit.

Codenamed “Sahand 2025,” the drills united forces from across the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) from December 1 to December 5. All ten SCO countries (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Iran, and Belarus) dispatched troops or representatives, while four other nations, including Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Oman, and Iraq, sent observers.

Exercises were mainly conducted at the Imam Zaman Mechanized Brigade base in Shabestar County, located in Iran’s northwestern East Azerbaijan Province.

Tactical commanders speaking to The Tehran Times said the drills involved complex, multi-phase operations designed to simulate real-world threats.

The exercises comprised four major phases: intelligence units conducted precise monitoring to identify simulated enemy movements; drone units executed targeted strikes on identified positions; helicopter units carried out aerial assaults to neutralize



threats at depth; special units performed a rapid heliborne insertion to free hostages taken by simulated “white elements”; and finally, teams conducted final area clearance operations to establish lasting security. The drills featured weaponry and military equipment from each participating nation.

Major General Mohammad Pakpour, commander-in-chief of the IRGC, said Iran’s expansive presence was “a source of pride” and a symbol of “deep strategic cooperation.” He emphasized Iran’s readiness to share hard-earned counter-terrorism experience “without limitation” with partner states.

Analysts and on-the-ground commanders hailed the maneuvers as a military success. However, another significant aspect of the drills was the rhetoric surrounding them, which emphasized shared purpose, mutual respect, and a collective stand against unilateral Western dictates.

“Independent countries are firmly determined to defend themselves against an unjust global order,” said Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf on the first day of the drill.

When it comes to Iran and the role of the IRGC, analysts pointed out that the Sahand drill demonstrated Western attempts at disparaging the IRGC had achieved little to no success.

The United States designated the entire IRGC as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in 2019 – the first time a formal part of another government received such a label. Canada followed suit, and Australia became the latest Western bloc country to blacklist the IRGC, making the move last month. Motions for similar designations have been advanced in the United Kingdom and the European Union, mostly by pro-Israeli Zionist groups. The West says Iran must end its support of Resistance groups that fight Israeli occupation and ag-

gression across West Asia.

The blacklisting has not affected Iran’s ability to arm itself and develop its defense capabilities, as the country has built a domestic military industry over the past four decades. It does, however, appear to have pushed the country deeper into alliances with non-Western powers, which increasingly find themselves at odds with the West over its unilateral measures. Russia, for instance, is currently fighting the West in Ukraine, and China is locked in a tussle with the West over the sovereignty of its break-away province, Taiwan. There are fears of an eventual military confrontation in Taiwan as well. India, too, is finding itself at a growing distance from the West over economic and trade issues that could eventually spread to the military domain.

In remarks to the Tehran Times, Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, said Iran’s hosting of the Sahand drills was an action for “alignment and coalition-building in line with a new architecture for regional security.”

“The Islamic Republic of Iran has been one of the main victims of terrorism and has always been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, with valuable experience in confronting all its forms and dimensions. We provided a platform for the transfer and synergistic exchange of experiences among SCO member states in this regard,” he explained.



Arab Persian Gulf leaders gather in Bahrain for PGCC’s 46th summit

all three states have never been formally demarcated.

Another reaction has come from Ali Akbar Velayati, an advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution. “The recent statement from the PGCC issued after their meeting, which contains repeated and baseless claims about the three Iranian islands as well as the fictitious ownership plan for the Arash oil field, once again showed that some governments have chosen the path of

creating tension and are following the policies of foreigners instead of stepping on the path of rational and constructive interaction,” he said.

“The islands of Bu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, as well as the Arash oil field, are an inseparable part of the historical territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and any claim about their ownership is false and has no legal value. Political statements will not change the reality.”

Iran’s steadfast stance has transformed resistance politics in West Asia: Malaysian activist

Mohd Azmi Abdul Hamid says Iran’s resistance to Western pressure gives it unique strategic weight

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN – At the sidelines of the Conference on “People’s Rights and Legitimate Freedoms in the Thoughts of Ayatollah Khamenei,” The Tehran Times sat down with Mohd Azmi Abdul Hamid, President of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Islamic Organizations (MAPIM), to discuss the evolving landscape of global justice, Palestine advocacy, and the role of the Muslim world in confronting oppressive power structures.

Known for his outspoken positions on humanitarian crises and neocolonial policies, Azmi offers a candid assessment of Malaysia’s responsibilities, the shortcomings of

Western human rights frameworks, and the growing moral awakening across the Global South and beyond. In this interview, he outlines strategic pathways for stronger solidarity, principled foreign policy, and people-centered resistance to global injustices.

The following is the text of the interview:

How can Malaysia strengthen its diplomatic and humanitarian support for Palestine and other oppressed regions?

Malaysia already has a strong moral and diplomatic record on Palestine, but in today’s climate that base needs to be upgraded into a more strategic and structured role.

Diplomatically, Malaysia can strengthen its support in several ways by building a coordinated Global South front on Palestine, together with Iran, Turkiye, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil and others, so that resolutions at the UN and other multilateral forums are not isolated voices but part of a bloc that refuses to normalize genocide and occupation.

By pushing more aggressively for legal avenues, including support for cases at the ICJ and ICC, sanctions on companies complicit in war crimes and concrete diplomatic consequences for states that arm and shield Israel.

By institutionalizing Palestine as a permanent pillar of foreign policy,

not an issue that depends on the personal inclination of any particular government.

On the humanitarian side, Malaysia should develop a permanent humanitarian and reconstruction mechanism for Gaza and all occupied territories, with government facilitation and NGO implementation, so that we move from ad hoc relief to long term resilience.

Use its credibility in the Muslim world and ASEAN to convene regional humanitarian coalitions that can negotiate more effective access and protection for aid convoys.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tehran derby ends in goalless stalemate: 2025/26 PGPL

TEHRAN – Tehran derby between Persepolis and Esteghlal football teams shared in a goalless draw on Matchweek 12 of the 2025/26 Iran’s Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Friday.

In the match held in Arak’s IRALCO Stadium, two teams showed a lackluster performance in front of about 10,000 spectators.

There have been 106 meetings between the rivals, with Persepolis claiming 29 wins, Esteghlal 26, and 51 drawn matches.

The Tehran derby, also known as Blue-Red derby, is a football match between the two prominent Tehran clubs Esteghlal and Persepolis.

It is widely considered the major crosstown derby in the Persian Gulf Pro League. This match was declared as the most important derby in Asia and 22nd most important derby in the world in June 2008 by World Soccer magazine.

Sepahan move top of 2025/26 PGPL

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team defeated Fajr Sepasi 2-0 to move top of 2025-26 Iran’s Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

In the match held in Isfahan, Enzo Crivelli and Mohammad Askari scored two goals in the second half to seal a home win for Sepahan.

Also, Foolad was held to a goalless draw by Aluminum and Malavan defeated rock-bottom Mes 2-1 in Bandar Anzali.

Sepahan moved top of the table with 21 points, one point ahead of Esteghlal.

Iran unchanged in FIBA ranking

TEHRAN – Iran national basketball team remained unchanged in the 26th place in the latest FIBA World Ranking.

The top ten teams held their positions in the newly released FIBA men’s world ranking on Thursday, following the conclusion of the first window of the 2027 World Cup qualifiers.

The U.S. remain top after two victories over Nicaragua, while defending world champions Germany are still second.

Outside the top ten, Turkey overtook Latvia to take the No. 11 spot after two wins, while Rwanda was the biggest climber, rising nine spots to No. 81.

Iranian taekwondo athletes win two more golds at 2025 World U21

TEHRAN – Iran’s Mobina Nematzadeh and Radin Zeinali won two gold medal at the 2025 World U21 Taekwondo Championships on Friday.

Nematzadeh defeated Turkey’s Sude Yaren Uzunçavdar 2-1 in the final match of the Women’s -53kg.

Zeinali also beat Turkey’s Ömer Furkan Körpe 2-1 in the Men’s -74kg final.

Abolfazl Zandi in the Men -58kg, Amir Reza Gholami in the Men’s 780kg, and Mobina Nematzadeh in the Women’s -53kg had previously won three golds, while Amir Mohammad Ashrafi in the Men +87kg and Hasti Mohammadi in the Women’s 757 kg won two bronze medals.

The 2025 World U21 Taekwondo Championships, the 1st edition of the World U21 Taekwondo Championships, are being held at the Moi International Sports Centre in Kasarani,

Nairobi, Kenya from Dec. 3 to 6.

Galloway signs for Iran’s Mahgol basketball team

TEHRAN – American guard Ramon Galloway joined the Iranian basketball team Mahgol.

The 34-year-old player currently plays for the Iraq national team.

He started his playing career in the Bosnian team Igokea and has also played at Sporting Al Riyadi, Beirut, Al Ittihad Alexandria, Al-Ahly Ly, Al-Difaa Al-Jawi, and Spartans Distrito Capital.

The Iranian Basketball Super League (IBSL) is a professional men’s basketball league in Iran. It was founded in 1998.

The current champions are Shahrdari Gorgan. The league follows the promotion and relegation system in which the two lowest ranking teams are relegated to 1st Division.

Iran basketball more terrifying with Amini: FIBA

TEHRAN – Window 1 of the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 Asian Qualifiers has come to a close, and so there’s no better time than now to assess how all 16 teams stood after the four-day competitions.

What made Iran even more exciting to watch was the return of Behnam Yakhchali. They kept basically (most of) the team that won bronze in the 2025 Asia Cup – led by Arsalan Kazemi and Sina Vahedi – and then brought in the star guard for Window 1. The result? A sweep of Iraq, and a share of the Group C lead with the Jordanians.

What makes Iran even more terrifying is that they did this without Mohammad Amini – who was announced injured before the window. Once they bring him back into the mix, they will surely be better, fiba.basketball wrote.

They’re sliding down here not because of how they played, but more relative to how the other rising teams performed against tougher opponents.

Soraya Aghaei joins IOC Athletes’ Commission

TEHRAN – The President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Kirsty Coventry, has appointed five new members of the IOC Athletes’ Commission (AC), ensuring that the AC reaches its full composition in time for the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games.

The five Olympians are: Soraya Aghaei Hajiagha (IRI, badminton), Husein Alireza (KSA, rowing), Cheick Sallah Cissé (CIV, taekwondo), Olufunke Oshonaiké (NGR, table tennis) and Mariana Pajón (COL, cycling). The appointments were made in consultation with IOC AC Chair Emma Terho.

Aghaei competed at Tokyo 2020, becoming the first female badminton player to represent Iran at the Olympic Games. She has coached at national level and is a member of the Iranian NOC’s Athletes’ Commission.

IOC AC Chair Emma Terho congratulated the new members on their appointment: «I am delighted to welcome Soraya, Husein, Cheick, Olufunke, and Mariana to the Athletes’ Commission,” she said. “Their diverse backgrounds, achievements and experience will enrich our discussions and help us continue to advocate for athletes worldwide.”

With these appointments, the IOC AC is now composed of 23 members from all continents (including a member from the Refugee Olympic Team), 13 women and 10 men, representing 15 summer sports and 5 winter sports.

Chinese private sector shows growing interest in entering Iran's market

TEHRAN – Iran's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) has said it is prepared to expand joint investments with Chinese companies in renewable energy, electric vehicles and rail industries, noting that Chinese private sector has shown growing interest in entering Iranian market, the head of the organization said during a meeting with Iran's ambassador to China.

Farshad Moqimi highlighted Iran's successful industrial partnerships with Chinese firms and said the 25-year Iran-China cooperation agreement provides a valuable framework for deepening technological and industrial ties.

He said IDRO has already collaborated with Chinese partners on three major projects: glass-fiber production, tire manufacturing and metro wagon construction. The organization, he added, is ready to broaden these collaborations into emerging sectors including renewables, electric mobility and rail equipment.

Moqimi stressed that advanced technology transfer is IDRO's top priority in international partnerships, noting that cooperation with



Chinese technology companies could address this strategic need. He also called on Iran's embassy in Beijing to help streamline direct engagement between IDRO and Chinese industrial and tech firms.

Iran's ambassador to China, Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, welcomed IDRO's plans and said the long-term cooperation document serves as a roadmap for expanding bilateral ties.

He noted that major Chinese corporations and private-sector companies are keen to enter the Iranian market, adding that the embassy will facilitate effective links between IDRO and Chinese industry to support future joint projects.

Economic co-op in focus as Brazilian ambassador meets Qazvin governor

TEHRAN – Brazil's Ambassador to Iran, André Veras Guimarães, met with Mohammad Nozari, the governor of Qazvin Province, on Wednesday.

Nozari described Qazvin as a major and strategically important province with strong industrial and tourism potential, saying the region is well-positioned to expand its relations with Brazil.

He added that Brazil is a large and influential country best known to many Iranians for its renowned football players, and noted that the two nations enjoy positive relations.

He expressed hope that the ambassador's visit would pave the way for deeper cooperation in industrial and tourism sectors.

The governor said Qazvin is a leading province in diversified exports, construction materials, and glass and ceramic production, stating that it can help meet Brazil's needs in various fields.

The meeting was also attended by Ali Rahmani, head of the provincial Planning and Budget Organization; Safikhani, the deputy governor for economic affairs; Ahmadvand, the deputy governor for political and security affairs; Darvishvand, the Foreign Ministry's representative in the province; Mostafa Taherkhani, director-general for economic affairs; economic adviser Ahad Chegini; and Mahdi Abedian, head of the Qazvin Chamber of Commerce.

Back in February, Iran and Brazil agreed to expand their financial and banking relations, with a focus on using national currencies in bilateral trade and leveraging banking infrastructure for economic cooperation.

According to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the agreement was reached during a meeting between CBI Deputy Governor Asghar Abolhasani and Tatiana Rosito, Brazil's Deputy Finance Minister and Chair of the BRICS Central Bank Deputies and Finance Ministers Meeting.

During the meeting, Abolhasani and Rosito discussed the significant financial and trade potential between Iran and Brazil, emphasizing the importance of increasing bilateral and multilateral monetary and banking cooperation, particularly through mechanisms available within the BRICS framework.

Abolhasani noted that the economic and trade capacities of Iran, Brazil, and other BRICS members indicate that enhanced banking and financial cooperation could significantly boost trade among these nations in the short term.

Rosito stressed the need to strengthen bilateral financial cooperation with Iran and proposed utilizing BRICS capabilities to develop new banking and financial collaboration mechanisms, given ongoing global financial and banking developments.

Tire production in Iran rises 8%

TEHRAN – Iran's tire industry has recorded an eight percent increase in output, a board member of the Tire Industry Association said, while calling for the removal of currency restrictions affecting raw material supplies.

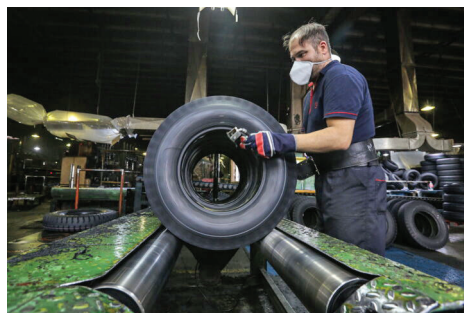
According to Jamal Mirzaei, domestic manufacturers meet about 95 percent of the country's tire demand in the passenger-vehicle segment, with only a few specific sizes for certain brands imported. "There is no shortage in the tire market," he said.

He estimated annual tire production at around 24 million units and projected output could rise to 26 million units next year.

Mirzaei said Iran does not yet produce ultra-heavy tires used for mining machinery but plans are underway to localize production within a year. These tires are currently imported.

In the bus and truck segment, he said domestic factories have about 45 percent production capacity, but output is 15 percent below that level due to liquidity shortages tied to government-set pricing.

Mirzaei noted persistent currency-related hurdles in procurement and order registra-



tion. He said the national trade system frequently experiences outages, delaying import approvals and customs clearance.

He added that foreign currency shortages have also limited supplies of raw materials and tires for certain imported vehicles, urging faster decision-making to address the issue.

According to Mirzaei, the price gap between government-set and free-market tires has narrowed, with some brands even selling below the official rate to access cash more quickly. He advised drivers to buy tires from authorized dealerships to secure official prices.

Tehran, Yerevan discuss ways to expand economic, trade, investment co-op

TEHRAN- During a meeting between the ambassador of Armenia to Iran and the secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Free Trade and Special Economic Zones, they discussed ways to develop bilateral cooperation and strengthen economic, trade, and investment relations between the two countries.

Grigor Hakovian, the ambassador of Armenia to Iran, met with Reza Masrou, the secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Free Trade and Special Economic Zones, to explore avenues for expanding bilateral cooperation and enhancing economic, trade, and investment ties between the two nations.

During this meeting, the two sides exchanged views on existing economic capacities between the two countries and emphasized the introduction of investment opportunities and the development of joint packages to attract domestic and foreign investors.

The Armenian ambassador and the secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Free Trade and Special Economic Zones noted the advantages of Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union, describing it as a valuable opportunity for Iranian free zone producers and investors to gain broader access to the markets of the union's member states.

The development of joint Iranian-Armenian productions and their supply in Eurasian markets was also presented as an effective strategy to increase the two countries' share in regional trade.

Additionally, the meeting emphasized organizing joint investment tours with the participation of economic actors from both countries and making maximum use of the transit corridor capacities between Iran and Armenia, particularly the North-South and East-West routes.

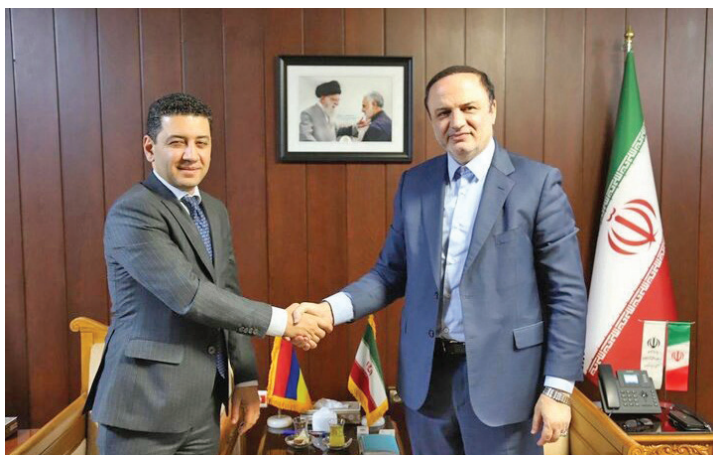
On October 26, the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and the Embassy of Armenia in Tehran agreed to establish a joint digital platform to connect Iranian and Armenian businesses directly, aiming to expand bilateral trade and investment opportunities.

During a meeting between Hamed Asgari, ICCIMA's deputy for international affairs, and Hayk Nazaryan, commercial attaché of the Armenian Embassy, the two sides reviewed the current level of trade cooperation and discussed practical strategies to deepen economic relations.

Asgari commended the Armenian Embassy for its active role in facilitating the Iranian trade delegation's visit to Yerevan, which coincided with the Iranian president's official trip earlier this year.

He said the two nations are working toward elevating their partnership to a strategic level, with a shared goal of increasing annual trade volume from \$737 million in 2024 to \$1 billion in 2025, and eventually to \$3 billion in the coming years.

The ICCIMA deputy emphasized that achieving a balanced and sustainable trade relationship requires the design of coordi-



nated frameworks to enhance cross-border business activity.

He underlined the importance of using existing networks of Iranian and Armenian entrepreneurs based in other countries to identify potential partners and promote mutual investment.

Both sides agreed to launch a joint B2B matchmaking platform, which will serve as a unified and accessible digital space for companies seeking partnerships, suppliers, or clients in either market.

They also decided to develop joint protocols for issuing certificates of origin to improve transparency and prevent forgery, hold technical meetings between customs authorities to harmonize trade procedures, and organize a joint conference on the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) free trade opportunities.

The Armenian side welcomed ICCIMA's proposal to hold specialized business forums in Tehran and Yerevan to facilitate sector-specific cooperation, particularly in construction materials, food processing, and logistics.

The meeting concluded with both parties reaffirming their commitment to continuous coordination and information exchange through the joint platform to enhance bilateral trade efficiency and trust.

On September 12, Iran and Armenia held talks on expanding cooperation in the energy sector, including trade in petroleum products and potential supplies of liquefied gas, during meetings between senior officials of the two countries.

Mohammad Sadegh Azimifar, managing director of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company, met Armenian Economy Minister Gevorg Papoyan and Deputy Minister Armen Simonyan in Yerevan, accompanied by Iran's ambassador.

Papoyan welcomed closer energy ties and expressed Armenia's interest in importing liquefied gas from Iran, describing it as a basis for long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation that would also enhance his country's energy security.

He cited opportunities for future collaboration in areas such as petroleum trade, development of liquefied and natural gas infrastructure, joint investments in energy projects, and better use of regional transport and logistics networks.

In a separate meeting, Azimifar also held discussions with Deputy Economy Minister Simonyan on joint plans for fuel production

and trade.

On September 1, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) and his Armenian counterpart discussed expanding technical and operational cooperation in rail transport among CIS member states during visit to Russia.

Jabarali Zakari, deputy transport minister and head of the RAI, met the chairman of Armenian Railways on the sidelines of a Railways exhibition in St. Petersburg.

Talks covered establishing sustainable rail transport, identifying cargo potential along the corridor, activating freight forwarders, and easing rail connectivity between Iran and Russia through Armenia, contingent on the resolution of political disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

With Baku and Yerevan reaching a preliminary agreement, officials concluded that the memorandum could help reopen the western route of the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) via Nakhchivan. This would restore rail links between Iran and Russia through Yerevan after years of suspension.

The Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) announced at the time that a recent trade mission to Armenia produced 10 cooperation agreements across energy, tourism, pharmaceuticals, transport, technical standards, and culture.

Mohammadreza Bahraman, ICCIMA vice president, said the delegation's visit — held in parallel with the Iranian president's official trip — marked a turning point for regional economic cooperation, opening doors to joint investment and expanded market access.

"Armenia is not only a gateway to the 184 million-strong Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) but also a bridge to Europe through its trade agreements with the EU," Bahraman said.

He cited Armenia's economic stability, investor-friendly environment, skilled workforce, tax incentives and competitive costs as key attractions for Iranian investors.

Among the key outcomes were a target of \$3.0 billion in bilateral trade using the Iran-EAEU free trade agreement, and the creation of a four-party committee of chambers and customs officials to resolve certificate-of-origin and customs barriers.

Progress was also made on infrastructure, including a second border bridge over the Aras River and completion of the third power

exchange line, which is expected to boost energy and transport capacity several fold.

Bahraman highlighted priority sectors for Iranian investment in Armenia, including mining, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, IT and R&D, as well as logistics projects linked to the INSTC.

He added that proposals were made to establish a permanent exhibition of Iranian goods and joint industrial parks in border regions.

Although a dedicated mining session was not held during the visit, Bahraman said groundwork was laid for future cooperation through customs and legal frameworks to support mineral exports.

The completion of Armenia's third power line would also enable the launch of mineral processing units, he noted.

Enterprise Armenia presented mineral opportunities to the Iranian delegation, paving the way for Iranian firms to enter exploration, extraction and processing projects.

Bahraman called for ICCIMA to organize a dedicated mining delegation to Armenia as the next step, aligned with Iran's goal of 13 percent growth in mining under the seventh development plan.

"Economic diplomacy is a marathon, not a sprint," Bahraman said. "In this trip, we cleared the initial obstacles so that in future visits, specialized cooperation — particularly in mining — can be pursued on a sustainable footing. Armenia is more than a market; it is a testing ground for new regional models of cooperation. With unprecedented incentives from the Armenian government and ICCIMA's institutional support, we can turn Armenia into Iran's strategic hub in Eurasia and Europe."

Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Minister has said tariffs on 87 percent of goods traded between Iran and Armenia have been eliminated, as Tehran presses ahead with efforts to expand a preferential trade pact with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Minister Seyed Mohammad Atabak said Iran has been formally recognized as a permanent observer in the EAEU, a status that allows the country to broaden ties with member states.

He noted that in recent years Tehran has sought to strengthen commercial links with neighbors, particularly Armenia, which he described as Iran's gateway to the Eurasian market.

Atabak said the preferential trade agreement that came into effect in May marked a significant milestone, reducing tariffs on the majority of goods traded with Armenia to zero. "This development has already spurred an upward trend in trade volumes with Armenia and other EAEU members," he said, adding that negotiations to expand the pact to cover other sectors are continuing.

The announcement coincided with President Masoud Pezeshkian's official visit to Yerevan, where he was received by senior Armenian officials.

Iran's paint, resin exports reach \$80m in 8 months

TEHRAN – Iran's paint and resin industry exported around \$80 million worth of products in the first eight months of the current Iranian year (March 20 - November 21), up about 10 percent from the same period last year, a senior official at the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade said.

Parvin Nobati, director general of the ministry's Chemical and Polymer Industries Office, told IRNA that despite the country's challenging conditions, the industry achieved notable export growth this year.

She said around 1,100 active units operate in the sector, with a total production capacity

exceeding 12 million tons. The industry directly employs over 44,000 people, with most producers relying primarily on domestic inputs.

"Fewer than 200 companies have sought foreign currency allocations for imports," she added.

Nobati said major producers have so far manufactured about 800,000 tons of paint and resin, underscoring the sector's export potential. Domestic products mainly serve household, automotive, and industrial applications, though local manufacturers also possess the know-how to produce specialized coatings when needed.

She noted that installed capacities exceed domestic demand, resulting in lower utilization rates. The ministry's future plans, she said, aim to align investment with areas facing production shortages while taking advantage of Iran's petrochemical resources, which supply much of the raw materials for the paint and resin industry.

Nobati added that steps have been taken to reduce imports of raw materials and finished products, benefiting domestic producers. She said the ministry is coordinating with petrochemical suppliers to prevent shortages and ensure steady material availability.

Professor Azarov argues the West moves Ukraine like a pawn in a grand game

From page 1 ► The following is the text of the interview:

It is widely believed that the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008 set the stage for today's confrontation between Russia and the West. From your perspective, what dynamics at that summit contributed to this outcome?

The NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, together with President Putin's Berlin speech that same year, certainly influenced the formation of today's confrontation. It marked a continuation of the West and NATO provoking Russia, refusing to accept any of Russia's offers to the world. The West deliberately complicated the situation so that everything would end in a war between Russia and Ukraine. Moreover, the West deliberately wanted this war with Russia to weaken and destroy it, but for Ukraine to lead it. To do this, it was pumped with money and weapons, carried out a powerful information policy and zombified the local population.

Western narratives often describe Russia's actions in Ukraine as "unprovoked aggression." How do you interpret the origins of the conflict differently?

In the mass consciousness of people all over the world, the prevailing version remains that on February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation committed an "unprovoked" act of aggression against Ukraine to seize it according to the plan for the restoration of the former Soviet Empire, of which the Russian Federation is the legal successor. But the reality is quite different.

Suppose we consider the war as a continuation of politics. In that case, it is no exaggeration to say that the conflict in Ukraine began in 1947-1948, when the United



States officially incorporated the so-called Gehlen organization into its national security apparatus.

It was the German intelligence agency created by the Americans in June 1946. It was formed based on a Nazi intelligence cell operating on the Eastern Front. The organization was commanded by General Reinhard Gehlen, who in 1956 became the first head of the West German Federal Intelligence Service (BND).

While in captivity, Gehlen convinced the Americans that he had good contacts in the territories occupied by the Soviet Union, including with Ukrainian nationalists.

This was very important in the perspective of the beginning of the Cold War, because the Anglo-Saxons wanted to use Ukraine as a tool to weaken the USSR.

Cooperation with the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, established through the Gehlen group, developed very intensively until 1954, when the USSR suppressed the active phase of the Bandera uprising in the then Soviet Ukraine.

At the same time, on August 18, 1948, the United States adopted the Directive of the US National Security Council 20/1 or the Allen Dulles Plan,

the Director of the CIA, which outlined the tasks of the West against the USSR, to work with the population on its decomposition and subsequent destruction of the country. A separate chapter outlines the tasks of the West against Ukraine and its role in the destruction of the USSR and Russia.

Therefore, the CIA maintained political ties with the Bandera survivors mainly through the Ukrainian diaspora in the West. To a large extent, these were Bandera fighters who fled to Germany after World War II. Many of them then moved to Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, where they gained significant political influence, playing a crucial role in the Anglo-Saxon struggle against the USSR during the Cold War era.

If you want to delve into the history of Russia a little bit, you can understand why Ukraine has become like this.

From a historical perspective, how did Ukraine's territorial and cultural development contribute to today's tensions?

Most of the future Ukraine became part of the Russian Empire after the partitions of Poland (1772-1795) and the conquest of

the Crimean Khanate by Russia, and it was only in the 19th century that externally imposed Ukrainian nationalism began to develop here.

And before all these events, Kievan Rus was constantly fighting for spheres of influence with the neighboring Khazar Khaganate, which also influenced the formation of the mentality of the inhabitants of the territories from which Ukraine was later formed.

For centuries, this territorial entity had no statehood of its own, except for a year and a half of the unsuccessful existence of its national republic, proclaimed in 1917 on the fragments of the Russian Empire, and the modern period that began after the collapse of the USSR with the declaration of independence on December 1, 1991.

Such a long-term moral condition in the role of provincial slaves, living under the influence and guidance of foreigners and neighbors who considered the inhabitants of Little Russia and Novorossiia to be second-class people, developed in some of them a persistent irritation towards the conquerors, whether they were conquerors

from Moscow or Poles.

This was vividly demonstrated during World War II, when Ukrainian nationalists killed civilians in the Soviet Union and Poland with equal brutality and sadism.

Ukrainians-Little Russians have not created their own national elite – the nobility, and have not forgotten the times when people were led by people from neighboring countries.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Hezbollah leader: Israel seeks to grab Lebanon under 'Greater Israel' scheme

Hezbollah's Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem accuses Israel of pursuing an "expansionist agenda" under the banner of a so-called "Greater Israel," warning that Lebanon is the next target of occupation.

In a televised speech on Friday, Qassem said Israel has violated last year's ceasefire agreement by carrying out "constant" attacks across Lebanon. He stressed that the aggression is not about Hezbollah's weapons but about a broader plan to gradually occupy Lebanon and extend Israel's borders.

"This aggression aims to establish a 'Greater Israel' through Lebanon," he declared, urging Lebanese unity against a colonial project.

Qassem rejected U.S. involvement in Lebanon's defense strategy, saying Washington has "no business interfering" in internal affairs. He warned that aligning with Israel means "sinking the ship," while unity ensures resilience. "Hezbollah will defend itself, its



people, and its country, and will not surrender," he vowed, framing resistance as Lebanon's only safeguard against Israel's expansionist ambitions.

The concept of "Greater Israel" has deep roots in Zionist ideology, with maximalist visions stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates. In modern politics, it often refers to Israel's expansion into Palestinian territories, the Golan Heights, and potentially parts of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.

Israeli-backed militia leader killed in Gaza

From page 1 ► The IOF then placed its militia's headquarters under its direct protection in a small neighborhood in Gaza's southern Rafah area, within territory still occupied under the so-called "yellow line".

The location of this base is strategically significant because it lies along the main route used by aid trucks entering Gaza through the Karem Abu Salem crossing, giving the militia a clear advantage over the flow and control of incoming aid.

When the Israeli regime allowed only a small amount of desperately needed aid to enter Gaza, starving Palestinians rushed to distribution sites operated by the IOF and a U.S. company. At these sites, the Abu Shabab militia seized much of the aid for itself.

During the same period, both the militia and the IOF opened fire on Palestinians who were gathering in search of food, killing people in the midst of an ongoing genocide. The Israeli regime later released blurry drone footage of the shootings, attempting to shape a narrative that Hamas had been responsible for looting the aid and firing on its own population.

This level of coordination between Abu Shabab and the IOF, at a time when the UN was warning that Palestinians were starving to death, stands in sharp contrast to the story Abu Shabab presented to Western media. There, he claimed his actions were motivated by a desire to help the people of Gaza by attempting to overthrow Hamas.

Once imprisoned in Gaza on theft and drug-related charges, Abu Shabab escaped after an Israeli regime strike near the facility during the early stages of the genocidal war on the besieged enclave.

Shortly after the reports of his death, Gaza's Radaa security force, affiliated with the Palestinian resistance, circulated a photo of Abu Shabab with a caption stating: "Just as we told you, the Israeli regime won't be able to protect you".

The Hebrew Kan network reported that the

criminal had met with U.S. envoy Jared Kushner on November 11 at a U.S. command site in southern Israel, where they discussed the role of his forces in occupied areas outside Hamas control.

Hamas said that Abu Shabab's killing represented the inevitable fate of anyone who chooses to collaborate with the Zionist regime. The group stated that his actions and those of his associates placed them outside the national and social consensus, and praised local families and tribes that disavowed him and anyone involved in attacks on Palestinians or cooperation with the IOF.

Hamas argued that the occupying regime's reliance on socially marginalized and criminal groups to advance its objectives in Gaza reflected its inability to counter persistent resistance on the ground.

The movement added that the occupying regime had failed to protect its collaborators and asserted that anyone who endangers Palestinians or assists the IOF would lose all standing within their community.

Hamas concluded that the unity of Palestinian families, tribes, and national institutions remains a safeguard against attempts to erode Gaza's social fabric and would not serve as a refuge for criminal groups or external agendas.

Within the Israeli regime, much of the discussion will now center on Abu Shabab, his actions, and whether the regime's investment in him should be viewed as a "failure" or a "success."

Yet it is increasingly evident that the broader Zionist regime's strategy behind this investment, the idea that local militias or lightweight allies could stand in for a direct confrontation with a major adversary, has fundamentally collapsed.

Another blow for the regime domestically and abroad is its inability to build any meaningful political or social alternative to Hamas, despite nearly two years of genocidal war and claims that it was planning for a viable "day after" scenario.

Lebanon's art of giving everything away for free

From page 1 ► When a state insists on giving services away "gratis," others naturally assume its value is negligible. Generosity, after all, becomes indistinguishable from disposability when it is practiced without conditions.

Against this atmosphere of unilateral complacency emerged the latest controversy: the appointment of former ambassador Simon Karam to lead Lebanon's delegation to the ceasefire implementation mechanism.

This is the kind of move that gives "surprise plot twist" energy—although everyone already knows who wrote the script.

Speaker Nabih Berri had initially endorsed the idea of adding a civilian figure to the delegation—on very clear terms: no direct negotiations, no political spillover, and no scope beyond the technicalities of enforcing the ceasefire.

Then came the presidential decision naming Karam, and the atmosphere shifted. Berri, reportedly, declined to even meet him, a gesture that communicated everything words didn't need to.

Karam's nomination wasn't merely a personal choice; it symbolized an entire orientation. His well-known positions—hostility to the Resistance's weapons, praise of neutrality doctrines, and nostalgic references to the 1949 Armistice—made him, in the eyes of the U.S. surveillance den (embassy) in Beirut, the perfect envoy for a Lebanon

not eager to pre-concede its sovereignty before the meeting even begins.

Already, Hezbollah's open letter of November 2025 had flagged the danger: crossing into negotiating frameworks designed as traps!

According to the communique, the Israeli occupation entity's record is consistent—take everything, commit to nothing, and always demand more. In this reading, Beirut's priority is enforcing the ceasefire as written and compelling Tel Aviv's compliance, rather than drifting into political bargaining under the illusion of "technical discussions."

Meanwhile, the anti-Resistance allegedly claim the mechanism is a routine administrative forum, pointing to the 2022 maritime precedent.

Critics, nevertheless, see something else entirely: the classic recipe for normalization served as a "technical appetizer," the kind that starts innocently and ends with the table flipped.

The dispute surrounding Karam is therefore more than a procedural skirmish. It encapsulates Lebanon's longstanding dilemma—how to defend sovereignty while operating in a political culture where the state keeps volunteering concessions no one even asked for.

A country that negotiates as if it owes the world an apology inevitably invites outcomes shaped by others. Further, when national policy resembles a clearance sale, the final price is paid in sovereignty.

Is Japan sliding back toward militarism?

From page 1 ► It is therefore no surprise that China's reaction was immediate and forceful. Chinese diplomats lodged a sharp protest, while China's ambassador to the UN, Fu Cong, stated that Takaichi was violating international law, endangering global peace, and undermining the post-war international order itself. Elevating the dispute to the UN level is unusual and indicates that Beijing sees Japan's rhetoric as a qualitatively new development. From China's perspective, such statements strike at the very core of its political identity and sovereignty. Beijing continues to demand that the remarks be withdrawn.

"If Japan's basic position on Taiwan is indeed the one stated in the 1972 China-Japan Joint Communiqué, can Prime Minister Takaichi articulate this position precisely and fully? Why is Japan unwilling to clearly state the commitments and legal obligations it undertook? What is the logic and motive behind this stance? The Japanese side owes China and the international community an explanation," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian. For China, Taiwan is not simply a regional issue—it is an existential principle that modern China is unwilling to relativize.

Beijing subsequently issued travel warnings, restricted tourism and cultural exchanges, and cancelled multiple planned events with Japan's cultural sector. The economic impact on Japan was immediate: hotels, airlines, and retailers reported a sharp decline within days. According to Japanese travel agencies, they lost roughly 80% of bookings from the Chinese market—one of the most important components of Japan's tourism industry, which accounts for 7% of Japan's GDP. Should the diplomatic and trade confrontation escalate further, both sides would suffer losses, as they remain significant economic and investment partners. However, thanks to long-term efforts to strengthen domestic self-sufficiency and a broader economic base, China is far better positioned to absorb such shocks.

The cultural and social dimensions of the crisis reveal its depth. Disrupted cultural exchanges, cancelled concerts and film premieres demonstrate that the dispute no longer remains confined to diplomacy. It has struck precisely those areas that both countries had cultivated for years as stabilizing spaces outside geopolitics. If even this "soft bridge" is collapsing, it signals the beginning of a long period of cooling relations.

Takaichi's statements also stirred controversy

at home. Opposition politicians, constitutional lawyers and parts of the academic community warned that her stance exceeds the legal framework of Japan's collective self-defense. Japan remains bound by the pacifist Article 9 of its constitution, and the public is not prepared to accept rhetoric that pushes the country toward open conflict. Takaichi, however, has gradually abandoned the long-standing policy of "strategic ambiguity" that Tokyo maintained on Taiwan. Her tone gives the impression that, instead of articulating Japan's own strategic interests, she is blindly following American policy—while edging Japan back toward militarization.

This abrupt change in atmosphere has also spilled into military dynamics. In November, Chinese coast guard vessels sailed near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, which Tokyo interpreted as escalation, prompting it to send its own ships and fighter jets. Japan also announced the strengthening of military capacities on Yonaguni, an island only 110 km from Taiwan. From Beijing's perspective, this is primarily precautionary monitoring of an increasingly unpredictable environment shaped by Japan's ambiguous signals. The drone incident near Yonaguni only confirmed that rhetorical shifts rapidly translate into military realities.

What we are witnessing today has deeper roots. For decades, Japan has been a central pillar of the American security architecture. Its defense policy—including its stance on Taiwan—is shaped more by U.S. strategic priorities than by Japan's own autonomy. Washington reacted to the recent tensions by offering Tokyo security guarantees, and U.S. diplomacy has taken a firm position against "any unilateral changes to the status quo in the Taiwan Strait." This framework further limits Japan's capacity to act independently and deepens the distrust Beijing has long felt toward Japanese policy. When we take into account Japan's defense posture and its quasi-vassal relationship to the United States, we begin to understand the excessive confidence—and arrogance—of the Japanese prime minister.

The U.S. objective today is to slow China's technological rise, which threatens American global dominance. China is increasingly perceived in Washington as a dangerous competitor in global trade and technological innovation. This is accompanied by China's growing military capability, which has already surpassed regional significance. American containment policy toward major competitors may well be the underlying cause of the current crisis. Traditional



Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi raises her fist as U.S. President Donald Trump speaks to Navy personnel aboard the USS George Washington at Yokosuka naval base in Kanagawa Prefecture in late October. Photo: AFP

Anglo-Saxon militarism continually searches for "useful idiots" in regions of strategic interest—actors who can be activated when needed as disposable tools. History provides countless examples showing that countries like the U.S. and the U.K. do not have friends; they only have servants and rivals.

In this context, it is legitimate to ask to what extent Japan is able to shape its own foreign policy—and to what extent it is being drawn into strategic games orchestrated by others. Tokyo risks finding itself in a position where it bears the heavy consequences of a conflict it does not control. And in a region already undergoing one of the greatest power reconfigurations of our time, this is an exceptionally dangerous place to be.

The current crisis is not merely a temporary dispute but an expression of deeper global shifts. China emerges here as an actor defending its borders, historical memory, and long-declared principles—and doing so in a way that is predictable, consistent, and based on the conviction that regional stability depends on clear rules, not on unbalanced and aggressive rhetoric. It is also a reminder that global conflicts do not arise in abstraction or suddenly. They often have deep historical roots grounded in security dependencies and geopolitical illusions. The Indo-Pacific is transforming before our eyes, and without a thorough understanding of its historical and strategic depth, we risk mistaking symptoms for causes.

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(The article reflects the author's opinions and not necessarily the views of the Tehran Times.)

‘The Land of Legends’ unveiled at National Museum ceremony



TEHRAN – The unveiling ceremony of the book “Iran, The Land of Legends” was held on Tuesday evening at the National Museum.

The event, part of the longstanding cultural series “Bukhara Nights,” attracted an enthusiastic audience of cultural enthusiasts, scholars, and photographers, underscoring the public’s keen interest in Iran’s rich heritage.

The ceremony featured remarks by prominent figures including Dr. Jebrail Nokandeh, the director-general of the National Museum of Iran; Fereidoun Biglari, the museum’s cultural deputy; heritage photographer Herbert Karim-Masihi; the book’s author, Davood Vakilizadeh; and noted cultural figure Ali Dehbashi. The program culminated in the official unveiling of the book, celebrated by the author alongside the gathered guests.

In his keynote address, Nokandeh hailed the publication as a monumental cultural achievement. He described the moment as one of great pride for the National Museum, an institution whose core mission is to narrate Iran’s glorious past. Nokandeh expressed profound admiration for Vakilizadeh, whose decades of dedicated work have produced a series of publications that collectively piece together the vast and magnificent puzzle of Iran’s historical, cultural, and natural landscape.

He also elaborated that “Iran, The Land of Legends” represents the culmination of

this lifelong journey. This large-format, published in Persian, English, and a separate volume in Spanish—is intentionally crafted for a global audience, reflecting a deep understanding of worldwide interest in ancient Iranian civilization.

Moreover, Nokandeh underlined the profound connection between the book and the Museum, noting that its early chapters on pre-history and myth are richly illustrated with images of iconic artifacts from the National Museum’s own collection. This deliberate choice, he stated, creates a powerful dialogue between the contemporary art of photography and ancient heritage.

The Museum director further articulated that true heritage preservation extends beyond safeguarding objects in vaults and display cases; it necessitates actively introducing and conveying their meaning to present and future generations. He asserted that this book fulfills that vital role by acting as a “mobile museum,” a reliable visual reference that carries the essence of Iran’s grandeur into homes and libraries worldwide. He praised the volume as a successful model of interdisciplinary collaboration, blending professional photography, historical research, and elegant design.

In conclusion, Dr. Nokandeh expressed his hope that “Iran, The Land of Legends” would serve as a timeless cultural ambassador, conveying messages of Iran’s beauty, peace, and profound civilizational depth to every corner of the globe.

Ilami artisans participate in handicraft exhibition in Iraq

TEHRAN--Ilami artisans have recently participated in a handicraft exhibition in the Iraqi city of Kut, Wasit province, said Head of Ilam Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department Farzad Sharifi.

He added that the exhibit was held with the participation of Ilami artisans and was welcomed by the visitors, Miras Aria (CHTN) reported.

Sharifi also said that a group of artists, cultural activists and handicraft enthusiasts visited the exhibition.

Various works from different fields such as pottery, carpets, leather, traditional jewelry and local handwoven carpets were exhibited to the public in this event, he added.

Sharifi stated that last week, the handicraft exhibition was held in the city of

Kut, simultaneously with the handicraft exhibition in the city of Al-Hay, Wasit province. Given the warm welcome of visitors, this edition of the exhibition continued on Thursday, he added.

He noted that this program aims to strengthen the cultural ties, introduce artistic capacities, and develop handicraft exchanges between Iran and Iraq.

Ilam province is a tribal region and its handicrafts specially embossed Kilim is famous nationally. The most important handicrafts of the province are wickerwork, coarse carpet, silk products, rug, felt carpet and wooden products. Ilam, like the other provinces of the country, has its own especial souvenirs like local chewing gum (the gum of Persian turpentine tree), local sweets and candy.

the potentials of this beautiful village including Dig-e Rostam hot spring, the historical texture and agricultural fields and palm groves, the protected area, and the Makshur Castle on the first day, Miras Aria (CHTN) reported.

Arab added that they became familiar with the customs, handicrafts, souvenirs, historical texture and natural and agricultural potentials of Esfandiar village on the second day.

He continued that finally, a meeting was held with the guides to review the problems and re-

A thousand stories under one name, Herbert Karim-Masihi reflects on his new exhibition

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – Iranian-Armenian photographer, and cultural heritage researcher Herbert Karim-Masihi is presenting a new exhibition titled “Iran Thinks of You” at the Sa’dabad Cultural-Historical Complex in northern Tehran.

The show gathers a selection of his long-term photographic projects on Iran’s ancient architecture, sacred sites, and historical landscapes, works created over years of travel through places such as Tchogha Zanbil, Shahr-e Sukhteh, Pasargadae, Persepolis, and the ancient city of Yazd, which is famed for its eye-catching windcatchers.

In a conversation with the Tehran Times on Thursday, he reflected on his artistic philosophy, the challenges of documenting cultural heritage, and what he hopes viewers take away from the exhibition. Below is excerpts of the interview in questions and answers:

The title of your exhibition, “Iran Thinks of You,” is poetic and contemplative. What message does it carry for viewers, and what does it mean to you personally?

“Iran Thinks of You” is an attempt to recognize and re-present Iran as a unified and all-encompassing cultural landscape. It is a message that holds within itself a diversity of peoples, historical eras, religions, rituals, and sanctuaries.

The narrative behind the exhibition is, in truth, a story of thousands of different stories that ultimately converge in a single shared name: Iran.

For this reason, I have not identified the locations or titles for the exhibited photographs. The goal is not to point to a specific geography, but to emphasize the unity of this diversity under one name.

In this exhibition, everywhere is Iran. And it is Iran that is “thinking” of the viewer!

Your work features a number of iconic sites and monuments. How did you choose those locations, and what drew you to them?

By choosing sites such as Chogha Zanbil, Persepolis, the windcatchers of Yazd, and the country’s historic mosques and other places of worship, I tried to highlight the pillars that collectively shape Iran’s national identity. This has always been fundamental for me... Their importance lies in the fact that many of the ritual practices and ways of life that emerged from these sites



Photographer and cultural heritage researcher Herbert Karim-Masihi (L) speaks with a visitor at an exhibition of his selected works at the Sa’dabad Cultural-Historical Complex in northern Tehran, December 4, 2025.

have persisted into modern times though we may not always recognize their deep historical roots.

In fact, through a single photograph, I try to reveal how contemporary floor plans, columns, architectural habits, and spatial structures remain connected to thousands of earlier narratives. These links show that modern life still stands on the shoulders of history.

Your prints seem to be presented with great precision and craftsmanship. What challenges do you face in photographing cultural heritage, and how do you aim to convey not only the visible reality but also the feeling and history behind it?

Heritage photography comes with many challenges. The first, and perhaps the most important concerns the photographer. It depends on how deeply the photographer understands the subject and what kind of relationship he or she forms with it.

When a photographer truly knows the subject, understands its history and recognizes its significance today, then an honest and unembellished narrative becomes possible. This seems to be the one that speaks both to what once was and to why it has endured.

Alongside these conceptual challenges, there are also practical ones: the difficulty of obtaining [in-case necessary] permits, economic constraints, and the lack of sustained support from the related institutions. In fact, photographers, who work in the arena of cultural heritage, often

work without financial backing, investing their own resources to record a heritage whose preservation is costly and often overlooked.

In the exhibition introduction, you wrote that architecture is not merely a building, but the continuation of human life through time. Can you elaborate on this idea and how it appears in your photography?

Iranian architecture, and architecture as a whole, is seems to be a product of climate and the surrounding nature. No architectural tradition can be understood without examining the ecological conditions that shaped it. In a cold climate, one uses entirely different forms and materials than in a hot one.

For example, in a sun-exposed region where shade and coolness are vital, no one would choose a stone that absorbs and intensifies heat. Conversely, in a cold region, clay and mud are insufficient because of their vulnerability to moisture. This is why stone plays such a central role in colder climates: it absorbs sunlight during the day and releases that warmth slowly at night. It is the intelligent negotiation between material and nature.

If we extend this logic to our own time, we realize that many of today’s technologies and building systems are imports [from outside to Iran] not designed for our landscape, nor adapted to it. Traditional Iranian architecture, however, was always grounded in a deep understanding of climate, environment, and the real needs

of people.

To make it short, such a continuity between place, material, and human life is what I aim to reveal in my photographs.

If there is only one message or experience you hope visitors take away from “Iran Thinks of You,” what would it be?

Thinking about Iran has been my greatest concern throughout all my years of photography. It has long been a concern that I have always wished to pass on to viewers. I want to remind them of the immense civilization we are heirs to.

But inheritance and in particular the cultural heritage of a nation is not only about possessing; it is about preserving, supporting, protecting, and advancing.

That is why the narrative of this exhibition begins inside the photographs themselves to invite viewers into the challenge of reflecting on what they have, what they are responsible for, what they are connected to, and what they must give meaning to.

As the final word I can say and repeat that one of my deepest hopes is that viewers can feel themselves inside the photographs: seeing them from their own perspective, not merely as spectators, but as part of the image.

“Iran Thinks of You” will remain open to the public at the Sa’dabad Complex until Dec. 21, offering visitors an opportunity to explore Iran’s architectural and cultural heritage through Karim-Masihi’s lens.

First ‘Kerman to Rayen’ tourist train departs

TEHRAN--The first tourist train departed from Kerman station to Rayen on Thursday. An action that marks the beginning of a new chapter in the development of travel infrastructure, strengthening the sustainable tourism, and creating new experiences for tourists in the southeast of the country.

It departed in the presence of the head of Kerman Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, the director general of Kerman Railways, a group of officials, tourism activists, and students of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, and accompanied its passengers on a delightful

route to a series of historical and natural attractions of Rayen, including the historical Rayen Citadel, waterfalls, and unique landscapes of this part of the province, ISNA reported.

Referring to the importance of this event, Head of Kerman Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department Morteza Nikrou said: The departure of the first tourist train from Kerman to Rayen is a clear sign of the province’s new approach to developing tourism on basis of clean and sustainable transportation.

Nikrou stated: “Our effort is to strength-

en the tourism infrastructure in a way that makes travel in Kerman province easier, safer and more attractive for domestic and foreign tourists.”

He added that Rayen is one of the most important tourist destinations in the province, and the launch of this train provides a better introduction to the cultural, historical and natural capacities of this city. “We hope that with continuation of this route, we will witness the prosperity of tourism businesses, an increase in staying of passengers and a balanced distribution of travel throughout the province.”

Tour guides visit South Khorasan attractions

TEHRAN—A number of tour guides of South Khorasan province have had a special tour known as FAM tour with the aim of getting to know and introduce the tourism potentials of the villages of Deyhuk district of Tabas city.

Announcing this, Mohammad Arab, the deputy head of South Khorasan Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department said that the program was held for two days with the presence of 15 official guides of the province, adding that the participants visited the tourist village of Nayband and experienced firsthand

quests and use the guides’ abilities to introduce the province’s various capacities to help develop the domestic tourism.

Esfandiar village, a part of the Deyhuk district of Tabas city, South Khorasan province, has old terraced houses, water mills, handicrafts, and lush nature.

This year, the first saffron festival was held with the help of the locals and was well received.

He stated that this fam tour, which was implemented in cooperation with Cultural Heri-

tag Department and local activists, provided an opportunity for the guides to become more familiar with the potential of this region for developing sustainable tourism.

He explained that FAM tour or FAM trip industry, which is also called familiarization tour, provides the opportunity for tourists from the provinces and countries of the target market to become closely acquainted with the realities of the target region, attractions, quality of services and security.

Therefore, one of the successful marketing techniques and tools is holding familiarization tours, which all leading countries in tourism are doing, he added.

These trips, which are mostly carried out by tourism activists, airline agencies and tour organizers, are attended by tourism industry experts, photographers, tour leaders, bloggers and journalists, and travel consultants, and recently through influencers, so that the tourist attractions of the region are introduced to the world by these people, he pointed out.

IUCN classifies Persian Gulf mangroves as ‘vulnerable’

TEHRAN – The first global assessment of mangroves by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has classified mangrove forests in the Persian Gulf as vulnerable (VU) overall.

The mangrove forests are classified as ‘vulnerable’ in Changes in Geographic Distribution, ‘least concern’ in Restricted Geographic distribution, ‘least concern’ in Abiotic components, and ‘least concern’ in Biotic components of ecosystems, ISNA reported.

The IUCN assessment results can be the basis for national and regional decision-making and intervention. The results indicate that planning, ongoing monitoring, and integrated management of these ecosystems should be prioritized. Otherwise, these ecosystems are likely to move into a more dangerous category.

Mangrove ecosystems are crucial for biodiversity conservation, providing essential goods and services to local communities and mitigating the impact of climate change. For this reason, understanding the risk of ecosystem collapse has serious socioeconomic implications.

According to data published in various sources, the total extent of mangrove forests in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman is about 250 square kilometers, with Iran having the largest share with 138 square kilometers.



Mangrove forests in Iran mostly consist of the *Avicenna marina*, known as Hara, named after the 11th-century great Iranian scientist Avicenna, or Abu-Ali-Sina. Hara forest area covers more than 27 thousand hectares.

The forests spread from Nayband Bay in the southwestern Bushehr province to Govater Bay in the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province on the coast of the Sea of Oman.

More than 90 percent of these forests, both in terms of quality and quantity, are located in the southern Hormozgan province, such as Khamir Port and Qeshm Island, although there is a part in the Khor Azini site, in Sirik county in Hormozgan, which hosts rhizophora mucronata species.

Contamination from oil, gas, and petrochemical industries in the vicinity of mangroves, effluent from aquaculture farms,

timber harvesting, livestock grazing, and substandard construction, unregulated tourism, plant pests, reduced freshwater inflow due to dam construction, and agricultural pesticides are among the main challenges faced by mangroves.

The world's mangrove ecosystems cover about 150 thousand km² along mainly tropical, sub-tropical, and some warm temperate coasts of the world. About 15 percent of the world's coastlines are covered by mangroves.

Threats menacing mangroves are evolving rapidly: degradation from wood exploitation, deforestation for agriculture and shrimp farming, and indirect impacts from dam construction altering freshwater and sediment fluxes. Today, mangroves face additional challenges due to climate change, including sea-level rise and an increased frequency and severity of cyclonic storms.

According to the first global assessment, fifty percent of Mangrove Ecosystems units are at risk of collapse (in the IUCN threat categories of Vulnerable (VU), Endangered (EN), or Critically Endangered (CR); equally, they represent 50 percent of the world's mangrove area. And one out of five are at severe risk of collapse (either Endangered or Critically Endangered). The other units are Near Threatened (NT), Least Concern (LC), or Not Evaluated (NE).

Mangrove ecosystems are exceptional in their ability to provide essential ecosystem services to people, including coastal disaster risk reduction, carbon sequestration and long-term storage, and ecological support for fisheries and biodiversity.

As of today, global mangroves store almost 11 billion tons of carbon, which is almost three times the amount of carbon stored by tropical forests of the same size, protecting 15.4 million people, and USD 65 billion worth of property per year from coastal disasters. In 2050, this could rise to 15.5 million and USD 118 billion because of population growth and a rise in property values.

Support 126 million fishing days per year, providing a key source of food for human populations living near coasts and beyond, along with valuable employment provided by millions of fisheries-related jobs.



Iran's Union of Medical Equipment Manufacturers and Exporters said that medical equipment worth around \$20 million is exported to more than 60 countries annually.

More than 70 percent of medical equipment and 100 percent of normal hospital beds are domestically made, IRNA quoted Abdolreza Yaqoubzadeh as saying.

Also, over 95 percent of specific ICU and CCU beds and more than 85 percent of operating room medical equipment, such as anesthesia machines and other equipment, are manufactured with cutting-edge technology in the country, he added.

Yaqoubzadeh went on to say that the country's need for medical equipment production is three to four billion dollars per year, some one billion dollars of which is imported.

Some 600 medical equipment companies are active in the country, producing around 99 percent of the medicine supplied to the domestic market.

Medical equipment manufacturers in the country produce and supply over 10,000 types of medical equipment to domestic and foreign markets. Now, various pieces of laboratory equipment are manufactured at prices much lower than the same foreign products.

Science ministry finalizes AI action plan

TEHRAN – The Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology has announced the finalization of an artificial intelligence (AI) action plan, which highlights the pivotal role of AI in the country's scientific advancement.

The plan has been developed in cooperation with the Vice Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy, IRNA reported.

The action plan was unveiled during a meeting held on Wednesday, with the presence of First Vice-President, Mohammad-Reza Aref.

The main pillars of the action plan include ‘transformation in education and training human resources, ‘empowering research and innovation capacity building’, ‘promoting and commercializing AI’, ‘expanding science diplomacy and international cooperation’, and ‘improving the scientific status of the country’.

Empowering research and innovation capacity building involves the establishment of five national laboratories in selected universities, development of interdisciplinary majors at post-graduate programs focusing on AI, the inclusion of ‘AI and digital transformation’ for undergraduate students, essential for engineering majors, and supplementary for other majors.

Promoting and commercializing AI focuses on selecting and supporting a number of universities as the country's AI research and development center. Supporting the development of at least 3 fundamental AI models (including language vision models) based on domestic data, and launching a platform to collect and share research and educational data in a secure way.

Expanding science diplomacy and international cooperation highlights expediting the formation and growth of AI startups and holding AI competitions.

Expanding science diplomacy and international cooperation involves enhancing educational and research collaborations with top universities from Shanghai and BRICS member states, as well as members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Cooperation on AI regulations, standardization, and collaboration with Iranian elites and experts living abroad are among other goals.

Improving the scientific standing of the country underlines maintaining and improving the country's international ranking in AI,

indexing at least 8 specialized journals in the first and second quartiles, increasing support for top researchers and patents, as well as strengthening scientific associations and national AI networking.

Iran advances in AI scientific research index

According to Nature Index, the country's ranking in scientific production in Artificial Intelligence (AI) has improved from 33 to 30, placing the country among the top 50 leaders, Hossein Afshin, an official with the vice-presidency of science and technology, said in August.

Iran's ranking in the region fluctuates between 14 to 17, which is mainly due to focusing on quality, he said, adding, “We're optimistic to improve the country's scientific position within the next two years,” IRNA reported.

The official went on to say that the country is following up on developing AI infrastructure, including the AI platform and the AI assistant, in the near future.

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

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

The Government AI Readiness Index has become a trusted resource for policymakers, adopted as an official benchmark by national governments.

In this year's edition, the AI readiness of 188 countries is examined at a time of growing complexity, where governments face evolving citizen needs and challenges like economic uncertainty, climate risks, and rising inequalities.

At its core, the index asks, ‘How ready are governments to implement AI in the delivery of public services?’ By answering this question, it aims to offer a practical tool that supports evidence-based decision-making and helps policymakers unlock AI's potential to serve citizens better worldwide.

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

World Soil Day an opportunity to rethink how we interact with earth

TEHRAN – Held annually on December 5, World Soil Day 2025 focuses on urban landscapes with the theme Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities.

World Soil Day aims to focus attention on the importance of healthy soil and to advocate for the sustainable management of soil resources.

In Iran, the national soil week is being marked with the theme ‘from soil and health to soil and culture’, IRIB reported.

A conference is scheduled to be observed on the occasion of World Soil Day on Monday. It will include holding an international scientific symposium with the participation of local and global scientists, as well as educational workshops on elaborating soil functions and the consequences of soil degradation.

The international day to celebrate soil was recommended by the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) in 2002. Under the leadership of the Kingdom of Thailand and within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has supported the formal establishment of the day as a global awareness-raising platform.

The FAO Conference unanimously endorsed World Soil Day in June 2013 and requested its official adoption at the 68th UN General Assembly. In December 2013, the UN General Assembly responded by designating 5 December 2014 as the first official World Soil Day.

The Earth planet's survival depends on the precious link with soil. Over 95 percent of our food comes from soil. Besides, they supply 15 of the 18 naturally occurring chemical elements essential to plants.

However, in the face of climate change and human activity, soils are being degraded. Erosion disrupts the natural balance, reducing water infiltration and availability for all forms of life, and decreasing the level of vitamins and nutrients in food.

Sustainable soil management practices reduce erosion and pollution, and enhance water infiltration and storage. They also preserve soil biodiversity, improve fertility, and contribute to carbon sequestration, playing a crucial role in the fight against climate change.

But when we think about soil, we almost always associate it with the countryside and nature. We rarely stop to consider that urban soil is also fundamental.

Beneath asphalt, buildings, and streets lies soil that, if permeable and vegetated, helps absorb rainwater, regulate temperature, store carbon, and improve air quality. But when it's sealed with cement, it loses these functions, making cities more vulnerable to flooding, overheating, and pollution.

Therefore, the day invites everyone—from policymakers to citizens—to rethink urban spaces from the ground up, to build greener, more resilient, and healthier cities.

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2 billion tons of soil erodes annually in Iran: expert

Iran loses 2 billion tons of soil per year as a result of land use changes, rainfed agriculture, and overgrazing, Hossein Akhani, environmental and botanical expert has announced.

“Sometimes, to support agriculture, land use changes permits are issued, while being unaware of its dire consequences on the soil,” he lamented, YJC reported on Saturday.

“Iran is responsible for the loss of 10 percent of the world's total soil erosion per year due to unsustainable agriculture, overgrazing, destruction of natural reservoirs,” he said.

فرسایش سالانه ۲ میلیارد تن خاک در ایران

کارشناس محیط زیست و گیاه شناس گفت: سالانه ۲ میلیارد تن خاک در ایران به دلیل تغییر کاربری زمین، کشت دیم و چرای بی رویه فرسایش می‌شود.

به گزارش باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان، حسین آخانی اظهار کرد: برخی زمان‌ها برای حمایت از کشاورزی اجازه تغییر کاربری به زمین داده می‌شود، اما غافل از این هستیم که به دلیل ناپایداری خاک ده‌ها برابر خسارت ناشی از آن را باید تحمل کنیم.

وی بیان کرد: ایران ده درصد کل فرسایش خاک جهان را دارد و این به دلیل کشاورزی ناپایدار، چرای بی ریه، و از بین بردن شبکه هیدرولوژیک است.

