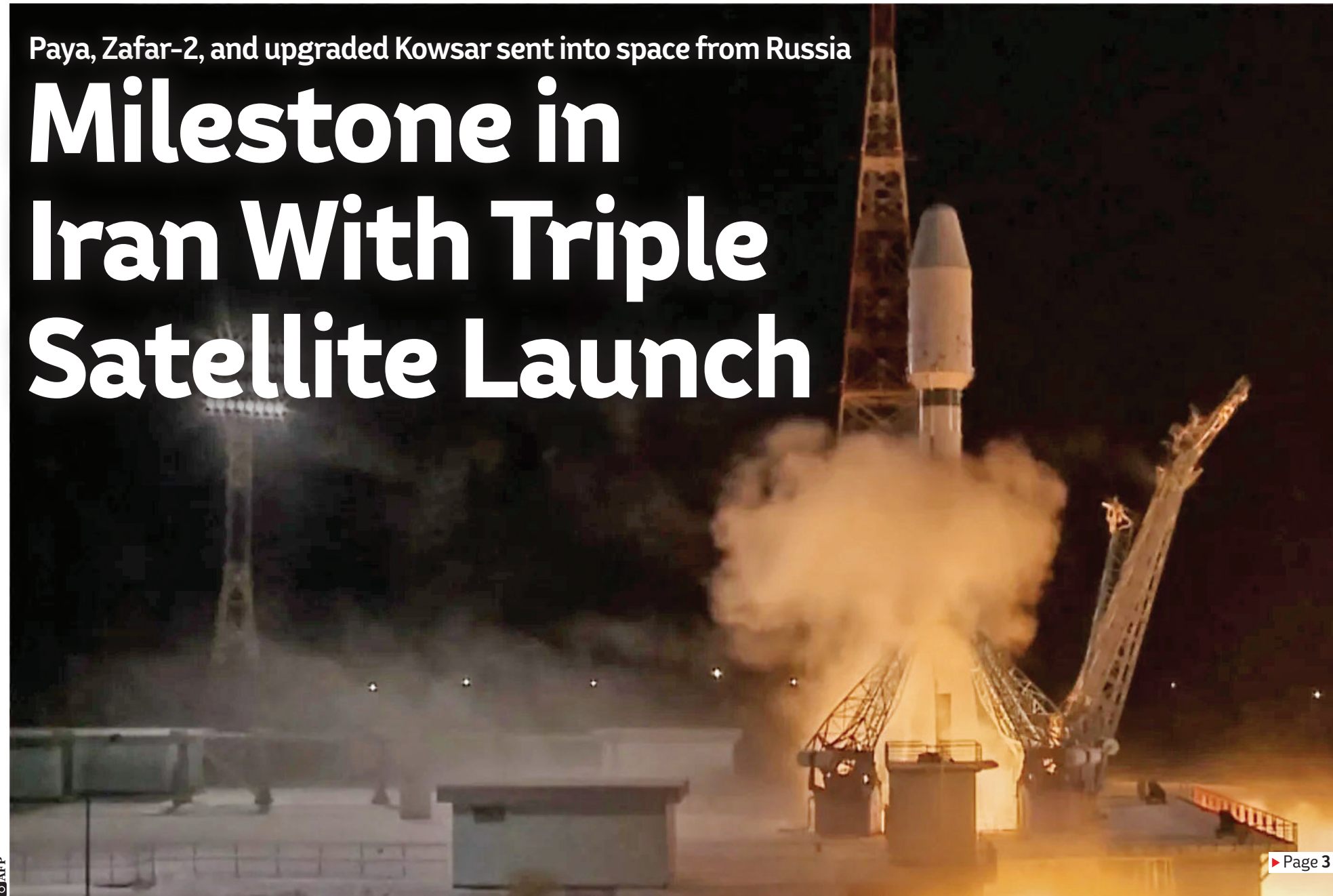


Paya, Zafar-2, and upgraded Kowsar sent into space from Russia

Milestone in Iran With Triple Satellite Launch



In this grab from a live broadcast run by the Russian space agency Roscosmos on December 28, 2025, a Soyuz-2.1b rocket booster with a number of satellites, including from Iran, blasts off from the Vostochny cosmodrom, in the far eastern region of Amur.

Iran does not interfere in Baghdad's affairs, says Iraqi PM

TEHRAN – Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani emphasized the constructive nature of Iraq's relationship with Iran during an interview with Al-Mayadeen, stating that Tehran's support for political trends in Iraq does not equate to interference in Baghdad's sovereign decisions.

"I have not seen any meddling by Iran in Iraq's affairs, whatsoever," al-Sudani stated, describing bilateral relations as progressing on a "positive path at official and political levels." He highlighted Iran's role in assisting Iraq's fight against terrorism. ▶ Page 2

Petchem projects under 7th development plan near 60% completion

TEHRAN – Petrochemical projects under Iran's Seventh National Development Plan are about 60 percent complete, with all first-year targets for the sector achieved in 2024, the head of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said.

Speaking at the first petrochemical industry investors conference in Tehran, NPC Head Hassan Abbaszadeh said the sector's capacity is expected to reach 131.5 million tons by the end of the plan period.

He said total planned investment under the program stands at \$26 billion, about half of which has already been realized, adding that projects covered by the plan have reached roughly 60 percent physical progress. ▶ Page 4

Iran's path to orbit

Space chief tells Tehran Times the story of building a national program in the midst of sanctions

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – When Iran established its new political system in 1979, its leaders placed a paramount emphasis on achieving independence. This pursuit faced numerous hurdles over the decades that followed, a period during which the country endured two wars, countless terrorist attacks, and, most critically, debilitating Western sanctions. Nevertheless, as we stand on the cusp of 2026, the independence Iranians once dreamed of has been realized in various sectors, partly because the country possessed no other option.

Iran's military stands as its most prominent example of domestic growth and development, alongside achievements in urban engineering, food production, and medicine. Yet, outside of its military, Iran significantly lags in certain high-technology industries like automotive, despite the huge sums it has poured into its car factories. However, among these expensive, high-tech industries, the country still has the success of its space program to take pride in. Despite considerable odds and challenges, Iran is today among the 10 or 11 nations capable of independently building satellites, satellite launch vehicles, and their subsystems.

Iranians began considering the development of a space program around the year 2000, following advances in electronic and military domains where technologies similar to those used in space industries can be found. New initiatives took off through the joint cooperation of the Ministry of Information and Communications and the Defense Ministry. In 2004, Iran established its first space organization, the Iranian Space Agency (ISA), as explained by Hassan Salariyeh, the current head of the ISA, who has led the agency for the past four years. ▶ Page 3

Scan this QR code to watch the video.



Is the UAE sailing Israel's ship in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea?

By staff writer

TEHRAN – The United Arab Emirates has long sought to project itself as a modern, pragmatic power, striking a balance between economic dynamism and regional influence. Yet its deepening partnership with Israel reveals a trajectory that is less about stability and more about embedding Israeli interests into fragile states. From southern Yemen to Somaliland and Sudan, Abu Dhabi's actions increasingly resemble those of a proxy, enabling Israel's ambitions in one of the world's most sensitive maritime corridors.

Yemen: A militarized corridor

Southern Yemen has become the UAE's primary arena of influence. By backing the Southern Transitional Council (STC), Abu Dhabi has secured control over ports, islands, and oil-rich territories along the Gulf of Aden. ▶ Page 5

Tehran to host Nowruz summit with ministers, ambassadors from 18 countries

TEHRAN – Iran is set to host an international Nowruz summit with ministers from 18 countries in Tehran from March 27 to 29, 2026, a senior official from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said on Sunday.

Hojjatollah Ayyoubi, senior adviser to the minister and head of the ministry's international affairs center, said the meeting will be held at the Summit Hall in Tehran and will bring together tourism and culture ministers from 18 countries, with representatives from five observer states of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) also expected to attend.

Speaking at the first meeting of the policy council for the Nowruz summit, Ayyoubi said invitations had been sent to 27 ministers. ▶ Page 6



Bahram Beyzaie, pillar of Iranian artistic heritage, passes away

▶ Page 8

Susa: Walking through one of the world's oldest cities

By Afshin Majlesi

Visiting Susa was like stepping into a living history book. From the moment I arrived in this ancient city in southwest Iran, I felt I was walking through layers of time, each step revealing traces of civilizations that shaped human history. Susa is not just another archaeological site; it is one of the oldest continuously inhabited places on Earth, and being there gave me a deep sense of connection to the past.

The ancient city lies in the fertile plains of Khuzestan, near the Karkheh River and at the edge of the Zagros Mountains. Its location explains why people have lived here for thousands of years. Water, fertile land, and natural routes for trade made it a perfect place for early settlements. Archaeologists believe people lived here as early as 7,000 years ago, and by around 4200 BCE, it had already become a developed urban center. ▶ Page 6



TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Collapse of the illusion of 'absolute security' in Tel Aviv's calculations

Sobh-e-No, in an interview with Jafar Ghanadbashi, a Middle East expert, examined Netanyahu's recent remarks and positions. The analyst argued that, given Netanyahu's long record of hostility toward Iran, it was natural for those following his speech to expect once again a barrage of repetitive accusations, fabricated claims, or exaggerated portrayals of Iran's capabilities—or perhaps an attempt to incite the West and certain Arab states against Iran. Yet his latest stance was, to a considerable extent, more realistic. He has come to realize that years of rhetoric and efforts regarding Iran's nuclear program, its support for resistance groups, and attempts to weaken the Islamic Republic have not enhanced Israel's security. On the contrary, they have left the regime in a highly vulnerable position. The reality is that Israel now finds itself extremely fragile in the face of Iran's missile power. For years, Netanyahu concentrated exclusively on the nuclear file, neglecting the growth and consolidation of Iran's missile capabilities—a force that has now expanded significantly and become a decisive factor not only in regional equations but also in Israel's own security calculations.

Javan: Iran's struggle against domination

In a commentary, Javan addressed the West's malign objectives toward Iran. It wrote: Iran is not accused of a mere technical issue; Iran is accused of standing against an unjust global order. The West seeks to reduce the conflict to a technical matter confined to the nuclear sphere, but the truth is that the Islamic Republic has raised the banner of justice against the system of domination, a reality that has unsettled corrupt and hegemonic powers. Iran's central conflict is a strategic one over the world's future. Today, Iran, as an independent actor, refuses to move within the orbit of U.S. hegemony and its allies. This political independence, especially after the failure of U.S. military projects in the region, has demonstrated that Iran's resistance is not a slogan but a tangible, practical reality. Iran has managed to neutralize much of the impact of sanctions. This economic resilience shows that Iran's confrontation with the West is about the right of nations to economic independence and liberation from the financial and commercial domination of major powers.

Farhikhtegan: A statement can't make islands 'non-Iranian'

Farhikhtegan examined the issue of the three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf in the joint statement of the UAE and China.

The paper noted: The reference to the three Iranian islands in the final statement of the UAE and China comes at a time when Tehran and Beijing have, in recent years, spoken of "strategic cooperation" in relations. The Chinese consider the "One China" principle and their territorial claims in the South China Sea to be red lines. Therefore, for Iran, the issue of territorial integrity, and especially sovereignty over the three Iranian islands, is also an unavoidable red line. Despite these sensitivities, Iran does not expect its strategic partners, including China, to openly support it in regional disputes; however, it does expect them at least to uphold neutrality and refrain from entering issues that directly concern Iran's national security and territorial integrity. For Iran, the continuation and deepening of relations with China remain highly important, but such engagement will only be sustainable if the principle of mutual respect for fundamental sensitivities is observed. Just as Iran seeks to respect Beijing's vital interests, it expects this approach to be reciprocated by China.

Resalat: The path to survival

In an analysis, Resalat addressed Iran's confrontation with Western bullying. The paper wrote: The world cannot find peace with politicians of the likes of Trump and Netanyahu. The issue is not limited to two individuals, but stems from a dangerous logic—a power-driven, lawless, and unaccountable mindset that treats war, crisis, and insecurity as tools of survival and hegemony. In this logic, peace is the exception and crisis the rule. West Asia has been more victimized by this approach than any other region. From Palestine to Lebanon, from Syria to Yemen, and even from Saudi Arabia to Iraq, the footprints of U.S. interventionist policies and the security projects of the Zionist regime are clearly visible. Nor is this pattern confined to West Asia. In Latin America, countries such as Venezuela have for years been suffocated under sanctions, psychological operations, soft coups, and economic pressures. In such a world, it is naive to imagine that goodwill, one-sided negotiations, or retreat could purchase security and calm. Historical experience has shown that wherever weakness is perceived, pressure intensifies; wherever retreat has occurred, new demands have been placed on the table. Therefore, Iran's way of confronting this bullying is neither isolation nor pleading for acceptance, but becoming strong—strong in every dimension. Above all, Iran's strength requires internal cohesion.

Iran joins host of 21 countries in condemning Israel's violation of Somalia's sovereignty

TEHRAN – A coalition of 21 Arab, Islamic, and African nations have denounced Israel's provocative decision to recognize the break-away Somali region of Somaliland as an independent state.

The foreign ministers of the predominantly Muslim countries—including Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Gambia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, the Maldives, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey, and Yemen—along with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), issued a statement coordinated by Qatar. They condemned the action as a flagrant violation of international law and a serious threat to regional stability, driven by Israel's own "expansionist agenda."

The top diplomats condemned Israel's action "in the strongest terms," labeling it a "serious precedent" that undermines the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. They characterized the recognition as a sign of Israel's "full and blatant disregard" for legal norms, warning of its grave potential to destabilize the already volatile Horn of Africa and Red Sea regions. The coalition unanimously reaffirmed its unwavering support for the Federal Republic of Somalia's sovereignty over its entire territory.



Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu signs an official recognition of Somaliland as an independent state on December 26, 2025.

Furthermore, the statement drew a direct connection to Israel's actions in Palestine, expressing a principled rejection of any linkage between this recognition and attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their land.

The countries that normalized relations with Israel under the so-called Abraham Accord, except for Sudan, did not join the coalition, namely the UAE, Morocco, and Bahrain.

US using Iraqi airspace to spy on Iran

Ambassador says spy jets have been identified in Iran's vicinity

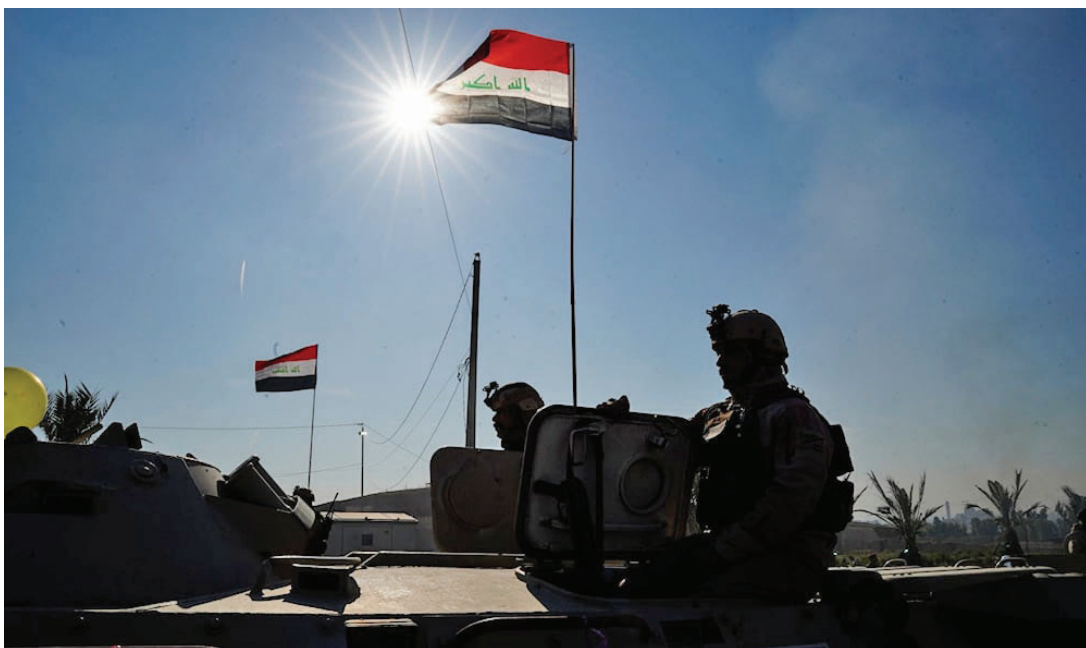
TEHRAN – Iran's ambassador to Baghdad says the United States is using Iraqi airspace to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance activities against Iran.

In an interview with Iraqi media, Mohammad Kazem al-Sadeq said Tehran has identified U.S. spy planes which used Iraqi skies to monitor Iranian soil. He also warned that the U.S. supports Israeli jet fighters in Iraqi airspace, which amounts to a "threat."

His remarks come as American and Israeli fighter jets used Iraqi airspace to fire missiles at Iran both before and after the 12-day U.S.-Israeli military aggression against Iran back in June. Iraq has, twice so far, filed a complaint with the United Nations against Tel Aviv for that. The first time was after the Israeli regime responded to Operation True Promise II, which featured retaliatory strikes conducted by Iran against Israel in late 2024. The second time that Baghdad lodged a complaint was after the U.S.-Israeli military aggression in Iran in June, 2025.

Recently, Iraqi National Security Advisor Qassem al-Araji met with Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larjani where the two sides discussed bilateral ties and ways of expanding mutual cooperation as well as the implementation of a joint security agreement.

Later in a post on his X account,



Larjani said that abuses of Iraqi skies by the United States and Israeli regime were being pursued by the Iraqi government.

"Development of economic relations between Iran and Iraq was the main topic of meeting with Iraqi National Security Advisor Qassem al-Araji," read the post.

"It is crystal clear that economic sustainability requires sustainable security," he said, adding that "Iran appreciates Iraq's positions during 12-day Israeli imposed war against Iran."

"The abuses of Iraqi skies by the US and Israel are being fol-

lowed up by our friends in this country. Iraq is independent and must have full independence," Iran's top security official added.

Also, during a joint press conference after their meeting, Araji said Baghdad will not allow any use of Iraqi territory or airspace to threaten Iran or any neighboring country.

"Iraq will not, in any way, permit the use of its land or airspace to threaten Iran or any neighboring country," he said. "Baghdad remains fully committed to the security agreement signed with Tehran," he added.

In August, Iraq and Iran signed

a memorandum of understanding to enhance security coordination along their shared border.

"The Iraqi government is working to consolidate regional stability and prevent any escalation or tension that could threaten regional security," added Araji.

Iraq lacks the technical capabilities necessary to prevent Israel and the U.S. from violating its airspace. So far, its only means of protest has been to file official complaints with international bodies. It remains unclear whether new plans have been developed or if Baghdad will seek assistance from other nations.

Iran does not interfere in Baghdad's affairs, says Iraqi PM

From page 1 ► Ties between Iran and Iraq are deep-rooted, built on historical, religious, and strategic foundations. The two neighbor's partnership was evident in the joint fight against the Daesh terrorist group in the 2010s and continues through robust cultural and economic exchanges. Iran remains Iraq's top energy supplier despite international sanctions, powering homes and industries, while Iranian goods are commonplace in Iraqi markets. The annual Arbadeen pilgrimage, which sees millions of Iranians journey to Karbala, further exemplifies the profound people-to-people connection.

The Prime Minister's comments about the Iran-Iraq cooperation in countering terrorism align with recent high-level security discussions. In a meeting with Iraq's National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji in Tehran, Chairman of the Chief of Staff of the Iranian

Armed Forces Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi stressed the urgency of fully implementing the Iran-Iraq security agreement to enhance regional stability.

General Mousavi pointed to the "deep brotherhood" between the two nations, describing it as a point of concern for the United States. He stated that recent regional aggressions by the Israeli regime and the U.S. have clarified their intentions, making stronger bilateral cooperation essential. Long-standing Iranian and Iraqi views indicate that U.S. efforts to strain Tehran-Baghdad relations by alleging interference have largely been unsuccessful.

Elsewhere in his interview, al-Sudani elaborated on Baghdad's independent stance and clarified that all of Iraq's external relations are governed by a single, unwavering principle: "the interests of Iraq and its peo-

ple remain our top priority." He affirmed this applies equally to relations with Arab nations, neighbors like Iran and Turkey, and the broader Islamic world.

The Prime Minister also reiterated Iraq's steadfast commitment to the Palestinian cause, a position he noted is supported at all levels of Iraqi society and by religious authorities. He simultaneously underscored that Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the security of its people are absolute and non-negotiable.

Concluding on an economic note, al-Sudani identified strategic partnerships as a central pillar of foreign policy. He pointed to Iraq's geopolitical position and resources as foundations for building economic relationships that directly contribute to the country's "internal development and stability."

Araghchi stresses need to safeguard Yemen's territorial integrity in calls with diplomats

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has stressed the need to safeguard Yemen's territorial integrity and national unity, warning that escalating tensions in the country's south risk deepening instability and advancing efforts to fragment the war-torn nation.

His remarks came in separate phone calls with senior officials from Yemen and Qatar, where he focused on escalating tensions in southern Yemen and the broader regional fallout from the wars in Gaza and Lebanon.

In a call with Abdulwahid Abu Ras, the foreign minister of Yemen's Government of Change and Construction, Araghchi reviewed the latest developments in Yemen, including recent unrest in the south.

Abu Ras briefed his Iranian counterpart on the situation and warned that recent moves by "enemies of Yemen and the region" were aimed at further destabilizing the country and would only deepen the crisis.

Araghchi praised the Yemeni people for their support for Palestinians and for resisting Israeli attacks, and stressed the need to safeguard Yemen's territorial integrity and national unity. He urged Yemeni political groups and factions to engage in dialogue and cooperation to prevent what he said were attempts to

weaken or fragment the country.

Araghchi also welcomed a recent agreement between Yemeni parties and Saudi Arabia to exchange prisoners. He said a durable solution to Yemen's conflict requires the full lifting of the blockade, implementation of the remaining steps of a political "roadmap," and direct Yemeni-Yemeni negotiations to form an inclusive government grounded in maintaining Yemen's unity and territorial integrity.

Araghchi also spoke with Qatar's Foreign Minister and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, with both officials emphasizing the importance of preserving Yemen's unity as violence intensifies in the country's southern and eastern regions.

The call came after tensions sharply escalated on December 3, when forces affiliated with the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) seized control of parts of Hadramout following clashes with Saudi-backed fighters.

The STC later expanded into the eastern governorate of al-Mahrah without reported resistance and has since been recruiting local forces in both provinces.

In response to the STC's advance, Saudi Arabia carried out airstrikes on Friday targeting STC-linked positions, including



Iranian FM Abbas Araghchi (R) addressed the escalating violence in Yemen during a phone call with his Yemeni counterpart, Abdulwahid Abu Ras

sites used by the Hadrami Elite Forces in the Ghayl bin Yamin area near key oil fields. Reports said the strikes caused no casualties and did not damage military equipment.

The STC said on Friday it was open to cooperation or agreements with Saudi Arabia to protect what it described as shared interests, while also pursuing the demands and aspirations of Yemen's southern population.

The UAE has played a central role in the U.S.-backed, Saudi-led war against Yemen's Ansarullah-led authorities in Sana'a since 2015. However, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi have also pursued competing agendas, vying for influence over Yemen's natural resources and strategically im-

portant ports.

Critics argue that both countries' policies are contributing to Yemen's fragmentation, warning that demands for local autonomy are often used as political cover for a broader struggle for control — with Hadramout emerging as a key battleground in that contest.

Beyond Yemen, Araghchi and Al Thani also voiced alarm over the situation in Palestine and Lebanon, pointing to continued Israeli strikes and repeated violations of ceasefire arrangements.

They called for sustained international pressure on Israel to halt attacks on civilians and to fully comply with its obligations, condemning Israel's genocide, occupation, and expansionism.

Milestone in Iran with triple satellite launch

Paya, Zafar-2, and upgraded Kowsar sent into space from Russia

TEHRAN – Iran’s space program took a significant leap forward on Sunday as it successfully placed three domestically built satellites into orbit in a single launch, carrying out one of the country’s most complex space endeavors to date. The mission has been hailed as a major milestone by analysts and officials.

The satellites—named Paya, Zafar-2, and an upgraded Kowsar model—soared into space atop a Russian Soyuz rocket from the Vostochny Cosmodrome. They are now circling Earth at an altitude of roughly 500 kilometers and each carry their own specialized mission.

The crown jewel of the trio is the Paya satellite. At 150 kilograms, it is now the heaviest spacecraft ever constructed by Iran. Paya carries an imaging camera capable of capturing detailed pictures of the Earth’s surface. Alongside it, the Zafar-2 satellite, developed by a team of university researchers, and the high-resolution Kowsar 1.5 satellite, built by a private Iranian company, round out the payload.

The satellites are designed for civilian use and some of their tasks will include monitoring the country’s water resources, tracking environmental changes, managing agricultural land, and aiding disaster response during events like floods and earthquakes.

With its three new “eyes in the sky,” Iran aims to build a more ro-



Photo captures moment Iranian satellites were launched into space on Sunday.

bust satellite network. The goal, according to space agency planners, is to be able to monitor any point in the country more frequently, providing data to guide future policy and development.

The successful launch was celebrated at a live-broadcast event in Tehran, where ordinary citizens could apply through the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) social media account to be part of the ceremony. Senior government officials were

also present, some of whom stated the achievement was far more than a technical feat; it was, in fact, a crucial step toward self-reliance. Iran’s Minister of Information and Communications Technology emphasized that projects like the ones executed on Sunday were vital for “national management,” from connecting remote villages to the internet to combating pollution.

Hassan Salariyeh, the head of ISA, was the next senior official to address the crowd. Some of his re-

mains pointed to the Iran-Russia collaboration behind the mission, as well as the “maturity” of the country’s space program.

“This success demonstrates the maturity of our knowledge-based ecosystem, as both private sector companies and academic institutions were involved in the projects. For Iran’s leadership, the launch serves as a symbol of domestic innovation and technological progress in the face of international sanctions,” he explained.

Iran’s path to orbit

Space chief tells Tehran Times the story of building a national program in the midst of sanctions

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – When Iran established its new political system in 1979, its leaders placed a paramount emphasis on achieving independence. This pursuit faced numerous hurdles over the decades that followed, a period during which the country endured two wars, countless terrorist attacks, and, most critically, debilitating Western sanctions. Nevertheless, as we stand on the cusp of 2026, the independence Iranians once dreamed of has been realized in various sectors, partly because the country possessed no other option.

Iran’s military stands as its most prominent example of domestic growth and development, alongside achievements in urban engineering, food production, and medicine. Yet, outside of its military, Iran significantly lags in certain high-technology industries like automotive, despite the huge sums it has poured into its car factories. However, among these expensive, high-tech industries, the country still has the success of its space program to take pride in. Despite considerable odds and challenges, Iran is today among the 10 or 11 nations capable of independently building satellites, satellite launch vehicles, and their subsystems.

Iranians began considering the development of a space program around the year 2000, following advances in electronic and military domains where technologies similar to those used in space industries can be found. New initiatives took off through the joint cooperation of the Ministry of Information and Communications and the Defense Ministry. In 2004, Iran established its first space organization, the Iranian Space Agency (ISA), as explained by Hassan Salariyeh, the current head of the ISA, who has led the agency for the past four years.

“The technology employed in initial launches was rudimentary compared to current Iranian capabilities and the standards of other nations at that time. A key milestone occurred in 2009 with the launch of the first Iranian satellite via the Safir rocket,” he stated in an interview with the

Tehran Times.

After the 2009 launch, slightly more advanced satellites were introduced in 2011, 2012, and 2015. A lull in both the quantity and quality of satellite launches appeared to follow for several years, until 2020, when the first of three Nour satellites was launched, with the other two reaching orbit within the next two years. In 2022, Iran also launched Khayyam, a high-resolution Earth observation satellite, marking the country’s largest technological leap to that date.

Then, a sustained operational cadence was achieved in 2024, a year in which Iran sent a total of 20 satellites into space.

Regarding satellite launch vehicles, three rockets have been designed and used after Safir: namely, the Simorgh, Qassed, and Zuljanah. Iran has also tested and developed numerous subsystems, as demonstrated by the launch of the Nahid-2 telecommunications satellite this past July.

We interviewed Salariyeh a few days before Iran launched three new satellites into orbit on Sunday, including the Paya. At approximately 150 kilograms, the Paya is the country’s heaviest Earth-observation satellite to date. At the time of our conversation, Iran had already launched 30 satellites into space. Sunday’s launches increased that cumulative total to 33, marking all the satellites Iran has sent into orbit since the inception of its space program.

The achievements of the space industry in recent years have now made Salariyeh a nationally recognized figure. He first became involved in space work as a young undergraduate student at the prestigious Sharif University of Technology. The ISA chief majored in mechanical engineering, later earning a master’s and a PhD in the field, but was drawn to space technology, “like many young people”. A look at the academic papers he has published over the years shows he has maintained that interest.

“In the late 1990s, we worked



Head of Iranian Space Agency Hossein Salariyeh during an interview with the Tehran Times.

on projects that were later used by government bodies. Many students took part in them,” he recalled.

Among Generation Z in Iran, there is a stereotype about students who enroll at Sharif. The day I spoke with Salariyeh, he fit many of those stereotypes despite belonging to a different generation: he spoke about science as if it were the most fascinating topic in the world and was eager to convey its importance.

Despite his engineering background, Salariyeh spoke extensively about business. He said the Space Agency aims to make the private sector a dominant force in the field—a process he noted has occurred in all major space industries worldwide, including in Russia, China, and the U.S.

“The private sector is always faster than any governmental body. But when an industry is emerging, government bodies need to mitigate risks and invest in projects. For instance, that’s what we did with the Kowsar satellite.”

The Kowsar satellite was first launched in 2024, with Sunday’s launch marking the deployment of its second, more advanced version. It was built by a private company named Space Omid. The ISA encouraged Kowsar’s development by committing to purchase its imagery for the first few years.

“I believe the government must do two major things: encourage the private sector by

reducing project risks, and also build infrastructure. This second goal is being achieved with the construction of the Chabahar Space Base.”

Located in Iran’s southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan Province, the Chabahar Space Base is a 5x5 hectare low Earth orbit launch site. Phase 1 is planned to open in 2026. In Phase 2, the launch site is expected to accommodate space launches for foreign satellites as well. Phase 3 will enable launches using solid-fuel rockets.

In line with the ISA’s 10-year space program, the Chabahar Space Center is scheduled to be fully operational and capable of conducting international space launches by the end of March 2031.

“The Space Agency devises five-year and ten-year plans. Apart from the Chabahar base, we are developing and building higher-technology satellites and satellite launch vehicles. Growth in the space industry is gradual, but constant,” Salariyeh explained.

Some reports suggest that within 10 years, Iran hopes to achieve ten launches per month to become a commercial industry. It also aims to place its satellites in geostationary orbit (GEO) in the coming years. Space research is another goal, which Salariyeh said will be pursued through new projects soon.

Gol Gohar stun Esteghlal in 2025/26 PGPL

TEHRAN – Gol Gohar football team shocked Esteghlal with a 1-0 victory on Sunday in the 2025/26 Persian Gulf Professional League, climbing above their hosts in the standings.

Pouria Shahrabadi scored the decisive goal in the 37th minute, powering home a header at Tehran’s Shahr-e Qods Stadium.

Esteghlal dominated possession after the break and pushed hard for an equalizer, but wasteful finishing let them down as Gol Gohar defended resolutely.

The defeat was a setback for the Blues, who remain sixth and now trail leaders Sepahan by eight points.

Gol Gohar’s disciplined performance lifted them to fourth place, giving them 23 points from 15 matches and strengthening their push for the league’s top spots. Fans witnessed a tense contest decided by fine margins late.

Bronze ‘greater than gold’ for Team Melli: FIBA

TEHRAN – For Iran national basketball team winning a bronze medal was ‘greater than gold’ in the FIBA Asia Cup 2025.

Iran and New Zealand pulled off comebacks of epic proportions on their way to completing half of the Semi-Finals picture.

Team Melli did it first, rallying from 21 down to upend Chinese Taipei, 78-75, which Sina Vahedi helped make possible even after he got called for three personal fouls merely seven minutes into the match.

«I was patient on the bench, thinking about defense, offense, everything. And in the second half, we won the game. I’m so happy about that,» expressed the eventual All-Star Five member, who finished with 21 points.

The Tall Blacks would author their own story the next night, fighting back from a deficit as big as 22 points to eliminate Lebanon by way of an 80-76 decision thanks to the efforts of Mojave King and Carlin Davison.

That victory over Chinese Taipei would actually serve as a prelude to bigger things for Iran. After waiting for nearly a decade, they finally took home a medal by beating New Zealand, 78-73, in the Third-Place Game, fiba. basketball reported.

The Iranians snared bronze but Arsalan Kazemi and his brothers felt like they struck gold, as it proved to be a statement to all those – including their very own people, yes – who didn’t believe they could succeed.

«Nobody was expecting us to accomplish anything, especially in Iran. We have a whole controversy around our basketball team, around this young group of guys, that they’re not ready yet,» said the 35-year-old forward.

Kazemi himself was instrumental in the win, finishing with 16 points and 16 rebounds to earn himself his second Asia Cup medal after copping silver in 2017 – also the last time that the Iranians stood at the podium.

Iranian Masoumi to wrestle for Azerbaijan

TEHRAN – Iranian freestyle wrestler Amir Reza Masoumi has joined the Azerbaijan national wrestling team and will represent the country at the 2027 World Wrestling Championships.

The 20-year-old wrestler had also been linked with a potential move to Armenia but ultimately chose to compete for Azerbaijan.

Masoumi is regarded as one of the world’s most promising super heavyweight wrestlers, having won several titles across various age-group competitions.

His decision could set the stage for a rare all-Iranian showdown under different flags at the 2027 World Championships—and potentially again at the 2028 Los Angeles

Olympic Games—where he may face fellow Iranian heavyweight Amir Hossein Zare.

Tractor to extend Dragan Skocic’s deal

TEHRAN – Tractor football club are set to extend head coach Dragan Skocić’s contract following the team’s strong performances in the 2025/26 AFC Champions League Elite.

Skocic made history last season by leading Tractor to their first-ever Iranian league title.

In the AFC Champions League Elite, Tractor have also secured qualification for the next round, further strengthening the club’s confidence in the Croatian coach.

Earlier media reports had suggested that Turkish coach Ismail Kartal, who managed Persepolis in the Iranian league last season, was in talks with Tractor. However, it now appears the Tabriz-based club will continue their partnership with Skocic by extending his contract.

Iranian coach Montazeri leads Al Shahania to win over Al Gharafa

TEHRAN – Iranian coach Pejman Montazeri led Al Shahania to a big win against Al Gharafa in the 2025-2026 Qatar Stars League (QSL) Week 10 match.

Montazeri takes charge of Al Shahania after Qatari club parted ways with its head coach Santi Denia.

Al Shahania resumed the QSL in emphatic fashion, pulling off a major upset by thrashing table-topper Al Gharafa 3-0 at Al Khor Stadium yesterday.

Former Iran football team defender was a member of Al Kharaitiyat in Qatar league as a player.

New Zealand captain Chris Wood undergoes surgery

TEHRAN – All Whites captain Chris Wood is set for an extended spell on the sidelines after undergoing surgery.

The 34-year-old striker for Nottingham Forest had been sidelined since mid-October with a knee injury and confirmed the setback in a social media post shared from his hospital bed.

«The Christmas I didn’t expect, you can never know what football throws at you,» Wood wrote.

«From the highs of last season to now the battles and the lows personally of this season. You have to be ready for anything.

«Truly gutting and frustrating that I’ll be on the sideline for another period of time. It’s what’s needed to come back stronger and better to help my teammates do the job needed in the Premier League and in Europe.»

New Zealand will play Iran in Group G of the 2026 FIFA World Cup on June 16 at the SoFi Stadium.

Farshid Bagheri reaches agreement with Al-Talaba

TEHRAN – Iranian midfielder Farshid Bagheri has reached an agreement with Iraqi football side Al-Talaba.

The Baghdad-based team competes in the Iraq Stars League, the top flight of Iraqi football and is headed by Iranian coach Alireza Mansourian.

Bagheri, 33, started his playing career in Mes Kerman in 2010 and has also played in Saba, Foolad, Gol Gohar and Esteghlal.

Media reports suggest that the Iraqi side has also set its sight on signing Iranian forward Hamed Pakdel.

‘Iran’s free trade agreement with Eurasia, key step to neutralize sanctions’

TEHRAN- The representative of Tehran in the parliament, emphasizing the role of the Fourth International Eurasia Expo in expanding regional cooperation, described Iran’s free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) as a vital strategy for circumventing sanctions.

According to the Public Relations Department of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), Kamran Ghafouri called for the replacement of the dollar-based SWIFT system with alternative payment systems like China’s Yuan SWIFT.

The MP also highlighted the strategic importance of Iran’s free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union.

He stressed that expanding connections with neighboring and regional countries is the best solution for neutralizing sanctions and reducing dependence on Western financial systems.

Ghafouri stated that the Eurasia Expo is a unique opportunity to strengthen economic and trade cooperation in the region, adding: By developing the exchange of goods and services with neighboring countries, mutual needs can be met through direct exports and imports, avoiding the high costs of intermediation by third countries, he noted.

The Tehran representative in the parliament also addressed the issue of international payment systems, stating: “If we want to break the deadlock of the dollar-based SWIFT, the solution is to use alternative systems like China’s Yuan SWIFT, which is both faster and more cost-effective.”

Referring to the advantages of this system, Ghafouri continued: “Moving towards such mechanisms practically neutralizes the sanctions of the U.S. and its allies, and countries like the UAE and Turkey cannot impose additional costs on Iran’s trade through brokerage and intermediation.”

He further described the holding of the Eurasia Expo and utilizing the free trade agreement as a historic opportunity to boost the national economy and strengthen regional convergence. He urged economic officials to create the conditions for maximizing the use of these capacities through structured planning.

It is worth mentioning that, in line with the implementation of Iran’s free trade agreement with Eurasia, the fourth International Eurasia Expo will be held in Tehran from February 1st to 4th. This event provides a suitable opportunity for Iranian traders and businessmen, producers, and member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union to become familiar with existing capacities and further deepen trade cooperation and joint investment.

As announced by the acting secretary of the Secretariat of Iran’s Free Trade Agree-



ment with the Eurasian Economic Union, the value of Iran’s export to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member countries rose 16 percent during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), as compared to the same period of time in the previous year.

Elham Haji-Karimi put the worth of Iran’s export to the mentioned countries at \$1.261 billion during the said seven-month period.

She also announced the holding of the “Fourth Eurasia Expo,” which will host high-ranking officials and trade delegations from member and influential countries in the region.

She stated: “The highest export growth was to Belarus with 50 percent and Armenia with 35 percent. This is while Iran’s exports to other countries worldwide did not grow during this period, indicating the positive impact of the agreement in maintaining the export trend.”

Haji-Karimi further added: “We have very high trade potential in the Eurasia region. Specifically, in the product groups of automobiles and parts, textiles and clothing, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, and food industries, Eurasia imports significantly from the world, and Iran has the capability to export to this suitable market.”

She also pointed to the formation of specialized working groups anticipated in the agreement and clarified: “Specialized working groups in the areas of customs, standards, rules of origin, and transportation were held via video conference between the two sides in September and October, and their results were presented to the ‘Joint Working Group,’ which is the main body monitoring the agreement.”

The acting secretary of the secretariat added: “At the Joint Working Group meeting on September 24, 2025, which was attended by the Iranian Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade and the Eurasian Minister of Trade, reports from these groups were presented and implementation challenges were reviewed.”

Furthermore, “a three-year roadmap for economic and trade cooperation” was signed between the two ministers, which is the future action plan within the framework of the agreement and defines the tasks of the executive bodies of both sides, she added.

inflation rate at 52.6 percent in the ninth month, which means families have paid an average of 52.6 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the preceding year.

The point-to-point inflation rate rose 3.2 percent in the ninth month from the previous month.

Inflation rate rises 1.8%

TEHRAN - The Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on November 21, which marks the end of the ninth Iranian calendar month Azar, at 42.2 percent, rising 1.8 percent from the figure for the twelve-month ended to the seventh month.

The center put the country’s point-to-point

Loading, unloading of basic goods increase at ports

TEHRAN - Handling of basic commodities at Iran’s ports rose 12.4 percent year on year in the eighth Iranian calendar month of Aban (late October-late November), according to data released by the Ports and Maritime Organization.

State media reported that total loading and unloading of basic goods reached 2.91 million tons in the mentioned month, up from 2.58 million tons in the same month last year.

The data showed mixed performance across other cargo categories. Handling of metal goods fell 3.6 percent, while building materials rose 22.4 percent and machinery increased 15.3 percent.

Throughput of chemical fertilizers declined 12.7 percent, while leather and textile cargoes fell 3.0 percent.

General and miscellaneous cargo recorded a sharp rise of 225.5 percent, while containerized cargo handling increased 14.9 percent year on year.

In contrast, loading and unloading of oil products dropped 25.5 percent compared with last year’s same month.

Overall, total cargo handled at Iran’s northern and southern ports amounted to 13.86 million tons, marking a 1.2 percent increase from the same period a year earlier, the data showed.

Petchem projects under 7th development plan near 60% completion

TEHRAN - Petrochemical projects under Iran’s Seventh National Development Plan are about 60 percent complete, with all first-year targets for the sector achieved in 2024, the head of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said.

Speaking at the first petrochemical industry investors conference in Tehran, NPC Head Hassan Abbaszadeh said the sector’s capacity is expected to reach 131.5 million tons by the end of the plan period.

He said total planned investment under the program stands at \$26 billion, about half of which has already been realized, adding that projects covered by the plan have reached roughly 60 percent physical progress.

Abbaszadeh said the industry met 100 percent of its first-year targets in 2024 and posted solid



performance in the first half of the current year, with an additional 7 million tons of capacity expected to come on stream by year-end through new start-ups.

He added that around 44 petrochemical projects have been identified for the subsequent development plan, with financing cited as a key priority for the sector.

Abbaszadeh said about 70 percent of Iran’s petrochemical output is exported, making the industry well suited for the creation of foreign-currency project funds. He noted that roughly 22 percent of installed capacity is currently idle, largely due to challenges in securing stable feedstock supply.

Iran’s exports to China rise 3% in November

TEHRAN - Iran’s exports to China rose three percent in November 2025, even as total bilateral trade between the two countries declined in the first 11 months of the year, according to data released by China’s customs authority.

Trade between Iran and China fell 24 percent year on year to \$9.09 billion in the January-November period, down from \$12 billion in the same period of 2024.

Chinese exports to Iran dropped 22 percent over the 11 months to \$6.233 billion, compared with \$8.05 billion a year earlier. China’s imports from Iran also fell 27 percent to \$2.857 billion, down from \$3.95 billion in the comparable period last year.

The trade balance for the 11 months stood at \$3.376 billion in China’s favor, the data showed.

Despite the overall decline, China’s imports from Iran increased three percent in November to \$760 million, up from \$735 million in the same month last year.

By contrast, Chinese exports to Iran in November plunged 57 percent to \$170 million, compared with \$395 million a year earlier.

Oil remains Iran’s most important export to China, though it is not reported in China’s official trade statistics.

In late November, Mahmoud Najafi Arab, the Head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA), in a letter to Abbas Araghchi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, while presenting a report on the achievements of the Tehran Chamber’s delegation’s visit to the Shanghai exhibition in China and the side meetings of this delegation, declared readiness to play an active role in organizing and facilitating the relations between the private sectors of the two countries.

By sending a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and referring to the dispatch of a high-ranking delegation from the Tehran Chamber to Shanghai, China, the Head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture shared a detailed report of the achievements and executive proposals from this trip with Abbas Araghchi.

According to the public relations report of the Tehran Chamber, the dispatched delegation of the Chamber, which attended the 8th China International Import Expo (CIIE), in addition to setting up the Tehran Chamber’s dedicated pavilion in the agriculture and food industries sector, held a series of specialized meetings and negotiations with local officials, trade institutions, and potential Chinese partners, and also signed several memoranda of understanding for cooperation.

In his letter to Abbas Araghchi, Mahmoud Najafi Arab stated that the Tehran Chamber, like last year, set up its dedicated pavilion in the agriculture and food industries hall of this exhibition, and the participating Iranian companies were able to introduce the country’s export capacities and advantages to the large Chinese market.

The letter emphasized that the accompaniment and support of the Embassy of Iran in Beijing and the Iranian Consulate General in Shanghai played an effective role in the success of the Tehran Chamber delegation’s programs, and the Chamber is ready, relying on existing capacities, to play a more active role in organizing and facilitating the relations between the private sectors of the two countries.

In the report that the Head of the Tehran Chamber provided in his letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, reference was made to the

meeting of the officials and members of the Tehran Chamber’s delegation with the Secretary-General and deputies of the Shanghai Commerce Development Council and the agreement of both sides to establish sustainable cooperation mechanisms through the implementation of the “Joint Iran-China E-Commerce Platform” and the formation of joint working groups to follow up on infrastructure projects, renewable energy, railway lines, and transit, as well as the proposal to establish a “Tehran-Shanghai Innovation and Technology Desk” at the “Tehran Chamber’s Digital Innovation and Transformation Center”.

According to the report, in specialized negotiations with Shanghai industrial unions and associations, a proposal was made to start operational cooperation in three areas: smart agriculture, solar energy, and pharmaceutical and biotechnology production. The Chinese side also declared its readiness for technology transfer, training Iranian experts, and dispatching technical teams to review joint projects.

The report stated that on the sidelines of the China International Import Expo, several memoranda of understanding and agreements were signed between Iranian and Chinese companies, including an MOU in the field of design and production of cryogenic pumps for use in oil, gas, and petrochemical industries, as well as developing chain stores for presenting Iranian food products in Shanghai.

Furthermore, the letter also pointed out that the B2B meetings and trade negotiations at the Tehran Chamber’s pavilion provided a platform for direct dialogue between Chinese producers and buyers.

In the presented report, the readiness of the Tehran Chamber to host specialized delegations and implement joint projects in the fields of technology, clean energy, medical equipment, and drug production was emphasized.

In his letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Head of the Tehran Chamber, while appreciating the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ambassador, and the Iranian Consul in China, spoke of the Tehran Chamber’s readiness to play an effective role in deepening economic relations and facilitating the utilization of opportunities in the Chinese market.

On November 8, Iran inaugurated its Trade Development Center in Shanghai in a ceremony attended by Najafi Arab and TCCIMA Secretary General Ferreydoun Vardinejad, honoring Vardinejad for his role in strengthening Iran-China ties.

The event also brought together former Iranian ambassador to China Alaeddin Boroujerdi, Iran’s Consul General in Shanghai Ali Mohammadi, and a group of Iranian and Chinese business leaders.

Vardinejad, who previously served as ambassador to Beijing, called for deeper private-sector cooperation between the two countries amid “intense global competition and Western efforts, particularly by the United States, to marginalize Asia’s role in global value chains.”

He proposed the creation of a digital barter platform enabling trade in yuan and rial with the support of both central banks, and urged Iran and China to expand collaboration in regional and global coalitions to counter unilateral sanctions and promote multilateral trade based on law and mutual agreement.

In a related meeting, the Tehran Chamber

To address this, he said the industry is pursuing measures including flare gas recovery, upstream field development, expansion of renewable energy and energy-efficiency projects.

Abbaszadeh also said only about 15 percent of the petrochemical sector is currently owned by “real” private investors, with the remainder held mainly by pension funds. The Seventh Development Plan, he said, targets further divestment and greater private-sector participation.

He urged households to curb gas consumption during winter peak demand, noting that residential and commercial use can account for up to 80 percent of national gas output during cold months, constraining supply to industries such as petrochemicals.

of Commerce delegation, led by Najafi Arab, met with the Deputy Director of the Hangzhou Council for the Promotion of International Trade and signed a memorandum of understanding to boost trade and technology exchanges, particularly in advanced and digital industries.

Najafi Arab expressed hope that the talks would “open new economic gateways” between the two countries, citing Hangzhou’s strength in electronics, innovation, and technology infrastructure.

He said the agreement could lead to cooperation on smart industrial parks, digital economy initiatives, and educational partnerships between Tehran’s Innovation and Digital Transformation Center and its counterparts in Hangzhou.

The Tehran Chamber delegation, which includes two lawmakers, traveled to Shanghai to attend the China International Import Expo (CIIE), and promote private-sector collaboration in trade and technology.

During a forum on economic cooperation opportunities between Iran and China, held in Tehran on November 4, Tan Kai, President of the Iran Federation of Overseas Chinese Association, said that Chinese companies view Iran as an appealing destination for industrial investment.

Tan noted that bilateral trade between Iran and China reached \$13.4 billion last year, adding that the figure could rise substantially through expanded cooperation.

He emphasized Iran’s role as a key member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and said Chinese firms are particularly interested in developing partnerships in industrial sectors.

He added that China is home to over 58 million private factories, offering diverse and flexible models of foreign investment that could help support Iran’s economic growth.

Former Economy Minister Ehsan Khandouzi, also speaking at the meeting, underlined the importance of strengthening Iran’s economic ties with eastern partners. He said that amid sanctions, strategic collaboration with China could play a vital role in mitigating economic pressures.

Meanwhile, Hamed Vafaei, professor of Chinese studies at the University of Tehran, said relations between the two countries need deeper transformation and mutual understanding. He noted that Iran remains an indispensable partner in China’s global development trajectory, underscoring the necessity of broadening bilateral cooperation.

In early October, Majid-Reza Hariri, the chairman of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce, commented on the extent to which the UN Security Council sanctions would affect Iran-China relations, and stated: “Given that none of the UN sanctions are trade-related and instead pertain to the nuclear industry and some sectors of the country’s missile industries, consequently, they should not impact our normal trade with China.”

He added: “Although the U.S. sanctions have completely prohibited oil sales, we see that the Chinese are currently buying nearly over 90 percent of the country’s oil. Therefore, UN sanctions are not related to the commercial sphere and logically should not affect these types of relations either.”

Hariri further added: “The UN sanctions will have psychological and secondary effects which must be examine

Fanning the flames: How US arms sales destabilize Taiwan and violate China’s sovereignty

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – China’s decision to impose countermeasures on U.S. military-linked companies and senior executives is neither impulsive nor symbolic. It is a calibrated response to Washington’s latest and most provocative escalation on the Taiwan question: an unprecedented \$11.1 billion arms package to China’s Taiwan region.

This move once again exposes a fundamental contradiction at the heart of U.S.-China policy—professing adherence to the one-China principle while steadily hollowing it out in practice. In doing so, the United States is playing with fire in one of the most sensitive fault lines in global geopolitics.

The Taiwan question is not a peripheral issue for China. It lies at the very center of China’s core interests, touching sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national dignity. It is the political bedrock upon which China–U.S. relations rest and the first red line that cannot be crossed. Yet Washington continues to test this boundary, step by step, weapon shipment by weapon shipment, as if erosion through repetition could somehow rewrite political reality.

One-China principle: A foundational pillar

The one-China principle is not a concept devised by China for diplomatic convenience, but a widely recognized norm of international relations that underpins the post-World War II international order. It is reflected in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 in 1971, which restored the lawful seat of the People’s Republic of China at the United Nations and recognized it as the sole legitimate representative of China. By decisively resolving the question of China’s representation and rejecting any arrangement involving “two Chinas” or “one China, one Taiwan,” the resolution provides an essential international legal and political foundation for the one-China principle. This principle constitutes the political basis of China’s relations with all countries, including the United States.

When China and the United States normalized relations, Washington explicitly acknowledged this reality. Such acknowledgment was neither ambiguous nor optional, but was formally codified in a series of joint political documents that continue to define the parameters of bilateral relations. Any attempt to hollow out or undermine the one-China principle, therefore, goes beyond a diplomatic disagreement; it strikes at the very foundation upon which China–U.S. relations were established and sustained.

How a technical committee has turned into a strategic threat to Lebanon

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT—What was introduced after the November 27, 2024 ceasefire as a purely technical arrangement has gradually evolved into a mechanism with political and security implications that extend far beyond its stated purpose.

The so-called “Mechanism Committee” was promoted as a neutral tool for coordination and de-escalation along Lebanon’s southern border. Yet beneath its technocratic language lies a structure that operates without a legal mandate, lacks constitutional legitimacy, and increasingly inter-

Is the UAE sailing Israel’s ship in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea?

By staff writer

TEHRAN – The United Arab Emirates has long sought to project itself as a modern, pragmatic power, striking a balance between economic dynamism and regional influence. Yet its deepening partnership with Israel reveals a trajectory that is less about stability and more about embedding Israeli interests into fragile states. From southern Yemen to Somaliland and Sudan, Abu Dhabi’s actions increasingly resemble those of a proxy, enabling Israel’s ambitions in one of the world’s most sensitive maritime



From commitments to contradictions

The framework governing China–U.S. relations on Taiwan rests on three Joint Communiqués, each carrying clear obligations for the U.S. side.

The 1972 Shanghai Communiqué marked the starting point of normalization between the United States and China. In it, the United States stated that it “acknowledges that all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.” This was a political acknowledgment of China’s position, reflecting a serious step toward recognition rather than a mere rhetorical courtesy.

The 1979 Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations went further. The United States formally recognized the government of the People’s Republic of China as the sole legal government of China and committed itself to maintaining only unofficial relations with Taiwan. Basically, official diplomatic recognition of Beijing and military support for Taiwan are inherently incompatible.

The 1982 August 17 Communiqué addressed the arms issue directly. In it, the United States pledged that it did not seek a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan and that such sales would neither exceed previous levels nor grow in quality or quantity. It also expressed an intention to gradually reduce and ultimately resolve the arms sales issue.

Today’s reality could not be further from those commitments. Far from reducing arms sales, Washington has expanded them in scale, sophistication, and frequency. What was once portrayed as “defensive” has steadily morphed into systems with clear offensive and strategic implications. The gap between U.S. words and actions has become so wide that credibility itself has fallen through the cracks.

Arming Taiwan breeds instability

The United States claims that its arms sales are meant to preserve

“peace and stability” across the Taiwan Strait. This argument collapses under scrutiny. Pouring advanced weaponry into a sensitive region does not extinguish flames; it fans them. It emboldens separatist elements on the island, distorts threat perceptions, and raises the risk of miscalculation.

Encouraged by U.S. backing, the Democratic Progressive Party authorities have increasingly indulged in the dangerous illusion of “seeking independence with external support.” Arms purchases are framed as security guarantees, yet in reality, they turn Taiwan into a forward outpost and a potential battlefield. The island is being transformed into a pawn on a geopolitical chessboard, its safety wagered for Washington’s strategic games.

Meanwhile, Taiwan residents are asked to foot the bill—billions diverted from social welfare, infrastructure, and public services into overpriced weapons that line the pockets of U.S. military contractors. It is a textbook case of selling fear at a premium, offering sugar-coated poison under the guise of security.

To understand Washington’s behavior, one must look beyond rhetoric and examine the driving logic behind its actions.

First is the lingering Cold War mindset. Seeing China as a strategic rival, the United States treats Taiwan not as a people to protect, but as a pawn to contain China’s rise—a convenient lever along the so-called first island chain. Its massive arms sales are not about Taiwan’s security; they are designed to slow China’s development and obstruct national reunification.

Second is the grip of the military-industrial complex. U.S. arms sales to Taiwan are a lucrative treadmill of tension: political figures approve deals while in office, then walk through the revolving door into defense corporations, ensuring that profit continually outbids prudence. Taiwan’s billions are funneled into weapons that serve Washington’s interests, not

the island’s, a bitter gift disguised as protection.

Third is Washington’s habit of managing instability rather than fostering peace. A perpetually tense Taiwan Strait allows the United States to justify its military presence, assert influence over regional allies, and maintain its self-styled role as the “stabilizer.” Such brinkmanship may serve American ambition, but it does so at the expense of regional stability and the well-being of the Taiwanese people.

China’s countermeasures: Lawful and proportionate

China’s recent countermeasures are neither excessive nor arbitrary. They are fully grounded in domestic law, particularly the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, and align with international legal principles. Sovereign nations have the right to protect their territorial integrity and core interests when threatened.

The measures are precisely targeted at U.S. entities and individuals directly involved in arms sales to Taiwan, sparing ordinary citizens and legitimate commercial activity. This restraint underscores China’s responsible and lawful approach, sending a clear message: actions undermining China’s sovereignty will have proportionate consequences.

More broadly, these countermeasures reveal the true cost of U.S. provocations and expose the pretense of “defensive arms sales.” They curb the overconfidence of separatist forces in Taiwan and reaffirm that external interference cannot alter China’s historical trajectory or determination.

China remains committed to peaceful reunification, dialogue, and development, but peace is not passive, and restraint does not imply surrender. On matters of sovereignty, China’s position is firm and uncompromising. The reunification of China is not a question of if, but when—anchored in historical legitimacy, law, and the collective will of the Chinese people.

Attempts to use Taiwan as a lever to contain China are ultimately doomed to fail, like trying to dam a rising tide with paper walls. The United States should honor its previous commitments, respect the one-China principle, and halt its destabilizing arms sales. Failure to do so will further erode trust and narrow the path to regional stability.

China’s resolve is clear, its patience measured, and its determination unwavering. The red line has been drawn. Crossing it will not halt history—it will only hasten the consequences.

influence without accountability. In a constitutional state, no body—domestic or external—may act without explicit legal authorization. The mechanism violates this basic principle.

At best, the committee can be described as a non-binding coordination forum. It is neither a United Nations-mandated force like UNIFIL nor an internationally recognized body with enforcement powers.

Any attempt to treat its recommendations as binding directives within Lebanese territory is therefore legally indefensible.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

ever, remained conspicuously silent. This silence is strategic. Abu Dhabi has invested heavily in Somaliland’s Berbera port, a facility that dovetails with Israeli ambitions to monitor the Red Sea and project power near Bab al Mandeb. By refusing to criticize Israel’s move, the UAE shields it from regional backlash while preserving its own leverage. Somaliland’s contested status thus becomes another pawn in a wider geopolitical game, with Abu Dhabi acting as the broker.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

Major hack exposes Netanyahu’s chief aide in corruption scandal

Bibi’s ‘gatekeeper’ exposed: Handala releases files tied to Qatargate

THERAN – The illusion of impenetrable security surrounding Benjamin Netanyahu’s administration has been shattered once again, revealing what cyber resistance group Handala called the “rotten core of power” festering within Israel in a statement on its website on Sunday.

In an operation dubbed “Bibi Gate,” the pro-Palestine hacking collective breached the personal iPhone 16 Pro Max of Tzachi Braverman, Netanyahu’s chief of staff and the so-called “gatekeeper” of the Prime Minister’s deepest secrets.

Handala has released a 110-page document detailing Braverman’s private contacts, exposing a web that binds senior security officials, diplomats, and media figures to the Prime Minister’s Office.

Among the exposed names and contact numbers are former War Minister Yoav Gallant, police commander Nitzav Shlomi Sagie, U.S. Embassy advisor Hana Aminia, and even Netanyahu’s wife, Sara.

The leaked files peel back the curtain on the hypocrisy of Israel’s leadership. While the regime has been waging a brutal war on Gaza, Braverman has been captured on video hosting lavish, taxpayer-funded “Shabbat dinners” designed to further his personal ambition of be-

The weakness of the world in our struggle

By Sim Zahra, researcher

TORONTO - When the world fails to uphold justice, it becomes an obligation of the oppressed to fulfil it. Demanding rights and justice from a world that has turned a blind eye to a genocide that has been occurring for over 70 years, and is now at its worst state, is a meaningless endeavor.

The international institutions which exist to “maintain global peace” and “promote human rights” are nothing but a mere distraction, and those who truly care about upholding human rights must support the oppressed resisting with arms in order to achieve their goal of sovereignty.

According to the UN, armed struggle is legal: UNGA Resolution 3314 (1974) affirmed the right of self-determination, freedom, and independence for all “peoples under colonial and racist regimes or other forms of alien domination,” and affirmed the “right of these peoples to struggle to that end and to seek and receive support.”

UNGA Resolution 37/43 (1982) reaffirmed the “inalienable right” of the Palestinian people “and all peoples under foreign and colonial domination” to self-determination. It also reaffirmed the legitimacy of “the struggle of peoples for [...] liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle.”

There is no limit to the Zionist entity’s crimes; violating the ceasefire countless times, using internationally banned weapons, and ultimately perpetrating a genocide against the people of Palestine. Various UN officials, experts and commissions calling it a genocide has not made any meaningful change. The genocidal war has not stopped, and the past two years have shown that it will not come to an end at the hands of these institutions. Hence, even though international law permits armed struggle as a legitimate way of resisting, it simply does not bear any meaning as it fails to hold the aggressor accountable in real life.

The Ummah must acknowledge that we support armed resistance because it is our religious duty, not because international law permits it. The armed struggle is legitimate even if international law did not allow it. Whatever international law dictates as legitimate and illegitimate does not matter, as they will continue to label the Resistance Axis as terrorists. The Palestinian struggle is a struggle of self-defense and the Ummah must realize that whatever action the resistance takes is a legitimate action morally and religiously, in confronting the enemy.

The ICC, on November 21, 2024 issued arrest warrants for the Prime Minister of the Zionist entity, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the entity’s former Minister of Defense, Yoav Gallant. Since then, the U.S. regime has sanctioned ICC officials and attacked the ICC’s legitimacy, and neither have been arrested or tried.

Additionally, when the ICJ in January and July of 2024 called on the Zionist entity to allow the entrance of humanitarian aid to Gaza and called

coming Israel’s ambassador to the UK.

Handala alleges this diplomatic push is motivated by a desire to reunite with an “old lover” in London.

The group released footage of these exclusive gatherings, where foreign ambassadors are seen mingling and toasting in opulent settings—backroom deals disguised as tradition.

In a blow to Israel’s operational security, Handala also unmasked Netanyahu’s elite “inner ring” of bodyguards.

These agents, who rely on anonymity and typically hide behind dark glasses and masks, were filmed at Braverman’s private parties with their faces fully visible.

By publishing these images, the hackers have effectively burned the identities of the agents charged with protecting the Prime Minister.

The hack also entangles the administration further in the ongoing “Qatargate” scandal, where Netanyahu’s inner circle is accused of accepting secret payments tied to influence operations.

The leaked chats contain Braverman’s mockery of the “next in line” for the premiership and details of a secret trip with a companion named Alexandra in December 2024, funded by public coffers.

for the dismantling of settlements across the West Bank—the U.S. ceased funding from the UN Human Rights Council and UNRWA. Neither ICJ ruling was adhered to by the Zionist entity, rather the situation has gotten more severe.

Systems such as the UN and its judicial body—the ICJ—only have as much power as the U.S. allows them. They are a tool of oppression used to delegitimize the struggle of the oppressed and legitimize the aggression of the oppressor. The ICC has no power to prosecute individuals from powerful states not willing to comply. These international rulings look nice on paper but they are rarely seen implemented in real life.

This simply means that a group of people have the ability to carry out a genocide and these institutions will have no power to stop them. This does not mean that there is no way out, the only answer is through armed resistance. Without weapons the oppressed are not respected, nor can they achieve their goals of sovereignty. Palestinians and the resistance in Gaza especially have proven this after over two years of continuous confrontation of the enemy, despite barbaric aggression.

It must be acknowledged that justice cannot be given to you by asking the oppressor, you must fulfil it yourselves. It is crucial to hit the enemy where it hurts; Iran’s 12-day war against the Zionist entity is an example of this. Iran rightfully retaliated to the aggression the U.S. carried out against it, due to its support for Palestine. The U.S. waged this war under the pretex of Iran having nuclear weapons, which is the same narrative of “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq that was used to brutally murder and torture people simply for the West’s interests and exploitation in the wider West Asian region.

It is crucial to ensure Iran’s survival. Iran has shown up for the oppressed and it will continue to do as it has a religious and moral obligation to protect those in need. It must be understood that the Zionist entity is a threat to everyone, it is backed by the U.S. and there is no limit to how far they will go to achieve their goals. It must also be understood that armed resistance is not an option, it is obligatory. In the words of the Master of the Martyrs of the Ummah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, “This experience [Gaza] shows that if you are weak, the world does not recognize you, defend you, or mourn for you. What protects you is your strength, courage, fists, weapons, missiles, and your presence in the field.”

The Ummah must recognize that armed resistance is the only answer to achieving liberation from the U.S.-backed Zionist entity. Quoting international law will not take us forward. The only way forward is normalizing the armed struggle against Western powers and uplifting the words of our leaders and martyrs who have been vilainized for years, who the West has labelled as terrorists time and time again.

The coming rounds of confrontation with the ‘Israeli’ enemy are inevitable, and the Ummah must remain in constant vigilance.” – Sayyed Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi

Governor-general urges Khorasan Razavi to host more cultural events

TEHRAN--Khorasan, as a large civilizational area, has the capacity to play a leading cultural role in the region by holding international events and conferences of Naqqali performance and Shahnameh recitation.

According to Miras Aria, Khorasan Razavi Governor-General Gholamhossein Mozaffari stated on Sunday: "It has been said many times in private, administrative and even non-administrative meetings that Khorasan, as a civilizational area, and we who are in Mashhad and Khorasan Razavi today, are facing high expectations and demands. In a sense, we have both a heavy responsibility and mission, we must do great things and we are facing backwardness and neglect that have caused us to forget what we have and pay less attention to them."

He said: "Today, from whatever angle we look at Khorasan, there is an issue and a capacity. The reality is that neither justification nor additional explanation is necessary. We do not even have a written plan in this regard. Everything depends on us making a serious decision together."

"Iran expects something from Khorasan and the Khorasan civilization area, from Mashhad today. Without any pretense, in the trips we have had to the surrounding countries over the past year, despite all the political and geographical demarcations, our eyes are on Khorasan and Mashhad, and everyone expects something serious to happen here."

He clarified: "The point we should pay attention to today is that our assets are very valuable and expensive. The main question is what we have done with these funds and what we should do. We should have dozens of places for naqqali performance and Shahnameh reading. I wish such programs were held every day and every week. The naqqali field should be expanded to the parks and different spaces, and the beginning of this path should be from schools. Even if there are some restrictions in terms of reg-

ulations, cultural work is not difficult and many of these obstacles can be solved by ourselves."

Referring to the capacity of cultural planning, Mozaffari, stated that Kheradsaraye Ferdowsi is on the verge of its 20th anniversary, and this shows that similar collections can be created.

"My suggestion is that from now on, for next year and for the days leading up to Ferdowsi the Great, we should plan national and even international events and have a clear output throughout the year in all cultural layers, from research to Shahnameh reading and storytelling. We should also pay attention to new arts such as animation and film and be able to activate the art economy from this huge capacity."

Mozaffari added: "The world creates history and stories for itself to generate income, but we have all these assets at our disposal. Khorasan has a very large capacity; both in terms of human resources and civilizational layers. Our greatest capital is these assets and these thoughts that you have. If these capacities are put together, great things can be done. Khorasan should not only solve its own problems, but also be able to lift the burden of the country in the field of civilization and culture and chart a clear path in the region."

Referring to the regional interactions, he noted that in the neighboring countries, from Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan, there is a special look at Shahnameh and common cultural figures. "During our trip to Kyrgyzstan and attendance at the country's international exhibition, we witnessed how cultural commonalities such as Rostam and Manas (the epic hero of Kyrgyz people) can be used for regional ties. If we want to strengthen our security, economy, and regional ties, the way to do that is to pay attention to these cultural assets."

Folios of Amol's history examined by cultural heritage experts

TEHRAN -- The Research Institute of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has recently reviewed a number of historical documents and narratives related to the ancient city of Amol, located in Iran's northern Mazandaran province, which was historically known as Tabarestan.

During the meeting, researchers examined various historical sources shedding light on Amol's urban development, cultural significance, and role in the political and social history of the region. The discussions focused on how the city evolved over different historical periods and its place within the broader context of Tabarestan's civilization.

The session was part of the institute's ongoing efforts to document and reassess Iran's urban heritage through academic research and interdisciplinary studies.

Zatollah Nikzad, a researcher at the institute, said on Saturday that the Tabarestan region was known by various names in ancient texts and encompassed an area beyond present-day Mazandaran. This region is mentioned in Greek sources, Achaemenid inscriptions including the Darius inscription and works from the Sassanid period such as the Ka'beh-ye Zardusht (Kaaba of Zoroaster), and has been widely reflected in historical texts after Islam, Miras Aria reported.

Referring to the geographical location of Amol, he stated that Amol's location between the sea, forest, and mountains and its connection with the Haraz Valley --as a historical route connecting the central plateau of Iran to the north--has had a profound impact on the formation, continuity of life, and spatial structure of this city.

Nikzad focused his remarks on the book 'History of Tabaristan'; a work that Ibn Esfandiyar, an Iranian historian from Tabaristan, wrote in 613 AH (1192 CE).

He explained that Ibn Esfandiyar used numerous sources in writing this book, including the ancient books that have disappeared today; such as the book of Abul-Hasan ibn

Muhammad Yazdadi, which is remembered as one of the first local histories of Tabaristan.

Nikzad added that Ibn Esfandiyar used the library of Mazandaran ruler Rostam bin Ali bin Shahriar during his trip to Rey and obtained sources that play a decisive role in the historical validity of his work.

Referring to the methodology of this research, he said that the study of the spatial structure of the city of Amol was conducted with an analytical historical approach; meaning that the textual data of local chronicles were matched with the environmental, architectural, and urban development evidence to obtain a more accurate picture of the city in the past.

Nikzad noted that local chronicles, because they were written by local historians and were directly involved in events, contain valuable details that are rarely seen in public histories.

These texts show that, contrary to the popular belief, an important part of Iranian history was preserved in writing in form of family and local deeds and documents.

He said that although this narrative is accompanied by fictional elements, detailed technical and engineering information lies at its heart about the urban system, the location of the city along the river, water resources, the structure of the fence, the ditch, and the four gates of the city; elements that are consistent with the well-known patterns of Sassanid urban planning.

This city developed during the Sassanid era and after its foundation, and after the second century AH and with the arrival of Muslims, it gradually underwent changes in urban spaces, complexes, and social fabric and developed further.

He stated that the critical and analytical reading of local histories has an important capacity for recognizing the history of Iranian cities and can be a valid basis for interdisciplinary research in the fields of history, architecture, and urban planning.

Tehran to host Nowruz summit with ministers, ambassadors from 18 countries

TEHRAN -- Iran is set to host an international Nowruz summit with ministers from 18 countries in Tehran from March 27 to 29, 2026, a senior official from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said on Sunday.

Hojjatollah Ayyoubi, senior adviser to the minister and head of the ministry's international affairs center, said the meeting will be held at the Summit Hall in Tehran and will bring together tourism and culture ministers from 18 countries, with representatives from five observer states of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) also expected to attend.

Speaking at the first meeting of the policy council for the Nowruz summit, Ayyoubi said invitations had been sent to 27 ministers, adding that China, Russia, Indonesia, India and another member of the Economic Cooperation Organization would participate as observers.

Ayyoubi said the Foreign Ministry had played a key role in facilitating preparations for the event. He said the upcoming gathering would not be a ceremonial celebration of Nowruz but a political and cultural meeting aimed at conveying the message that Iran is a safe country and is not in a state of conflict.

"This is an international summit with the participation of ministers and a speech by the president," Ayyoubi said. "Its message is that Iran is a secure country and a central hub of the Nowruz civilization."

He added that the event would include limited cultural



programs, such as performances by an international Nowruz symphony ensemble, but would focus primarily on dialogue and networking among participating countries.

Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said China and India would be special guests at the summit.

Bandpey said a permanent secretariat for the Nowruz summit would be established in Tehran and that specialized committees covering cultural affairs, arts, accommodation, security, taxation and communications had been formed.

He also said international tourism arrivals to Iran had increased by 48.5% in the first month of the

current Iranian year (started on March 20 2025) compared with the same period last year, attributing the rise to enhanced cultural diplomacy and cooperation with the Foreign Ministry.

Last week, Iran's tourism minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri announced plans to hold a meeting of tourism ministers and a global Nowruz celebration in Tehran, and called on foreign ambassadors to encourage cultural figures in their countries to take part.

Ayyoubi said the shared heritage of Nowruz could serve as a bridge for dialogue among nations. "In a world crowded with information, face-to-face encounters remain the most effective way for genuine under-

standing," he said.

Nowruz, inscribed by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, marks the arrival of spring and the beginning of the new year. Celebrated across a wide region including Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the ancient festival symbolizes renewal, harmony and hope.

The word Nowruz combines the Persian words for "new" and "day" and is marked by rituals such as house cleaning, family gatherings, and the preparation of the Haft-Seen table, which features seven symbolic items representing health, prosperity and renewal.

Susa: Walking through one of the world's oldest cities

By Afshin Majlesi

Visiting Susa was like stepping into a living history book. From the moment I arrived in this ancient city in southwest Iran, I felt I was walking through layers of time, each step revealing traces of civilizations that shaped human history.

Susa is not just another archaeological site; it is one of the oldest continuously inhabited places on Earth, and being there gave me a deep sense of connection to the past.

The ancient city lies in the fertile plains of Khuzestan, near the Karkheh River and at the edge of the Zagros Mountains. Its location explains why people have lived here for thousands of years. Water, fertile land, and natural routes for trade made it a perfect place for early settlements. Archaeologists believe people lived here as early as 7,000 years ago, and by around 4200 BCE, it had already become a developed urban center.

Walking through the ruins, I could easily imagine how Susa once stood as the capital of the Elamite kingdom and later became one of the main capitals of the Achaemenid Empire. Under kings like Darius the Great, the city flourished. It was not just a political center but also a cultural and administrative heart of the empire. Orders were issued from here, goods moved through its markets, and people from different lands lived side by side.

One of the most impressive parts of my visit was exploring the remains of the ancient

palace complex. The Apadana Palace, built by Darius the Great, once stood in great splendor. Today, only fragments remain, but even these are enough to imagine its former glory. The glazed bricks, carved reliefs, and massive columns speak of an empire that valued beauty, order, and power. Standing there, I could almost picture delegations from distant lands walking through its halls.

As I wandered through the archaeological site, I was struck by how many layers of history are packed into one place. The excavations reveal traces of Elamite, Babylonian, Assyrian, Achaemenid, Greek, Parthian, and Sasanian civilizations. Few places in the world show such a continuous story of human life. Pottery shards, inscriptions, and ancient foundations lie scattered across the site, each telling a small part of a very long story.

Susa also holds deep religious significance. It is known as Shushan in the Bible and plays an important role in the story of Esther. According to tradition, the Prophet Daniel is buried here, and his tomb remains one of the most important religious sites in the city. I visited the shrine, easily recognizable by its unique conical dome. People from different faiths come here to pray, reflecting centuries of shared spiritual heritage.

Another highlight of my visit was the Susa Castle, also known as the French Castle. Built in the late 19th century by French archaeolo-

gists, it stands on one of the ancient mounds overlooking the site. The castle itself is a reminder of the early days of archaeology, when explorers came to uncover the secrets of the ancient world. From its walls, I enjoyed wide views of the ruins and the surrounding plains, which helped me better understand the city's layout and importance.

The modern city of Shush surrounds these ancient remains. Walking through its streets, I saw a mix of cultures and traditions. Arabs, Lurs, Dezfulis, and others live side by side, continuing a long tradition of diversity. The city still feels deeply connected to its past, yet it is very much alive, with markets, mosques, and everyday life unfolding around the ruins.

What struck me most about Susa was how naturally history and daily life blend together. This is not a frozen archaeological park but a living place where the past and present exist side by side. Nearby, places like the ziggurat of Tchogha Zanbil and the fertile lands nourished by the Dez River add even more depth to the region's historical landscape.

Leaving Susa, I felt I had not just visited a historical site, but had walked through thousands of years of human experience. From ancient kings and empires to modern communities, Susa tells a powerful story of continuity, resilience, and cultural richness. It is a place that stays with you long after you leave, a true treasure of human civilization in the heart of Iran.

Special driver's license tests planned for servants and pilgrims of Imam Reza Shrine

TEHRAN-- The cultural and tourism project honoring the servants and pilgrims of Astan Quds Razavi is being implemented by Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran (TACI) in Mashhad (centered on the vast Holy Shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the capital city of Khorasan Razavi province, with the aim of promoting land tourism and developing automobile assistance services.

According to Mehr News Agency, this project will be implemented on December 31 with the aim of preserving the spiritual status of Mashhad, appreciating

the servants of Razavi Shrine, and facilitating the provision of special travel services for the servants, pilgrims, and travelers of this city.

Mashhad has been selected as the first base for the project due to its distinguished cultural and religious status, the high number of domestic and foreign pilgrims, and its role as the spiritual capital of Iran. The city hosts millions of pilgrims annually and is considered a symbol of service, travel, and hospitality in Iranian-Islamic culture.

As part of this project, which

is implemented by TACI agents in Mashhad, the servants of Astan Quds Razavi can receive an international driving license for free, and young people aged 18 to 23 and have no history of receiving an international driving license can also benefit from a 50-percent discount.

Travelers and pilgrims can also receive an international driving license at half price.

Concurrent with the National Day of Mashhad, TACI's Roadside Assistance Service provides car assistance services at a 30-percent discount to the pilgrims,

servants, and travelers in the city of Mashhad and the entrance routes to this city to honor the servants and pilgrims and facilitate land travel.

TACI will implement this project in the first phase in the city of Mashhad as a national model and provide the basis for its development in other provinces in line with its social responsibilities and in order to commemorate the National Day of various provinces and cities of the country and promote international driving services, car assistance, and the development of land tourism.

Iran attends regional workshop on Biodiversity Monitoring and National Reporting

TEHRAN – Iran has participated in a regional training workshop on biodiversity monitoring and national reporting for West Asian countries in Manama, Bahrain.

The Supreme Council for Environment (SCE), in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with support from the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Environment Program, held the workshop from December 21 to 23.

Esmael Karami-Dehkordi, the secretary of the council of the Convention on Biological Diversity, represented the country.

The workshop brought together representatives of regional countries, government entities, academic institutions, and environmental experts.

The event supported countries in updating and preparing their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAP), as well as the Seventh National Report, in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Addressing the event, Karami-Dehkordi, who is also a faculty member of Tarbiat Modares University, highlighted the importance of addressing key challenges in financing, and accessing global financial resources, exchanging knowledge and innovations among countries, particularly those in West Asia, ISNA reported.

The official went on to propose establishing a West Asia Regional Fund to support joint biodiversity projects, enhancing capacity building, promoting partnerships and collaborations, and considering indigenous knowledge of local communities, especially rural and



nomadic communities.

Participatory and integrated planning with the participation of various stakeholders, including governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local communities, as well as women and youth, was among other proposals put forward by the country, which were well-received by the participants.

Resolving political challenges and regional conflicts, developing joint databases for shared ecosystems and species, and conducting and supporting collaborative projects through bilateral and multilateral agreements were also emphasized.

Strategic goals for long-term biodiversity preservation

The Department of Environment (DOE) has revised a comprehensive plan, setting its strategic goals for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by the Iranian calendar year 1430 (March 2051-March 2052).

In May, President Masoud Pezeshkian issued an order, obligating the DOE to prepare a comprehensive plan for the preservation of biodiversity in the country,

covering different environmental sectors.

In this line, several meetings have been convened with the participation of faculty members, environmental experts, and managers, as well as NGOs, IRNA reported.

During the meetings, the participants agreed on five main goals: promoting the integrity and resilience of biodiversity, conserving biodiversity for sustainable use, equitably sharing the benefits derived from genetic resources, raising public awareness, enhancing specialized knowledge, and modern technologies for effective biodiversity management, strengthening financial resources and national mechanisms for the implementation of the comprehensive strategic plan for biodiversity.

Finally, the national biodiversity conservation program will be revised based on the national biodiversity strategies and action plan (NBSAP3) by relevant executive agencies, academic experts, and non-governmental organizations, to be approved by the DOE.

Iran is a rich country in terms of biodiversity, with about 37,500

animal species and more than 8,000 plant species. In addition, it is home to 579 bird species, 214 mammal species, 284 reptile species, 23 amphibian species, 309 freshwater fish species, and 763 marine fish species in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, and the Caspian Sea.

According to the latest report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), some 154 species of Iranian vertebrates are critically endangered of extinction.

The Asiatic cheetah and the ostrich, whose numbers in nature have dropped to less than 25, are among the critically endangered species. Moreover, there are 5 species of Caspian sturgeon, unique in the world, that are disappearing from the Caspian waters.

According to experts, species extinction is a natural phenomenon, but the speed at which they are disappearing is concerning. Unfortunately, the current rate of extinction has accelerated in the present era due to human activities; it will have serious consequences for ecosystems and the well-being of the planet.

Referring to the country's biodiversity, Hamid Zohrabi, an official with the DOE, stated, "Sadly, the unsustainable exploitation of biological resources has affected and disrupted ecosystems in several areas."

The official made the remarks on the occasion of World Biodiversity Day, celebrated annually on May 22.

The DOE is in charge of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The convention's three main objectives include conserving biodiversity, promoting sustainable use of natural resources, and equal sharing of biodiversity benefits, he said.

Three more sites added to national protected areas



TEHRAN – The Department of Environment (DOE) has added three new sites in Fars, Alborz, and Golestan provinces to the national protected areas across the country.

Qadamgah spring in southern Fars province is a rather small area. However, the area is a typical example of the wonder of creation being home to eight species of fish, six of which are endemic to the country, and the two others are endemic to the same spring, IRNA quoted Hamid Zoharbi, an official with the DOE, as saying.

Aras Shahrestanak in north-central Alborz province is the second area, where an ancient tree, known to be over 2,700 years old, is registered as national natural heritage. The area is also a reservoir of genetic resources, with old trees known to be potential reservoirs of genetic diversity.

The third area is Zarrin Gol in northern Golestan province. It hosts more than 60 species of trees and shrubs, playing an important role in maintaining biodiversity.

Two main tree species in the area are yew and ficus, which are of great conservation importance.

The history of Iran's first protected areas dates back to 1967, when the proposal for the establishment of two national parks and 15 protected areas as the first protected sites in Iran was approved.

In 1976, there were more than 65 protected areas covering an area of 6.7 million hectares in the country, which has now extended to more than 300 areas with an area of 19.5 million hectares.

The population of species such as goats, rams, and sheep in these areas has increased by three to eight times.

In June, Zohrabi said that the number of wild goats (*Capra aegagrus*) in private protected areas across the country has grown by 21 percent compared to the past Iranian year (March 2023-March 2024).

"Also, the population of rams and ewes has risen by an increase of 10 percent in the same period, indicating the effective performance

of the private sector, the successful cooperation of public and private sectors in environmental conservation, which has reduced environmental preservation costs, as well," IRNA quoted Zohrabi as saying.

According to the latest censuses, a total of 6,093 animals, including 3,384 rams and ewes and 2,709 wild goats, have been counted in four private protected sectors in Yazd (2), Semnan (1), and Kerman (1) provinces.

The number of protected areas under the supervision of the Department of Environment has increased 5.5 times after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Before the Revolution, there were a total of 58 protected areas in the country, Alireza Najimi, an official with the DOE, said in 2024.

The number of protected areas has increased to 309 after the Islamic Revolution, ISNA quoted Najimi as saying.

In terms of area, the protected sites have expanded from 6.335 million hectares to 18.963 million hectares, he added.

Shina Ansari, the head of the Department of Environment, has stated that no single organization can successfully preserve the environment on its own. Environmental issues will be best addressed through public participation.

"There are many environmental challenges in habitats, wildlife, and wetlands which cannot be tackled just by the efforts and measures of the Department of Environment," IRIB quoted Ansari as saying.

President Masoud Pezeshkian has offered a program with a focus on the preservation of the environment that is structured around six axes: moving towards a green economy; managing and improving various quantitative and qualitative dimensions of environmental imbalances (such as economy, energy, and water); effectively protecting biological resources (including natural resources and biodiversity); achieving good environmental governance; addressing public demands in the field of environment, and enhancing international bilateral or multilateral cooperation in the field of environment.

Over 140 earthquakes hit Iran in a week

TEHRAN – A total of 141 earthquakes were recorded across the country in a week from December 20 to 26, according to the seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Statistically, 125 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3; 15 earthquakes with a magnitude between 3 and 4, and one earthquake with magnitudes between 4 and 5 have occurred in the country, isrc reported.

Among the provinces of the country, Semnan experienced the highest number of earthquakes, with 17, followed by South Khorasan and Fars, with 16 and 15 earthquakes, respectively.

Of the total quakes, one had a magnitude of 4.1 on the Richter scale, which occurred on December 24 in Hormozgan province.

During the same period, four earthquakes hit Tehran province. No earthquakes were recorded in the provinces of East Azarbaijan,

Alborz, Zanjan, Qom, Gilan, and Hamedan.

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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COVID-19 takes lowest toll on foreign nationals in Iran

Iran had the lowest coronavirus cases and mortality among refugees and foreign nationals compared to the population it is hosting, Mehdi Mahmoudi, Director of Citizens and Immigrants Affairs of the Ministry of Interior has said.

He said that since the very beginning, when the country became infected with the disease, the community of foreign nationals in our country was no exception to this issue, and prevention programs and necessary measures have been taken for this group.

«We identified foreign nationals in need and tried to provide them with livelihood assistance, as well as health packages and self-protective items needed to prevent the infection,» he explained.

ایران کمترین تلفات کرونا اتباع خارجی را داشته‌است

مهدی محمودی مدیرکل امور اتباع و مهاجرین وزارت کشور گفت در خصوص ابتلا به بیماری کرونا در بین اتباع خارجی، ایران کمترین ابتلا و کمترین تلفات را نسبت به جمعیت داشته‌است. او در گفت‌وگو با ایلنا گفت: از همان ابتدا که کشور درگیر این بیماری شد، جامعه اتباع خارجی هم در کشور ما مستثنی از این موضوع نبود و برنامه‌های پیشگیری و تمهیدات لازم نیز برای این گروه نیز در نظر گرفته شده است.

اتباع غیرایرانی که نیازمند بودند را شناسایی کرده و تلاش کردیم از نظر معیشتی به این گروه نیز کمک‌هایی صورت بگیرد و همچنین بسته‌های بهداشتی و اقلام مورد نیاز پیشگیری از بیماری کرونا در چندین نوبت به آنها ارائه شده است.



DECEMBER 29, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Kindness is a mark of faith and whoever is not kind has no faith.
Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:06 Evening: 17:20 Dawn: 5:44 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:14 (tomorrow)

IAF to show second Iranian female-directed feature film

TEHRAN – The restored version of “The Sealed Soil,” a 1977 Iranian film directed by Marva Nabili, will be shown at the cinematheque of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran on Monday.

The 90-minute film is scheduled to be screened at the Nasser Hall of the IAF at 5 p.m. and will be followed by a review session in the presence of the movie critic Shahram Ashraf Ab-yaneh, Mehr reported.

The second feature film made by a female director in Iran, “The Sealed Soil” traces the passive revolt of a young girl who resists to forced marriage, a transformation that can be seen as a metaphor for Iran’s transition from tradition to modernity.

In pre-revolution Iran, a village girl’s rejection of marriage leads her family to believe she’s possessed, prompting them to consult an exorcist.

The film was shot without sound. Nabili later added dubbing and sound effects. “The Sealed Soil” met with international critical acclaim, notably winning an award at the London Film Festival in 1977.

The earliest surviving Iranian film directed by a woman, Nabili’s astonishing debut is a deftly observant and sensually attuned work that conjures the everyday plight of the female subject under the stifling patriarchy of village life in southwestern Iran.

The film follows Roo-Bekheir, a woman living in a remote village of Ghalleh Noo-Asgar, who must prepare to move in order to accommodate a state-ordered construction project. We watch as she goes about her everyday routine, a life structured as much by repetitiveness as by so-

cial repression.

Evoking Akerman and Bresson through its uncompromising rigor, yet marked by its own brand of low-key sensuality, “The Sealed Soil” is shot through with criticality and an attentiveness to the inner world of a woman rebelling, in her way, against stifling patriarchy, as she is caught between the traditional values of her small village and her own yearnings for independence and individuality.

Breathtaking in its directorial sophistication and restraint and unblinking in its critique of institutionalized misogyny, this too-long-underseen masterstroke of world cinema stands alongside Chantal Akerman’s “Jeanne Dielman” both in its formal rigor and its quietly radical vision of female rebellion.

Born in Iran in 1941, Marva Nabili studied painting at the University of Decorative Arts in Tehran, where she met filmmaker Fereydoon Rahnama. She later starred in his film “Siavash at Persepolis,” which won the Jean Epstein Award at the Locarno Film Festival. Encouraged by Rahnama, Nabili moved to London and later New York City, studying filmmaking at City University of New York and Goddard College.

Her debut feature film “The Sealed Soil” was named Outstanding Film of the Year at the London Film Festival, and Nabili received the Best New Director Award at Mostra Internazionale del Film d’Autore, Sanremo. Her film “Night-songs,” which chronicles the lives of a Chinese immigrant family living in New York City, was one of the first screenplays developed through Robert Redford’s Sundance Institute and was later produced by the PBS series American Playhouse.

Cartoon of Day



Too Late

Cartoonist: Antonio Rodriguez from Mexico

Bahram Beyzaie, pillar of Iranian artistic heritage, passes away

TEHRAN- Bahram Beyzaie, a towering figure in Iranian theater, cinema, and literature passed away on his 87th birthday on Thursday, according to a statement from Stanford University’s Iranian Studies Program, where he served as a distinguished visiting professor for over 15 years.

Mojdeh Shamsaie, his wife, confirmed the news of the artist’s passing on social media and stated that Bahram Beyzaie died at his private residence in California, the U.S.

Beyzaie’s death coincides with Iran’s Playwrights’ Day, a day that, in honor of his birth and coinciding with the anniversary of Akbar Radi’s death, has been commemorated annually.

His life’s work bridged the ancient myths of Persia with contemporary social narratives, shaping the cultural fabric of Iran and inspiring generations of artists and thinkers.

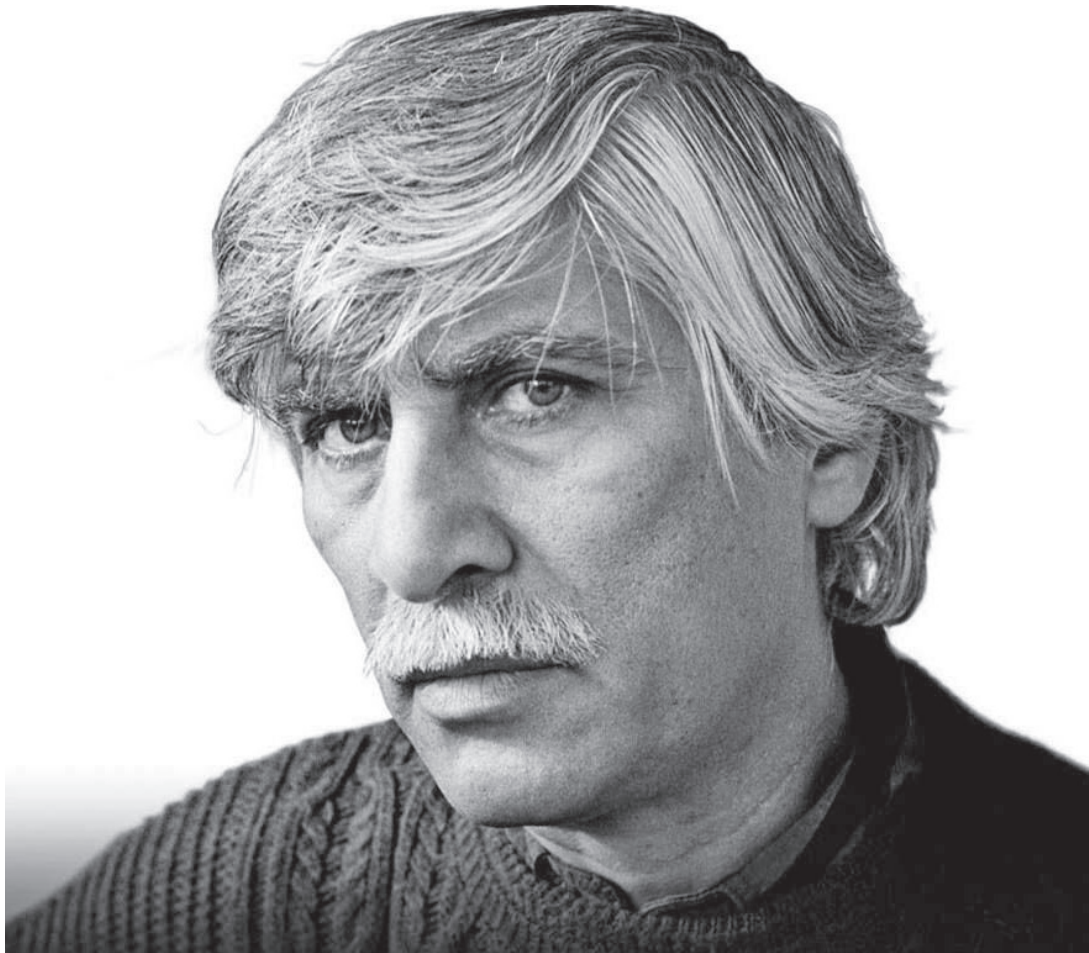
The statement from Stanford expressed deep sorrow, highlighting Beyzaie’s unwavering dedication to Iran’s cultural preservation. “He often said that his true home and calling were the realm of culture. His love for Iran was profound, and he tirelessly promoted its heritage,” it read.

“His departure comes five years after his heroic and luminous effort to complete the text of ‘Dash Akol According to Marjan,’ a testament to his lifelong dedication to the arts,” the statement continued.

The community also wishes to extend its heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Mojdeh Shamsaie, who, without her wisdom and empathy, believes many of Beyzaie’s later years would have been different, ensuring his legacy endures.

“In the words of the Shahnameh, wherein Beyzaie lived all his life, ‘If death is justice, what then is injustice?’” it concluded.

Moreover, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance expressed his condolences on the passing of Bahram Beyzaie in a message.



“The death of Professor Bahram Beyzaie, playwright, researcher, and screenwriter, is deeply saddening. Throughout his long artistic career, he made a significant contribution to the expansion of Iranian storytelling by creating theatrical and cinematic works that emphasized cultural and mythological roots,” Seyyed Abbas Salehi stated in his message.

“Beyzaie’s dedication to research and enhancing knowledge of theater, along with his influential role in training new generations, has become part of the cultural legacy of this talented artist. His works, research, and writings—from his publications to his theatrical and cinematic productions—will remain enduring in Iran’s artistic memory,” parts of the message read.

“I extend my condolences to his esteemed family, students, artists, and lovers of theater and cinema. I pray to God for mercy and forgiveness for the departed

and patience and strength for his family and loved ones.”

Born in Tehran in 1938, Beyzaie, one of Iran’s most cherished artistic minds, was a multifaceted artist whose work spanned playwriting, filmmaking, and academic scholarship. His artistic vision seamlessly intertwined Persian mythology, epic literature—particularly Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh—and modern social issues, establishing him as a pioneering force in Iran’s cultural renaissance.

Prior to his cinematic career in the 1970s, Beyzaie had already gained recognition as a leading playwright and historian, earning the nickname the Shakespeare of Iran for his mastery of the Persian language and dramatic storytelling. Like Shakespeare he made the history of his country the subject of his plays. His plays are magnificent and his language is cultivated.

His films, including the acclaimed “Bashu, the Little

Stranger” (1986), which was named Iran’s greatest film in a 1999 poll, are considered landmarks of Iranian cinema. Other notable works include “Ballad of Tara” (1979), “Death of Yazdgerd” (1982), and “Killing Mad Dogs” (2001).

Relocating to the United States in 2010, Beyzaie continued to nurture Iranian cultural traditions through his academic endeavors at Stanford University, where he introduced students and audiences worldwide to Persian theater, cinema, and mythology. His teaching and research kept alive the rich heritage of Iran’s artistic history, even as he remained actively engaged in his creative pursuits until the final years of his life.

His dedication culminated in the completion of the manuscript for “Dash Akol According to Marjan,” a project he finalized five years prior to his passing—an achievement reflecting his enduring creative spirit.

Iranian modern artworks on display in Shiraz gallery

TEHRAN – An exhibition of works by renowned Iranian artists such as Hossein Zenderoudi, Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam, Abbas Kiarostami, Parvaneh Ettemadi, Monir Farmanfarmaian, Ardeshir Mohassess, and Lili Matin-Daftari is underway at Pirsook Gallery in Shiraz, Fars Province.

In recent weeks, works by prominent figures of Iranian modern art have been exhibited at Pirsook Gallery. The paintings, sculptures, and installations on view are mostly selected from the private collection of pioneering Iranian artist Fereydoon Ave, curated by the artist himself, ISNA reported.

The exhibition opened on December 5 and was scheduled to run for one month. However, according to Nima Taghavi, director of the gallery, the exhibition will be extended due to strong public interest.

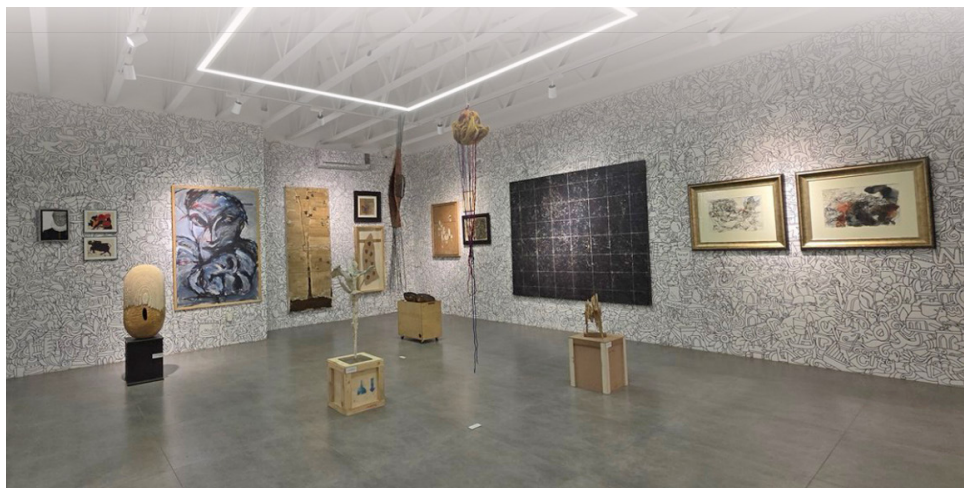
Taghavi explains that he had long planned to organize an exhibition of Iranian artists’ works, but a phone call with the distinguished artist Fereydoon Ave altered the project’s direction.

“I contacted Ave, who was in Paris at the time, and asked him to advise us on organizing the exhibition. He responded very warmly and generously made a significant portion of his private collection available to us,” Taghavi said.

Fereydoon Ave, who resides in Paris, traveled to Shiraz for the exhibition and, according to Taghavi, “also supervised and assisted with the installation of the works.”

Taghavi added that Ave was particularly interested in making Iranian modern and contemporary art accessible to the public. As a result, a diverse selection of works by multiple generations of Iranian artists was chosen for display at Pirsook.

Some of the exhibited works belong to first-generation pioneers of Iranian modern art, such as Hossein Zenderoudi, Lili



Matin-Daftari, Bahman Mohassess, and Ardeshir Mohassess. The exhibition also features works by artists such as Parviz Tanavoli, Farshid Mesghali, and Farhad Moshiri.

Alongside these established figures, works by contemporary painters and sculptors are also presented, including Sareh Abbasian, Morteza Zahedi, Mohammad-Hossein Gholamzadeh, and Sahand Hesamian. In addition, pieces by artists from Shiraz are included.

This broad selection allows visitors to view the evolution of Iranian modern art from a historical perspective. In total, works by 55 artists are on display, creating a rare and diverse exhibition.

Fereydoon Ave himself has expressed surprise at the large number of visitors in Shiraz. “I felt the exhibition was extremely successful. I think at least two thousand people took photos with me. Most of them thanked me for making this collection possible and for giving them the opportunity to see what has been happening in Iranian contemporary art.”

Ave, who has also exhibited some of his own works, added: “If I keep this collection in storage and no one sees it, what purpose does it serve? These days, many people share

artworks online in virtual spaces, but I don’t know how to do that—I’m not from the digital generation. So, I do what I know how to do.”

Fereydoon Ave, 80, is an Iranian art collector, curator, painter, and sculptor. Much of his work draws from the Iranian epic “The Shahnameh,” such as his “Rostam” series.

He was influenced by his friend and mentor Cy Twombly with whom he had a 40-year relationship, sharing a studio at several points in his life. Twombly (1928-2011) was an American painter, photographer, and sculptor, who influenced many other artists such as Anselm Kiefer, Francesco Clemente, Julian Schnabel, and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

As an artist, some of Ave’s works are housed in museums worldwide, including the British Museum, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Victoria & Albert Museum, and the Center Pompidou in Paris.

Ave is also an established curator and his private collection includes works of Cy Twombly, Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, Abbas Kiarostami and Andy Warhol.