

‘Iran as Ready for Diplomacy as It Is for War’



In Ankara, Araghchi restates Tehran's long-held position as neighbors call on Washington to halt escalation against Iran

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (left) meets with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (center) and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan (right) during his visit to Turkey on January 30, 2026.

Qalibaf says Iran will pursue justice for terror riot victims at home and abroad

TEHRAN – Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf has reiterated that Tehran does not reject dialogue or diplomacy in principle, stressing that any negotiations must be genuine, balanced, and grounded in mutual respect, clear guarantees, and the protection of Iran's national interests.

In an interview with CNN published on Thursday, Qalibaf underlined that diplomacy conducted “under the shadow of war” only deepens instability and insecurity. He said Iran remains ready for sincere talks conducted within the framework of international law, but warned that coercion and intimidation have never produced sustainable outcomes.

Qalibaf noted that U.S. President Donald Trump has consistently demonstrated an approach based on pressure rather than diplomacy. He said Trump “has so far shown that he seeks to impose his political views through the threat of war,” a strategy that undermines trust and fuels regional tensions instead of resolving them.

Iran Army bolsters combat power with massive drone integration

TEHRAN — The Iranian Army (Artesh) has officially integrated 1,000 “strategic” drones into the combat organization of its four service branches.

The massive induction on Thursday, executed under a directive from the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Major General Amir Hatami, represents one of the largest single additions of domestically produced hardware to the nation's defense structure in recent years.

The newly deployed fleet includes a diverse array of ground-based and sea-based platforms, encompassing specialized classes for reconnaissance, offensive strikes, destruction, and electronic warfare.

Designed to neutralize both fixed and mobile targets across land, air, and maritime domains, these systems were developed through a high-level collaboration between Army specialists and the Ministry of Defense.

According to a statement released by the Army, the technical specifications of the drones were tailored to counter “modern threats” and incorporate operational lessons harvested from the Israeli-US-12-day war against Iran in June 2025.

Iran to EU: IRGC is world's premier anti-terror vanguard

TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic of Iran has launched a sweeping diplomatic and political counter-offensive following the European Union's decision to classify the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.

In statements on Thursday and Friday, high-ranking officials, military bodies, and ministries characterized the move as a “dangerous heresy” and a desperate act of submission to the dictates of the United States and Israel.

Tehran warned that this violation of international law would trigger immediate, reciprocal measures against European interests and military assets.

This escalation by the EU follows Washington's threats and provocative military buildup in the Middle East, after what Iranian officials consider the defeat of foreign-backed riots and terror attacks that gripped Iran in early January, leading to the death of over 3000.

Iranian authorities have said that U.S. and Israeli intelligence agencies hijacked peaceful economic grievances, transforming them into scenes of organized terrorism.

► Page 2-3

Full list of persons killed in the unrest will be released

TEHRAN – President Masoud Pezeshkian issued an order on Wednesday night to publish the names and identities of all those who were killed in the first ten days of the unrest in January in certain cities across Iran.

Mehdi Tabatabayee, director of the Presidential Office for Communications, said a mechanism has been planned that any information or report contrary to the figure released on January 25 will be thoroughly examined and verified.

“This move is a direct response to distortion and figuration,” Tabatabayee wrote on his X account.

He added that the measure would make those who had resorted to falsification feel ashamed. The Department of Forensic Medicine announced on January 25 that 3,117 people were killed during the unrest in certain cities across Iran. The department said a total of 3,117 individuals lost their lives, with 2,427 recognized as martyrs.



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U.S. seeks an Iran that is subservient, says Chinese expert

TEHRAN- Amid the January unrest in Iran and escalating rhetoric from Washington and Tel Aviv, questions are mounting over whether Western claims of supporting civil liberties mask deeper geopolitical objectives. To explore these dynamics, Tehran Times spoke with Professor Hongda Fan, a prominent Chinese scholar of Middle East affairs.

Fan, a professor at Shanghai International Studies University, offers a critical assessment of U.S. sanctions, media narratives, Israeli calculations, and the broader regional implications of foreign interference amid Iran's internal challenges. ► Page 3

Iran's response to any aggression will be 'immediate, decisive.' Pezeshkian warns

TEHRAN — Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has issued a stern warning against any military miscalculations by foreign powers, asserting that while the Islamic Republic seeks peace, it is fully prepared for a crushing retaliation.

In a series of telephone conversations with regional heads of state on Thursday and Friday, the Iranian president emphasized that the era of coercion is over, describing Iran's stance as one of “dignified diplomacy” backed by an unwavering right to self-defense.

In a call with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Pezeshkian addressed the escalating rhetoric from Washington and the recent deployment of U.S. naval assets. ► Page 2

Iran's non-oil trade tops \$94b in 10 months

TEHRAN – Iran's total non-oil trade reached \$94.123 billion in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2025-January 20, 2026), the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said.

In a report carried by IRNA, customs data showed total trade stood at 163.213 million tons over the period.

In value terms, trade was down 11.36 percent year on year, while volumes rose two percent.

Exports amounted to 130.036 million tons worth \$45.015 billion, up 1.44 percent by weight but down 6.3 percent in value compared with the same period last year. ► Page 4

Israel's admission of Gaza death toll shatters its own denial

By staff writer

TEHRAN — A quiet admission from a senior Israeli military official has opened a door Israel has tried to keep shut for two years. By acknowledging that around 71,000 people have been killed in Gaza, the official effectively confirmed what the Gaza Health Ministry has been reporting since the start of the war.

For months, Israel insisted that Palestinian casualty figures were exaggerated or manipulated. But now, Israel's own estimate lines up almost exactly with the numbers it once dismissed. This convergence exposes something important: the debate was never really about accuracy — it was about avoiding responsibility. ► Page 5

Trump's threats against Iraq could backfire

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The U.S. president's aggressive rhetoric about Iraq's political future may ultimately produce the opposite of its intended effect.

Rather than sidelining Nouri al-Maliki as the nominee for prime minister, threats from the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump risk transforming the politician into a symbol of national defiance.

Controversy erupted after Trump warned that “the United States of America will no longer help Iraq” if al-Maliki were to return to power, adding that without U.S. support, Iraq would have “zero chance of success and prosperity.” The warning strongly suggested that Washington could respond by seizing Iraq's oil revenues held in New York.

Even before Trump's remarks, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio had issued similar statements.

Behind the rhetoric, the administration likely intended these warnings as a deterrent, aimed at discouraging Iraqi lawmakers from supporting al-Maliki's appointment as prime minister in parliament.

Al-Maliki condemned what he described as a “violation of Iraqi sovereignty,” characterizing Trump's threats as “blatant American interference in Iraq's internal affairs.” The Iraqi Presidency, Judiciary and senior officials echoed this view, stating that government formation is a sovereign matter. ► Page 5

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

TEHRAN PAPERS

US officials' disagreement over military attack on Iran

Shargh wrote: U.S. media are reporting serious disagreements within the Trump administration regarding a military attack on Iran; a disagreement between hardline groups that emphasize the implementation of the red line and a group centered on J.D. Vance and Steve Witkoff, who believe that the costs of the war will not bring any tangible gains for the United States. However, some American officials admit that without further strengthening U.S. combat capabilities, it will be difficult to manage Iran's possible response. This concern is also particularly prevalent among U.S. regional allies in the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, Hebrew-language media are referring to an alternative war scenario and believe that Trump will seek a complete naval blockade of Iran, similar to what happened to Venezuela before Maduro's arrest. However, the country's military officials, emphasizing full defense readiness, have announced that they have no specific information about an imminent military action, but are closely monitoring U.S. movements. This situation has brought the foreign policy space to a stage where threats and diplomacy are simultaneously contradictory.

Sisat-e-Rooz: Military establishment authority is a tool of deterrent diplomacy

Sisat-e-Rooz, in an analysis, pointed to Iran's military power that serves as a deterrent against U.S. threats. According to the newspaper, as the U.S. is beefing up its military presence in the region and Trump is once again pursuing deceptive diplomacy under the claim that he is seeking to negotiate, Iran's military authority and threats by military commanders against aggressors have laid the groundwork for deterrent diplomacy in the region. This is why regional countries have insisted in their consultations with Iranian officials and other countries that they will not allow their soil, airspace, or Western countries' military bases in these countries to be used against Iran. The region is currently experiencing escalating military tensions and diplomatic moves. However, evidence shows that this diplomacy is not derived from American power, but rather from Tehran's active regional diplomacy and military power, which have led countries to conclude that without Iran, there will be no stability in the region, and that a conflict between Tehran and Washington could lead to the burning of the entire region. They believe that Iran is not Venezuela, which would surrender to American excesses.

Iran Army bolsters combat power with massive drone integration

From page 1 ► Speaking at the integration ceremony, Major General Hatami emphasized that the continuous advancement of drone capabilities is a cornerstone of national security.

"In accordance with the threats ahead, maintaining and enhancing strategic advantages for rapid combat and a crushing response to any aggressor has always been on the Army's agenda," he stated, according to the statement.

He added that the induction ensures the armed forces remain prepared to deliver a decisive blow to any entity attempting to violate Iran's sovereignty.

For decades, Iran has cultivated a culture of technological sovereignty, turning the pressure of Western sanctions into a catalyst for innovation.

Today, Iranian drones are globally sought after, recognized by international experts for their precision, cost-effectiveness, and combat-proven reliability.

These systems have effectively dismantled the traditional monopoly held by Western powers, offering an asymmetric advantage that prioritizes strategic impact over

Etemad: The future of Middle East geopolitics

Etemad examined the future of Middle East geopolitics. According to the newspaper, the future of Middle East geopolitics is not defined around a single country. Rather based on the competition between two emerging coalitions: the Abraham bloc and the Islamic bloc. On one side of this equation, the Abraham bloc, led by Israel and the United Arab Emirates, is being established. It is an axis that seeks to redesign the regional order by relying on military superiority, advanced technologies, security convergence, and economic integration. The connection of this axis with actors such as Greece and India shows that the goal is not simply to contain Iran, but to build a trans-regional security architecture from the Mediterranean to the Indo-Pacific. On the other side, the Islamic coalition, which is being shaped with the centrality of Saudi Arabia, is accompanied by Turkey, Pakistan, Qatar, and Egypt. It is moving cautiously. This axis introduces itself as a defender of stability and believes that the Israel-UAE axis is pushing the region towards instability by intensifying divisions, interventionism, and a show of power. However, this coalition is not necessarily aligned with Iran's interests, as its goal is to maintain controlled stability and contain any disruptive actor - including Iran - within the framework of its desired order.

Arman-e-Melli: War and diplomacy

After the January events in Iran, the United States has made new statements regarding the country. The Americans have made military threats and offered negotiations. A constant approach that they have usually taken towards Iran. Today, the Americans are trying to force Iran to negotiate, not based on fairness and equality, but to accept their demands, with increasing economic pressure. The arrival of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier in the region sends the message that the Americans still believe in putting pressure on Tehran. Although many analysts are talking about the high possibility of war, it seems that, considering the costs of war in the region and the emergence of an international crisis, regional and even extra-regional countries are warning the United States against starting a war with Iran. In his latest position, Trump has claimed he seeks diplomacy but has made threats again. He hopes the two sides can reach an agreement. However, Iran will not accept either an imposed negotiation or an imposed agreement. Everything must be equal and fair.



exorbitant costs.

The influence of Iranian design has reached a point where even self-proclaimed superpowers are now following Tehran's lead.

Military analysts have noted that the United States has recently moved to replicate the success of Iranian loitering munitions through programs like "LUCAS" and the "MQM-172 Arrowhead," which directly mirror the delta-wing configuration and cost-efficient philosophy of the Shahed-131 and Shahed-136 series.

Furthermore, the development of jet-powered variants such as the Shahed-238 has forced Western defense contractors to rethink their interceptor strategies.

Iran to EU: IRGC is world's premier anti-terror vanguard

FM Araghchi says Europe would be battling ISIS on its own streets without the IRGC

From page 1 ► Foreign-trained rioters attacked clinics, ambulances, and mosques, acting on the public incitement of Western leaders, according to security bodies.

Warnings of reciprocal action

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the "fraudulent" claims of European concern for human rights, noting their silence and complicity in Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Meanwhile, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani warned that, per parliamentary legislation, the militaries of participating European countries will now be treated as terrorist entities.

Ali Shamkhani, an advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, wrote that the West no longer defines terrorism but "consumes" it as a political tool.

Parliament Speaker Mohamad-Baqer Qalibaf said that only those standing on the side of terrorists could deny the IRGC's record in defeating ISIS, warning that Europe's "law of the jungle" approach will yield nothing but profound regret.

Military leadership slams 'blind obedience'

The General Staff of the Armed Forces issued a blistering statement, describing the EU's decision as an "irrational and spiteful" act of



"blind obedience" to the anti-human policies of Washington and Tel Aviv.

The top military body emphasized that the IRGC is a legal, sovereign institution rooted in the will of the Iranian people and has consistently stood as the primary wall of defense against Western-sponsored state terrorism.

The statement questioned the audacity of European leaders who, to appease figures like Trump and Netanyahu, accuse an anti-terrorism powerhouse of the very crimes it has sacrificed thousands of martyrs to prevent.

The Army (Artesh) further contextualized the hostility, reminding the world of Europe's dark history during

the Sacred Defense in the 1980s.

It noted that these same European nations supplied chemical weapons and advanced military hardware to Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime, contributing to the martyrdom of 17,000 Iranians.

Today, the Army asserted, a "weakened and marginalized Europe is resorting to psychological warfare to curry favor with the U.S. president," hoping for support in its own crises, including the war in Ukraine and the internal erosion of NATO.

Systematic rejection of judicial overreach

The Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics denounced the designation as a "vindictive and

hasty" reaction to the failure of foreign-designed plots against Iran.

Legally, the ministry argued that the EU has committed two fundamental errors: attempting to criminalize the sovereignty of a state—which is a legal impossibility—and violating the UN Charter's principle of non-interference.

It described the EU's move as a sign of "civilizational collapse" and a total abandonment of human values.

Europe's security debt

Speaking at a press conference in Istanbul, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi delivered a sharp reality check to Brussels, asserting that the EU has made a "big mistake" that they will soon be forced to remedy.

He pointed out what he considers the blatant ingratitude of European countries, stating that they "do not appreciate what has been done for them," and that the IRGC "actually saved the world from a major terrorist organization."

Araghchi warned that had it not been for the IRGC's sacrifices, the fight against ISIS and other takfiri groups would have failed, and European citizens "would be battling against Daesh [ISIS] and other terrorist organizations on the streets of Europe" today.

Qalibaf says Iran will pursue justice for terror riot victims at home and abroad

Parliament Speaker tells CNN genuine dialogue requires respect, guarantees, and peace

From page 1 ► The Iranian parliament speaker also pointed to Washington's military aggression against Iran in June 2025, noting that it occurred just two days before the sixth round of indirect talks between Tehran and Washington. The timing, he said, revealed a clear contradiction between claims of diplomacy and actions on the ground.

"As long as there are no guarantees for the rights of the Iranian nation, as long as the economic interests of our people are not secured, and as long as Iran's dignity is not respected, there can be no talk of negotiations," Qalibaf said. "We do not consider dictation, imposition, or surrender to be negotiation."

He added that if Trump genuinely seeks "real peace" and believes he deserves recognition such as the Nobel Peace Prize, he must first abandon



threats and take concrete steps toward justice and respect for international norms. These remarks come as Trump has escalated hostile rhetoric and threatened new military action, while the

United States has deployed the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and its strike group to West Asia near Iran.

Elsewhere in the interview, Qalibaf said Iran will pursue justice for the victims of recent terrorist riots through domestic courts as well as international legal mechanisms. "These crimes must be documented, and their perpetrators must be held accountable," he said, calling the loss of more than 2,500 lives a "bitter tragedy" and an "absolute duty" to pursue accountability.

Describing the Iranian nation as a victim of terrorism, Qalibaf said the violence was the result of foreign-orchestrated plots, adding that the killing of nearly 300 police officers in just two days reflected an organized, Daesh-like campaign aimed at engineering a "quasi-coup" through terror.

Iran's response to any aggression will be 'immediate, decisive:' Pezeshkian warns

From page 1 ► He stated that strengthening brotherly bonds and Islamic unity are the pillars of his administration, but these should not be mistaken for a lack of resolve.

Addressing potential threats, the president declared: "Any aggression against the country and the nation of Iran will be responded to immediately and decisively."

He added that while Iran pursues interaction based on mutual respect, it views the current Western approach as a violation of international law and a failure of practical diplomacy.

The president's message remained consistent during a detailed exchange with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the same day.

The two leaders discussed the

necessity of resolving regional issues through dialogue rather than "war-inciting" provocations.

Pezeshkian reiterated that for any diplomatic initiative to succeed, all parties must prove their good faith by abandoning threats.

He characterized Iran's approach as a "win-win logic" that rejects the use of force but remains committed to protecting the nation's integrity under the framework of international regulations.

The diplomatic outreach comes as the United States intensifies its military posturing in the waters of the Middle East.

U.S. President Donald Trump has dispatched the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group—which he labeled a "beautiful armada"—in an

overt attempt to force Tehran into a lopsided negotiation.

Trump has further threatened military strikes "far worse" than previous operations if Iran does not comply with U.S. demands.

Senior Iranian officials have dismissed this as a failed "gunboat diplomacy" strategy that will only deepen regional instability. They have also said Iran's response to any aggression will be "immediate, comprehensive, and unprecedented."

In separate discussions with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, Pezeshkian thanked the neighboring nations for their consistent solidarity.

He remarked that if the U.S. tru-

ly desired genuine negotiations, it would cease its destabilizing actions. "Iran has never been the initiator of war and does not welcome conflict," he noted. But he made a crucial distinction: "We will not allow ourselves to be threatened or attacked while negotiating."

The leaders of Qatar and Pakistan expressed their opposition to any measures—military, economic, or political—targeting Iran's sovereignty.

They warned that any escalation would trigger a "disastrous cycle of violence" with global consequences, commending Tehran's logical and responsible prioritization of regional dialogue over foreign-imposed confrontation.

Tehran warns Berlin of consequences following Merz's 'low-minded provocations'

TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Thursday summoned German Ambassador Axel Dittmann on Thursday to deliver a condemnation of Berlin's increasingly aggressive interference in Iran's internal affairs.

The diplomatic move follows "interventionist and low-minded" remarks by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who recently echoed Washington's hostile rhetoric by claiming the Islamic Republic's "days are numbered."

Alireza Yousefi, the Foreign Ministry Director-General for Western Europe, met with the envoy to lodge a formal protest against the "irresponsible positions" of German leadership.

He specifically criticized Merz's recent press conference assertions—where the Chancellor ac-

cused Tehran of maintaining power through "violence and terror"—noting that such remarks serve as a green light for foreign-backed rioters who have recently attempted to destabilize the country under the guise of civil unrest.

During the session, Yousefi dismantled Germany's attempt to occupy the moral high ground, reminding Dittmann of Berlin's dark history of providing chemical weapons to Iraq's Saddam Hussein's regime during his war against Iran in the 1980s.

He emphasized that a state that refuses to compensate victims of its chemical weapons and maintains "comprehensive support for the genocide of Palestinians" has no standing to lecture Iranians on human rights.

Furthermore, the ministry condemned Germany's provocative stance during Israel's 12-day war on Iran last June, characterizing Berlin as a partner in regional aggression.

The German ambassador stated he would relay Tehran's firm message back to Berlin.

Germany's recent anti-Iran positions have intensified under Merz, marked by unwavering alignment with U.S. and Israeli pressures.

Berlin actively pushed for the European Union's designation of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.

Such actions reveal Berlin's double standards, as it overlooks Israel's violations while interfering in Iran's internal affairs and supporting efforts to undermine its sovereignty.

‘Iran as ready for diplomacy as it is for war’

In Ankara, Araghchi restates Tehran’s long-held position as neighbors call on Washington to halt escalation against Iran

By Saleh Abidi Maleki

TEHRAN – Iran’s foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, arrived in the Turkish capital on Friday with a message for Washington that was as firm as it was measured: Tehran remains open to a diplomatic resolution regarding its nuclear program, but it will not negotiate under duress, nor will it hesitate to engage in total war if the United States miscalculates again.

The visit comes at a precarious moment in West Asia. Following a violent but ultimately inconclusive war initiated by the U.S. and Israel in June, the region is bracing for the possibility of a second, more expansive confrontation.

Speaking alongside his Turkish counterpart, Hakan Fidan, Araghchi projected the confidence of a country that believes it has weathered the worst of Washington’s “maximum pressure” campaign. He dismissed the utility of American military posturing in the Persian Gulf, describing Iran’s readiness for dialogue not as a sign of weakness, but as a strategic preference that has its limits.

“If the negotiations are fair and just, Iran is ready to participate,” Araghchi said during a joint press conference. “But negotiations cannot take shape under the shadow of threats. We will by no means accept dictation and imposition.”

The diplomatic overtures in Ankara were set against the backdrop of significant hostilities in the past seven months. In June, while indirect nuclear talks mediated by Oman were nominally underway, President Donald Trump authorized a military offensive intended to dismantle the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) framework permanently. The summer campaign resulted in the deaths of over 1,000 Iranians and damaged specific nuclear facilities. However, the offensive failed to degrade Tehran’s core nuclear capabilities or force the concessions the White House had demanded, specifically regarding the dismantling of Iran’s missile program and the severance of ties with regional Resistance groups.

Tehran’s ability to absorb the ini-



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) and his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan attend a press conference in Ankara on Friday

tial strike and retaliate with precision missile barrages against occupied territories and the largest American base in West Asia forced a cessation of hostilities after less than two weeks. Araghchi warned on Friday that the United States should not assume a second conflict would be as contained, echoing similar warnings from Iranian generals in recent days.

“We are even more prepared than before the 12-day war,” the foreign minister said. He cautioned that any future American aggression would be met with “previously unexplored options,” a comment analysts interpret as a reference to closing the Strait of Hormuz—a maneuver Iranian naval forces are scheduled to practice this week—or direct targeting of American troop concentrations in the region.

The specter of renewed conflict has been compounded by recent internal unrest in Iran, which was seen as an orchestrated prelude to a second American invasion.

While the protests began over economic grievances stemming from years of U.S. sanctions, Iranian intelligence reports released this month detailed a covert operation by the C.I.A. and Mossad to hijack the demonstrations. Officials say foreign operatives injected armed provocateurs into the crowds, turn-

ing peaceful gatherings into deadly riots marked by bloodletting and destruction in several cities.

Trump had signalled in early January that he was preparing a military intervention to support the “protesters.” However, Iranian security forces moved swiftly to arrest the armed elements and restore order, effectively scrapping Washington’s invasion plans, which relied on internal destabilization as a force multiplier.

With the “regime change” narrative collapsing after the restoration of order, Trump has reverted to conventional military signaling, building up naval assets in the Persian Gulf. The American president said this week that his next attack against Iran would be “far worse” if the country does not sign the deal he wants.

The failure of the summer war to disarm Iran, combined with the neutralization of the foreign-backed riots, has left Washington with few viable military options that do not risk a regional conflagration.

During the Friday press conference, Turkey, a NATO member, firmly sided with its neighbor against the prospect of further American intervention, becoming one of the several regional countries asking the Trump administration to refrain from the dangerous escalation of tensions

with Iran in recent days.

Hakan Fidan, the Turkish foreign minister, voiced strong opposition to any military action against Tehran, warning that Israel was actively trying to drag the United States into a disastrous war to serve its own expansionist ambitions.

“Israel’s efforts have the potential to cause great harm to our region’s fragile stability,” Fidan said, adding that he had conveyed Ankara’s opposition to military intervention to U.S. officials “at every opportunity.”

The two diplomats emphasized that regional security must be indigenous, free from “illegitimate interventions by extra-regional powers.”

Despite the bellicose rhetoric emanating from Washington, Araghchi reiterated that the door to diplomacy remains slightly ajar—provided the terms are honorable. He confirmed that the U.S. government has continued to seek contact through intermediaries, though he noted that “no plan has yet been arranged” for direct meetings.

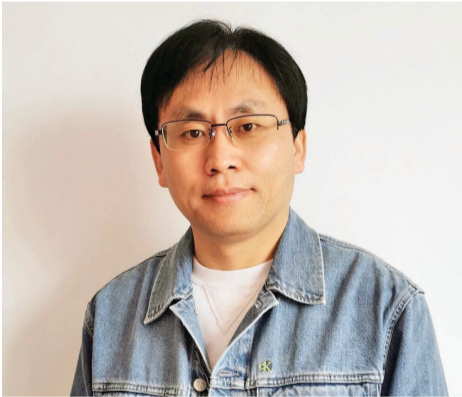
Araghchi also drew sharp red lines. The foreign minister clarified that Iran’s defensive doctrines are non-negotiable, a position the country has maintained for decades.

“Iran’s defensive capability and missiles will never be the subject of any negotiation,” Araghchi said, pushing back against demands Trump has been wielding since 2018. “The security of the Iranian people is not related to anyone else.”

For now, Tehran appears willing to wait, bolstering its alliances in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen—all of whom have pledged to intervene if the U.S. attacks—while offering Washington a choice: a return to fair negotiations based on mutual respect, or a conflict that Iranian officials promise will be far more costly than the last.

“I hope rationality prevails,” Araghchi said, “and those who seek to drag the region into an all-out war fail in their objectives.”

Both Araghchi and the Turks struck similar positions during the foreign minister’s subsequent meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.



causes of the unrest in Iran certainly lie internally, external interference cannot be ignored. Other Middle Eastern countries with security risks, particularly those in the Persian Gulf, cannot afford to ignore this issue. In short, the geopolitical restructuring in the Middle East is far from over.

Could U.S. and Israeli interference backfire, strengthening Iranian unity against foreign pressure?

This depends on Tehran’s policies. Iran’s current crisis didn’t develop overnight. If Tehran’s policymakers want to inspire national unity against external threats, they must give Iranians hope for the country’s future. I believe in the patriotism of the Iranian people, but I also believe they need more hope from official policies.

strike was announced.

Therefore, while US forces are an asset when controlling territory, they become a weakness when they can be targeted and harmed. Even if Iran were subjected to large-scale destruction affecting electronic systems, infrastructure, or communications, it would be capable of overcoming such damage and would not collapse.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Female taekwondo athlete Kiani sidelined for six weeks

TEHRAN – Iranian female taekwondo athlete Nahid Kiani underwent knee surgery on Thursday. She sustained an injury to her right knee. After reviewing medical documents and consulting with specialists, it was decided that the meniscus of her right knee would be operated on.

Kiani was discharged on Thursday and will begin rehabilitation with hydrotherapy and physiotherapy after the rest period.

She should begin rehabilitation training in six weeks, followed by technical training to prepare for competition, subject to the coaching staff’s discretion.

It is worth noting that Talat Moradi, Vice President of the Federation, and Zahra Hosseini, head of the national women’s teams, were present at the hospital during Kiani’s surgery and discharge.

Jalal Omidian named Zob Ahan coach: PGPL

TEHRAN – Zob Ahan Football Club have parted ways with head coach Ghasem Haddadifar following a series of poor results in the 2025/26 Iran Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

After Haddadifar’s dismissal, Jalal Omidian has been appointed as the new head coach of the Isfahan-based team.

Zob Ahan Isfahan Cultural and Sports Club announced the decision in an official statement:

Zob Ahan Isfahan Cultural and Sports Club hereby expresses its appreciation and gratitude for the sincere efforts of Ghasem Haddadifar, the esteemed legend of Zob Ahan football, who over many years as a player and during the recent season as head coach rendered valuable services and achieved numerous honors. Due to the club’s current position in the Iranian Premier League standings and the need for a change in approach to reach the club’s true and deserved status, the Board of Directors has decided to entrust the leadership of the senior football team to Jalal Omidian, a former player and one of the distinguished coaches of Zob Ahan Isfahan.

Iran defeat Saudi Arabia in 2026 AFC Futsal Asian Cup

TEHRAN – Iran survived a stern test to defeat Saudi Arabia 2-0 in their AFC Futsal Asian Cup Indonesia 2026 Group D tie on Friday.

The defending champions had to withstand heavy pressure from Saudi Arabia throughout the match before two second half goals put them in a strong position to advance to the knockout stage.

Saudi Arabia took the game to Iran from the opening whistle with Bagher Mohammadi having to make multiple stops to deny efforts from Eihab Mohamed and Saleh Alqarni.

Despite being put under intense pressure, Iran forced a chance in the seventh minute when Saied Ahmad Abbasi was sent through on goal in a quick breakaway but saw his low shot kept out by Humood Aldahhan’s outstretched leg, the-afc.com reported.

Rotating their players with regular frequency, Saudi Arabia were able to keep their intensity high throughout the first half, forcing Mohammadi to make another good save in the 10th minute after Moath Alasiri had broken through.

As the first half edged towards its end, Iran started to find gaps with Aldahhan having to be at his best to make a double save, first from Behrooz Azimi then getting back on his feet to block out Salar Aghapour’s follow-up header.

Iran did find the net when Azimi fired home from Aghapour’s corner delivery but the goal

was ruled out after Video Support review with the half-time buzzer having sounded before the ball went in.

After the break, Mohammadi showed why he’s one of the best in the game, coming out of his goalmouth to block successive efforts from Abdullah Alaqeeli and Alqarni after Nawaf Aroan started the play with a run out of defence.

Saudi Arabia, however, spurned a great opportunity in the 25th minute after an interchange of passes between Alaqeeli and Alasiri took the Iranian keeper out of position but the former scuffed his shot wide with the goalmouth gaping.

Against the run of play, Iran broke the deadlock in the 29th minute after Ahmad Abbasi’s strike had been turned away for a corner kick with Moslem Oladghobad’s delivery nodded in by Amirhossein Gholami.

Saudi Arabia went for broke in their search for the equalizer but their efforts were in vain with Mohammadi securing the win for Iran with a stunning volley in the 35th minute from almost the full length of the court.

Iran had defeated Malaysia 4-1 in their opening match and will fight Afghanistan on Sunday in Group D.

Esteghlal, Didier Ibrahim Ndong part company

TEHRAN – The contract of Esteghlal’s Gambian defensive midfielder Didier Ibrahim Ndong has finally been terminated, and this player, who had terminated his contract with Esteghlal again before the winter transfer window closed, can move to a new team as a FIFA free agent.

The player has terminated his contract with Esteghlal for the second time, and this time the separation is completely and officially sealed; Ndong will no longer be part of Esteghlal’s squad and should effectively be regarded as separated from Esteghlal.

The Ndong saga began when he was called up to his national team’s camp to participate in the Africa Cup of Nations, and suddenly news of his contract termination by his agent was released. At first, the club did not respond officially, and Esteghlal believed that the termination procedure had not been legally completed. Although there remains some ambiguity about whether the termination was legally valid, an email that his agent sent to Esteghlal and FIFA essentially marked the beginning of the end of the cooperation between the two parties.

Bahrain seal historic win against Qatar to be crowned Asian champions

TEHRAN – After five finals lost between 2010 and 2022, Bahrain finally managed to secure their maiden title at the AHF Asian Men’s Handball Championship, after a dramatic final against Qatar, where Robert Hedin’s side squandered a three-goal lead in the last three minutes of the regular time, only to bounce back and secure a 29:26 win in overtime.

Bahrain had finished second in their main round group, after a 21:23 loss against Saudi Arabia, therefore had to meet the first-placed side in the other group, Japan, in the semi-finals.

After Japan had beaten Bahrain two years ago, in the same phase of the continental championship, Bahrain delivered a perfectly-pitched performance, dominating the semi-final against their rivals, 35:25, after Jasim Khamis scored 10 goals and Mohamed Naser Mohamed added eight more goals, to seal the sixth finals berth for Bahrain in the last nine editions.

The second semi-final was an even more interesting proposition, a true roller coaster, which saw title holders Qatar face off against hosts Kuwait. After 30 minutes, Kuwait, led by coach Aron Kristjansson, had a five-goal lead, 13:8, which grew to six goals immediately after the start of the second half.

U.S. seeks an Iran that is subservient, says Chinese expert

Hongda Fan warns U.S. and Israeli interference could reshape regional alliances

From Page 1 ► Below is the full text of the interview:

Trump publicly encouraged Iranian protesters by promising that “help is coming.” From your perspective, is this genuine support for civil liberties, or a deliberate attempt to destabilize Iran politically and economically?

Forcing Tehran to submit, following last year’s 12-day war, has been the fundamental objective of the U.S. and Israel regarding Iran. President Trump’s support for Iranian protests and military threats serve this objective. This has little to do with supporting civil liberties. The U.S. needs an Iran that is subservient and poses no threat to Israel.

How do U.S. sanctions and economic measures, combined with public rhetoric, function as tools of strategic interference to amplify unrest and weaken Iranian sovereignty?

Frankly speaking, it is a fact that discontent is growing within Iran. Amidst this internal unrest, U.S. actions can exacerbate Iran’s internal conflicts. Both sanctions and public rhetoric can achieve this. Tehran has given external forces far too much room for intervention. Of course, the United States’ behavior is very domineering.

Israel has openly aligned with the U.S. in provoking protests in Iran. How do you evaluate Israel’s role in potentially exploiting domestic

unrest in Iran?

Compared to the United States, Israel takes a tougher stance towards the Islamic Republic, hoping to weaken or even overthrow it. Every instance of internal turmoil in Iran presents an opportunity for Israel. To date, I believe the Iran-Israel confrontation is the most acute conflict in the Middle East.

Western media often highlight protests while ignoring foreign involvement. How does this selective framing serve U.S. and Israeli geopolitical objectives?

Western media’s focus on the internal protests in Iran is evident. This phenomenon isn’t limited to Iran; it’s also seen in their coverage of unrest in other countries affected by external influences. This is a common practice in Western media reporting on developing countries. Undeniably, some of the reporting by American and Israeli media on the Iranian unrest does serve their national objectives. Furthermore, I personally believe that the high death toll in this Iranian unrest is also a reason for their reporting in this way.

How do U.S. and Israeli actions during these protests affect regional alliances, security dynamics, and the balance of power in the Middle East?

Iran is not the only country in the Middle East with security concerns. Israel also has its share of countries it dislikes in the region. While the root

achieving results in a confrontation with Iran, given the size of the US military buildup in the region, even while the Islamic Republic is under maximum economic and political pressure, it is insufficient to topple a country like Iran through air or naval strikes, while a ground invasion is impossible. Iran’s capacity to respond by targeting US bases must be taken into account, particularly given the number of such bases abroad, some of which were evacuated as soon as a

Regarding the possibility of

New Iranian vessel to be unveiled in Caspian Sea, co-op with Russia planned in 200 petchem projects



TEHRAN – Iran will unveil a new vessel in the Caspian Sea next week as part of efforts to expand cargo transport capacity, particularly container shipping, Iran's ambassador to Russia said.

Kazem Jalali made the remarks at a meeting with Iranian traders and business representatives attending the Ruplastica petrochemical exhibition in Moscow, according to a statement from the Iranian embassy.

He said the International North–South Transit Corridor (INSTC) currently offers the shortest, most cost-effective route for Eurasia, especially Russia, to access global markets, cutting the Mumbai-to-Europe route from about 17,000 kilometers via the Suez Canal to around 7,000 kilometers.

Jalali also cited a plan to transfer Russian gas via Iran as a key bilateral project and called for faster implementation, while

pointing to Russia's nearly \$300 billion in annual imports as a significant opportunity for Iran's private sector.

He said economic ties between the two countries' private sectors had suffered a century-long disconnect, limiting mutual awareness of available capacities, and stressed the need for better targeting of Russia's market.

Separately, Mehdi Heidari, deputy economy minister and head of the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran, said the groundwork had been laid for cooperation between Iran and Russia in more than 200 petrochemical projects.

He said Iran's national pavilion at the Ruplastica exhibition had expanded compared with previous years and described Russia's infrastructure and market conditions as favorable for broader bilateral cooperation in the petrochemical sector.

\$1.2b allocated for basic goods imports in 2

TEHRAN – Iran has allocated \$12 billion in foreign currency over the past two weeks to import basic goods, Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri said, adding that special trade “green lines” have been established, particularly with neighboring countries, to facilitate imports.

Speaking on Wednesday at a meeting of the agricultural subsidy system reform task force, Nouri said supporting the production, distribution and consumption chains of agricultural products and essential goods is being pursued with particular sensitivity by the government and the Ministry of Agriculture.

He said international law prohibits sanc-

tions on food and medicine, noting that while restrictions may target transportation and raise costs, sanctions on people's food are banned under humanitarian principles.

Nouri added that since the start of the 14th administration, Iran has pursued active economic and agricultural diplomacy, with international engagement in the agricultural sector expanding in recent months, especially after the 12-day conflict.

He said trade green lines, particularly with neighboring countries, have been created to fully utilize import capacities for essential goods.

More than 22MW of solar capacity connected to grid in 6 provinces

TEHRAN – More than 22 megawatts of solar power capacity has been connected to Iran's national electricity grid across six provinces over the past three months, reflecting the continued expansion of renewable energy projects, state media reported.

A total of 10 solar power plants became operational during the months of Aban, Azar and Dey, with projects coming online in Isfahan, Khorasan, Hamedan, Markazi, Zanjan and Fars provinces, according to data from the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA).

Several plants with capacities ranging from 100 kilowatts to two megawatts were connected under guaranteed power purchase schemes or through the green electricity board of the Iran Energy Exchange.

Larger projects included the first phase of a 10-megawatt solar plant in Fars province and a three-megawatt facility in Zanjan.

SATBA said the sealing of power plant



meters, the final step before commercial operation, has accelerated in recent months following faster project implementation and grid connection procedures.

Under Energy Ministry regulations, meter sealing is carried out after technical inspections are completed, allowing electricity generation to be formally recorded for monitoring and financial settlement.

Iran's non-oil trade tops \$94b in 10 months

From Page 1 ▶ Imports totaled 33.177 million tons valued at \$49.107 billion, marking a 4.6 percent rise in volume but a 15.6 percent decline in value year on year.

Iran exported non-oil goods worth \$41.243 billion in the first nine months of the current Iranian year (March 21–December 21, 2025), customs data showed, as shipment volumes rose slightly despite a decline in export value.

According to figures released by IIRICA, Iran shipped 118.901 million tons of goods abroad during the period, marking a one percent increase in volume



compared with the same period last year.

The value of exports, however, fell 5.78 percent year on year.

The data showed that Iran's total foreign trade in the nine-month period amounted to 148.226 million tons valued at \$85.394 billion.

Overall trade value declined 10.92 percent from a year earlier, while total trade volume increased 1.36 percent.

Imports accounted for 29.325 million tons of goods worth \$44.151 billion, customs figures showed.

Import volumes rose 2.75 percent compared with the same period last year, while their value dropped 15.23 percent.

The figures point to continued pressure on trade revenues amid lower values, even as the physical volume of exports and imports recorded modest growth.

Private sector seen doubling exports to Eurasian markets

TEHRAN – Iran's private sector and traders have the capacity to double exports to some member states of the Eurasian Economic Union, a senior trade official said.

Sadreddin Niavarani, vice chairman of the Iran Chamber of Commerce's export development committee, said exports to Eurasian Economic Union members rose 16 percent in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21–November 22, 2025).

He said Iranian exporters could increase agricultural shipments to markets such as Russia by as much as fivefold, replacing foreign competitors.

Niavarani said implementation of the free trade agreement with the Eurasian bloc had helped advance Iran's export sector, adding that government measures to facilitate access for private companies and traders to markets such as Eurasia encourage exporters and ultimately boost shipments.

He also highlighted the importance of infrastructure development, including rail transport and refrigerated rail freight for fruit and food products, in expanding exports to Eurasian Economic Union countries.

Iran's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has increased the competitive status of Iranian products.

The agreement has created new opportunities for the promotion of Iran's trade with the five members of the union.

As the experts believe, it seems that economic cooperation between Iran and the EAEU will become a turning point in the near future.

The implementation of this agreement, which entered its operational phase in May, has created new opportunities for boosting Iran's trade with the five member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union. Iran's free trade agreement with Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan has laid the groundwork for facilitating the export of goods, reducing tariffs, and increasing the competitiveness of Iranian products.

Experts believe that this agreement will not only strengthen Iran's export capacities but will also lead to the development of stable, long-term economic relations between Iran and the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union.

In mid-August, Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), said that steel and petrochemicals are expected to account for 50 percent of the objectives set under Iran's free trade agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

He said the FTA, which entered into force on May 15, 2025, is unprecedented for Iran, reducing tariffs on 87 percent of traded goods.

He noted that while previous preferential trade agreements with the EAEU had expanded trade volumes, this latest agreement presents a unique opportunity for deeper integration.

“Trade agreements create both opportunities and challenges. The overall outcome is positive for both sides if vulnerabilities are addressed and opportunities maximized,” Dehnavi said. He emphasized that steel and petrochemical industries are major drivers of production and exports, and leveraging them effectively could achieve half of Iran's FTA objectives.

The official called on the private sector to actively engage in Eurasian markets, pointing to research identifying which Iranian products have the highest export potential. “Private companies should focus on maximizing profitability, while policymakers ensure collective benefits such as employment, economic growth, and foreign currency inflows,” he said.

Dehnavi also noted that export opportunities vary across member states, highlighting Russia as one of the most lucrative markets

for Iranian products and promising further studies to optimize engagement in the region.

The official emphasized the necessity of removing non-tariff barriers between Iran and Eurasian Union member countries, stating: “One such issue lies in the areas of standards and removing transportation obstacles. Currently, connectivity has been established on the eastern side of the Caspian Sea, and on the western side, the Rasht–Astara railway project is being pursued. New railway routes via Nakhchivan and Armenia are also under consideration. In the field of standards, a major non-tariff barrier is the lack of a common standard language between Iran and Eurasian countries, as differences in standard systems have caused problems for Iranian producers. Removing this obstacle can pave the way for export development.”

The head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran stressed the importance of promotional activities and increasing mutual understanding between traders of both sides, adding: “Creating spaces for dialogue, negotiation, and contract signing among economic actors is very important, and trade exhibitions are considered the most organized tool for achieving this goal.”

Iran's Free Trade Agreement with Eurasian Economic Union has increased competitive status of Iranian products.

“Currently, the private sector, especially in the medical equipment field, has been successful in this path and has managed to achieve significant exports to Eurasian countries by registering their products.”

Referring to the role of customs in implementing the free trade agreement, Dehghan Dehnavi stated: “In the customs domain, Iran Customs has played an effective role in the joint committee negotiations. One important action is moving towards the electronic exchange of information, which can remove part of the non-tariff barriers. Additionally, good measures have been taken in rail transportation; the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways has reached important agreements with Eurasian countries and active railway routes have been established. However, in road transportation, we still face problems such as prolonged waiting times for trucks, which harms exports. This sector requires more serious measures.”

In early December, Amir Roshan, deputy head of the TPO, told a coordination meeting that this year's Eurasia International Trade Exhibition, which will be held from February 1 to 4, has been structured to highlight regional economic cooperation and ensure high-level attendance. He said hosting costs for official delegations and chambers of commerce representatives from EAEU member states will be covered under existing protocols and approved budgets to encourage broad participation.

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

The second will review the International North–South Transit Corridor (INSTC), which is expected to ease access for regional, European and Arab markets through Iran.

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

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

Roshan said invitations have been sent to ministers and senior economic officials from

regional countries, and about one hundred sixty companies have been invited to participate as exhibitors or visitors.

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

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

“We not only avoided a drop in exports, but recorded significant growth in exchanges with Eurasian countries,” he said, adding that the agreement helped keep Iran's trade balance from turning negative amid regional instability and wartime disruptions.

Roshan said the Foreign Ministry and the TPO are fully prepared to organize business-to-business meetings and facilitate procedures related to the event. He expressed hope that coordinated work across government agencies would help the exhibition advance Iran's trade objectives with Eurasia.

The official statistics indicate that Iran's trade with the Eurasian Economic Union has followed an upward trend in recent years. According to the IIRICA report, the value of trade between Iran and member countries of this union has risen from \$2.5 billion in the past to nearly \$5 billion currently. This growth is a clear sign of the positive impact of implementing Iran's preferential trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, and forecasts suggest that under current conditions, this trade value could be assessed at up to \$20 billion.

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According to Elham Haji Karimi, head of the Iran–EAEU FTA secretariat, the agreement, signed in December 2023 after more than two years of negotiations, covers 11 chapters, including trade in goods, technical measures, sanitary standards, rules of origin, customs cooperation, dispute resolution, government procurement, and sectoral cooperation in transport, energy, automotive industries, and free trade zones.

China leads the agenda: Xi–Starmer talks highlight the limits of US unilateralism

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s visit to China has highlighted a broader shift in global diplomacy, showcasing the contrast between nations willing to engage Beijing and the unilateral approach pursued by US President Donald Trump.

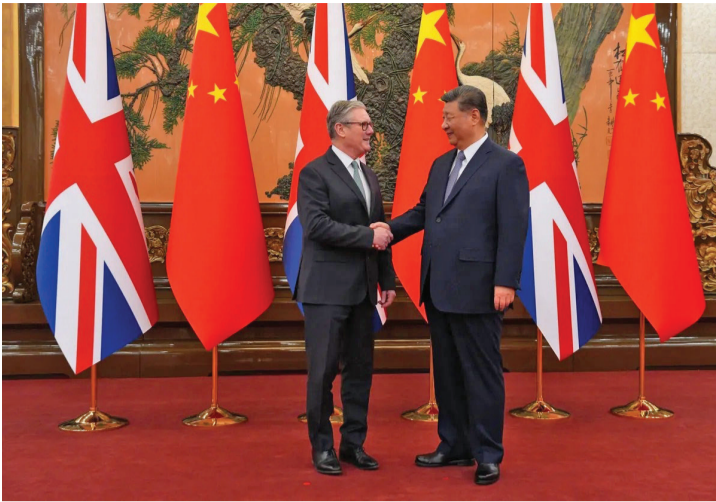
Hitting back at critics, including Conservative politicians who accused him of “kowtowing” to China, Starmer argued that “it would be foolhardy to sit with your head in the sand and refuse to engage.” He emphasized that engagement allows countries not only to pursue opportunities but also to raise “difficult and sensitive issues” through direct dialogue rather than avoidance.

Starmer’s meeting with Xi Jinping

A central moment of the trip was Starmer’s meeting with President Xi Jinping, the first such encounter between a UK prime minister and the Chinese leader in several years. The talks produced tangible outcomes: China agreed to reduce tariffs on certain UK products, ease visa rules, and explore further market access for British services. Xi described the visit as constructive and signaled openness to deeper cooperation, underscoring Beijing’s interest in stabilizing ties with London.

Clash with Trump

Trump publicly rebuked Starmer, describing closer UK–China ties as “very dangerous.” His criticism extended beyond the UK, as he has also threatened Canada with 100% tariffs if Ottawa pursued



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer meets Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, Jan. 29. Photo: Carl Court/Getty Images

a trade agreement with Beijing. These statements illustrate Trump’s reliance on coercive, unilateral tactics rather than negotiation or multilateral engagement.

Starmer downplayed the severity of Trump’s remarks, noting that much of the warning was directed at Canada. He underscored the importance of dialogue and mutual benefit, revealing a stark divergence: while some Western leaders pursue engagement, the US administration under Trump continues to emphasize threats and pressure.

Trump’s planned China Visit

Adding further nuance, Trump himself has announced plans to visit China in April. This trip underscores the strategic importance of Beijing, even as he publicly criticizes other countries for engaging with China. Expected topics include easing visa access

for US executives and expanding commercial ties. For China, hosting Trump reinforces its global centrality and diplomatic strength, demonstrating that even its most vocal critics cannot ignore Beijing’s role in global trade and diplomacy.

European engagement

Starmer’s visit mirrors a broader European trend. Germany has engaged China over the past year, balancing economic opportunities with strategic concerns. Chancellor Friedrich Merz is set to visit China in February. French President Emmanuel Macron has also recently traveled to China, emphasizing Europe’s desire to maintain open channels with Beijing. These interactions show that Europe approaches China pragmatically, seeking cooperation while managing geopolitical risks.

China’s global strategy

China’s foreign policy emphasizes win-win cooperation and a shared future for mankind. These principles resonate with members of the Global South, developing economies, and even European partners who value constructive and results-oriented diplomacy. Through consistent engagement, infrastructure projects, trade agreements, and investment partnerships, China has expanded influence across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

The cost of unilateralism

Trump’s approach, with tariff threats and public admonishments, highlights the limitations of coercive unilateralism. While intended to assert leverage, such measures risk isolating the United States from traditional allies and push countries toward independent engagement with China. Starmer’s visit, along with Europe’s outreach, exemplifies a strategy of engagement: using dialogue to secure economic and strategic advantages without alienating partners.

China’s consistent emphasis on cooperation, shared prosperity, and multilateral partnerships continues to attract a wide range of global actors. Even critics must engage directly, as evidenced by Trump’s upcoming visit. In today’s multipolar world, pragmatic engagement with China is increasingly central to international diplomacy, highlighting the limits of unilateralism and the enduring appeal of cooperative foreign policy.

Lebanon’s 2026 budget: A state between social anger, political confusion, and regional fire

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Lebanon’s Parliament has approved the 2026 state budget by 59 votes in favor, 34 against, and 11 abstentions, closing three turbulent days of debate that exposed far more than fiscal disagreements.

The final session was marked by sharp confrontations over public-sector and military pensions, while protests outside escalated dramatically, with demonstrators breaching the gates of Parliament.

The vote may have passed procedurally, but politically and socially, the budget remains deeply contested; between government promises and the reality of the numbers, confusion prevailed.

Public-sector employees and retired soldiers were left uncertain as to whether their long-promised rights would materialize or whether they had once again fallen victim to political maneuvering during negotiations.

What Lebanese citizens witnessed live on their screens—verbal clashes, populist bidding, and deliberate diversion of attention—reflected a broader dysfunction in governance.

Many fear this chaotic performance mirrors how the state handles far more existential issues, from Israel’s daily aggression to improvised political stances that inflame tensions rather than calm the streets.

MP Halima Kaakour openly challenged the

government’s approach, stressing that funds allocated for reconstruction are insufficient and reminding Parliament that, under international law, responsibility for compensation lies with the party that caused the destruction—namely, Israel.

In the same context, several MPs described Foreign Minister Youssef Raggi’s recent statements as politically dangerous, insisting the government must correct them and assert, as a sovereign state, Lebanon’s right to demand reparations from the aggressor.

The parliamentary session ended on a grim note. Before the vote, retired soldiers organized themselves and marched to Parliament’s gates, protesting the government’s failure to honor its commitments.

Meanwhile, ministers whose positions were perceived as hostile to their own people—whether in foreign policy, judicial decisions, or central bank circulars—came under intense scrutiny of Hezbollah’s MPs who warned that continued provocation, especially amid daily Israeli attacks and suffocating economic decisions aligned with U.S. preferences, risks pushing the country toward internal strife.

In parallel, families of detainees in Israeli prisons, gathered at the Grand Serail, heard the same familiar promises repeated—echoing the hollow assurances given to retired military personnel.

Beyond domestic turmoil, Lebanon stands at

a perilous regional crossroads; as U.S. threats against Iran intensify, Lebanese policymakers must confront a crucial strategic question: what would happen to Lebanon if one of the main pillars of regional deterrence were to collapse?

The fall of Iran would constitute a strategic earthquake, dismantling what remains of the deterrence network that has restrained Israel for decades.

In such a scenario, Israel would shift from risk calculation to opportunity harvesting, with Lebanon—economically exhausted, politically divided, and diplomatically exposed—becoming an ideal arena for escalation and imposed arrangements.

This vulnerability is compounded by controversial provisions now heading to the Cabinet, particularly Clause 23 on reconstruction.

Allowing financial compensation instead of rebuilding on the same land risks emptying border villages of their inhabitants—an outcome that aligns disturbingly with Israeli objectives.

Hence, the 2026 budget entrenches social inequality. By exempting wealthy capital holders from meaningful contribution while increasing indirect taxes on consumption, the government continues a policy that burdens low- and middle-income groups without offering services, protection, or genuine reconstruction.

Far from reform, this budget deepens Lebanon’s fractures—at a moment when the country can least afford them.

Trump’s threats against Iraq could backfire

From page 1 ► By making U.S. support conditional on specific political outcomes, the White House has shifted Iraq’s post-election debate away from al-Maliki’s policies and toward the far more volatile issue of foreign interference.

When facing outside pressure, Iraqi public debate often shifts from questioning its own leaders to prioritizing national unity and defense. Demonstrations took place outside the U.S. embassy with angry protesters setting the American flag on fire.

This interference is especially troubling when seen in the context of Trump’s broader foreign policy approach, marked by aggression toward Venezuela, renewed threats against Iran, and

a reliance on punitive pressure as a primary tool of engagement.

To much of the Iraqi electorate, the message is clear: the United States views Iraq as a client state rather than a partner.

This creates a sovereignty trap for Washington. When a foreign power publicly attempts to veto a candidate, it often provokes a defensive nationalist response in Iraq.

The greatest irony of this pressure campaign lies in its impact on al-Maliki himself. Although he remains a divisive figure within segments of Iraqi society, Trump’s public attack has effectively granted him a resistance aura.

Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi, secretary-general of the al-Nujaba

movement, warned that violations of Iraqi sovereignty and foreign interference in domestic affairs would no longer be tolerated.

He further cautioned that speculation about replacing U.S. forces with NATO troops would not alter the movement’s position, declaring all foreign military entities “legitimate targets.”

By casting al-Maliki as the figure Washington fears most, the United States has inadvertently renewed his legitimacy among those who resent American interventionism.

Rather than weakening his political standing, these interventions have hardened positions across the spectrum. The Coordination Framework, the dominant

political bloc, is now less inclined to compromise, as doing so would appear to be capitulation to foreign dictates.

Meanwhile, delays in the parliamentary session to elect a president and form a government stem from internal political disputes, not pressure from Washington.

The Trump administration may have fallen into a familiar trap. By attempting to coerce Iraq through public threats, the United States risks undermining its own credibility while deepening public resentment.

In trying to force Iraq forward, Washington may instead have paved the way back to the past, nudging the country closer to the very leader it seeks to exclude.

Israel’s admission of Gaza death toll shatters its own denial



From page 1 ► Casualty numbers shape how the world understands a war. When a government rejects the numbers, it also rejects the human cost behind them. By quietly validating the death toll, the Israeli military has unintentionally strengthened the credibility of the United Nations, human rights groups, and independent researchers who have been warning about the scale of destruction in Gaza since 2023.

Placed in context, the figure is staggering. The high death toll means that nearly three percent of Gaza’s population has been killed in just two years. In modern warfare, especially involving a highly advanced military, this level of civilian loss is almost unheard of. It demands global attention and serious legal scrutiny.

Gaza’s health authorities have also reported deaths from starvation and malnutrition. Israel denies this, yet international agencies have documented severe shortages of food, clean water, and medical supplies — all linked to Israeli restrictions and blockades. Under international humanitarian law, when civilians die because essential goods are deliberately withheld, those deaths are not accidents. They are predictable outcomes.

Persona non grata: South Africa expels Israel’s top diplomat

South Africa has ordered Israel’s top diplomat to the country to leave within 72 hours, citing “insulting attacks” on South Africa’s president Cyril Ramaphosa on social media and the “abuse of diplomatic privilege.”

Ariel Seidman, the chargé d’affaires at Israel’s embassy in Pretoria, was declared persona non grata by South Africa’s Department for International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) in a statement on its website on Friday afternoon, the Guardian reported.

“This decisive measure follows a series of unacceptable violations of diplomatic norms and practice which pose a direct challenge to South Africa’s sovereignty”, the statement said.

“These violations include the repeated use of official Israeli social media platforms to launch insulting attacks against His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, and a deliberate failure to inform DIRCO of purported visits by senior Israeli officials.”

South Africa’s relationship with Israel dete-

riorated in December 2023, when South Africa launched a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.

This alignment of casualty figures carries real legal consequences. The death toll is central to the genocide case at the International Court of Justice and to the arrest warrants sought by the International Criminal Court. Israel rejects these proceedings, but the matching numbers weaken claims that the evidence is unreliable or inflated. As international courts examine intent, proportionality, and state responsibility, the confirmed scale of civilian deaths will remain a critical part of determining whether Israel’s actions amount to grave violations of international law.

In the end, when numbers converge, narratives collapse. Israel’s own estimate has done more than confirm a statistic — it has validated the lived reality of Palestinians in Gaza and strengthened the global demand for accountability.

In January 2024, the ICJ ruled that the claim of genocide was “plausible”. However, the case has since slowed and experts do not expect a judgment before the end of 2027. Israel has rejected accusations of genocide as “outrageous and false”.

South Africa and Israel have long been at odds, due to the staunch support of the Palestinian cause by South Africa’s government. Soon after his release from prison in 1990, Nelson Mandela embraced the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. In 1997, Mandela, by then president of South Africa, said: “Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

Many South Africans see strong similarities between apartheid white minority rule and Israel’s grip over the occupied Palestinian territories.

Syrian government and Kurdish-led SDF agree integration deal

Syria’s government has reached a deal with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) militia alliance that would see the gradual integration of Kurdish forces and institutions into the state, the BBC reported.

This comes after weeks of clashes which saw Syrian troops reclaim large swathes of territory in the north-east that had been under SDF control for more than a decade.

US envoy Tom Barrack called it “a profound and historic milestone in Syria’s journey toward national reconciliation, unity, and enduring stability”.

Earlier this month – and after its major territorial losses – the SDF agreed to a ceasefire that saw much of its hold brought under government control, but reports of clashes continued.

Much like that 14-point agreement, Friday’s deal would see SDF withdraw from points of contact, its members join the Syrian army and government, and the integration of its administrative and civil bodies into those of the state.

The SDF said the agreement also includes the formation of a military division consisting of three brigades made of its members.

The statement on X added that an agreement on the civil and educational rights for Kurdish people was also reached, as well as a guarantee that those displaced would be allowed to return to their homes.

Part of the deal saw the transfer of prisons, oil and gas fields – which were under SDF control – to Damascus.

Syrian troops seized control of the Omar facility, the country’s largest oilfield, after the SDF pulled back. Earlier, the army took the strategic Tabqa dam on the Euphrates River.

The Kurds previously controlled nearly a third of Syria’s territory with the support of the US after it helped defeat ISIL.

Their recent losses mark the biggest change of control in the country since the toppling of former president Bashar al-Assad in December 2024.

Tabriz can be starting point for tourism cooperation between Iran, Turkey, consultant says

TEHRAN—Orhan Baki, the consultant of the Turkish tourism, commerce and trade company Sulduz considered Tabriz, the capital city of Iran's East Azarbaijan province, one of the effective destinations for starting joint tourism cooperation between the two countries.

He highlighted Iran's real and field capacities in the field of tourism, and emphasized the necessity of an approach based on personal experience and civilizational commonalities, Miras Aria reported.

Referring to his field observations of Tabriz, he stated that the image drawn of Iran abroad is far from the social, cultural and tourism realities of this land, and the experience of being in Tabriz shows that security, social intimacy and economic interactivity are tangibly present in the heart of the city.

Emphasizing the role of social security in the decision-making of foreign tourists, he said that the market atmosphere, economic relations, and behavior of urban activists in Tabriz are such that a foreign tourist can travel confidently and peacefully in different parts of the city, and it is considered one of the most important indicators of choosing a destination in international tourism.

Referring to the common capacities of Iran and Turkey, Baki added that Tabriz and Trabzon, as two neighboring destinations, can be the starting point for the formation of common tourism routes; a route that began with the regional cooperation and has the potential to expand to the other cities and destinations in the two countries.

Emphasizing the civilizational nature of Iran, he stated that Iran is not just a collection of historical monuments, but rather a carrier of a living civilization that is reflected in social



behavior, hospitality culture, the market, and the daily lives of the people, and the reality can only be understood through field presence and direct contact with geography, not through cyberspace and media narratives.

Baki continued that both countries are facing challenges, but international pressures on Iran require that countries and destinations with cultural and historical commonalities stand together with a supportive and cooperative outlook and use common capacities to develop tourism.

Emphasizing the role of executive institutions, he noted that cooperation with East Azarbaijan Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department can take these programs from the idea level to the implementation stage and shape the future of regional tourism based on trust, mutual need and common interests, because Iran and Turkey need each other more than they think.

The city of Tabriz, known for its rich history, warm hospitality, and the UNESCO-listed Grand Bazaar, remains a key gateway for visitors, particularly those entering Iran from Armenia and Turkey.

Chabahar to host Iran's national tourism award

TEHRAN-- Iran's national tourism award event will be held in Chabahar, Sistan-Baluchestan province, from February 14 to 16, with a technology and innovation approach, aiming to develop and promote new approaches in the field of tourism.

According to ISNA, the Soft Technology and Cultural Industries Park is the secretariat of the award, and its final winners will be introduced at the first National Festival of Creative and Cultural Industries of Iran, which will be held from February 14 to 16 in Chabahar.

Simplifying travel, easy and faster experience for travelers, new technologies in travel

and tourism, innovation in tourism services, protecting culture and heritage, preserving identity and history by using innovation and new technologies are among the most important themes of the event.

After initial registration, completing the declaration and registering the application of the interested parties, the top tourism companies will be selected by the judges of the event.

Those interested in participating in this event have to submit their application file to the event secretariat until February 9.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Ancient City of Damascus

Founded in the 3rd millennium BC, Damascus is one of the oldest cities in the Middle East. In the Middle Ages, it was the center of a flourishing craft industry, specializing in swords and lace. The city has some 125 monuments from different periods of its history – one of the most spectacular is the 8th-century Great Mosque of the Umayyads, built on the site of an Assyrian sanctuary.

According to UNESCO, Damascus is considered to be among the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. Excavations at Tell Ramad on the outskirts of the city have demonstrated that Damascus was inhabited as early as 8,000 to 10,000 BC.

However, it was not documented as an important city until the arrival of the Aramaeans. In the Medieval period, it was the center of a flourishing craft industry, with different areas of the city specializing in particular trades or crafts.

The city exhibits outstanding evidence of the civilizations that created it – Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic. In particular, the Umayyad caliphate created Damascus as its capital, setting the scene for the city's ongoing development as a living Muslim, Arab city, upon which each succeeding dynasty has left and continues to leave its mark.

In spite of Islam's prevailing influence, traces of earlier cultures particularly the Roman and Byzantine continue to be seen in the city. Thus

the city today is based on a Roman plan and maintains the aspect and the orientation of the Greek city, in that all its streets are oriented north-south or east-west and is a key example of urban planning.

The earliest visible physical evidence dates to the Roman period – the extensive remains of the Temple of Jupiter, the remains of various gates, and an impressive section of the Roman city walls. The city was the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate. However, apart from the incomparable Great Mosque, built on the site of a Roman temple and overlaying a Christian basilica, there is little visible dating from this important era of the city's history. The present city walls, the Citadel, some mosques, and tombs survive from the Middle Ages, but the greatest part of the built heritage of the city dates from after the Ottoman conquest of the early 16th century.

The line of the walls of the old city forms the boundary of the property. Although areas outside the walls that represent the expansion of the city from the 13th century, are considered related to the old city in terms of historical significance, and provide its setting and context, the key attributes of Outstanding Universal Value lie within the boundary. These include the plan of the city and its dense urban fabric, city walls, and gates, as well as its 125 protected monuments including the Umayyad Mosque, madrasas, khans, the Citadel, and private houses.

(Source: UNESCO)

Urgent repairs ordered after water leak damages Isfahan's UNESCO-listed mosque

TEHRAN – Cultural heritage authorities have launched emergency measures to contain water leakage and ground subsidence at the UNESCO-listed Jameh Mosque of Isfahan after moisture and cracks were detected near its centuries-old Nezam al-Molk dome.

Omidali Sadeqi, director of the World Heritage base of the Jameh Mosque, on Thursday said the damage was partly caused by external factors, including a burst drinking water pipe that went unnoticed for weeks, leading to rising moisture in the mosque's foundations.

Sadeqi told ISNA that water leakage behind the Nezam al-Molk dome had caused a slight substructure and visible impacts in western passageways, prompting an emergency crisis management meeting in Isfahan province to assess the situation and coordinate interventions.

He said a technical committee had been formed, on the order of the provincial cultural heritage director, to implement corrective measures to the urban water and wastewater system and to lower the level of surrounding passageways to reduce pressure on the historic structure.

According to Sadeqi, a meeting involving relevant authorities was held last week, at the provincial cultural heritage department, where a comprehensive report on subsidence-related damage was presented. The report identified faulty pipes and other sources of moisture contributing to the problem.

He said the meeting also agreed to revise and update regulations governing the protected area and buffer zone of the mosque to strengthen safeguards, incorporating risks that had not been previously addressed.

Sadeqi further said the



mosque's heritage base was tasked with compiling a risk assessment covering moisture and subsidence and submitting it through the provincial cultural heritage office to the Isfahan governor, enabling the use of national crisis management resources.

He added that a one-year monitoring and documentation program would be carried out to record remedial actions and report outcomes to crisis management authorities.

As part of the plan, the provincial water and wastewater company has begun excavations to replace damaged pipes. The official said another leak was discovered during the work and was also being repaired, which he said was expected to resolve most of the moisture-related problems.

He said parallel measures include reorganizing electricity, telecommunications and gas lines around the mosque, standardizing drainage channels, repairing cracks, managing downpipes and addressing areas of subsidence to limit further damage.

Separately, Mansour Shishehforoush, director of crisis management at the provincial governor-general's office, said authorities had convened an emergency session and launched field inspections following reports on social media showing moisture, cracks and limited subsidence near the Nezam al-Molk dome.

"Given that the situation may lead to a critical stage, we must act immediately," Shishehforoush said on Tuesday during a site visit, according to IRNA. He said defects in water and wastewater networks and deteriorated paving in surrounding passageways posed a direct risk to the historic fabric.

He said crisis management teams were being deployed under the supervision of cultural heritage authorities, with cooperation from the municipality and utility companies, to carry out urgent repairs and prevent further damage to the mosque.

The Jameh Mosque of Isfahan, located in the historic center of the city, is one of the oldest Friday (congregational) mosque

in Iran and one of the most significant monuments of Islamic architecture worldwide. It represents more than 12 centuries of architectural evolution, encompassing styles and innovations from the Abbasid, Buyid, Seljuq, Ilkhanid, Muzaffarid, Timurid and Safavid periods.

Following major expansion under the Seljuqs, the mosque became the prototype for the four-iwan (Chahar Ayvan) layout that later spread widely across the Islamic world. It is renowned for its two extraordinary domes, including the Nezam al-Molk dome, one of the earliest double-shell ribbed domes in Islamic architecture, and the Taj al-Molk dome, celebrated for its refinement and proportional harmony.

Built on the site of an earlier fire temple, the mosque's origins date back to the second century of the Islamic calendar. Over centuries, successive dynasties added prayer halls, iwans, courtyards and decorative elements, turning the complex into what many scholars describe as a living museum of Iranian architecture.

Lawmaker criticizes neglect of Khuzestan's 'golden triangle' of tourism



TEHRAN – A senior Iranian lawmaker on Thursday criticized what he called the neglect of Khuzestan province's key tourism assets, saying inadequate funding has prevented development of the historical cities of Dezful, Susa and Shushtar.

Abbas Papizadeh, a member of parliament from Dezful and a member of the parliament's presiding board, said the three cities form a civilizational "golden triangle" with major historical, cultural and tourism potential that has not been properly used at either provincial or national levels.

Speaking at a meeting of Khuzestan's administrative council in Dezful, attended by Iran's minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, Papizadeh said better use of the region's tourism capacity could boost employment and economic development in the province.

He criticized what he described as the weakest budget allocations being directed to the cultural heritage and tourism sectors in Khuzestan, according to IRNA.

"Funding allocated to Khuzestan's cultural heritage is in-

adequate and must be increased from available national resources," Papizadeh said.

He said sustained funding over a five-year period for the protection and maintenance of Khuzestan's historical sites could help preserve them for decades to come.

Papizadeh also criticized the limited budget allocated to Dezful's cultural heritage sector, saying the city was one of Khuzestan's main tourism hubs and questioning where heritage funding was being spent if not in such areas.

Dezful has consistently ranked as Khuzestan's top tourism destination in recent years, he said, citing its wide range of historical and natural attractions.

In addition, Papizadeh warned that parts of the ancient Dezful bridge, one of Iran's oldest active bridges, could collapse if urgent structural reinforcement work is not carried out, despite previous restoration efforts.

He also said the ancient city of Jundishapur, located near Dezful and dating back about 1,800

years, has not received sufficient attention despite being regarded by some historians as the world's first university city.

The MP then called for official recognition in Iran to be revised to acknowledge Jundishapur aka Gundeshapur as the country's earliest center of higher learning, rather than dating the origin of universities solely to the founding of Tehran University about 80 years ago.

He further disapproved what he described as neglect of Dezful's historic urban fabric, saying historic houses were collapsing on a weekly basis due to a lack of funding and protection.

According to Papizadeh, Dezful lacks a central museum despite its rich archaeological sites, leaving the city without adequate facilities to house and display excavated artefacts.

Khuzestan province is home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites: Susa, one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited settlements; the ancient hydraulic system of Shushtar; and the ziggurat of Tchogha Zanbil.

Poldokhtar's tourism future bright, minister says

TEHRAN -- Poldokhtar county in Lorestan province is one of the emerging centers of nature-based tourism in Iran and has a bright and sustainable future.

During a visit to the most important natural, historical and environmental centers of Poldokhtar county, including Khazineh Valley, Vali-e Asr Nature Park, and the wetlands on Thursday, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri emphasized the Government's policy of achieving balanced territorial development, ILNA reported.

He announced the start of a decision-making process and targeted investment for the

sustainable exploitation of the natural and water capacities of the region.

The minster described Lorestan province as one of the prominent origins of the history, civilization, and nature of the country.

Explaining the major policies of the Government, he noted: "Balanced development and attention to the less-visited areas are among the fundamental axes of national policymaking. Lorestan, and especially Poldokhtar county, with its unique natural and cultural potentials, have a decisive role in the future tourism map of the country."

Salehi-Amiri also conveyed the President's greetings to the people of Lorestan and Pol-

dokhtar, adding: "President emphasized special attention to the demands of the people of this region. Today, along with the hard-working governor of the province and the experienced representative of the people, field visits began with the aim of evaluating the infrastructure and capacities of tourism and handicrafts."

He stated that with the management at the provincial level, a bright future can be drawn for Poldokhtar; a future in which tourism will become a driver of employment, improved livelihoods, and economic prosperity of the region.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

Officials discuss promoting knowledge-based products in food, medicine sectors

TEHRAN – The headquarters for developing food and agricultural knowledge-based economy and the headquarters for developing traditional medicine and medicinal herbs have discussed ways to expedite the commercialization of knowledge-based products.

Officials from the two headquarters met on Thursday with a focus on the development of new seeds (high-yielding with high levels of tolerance to environmental stress) using modern biotechnology, breeding, and genetic knowledge, and the replacement of antibiotics with plant-derived compounds (including the production of food and pharmaceutical supplements taken from medicinal plants to promote health, biosafety and reduce the use of antibiotics in the livestock, poultry and aquatic production chain).

The promotion of smart agriculture (employing mechanization, automation, artificial intelligence, and data mining in agricultural machinery), and the production of functional food (developing natural food additives, value-added food products, leveraging modern, sustainable, and knowledge-based processes, and meeting health-related needs of society) to complete the value change were also discussed, IRNA reported.

The meeting also aimed at boosting synergy and policy alignment, utilizing the country's inno-



vative and technological capacities in agriculture, food, medicine, and health-oriented supplements fields.

On January 13, Damoun Razmjoue, the secretary of the headquarters for developing traditional medicine and medicinal herbs, and Emad Ahmadvand, the secretary of the headquarters for developing nanotechnology and microtechnology, attended a meeting to use nanotechnology for promoting herbal medicine, IRNA reported.

The two sides discussed ways to use the capacity of nanotechnology in manufacturing standardized products, increasing the efficiency of products, and developing knowledge-based products, especially herbal medicine.

Over 83% of Iranians tend to use traditional medicine

According to a recent survey, 83.8 percent of people in the country tend to benefit from Iranian

traditional medicine.

The survey's findings have confirmed people's positive attitude towards Persian traditional medicine. However, only 10 out of 83.8 percent use traditional medicine and supplements for the treatment of their illnesses.

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

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

The share of clinical trials in traditional and complementary medicine in Iran makes up about three percent of all clinical trials registered in the country, while just about 0.3 percent of the health-

care staff are experts in traditional and complementary medicine. The report shows the high capacity of Iranian researchers to move towards evidence-based medicine.

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

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

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

Around 500 Persian medicine experts are providing health and medical treatment services across the country. More than 1,000 general practitioners who have passed the Persian medicine courses approved by the health ministry are also offering services.

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

A miracle for a migratory bird: Steppe Eagle from Kazakhstan released after being treated in Iran

TEHRAN – A migratory Steppe eagle from Kazakhstan that had lost its strength due to parasitic and skin diseases was released into the wild after receiving complete treatment at the provincial Department of Environment (DOE) in Izeh, a city in the south-western province of Khuzestan, and regaining the ability to fly.

The eagle, named Shuber, was equipped with a logger; it was wintering in Khuzestan's wetlands. Two wildlife activists found the bird unable to fly in a mountainous village in Susan district in Izeh. They took the bird to the DOE veterinary station in the city.

After six days of medical treatment, the eagle gained enough strength to be ready for release back into the wild.

The Research and Conservation Centre for Birds of Prey in Kazakhstan, on its official website called Aquila, described the whole incidence 'a miracle in the life of a migratory bird' and officially recognized the efforts of the environmentalists in Izeh. The center considered the effort a model example of international

solidarity in the protection of endangered species.

The research center lauded the professional handling and kind support of the bird, expressing their deepest thanks to the DOE in the city of Izeh.

According to the website, "every dozen or so years, and every several hundred dataloggers fitted, a miracle occurs. And when one occurs, then suddenly miracles start pouring down like rain. It all began on November 26th, when one of the Steppe Eagles fitted with our logger 5 months earlier in Kazakhstan – a male named Shubar was caught alive in Iran.

Miracle number one – it was not shot down.

Miracle number two – it was not killed.

Miracle number three – it was not sold on a local market.

Miracle number four – it was urgently transported to a veterinary station of the Department of Environment in the city of Izeh.

Miracle number five – it was professionally treated there.

Miracle number six – the logger



was not removed from the bird.

Miracle number seven – the logger was not regarded as a spying device.

Miracle number eight – the logger was not handed to any military unit for investigation.

Miracle number nine – the bird was released in the Miangaran Wetland after recovery.

Miracle number ten – the bird was released even with the logger still on its back!!!

Thanks to the goodwill of the people involved, we were at all times able to monitor the situation and wait for the final moment of releasing the bird again to the wild, as well as further

track his movements.

The bird is fine now. It turned out he had an infection that was efficiently cured.

On days like these, overwhelmed with good things taking place, it really feels the hard and stressful work makes sense. And even start dreaming that from now on, eagles will be treated with due respect, receiving help, if needed, and do their eagle stuff. And from the technical side, that dataloggers with Aquila inscriptions will no longer be treated like enemy tools for causing harm, pain, and tears to humans.

The dream will continue, thanks to people in Iran."

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Afghans life in Iran provided new model of migration

The friendly coexistence of Afghans with Iranians has set a new pattern in migration, secretary of human rights headquarters in Iran has stated.

The two nations of Iran and Afghanistan share similarities in religion, culture and civilization, Ali Bagherikani said on Thursday during a meeting with Afghan immigrants in Tehran.

The west is using all the capacities to turn the differences between the two nations of Iran and Afghanistan into a dispute and then a conflict in order to achieve their illegitimate interests, he lamented.

"The effort of the Human Rights Headquarters is to highly protect the right of immigrants living in Iran," he highlighted.

زندگی افغانستانی‌ها در ایران الگوی جدیدی از مهاجرت ارائه کرده است

دبیرستاد حقوق بشر جمهوری اسلامی ایران می‌گوید همزیستی ملاطفت‌آمیز افغانستانی‌ها با ایرانی‌ها، الگوی جدیدی را در مهاجرت ارائه کرده است.

به گزارش ایرنا، «علی باقری‌کنی» روز پنجشنبه در دیدار با مهاجران افغانستانی در تهران اظهار داشت: اشتراکات دینی، فرهنگی و تمدنی دو ملت ایران و افغانستان بسیار به هم نزدیک است.

وی افزود: غربی‌ها از همه ظرفیت‌ها استفاده می‌کنند تا تفاوت‌های دو ملت ایران و افغانستان را به اختلاف و سپس نزاع تبدیل کنند تا به منافع نامشروع خود برسند. او گفت: تلاش ستاد حقوق بشر آن است که کوچکترین حقی از مهاجران مقیم ایران ضایع نشود.



Persian Gulf warmly welcomes migratory birds

Every year during the winter season, thousands of migratory birds, especially flamingos, flock to the Persian Gulf in southern Iran.

Encompassing numerous wetlands, reservoirs, and diverse water bodies, Iran welcomes millions of migratory birds every year.



JANUARY 31, 2026

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Be generous but not extravagant, be frugal but not miserly.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:18 Evening: 17:50 Dawn: 5:39 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:05 (tomorrow)

“The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane” published in Persian

TEHRAN- A Persian translation of American author Kate DiCamillo's book “The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane” has been published in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Leila Mohseni. Milkan is the publisher of the book.

Illustrated by Bagram Ibatoulline, the book won the 2006 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award in the Fiction category.

“The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane” tells the story of a china rabbit named Edward Tulane, who embarks on a transformative adventure that takes him far from his comfortable life as a beloved toy. Gifted to a young girl named Abilene, Edward initially lives in a world of luxury and adoration.

However, his life takes a turn when he accidentally falls overboard while vacationing on the Queen Mary. Edward spends 297 days at the bottom of the ocean until a storm dislodges him, and a passing fisherman retrieves him from their fishing net. The fisherman takes Edward home to his wife, where he is mistakenly referred to as female and dressed in dresses.

Throughout his journey, Edward is passed between various life-changing characters, including a hobo and his dog, as well as a four-year-old girl suffering from tuberculosis and her brother. These experiences take him far from home and transform him from the self-absorbed rabbit he once was. Eventually,

Edward is tragically damaged against a countertop edge, repaired, and then placed for sale in a doll store for several years. Ultimately, he is purchased by Abilene, now grown up and married with a daughter of her own.

The novel explores several themes, including loss and recovery, kindness and compassion, and the journey toward self-discovery. The central theme can be encapsulated by a quote from the book: “If you have no intention of loving or being loved, then the whole journey is pointless.”

It has often been likened to the works of Hans Christian Andersen, particularly “The Steadfast Tin Soldier.”

In addition to the 2006 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for children's fiction, the book also received a Parents' Choice Award for Spring 2006 fiction. It was also a finalist for the Quill Awards in the children's chapter book category.

In 2007, the U.S. National Education Association recognized it as one of “Teachers' Top 100 Books for Children” based on an online poll. In 2012, it was ranked number 59 among all-time children's novels in a survey by “School Library Journal”, marking it as one of three books by DiCamillo in the Top 100.

In 2013, Robert Zemeckis was announced as the director and producer for the film adaptation of “The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane”, with Jeff Stockwell writing the script.

16th Ammar Popular Film Festival concludes in Tehran

TEHRAN – The 16th Ammar Popular Film Festival concluded on the evening of Thursday, January 29, in Tehran.

The closing ceremony was held at Bahman Cinema with the announcement of winners in various categories and a tribute to the filmmaker Behrouz Afkhami, Mehr reported.

During the program, Hossein Shahrabi Farahani, a space scientist and the project manager of the national Omid satellite, who was the subject of the documentary “Hope in Space”, said: “We became aware of the space renaissance, and our intention was to start a real knowledge-based project. I preferred to start the work with young people”.

Referring to the sanctions imposed by the U.S. against Iran, he said: “We wanted to work internationally and believed that even under sanctions, it was possible to sign international contracts. We managed to sign our first contract with Russia, a country that had previously sent a large constellation into space. Even if we had no sanctions, I would have followed the same path I have pursued so far, and sanctions did not stop us”.

“Our contract with the government was the riskiest in the history of Iranian space programs, and we committed to doing all satellite work ourselves. We must pave the way for those who want to work, and this is the key to our economy. In everything that happened to us, there was one key word: God guided us and brought us to our destination. Whoever trusts in God reaches where they are meant to. Tonight, we will also send a message from the Ammar Popular Film Festival, which is that the U.S. can do nothing,” he added.

Following this, the People's Independence Award was presented to him by the family of martyr Fereydoun Abbasi.

Fereydoun Abbasi, a nuclear scientist and former nuclear chief of Iran, along with another prominent nuclear scientist named Mohammad Mehdi Teh-



Space scientist Hossein Shahrabi Farahani (R) receives the People's Independence Award from the family of martyr Fereydoun Abbasi at the closing ceremony of the 16th Ammar Popular Film Festival in Tehran on January 29, 2026.

ranchi, a theoretical physicist who was also the president of the Islamic Azad University of Iran, were targeted in separate attacks on their residences in Tehran, during Israel's attacks on Iran last June.

In the next part of the ceremony, a tribute was paid to the Iranian movie director and screenwriter Behrouz Afkhami.

“Today's youth have shaped the Ammar Popular Film Festival, and I advise them to pay attention to documentary and docudrama cinema,” Afkhami said.

Addressing the young filmmakers, he added: “The future of cinema, with the expansion of artificial intelligence, will become increasingly artificial. Apart from fantasy cinema, one must think about documentary and the always-successful docudrama for lasting cinema, and focus on low-budget cinema which allows for more productions. Learn the craft within filmmaking itself and work as much as you can”.

Behrouz Afkhami, 69, is known for a style that utilizes point of view camera techniques to portray stories of human drama. He

was also a member of the Iranian Parliament from 2000 to 2004.

Born in Tehran, he is a graduate of the School of Cinema and Television. He made a few documentaries for television before collaborating with Seifollah Daad in 1986 as a cinematographer in “Under the Rain”.

He made his directorial debut in television with “Jungle Commander” in 1987. He directed the movie “The Bride” in 1990, which became a blockbuster hit.

In “The River's End,” Afkhami has experienced a new kind of filmmaking and an iconoclastic kind of approach.

Moreover, he has made many successful movies, including “Day of the Angel” (1993), “Day of the Devil” (1994), “Takhti, the World Champion” (1997), “Hemlock” (1998), “Morning's Child” (2008), “St. Petersburg” (2009), and “Azar, Shahdokht, Parviz, and Others” (2013). He has also made two seasons of the series “Operation 125” (2009 and 2012).

Afkhami has been teaching script writing, directing, and editing both privately and in univer-

sities since 1989.

During the ceremony, winners in various categories received their awards from the jury of the respective sections.

Ammar Popular Film Festival was established in 2010 by a number of Iranian revolutionary figures to honor film and art products promoting topics such as resistance and revolution. It was named after Ammar Yasir, a close companion of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Since its inception, the Ammar Popular Film Festival has championed the defense of exalted Islamic values and the support of popular and revolutionary artists. The 16th edition, under the motto “The Civilizational Battle of Islamic Iran Against the Barbaric West,” aimed to globally expose further dimensions of any malicious aggression by the despicable Zionist regime during the 12-Day War.

The 16th edition convened as the vile Zionist regime conducted terrorist operations inside the country, insulting mosques and the sanctities of devout Iranians.

Cartoon of Day



The Disciple

Cartoonist: José Alberto Rodríguez Avila from Cuba

Artists' works at London auction for Gaza health workers

Leading artists including Antony Gormley and Brian Eno have donated works to an art auction supporting medical professionals in Gaza.

“The Seeds of Solidarity auction,” organized by a coalition called Health Workers 4 Palestine, will take place on February 1 at the Savoy hotel in London. Proceeds will support the Gaza Medics Solidarity Fund, which provides stipends to doctors working in the enclave, and supports mobile clinics and the reconstruction of maternity wards, The Art Newspaper reported.

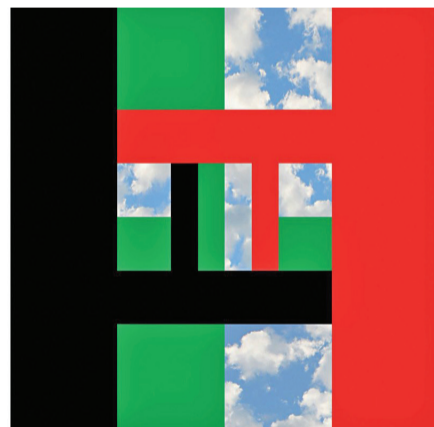
The auction features works by 21 visual artists in total, also including Mona Hatoum, Lisa Brice, Caroline Walker, Alison Wilding, Sam Durant, Rana Begum, and Hassan Hajjaj, who contributed a portrait of hip-hop artist Yassin Bey (formerly known as Mos Def).

The Turner Prize-winning sculptor Gormley, whose auction record stands at £5.3m, has given the inkcap-on-paper work “Threshold XXIII” (2025) to the sale, while the musician and visual artist Eno has donated the inkjet-on-velvet “Seeing Through to Sky” (2025). In 1994 Eno collaborated with David Bowie on an exhibition that became one of the first major fundraisers for War Child, a charity dedicated to children affected by conflict.

The founder of Health Workers 4 Palestine is Omar Abdel-Mannan, a London-based doctor who accompanied the first Gazan child to be evacuated to the UK for medical aid in July 2025.

“The auction is a reminder that art can be a form of action,” he said. “At a moment when healthcare workers in Gaza are operating amid extraordinary violence and deprivation, this auction brings together creative voices and public conscience to offer tangible support.”

“The generosity of artists donating their work transforms the auction into a wider act of solidarity, where every piece sold represents not only creativity, but a commitment to protecting life, affirming dignity, and insisting that culture has a role to play in moments of profound injustice,” he added.



The sale is curated by Zayna Al-Saleh, the British-Palestinian curator behind the Voices of Palestine auctions, which has raised over \$1.4m over the last two years. Al-Saleh's previous auctions have included works by Banksy, Peter Doig, and Jeremy Deller.

The event includes the acclaimed “Photosymphony: A Live Plant Orchestra for Palestine,” a world-travelled installation (Frieze LA, New York, London) reimagined exclusively for “Seeds of Solidarity”. Created by internationally acclaimed artist Millie Brown, with a site-specific scent-scape by perfumer and sister Beckielou Brown (Altra Profuture), “Photosymphony” explores plant intelligence and our relationship with the natural world through native Palestinian flora. As guests dine, the electrical frequencies of living plants are captured by sensors and translated into an evolving live soundscape drawn from recordings of the land itself, making the unseen life force of plants audible. The installation also bears witness to environmental devastation in Palestine, from the loss of culturally vital species such as za'atar to the uprooting of ancient olive trees and the erosion of fragile ecosystems, creating a haunting, immersive tribute to Palestinian roots, memory, and resilience.

The fundraiser takes on particular urgency as more than 1,700 health workers have been

killed in Gaza since the war began on October 7, 2023. More than half the territory's healthcare infrastructure has been destroyed by Israel and 15,000 people require evacuation for medical treatment abroad. Despite a US-mediated ceasefire signed on October 10, 2025, 37 international aid organizations, including Oxfam, Save The Children, and Médecins Sans Frontières, continue to report being blocked from entering the territory.

The Israeli military has said that around 70,000 Palestinians were killed during the war in the Gaza Strip, a figure broadly in line with estimates from Gaza's health ministry, which Israel has previously questioned.

Israel launched its military campaign in Gaza following Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack. According to Gaza health authorities, at least 71,662 Palestinians have been killed and over 171,000 people injured during the war.

The United Nations has estimated that approximately 90% of Gaza's civilian infrastructure was damaged or destroyed, with reconstruction costs projected to be around \$70 billion. The recent strikes, occurring in this context of near-total devastation, highlight the challenges of maintaining stability and the severe humanitarian situation that persists despite the formal cessation of full-scale war.

Israel and its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are facing prosecution in international courts for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

The auction will take place as part of a broader gala event bringing together artists, cultural figures, and medical leaders. Performers include the Arab Orchestra and the performance artist Millie Brown. Speakers include the doctors Ghassan Abu Sitta, recognized globally for conflict medicine and emergency surgical care in Gaza, and Victoria Rose, who has undertaken multiple humanitarian missions to the region since 2018.