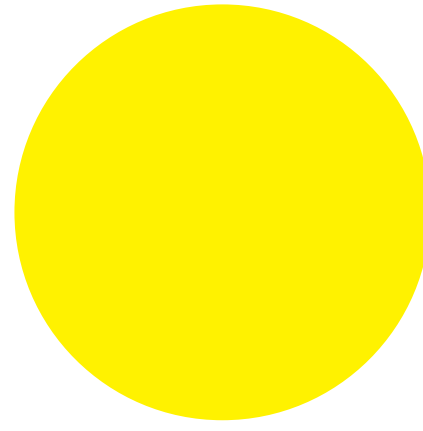




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SPECIAL ISSUE



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Iransians gather at Tehran's Imam Hussein Square on December 28, 2023 to pay tribute to Brigadier General Seyyed Razi Mousavi, a senior commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, who was assassinated by Israel in Syria. ● ABOLFAZI NESAEI/IRAN DAILY

Bolourchi: Grammys, Oscars are political events, US independent competitions hold more credibility



Pejman Bolourchi, an Iranian composer and recipient of much-admired accolades for independent musicians in the US, regards the Grammy Awards and the Academy Awards as political competitions. 8 >

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Iran executes Mossad-linked saboteurs

Four convicts who were found guilty of working with the Israeli Mossad spy agency and participating in armed kidnapping, intimidation and assault of security forces in the north-western province of West Azarbaijan were executed on Friday.

According to the judiciary's news agency, Mizan Online, the four were part of a ten-member sabotage group linked to Mossad, whose main objective was to identify Iranian intelligence agents who were foiling Israeli plots against Iran. The main four convicts of the team, including three men and a woman, were hanged on Friday morning on charges of "corruption on Earth" and "waging war against God" (moharebeh) through intelligence cooperation with Israel with intent to undermine Iran's security, Press TV reported.

They were all tracked down and arrested after complex intelligence operations and close surveillance. The report of their arrest was published in October 2022. Head of the provincial Justice Department Nasser Atabati said then that the group members, under the direct supervision of Mossad officers, were instructed to locate individuals affiliated with Iran's security apparatus and obtain information from them through abduction, death threats, and brutal battery.

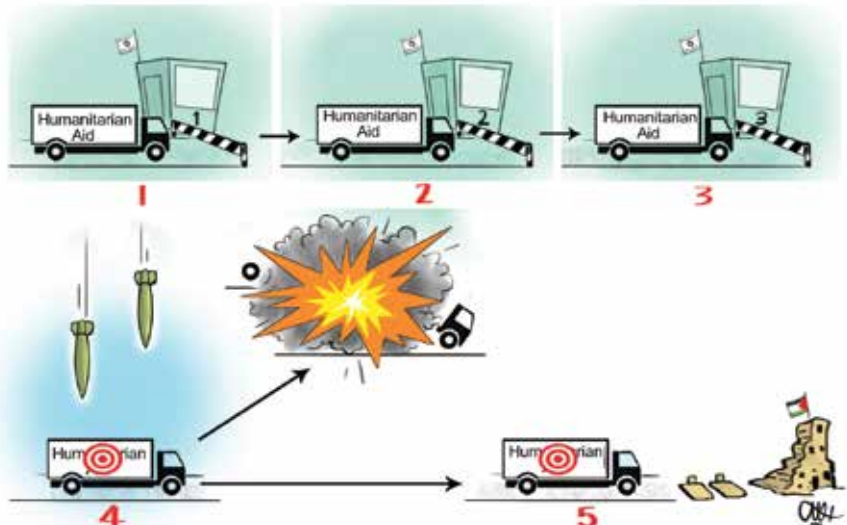
He added that the convicts had received money from Israeli agents and Mossad officers on several occasions for the tasks they had completed.

The official also noted that the detainees had communicated with Mossad officers via video calls, and had performed acts of sabotage in Iran's northwestern West Azarbaijan Province, the capital Tehran and the southern Hormuzgan Province.

The members of the team also set fire to the homes and cars of the people linked with the Iranian security organizations, Atabati said, noting they were even involved in several aborted assassination attempts against Iranian security forces.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran mourns IRGC general assassinated by Israel

International Desk

Thousands massed in the Iranian capital for the funeral of senior commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Seyyed Razi Mousavi, three days after he was assassinated by Israel in Syria.

The crowd in Tehran's Imam Hussein Square waved yellow flags imprinted with the message "I am your opponent" – a reference to Israel – in both Persian and Hebrew. High-ranking military commanders and government officials were also present at the ceremony. Israel has long fought a shadow war of assassinations and sabotage against Iran and its allies, but Mousavi's killing in Syria came at a time of

sharply heightened regional tensions over Israel's onslaught on the Gaza Strip since October.

Some of the mourners in Tehran carried pictures of Mousavi together with the revered Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, a former commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) foreign operations arm who was assassinated in a 2020 US drone strike in Baghdad.

Iran next week will mark the fourth anniversary of the death of Soleimani, who had run the IRGC's Quds Force for more than a decade.

Iran said an Israeli missile strike on Monday near the Syrian capital Damascus killed Mousavi, the most senior IRGC



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (C) leads funeral prayer for Brigadier General Seyyed Razi Mousavi on December 28, 2023, a senior commander in the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, who was assassinated by Israel in Syria. khamenei.ir

commander killed since Soleimani.

UN urged to act

Syria on Thursday said Mousavi's "martyrdom" on its territory was part of Israel's "aggressive policies," official news agency SANA reported.

In letters sent by the Syrian Foreign Ministry, Damascus called on the United Nations to act against Israeli actions which might "ignite the region," SANA said.



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei earlier on Thursday met with Mousavi's family and led a funeral prayer over the slain general's

body before it was taken to the central square.

The chief commander of the IRGC, Major General Hossein Salami, hailed Mousavi as "one of the most experienced and ef-

fective IRGC commanders in the Axis of Resistance."

He said Iran's revenge for Israel's assassination of Mousavi will be nothing but annihilation of the occupying regime.

UN: Israel doing 'monstrosity of our century'

International Desk

The UN special rapporteur on Palestine said what Israel is doing to the Palestinians is "the monstrosity of our century" as regime continues to massacre more Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

"What Israel is doing to the Palestinians, especially in #Gaza, is 'the monstrosity of our century', The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, said in a message posted on her X account on Thursday.

She also referred to Western countries' inaction over the Israeli crimes against Palestinians, saying that "Western complacency is turning into complicity".

On Friday, Israel pounded south and central Gaza as Egypt was to host a high-level Hamas delegation

for talks to try and end the nearly 12-week conflict that has devastated the besieged Palestinian territory.

The Israeli military said its forces "are extending operation in Khan Yunis" in the coastal territory's south. Israeli shelling near Al-Amal in Khan Yunis killed 41 people over the past two days, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said on Thursday.

The casualties in repeated Israeli strikes near the facility include "displaced persons seeking shelter", it said. The UN humanitarian office said an estimated 100,000 more displaced people had arrived in the already-teeming southern border city of Rafah in recent days following the intensification of fighting around Deir al-Balah and Khan Yunis.

The Israeli onslaught has left much of Gaza's north in ruins, while the battlefield has shifted ever further to



the south.

Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas in retaliation for the October 7 attack which left nearly 1,200 people dead.

Israel's relentless aerial bombardment and ground invasion in Gaza have killed at least 21,507 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in Gaza. The Israeli army says 168 of its soldiers have been killed inside Gaza.

The UN says more than 80 percent of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been driven from their homes. Many now live in cramped shelters in the tiny territory or in makeshift tents around Rafah.

Meanwhile, an Israeli siege imposed after October 7, following years of crippling

blockade, has deprived Gazans of food, water, fuel and medicine.

Attack on aid convoy

The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees said Friday an aid convoy came under fire by the Israeli military in the Gaza Strip, without causing any casualties. "Israeli soldiers fired at an aid convoy as it returned from northern Gaza along a route designated by the Israeli army – our international convoy leader and his team were not injured but one vehicle sustained damage," UNRWA's director in Gaza, Tom White, wrote on X.

According to UNRWA, the incident took place on Thursday afternoon. Earlier on Friday the UN



People gather and mourn in front of 500 baby dolls wrapped in shrouds, in remembrance of the children killed in the Gaza Strip, in New York on December 28, 2023. [CHARLY TRIBALLEAU/AFP](http://charlytriballeau.com)

humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths, wrote a post on X describing what he called "an impossible situation for the people of Gaza, and for those trying to help them". Griffiths said that aid convoys had been shot at, without elaborating. "You think getting aid into Gaza is easy? Think again," he said.

A Hamas official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP the delegation in Cairo would "give the response of the Palestinian factions, including several

observations" regarding the Egyptian proposal, recently put to officials from Hamas and another Gaza armed group, Islamic Jihad.

Hamas would also seek "guarantees for a complete Israeli military withdrawal" from Gaza, the official said.

Egypt's State Information Services chief Dia Rashwan said the plan was "intended to bring together the views of all parties concerned, with the aim of ending the shedding of Palestinian blood".

New York protest

People across the world still hold pro-Palestinians protests to show their anger at the Israeli regime.

On Thursday, hundreds of protesters took to the streets of the US city of New York, staging a mock funeral in a demonstration against Israel's continued heavy bombardment of the besieged Gaza strip.

Several women shrouded in black held baby dolls swaddled in white cloths to represent the toll the fighting has taken on children in the coastal territory.

"Today's action is to draw attention to the fact that, as of now, almost 10,000 children, just children alone, not counting everybody, not counting all Palestinians, have been killed... in Gaza," said archivist Grace Lile, 64.

Tehran advises neighbors to avoid comments on Iran's islands

International Desk

Iran's Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi advised neighboring countries not to damage their relations with a "great country" such as Iran by making unfounded claims regarding Iran's three islands in the Persian Gulf. Vahidi pointed to a recent statement issued by Russia and several

Arab countries on Iran's three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tumb, and the Lesser Tumb, saying that the baseless statements issued about the Iranian islands are claims that had been earlier made by others. He made the remarks on a visit to the Abu Musa Island on Thursday. Iran summoned the Rus-

sian chargé d'affaires to Tehran on December 23 in protest at a recent statement issued by Russia and several Arab countries on Iran's three islands. The final statement of the 6th Arab-Russian Cooperation Forum, which was held in Morocco on December 20, reiterated the United Arab Emirates' baseless claims

about the three Iranian islands.

The three Persian Gulf islands have historically been part of Iran, the proof of which can be found in and corroborated by countless historical, legal, and geographical documents in Iran and other parts of the world. The UAE, however, has repeatedly laid claim to the islands.

Explore majesty of Shirkuh Mountain in Yazd Province

Iranica Desk

Mountains have long been revered as diverse and captivating tourist destinations. The allure of exciting sports and the exploration of mountain ecosystems has only grown over time. In this article, we'll delve into the allure of Shirkuh Mountain in Yazd, offering insight into this natural wonder for those interested in embarking on an exhilarating journey.

Rising to a height of 4,075 meters above sea level, Shirkuh stands as the highest peak in Yazd Province, forming part of the expansive Zagros Mountain. Surrounding the peak are various villages, including Bagh Mehdi to the west, Bardestan to the southwest, Deh Bala to the east, and Dareh Shir to the northwest.

Situated to the south of Yazd, Shirkuh is recognized as one of the 1,515 most prominent peaks globally. Its impressive elevation allows for a day-long ascent to its peak. Renowned for its numerous climbing routes, the mountain boasts many attractions. Additionally, atop Shirkuh, natural springs provide refreshing drinking water.

The name Shirkuh holds significance, as *shir* translates to lion and *kuh* to mountain, giving rise to the moniker Mountain Lion. This name is attributed to the mountain's snow-covered peak, resembling a white lion, and its likeness to a sleeping lion when viewed from a particular angle.

To witness the majesty of Shirkuh, visitors often venture to Deh Bala village, a verdant, hospitable community that has long embraced the mountain's presence, even amid harsh winter conditions. Shirkuh serves as a vital water source for the qanats in Taft and Mehriz, as well as the Posht-e Kuh and Pish-e Kuh villages, contributing to the underground water supply of Yazd. Moreover, the mountain's influ-



● [decovel.com](https://www.decovel.com)

ence on rainfall patterns in surrounding areas is noteworthy, making it a crucial component in water distribution and ecological balance.

Geologically, Shirkuh rests on a granite base, overlaid by over 1,000 meters of dolomite and limestone from the Cretaceous period. Erosion has significantly impacted these formations, particularly in the southern regions of Shirkuh. Notably, igneous formations from the late third and fourth periods, along with layers of travertine, can be observed in the mountain's southern periphery. The area's geological phenomena, including river terraces, attract the fascination of visitors. The ascent to the peak begins near

Sheikh Alishah neighborhood's mosque, marking the starting point for the journey. While the initial stretch allows for vehicular travel, the subsequent kilometer requires traversing on foot. Along the way, three perennial springs offer a respite and their cool and clear waters providing sustenance for the climb. The first spring, nestled amidst towering Tabrizi trees, has earned the local moniker Taabestan Khaneh, or the Summer House.

Shirkuh stands as a testament to the rich biodiversity and ecological significance of the mountain, serving as a vital sanctuary during periodic droughts in Yazd Province. Whether for its natural beauty, geological marvels,

or cultural significance, Shirkuh Mountain offers a captivating experience for those seeking adventure and exploration in this breathtaking region.

Mountain shelters

Three shelters are available along the route. One newly constructed shelter is made of metal, offering three sections suitable for accommodating 40 to 45 individuals. The other two shelters are constructed from concrete, with the larger one capable of housing 20 people and the smaller shelter accommodating eight. Blankets are provided in both concrete shelters, offering superior warmth and insulation compared to the metal shelter.

Shirkuh Peak

The ascent from the shelters to the peak of Shirkuh follows a well-defined path with a gradual slope. The journey covers a distance of 5.4 kilometers, occasionally challenged by high wind speeds and snow. However, reaching the peak alleviates all fatigue, with the sense of accomplishment indescribable.

Mountain condition

The Shirkuh shelter, situated on the ridge, presents a relatively easier climbing experience to the peak compared to other 4,000-meter peaks, particularly due to the potential for nightfall during the ascent. Depending on weather conditions, the main

ascent route of Shirkuh is suitable for individuals capable of navigating rough nature paths spanning 9 to 18 kilometers, including challenging trails and steep paths. However, alternative routes, such as the southern wall route, present more difficult conditions, particularly in winter due to rocky terrain and the absence of facilities like springs and shelters.

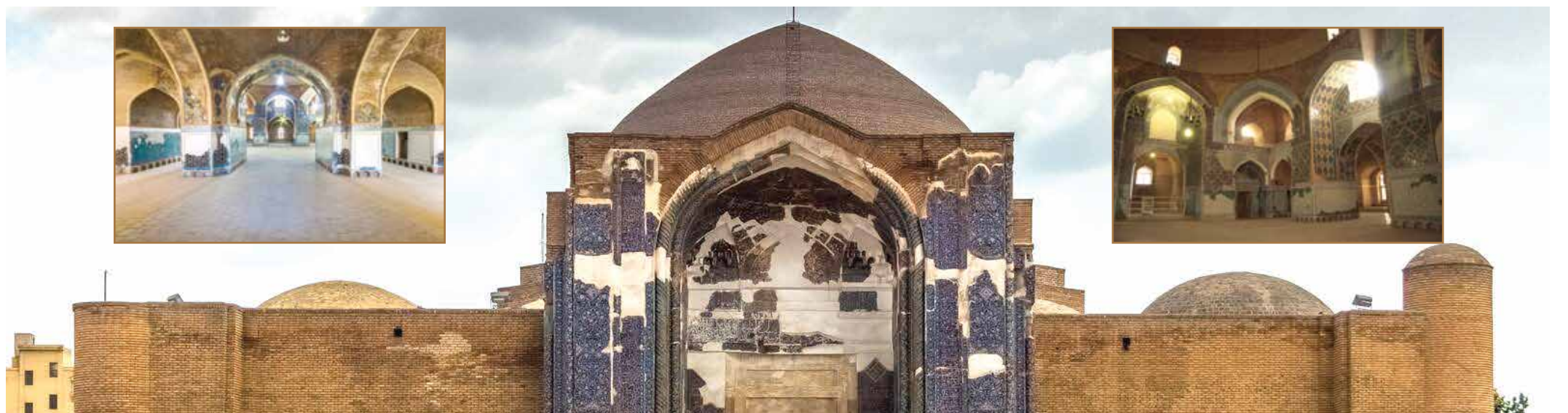
When to climb

The climate at Shirkuh Peak is ideal for climbing during spring, autumn, and summer. While Shirkuh experiences cold, snowy winters, winter ascents are less dangerous than other peaks of similar height in Iran. Early spring ascents offer a blend of lush greenery and pleasant temperatures. The first half of spring provides the most balanced temperatures and optimal spring water conditions, offering the chance to witness waterfalls along the way. Climbing from April to November ensures a simple and enjoyable ascent, with the added beauty of the mountain's landscape. It's advisable to commence summer ascents early in the morning to reach higher altitudes before the weather heats up.

Camping or overnight stay

In Deh Bala village's Sheikh Alishah neighborhood, situated along the ascent to Shirkuh peak, accommodations are available at the Central Mosque or Zeinabiyeh Mosque, with prior arrangement. Additionally, a mountaineer's house has been established by a local resident next to the Zeinabiyeh Mosque, providing a comfortable overnight stay for climbers. If weather conditions permit camping in the village, the area next to the Shir and Khorshid (Lion and the Sun) spring at the beginning of the ascent to Shirkuh is an excellent choice, offering ample space for parking and camping.

Blue Mosque, turquoise jewel of Tabriz



● [visitiran.ir](https://www.visitiran.ir)

Iranica Desk

Did you know that there are only four blue mosques in the world? One of these rare, beautiful buildings is located in Tabriz, the capital of East Azarbaijan Province. Covered with dazzling blue tiles, this building has a fascinating story to tell. Let's delve into the history of the Turquoise of Islam.

The Blue Mosque, known as "Masjed-e Kabud" in Persian, and "Goy Masjed" in Azeri, was built in 1465 CE by the order of Jahan Shah, a ruler of the Kara Koyunlu dynasty. Once one of the most famous buildings of its time, it remains a testament to the region's rich history.

When standing in front of the magnificent entrance of the Blue

Mosque, the first thing that catches one's eye is the blank spots on its blue facade. These missing tiles are a result of two massive earthquakes in 1727 and 1773. Despite ongoing reconstruction efforts since 1973, the restoration remains incomplete.

The Blue Mosque was once part of a vast architectural complex, including a mosque, a monastery,

a courtyard, and a library, all destroyed during the earthquakes. Despite this, remnants of the main gate, the dome, and some parts of the outer walls still stand, showcasing remarkable architecture.

What makes the Blue Mosque truly unique is its blend of Iranian and Ottoman design elements, a result of the Kara Koyunlu

era's influence. The fusion of Islamic architecture from both regions, along with intricate calligraphy and geometric patterns, creates a stunning visual tapestry.

Visitors to the Blue Mosque can also explore the mausoleum and tomb of Jahan Shah, the king who commissioned this architectural marvel. For photography enthu-

siasts, the interplay of light and shadow makes the Blue Mosque a captivating subject, offering a dreamy destination for capturing Islamic architectural beauty. If you're ever planning to visit Tabriz, be sure to add the Blue Mosque to your bucket list. It's a must-see destination, offering a glimpse into a rich historical and architectural legacy.

Green petchems for Iran through innovative technologies



By Reza Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writer

The Iranian petrochemical industry plays a pivotal role in the nation's economy, yet it faces a pressing need to align with global sustainable development goals. As environmental consciousness and regulations intensify worldwide, the imperative to revolutionize traditional petrochemical processes and embrace eco-friendly technologies has never been more urgent.

The conventional methods employed in Iran's petrochemical industry, while essential for economic growth, have historically posed significant environmental challenges. From energy-intensive production processes to carbon emissions and waste generation, the industry faces mounting pressure to mitigate its environmental footprint and transition towards greener, more sustainable practices. Addressing these challenges is paramount to ensuring the long-term viability and global

acceptance of Iran's petrochemical products.

The development of new technologies that leverage clean energy sources, such as solar, wind, and hydrogen, presents a transformative opportunity for the Iranian petrochemical industry. By integrating renewable energy into production processes and prioritizing resource efficiency, petrochemical facilities can significantly reduce their carbon footprint, lower operating costs, and enhance energy security. Additionally, advanced process optimization and waste reduction strategies contribute to a more sustainable and economically viable operational model.

The integration of carbon capture and storage technologies within petrochemical facilities holds immense promise for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions as well as combating climate change. Implementing carbon-cut solutions enables the capture and secure storage of CO₂ emissions, thereby minimizing the industry's environmental impact while fostering a cleaner and more responsible production cycle. Em-

bracing these innovations not only aligns with global environmental mandates but also positions Iranian petrochemical products as environmentally conscious choices in the global market.

The advent of bio-based feedstock and sustainable chemistry technologies presents a paradigm shift in the production of petrochemical derivatives. By harnessing renewable raw materials, such as biomass and agricultural waste, and employing biotechnological processes, the industry can diversify its feedstock resources and reduce dependency on fossil fuels. This transition towards sustainable chemistry not only enhances environmental stewardship but also fosters the development of eco-friendly, bio-derived products with versatile applications.

Innovative catalytic conversion techniques and green synthesis methodologies offer a pathway to optimize the petrochemical production chain while minimizing environmental impact. By developing catalysts that enhance selectivity and efficiency

in chemical reactions, and adopting green synthesis routes that minimize waste generation and hazardous by-products, the industry can achieve higher production yields with reduced environmental burden. These advancements pave the way for sustainable and responsible manufacturing practices.

Transitioning towards a circular economy model, wherein waste is minimized and resources are regenerated, is fundamental to the sustainable evolution of Iran's petrochemical industry. Technologies that enable the recycling and valorization of waste streams, such as plastic waste and industrial by-products, not only reduce the environmental footprint but also create opportunities for the development of circular value chains. Embracing circular economy principles fosters resource efficiency and supports a closed-loop approach to material utilization.

The convergence of digitalization and data analytics in petrochemical operations facilitates smart monitoring and predictive maintenance, optimizing asset performance and ener-

gy utilization. By leveraging Internet of Things (IoT) devices, predictive analytics, and artificial intelligence, facilities can proactively identify inefficiencies, reduce downtime, and enhance overall operational reliability. This technological integration enhances safety, environmental compliance, and cost-efficiency, while fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

The development and deployment of green technologies in Iran's petrochemical industry necessitate collaborative innovation and strategic partnerships between government, academia, and private sector stakeholders. Fostering research and development initiatives, incentivizing technology adoption, and nurturing a supportive ecosystem for green technology startups are crucial steps in accelerating the industry's transition towards sustainability. Moreover, engaging in international cooperation and knowledge exchange facilitates the assimilation of best practices and catalyzes innovation within the global petrochemical landscape.



Petrochemical sector in dire need of investment: *OPEX*

By Sadeq Dehqan &
Mahdieh Qazvinian
Staff writers

Iran has built petrochemical plants, with a total production capacity of 95 million tons, which currently produce about 70 million tons of petrochemical products per year, announced a member of the Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters' Union (OPEX). Talking to Iran Daily on the occasion of the National Petrochemical Industry Day, Hamid Hosseini added that it is a fact that our country needs the required feedstock to produce pet-

rochemical products. Iran has all kinds of feedstock that can be used by petrochemical industries, including gas, oil, liquefied gas and condensates, he explained, adding that an energy giant like Saudi Arabia does not have gas resources. "According to the advantages that Iran has, the petrochemical industry is one of the most important industries that has received attention." Hosseini noted that our country enjoys an educated manpower to drive the petrochemical industry to further development. In terms of technical knowledge, we have reached a level where, due to

sanctions, our petrochemical industry is able to carry out most of the work by indigenized technology. A petrochemical complex must be constructed in a zone where there is plenty of water, he said, adding that some plants will be built in Chabahar in the near future. Another important need of the industry is access to the market, Hosseini said, noting that a great market is in Asia, while consumption of petrochemical products has been spread to all industries. In home appliances, medicine, and many other industries, we can see polymer and other petrochemical products which have replaced steel

products and other materials, he explained. "Furthermore, in the near future, carbon-based fuel consumption for cars and power plants will decrease as the world will move toward renewable energies." We could be hopeful for petrochemical industries as Iran can allocate the greater part of its oil production to petrochemical producing plants. "Iran has the second rank, after Saudi Arabia, in the Middle East in terms of the weight of petrochemicals production. In Saudi Arabia, the tonnage of products is much greater than in Iran." This industry is very capital inten-

sive rather than labor intensive, Hosseini said, adding that the country is in dire need of investments for modernization. "Until two years ago, our oil exports and imports were in balance, as the export value of oil products and petrochemical products was \$25 billion, but now our exports have decreased." Iran's trade balance is positive thanks to its oil exports, Hosseini said, noting that due to the decrease in global prices of petrochemicals, the revenues for our exports have decreased by 14 percent, while the weight of our exported petrochemical products has increased.

Iran's resilient petrochemical industry helps offset sanctions

Economy Desk

Iran's petrochemical industry has continuously withstood illegal US sanctions, demonstrating remarkable resilience in the face of economic barriers. Despite efforts to restrict Iran's access to global markets and technology by western countries, the petrochemical sector has continued to thrive, underscoring the limitations of sanctions in achieving their intended outcomes.

Diversification of markets and trade partners

One of the primary factors contributing to the limited impact of sanctions on Iran's petrochemical industry is the industry's adeptness at diversifying its market reach and forging trade partnerships with non-sanctioning countries. By strategically cultivating new trade channels and expanding its customer base beyond traditional markets, Iran has effectively mitigated the adverse effects of restricted access to certain regions, thereby preserving its export capacity and revenue streams.

This adaptability has proven instrumental in offsetting the impact of sanctions, allowing the industry to sustain its operations and contribute to the national economy.

Indigenous technological development and self-reliance

The imposition of sanctions has prompted Iran's petrochemical sector to invest in indigenous technological development and foster self-reliance in various facets of production and operations.

By leveraging domestic expertise and innovation, as well as adapting existing technologies to suit local requirements, the



industry has maintained its competitive edge and minimized the disruptive effects of external technological restrictions. This cultivation of self-sufficiency not only bolsters Iran's petrochemical autonomy but also serves as a deterrent against over-reliance on foreign resources, thus insulating the industry from the full impact of sanctions.

Strategic investment in infrastructure and upgrading facilities

In response to sanctions, Iran's petrochemical industry has undertaken strategic investments in infrastructure development and the modernization of production facil-

ities, enhancing operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

By prioritizing the refurbishment and expansion of existing petrochemical complexes, as well as integrating advanced technologies for process optimization, the industry has bolstered its production capacity and product quality, positioning itself as a formidable player in the global market. These proactive measures have enabled Iran to not only sustain its petrochemical output but also elevate its competitiveness, despite external economic pressures.

Global demand and essential products

The inherent global demand for petro-

chemical products, coupled with the industry's production of essential commodities with widespread applications, has acted as a buffer against the full ramifications of sanctions.

Key petrochemical derivatives, such as polymers, fertilizers, and basic chemicals, constitute integral components of various industries and consumer goods, ensuring sustained market demand for Iran's petrochemical exports.

This intrinsic necessity and versatility of petrochemical products have conferred a degree of resilience upon the industry, enabling it to navigate geopolitical constraints and sustain its relevance in the global supply chain.

Adaptive financial mechanisms, bartering arrangements

In response to financial restrictions imposed by sanctions, Iran's petrochemical industry has demonstrated adaptability by devising alternative financial mechanisms and engaging in barter trade arrangements with partner countries.

Through creative financial structuring and utilizing non-dollar denominated transactions, the industry has circumvented certain limitations on banking and monetary transactions, facilitating continued trade operations and revenue generation.

Moreover, the exploration of bartering agreements, wherein goods are exchanged directly without relying on conventional currency transactions, has provided a pragmatic avenue for sustaining international trade amidst financial constraints.

Regional geopolitical alliances and collaboration

Iran's petrochemical industry has capitalized on regional geopolitical alliances and collaborative initiatives with neighboring countries, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships that mitigate the impact of sanctions.

By leveraging shared infrastructural projects, joint ventures, and cooperative trade agreements within the region, Iran has expanded its market access and diversified its export routes, thereby circumventing some of the barriers imposed by extraterritorial sanctions.

This strategic engagement with neighboring nations reinforces the industry's resilience and amplifies its interconnectedness within the broader regional economic landscape.

IRNA

Persian Gulf Pro League:

Depleted Sepahan sunk by Golgothar; Persepolis edges Nassaji

Sports Desk

A rescheduled double header at the Persian Gulf Pro League saw short-handed Sepahan fall to a 3-1 defeat at Golgothar Sirjan on Thursday, with Persepolis laboring to a 1-0 victory over Nassaji Mazandaran at home.

Alireza Alizadeh headed home a Roberto Torres' corner-kick to give Golgothar the lead 14 minutes into the game before things went from bad to worse for Sepahan two minutes after the break when fullback Arshia Sarshoq received his marching orders for a second bookable offense.

Torres doubled the advantage for the home side with a 52nd-minute stunner from the edge of the box but Shahriar Moghanlou pulled one back for the visitors from the penalty spot seven minutes later – a ninth goal of the campaign for the leading marksman of the Iranian top flight.

Masih Zahedi's header secured maximum points for the host two minutes from normal time as Golgothar moved up to seventh in the table with 22 points, while Sepahan remained on top with 31 points despite suffering a second league loss in four days.

Tuesday's ruling by the Appeal Committee of the Iranian Football Federation to overturn a Disciplinary Committee's decision to deduct four points from Sepahan over breaching the new transfer rules had seen the club overtake Esteghlal on top of table.

However, Portuguese manager Jose Morais had to do without a number of key players for the visit to Sirjan after Payam Niazmand, Reza Shekari, Kaveh Rezaei, Ehsan Pahlevan, Hadi Mohammadi, and Reza Asadi were banned for the wrongdoings in their contracts while the latter had already been suspended for a red



Golgothar players celebrate a goal during a 3-1 victory over Sepahan in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Sirjan, Iran, on December 28, 2023. **JAVAD NADERIPOUR/FFIRI**

card in the previous game against Iralco – alongside Bryan Dabo and Mohammad Karimi – and in-form fullback Ramin Rezaei was ruled out of the contest with a muscle injury. At Tehran's Azadi Stadium, Yahya Golmohammadi's Persepolis again had to make a hard work of the three points at home as the win against Nassaji meant the

Reds will reach the midway point of the season on Monday – away to Mes Rafsanjan – with five one-goal victories in eight home fixtures, while sharing the spoils with Zob Ahan, San'at Naft, and Esteghlal. Having last found the net against Paykan in mid-October, Shahab Zahedi headed in Mahdi Torabi's pinpoint cross on the half-hour mark on his return to the starting

XI to take his tally to five for the season. As integral winger Torabi ran out of steam in the second period, Golmohammadi's men looked out of clues in the opposition half and had to hold off a late surge by the visiting side, which had new head coach Lucas Alcaraz on the bench for the first time since the Spaniard replaced Mahdi Rahmati.

The hard-fought victory was still enough to see Persepolis, who also had a point restored by the Appeal Committee, move level on 29 points with archrival Esteghlal in the table – sitting third on goal difference – but more work needs to be done for the second part of the campaign if the Reds fancy a seventh league crown in eight seasons.

Al Hilal test

Meanwhile, Sepahan was given probably the hardest task in the knockout phase of the AFC Champions League in Thursday's draw, as the Iranian club will face Saudi giant Al Hilal – the most decorated club in the history of the competition with four titles – in the two-legged last-16 fixture.

Sepahan will be the only Iranian side in the knockouts, thanks to a second-place finish behind Al Ittihad in Group C of the Asian elite clubs' competition, while Al Hilal will head into the first leg on February 12 – hosted by Sepahan – on the back of winning Group D.

The second leg will be played in Riyadh seven days later.

A summer of spending spree saw Al Hilal secure the services of Neymar and his fellow Brazilian Malcom, Serbian internationals Aleksandar Mitrovic and Sergej Milinkovic-Savic, as well as Kalidou Koulibaly, Rúben Neves, and Moroccan keeper Yassine Bounou and is yet to concede a defeat across all competitions this season – sitting comprehensively atop the Saudi Pro League table with 16 wins in 18 matches.

Elsewhere in the West Zone last-16 round, Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr will square off against Al Fayha in an all-Saudi tie, with Nasaf FC of Uzbekistan playing the UAE's Al Ain.

Navbahor vs. Al Ittihad completes the last-16 lineup in the West.

Son leads squad as South Korea 'ready' to win Asian Cup

Tottenham Hotspur's Son Heung-min was named in South Korea's Asian Cup squad on Thursday and coach Jurgen Klinsmann said it was "about time" they ended their 64-year continental title drought.

Wolves forward Hwang Hee-chan, who scored his 10th Premier League goal of the season against Brentford on Wednesday, was also among Klinsmann's 26-man selection for the tournament, which kicks off in Qatar on January 12.

Son will captain a squad that includes Bayern Munich defender Kim Min-jae and 22-year-old Paris Saint-Germain attacking midfielder Lee Kang-in. South Korea have not won the

Asian Cup since 1960 and Klinsmann said: "It's all about timing now and I think we are ready for this big, big competition."

South Korea have been drawn in Group E and will face Malaysia, Jordan and Bahrain in the first round.

They lost 1-0 to eventual champions Qatar in the quarter-finals of the 2019 Asian Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

Klinsmann, a World Cup winner with Germany in 1990, will have one of the strongest squads in the tournament in Qatar and he said he could "see it in their eyes that they are hungry for it".

"I have a good feeling because they're doing well at their clubs," he said.



YONHAP

"They're healthy, they're fit, they're ambitious and they're very hungry. This is the foundation for playing a good tournament."

Son will be appearing at his fourth Asian Cup and was part of the South Korea team that lost to hosts Australia in the

2015 final.

PSG's Lee is also making a splash after moving to Paris from Mallorca in the summer, and Klinsmann described him as "a flower that starts to bloom".

"We have a lot of different pieces in that roster and that makes us one of the favourites for the Asian Cup," said Klinsmann.

"We have to fine tune these elements over the next couple of weeks and then go into the tournament with confidence."

South Korea squad:

Goalkeepers: Kim Seung-gyu (Al Shabab/KSA), Jo Hyeon-woo (Ulsan), Song Bum-keun (Shonan Bellmare/JPN)

Defenders: Kim Young-gwon (Ulsan), Kim Min-jae (Bayern Mu-

nich/GER), Jung Seung-hyun (Ulsan), Kim Ju-sung (FC Seoul), Kim Ji-soo (Brentford/ENG), Seol Young-woo (Ulsan), Kim Tae-hwan (Ulsan), Lee Ki-je (Suwon), Kim Jin-su (Jeonbuk)

Midfielders: Park Yong-woo (Al Ain/UAE), Hwang In-beom (Red Star Belgrade/SRB), Hong Hyun-seok (Gent/BEL), Lee Soon-min (Gwangju), Lee Jae-sung (Mainz/GER), Lee Kang-in (Paris Saint-Germain/FRA), Son Heung-min (Tottenham/ENG), Jeong Woo-yeong (Stuttgart/GER), Hwang Hee-chan (Wolves/ENG), Moon Seon-min (Jeonbuk), Park Jin-seob (Jeonbuk), Yang Hyun-jun (Celtic/SCO)

Strikers: Cho Gue-sung (Midtjylland/DEN), Oh Hyeon-gyu (Celtic/SCO)

Nadal plays down AO hopes but vows to enjoy comeback



BRADLEY KANARIS/GETTY IMAGES

AAP – Rafael Nadal has attempted to play down his "impossible" Australian Open title hopes in what shapes as the first stop on his 2024 farewell world tour. But for the 37-year-old Spaniard, who is set to return at the Brisbane International after almost a year out with injury, Australia is a place where the impossible happens.

The 22-time major champi-

on's last match was a round-two loss at the Australian Open in January earlier this year, with Nadal eventually opting for surgery to fix his troublesome hip in June.

"It's impossible to think about winning tournaments today," he said when told Australian world No 40 Alexei Popyrin had tipped him to win in Brisbane. "What's really possible is to enjoy the comeback. I don't expect

much; one year without being on the court."

Nadal, who missed last year's French Open after winning it for a staggering 14th time a year earlier, has said 2024 is "probably going to be my last year on the professional tour". But he said he was encouraged by his fitness, confessing he feels "much better than what I expected a month ago".

"I can't have super long-term

goals because I don't see myself playing a super long time," he said.

"I don't know how things are going to keep going. I'm not a player who tries to predict what can happen in the short term, and it's even tougher in the medium period of time. I need to accept the adversity and that it's not going to be perfect, just come with the right spirit every day."

Over 28m Iranians screened for hypertension, diabetes: *National Health Survey*



Social Desk

Since the implementation of Iran's National Health Survey on November 11, 2023, the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education has announced that over 334,000 people have been identified as possibly having diabetes. The survey, which will run from November 11, 2023, to January 5, 2024, aims to screen individuals over the age of 18 for blood pressure and diabetes. The Ministry plans to create health records for all participants as part of this nationwide initiative, as reported by IRNA. According to the Ministry of Health's announcement, as of Friday, December 29, 2023, a total of 28,305,718 individuals have been screened for high blood pressure and diabetes in the National Health Survey. Of those, 558,896 people were identified as possibly having hypertension, and 334,190 people were identified as possibly having diabetes. Further-

more, in the 24 hours before that date, 1,302,529 individuals were screened, with 20,588 people identified with the possibility of high blood pressure and 10,866 people with the possibility of diabetes. Based on a previous announcement by the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education, 65 percent of men and 35 percent of women have participated in the National Health Survey thus far. The Director General of the Non-Communicable Diseases Management Office, Kourosh Etemad, noted that over five million Iranians have been identified in the pre-hypertension phase, while over 1.9 million people have been identified in the pre-diabetes phase through the survey. Etemad emphasized the importance of timely intervention to prevent or manage diabetes and high blood pressure in these individuals. Etemad also encouraged greater participation from women, stating that the current 35

percent coverage is promising but can be improved. He highlighted that the most active age group in the survey has been 35-45 years old, and he urged all individuals over 18 years old in the country to participate to achieve the survey's objectives. In terms of screening numbers, the provinces of Fars, Mazandaran, East Azarbaijan, Kermanshah, and Urmia have been the most active, with over one million people screened since November 11. In terms of population coverage, the cities of Behbahan, Iranshahr, Shahrekord, and Bushehr have shown the highest participation rates in the survey. The main goal of this campaign is to provide free care for diabetic and hypertensive patients within the framework of the family health program. By creating electronic health records, healthcare providers and doctors will be able to monitor and provide necessary tests and medications on a monthly or quarterly basis to those in need.

Migration cannot be wished away



By Ali Amiri
Staff writer

On October 22, 2023, *The Wall Street Journal* published an article titled "Illegal Immigration Is a Bigger Problem Than Ever," which raises concerns about the current situation of increased migration to the United States. The article specifically focuses on the number of families and children entering the country illegally. Almost a year before that, CNN ran a story titled "No Immigration 'Fix' and Congress Isn't Really Trying," with its headline framing immigration as a problem the US is facing and blaming Congress for not taking action.

This kind of fearmongering is not limited to *The Wall Street Journal* and CNN alone. Immigration has become one of the most divisive debates of our era, and the rise of right-wing politicians in the West can, at least partially, be attributed to the anti-immigrant sentiments propagated by both legacy media and the politicians and parties benefiting from it.

However, Hein de Haas, a distinguished migration scholar,

sociologist, and Professor of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam, has recently published a book titled 'How Migration Really Works'. This authoritative and myth-busting book comprehensively examines the issue of immigration in three distinct sections. De Haas debunks 22 myths about immigration that are deeply rooted in the popular discourse on the matter, making it an excellent read for anyone seeking a genuine understanding of immigration.

"This book," writes de Haas, "will show that the ideas on both sides represent partial, simplistic and often outright misleading views on migration, which crumble in the face of evidence." In an attempt to "overcome an increasingly polarized debate," de Haas offers "evidence that challenges simplistic pro- and anti-migration narratives."

In an opinion piece published by *The Guardian*, de Haas summarizes his core ideas and begins by questioning the popular term "immigration crisis." He writes, "There is no scientific evidence to sustain the claim that global migration is accelerating," pointing to the fact that

international migrants account for approximately 3 percent of the world's population. "This percentage," he authoritatively states, "has remained remarkably stable over the past half-century."

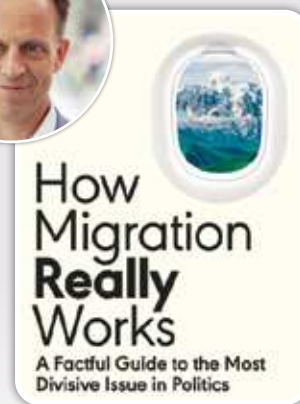
De Haas goes on to explain that similarly, the scale of refugee migration is much smaller than what politicians and media portray. Approximately 10 percent of all international migrants are refugees, which accounts for only 0.3 percent of the global population. While the number of refugees may vary significantly due to regions and conflicts, there is no concrete evidence of a long-term upward trend.

He further discredits the myth that illegal migration is spiraling out of control. "In fact," he notes, "the large majority of migrants who move from the global south to the global north continue to move legally."

Turning to the "common understandings of the causes of migration," de Haas presents them in a completely novel and different way, supported by evidence. He suggests that the conventional view of "south-

to-north migration" is primarily rooted in the assumptions that poverty, inequality, and violence in origin countries drive people to migrate. This perspective leads to the belief that addressing poverty reduction and promoting development in the countries of origin could potentially offer a long-term solution to migration.

However, this assump-



tion does not withstand evidence that demonstrates how migration increases as poorer countries experience economic growth - like the cases of Mexico and India, both middle-income countries. This is because as income and education levels

improve, along with infrastructure development, people's abilities and aspirations to migrate also rise. Contrary to the common perception of migration as a result of a desperate escape from misery, the reality is that migration is often an investment in the future well-being of families and demands substantial resources.

"Poverty actually deprives people of the resources required to move over long distances, let alone to cross continents," he writes.

In the final part of the book, de Haas underlines "the elephant in the room of migration debates: persistent labor demand," which is a central aspect of his perspective on migration. He presents this as the underlying reason why all the "ill-conceived immigration restrictions have [...]

backfired." These restrictions have resulted in sudden surges in migration, where individuals feel compelled to migrate immediately or risk losing the opportunity. Consequently, established patterns of movement have been disrupted, leading migrants to settle permanently in new locations. These circumstances have also contributed to an increase in illegal migration, as people are forced to take greater risks when crossing borders and rely on smugglers to evade detection. "The misleading assertion that poverty causes migration," de Haas writes in his opinion

piece, "conceals the fact that labor demand has been the main driver of growing immigration to Western countries since the 1990s."

The rise in educational attainment, progress in women's rights, and the aging population have led to labor shortages, particularly in Western countries. Consequently, there is a growing demand for migrant workers in sectors such as agriculture, construction, cleaning, hospitality, transport, and food processing. This demand arises from the lack of local workers who are both willing and qualified to fulfill these positions, which are often regarded as precarious employment. If there were no ongoing labor shortages, the majority of migrants would not have decided to migrate.

Asserting that there are "no simple solutions for complex problems," de Haas urges politicians to gather the courage to tell an honest story about migration. In his book, he demonstrates that migration benefits the wealthy in host communities more than the migrants themselves and emphasizes that it is a phenomenon that is here to stay.

De Haas concludes his book by saying that any genuine debate on migration should "inevitably be a debate on the type of society we want to live in."



Iran's Nat'l Orchestra performs 'Lady of Water and Mirror'



Arts & Culture Desk

IRNA – In a special ceremony held at Vahdat Hall on December 27, Iran's National Orchestra performed a symphonic poem titled 'Lady of Water and Mirror,' conducted by Hamayoun Rahimian and featuring the vocals of Amirhossein Samiei.

The orchestral performance coincided with the death anniversary of the passing of Hazrat Umm ul-Baneen (PBUH). The symphony, was supposed to be staged on the martyrdom anniversary of Hazrat Fatima (PBUH) on December 17 under the name of 'Lady of Water' whose compositions were made by Safi Safavi.

The pieces are inspired by the poetry of Abdoljabbar Kakaei and Seyyed Mehdi Shojaei.

The symphonic poem comprises eight sections: 'Offering,' 'Yas (Jasmine) Fragrance,' 'Conqueror of Hearts,' 'Love and Moon,' 'Dear Father,' 'Night of Longing,' 'All This Loneliness,' and 'Celestial'.

The orchestra, led by Rahimian, surprised the audience with a diverse selection of pieces, including compositions by Maurice Jarre, the French conductor and composer, as well as works by Fereydon Shahbazian, Farhad Fakhreddini, and Mehرداد Delnavazi.

The performance began with a solo oud performance by Mehran Khanzadeh, followed by the orchestra's rendition of 'Entry to Mecca,' the music from the film 'Muhammad: The Messenger of God,' composed by Jarre.

After the conclusion of this piece, Rahimian left the stage briefly, returning with vocalist Samiei performing the piece 'Apple of the Tree of Revelation,' featuring lyrics by Mohammad Nikoo and composed by Rahimian, accompanied by the choir group led by Razmik Ohanian.

Continuing the program, musical pieces from the film 'Avar (Debris)' by Shahbazian, featuring a solo performance by *ney* player Pooriya Shivaferd, as well as 'Once Upon a Time' by Fakhreddini, with duet performances by qanun player Mojgan Mohammad-Hosseini and oud player Mehran Khanzadeh, and 'Invitation to Islam' (from the film 'Muhammad: The Messenger of God') by Jarre were presented.

Furthermore, 'Rhapsody for Ney and Orchestra' composed by Delnavazi and performed by *ney* (end-blown flute) player Pooriya Shivaferd 'Season with Our Rain' with lyrics by Rumi and composed by Rahimian, featuring vocals by Samiei and the choir group, and 'Kaarzaar (Campaign)' (from the film 'Muhammad: The Messenger of God') by Jarre were among the notable pieces performed.

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Bolourchi: Grammys, Oscars are political events, US independent competitions hold more credibility

IRAN DAILY: Could you first elaborate on your recent success at the World's Best Musicians Competition?

BOLOURCHI: This competition holds significant credibility in the world of music, where independent artists from around the globe participate. In terms of ranking, it is even in higher status compared to even the Grammy Awards and Academy Awards because the two are considered too political. The awards for independent artists hold a higher artistic status within the community of producers and art specialists. The competition is held every six months, when all independent composers worldwide participate. After holding the first round, a total of 30,000 artists, in the second round first top person receives a gold medal, followed by the second and third top persons who receive a silver, and bronze medals, respectively. As is evident, achieving first place in this music competition is quite challenging, and I am highly fortunate to have received the first place again this year.

You have received several international awards in world competitions. What are the characteristics of your artworks, distinguishing them from others?

Once again in May 2023, I received the first title and gold medal at the Akademia Music Awards for composing 'Nature's Dance.' The competition ranked second in the independent artists' awards of America after the World's Best Musicians Competition. In addition, in 2022 and 2023, I won two bronze medals in the Global Music Awards, which is the third top music festival in the rankings of global competitions in terms of credibility. To my mind, the success of my works lies in my attempt to listen to my inner voice during composition and transform my emotional outbursts into a musical piece. That's why I don't focus

much on technique when creating and performing a song and this has contributed to the international acceptance of my works.

Could you elaborate on your artistic journey from the beginning to the present?

I started musical education at the age of seven with playing the dulcimer. I benefited from various instructors, including Reza Shafieian, Pashang Kamkar, and Omid Sayyareh. In the field of composition, I broadened my experiences working with maestro Pirouz Arjmand. For 10 years, I learned all compositions and *radifs* (traditional melodic entities) from Parviz Meshkatian, as his last student. Plus, I spent five years studying composition with Farhad Fakhreddin and later from Hossein Delhavi. I hold degrees in music at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with a Ph.D. equivalent in sound engineering from the UK. In 2000, I introduced the first digital music recording studio in the country. Over the years, alongside playing music and arranging, I collaborated with various artistic groups in the field of sound engineering. Since 2022, I have dedicated more time and energy to my works and compositions, producing various musical pieces alongside other musical activities.

Most of your works are categorized as instrumental music. What are the reasons behind this preference?

I am so engrossed in instrumental music, and I believe I can express myself better in this genre. That's not to say that I do not create vocal music or cannot perform it; rather, it is a personal preference to focus more on instrumental works. At present, I am working on a piece inspired by folklore music. Its melody is almost finished and soon will be followed by arrangement.

What goals do you pursue in the world of art and music?

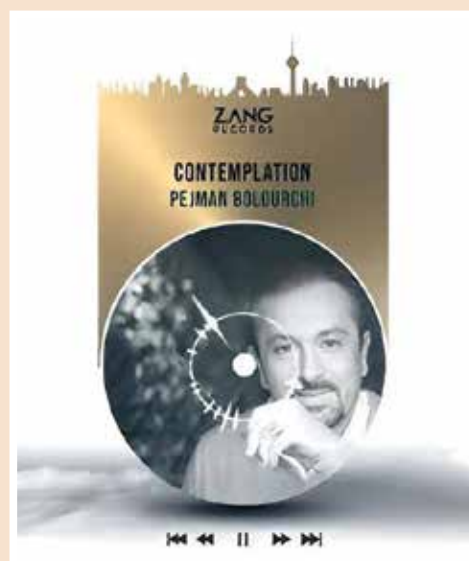
Throughout my musical journey, my constant effort has been to do my best in promoting the status of



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

Pejman Bolourchi, an Iranian composer and recipient of much-admired accolades for independent musicians in the US, regards the Grammy Awards and the Academy Awards as political competitions.

He believes that awards given in competitions for independent artists carry higher artistic credibility and ranking among arts specialists. Recently, Bolourchi received the first prize at the World's Best Musicians Competition for his composition 'Contemplation.' This competition, the largest classical music festival globally, covers various categories such as instrumental, woodwind, brass, vocal, and ensemble performances. Bolourchi achieved first prize of the same event for two separate compositions ('Nature's Dance' and 'Contemplation') in one year. Iran Daily conducted an exclusive interview with Bolourchi regarding his achievements in global music competitions. The following is the full text of the interview:



The success of my works lies in my attempt to listen to my inner voice during composition and transform my emotional outbursts into a musical piece.

Iranian music. Just as I pioneered in introducing digital sound recording technology to the country, I do the same producing and composing music in a way that showcases the talent and potential of Iranian music to the world. Iranian music is an invaluable gem that should be recognized by people worldwide, and, undoubtedly, when the world hears Iranian music it will be more captivating than ever.