



China backs expanding Iran–Saudi ties at trilateral meeting

TEHRAN – Iran, China, and Saudi Arabia have wrapped up their third Trilateral Committee Meeting, with Beijing once again underscoring its commitment to strengthening relations between Tehran and Riyadh.

The meeting was held Tuesday at Iran's Foreign Ministry in Tehran and was chaired by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi. Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Walid al-Kharaji and China's Deputy Foreign Minister Miao Deo also took part.

During the session, the three sides issued a joint statement outlining key commitments and recent progress. ▶ Page 2

Iran, Belarus hold 18th joint economic committee meeting in Tehran

TEHRAN – The eighteenth session of the Iran-Belarus Joint Economic Committee meeting convened in Tehran, bringing together senior ministers, business representatives and experts from both countries to outline a new phase of commercial, industrial and scientific collaboration.

The meeting was co-chaired by the two countries' industry ministers, IRIB reported.

Iran-EAEU FTA a turning point in Iran-Belarus trade ties

Speaking at the session, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak said the committee is expected to produce substantive agreements that will broaden cooperation across economic, commercial, scientific, cultural and investment fields. ▶ Page 4

Strategic autonomy in practice: India and Eurasia's reconfiguration

By Somaye Morovati

TEHRAN – Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi on 4–5 December 2025 should be viewed as one of the defining geopolitical moments in Eurasia over the past decade—an event that transcends the traditional contours of the Moscow–New Delhi relationship and is best understood as part of a broader realignment in the regional balance of power.

At this juncture, India occupies a pivotal position within a triangle of competing pressures: rising expectations from Washington to align with the U.S.-led framework of energy security and domestic economic stability; and the management of a long-term rivalry with China that spans from the high-altitude frontiers of Ladakh to the dense lattice of technological and industrial supply chains.

From Oracle to Starlink: Lebanon's security sovereignty in the wind

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Lebanon has always lived in the crossfire of regional conflicts, but rarely has its digital sovereignty been placed so casually on the negotiating table.

In the space of a few weeks, the state entrusted its public-sector data to Oracle, a CIO structurally tied to the Israeli military and technological complex, and cleared the path for Starlink, a U.S.-controlled satellite system capable of circumventing every Lebanese security and regulatory body.

These moves, adored as “advancement” and “innovation,” expose the country's core infrastructure at a time of escalating Israeli aggression.

The first shock arrived with the memorandum of understanding between Minister of State for Technology Kamil Chahada and Oracle, ceremonially signed under the eyes of the U.S. ambassador.

Is Israel's mirage of victory in Gaza fading?

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – More than two years after Israel launched its war on Gaza on October 7, 2023, the outcome is undeniable: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vow to “destroy Hamas” has failed.

The October 10 ceasefire was supposed to mark the end of Hamas's grip on Gaza. Instead, it has revealed the opposite — Hamas, though weakened, remains entrenched, rebuilding day by day, and reasserting its authority in ways that expose the futility of Israel's campaign and the hollowness of American promises.

From the start of the conflict, Israeli officials themselves admitted that Netanyahu's rhetoric was misleading. Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, the Israeli military chief spokesman, warned in June 2024: “This business of destroying Hamas, making Hamas disappear — it's simply throwing sand in the eyes of the public.”

How Israel trampled on human rights in Gaza

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Gaza has been subjected to the harshest forms of collective punishment in modern history, measures that grossly violate international law and amount to war crimes.

After the October 7 operation in 2023, the occupying Israeli regime invaded the Strip and intensified its blockade. The renewed siege forced 2.4 million residents from their homes and imposed full control over the enclave's air and sea access.

The Zionist regime prevented humanitarian agencies from providing critical aid, contrary to Article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The interception of an international humanitarian flotilla carrying delegates from more than 40 countries, detaining the activists in international waters before interrogating and mistreating them further, reflects the regime's disregard for international law.

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Sa'dabad director outlines major restoration, conservation push at former royal complex in Tehran

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – The director of the Sa'dabad Cultural–Historical Complex says the former royal residence in northern Tehran has accelerated restoration and conservation work, completing a long-delayed digital inventory of its holdings while advancing new projects to safeguard thousands of stored objects.

In a recent meeting with cultural heritage reporters, Seyyed Mohsen Mir, director of the Sa'dabad complex, underlined that the months-long closure of museums during Iran's 12-day conflict with the Israeli regime provided an opportunity for his staff to do restorations, reorganize and fully register all holdings. ▶ Page 6



“Light Has Come” art exhibition unveils works on Zionist regime's destruction

TEHRAN- Iranian artist Abdolhamid Qadirian's art exhibition was inaugurated at the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization in Tehran on Monday, depicting Quranic narrative of the destruction of the Zionist Regime.

The opening ceremony of the exhibition titled “Light Has Come” was attended by prominent cultural and artistic figures, including Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Qomi, Head of the Islamic Development Organization, Mohammad-Mehdi Dadman, the director of the Art Bureau, and several other leading artists and managers from the visual arts sector, Mehr reported. ▶ Page 8



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TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Iran remains a priority in U.S. confrontational strategy

Siasat-e-Rooz analyzed the U.S. National Security Strategy document. According to the paper, supporting and safeguarding the Zionist regime, maintaining control over international waterways for the flow of energy and goods, reducing dependence on regional energy resources, and countering China are among the dimensions of this approach—all of which directly intersect with Iran's security and national interests. The threats facing Iran stem from the fact that U.S. claims in the region continue to be framed under the banner of “counter-terrorism.” Yet, in the American view, this does not apply to al-Qaeda or ISIS, but rather to Iran and the Resistance Front, which Washington portrays as challengers to its dominance. Given these factors, hoping for negotiations with the United States on the assumption of reduced hostility or a shift in priorities would be a miscalculation, one that could impose high costs on the country. Relying on domestic capabilities, emphasizing the continuation of nuclear activities, strengthening the armed forces, and pursuing assertive, active diplomacy are presented as the means to counter America's new designs—measures that could inflict yet another defeat on the adversaries of this land.

Khorasan: Iran needs special envoy to UAE more than ever

Recent moves by the United Arab Emirates regarding the three Iranian islands signal a growing complexity in an issue that, without an appropriate solution and effective diplomacy, could escalate into more difficult and costly stages. The central question is no longer about ownership of the islands. History and international law have clearly established Iran's sovereignty, leaving no room for dispute. The UAE, leveraging its deep ties with the West and its pivotal role in Iran's trade, now sees itself in a position to shape narratives in sensitive cases, including the three islands. This behavior becomes more dangerous when Iran lacks effective diplomatic tools to manage the crisis. The reality is that diplomacy in the Arab world differs from classical diplomacy. In the Persian Gulf (Arab) states, sometimes more than the formal content of negotiations, political weight, personal relationships, and the demeanor of the ambassador play decisive roles. Iran, therefore, needs a special envoy to the UAE more than ever. The Emirates will abandon its baseless claims only when it realizes that Tehran is prepared to send a figure of regional stature into the field.

Arman-e-Melli: Managing tensions

Arman-e-Melli examined the fraught state of

negotiations between Iran and the United States under current conditions. The paper writes: the complexities of Iran–U.S. relations grow by the day. Both countries remain in a state of complete diplomatic estrangement. Iran, for its part, refuses to sit at a negotiating table where its rights are not recognized. Meanwhile, the International Atomic Energy Agency is preparing a new case against Iran. In addition, political developments in Lebanon, Iraq, and even Yemen have cast their shadow over Iran's nuclear file. Taken together, these factors suggest that, due to the severed diplomatic ties and the reliance of both sides on third-party intermediaries to convey messages, tensions are gradually increasing. The absence of direct communication between Iran and the United States, combined with certain unreasonable American demands regarding missile, nuclear, and regional issues, has further fueled the escalation. If both countries continue along this path, a sharp rise in tensions is likely. To counter this destructive trajectory, both sides appear to need measures that would result in reducing tensions between them.

Arman-e-Emrooz: Step-by-step model needed to prevent tensions

Arman-e-Emrooz highlighted Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's remarks that Iran will enter serious negotiations if Washington stops maximalist demands and recognizes Iran's inalienable rights, including its right to nuclear enrichment for peaceful purposes. The paper said: Araghchi said that if the United States is ready for real negotiations, Iran is also prepared; but genuine negotiation means recognizing the rights of the Iranian people, lifting unjust sanctions, and a reciprocal return to commitments. To move beyond this stage, the most practical path is a return to the idea of a “step-by-step agreement.” This method offers several key advantages: first, neither side feels it has surrendered; second, each step creates tangible confidence-building; third, if one party violates the agreement, the other can easily revert to the previous state by relying on a mutual snapback mechanism. Iran has shown that when the other side takes concrete steps, it responds in kind. The experience of releasing foreign prisoners and releasing Iran's six billion dollars frozen in South Korea was a successful example of this step-by-step model. If diplomacy does not quickly transform into “diplomatic action,” it will soon give way to tension and threats. The window of diplomacy is open—but it will not remain open for long.

China backs expanding Iran–Saudi ties at trilateral meeting

From page 1 ► They reaffirmed Iran and Saudi Arabia's dedication to fully implementing the 2023 Beijing Agreement, the China-brokered deal that restored diplomatic ties between the two nations. Both countries stressed the importance of upholding sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and security in line with the UN Charter, the Charter of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and international law.

The statement also praised China's “continued positive role” in facilitating dialogue and overseeing the agreement's implementation.

For its part, China reiterated its willingness to support and encourage further cooperation between Tehran and Riyadh in political, economic, cultural, and security areas.

The joint statement highlighted progress in consular coordination, noting that this cooperation helped ensure the safe travel of more than 85,000 Iranian Hajj pilgrims and over 210,000 Umrah pilgrims in 2025.

It also welcomed the expanding exchanges between Iranian and Saudi research centers, universities, media outlets, and cultural institutions.

Addressing regional issues, the three countries called for an immediate end to Israeli military operations in Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, and condemned violations of Iranian sovereignty.

Iran's representative expressed appreciation for the steadfast support shown by Saudi Arabia



The third meeting of the Iran–China–Saudi Arabia Trilateral Committee took place at the Iranian Foreign Ministry in Tehran on December 9, 2025.

and China during Israel's June aggression against Iran.

The parties further reaffirmed their backing of a comprehensive, UN-led political solution in Yemen.

Iran and Saudi Arabia restored diplomatic ties in March 2023 after a seven-year break, following a China-mediated agreement that led to the re-opening of embassies.

Earlier rounds of the trilateral committee were held in Beijing and Riyadh, where all sides restated their commitment to respecting sovereignty and non-interference, and acknowledged China's on-going mediation in support of regional dialogue.

Global turn toward replicating Iranian drones highlights Tehran's military ascendancy: top general

TEHRAN – A senior spokesperson for the Iranian Armed Forces says the replication of the Iranian-made unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) Shahed 136 by certain superpowers which claim to be in possession of cutting-edge technology is a confession of Iran's eye-catching breakthroughs.

Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said it is a source of pride for Iran to see heavyweights in the domain of military knowhow such as the United States are manufacturing copies of modern Iranian drones to “make up for the things they don't have.”

“It is a very great honor for the Iranian nations, the Aerospace Division of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and other parts of the Armed Forces,” the top general explained.

“Today, world nations have set their eyes on the breakthroughs made by the Islamic Republic of Iran; they take pride [in Iran's progress], too, because they themselves are being oppressed by the tyranny of global hegemony,” he noted.

“As the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the oppressed around the world, naturally world nations are proud of this country,” the general said.

He further touched upon the 12-day US-Israeli military aggression against Iran, saying any further mistakes by the enemy will be met with a response more crushing than



The photo shows Iran's Shahed-136B drones in a military parade in Tehran.

before.

Iran's massive and rapid progress in drone technology and its capabilities to carry out long-range strikes in drone warfare with a high level of accuracy have cemented the country's growing military might in West Asia.

The cutting-edge drone program has been among the Iranian military's breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of domestically-developed defensive equipment to make the armed forces self-sufficient in the face of years-long US threats and sanctions.

Iranian officials have repeatedly warned that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, which are entirely

meant for defense.

Iran deployed its domestically-made UAVs, including Shahed drones, in retaliatory attacks against Israel during the regime's military aggression against Iran back in June.

Meanwhile, several countries have begun manufacturing copies of Iran's Shahed drone, which are not expensive but efficient and accurate, a leading American daily reported recently.

In a report, The Wall Street Journal said that different corporations in the United States, China, France and the UK are developing armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) modeled after Iran's Shahed.

The United States and its allies are “competing to develop low-cost, long-range replica weapons,” it added.

The report also noted that models similar to the Shahed stood out among 18 types of US-made drone prototypes displayed at an event held by the US Department of War this summer.

Those models, it added, included LUCAS and Arrowhead made by SpectreWorks and Griffon Aerospace companies, respectively.

“The Shahed and its knockoffs have become so widespread that corporations such as Griffon and Sweden's Saab are even selling target-practice UAVs resembling Iran's munitions,” the report said.

Europe's reinstatement of Iran sanctions ‘baseless, invalid’: Russian senators

TEHRAN – Two senior Russian senators have dismissed efforts by the European troika to reinstate sanctions against Iran as unfounded and invalid.

Deputy Speaker of the Federation Council Konstantin Kosachev and Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Council Grigory Karasin made the comments in a meeting with an Iranian parliamentary delegation.

The Iranian parliamentary delegation, headed by Ebrahim Azizi, Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Parliament, is in Moscow to attend the 18th General Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Parliamentary Assembly.

Kosachev condemned the West's hostile moves against Iran, saying Russia believes the credibility of the sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program ended on October 18, 2025 based on UN Security Council Resolution 2231, and that any attempts by the European countries to bring back those sanctions lacks any credibility.

Also recently, the ambassadors of Iran, Russia and China to the United Nations, in a joint letter to the president of the UN Security Council and the UN secretary general, underlined that all provisions of UNSC Resolution 2231 were terminated after October 18, 2025 under Operative Paragraph 8 of the same resolution.

Meanwhile, the countries reiterated their commitment to continuing their cooperation with UNSC member states.

Iranian court begins hearings for Mossad agent arrested in June war

TEHRAN – Iranian judicial officials say a court in Alborz Province has opened proceedings against a dual national charged with spying for Israel during the June Israel–U.S. offensive against Iran.

Chief Justice Hossein Fazeli Harikandi announced on Monday that Branch Two of the Islamic Revolution Court in Karaj has begun hearing the case. The defendant, a dual citizen living in a European country, was arrested by the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on the fourth day of the conflict.

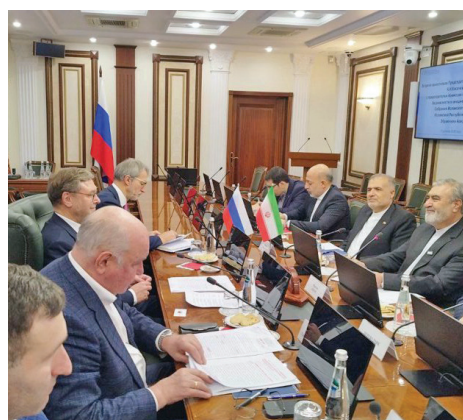
According to Harikandi, the defendant had been in contact with Mossad operatives for two years and allegedly received training in several European capitals as well as in Israeli-occupied territories.

He reportedly entered Iran by air roughly one month before the 12-day war with the aim of carrying out an assigned mission.

“When he was taken into custody, advanced espionage and intelligence-gathering equipment was discovered in the villa where he had been staying,” Harikandi said.

Between June 13 and 24, Israel launched a series of strikes inside Iran, killing at least 1,064 people and targeting civilian infrastructure. The United States also carried out airstrikes on three Iranian nuclear facilities.

In October, Iran's Guardian Council approved legislation imposing harsher penalties on individuals convicted of spying for Israel or cooperating with hostile foreign governments.



Top Russian senators hold a meeting with the Iranian parliamentary delegation at the Federation Council in Moscow, Russia, on December 8, 2025.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran, the People's Republic of China and the Russia Federation remain fully committed to continuing their constructive diplomatic partnership with all members of the council, and announce their readiness to support collective efforts to safeguard the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program,” wrote the top three diplomats.

For nearly two decades, Iran's peaceful nuclear program has been met with relentless opposition from the West. Pressure came in many forms, endless negotiations that went nowhere, punishing sanctions and even military action.

Iran president due in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan on two-day tour

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is set to travel to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on Thursday and Friday, the President's Deputy for Political Affairs, Mehdi Sanaei, announced on Tuesday.

Sanaei said Pezeshkian's visit to Kazakhstan comes at the invitation of the Kazakh president and will be an official bilateral trip. During the visit, the two sides are expected to sign more than ten cooperation agreements. A major Iran–Kazakhstan business forum, an exhibition of historical documents, and the unveiling of several books on the two nations' shared history are also planned.

Pezeshkian will then travel to

Turkmenistan to attend a summit, where he is scheduled to deliver a speech. On the sidelines of the summit, he will meet with the President of Turkmenistan as well as other participating heads of state.

Sanaei emphasized the strategic importance of Central Asia, highlighting the deep religious, cultural, and civilizational ties Iran shares with countries in the region. He noted that many Central Asian states are already working with Iran through organizations such as ECO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and BRICS+. Despite strong political relations, he said, there is still a need to expand economic and trade cooperation.

Politics on the Pitch

Is the U.S. weaponizing 2026 World Cup against Iran?

TEHRAN — The contradiction between sport’s stated mission to unite people and the reality of restricted access was laid bare last week when several members of Iran’s World Cup delegation were refused U.S. visas and could not attend the FIFA 2026 draw in Washington on December 5, 2026.

The episode prompted Iran’s Football Federation president, Mehdi Taj, to warn Tuesday that the national team must prepare substitute players in case further officials or athletes are barred from travel.

Taj said the refusals were linked to where some players and officials had served their compulsory military service, specifically those who served under the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, an affiliation Washington regards as problematic. He singled out assistant coach Saeed Elhuyi as one of the delegation members whose visa was rejected for that reason. Taj said the federation has been forced to identify backups so the team can function even if more people are denied entry.

The visa disputes come against the backdrop of U.S. security measures. In June, President Donald Trump signed an executive order restricting entry for nationals of a dozen countries on security grounds; Iran is included on that list. The order formally allows exemptions for athletes and coaching staff travelling to global events such as the World Cup and the 2028 Olympics, but Taj said those exemptions were



US President Donald Trump receives the FIFA ‘Peace Prize’ from FIFA chief Gianni Infantino at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. on December 5, 2025 during the 2026 FIFA World Cup’s final draw.

not being honored in practice. He told FIFA president Gianni Infantino that the issue had been politicized and called on FIFA to take a clear stand against such discriminatory treatment.

The World Cup draw ceremony itself heightened the discord. The presentation of an inaugural FIFA “Peace Prize” to Trump at a dazzling, celebrity-filled event in Washington solidified a view of a governing organization that values spectacle and political connections more than unbiased management. Media and commentators quickly highlighted the inconsistency: what Infantino describes as football’s obligation to unity appeared, at least in optics, as a public endorsement of partisan authority. Media coverage described the ceremony as “cringe,” “bizarre,” and a moment when FIFA’s claims to political neutrality rang hollow.

The irony is amplified by repeated public statements from FIFA’s leadership about sport’s transcendent power. Gianni Infantino has, in public fora repeatedly, advanced a simple — and appealing — thesis: football unites. “We are saying football unites the world,” he said addressing the FIFA Congress in Bangkok in 2024, adding that “uniting this world is our responsibility; it is our answer to the aggression, our answer to the hate, our answer to the war.”

Those claims now sit in uncomfortable contrast to the realities experienced by Iranians. On one side, FIFA’s president promises that football can create shared human moments; on the other, a host state’s visa policies — rooted in broader political tensions — determine who may enter the room. The contradiction is not abstract. It deprives teams of their designated repre-

sentatives, disrupts preparation, and sends a message that global football platforms are not equally accessible.

And for Iran, this issue is not limited to football only. Earlier in the year, the U.S. also denied visas to Iran’s national polo team, preventing them from competing in the 2025 FIP Arena Polo World Championship in Virginia despite having qualified in May. Similar access problems have affected athletes across multiple disciplines, whether through outright rejections, lengthy delays, or administrative obstacles tied to nationality. For sure, when entire teams or officials are prevented from attending, the international character of competitions is fundamentally compromised.

It may be argued that awarding a prize or staging a ceremony is not necessarily a political act. But when such gestures are staged in environments saturated with political symbolism and accompanied by practical exclusions that fall along political lines, the aggregate message is clear: access to the global sporting stage can be contingent on state policy and political affiliation.

If international sport is to live up to its unifying rhetoric, governing bodies and host states must translate words into enforceable practice. Without clear guarantees and accountability, the claim that “sport unites” will remain aspirational. For the athletes and officials left on the sidelines, the promise of a shared global experience will feel, at best, only partially kept.

Limouchi wins the Para Sport Volunteer Award 2025

TEHRAN - Limouchi has been a driving force behind the Paralympic Movement in Iran through her extensive volunteer work and leadership

To coincide with International Volunteer Day (5 December) Sima Limouchi, a long-time volunteer and disability rights advocate from Iran, has been named the winner of the 2025 Para Sport Volunteer Award following a global public vote.

The Para Sport Awards celebrate individuals whose efforts have strengthened the impact of Para sports worldwide. Among categories for athletes, coaches, and IPC members, the Volunteer Award is the only one decided by public vote, with thousands of ballots cast globally over a two-week period.

Limouchi has been a driving force behind the Paralympic Movement in Iran through her extensive volunteer work and leadership. For her volunteering is more than an activity, it is a philosophy of life rooted in empathy, social responsibility, and personal values. Her commitment to the Movement deepened after the 2000 Sydney Paralympic Games, where conversations with volunteers from diverse backgrounds inspired her to promote volunteerism in Iran through education, cultural initiatives, and awareness about disability and the Paralympic movement.

Over the years, she has continued to strengthen the network of student volunteers, which now actively supports the Paralympic movement across Iranian social media. She has inspired university students to engage with Para sport, organised educational workshops, and served as a Technical Classifier in Para table tennis.

As Head of Volunteers for Iran's National Paralympic Day, she enhanced public engagement through awareness seminars and inclusive activities. Her leadership also extends to commemorating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in partnership with UNESCO and contributing to strategic planning through the NPC's Development Committee and General Assembly.

Limouchi played a key role in advancing Para table tennis regionally, successfully advocating for its inclusion in the Asian Youth Para Games and developing inclusive sports programmes for children with disabilities.

Limouchi also served as member of the IPC Women in Sport Committee (2006 to 2010), and until 2023, volunteered with the Asian Paralympic Committee.

Reflecting on her journey, Limouchi said: “With every step we take alongside the Paralympic Movement, we help build a more hopeful, unified, and inclusive world. As volunteers, this responsibility drives us to champion the Movement’s beauty, solidarity, and strength, guided by our insight and unwavering belief in its sustainable future.”

Limouchi is only the second Iranian to receive a Para Sport Award, following Elaheh Gholi Fallah, who won the 2019 Paralympic Sport Award for Courage after making history as the first Iranian woman to qualify for a Paralympic Winter Games.

Also shortlisted for the Volunteer Award were Betty Miangindula Mabenza from Democratic Republic Congo and Anvar Mursakulov from Uzbekistan. Voting took place from 30 October to 13 November 2025.

Persepolis edge Paykan: 2025/26 PGPL

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team edged past Paykan 1-0 thanks to a goal from Oston Urunov here on Tuesday.

In the match held at the Dastgerdi Stadium, the Uzbek winger scored the winner in the dying moments of the first half.

In Isfahan, Zob Ahan and Tractor shared the spoils in a goalless draw.

Shams Azar were held to a 1-1 draw by Gol Gohar in Qazvin and Esteghlal Khuzestan lost to Kheybar 1-0 in Ahvaz.

On Wednesday, Sepahan will Aluminum in Arak, Esteghlal host Malavan in Tehran, Fajr Sepasi meet Chadormalou in Shiraz and Mes face Foolad in Rafsanjan.

Persepolis sit top one point above Sepahan, who have two games at hands.

Mojtaba Jabbari takes charge of Mes Rafsanjan: PGPL

TEHRAN - Former Esteghlal football team head coach Mojtaba Jabbari was named new head coach of Iranian top-flight club Mes Rafsanjan.

Mes parted company with Rasoul Khatibi last week following poor results in the 2025/26 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

He took charge of the team until the end of the season.

Jabbari will be assisted by Jalal Cheraghpour and Hadi Shakouri in the Rafsanjan-based club.

Mes Rafsanjan are 16th in the PGPL 16th table with seven points out of 12 matches.

Iran line up Portugal for 2026 World Cup prep

TEHRAN - The president of the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), Mehdi Taj, has announced that Iran national football team — “Team Melli” — are close to finalizing a high-profile warm-up friendly against Portugal national football team on May 27.

According to Taj, an agreement with the Portuguese federation should be signed within days. He also revealed there is a “possibility” of arranging a friendly with Spain national football team next April in Doha.

Beyond those two, Iran is reportedly in talks with other European sides — including Scotland and Iceland national football teams — to set up friendlies as part of the final run-up to the 2026 FIFA World Cup. For that tournament, Iran are drawn into a tricky Group G alongside Belgium, Egypt and New Zealand national football teams.

With strong preparation matches on the horizon, Team Melli will hope to sharpen their tactics, test their squad depth and build momentum.

As Taj noted, facing top European nations before the World Cup could prove crucial in helping Iran compete at the highest level when the group-stage lights go on next summer.

Didar’s goal among top goals of Group Stage: AWCL

TEHRAN – Bam Khatoon forward Sara Didar’s goal has been nominated for the best goal in the AFC Women’s Champions League 2025-26 Group Stage.

From long-range thunderbolts to ice-cold one-touch finishes, the Group Stage served up goals that changed matches and lit up timelines.

The-afc.com has shortlisted strikes that blended technique, timing and temperament — now it’s the fans turn to back their favorites.

Didar scored from the counter-attack by the book. A burst to shed the marker, a velvet first touch to open the lane, and a calm pass into the far corner. A composed finish crowns clinical transition play.

Sajjad Ganjzadeh named Iran’s karate head coach

TEHRAN – Olympic gold medal winner Sajjad Ganjzadeh has been named as new head coach of Iran’s karate national team.

Ganjzadeh won a gold medal at the men’s +75 kg event in 2020 Olympic Games.

He will be assisted by Amir Mehdizadeh and Esmaeil Hassanbeigi in Team Melli.

Shahram Heravi, who was head coach of national team, will serve as manager of Iran’s karate national teams.

Iran’s stand in the 12-day war undermined U.S.-Israeli strategy, says Philippine scholar

Julkipli Wadi warns that as Israel widens its aggression, Iran’s resilience signals a new regional momentum.

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 spoke with Professor Julkipli Wadi of the University of the Philippines to examine the conference’s intellectual significance, the current crisis of international law, and Iran’s evolving role in regional security.

As a distinguished scholar of political Islam in Southeast Asia, Professor Wadi provides a measured analysis of the limitations of Western human rights frameworks, the urgency of advancing an Islamic paradigm of rights and freedoms, and the broader implications of Iran’s resilience during the recent 12-day confrontation with Israel. In this interview, he underscores the growing need for principled, coherent approaches to justice, governance, and human dignity across the Muslim world and beyond.

The following is the text of the interview:

How can Southeast Asian countries contribute to raising awareness about the Palestine issue globally?

In fact, my university—the University of the Philippines—was one of the earliest institutions whose Faculty Council issued a statement declaring that what was happening in Gaza amounted to genocide, even before the International Criminal Court formally made such a declaration. This sentiment has been widely shared among students and faculty.

I also teach a course on Palestine, which the Center for International Studies established precisely to raise awareness among students. What is particularly interesting is that at the end of each term, when students submit their papers, I am often surprised by the depth of their understanding of the Palestinian struggle and the perspectives they develop.

So yes, the visibility of protests and demonstrations varies across Southeast Asia, but in my country, for instance, we can clearly feel a rising consciousness—especially among students and progressive groups—in support of the Palestinian cause.

Given your research on political Islam in Southeast Asia, how can Islamic political thought contribute to governance, social

justice, and lawmaking in countries facing political instability?

Political Islam in Southeast Asia has many shades. In the region, we have Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei, but we also have Muslim minorities, such as in the Philippines and southern Thailand. These differences produce varied expressions of Political Islam.

In Malaysia and Indonesia, Political Islam is mostly expressed through parliamentary democracy—through political parties and legislative processes—although it is not identical to the forms found in the Middle East. In Muslim-minority areas like the Philippines and southern Thailand, however, Political Islam has historically been expressed through secessionist movements or armed rebellion.

At one point, these movements created significant challenges for both countries, as they demanded either independence or a separate political system. The Philippine government, aware of the consequences of ignoring these grievances, launched a peace process. As a result, rhetoric surrounding Political Islam shifted, and movements like the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) entered into negotiations with the government. They eventually achieved autonomy and a new regional government, which helped bring Political Islam into the mainstream of Philippine politics. A similar dynamic can be observed in southern Thailand, although the situation there remains more delicate.

Malaysia facilitated the peace process in the Philippines, and because both countries are ASEAN members, neither could afford instability that would strain bilateral relations. Over time, radical groups, including Abu Sayyaf, weakened considerably. Their leaders were killed, many followers reintegrated into society, and the group withered away. What remain today are the two major liberation movements that now govern autonomous regions.

Despite this progress, small armed groups still exist, which creates a sense of uncertainty, especially when I travel to southern Philippines and hear news of various militant factions. Nevertheless, we hope that peace can be sustained in these parts of Southeast Asia.

From your perspective, what is the most

urgent challenge to people’s rights and legitimate freedom in South Asia and the Middle East? How does the Islamic framework presented at this conference offer a better response than Western human rights models?

This conference is extremely timely. It addresses issues that are acutely felt today, particularly amid the genocide in Gaza and the failure to enforce international law—including the fundamental principles of human rights. We are witnessing, in real time, barbarity, apartheid, and genocide in Palestine without meaningful intervention. Human rights laws are being violated daily.

The conference emphasizes the need to reflect on and review our current understanding of people’s rights, freedom, and humanity. The Islamic tradition is very rich in this regard, and one of the conference’s main arguments is that we have not been proactive enough in presenting an Islamic conception of human rights and freedoms as an alternative to the Western model, which is clearly failing.

This conference therefore addresses a crucial issue that must be promoted, including in regions like Southeast Asia, which have substantial Muslim populations. Although ASEAN has served as a stabilizing regional organization, internal and external pressures are growing. The South China Sea dispute—involving major powers such as China, the United States, and Japan, as well as regional states like the Philippines—has created dangerous tensions. Even ASEAN is now divided along geopolitical lines: China on one side, the U.S. on the other, with Japan increasingly involved.

In this context, it becomes even more important to articulate a vision rooted in Islamic principles—one that raises awareness about legitimate rights, freedoms, and a renewed understanding of humanity—especially at a time when international law and humanitarian principles have failed in the face of the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Scan this QR code to watch the video.



Semi-finished steel production up 4.7% in 7 months on year



TEHRAN- The production of semi-finished steel in Iran rose 4.7 percent in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (September 23-October 22), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) announced.

According to the ISPA's report, the country produced 18.152 million tons of semi-finished steel in the seven-month period of this year, while the figure was 17.34 million tons in the same period of time in the previous year.

Semi-finished steel (also called intermediate steel products) is steel that has been cast into a simple, basic shape after its initial production but has not yet been rolled or forged into its final form.

Think of it as the raw material for finished steel products. It's the crucial middle step between molten steel and the steel beams, car parts, sheets, or rods we use.

There are three primary forms of semi-finished steel, created by a process called continuous casting: Billets: Small, square or round cross-sections (typically under 6 inches/150mm). These are the starting point for long products like rebars, wire rods, merchant bars, and seamless tubes. Blooms: Larg-

er square or rectangular cross-sections (bigger than billets). They are often further processed into structural shapes like I-beams, rails, and heavy columns. Slabs: The largest form, with a wide, rectangular cross-section but relatively thin. Slabs are rolled flat to make finished flat products like hot-rolled coils, steel plates, sheets for automobiles, and appliances.

Semi-finished steel is an important economic indicator because: It measures early-stage industrial activity. This is often a leading indicator of future activity in construction, automotive, and manufacturing sectors, as that semi-finished steel will be turned into final products months later. It represents flexibility and supply. Semi-finished steel can be stored and then later processed into various final products based on market demand. A country with high semi-finished output can export these intermediates to other nations that lack the initial steelmaking capacity but have finishing mills. It's the core product of many mini-mills. Modern electric arc furnace (EAF) mills often specialize in producing semi-finished steel (especially billets) from scrap metal, which is a faster and more flexible process.

Tehran to host 4th Eurasia trade exhibition in February 2026

TEHRAN – Iran will host the fourth Eurasia International Trade Exhibition from February 1 to 4, 2026, an event that officials say is designed to maximize the benefits of the free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and draw strong participation from member states' delegations and private-sector representatives.

Amir Roshan, deputy head of the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), told a coordination meeting that this year's exhibition has been structured to highlight regional economic cooperation and ensure high-level attendance.

He said hosting costs for official delegations and chambers of commerce representatives from EAEU member states will be covered under existing protocols and approved budgets to encourage broad participation.

The first will focus on monetary and financial issues, an area he described as a priority for EAEU members.

The second will review the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC), which

is expected to ease access for regional, European and Arab markets through Iran.

A third section will address export-related issues, including logistics challenges, with the aim of improving trade flows through common standards.

The fourth will highlight goods and services with comparative advantages, particularly in energy, healthcare and other high-value sectors.

Roshan said invitations have been sent to ministers and senior economic officials from regional countries, and about one hundred sixty companies have been invited to participate as exhibitors or visitors.

"Any company or delegation interested in joining the event will be supported by the TPO," he said.

Referring to the impacts of the Iran-EAEU free trade agreement, Roshan said trade grew in the first half of the current year despite earlier concerns over potential declines.

Export from Sistan-Baluchestan rises 6% in 8 months yr/yr

TEHRAN- The value of export from Sistan-Baluchestan province, in southeast Iran, rose six percent in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), as compared to the same period of time in the previous year, a provincial official announced.

Gholamreza Balouti Mirza, the acting head of the province's Customs Department, reported a significant surge in the province's foreign trade during the first eight months of the current year, stating that 35 percent growth in exports, 62 percent rise in imports, and seven percent growth in transit indicate an increased role for the province in regional exchanges.

He reiterated that the volume of trade in Sistan-Baluchestan during the first eight months of the year 1404 (Iranian calendar) has grown remarkably, and this province has secured a more important position in regional trade.

The official announced that during this period, 1.775 million tons of goods worth \$244.9 million were exported from the province's customs, adding that these statistics show a 35-percent increase in weight and a six-percent increase in value compared to the same period last year. Cement, clinker, rock salt, and dates were the top exported items.

Continuing to explain the import situation, the acting head of Sistan-Baluchestan Customs Department added: "In the first eight months of this year, 1.511 million tons of goods worth \$1.435 billion were imported into the country through Sistan-Baluchestan Customs. This volume of imports has increased by 62 percent in weight and 31 percent rise in value compared to the same period last year. Wheat, rice, corn, barley, oilseeds, mangoes, and meat were the most important imported goods during this period."

Iran, Belarus hold 18th Joint Economic committee meeting in Tehran

TEHRAN – The eighteenth session of the Iran-Belarus Joint Economic Committee meeting convened in Tehran, bringing together senior ministers, business representatives and experts from both countries to outline a new phase of commercial, industrial and scientific collaboration.

The meeting was co-chaired by the two countries' industry ministers, IRIB reported.

Iran-EAEU FTA a turning point in Iran-Belarus trade ties

Speaking at the session, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak said the committee is expected to produce substantive agreements that will broaden cooperation across economic, commercial, scientific, cultural and investment fields.

He said the implementation of the free trade agreement between the Islamic Republic and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), along with plans for a special economic zone, represents "a turning point" in the commercial and industrial history of member states.

Atabak added that these arrangements give national policymakers and private-sector actors a wider platform to pursue long-term economic development and to deepen regional engagement.

The minister highlighted plans to reinforce legal frameworks, expand university-level scientific cooperation and support business-to-business engagement with Belarus. Years of political and economic interaction—including sector-specific working groups and high-level visits—have helped create conditions for broader joint projects across industry, science, culture and trade.

According to Atabak, the formation of dedicated working groups in industrial, health, medical and agricultural sectors has enabled companies in both countries to advance practical cooperation.

He said the two governments aim to raise bilateral trade volumes in line with their economic capacities and complementary strengths.

Removing banking and transit obstacles

Atabak noted that banking problems, letters of credit and transit issues for drivers must be resolved quickly to facilitate predictable and efficient trade. He called on private-sector representatives to intensify efforts to understand each other's markets and build long-term commercial partnerships. Establishing trade centers, exhibitions and consultative councils could accelerate this process, he said.

He also underlined the country's strategic logistics position in West Asia, saying Belarusian firms could use southern ports as gateways to India, Africa and Southeast Asia.

Atabak said the joint session reflected the strong will of both governments to pursue comprehensive ties. He reiterated the need to re-



solve banking issues, improve customs and logistical links, and standardize pharmaceutical regulations under EAEU frameworks.

He invited the Belarusian delegation to participate in the Eurasia Exhibition scheduled for February 1, 2026.

Belarus emphasizes readiness for joint industrial projects

Belarusian Industry Minister Andrei Kuznetsov thanked the hosts for the organization of the committee and said the presence of his delegation reflects a commitment to strengthening friendly relations.

He said expert teams from both countries had contributed significantly to drafting the agreements and preparing implementation plans.

Kuznetsov said Belarus is keen to move quickly on joint agreements and to expand cooperation in economic and industrial technologies, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, machinery, home appliances, food products and agricultural goods.

He underscored the importance of establishing joint production lines, advancing pharmaceutical and medical projects, and updating investment and economic mechanisms.

Focus on transport corridors, education and cultural exchange

The Belarusian minister identified transportation, transit corridors, scientific education and cultural tourism as priority areas for near-term action.

He said academic cooperation—such as joint scientific committees and mutual recognition of degrees—will help strengthen trust and expand long-term exchanges.

Kuznetsov added that reinforcing professional, technical and educational engagement could help increase bilateral trade volumes and broaden the overall scope of cooperation.

In a meeting with Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, earlier this week, Belarusian Ambassador to Iran Dmitry Koltsov stated: "We are seriously pursuing increased trade and economic exchanges between Iran and Belarus".

In the mentioned meeting, the TPO head emphasized the expansion of trade cooperation between the two countries, stating: "Holding the joint committee meeting can facilitate many trade issues between the two

countries."

He stressed the development of trade cooperation between the two countries, saying: "There are diverse capacities for trade exchanges between Iran and Belarus, and we strive to expand economic relations between the two countries in various fields."

Dehghan Dehnavi further listed some trade issues that would lead to the development of bilateral trade relations, expressing hope: "The joint committee meeting can facilitate many trade matters between the two countries."

The TPO head concluded by noting: "Alongside the 18th joint committee meeting of Iran and Belarus, meetings will be held between officials of the two countries, which will provide the groundwork for further cooperation."

The ambassador of Belarus to Iran, for his part, referred to the importance of the Iran-Belarus joint committee meeting, stating: "The meeting of officials from both countries in this committee is highly significant and will resolve many trade obstacles."

Dmitry Koltsov added: "After this meeting, we intend to have further meetings with the managers of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization to follow up on the topics discussed."

Highlighting that "we are seriously pursuing increased trade and economic exchanges between Iran and Belarus", the ambassador expressed hope that "after this meeting, we will witness good measures in expanding trade relations between the two countries."

Back in August, Belarusian Industry Minister and Co-chair of the Belarusian-Iranian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation Andrei Kuznetsov said that Belarusian Industry Ministry places great importance on the development of mutually beneficial cooperation between Belarus and Iran.

The official told BelTA on the sidelines of the high-level talks between Belarus and Iran at the Palace of Independence in Minsk on August 20.

"We highly value the achieved level of interaction and see significant potential for further expansion of bilateral ties. The Industry Ministry is ready to offer Iranian partners a wide spectrum of opportunities for deepening our industrial partnership," Andrei Kuznetsov said.

The minister highlighted specific areas of joint work that demonstrate

a commitment to long-term and productive interaction between the two states.

For instance, the establishment of assembly production for Belarusian harvesters would integrate the technologies of the Belarusian mechanical engineering industry into Iran's economy and create a local enterprise for assembling high-quality agricultural machinery. This would reduce logistics costs and provide the local market with access to the advanced technologies of the Belarusian agricultural industrial complex. The minister noted that work in this direction has already begun.

Also during talks on expanding investment and transit cooperation, officials from the two countries said that Belarus could gain access to open waters via Iran's free trade zones.

Alena Perminova, head of Belarus's National Agency of Investment and Privatization, met Reza Masrour, secretary of Iran's Free and Special Economic Zones High Council, to discuss new avenues for collaboration.

Perminova said a cooperation agreement signed between her agency and Iran's free zone secretariat was aimed at boosting joint projects.

She stressed Belarus's interest in building partnerships with Iran's free zones, saying the two countries could meet many of each other's needs through investment and re-exporting goods. "We are committed to implementing the framework of this agreement and creating more opportunities for cooperation," she said.

Perminova noted that Belarus's free trade zones were established to stimulate provincial development and commercial dynamism, and added that Minsk was ready to pursue serious joint projects with Tehran.

Masrour said Belarus could use Iran's ports to bypass its landlocked geography and sanctions-related restrictions.

He cited the Caspian route from Makhachkala in Russia to Iran's Caspian Port as a corridor that could provide Belarus with maritime access. In return, he said Belarus could enhance Iran's entry into the Eurasian Economic Union's 180-million-strong market.

"Both Iran and Belarus face unjust economic sanctions," Masrour said, adding that the measures had restricted Belarus's traditional access to Baltic ports in Lithuania and Latvia. "Iranian ports can serve as an alternative."

The official also pointed to Iran's role in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), saying Belarus could secure vital export routes for its potash fertilizers, agricultural products and other goods to Arab countries, Africa and beyond via Iranian free zones.

The talks also covered cooperation in tourism, high-tech industries, the digital economy, logistics, and organizing joint investment exhibitions.

‘Economic diplomacy should be prioritized in Iran’s embassy in Baku’

TEHRAN – Hossein Pirmoazen, head of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce, says Tehran's embassy in Baku must be redefined with an economic mission at its core, arguing that revitalizing bilateral ties hinges on trade, investment and joint projects rather than political engagement.

Pirmoazen told the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) portal that relations between the two neighbors should move beyond the current period of stagnation and return to the more dynamic, cooperative era of previous years.

"This can only be achieved through the economy, not politics," he said, urging a fundamental shift in how Iranian diplomacy approaches Azerbaijan.

He argued that the embassy in Baku must function as an economic driver—supporting traders, resolving commercial barriers, coordinating with domestic institutions, restoring suspended joint projects and providing analytical assessments of opportunities and risks in the Azerbaijani market.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi left

Tehran for Baku on Sunday to discuss bilateral relations between Tehran and Baku and exchange views on regional and international developments.

Esmail Baqaai, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in Sunday's press conference that Araghchi's trip highlights the importance of Iran-Azerbaijan relations.

He emphasized: "Our relationship with Azerbaijan is extremely important. The two countries are neighbors, share the same religion and culture, and have deep historical ties."

Baqaai added that these diplomatic visits aim to expand cooperation and contribute to understanding, peace, and stability in the Caucasus region, which is of great importance to Iran.

Over the past three decades, Iran-Azerbaijan relations have been a cornerstone of Tehran's neighborhood policy. Their shared historical, cultural, and religious ties have created strong potential for cooperation.

During a meeting in Tehran on October 21, Araghchi held extensive talks with Khalaf Khalafov,

special assistant to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. The discussions focused on ongoing collaboration, regional stability in the South Caucasus, and prospects for future cooperation across strategic sectors.

During the meeting, Araghchi stressed Tehran's commitment to strengthening relations with Baku based on mutual respect, good neighborliness, and shared regional interests. "Iran's policy is to develop and expand comprehensive relations with Azerbaijan and to remove any obstacles in this process," he said, noting that geographic proximity, cultural ties, and common interests provide a natural foundation for lasting friendship.

On the broader regional context, Araghchi reiterated Iran's position that peace and stability in the South Caucasus are essential for all countries in the region. He emphasized Tehran's respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, rejected any external attempts to change regional borders, and underscored that diplomacy is the only way to resolve disputes.

Is Israel's mirage of victory in Gaza fading?

From page 1 ▶ Lt.-Gen. Eyal Zamir cautioned that a full occupation of Gaza would trap the army in a costly quagmire. Former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant argued that without a political solution, military operations alone could not secure lasting stability. Opposition leader Yair Lapid added that Netanyahu's refusal to compromise had isolated Israel internationally. These voices foreshadowed the reality now visible on the ground.

As The New York Times reported on Monday, Hamas has quickly filled the void left by Israel's partial withdrawal. "Hamas was hit hard, but it wasn't defeated," said Shalom Ben Hanan, a former senior official in the Shin Bet. "It's still standing." The NYT noted that Hamas has re-established its presence in Gaza, with police forces visible again, officials regulating imports, and fighters replacing commanders lost in battle. Brig. Gen. Erez Winner explained that Hamas swiftly rebuilt its leadership, while intelligence estimates suggest 20,000 fighters remain. More than half of its tunnel network is intact, giving the group places to hide and store weapons.

Hamas has also demonstrated its ability to strike back. Earlier this month, Yasser Abu Shabab, the leader of a militia backed by Israel,



was killed in Rafah. This was a blow to Israel's attempt to cultivate alternative forces in Gaza.

Netanyahu, however, continues to insist otherwise. Last month, he told his cabinet, "This territory will be demilitarized, and Hamas will be disarmed. Either this will happen the easy way, or it will happen the hard way." Yet Israeli lawmakers acknowledge that with each passing day of the ceasefire, Hamas deepens its control. "It happened very quickly," Moshe TurPaz, a centrist Israeli lawmaker, said of Hamas's resurgence. "The moment to bring in the new government was the moment the ceasefire started. Hamas was at its weakest." That moment has passed, and Israel's failure is now entrenched.

The Trump administration's plan for Gaza only compounds the prob-

lem. It envisions demilitarization, reconstruction, and a new government backed by an international stabilization force. But this vision is detached from reality. Hamas officials reject outright disarmament, insisting weapons are central to their identity and necessary for self-defense. Senior official Husam Badran told the NYT the group was willing to discuss its arsenal only in the context of "serious" talks about full Israeli withdrawal and the establishment of a Palestinian state. "Without that, talking about these matters would be nonsensical," he said.

By refusing to consider reconstruction in areas under Hamas control, Washington risks deepening Gaza's humanitarian crisis while strengthening Hamas's narrative of resistance. For Palestinians, surrendering weapons would mean

abandoning the right to resist occupation. Trump's plan, therefore, is not a roadmap to peace but a recipe for renewed conflict.

The war devastated Gaza, killing tens of thousands and injuring many more. Yet Hamas survives, governing half the territory, taxing imports, policing the streets, and preparing for the future. As Ben Hanan cautioned in the NYT: "Hamas is besieged. But if it continues controlling parts of Gaza and wants to rebuild its capacities, it will find a way to rebuild them. The next battle might be in 10 or 20 years, but it could be much worse than Oct. 7."

On October 7, 2023, Hamas carried out a large-scale surprise attack on southern Israel. More than 1,100 people were killed in the operation, and some 250 were taken captive. The attack shocked Israel and triggered the two-year war that so far has claimed the lives of more than 70,000 Palestinians.

Israel's war has failed to achieve its stated goal. The United States has failed to offer a viable alternative. And Hamas, weakened but unbroken, remains the central force in Gaza. The ceasefire has not ended the struggle; it has only revealed the truth: Hamas still stands, and Israel's promise to destroy it was always an illusion.

Trump 'only interested' in Venezuela's oil: analyst



By M.A. Saki

TEHRAN – Yuram Abdullah Weiler, an engineer-turned political analyst, argues that U.S. President Donald Trump's intense pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro stems from a desire to dominate the country and secure access to its vast oil reserves, which surpass those of Saudi Arabia.

Trump is "only interested in getting his hands on Venezuela's oil, which represents the largest proven oil reserves in the world at an estimated 303 billion barrels (Bbbl) vs Saudi Arabia's 267 Bbbl," Weiler tells the Tehran Times.

What follows is the complete interview:

Some argue that Trump's political, economic and military pressure on Venezuela is intended to gain control over Venezuela's oil riches given the U.S. president's great love for oil and his disdain of renewable energy. What is your opinion?

Yes, that is the objective, but one has to look more deeply at the projections of energy use in the coming decades to understand why this is happening. World energy demands are projected to increase at a rate which will exceed the rate of growth of renewable energy sources. The least expensive alternative is, of course, fossil fuels, and hence, there is a scramble among energy producers to maximize their market share of this shortfall. Trump's disdain for renewable energy is merely a consequence of his financial supporters' wish to maximize the renewable energy gap and thus maximize the return on their fossil fuel investments. The alternative to using fossil fuels to bridge the so-called green energy gap is nuclear energy, however, initial costs for nuclear generating plants are much higher than for fossil-fuel-fired generating plants, which are favored by investors, but contribute to the global climate crisis.

Statements by American officials indicate that an attack on Venezuela seems imminent under the allegation that Maduro's government is an accomplice in the drugs trafficked into the United States. However, Maduro's involvement in drug trafficking has not been proven. Your answer please.



While Venezuela has been a minor transit point for cocaine trafficking, the allegation that Maduro's government is involved in drug trafficking of fentanyl is completely bogus. Most fentanyl comes to the United States through Mexico, where it is produced from precursor chemicals imported mainly from China, India and Myanmar according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's National Drug Threat Assessment (NDTA). In fact, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, neither Venezuela nor any other South American country is involved in synthetic opioid production or transit networks.

Given that the U.S. and the UN both agree that Venezuela is only a minor player in U.S.-bound cocaine, most of which comes from Mexico and Central America, if Trump were truly concerned about drug abuse in the U.S., why would he pardon former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, who was convicted of drug trafficking, smuggling over 400 tons of cocaine into the U.S.? The answer is, of course, he doesn't give a hoot about America's drug problem; he's only interested in getting his hands on Venezuela's oil, which represents the largest proven oil reserves in the world at an estimated 303 billion barrels (Bbbl) vs Saudi Arabia's 267 Bbbl.

After all, the kernel of the illicit drug trafficking problem is U.S. domestic consumption, which is a pervasive societal problem: drug overdoses kill annually over 100,000 people; half of Americans aged 12 and older have used illicit drugs at least once. If Americans stopped consuming such a huge quantity of illegal substances, the profitability of drug trafficking would simply evaporate along with the drug flow into the U.S. However, focusing on drug trafficking completely overlooks the fact that some 125 million opioid prescriptions are filled in the U.S. annually, and nearly all opioid abusers misuse prescription opioids at least once in a year. No one seems to be asking the obvious question, and that is, why does the U.S. have the highest death rate, 15.4 per 100,000, due to opioids in the world?

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Strategic autonomy in practice: India and Eurasia's reconfiguration

From page 1 ▶ Hosting Putin at such a moment was a deliberate assertion that New Delhi rejects any subordinate role and that strategic autonomy remains the foundational doctrine of Indian foreign policy.

To understand the full significance of this visit, one must consider the emerging frictions in India-U.S. relations. The return of protectionist economic policies in Washington—combined with unprecedented pressure on New Delhi to reduce its energy engagement with Russia—has convinced Indian policymakers that the energy security and economic welfare of 1.4 billion citizens cannot be made contingent upon the shifting priorities of successive U.S. administrations. India, which sourced approximately 36 percent of its energy imports from Russia in the 2024–2025 fiscal year, recognizes that severing this affordable and reliable supply line would impose structural disadvantages vis-à-vis China and Pakistan. Simultaneously, Washington's recalibration of Pakistan's regional role—particularly the renewed operational space granted to Islamabad in the Afghan theater—has heightened concerns within India's strategic community.

Drawing on the legacy of non-alignment, senior security and policy elites warn that excessive dependence on the United States not only erodes India's positional advantages but risks undermining the very essence of its strategic autonomy for the first time in three decades.

Within this context, India's calibrated ap-

proach toward China assumes clear strategic significance. Border de-escalation, the reopening of communication channels, and the symbolic image of Modi, Putin, and Xi together at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit all point to a new phase of pragmatic realism in New Delhi's foreign policy. India has signaled that despite its structural rivalry with Beijing, it will not be drawn into a U.S.-led anti-China coalition. Its deep economic interdependence with China—from sourcing nearly 80 percent of its surveillance equipment to extensive technological trade—underscores the reality that "containing" China is impossible without simultaneously "managing" it. India's emerging posture is a sophisticated blend of competition, engagement, and selective economic pragmatism—an approach that frees New Delhi from the rigid dichotomies of Cold War-style alignments.

For Russia, the visit carries an equally clear message. Facing acute economic and strategic constraints amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, Moscow views India as a geopolitical anchor essential for diversifying its partnerships and mitigating excessive dependence on China. For Russia, New Delhi is far more than an energy client; it is a strategic partner capable of stabilizing Russian energy revenue, limiting the reach of Western sanctions, and reopening Eurasian channels of connectivity. Defense cooperation—accounting for nearly 60 percent of India's weapons inventory—remains a shared, irreplaceable strategic pillar for both sides.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

From Oracle to Starlink: Lebanon's security sovereignty in the wind

From page 1 ▶ What was marketed as a patriotic leap into digital transformation, training 50,000 civil servants in cloud and AI tools, masks a far darker reality: Lebanon is placing its administrative nervous system in the hands of a corporation that is an integral pillar of the Israeli military apparatus.

Oracle has built fortified cloud centers for the Israeli army. It supplies intelligence units with operational software. It even donated equipment to troops operating in Gaza in 2024. This is not a neutral service provider. It is a strategic weapon in the Israeli security ecosystem.

So what exactly does it mean for Lebanese public-sector data, health records, citizen files, infrastructure details, administrative systems, to flow into a framework aligned with the very military that bombs Lebanese villages and violates Lebanese airspace daily?

The question hangs in the air, unanswered and deliberately unasked.

Barely had the Oracle debate begun when another decision was pushed through: granting Starlink a license without serious parliamentary scrutiny. Starlink's selling point is seductive—fast, reliable satellite internet.

Its danger is far greater: full bypass of Lebanese infrastructure, jurisdiction, and oversight.

Every Lebanese connection would route through U.S.-controlled satellites, subject to American privacy laws that compel companies to cooperate with intelligence agencies.

In practical terms, Lebanese users would be exposed directly to Washington—and by extension to the Israeli enemy—with no judicial, political, or technical protection.

Experts have already warned of devastating financial consequences once Starlink expands beyond its "backup" role; the licensing model siphons value out of the national economy, weakens local ISPs, and drains future tax revenues.

For a country already crawling through economic collapse, this is not a policy, it is a dismantling. And yet the cabinet embraced the scheme enthusiastically, even accepting a "donation" of 151 Starlink units from a barely traceable foreign NGO.

The symbolism is impossible to ignore: Lebanon's sovereignty handed over in a cardboard box.

The economic risks are grave, but the security implications are existential. Cyber specialists warn that Starlink can identify sensitive coordinates, detect military patterns, and map troop movements, capabilities already documented during the Ukraine war.

If that is what Starlink can do among allies, imagine its visibility over Lebanon, where its closest strategic partner is the Israeli enemy.

At a moment when Israeli aggression is ongoing, airstrikes, assassinations, territorial violations, the timing is not coincidental.

A satellite network controlled by Washington, the Israeli occupation entity's primary military backer, grants unprecedented reach into Lebanese communications, state systems, and operational logistics.

Yet Lebanese officials continue portraying these developments as "modernization." But modernization without sovereignty is not progress. It is supervised dependency.

Lebanon does need stable internet and technological renewal. What it does not need is for its digital heartbeat to be monitored, accessed, or manipulated by actors whose strategic interests run directly against Lebanon's security and stability.

When national survival is at stake, technological naïveté becomes a security liability. In times of war, sovereignty is not a luxury or a slogan. It is the last remaining firewall between a nation and its erasure.

How Israel trampled on human rights in Gaza

From page 1 ▶

Humanitarian collapse

The widespread Israeli destruction across Gaza, including strikes on densely populated areas, cutting fuel and electricity from hospitals, clinics, and essential services, has resulted in severe medical crises.

Thousands of children have been born with complications or disabilities due to the lack of care, and many patients, particularly children, have died slowly as power shortages cripple the remaining hospitals. Gaza's humanitarian situation constitutes collective punishment, prohibited under interna-

tional law.

Civilian protection under Geneva law

Articles 51 and 57 of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions require parties to protect civilians from attack and prohibit threats intended to terrorize the population.

Operations by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) have led to catastrophic harm to children, women, and unarmed civilians. These actions amount to a pattern of conduct that constitutes genocide.

Article 57 also bars attacks on

civilian areas as acts of reprisal. The International Criminal Court's foundational documents classify such attacks as war crimes.

UNRWA's commissioner-general has stated that most casualties since October 7, 2023, have been civilians, with women and children accounting for roughly 70 percent of deaths, alongside others who died from hunger and deprivation.

Starvation as a method of warfare

The Zionist regime has been deliberately using starvation against civilians, prohibited under Article 54 of the First Additional Protocol. Article 76 also mandates special

protection for women in conflict zones. IOF abuses against kidnapped women, particularly former staff at Gaza's al-Shifa Hospital, are evidence of these violations.

Pregnant women at high risk

International organizations estimate that around 100,000 pregnant women in Gaza face acute danger from the collapse of health services. More than 1,000 miscarriages have occurred due to insufficient medical care, in violation of Article 16 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which requires special protection for pregnant women.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israel violates Lebanon ceasefire again, unleashing heavy airstrikes and ground demolitions

TEHRAN — Israeli warplanes unleashed a heavy barrage across southern Lebanon late Monday into Tuesday, hammering Jabal Safi, the valley between Azza and Roumine, and multiple sites in Iqlim al-Tuffah.

According to reports in local media, simultaneous ground incursions saw occupation troops infiltrate Ayta al-Shaab, Odaisseh, and Khiam, deliberately demolishing homes in central Odaisseh and several buildings in Wadi al-Asafir south of Khiam.

Tracks of Israeli military vehicles reportedly stretched visibly from the Misgav Am settlement into Lebanese territory.

The Israeli military said the strikes targeted "Hezbollah Radwan Force infrastructure and launch positions," but provided no evidence.

Local sources described the raids as indiscriminate attacks on residential outskirts that sent plumes of smoke over terrified villages.

The timing could not be more provocative: the assaults followed days after a UN Security

Council delegation left Beirut having reaffirmed commitment to Resolution 1701, and mere hours after civilian envoys advanced indirect border talks.

Since the November 2024 ceasefire, Israel has committed over 10,000 documented violations—averaging 27 per day—while illegally holding five hilltop positions. At least 333 Lebanese have been killed and more than 950 wounded in the supposed truce period, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

Iran, Armenia to form joint working commission to ease border travel



TEHRAN – Iran and Armenia have agreed to establish a joint working commission to address land border issues and facilitate tourist movement between the two neighboring countries.

Iran's proposal to form the commission was welcomed on Monday in a meeting with the Iranian Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey and Armenian Economy and Tourism Minister Gevorg Papoyan, held on the sidelines of the fifth Iran-Armenia joint technical committee meeting on tourism cooperation. The session was held in the Armenian capital to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral tourism interactions and ease road travel.

According to ISNA, Mohseni-Bandpey has announced that both sides agreed to form the joint working commission and would begin practical steps to facilitate the entry and exit of tourists, addressing border problems gradually and based on expert assessments. "The working commission, involving relevant agencies from both countries, would provide a platform to examine border issues, standardize control procedures, improve passenger-handling infrastructure, increase capacity during peak periods and enhance road-transport coordination."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian official noted that improving procedures at the Norduz land border in Iran's East Azarbaijan province was essential due to the growth in overland travel. "Norduz must be upgraded from a crossing point to a service-based tourism corridor," Mohseni-Bandpey said, ISNA reported.

He described the creation of a new model of joint border-management cooperation as necessary for the future of tourism ties. He said East Azarbaijan could serve as a gateway for tourism development between Iran, Armenia and the Eurasian market.

Mohseni-Bandpey also cited that delays and transport issues for buses and passenger cars as major obstacles. "For tourists of both countries, the travel experience begins at the point of entry," he said, adding that service speed and coordination at the border must match the tourism potential of both sides. "Norduz crossing on the Tabriz-Jolfa route had the capacity to become one of Iran's busiest land-travel corridors."

He underlined that Norduz, the only land customs point between Iran and Armenia, played a key role in Iran's links with members of the Eurasian Economic Union. He added that its improvement carried national and regional importance. "Removing border obstacles would support tourism growth and boost people-to-people exchanges and economic interactions. Coordinated border management, organized transport and joint policymaking could help establish a stable and secure year-round tourism corridor between the two countries."

Armenia is considered an important target market for Iranian tourism, particularly in health tourism, shopping and pilgrimage.

Tonekabon offers strong potential for birdwatching

TEHRAN--The presence of seabirds such as gulls in Cheshmeh-Kileh River in Tonekabon, Mazandaran province, gives this city a special look during falls and winters. It has good potentials for birdwatching tourism. Many tourists who encounter this beautiful scene take photographs and record beautiful images of them.

A Tonekaboni citizen told IRNA that this capacity, which is less visible in other neighboring cities, should be used in form of tourist and sightseeing tours, and the presence of these birds should be considered a good omen.

This citizen stated that media advertising is very effective in introducing these capabilities to compatriots in other provinces and abroad, and emphasized that this capacity should be introduced by holding local and indigenous festivals along the Cheshmeh-Kileh River and inviting the news agencies to cover it in the media.

Experts believe that birdwatching is a growing activity in wildlife tourism, and more people are becoming interested in this branch of tourism every day. This field has countless fans and applicants in different parts of the world, and hundreds of thousands of professional birdwatchers earn huge income through this type of tourism or tourism in countries that host birds from all over the world with their diverse climates.

Ali Aminian, an environmental expert, pointed to the high income of birdwatching tourism in other countries, adding that the income of birdwatching tourism is much higher than hunting, and European countries have realized this fact and have made efforts to expand this industry.

He noted that the number of birdwatching fans in a country like England is so high that some believe that there are more birdwatching

fans in this country than football fans.

According to this environmental and wildlife expert, strengthening the infrastructure along with training to improve the knowledge of tour guides can attract many tourists to the country to see the native and migratory birds.

Stating that there are about 600 bird sites in the country, he said: "Of these, only 105 habitats that are most important have been internationally registered, and most migratory birds that come for wintering reside in these habitats."

Aminian said that 535 bird species have been sighted in Iran, adding that this number constitutes about one-third of the birds in the world, which migrate to Iran from Siberia and Europe in the autumn and winter seasons and are mostly seen in the northern provinces of the country. About 65 percent of migratory birds are swans, geese, ducks, mergansers, and ospreys, he added.

A major tourist attraction in Mazandaran is birdwatching, and efforts are being made to make this branch of tourism flourish in different areas throughout the province, which welcomes a variety of migratory birds every year, the official added.

This could gradually become an alternative to hunting birds by earning money from their presence.

Birdwatching, the observation of live birds in their natural habitat, is a popular pastime and scientific sport that developed almost entirely in the 20th century.

The northern provinces of Gilan, Golestan, and Mazandaran embrace a variety of freshwater lakes, wetlands, and lagoons, which are the main destinations for traveling pelicans, flamingos, ducks, swans, coots, and some other species.

Sa'dabad director outlines major restoration, conservation push at former royal complex in Tehran

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – The director of the Sa'dabad Cultural-Historical Complex says the former royal residence in northern Tehran has accelerated restoration and conservation work, completing a long-delayed digital inventory of its holdings while advancing new projects to safeguard thousands of stored objects.

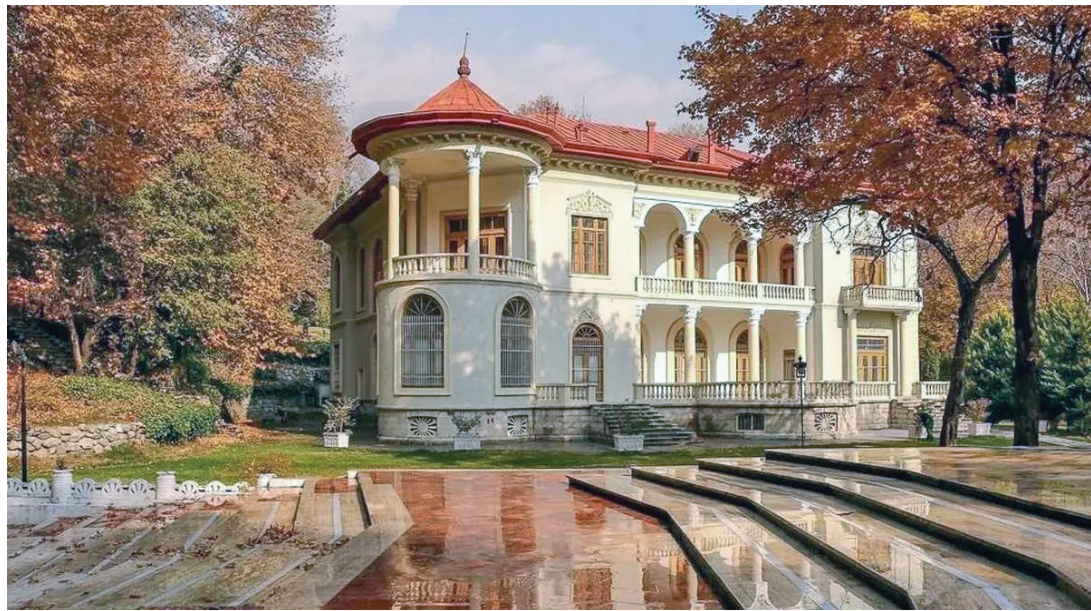
In a recent meeting with cultural heritage reporters, Seyyed Mohsen Mir, director of the Sa'dabad complex, underlined that the months-long closure of museums during Iran's 12-day conflict with the Israeli regime provided an opportunity for his staff to do restorations, reorganize and fully register all holdings.

Mir described a painstaking effort to document the complex's 150,000 objects--excluding some 70,000 paper documents--into the JAM system, a comprehensive digital database managed by the government, adding that many objects had previously been registered only at the first of five required steps in the JAM system. "Out of the 150,000 items, only about 8,000 to 10,000 had been recorded--and not completely," he said.

The official then explained many assets had been listed only in old inventory books that had not been reviewed for years. "We knew the items existed in storage, but they had not been re-examined," he told reporters. The recent effort, he said, required opening and rechecking the inventory books for the first time in more than four decades.

He said the scale of the project was unusual for the country and that the completion of the digital inventory allowed experts to identify objects they had not previously seen. "The process helped verify the presence and history of all items in storage."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mir referred to past rumors concerning the royal dishes museum within the complex, saying the recent audit clarified that no items had been lost or stolen. He said some objects had been transferred between museums or former royal residences under the supervision of the cultural heritage ministry and were fully documented.



He said the audit and simultaneous asset review improved transparency and resolved concerns raised in previous correspondence with oversight bodies. The ministry later announced that issues related to the inventory and registration system had been resolved, he said.

The official added that the digital inventory now allows museums to identify artworks and coordinate loans without relying on handwritten ledgers. He said many of the old ledgers were faint or difficult to read and had been checked against copies held by the economy ministry and the national museum directorate.

Responding to a question about the number of items on public display, he said out of the 150,000 registered-objects at Sa'dabad, only about 20,000 have been put on display. The rest had been kept in non-standard storage spaces and were vulnerable to damage.

He then lamented that the annual capacity for conservation remained limited. While 200 objects were recorded as restored in the complex's performance report, about 2,000 were in need of conservation, he said. The in-house conservation team handled much of the work without additional cost, he added.

The then noted that about 5,000 items required restoration, but only a small portion could be treated each year, adding that deterioration increases over time and that bud-

geting and planning for outsourcing part of the work had already begun.

Archive museum reopens; total holdings rise to 220,000

Mir said the archive museum was closed when he took office. It was reopened after the return of its former asset registrar, who re-catalogued documents over a one-year period. He said about 70,000 documents were newly identified, bringing the total number of items at Sa'dabad to 220,000. Current work includes classification, scanning and disinfection of materials.

He said a cooperation agreement with the National Library was being finalized to support scanning, cataloguing and preservation tasks.

Quran Museum relocation increases visitors

Speaking about the relocation of the Quran Museum, he said the museum had previously been located in the Pastour neighborhood, a high-security area housing the Iranian president's office, where restricted access resulted in very few visitors.

"Relocation to Sa'dabad increased attendance to at least 300 visitors per day, compared with as few as 30 visitors in a month--or even a year--at its former site."

A brief history

Covering roughly 110 hectares of wooded mountainside in northern Tehran, the Sa'dabad Cultural-His-

torical Complex stands as one of Iran's most extensive royal estates. First developed in the 19th century, it served as a summer residence for Qajar monarchs, who built the earliest structures on the site. The complex underwent major expansion in the 1920s after Reza Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty made it his residence, a role it maintained until his exile in 1941. His son, Mohammad Reza Shah, later occupied Sa'dabad in the 1970s, using it as one of the main royal compounds during the final years of the monarchy.

Sa'dabad also figured briefly in modern political history. In 1978, U.S. President Jimmy Carter stayed in the palace during his visit to Tehran, a trip aimed at demonstrating American support for the Pahlavi government. Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the complex was nationalized and transformed into a public museum.

Today, Sa'dabad is managed by Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts. Much of the estate has been converted into museums that exhibit a wide range of royal belongings, including furniture, dishware, carpets, miniature paintings, and vintage automobiles. However, a number of buildings remain in use by the Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, while the rest of the site welcomes visitors who explore its gardens, palaces, and collections.

Gevorgyan appreciates Iran for protecting cultural heritage of Armenians

TEHRAN--Chairwoman of the Tourism Committee of Armenia Lusine Gevorgyan has appreciated Iran for protecting cultural and historical heritages of Iranian Armenians.

Speaking at the fifth meeting of Iran-Armenia joint tourism technical committee which was held in Yerevan during December 7-9 and attended by Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpei, she considered the efforts of Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts a successful example of managing shared cultural heritage, Miras Aria reported.

She emphasized strengthening tourism cooperation between the two countries.

Referring to the series of conservation, restoration and management measures taken to preserve the Armenian cultural heritage of Iran, she stated: "Iran has always had a responsible and valuable approach to preserving the Arme-

nian heritage, which is an important part of the cultural history of this land. We deeply appreciate the efforts of Deputy Tourism Minister Mr. Mohseni Bandei, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage to protect the historical churches."

The historical Armenian churches registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List and National Heritage List of Iran were the main focus of discussion during the three-day meeting. They included the Church of St. Stephen in Jolfa, East Azarbaijan province, the Shepherd Church in the Aras region, the Church of Saint Mary in Jolfa, the Church of Sohrol and Qara Church (St. Thaddeus), one of the oldest churches in the world.

Emphasizing the global value of these collections, she said that Iran's restoration and conservation measures, especially in the churches of St. Thaddeus and St. Stephen, demonstrate the cultural commitment and respect that the people and government of Iran have for the cultural heritage of Iranian Armenians.

1000-year-old minaret of Semnan mosque to be honored in Special ceremony

TEHRAN--A ceremony to commemorate the millennium of minaret of Semnan Jameh Mosque will be held on Wednesday with the aim of transforming this heritage site into a historical and cultural brand of the city.

Announcing this, Semnan Governor Mehdi Samimian told IRNA on Monday that the minaret of Jameh Mosque is a historical, heritage and millennial monument that should become the brand of Semnan.

Referring to the 1,000-year-old history of minaret of Semnan Jameh Mosque, he said that 85 percent of the country's historical monuments belong to the Safavid, Zandieh and Qajar eras, while minaret of Semnan Jameh Mosque is 1,028 years old.

In order to introduce this historical monument, its commemoration ceremony will be held on December 10, coinciding with the anniversary of the birth of Hazrat Zahra (AS), in the Red Cres-

cent Hall of Semnan, he said.

He also said that 1,000 guests have been invited to commemorate the millennium of the minaret of Semnan's Jameh Mosque. "The main goal of holding this event is to introduce this minaret as the brand of Semnan, because throughout the history, this historical monument has been the center of various rituals for people and has served the needs of citizens, and its current historical and cultural status

must be institutionalized."

The governor criticized forgetting the importance of minaret of Semnan Jameh Mosque, adding that attracting domestic and foreign tourists is another goal of the event.

"Throughout this ceremony, an effort is being made to create consensus for introducing the October 22 as 'Semnan Day' so that the General Culture Council of Iran can make a final decision on it"

Iranian universities advance in GreenMetric World Ranking

TEHRAN – A total of 44 Iranian universities are featured on the 15th edition of the GreenMetric World University Ranking 2025, up from 40 universities in 2024.

Around 1,745 institutions across 105 countries have been evaluated by the UI Green Metric World Ranking 2025.

It is a global university ranking system dedicated to assessing the sustainability performance of institutions.

Razi University of Kermanshah, with a total score of 8,400, ranked first in Iran and 147 worldwide.

Tarbiat Modares University, with a global ranking of 165, and Alzahra University, with a ranking of 209, are placed second and third, respectively.

University of Kashan (213), Kashan University of Medical Sciences and Health Services (413), University of Mohaqeq Ardabili (549), University of Zanjan (573), Yazd University (605), Isfahan University of Technology (607), Zanjan University of Medical Sciences and Health Services (617) are ranked fourth to tenth.

The UI GreenMetric World University Ranking is a ranking of green campuses and environmental sustainability initiated by Universitas Indonesia in 2010.

The 2025 rankings aim to present the results of an online survey on the current conditions and policies related to sustainability efforts and institutional improvements in universities all over the world. It is expected that by drawing the attention of university leaders and stakeholders, more attention will be given to global climate change, clean energy, water conservation, waste recycling, green transportation, and sustainability education and research. This will require increased awareness and a change in the behavior of many if we are to see it happen.



This year, a new theme, 'Advancing Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education: Stories from Our Institutions and Communities' has been introduced.

Setting and Infrastructure (15 percent), Energy and Climate change (21 percent), Waste management (18 percent), Water (10 percent), Transportation (18 percent), and Education and Research (18 percent) are the main criteria used in this rating system to measure institutions.

Wageningen University and Research, University College Cork, and Nottingham Trent University ranked first to third globally.

Recent rankings

The Times Higher Education (THE) Interdisciplinary Science Rankings (ISR) has placed 28 Iranian universities among the top institutions worldwide for interdisciplinary science research, compared to 29 universities in the 2025 rankings.

Amirkabir University of Technology, with a global ranking of 99, is ranked first in the country, ISNA reported.

Shahid Beheshti University (147), Shiraz University (196), and Golestan University (351-400) ranked second to fourth, respectively.

Bu-Ali Sina University, Razi University, University of Kurd-

istan, University of Mohaqeq Ardabili, Urmia University, and Yazd University ranked 401-500 globally.

The Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asia University Rankings placed 48 Iranian universities in the list of top universities in 2026, compared to 32 universities in 2025.

Published annually since 2009, the QS Asia University Rankings highlights the top universities in Asia each year.

University of Tehran (with a global ranking of 93) is placed first among Iranian universities, followed by Sharif University of Technology (ranking 142 globally) and Amirkabir University of Technology (ranking 169 globally), ISNA reported.

Iran University of Science and Technology (172), Isfahan University of Technology and University of Tabriz (212), Shahid Beheshti University (214), Shiraz University (241), Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (261), K.N. Toosi University of Technology (287), University of Isfahan (293) are ranked fourth to tenth.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026 has placed 101 Iranian universities among the top institutions, up from 85 universities in 2025.

Amirkabir University of Technology, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, and Sharif

University of Technology are among the top Iranian universities, with a global ranking of 351-400.

Iran University of Science and Technology, and University of Tehran are jointly placed second, ranking 401-500 globally. Shiraz University of Technology and Tehran University of Medical Sciences ranked third collectively, with a global ranking of 501-600.

Shanghai University ranking 2025 has placed six Iranian universities among the top 1,000 institutions worldwide, down from 9 in 2024. Tehran University of Medical Sciences and University of Tehran are among the top 500 universities in the world, ranking 401-500 globally. Tarbiat Modares University ranks 701-800.

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and Sharif University of Technology rank 801-900. Iran University of Medical Sciences ranks 901-1000. The July edition of the Webometrics world ranking has included 64 medical universities from Iran, unchanged from January's edition, 11 of which have advanced in the ranking compared to the January edition.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences (485) is the only university ranked among the top 500 institutions in the world, Mehr news agency reported.

Some125 earthquakes hit Iran in a week

TEHRAN – A total of 123 earthquakes were recorded across the country in a week from November 29 to December 5, according to the seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Statistically, 109 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3; 11 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4; and three earthquakes with a magnitude between 4 and 5 have occurred in the country, isrc reported.

Among the provinces of the country, Yazd, with 19 earthquakes, experienced the highest number of earthquakes, followed by North Khorasan and South Khorasan with 15 and 14

earthquakes, respectively.

Of the total quakes, one had a magnitude of 4.4 on the Richter scale, which occurred on December first in Hormozgan province.

During the same period, no earthquakes were recorded in Tehran, Alborz, Zanjan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Qom, Kordestan, Golestan, Gilan, Markazi, and Hamedan provinces.

A total of 6,272 earthquakes were recorded across the country over the past calendar year (March 2024 –March 2025), according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Out of registered earthquakes, 150 were more than 4 on the Richter scale; at least five earthquakes with a magnitude of more than 4.5 occurred monthly in the country.

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

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

ENGLISH IN USE

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Iran to build desalination plants along Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman

The Department of Environment (DOE) is preparing a plan to deploy desalination plants on the shores of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in order to supply drinking water to the coastal provinces.

Ahmad Reza Lahijanzadeh, deputy chief of the marine environment of the DOE, announced that the project, which is to be carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy, will supply water for 17 drought-ridden provinces.

The country's coastline stretches to about 5,800 kilometers, which includes the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in the south.

برنامه ایران برای تامین آب شرب از طریق خلیج فارس و دریای عمان

سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست ایران در حال مطالعه طرحی برای استقرار آب شیرین کن‌ها در سواحل خلیج فارس و دریای عمان به منظور تامین بخشی از آب شرب استان های ساحلی است.

به گزارش ایرنا، احمد رضا لاهیجان زاده معاون محیط زیست دریایی سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست اعلام کرد این طرح که قرار است با همکاری وزارت نیرو انجام شود شامل ۱۷ استان خشک و بی آب می شود.

طول سواحل کشور حدود پنج هزار و ۸۰۰ کیلومتر است که شامل دریای خزر در شمال و خلیج فارس و دریای عمان در جنوب می شود .

Tehran hosting meeting of BRICS working group on research infrastructures, mega-science projects

TEHRAN – The 7th meeting of the BRICS working group on research infrastructures and mega-science projects is being held from December 8 to 10 in Tehran.

Organized by the Center for Progress and Development Cooperation of the Presidency, serving as the national BRICS focal point for technology and innovation, in collaboration with the Organization for the Development of International Cooperation in Science and Technology, Tehran meeting is bringing together scientific delegations of BRICS member states including Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Russia, India and the UAE, IRNA reported.

The key focus areas of the Tehran meeting include advancing joint research cooperation among BRICS member states, supporting the development of mechanisms for defining and financing mega-science projects, and strengthening the role of research infrastructures as drivers of innovation, sustainable development, and science diplomacy.

The opening ceremony kicked off on Monday with Iranian representatives delivering lectures and expounding on the country's capacities in research infrastructures and knowledge-based economy. Delegates of other countries presented talks, as well.

The Russian representative provided an account of the previous meeting, held in Russia, detailing discussions, decisions, and approvals.

Next, participating states elaborated their policies, accomplishments, and national plans related to research infrastructures and mega-science projects.

The three-day event will proceed with specialized meetings, exploring opportunities for joint projects, and future cooperation.

On the second day, participants are scheduled to make proposals for collaborative programs, strategies, and plans in research infrastructure and scientific mega-projects, and then the cooperation framework document will be reviewed and summarized.

To showcase Iran's scientific and research capabilities and strengthen international collaborations, foreign delegations are also planned to pay visits to the country's advanced scientific centers, including the National Brain Laboratory and the Institute for Basic Sciences.

According to the head of the Organization for the Development of International Cooperation in Science and Technology, Hossein Roozbeh, BRICS is turning into an influential player in the future scientific and technological order, and Iran, relying on its powerful



science and technology ecosystem, is expanding its role in infrastructures and mega-science projects of member states.

Iran has a vast capacity for fostering international interactions, sharing knowledge and technology, cooperating in scientific institution-building, and participating in major research projects, the official added.

Tehran meeting is expected to promote collaborative projects and cooperation in different scientific and technological sectors between the country and BRICS member states.

“We aim to take full advantage of this international opportunity, establishing maximum impact on our future scientific cooperation,” Roozbeh further noted.

Background of the Working Group

The BRICS Working Group on Research Infrastructures and Mega-Science Projects was established in 2015 during the 3rd Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Science, Technology, and Innovation. The key objectives of this Working Group include strengthening cooperation on large-scale research infrastructures, supporting initiatives that lead to the efficient use, development, and management of mega-science projects, and creating a dynamic environment for the advancement of research infrastructures among BRICS countries.

The BRICS Working Group on Research Infrastructures and Mega-Science Projects provides opportunities for fundamental and applied research that can lead to solutions for shared challenges faced by BRICS and the global community. The Working Group is also responsible for developing the digital platform “BRICS Global Research Advanced Infrastructure Network (BRICS GRAIN)”, which provides information on more than 30 research infrastructures across BRICS member states in five key fields: energy, nanotechnology, biology, fundamental physics, and astronomy. Overall, facilitating data sharing, enabling access to laboratories, and making this process a core component of BRICS' collaborative efforts is the main objective of this platform.

FAO explores areas of collaboration on fisheries and aquaculture in Isfahan

TEHRAN – A delegation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) paid a visit to a fish farm in Isfahan Province, exploring ways to enhance collaboration and improve productivity in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Headed by Farrukh Toirov, the representative of FAO in Iran, the delegation visited Abzi Negin Shayan Fereydounshahr trout farming complex on November 3 to observe aquaculture practices and assess ongoing challenges, the FAO website announced in a press release on December 9.

During the visit, Toirov discussed innovative approaches and genetic improvement techniques with farm managers and reviewed the farm's operational model.

Iran is one of the global leaders and top three in farmed rainbow trout production, with the industry primarily based in specific cold-water provinces, mainly using raceway systems. Based on FAO statistics, Iran's existing trout production capacity, as measured by actual output, was approximately 267,838 tonnes in 2022.

The farm manages a complete value chain for rainbow trout production, from trout roe and broodstock management to fattening operations and specialized fish feed production. Their trout roe production currently supplies

approximately 25 percent of national demand.

During the visit, the FAO representative emphasized the importance of strengthening public-private partnerships to improve aquaculture productivity, food safety compliance, and climate-resilient farming systems. He also highlighted FAO's readiness to support the country in adopting advanced technologies, enhancing biosecurity measures, and promoting best practices in fish health management.

Discussions further addressed opportunities for enhancing the farm's contribution to both domestic markets and international exports, genetic improvement, and alignment with global standards.

The global demand for animal protein is rising steadily, with aquaculture representing the fastest-growing food production sector. This growth is central to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s concept of “Blue Transformation,” which advocates for sustainable aquatic food systems to improve food security, nutrition, and equitable economic development while adapting to climate change.

The visit marks another step in FAO's ongoing cooperation with national counterparts to encourage sustainable, innovative, and environmentally responsible aquaculture across the country.

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DECEMBER 10, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Value of each man depends upon the art and skill which he has attained.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:11:57 Evening: 17:11 Dawn: 5:34 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:04 (tomorrow)

Cinema Verite to hold 10 workshops with Iranian, international instructors

TEHRAN – The Iran International Documentary Film Festival “Cinema Verite” has announced the workshops and instructors for the 19th edition that will kick off on December 10 in Mellat Cineplex in Tehran.

In total, 10 workshops have been planned for the event, with Iranian and international instructors, ILNA reported.

On Thursday, the masterclass “Strategy in Recreating Truth” will be held by Goran Radovanović, a documentary filmmaker from Serbia.

Born in Belgrade, 68, he graduated in art history from Belgrade’s Faculty of Philosophy in 1982. Since 1994, he has focused on documentary films and cooperation with independent media. In 1996, he founded the independent production company Principal Film. He also lectures at Tisch School of Arts.

Ahmad Alasti, a well-known Iranian film scholar, translator, and author, will conduct a workshop titled “Nonlinear Documentary in the 21st Century,” also on Thursday.

On Friday, December 12, the first session, “Hybrid Narrative Between Documentary and Fiction,” will be taught by Nishtha Jain, an Indian filmmaker and producer.

Nishtha Jain’s films interrogate lived experience at the intersection of gender, caste, and class. They explore the political in the personal and uncover the mechanisms of privilege. In addition to documentary film, she’s been working across various platforms including narrative and virtual reality.

The next workshop, “Artificial Intelligence: Service or Betrayal to Documentary?”, will be held by Amir Saharkhiz and Mohammad Va’ezi.

Also on Friday, “Escaping the Noise of Brands: Making an Informed Camera Choice” will be presented by Morteza Janbakhsh, a university lecturer in cinematography.

On Saturday, December 13, the program

begins with a practical workshop titled “Using Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality Technologies in Documentary Cinema,” conducted by Kuan Yuan Lai from Taiwan, focusing on practical tools and techniques.

Born in Taipei, Kuan Yuan Lai, 44, is a film director, CG artist, XR content creator, and also the founder of Poké Poké Creative Studio. He was graduated from a film school, Shih-Hsin University in Taiwan and an animation school, SUPINFOCOM in France.

He is committed to independent production and multi-media visual arts work. Most of his works consider the relationship between environment, culture, life, and people from the perspective of the land. Sci-fi utopia theme, locality, and worldwide issues in folklore/event/environment, etc., have always been a rich resource for his artistic creation.

On Sunday, December 14, the workshop “Documentary Montage: From Archive to Creating Meaning” will be led by Sami Joubert van Ingen, a documentary filmmaker and the grandson of the late filmmaker Robert Flaherty.

Also on Sunday, Siavash Jamali, an Iranian international documentary producer, will lead the workshop “Co-Production.” This session is held in collaboration with the Iranian Documentary Producers Association.

The final workshop on Sunday, titled “Underwater Photography and Cinematography”, will be presented by Ramin Ardestani, an expert in the field, discussing the challenges of underwater imaging in the Persian Gulf.

Iran International Documentary Film Festival “Cinema Verité” is organized by the Documentary & Experimental Film Center (DEFC). The festival tries to express the relationship between reality and truth through documentary films.

The 19th edition of the festival will run until December 17.

“Light Has Come” art exhibition unveils works on Zionist Regime’s destruction

TEHRAN- Iranian artist Abdol-hamid Qadirian’s art exhibition was inaugurated at the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization in Tehran on Monday, depicting Quranic narrative of the destruction of the Zionist Regime.

The opening ceremony of the exhibition titled “Light Has Come” was attended by prominent cultural and artistic figures, including Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Qomi, Head of the Islamic Development Organization, Mohammad-Mehdi Dadman, the director of the Art Bureau, and several other leading artists and managers from the visual arts sector, Mehr reported.

The exhibition features 30 oil paintings that portray the destruction of the Zionist regime through Quranic themes, the report added.

Qadirian aims to offer a fresh perspective on the relationship between thought, art, and future governance, emphasizing an honest and faithful approach to these complex issues.

During the opening, Qadirian expressed his appreciation for the attendees and clarified the collective nature of the project.

“This is a group effort, and I merely executed it. My goal was to convey certain concepts through these works, and I have done my best so far. I look forward to scholars discussing these works and introducing new ideas that can lead to further development of this project,” he stated.

The artist elaborated on the philosophical foundation of the exhibition, saying, “This collection is the product of nearly forty years of research and gathering



evidence that led me to believe that God gradually manifests His light on earth. However, we often overlook this truth.”

“For example, Arbaeen was created as a luminous event, yet we confined it to a march. In the case of Gaza, divine light protected the people, but we perceived it differently. Even during the awakening of Europeans and Americans to injustice, the role of divine light was ignored,” he explained.

“This exhibition is not as a conventional art show but as a spiritual and epistemological event,” he said and added: “We named it ‘Naql’ (Narrative) to distinguish it from typical exhibitions. Our aim is to foster thought and promote understanding. Committed art must enter this space, and this gathering serves that purpose.”

The exhibition’s official statement highlights its conceptual framework: “Naql; the connection between the world and the artist unfolds through four journeys of meaning. In an era where signs of the emergence appear in civilization’s hidden layers, the second phase of the revolution requires a new language to articulate truth. From this necessity, we created ‘Naql’—a novel approach to visual arts that goes beyond mere display to become a narration of truth.”

It further describes the nature of the work: “Naql’ combines image, sound, space, and explanation; a narrative that shifts the viewer from mere spectatorship to active participation in meaning. The shift occurs not in physical location but in stance—from appearance to essence,

from feeling to understanding. The narrative has two voices: ‘the world’ and ‘the artist,’ who meet in four journeys. The world guides the artist to the source of meaning; the artist creates that meaning in imagination and image. The artwork manifests in the material realm, and through interpretation, elevates the viewer from seeing to becoming.”

The statement emphasizes that “Naql” is more than an exhibition; it is a spiritual event—a bridge between art and truth, between humanity and divine light.

The “Light Has Come” exhibition will be open until January 5, 2026, from Saturday to Wednesday, at the Habibollah Sadeqi Gallery of the Art Bureau.

Iranian artists, ensemble win at fall edition of Classical Music Stars Competition

TEHRAN – One ensemble and three artists from Iran are among the winners of the fall edition of the Classical Music Stars Competition in Poland.

Mithra Orchestra, Seraj Rohanifard, Mohammadreza Hatami, and Sana Najaf Pour are the Iranian winners at the event, IRNA reported.

Mithra Orchestra was the Absolute Winner in the Chamber Music category.

Established by Mohammadre-

za Safavi (conductor) and Kaveh Kashkouli (executive director) in 2023, Mithra Orchestra started with about 20 musicians and till now it has worked with more than 200 musicians in its concerts.

The orchestra has performed pieces from romance to modern works, performing from European composers such as Vivaldi, Tchaikovsky, Britten, and Shostakovich. It has also performed many pieces from the most famous Iranian composers such as Pourtorab, Dehlavi, and Baghcheban.

Seraj Rohanifard and Mohammadreza Hatami received First and Second prizes in the Composition category.

Rohanifard is a piano player and music composer based in Tehran. His music album “Fusion of Souls” was awarded a Bronze Medal in Global Music Awards in best album and best composer categories last year.

Hatami won the award for his piece “Dasein,” which is an orchestral-choral piece inspired by Martin Heidegger’s existentialist

philosophy and Theodore Roethke’s poem “The Waking”.

Sana Najaf Pour was another Iranian artist who was presented with an Honorable Mention in the Pop Song category.

An international competition for classical musicians of all ages from all over the world, Classical Music Stars Competition is a prestigious event for all instrumentalists, singers, chamber ensembles, composers, and conductors.

Andisheh Cultural Center reviews Bong Joon Ho’s “Mother”

TEHRAN- “Mother”, a 2009 neo-noir thriller film by prominent South Korean filmmaker Bong Joon Ho, was reviewed at the Andisheh Cultural Center in Tehran on Tuesday on the occasion of National Mother’s Day.

Film critics Mohsen Soleimani Fakhre and Minoo Khani attended a screening of the film followed by a review session.

“Mother” explores themes of maternal devotion, justice, and the dark complexities of human morality. The story revolves around a humble mother living in a small town in southern South Korea, whose life takes a harrowing turn when her intellectually disabled son becomes the prime suspect in the murder of a young girl.

The narrative begins with an unnamed widow who makes her living selling medicinal herbs and performing unlicensed acupuncture treatments to local women, trying to help them erase their bad memories. Her only son, Yoon Do-joon, is a shy young man with an intellectual disability, prone to violent outbursts when mocked. She loves him deeply but is often overwhelmed by the hardships of

their modest life. When Do-joon and a local thug named Jin-tae vandalize a car after a confrontation, Jin-tae blames Do-joon for damaging his vehicle, setting off a chain of events that lead to mounting debts for the mother.

One night, Do-joon witnesses a high school girl, Moon Ah-jung, walking alone and follows her. Tragically, she is found dead the next morning on a rooftop, her murder shocking the town and prompting an investigation by police that seem incapable of solving the case. Circumstantial evidence quickly points to Do-joon, leading to his arrest. The mother, convinced of his innocence, dedicates herself to proving the truth and freeing her son. Her efforts are met with skepticism and hostility from the police, her lawyer, and the community, all of whom quickly judge Do-joon guilty.

Desperate for answers, she investigates Jin-tae, suspecting him of the murder. Her probing reveals that Ah-jung had a secret relationship with a boy named Jong-pal, who had escaped from a sanatorium. The mother also learns that Ah-jung had a cell-phone with photos she intended

to print, and that she may have been blackmailing her peers. These discoveries point her towards the possibility that the girl’s murder was more complex than it initially appeared.

Through a series of interviews and investigations, the mother uncovers a crucial piece of evidence: a man who saw Do-joon in the abandoned building on the night of the murder. This man, a junk collector, reveals that he witnessed Do-joon hitting Ah-jung with a large rock, unintentionally killing her, and then dragging her to the rooftop. Overwhelmed by guilt and unable to accept her son’s involvement, the mother attacks the collector and sets fire to his house to conceal the truth.

Later, the police identify Jong-pal as the real culprit, based on evidence of Ah-jung’s blood on his shirt. It turns out that the blood was from her nosebleed, not from the murder. Wracked with guilt, the mother visits Jong-pal, who is even more intellectually disabled, and cries for him as he faces wrongful imprisonment. Do-joon is eventually released, and the mother, haunted by the tragic events, begins to

accept her son’s innocence.

The film concludes with Do-joon returning her acupuncture kit, which he found among the debris, symbolizing a moment of understanding and reconciliation. The mother, overwhelmed by guilt and grief, chooses to forget the painful truths and begins to dance with other parents on a bus, seeking solace in her own way.

“Mother” was praised worldwide for its powerful storytelling, Kim Hye-ja’s outstanding performance, and Bong Joon Ho’s masterful direction and screenplay.

It was South Korea’s official submission for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and won numerous awards, including Best Film and Best Actress at various festivals and critics’ associations. The film’s intense emotional depth and nuanced portrayal of maternal love and moral ambiguity have made it a standout in contemporary cinema. It is widely regarded as one of Bong Joon Ho’s best works and a compelling exploration of the human condition.

Cartoon of Day

STAGES OF THE GAZA AGREEMENT



Stages Of the Gaza Agreement

Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria