

**Pezeshkian visits 'Pioneers of Progress' exhibition**



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## VP urges leveraging cultural dominance for national prosperity

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**Time to 'strike while the iron is hot' for Iran's good**



By Mostafa Shirmohammadi  
Editor-in-chief

### OPINION

Positive vibes are coming out of the United States, suggesting that President Donald Trump is willing to have it out with Iran and, in particular, seeks to address the nuclear saga through diplomacy. In a recent interview with Fox News, Trump implicitly opposed a possible Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, indicating that he may not support even a surgical strike, let alone an all-out war. This is a blow to Israel's belligerent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The hawkish PM probably never might have thought that Trump, who once advocated striking Iran's nuclear sites during his electoral campaign, would backtrack and now pursues a diplomatic solution through negotiation and agreement.

It appears that a Republican like Trump is more adept at reigning in the warmongers in Israel and within the US.

Trump's remarks imply that he favors a deal with Iran over pressure, which itself is a sign that he has learned from his first term and become more pragmatic. He has realized that his so-called "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran's economy did not yield the desired outcome of bringing Iran to the negotiating table, nor did it slow down its nuclear advancements.

In fact, what Iranian officials have reiterated for years that the nation will not buckle under pressure has proven true to the septuagenarian businessman-turned-politician.

I have always maintained that a major deal between Iran and the US needs to have a government in Iran capable of conducting fruitful talks and a Republican administration in the US, since it would be more likely to result in a mutually satisfactory agreement that stands the test of time.

Now a Republican administration, led by Trump, is at the helm in the US, the very person who walked out of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, almost seven years ago and unleashed the "toughest ever sanctions" on Iran.

In Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist president leading a moderate government, has expressed a desire to sit down for talks with the West to get the sanctions on Iran's economy lifted. Pezeshkian's government understands Iran's need for unfettered access to global engagement to boost its economy and attract much needed investments to maintain and develop its infrastructure.

Iran is said to be the world's "most untapped" country after years of sanctions – a ripe investment destination.

And Trump has described Iran as a country that has "great potential," which could indicate that he sees Iran a country with abundant investment opportunities and probably wants American companies to step into the Iranian market. All countries, be it the world's second-largest economy China, are in need of foreign investment.

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President of the 40th International Fajr Music Festival Reza Mahdavi (R), and executive secretary of the event Mohammad Ali Mer'ati (L) unveil the poster of the event at a press conference held at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on January 25, 2025.  
SNN

## Top-tier World Musicians to Attend Fajr Music Festival Despite Sanctions

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## Crude output to rise by 10K bpd with development of three oilfields:

**NIOC**



**Economy Desk**

The development plan for three oilfields namely Soumar, Saman, and Delavaran in western Iran officially began on Saturday in the attendance of the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

The project, which aims to boost the country's oil production capacity by 10,000 barrels per day (bpd), is being implemented with a \$240 million investment from the private sector as the contractor, Shana reported.

During the groundbreaking ceremony for the development of the oilfields in the operational area of Naft-Shahr in the western province of Kermanshah, NIOC chief Hamid Bovard announced the increase in oil production capacity, stating that the \$240-million project aims to develop and revitalize the border region.

Bovard highlighted the underdevelopment of the Naft-Shahr area in recent years, noting that the project seeks to develop small oilfields in the region and restore prosperity to border areas.

He emphasized that the development of these areas will not only enhance security but also bring progress and welfare to local communities.

The NIOC CEO explained that Naft-Shahr is host to one of the country's oldest oilfields, with several smaller fields in the region currently undergoing development.

"The project is expected to increase Iran's daily oil production capacity by 10,000 barrels and provide feedstock for the Kermanshah refinery," noted the official.

Bovard added that the \$240 million investment by the private sector is projected to become profitable within less than 20 months. He also noted that the incumbent administration's key policy is to utilize local workforce in projects, emphasizing efforts to leverage the capabilities of the region's residents and present the project as a small gift from the government to the diligent people of the area.

The Soumar field is located in Kermanshah Province, 30 kilometers southwest of Gilan-e-Gharb, while the Saman field is nestled 17 kilometers southeast of Naft-Shahr in Kermanshah Province. Also, the Delavaran field is located in Ilam Province, 85 kilometers from the city of Ilam.

# Pezeshkian visits 'Pioneers of Progress' exhibition

**Economy Desk**

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian toured the "Pioneers of Progress" exhibition on Saturday, a national event showcasing the achievements and capabilities of the country's private sector; and during the visit, he engaged in discussions with private sector representatives.

The tour was attended by Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf, Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Qezelgeh, Mohsen Hajimirzaei, the president's chief of staff, Satar Hashemi, the minister of communications and information technology; Mohammad Atabak, the minister of industry, mine, and trade; and Mohammad Javad Zarif, the vice president for strategic affairs, president.ir wrote. Pezeshkian used the opportunity to learn about the capacities and advancements of the country's private sector.

The exhibition opened on Tuesday with the presence of the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

During his visit to the "Pioneers of Progress" exhibition, the Leader emphasized that the only way to advance the country is by leveraging the capabilities of the private sector.

The exhibition featured the private sector's accomplishments in various fields, including information and communication technology, satellite equipment manufacturing, artificial intelligence, aircraft repair tools and equipment, mining and geology, oil, gas, and petrochemical industries, steel and aluminum production, home appliances, maritime industries, carpet manufacturing, water and electricity industries, textiles, medical and hospital equipment, drug production, the Royan Research Institute, agricultural and livestock produc-

tion, handicrafts, and tourism.

During the visit, representatives from various private sector companies raised concerns and complaints about the challenges and obstacles they face.

Addressing the ministers present at the exhibition, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that the government and state officials must work to resolve these issues, as the country's progress depends on empowering the private sector.

He reiterated that utilizing the private sector's capacities and capabilities is the only way to move the country forward.

In the water and electricity industry, after Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi explained efforts to address shortages in the electricity sector, the Leader acknowledged that the remarks were positive and accurate but emphasized that they must be put into practice.



He noted that while the issue of imbalances and their solutions have been discussed in recent years, there is still a significant gap from achieving the desired outcome.

Regarding private sector complaints about the lengthy and complex process of obtaining permits, Ayatollah Khamenei stated that this is a critical issue.

He urged the government and responsible agencies to devise fundamental solutions to streamline and expedite the process of permit issuance.

## Union head: Iran ranks 3rd in global honey production



**Economy Desk**

The head of the National Union of Iranian Beekeepers stated that the country, with an annual production of 122,000 tons of honey from over 92,000 beekeeping units, is the world's third-largest honey producer.

Mir-Mohsen Mousavian, speaking on Saturday about the state of the apiculture industry, added that according to the latest statistics from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), global honey production stands at 2.15 million tons annually, produced by over 91 million bee colonies, noting that Iran ranks third in honey production after China and Turkey and fourth in the number of bee colonies.

Mousavian noted that according to the latest statistics, results in 2024, the country's honey output reached approximately 127,700 tons, marking a 5.63% increase compared to 2023 (121,000 tons).

He further highlighted that, in addition to honey, Iran produces around 11 tons of royal jelly, 862 tons of bee pollen, 211 tons of propolis, over 2,600 tons of beeswax, and 9.6 kilograms of bee venom. Mousavian emphasized that the recent census counted 92,122 beekeeping units in the country, housing 10.8 million bee colonies, of which 10.5 million are in modern hives and 300,000 in traditional hives. He also mentioned that honey production in 2024 exceeded the projected 122,000 tons by about 4.7%. The highest honey production in the country is concentrated in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Fars, Kurdistan, Isfahan, and Mazandaran.

Mousavian stated that over the past four years, some beekeeping units in the country had experienced bee and larva mortality, which is attributed by some to infected queen bees and a lack of effective medications to combat such diseases. Mousavian criticized that Iran Veterinary Organization had discontinued monitoring and surveillance of bees in recent years due to a lack of manpower and budget, which has seriously impacted the beekeeping industry. The issue of

larva mortality persists, and its cause remains unidentified.

He also mentioned that in the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (2021), the Parliament approved a 10% value-added tax (VAT) on honey, royal jelly, and other bee products, which has led to a decline in honey sales due to reduced purchasing power.

Mousavian argued that, according to the law, raw agricultural products are exempt from VAT, as seen with meat and raw milk, but honey is subject to VAT.

He expressed hope that the current administration would repeal this decision to support beekeepers and include honey in the VAT exemption for agricultural products.

### Sugar consumption inevitable

Mousavian stressed that sugar consumption for beekeeping during winter is essential for colony survival, stimulating the queen to begin laying eggs, and enhancing bees' ability to store honey. He clarified that this practice is unrelated to producing honey with sugar.

The union head added that sugar, as a key input in beekeeping, should be made available to beekeepers at reasonable prices.

### Beekeepers in need of credits

Mousavian stated that no financial credits had been provided to beekeepers in the past decade, despite the industry requiring support. He noted that neighboring countries like Turkey, Afghanistan and Iraq provide subsidies and support to their beekeepers. He described bee pollination as vital for agriculture and highlighted that many countries with apiculture industries subsidize beekeepers for pollination services.

Mousavian also called for the implementation of beekeeper insurance, which has been stalled for the past three years due to budget deficits, causing concerns among apiarists.

### Lags in honey exports

Mousavian acknowledged that despite Iran's honey production capacity and potential for increased forex earnings, the country has made little progress in honey exports.

He emphasized that Iran has the potential to boost production and expand exports of honey, royal jelly, bee pollen, propolis, beeswax, and bee venom to increase hard currency revenues. However, last year (ended March 19, 2024), only about 4,600 tons of honey were exported to target countries, which a negligible figure.

## Energy Ministry to back private sector by cutting investment risks



**Economy Desk**

The Energy Ministry is seeking to support the private sector to attract investment by creating an appealing environment and reducing investment risks, Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said, adding that his ministry is implementing policies to achieve the intended goal.

Speaking on the sidelines of the International Water Industry Exhibition, Aliabadi emphasized the need to provide manageable risks for investors while eliminating unmanageable ones, as reported by ISNA.

He stated that the government will play a role in areas related to the Energy Ministry by creating suitable markets to enable the private sector to fully benefit from its investments.

Aliabadi highlighted that the private sector has already entered the water and electricity industries, with over 35,000 megawatts of proposed investments in the electricity sector.

Regarding water, Aliabadi said the ministry has serious policies to support the private sector in desalination and water recycling. He also mentioned plans to improve drinking water services and expand investment opportunities through new mechanisms.

Addressing Iran's water resources, Aliabadi acknowledged that the country is located in an arid region with limited water supplies. He stressed that Iran cannot fol-

low water-intensive models and must adapt to its geographical conditions.

On the issue of transboundary water rights, Aliabadi said Iran's policy is to adhere to international commitments and fairness.

He called on neighboring countries to reciprocate in respecting Iran's water rights, particularly in discussions with Afghanistan over shared water resources.

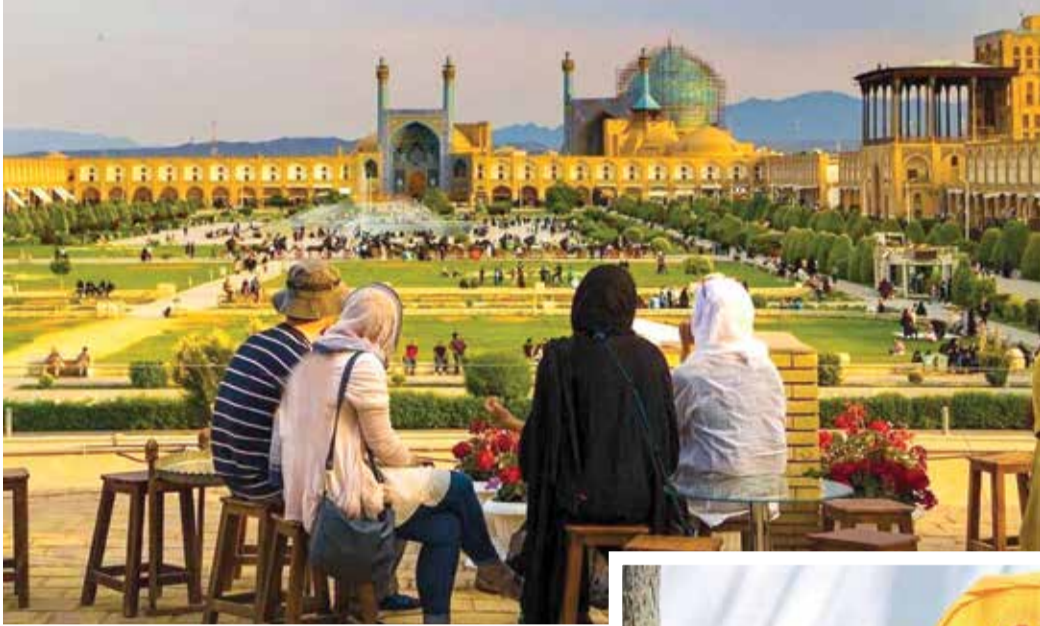
Regarding agricultural water management, Aliabadi emphasized the importance of shifting to crops that require less water, environmentally compatible farming, and greenhouse cultivation.

While the Energy Ministry is responsible for water supply and promoting efficient water use, the primary responsibility lies with the Ministry of Agriculture, which has detailed plans in this area.

During the exhibition, Aliabadi, accompanied by water industry officials and Parliament members, reviewed the latest achievements of domestic companies in the water and wastewater sectors as industry representatives highlighted their challenges and called for government support.

The 20th International Water and Wastewater Industry Exhibition, themed "Sustainable Iran with Interactive and Technological Management," was held in Tehran from Wednesday to Saturday. It featured 150 domestic and five foreign companies showcasing the latest technologies in the water and wastewater sectors.

# Role of family travel in community development



## Iranica Desk

One of the most unforgettable experiences is family travel; it's an adventure filled with conversations, paths traversed, sights admired, souvenirs collected, and new friends and attractions discovered. It also embodies the assurance we share, allowing us to navigate the sweetness, fatigue, and patience of the journey together, supporting one another. Regarding the significance of family travel, Mehran Hassani, a tourism researcher, believes these trips not only strengthen emotional and social bonds but also play a crucial role in the economic, social, and cultural development of Iranian society. With effective planning and investment, such journeys can significantly contribute to achieving sustainable development goals and improving the quality of life for Iranians, chtn.ir wrote. He noted that in Iranian

society, families, as primary consumer groups while traveling, enhance local community income by purchasing handicrafts, staying in hotels, dining at local eateries, and more. Furthermore, such trips encourage domestic tourism, as families opt to explore various regions of Iran rather than traveling abroad, which positively impacts the preservation of financial resources within the country. Hassani, a member of the Association of Tourism Experts, regards the social dimension of family trip as an opportunity for deeper interaction among relatives, allowing for more conversation, recreation, and group activities. During these excursions, individuals can create unique shared experiences while exploring natural, historical, and cultural sites, leading to stronger bonds. Additionally, research indicates that communal ac-

tivities during travels help lower psychological stress and enhance the overall quality of life for family members. He emphasized the importance of fostering connections between families on these journeys, noting that such interactions can strengthen unity and cohesion within the community. Organizing the tourism events and festivals, where different households can

exchange experiences, further promotes social solidarity. Hassani also highlighted the cultural value of family travel, pointing out that it enables parents to introduce their children to the diverse customs and traditions of various regions. This exposure not only educates the younger generation about Iranian history and art but also reinforces their cultural identity

through these enriching encounters. He continued that another benefit of such group trips is that families gain insight into environmental challenges, cultural heritage, handicrafts, and related issues. By raising awareness, they can take essential steps to protect these resources. Hassani emphasized that notable challenges and opportunities exist for en-

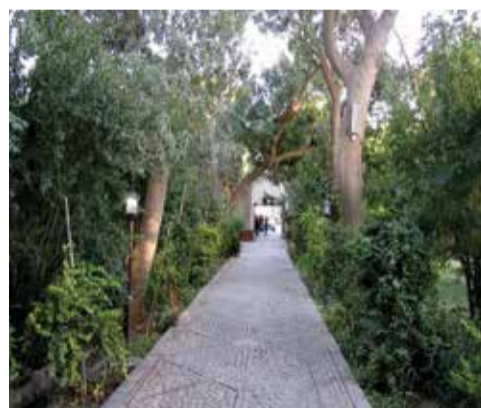
acting meaningful change in family travel. To achieve these goals, it is important to design tours with a "multigenerational" approach, catering to the needs of all members, from children to seniors. Such programs can offer diverse activities, including engaging entertainment for kids, educational experiences for teenagers, and uplifting, calming activities for older adults. He also noted that these tours could be thematic, featuring artistic itineraries that include visits to creative handicraft workshops and explorations of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as health and nature therapy excursions with stays in natural settings aimed at enhancing mental well-being. Referring to the main features of family travel packages, he noted their variety and affordability, which enhance satisfaction and encourage family partici-

pation in domestic trips. He proposed the development of a family tourism application that could offer information on suitable routes, family-friendly accommodations, attractions designed for families, and special tour recommendations. Users would be able to share their travel experiences and gain insights from others. Additionally, with the widespread use of technology and high internet access, families can save on both travel costs and time. Hassani also highlighted the role of media in producing documentary, narrative, and educational content, such as clips, visual reports, series, and short films. He asserted that these artistic formats, focusing on family-friendly destinations and their benefits, would likely be well-received due to the country's strong household culture, acting as a catalyst for promoting a family-oriented travel ethos.

## Splendor of Shokat Abad Garden in Birjand

Shokat Abad Garden, a celebrated example of Persian gardens, was commissioned by Ismail Khan Shokat ol-Molk from the Alam family, located near Birjand in South Khorasan Province. Persian gardens are hallmark features of Iranian desert cities, showcasing the ingenuity and historical technology of Iran in transforming arid landscapes into vibrant oasis-like retreats.

Shokat Abad is an expansive garden that not only features ornamental plants but also includes an array of fruit trees. Following the traditional layout of Persian gardens, it incorporates a *kushk* (pavilion) at its center, which dates back to the Qajar dynasty. The pavilion boasts a striking white facade and a spacious terrace supported by two elegant pillars adorned with arches. Decorative Goldani motifs enhance its aesthetic appeal, with multiple rooms constructed around and behind this



terrace, enriching the overall design. In terms of structure and architecture, Shokat Abad is truly remarkable. The landscaping and construction adhere to a meticulously prepared plan, resulting in a harmonious design. The *howz khaneh* — a summer room typically designed in an octagonal shape — features the most intricate decorations. A prominent vault, covered by a *kolah farangi* (a dome resembling a foreign headdress), elegantly

crowns the *howz khaneh*, adding to the architectural splendor. The garden employs various types of vaulting, including barrel vaults in some rooms, which are particularly well-suited for the hot, dry climate of South Khorasan. Interestingly, certain sections of the garden appear newer, indicating later additions made to accommodate the evolving needs of its residents over time. The owner's private quarters, known as *andaruni*, are lo-

cated on the southern side of the complex, resembling traditional houses with stucco frames and blind arches surrounding the pools. Fruit trees serve as a defining feature of Shokat Abad, providing both yield and decorative charm throughout the garden. Situated five kilometers east of Birjand in Shokat Abad village, the garden can be easily accessed by asking for directions to Birjand University, which is located directly across from it. The complex was

registered as a national heritage site of Iran on August 14, 1999, highlighting its cultural significance.

### About Birjand

Birjand itself is a city rich in history and culture, offering several attractions to explore. One significant landmark is the Birjand Citadel, a historic fortress that dates back to the Safavid era. Its impressive architecture and strategic design provide visitors with a glimpse into the military history of the region, while

the citadel's vantage point offers panoramic views of the surrounding landscape, enriching the visitor experience.

### South Khorasan Province

South Khorasan Province is renowned for its stunning natural landscapes, which encompass mountains, deserts, and lush valleys. The province is characterized by a unique climate that varies from hot and dry in the lower elevations to temperate in the high-

er altitudes. This climatic diversity fosters a rich variety of flora and fauna, as well as agricultural products, particularly saffron, which stands out as one of the region's most famous exports.

Rich in history, the province hosts numerous historical sites, ancient caravansaries, and traditional bazaars that reflect its vibrant cultural heritage. Its strategic location on the Silk Road historically transformed it into a crucial hub for trade and cultural exchange between east and west, further enhancing its significance.

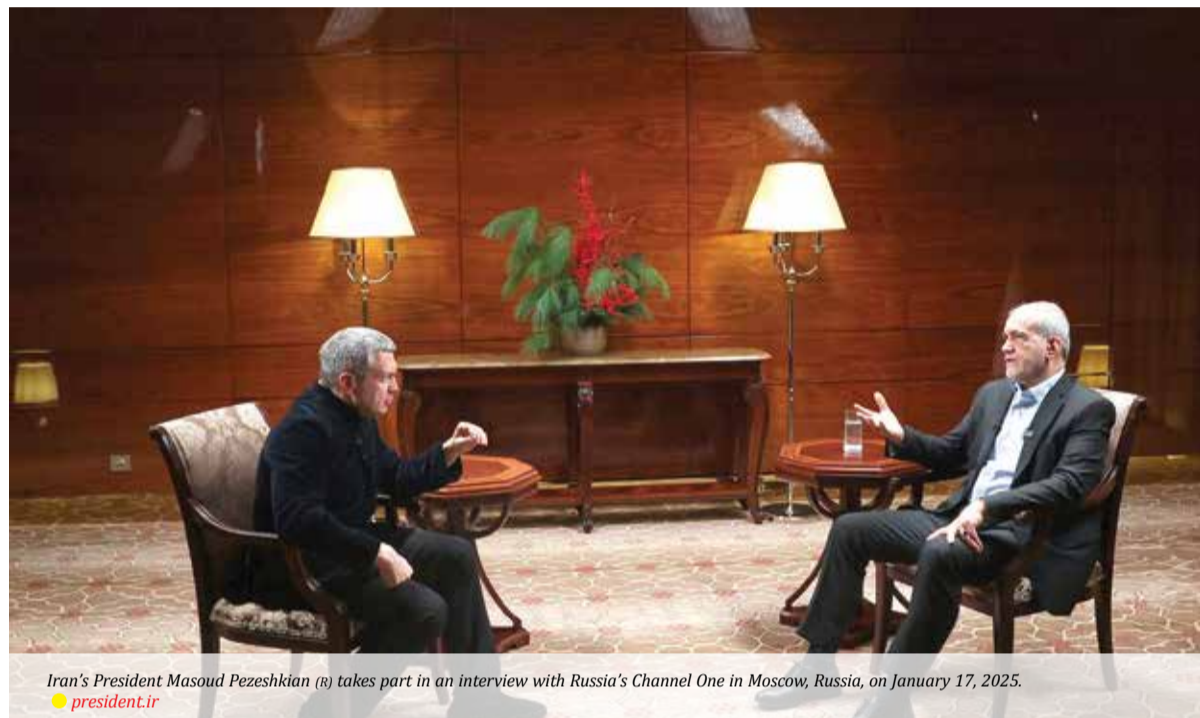
Overall, South Khorasan Province offers a rich tapestry of cultural and natural attractions, making it a rewarding destination for travelers seeking to experience the profound depth of Iran's heritage. With sites like Shokat Abad Garden at its heart, the province invites exploration and appreciation of its historical and natural richness.

# Iran hates war, bloodshed: Pezeshkian

## 'People, not missiles' make the difference

International Desk  
**INTERVIEW**

In a significant display of diplomatic cooperation, Iran and Russia have signed a strategic agreement, bolstering their partnership in the face of pressures from the West. In a recent interview with Russia's Channel One during his daylong trip to Moscow on January 17, 2025, President Masoud Pezeshkian highlighted the deal's potential to reshape the global landscape and promote a more just world order. What follows is a translation of some of the most important parts of that conversation from Farsi into English.



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) takes part in an interview with Russia's Channel One in Moscow, Russia, on January 17, 2025.  
● president.ir

**RUSSIA-1: Is there anything beyond what has been mentioned in the newly signed treaty between Iran and Russia, especially in the economic sector, that you would like to highlight?**

**PEZESHKIAN:** The treaty covers three main areas. It has 47 articles, about 12 of which are about security and political issues where we need to work with each other. The security issues, for example, range from the security of Iran and Russia to regional security and possible interventions to create peace and security in our region. We can work together in these areas.

From articles 19 to 40, the agreement explores economic issues like cooperating in the development of the fields of rail, road, trade, energy, and electricity. It also discusses the projects we can pursue with each other as well as how to follow up on the commitments made.

**Given some claims about the possibility of US or Israeli military action against Iran, has an agreed form of joint defense emerged?**

According to the deal, if another country attacks Iran or Russia, we are committed to not cooperating with them and not allowing it to follow through. A form of cooperation between us and the Russian Federation has been imagined, and the details will be determined by future processes and agreements. In general, there are articles that pertain to the direction of future agreements with each other, allowing the two countries to continue working together later.

**So, there will be security negotiations in the future. Is that correct?**

Definitely. And not just in the

area of security; Rather, in all areas where we previously said deals have been made. They all need follow-up work to become operational.

**The West, especially the US, is not only committing economic terrorism on Iran but has also assassinated prominent figures such as Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and a foreign guest who was officially visiting your country. The international community has not only failed to condemn these actions but also accuses Iran of supporting terrorism. Why has Tehran been so patient in the face of these threats and accusations?**

The approach that both the Zionist regime has in Gaza and the Americans have elsewhere is clear. The route that the Zionist regime has taken in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria over the past 15 months has violated every international rule and law. They assassinate and bomb without worry, and the US and Europe strongly defend them. In no international framework or law has any country been allowed to bomb and massacre innocent people, even in war, but the Zionists do this with ease.

Meanwhile, those who claim to be advocates of human rights and democracy show that they stand against their own claims. Saying is not enough; what happened in Gaza was genocide. It got to the point where the International Court of Justice (ICJ) condemned them and the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for their commanders. But still, the US and Europeans not only defend the Zionist regime and its crimes but also equip and arm it to continue these crimes. Then, they sit in the halls of the UN

and other organizations and advocate democracy, human rights, and peace.

I challenge them to show proof that the Islamic Republic of Iran has started a war somewhere. I challenge them to prove that Iranians have been involved in assassinations in other countries. The perpetrators of such assassinations have been either themselves or groups like the Daesh (ISIS) they have trained. They strong-arm the media and some international organizations with money, intimidation, and sanctions to approve and implement what they say. Currently, they are trying to tell the world that Iran is seeking atom bombs. This is while both the standpoint of the Leader of Iran's Revolution and our policies and beliefs were originally against pursuing nuclear weapons, still are, and will always be. Yet, the West alone keeps saying that we are seeking to produce nuclear weapons, just to incite Iranophobia.

Throughout the campaign trail, my motto was that we should create unity and cohesion in the country and make friends with our neighbors. On the first day of my presidency, however, they assassinated our guest in Tehran. Under what international law did they have the right to do this? Regardless, the US and Europe defended them.

The deal we signed with Russia is based on the grounds that we are not the only ones who have been treated this way. They also work hard to show a different face of Russia. Since they control the media and have financial and international power, they unfortunately can exert pressure and change perceptions to some extent. However, if we stick together and all the countries that accept the principles of freedom and in-

dependence stand together, their unilateralism will disappear.

**The leaders of Israel, in addition to repeatedly pleading with the Iranian people to act against their own country, have always tried to portray Iran as an anti-Jewish country. This is while Iran has a history of saving Jews and many Jews currently live in Iran, have a representative in the Iranian parliament, and worship freely in their synagogues. What is your opinion on this?**

Who can believe these words? Everywhere I went, my motto was that we are against no one. We are against oppression and crime, and we are against those who have power and use it to plunder the resources and wealth of poor countries.

From a religious point of view, we believe that all divine religions come from God and are respectable. We believe in our own prophet, as well as in Prophet Moses (PBUH) and Jesus Christ (PBUH). How can we be anti-Jewish? Their prophet is Moses (PBUH).

The dispute is over worldly issues; there is no dispute over religions. All religions say that you should not bow to oppression and should not be captivated by power, hypocrisy, and deception. Every religion says this in its own words, but they all preach the same things: justice, fairness, rights, and not fighting with each other.

**How do you assess the recent developments in the region and the Americans' efforts to create instability on Iran's borders? What consequences can they have for the future of the region?**

What is happening in the region is a re-engineering done

The photo shows the building where Ismael Haniyeh, the late politburo chief of the Palestinian resistance group Hamas, is believed to have been assassinated on the day of the inauguration of Masoud Pezeshkian. A corner of the building is now covered with a green cloth. Apparent debris also litters the ground floor roof of the building, directly underneath the green cloth.  
● FARS



one thing, but a more important thing is the people. They are under the impression that even though we have missiles, they would not be useful to us if our differences have been intensified. We once did not have missiles, but our people were all together. They encouraged Iraq and helped it in order to destroy Iran, but they could not take even an inch of our land. We are capable of creating the means to defend ourselves. We have never had the intention of attacking any country and we still would not. We hate war and bloodshed. Life is short, and we have only 50 to 70 years to live. If we do not fight, we can live this limited time in peace and security. Why are we fighting and killing each other and invading each other's land? We can have our own lands, help each other, be human, and practice humanity. Unfortunately, however, this mentality is not dominant.

If we stay united to defend our country, we will not be defeated, whether we have missiles or not. Regardless, we are strengthening our military power day by day so the thought of attacking us and bombing us like Gaza — while the world remains silent — would not pass their mind easily.

**How did you evaluate your recent conversation with President Putin? Did you feel that a friendship was blossoming between you two? In modern times, it is very important for personal relationships to be established between leaders. We are gradually bringing our views closer together. The feeling and position that Mr. Putin has on unilateralism that made him believe that there should be multilateralism are mutually being strengthened in us and in those who seek freedom and independence. As a result, we feel a sense of companionship and closeness in our beliefs, and we will stand together.**

The full interview first appeared in Farsi on president.ir.

What is happening in the region is a re-engineering done by the powers to further infiltrate the Middle East because there are huge reserves of oil and gas as well as various mines in this region. Why aren't they fighting over Africa? Because the reserves are not there. Naturally, to dominate and plunder the Middle East's reserves, they engineer it so that the communities here fight with each other, leaving them alone to do their thing.

The art can be to try to respect each other's rights and each other, and not allow others to take advantage of our differences and intensify them. It all depends on the rulers of countries and their perspective, and how they interact with regional powers and infiltrating powers. Why have they imposed sanctions on Russia and Iran? Because these two countries do not want to play along with this game.

**Despite severe sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made significant progress and achieved notable successes, for example, in the defense sector and the production of missiles and drones. Given these capabilities, to what extent can Iran defend itself?**

Weapons and missiles are



Masoud Pezeshkian waves as he readies to depart from Moscow, Russia, on January 17, 2025. The Iranian president and his Russian counterpart signed a cooperation pact earlier in the day to deepen their partnership.  
● president.ir

# A major development in Iran's horizon

## Key foundations for implementing Iran-Russia comprehensive cooperation treaty

**International Desk** A "comprehensive strategic partnership" treaty, signed between Iran and Russia in mid-January in Moscow, serves as a roadmap for enhancing bilateral ties. The 20-year agreement establishes a robust framework that facilitates deeper cooperation across a range of sectors, including economics, finance and trade, energy, security and defense, agriculture, nuclear capabilities, and technology.

Ties between Iran and Russia in finance and trade have a rich history. Now is the time to tap into the potential of this relationship to overcome economic challenges. Last year, trade between the two countries grew by 15%, and the new agreement is expected to accelerate this trend even further. The agenda for this cooperation includes developing joint markets and investing in infrastructure projects. According to the deputy head of the Iranian Parliament's Economy Commission, the agreement "not only does not impose any restrictions on Iran's relations with other countries, but it also serves as a foundation for a vast and sustainable project in the country's economy."

In a recent session titled "Exploring the Comprehensive Strategic Agreement between Iran and Russia," Mehdi Toghiani discussed the country's economic structure. The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) has also examined the foundations necessary for the realization and implementation of the treaty. Both are outlined below:



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin sign the "comprehensive strategic partnership" treaty in Moscow, Russia, on January 17, 2025. [president.ir](#)



"The Iranian economy has long relied on oil revenues, with many of the nation's needs being met through oil sales. This deep dependency has increased the government's stake in the economy and tied the country's foreign exchange earnings to oil," Toghiani stated during the session.

"Sanctions have exposed the vulnerabilities of this dependence and caused a drop in oil exports to one million barrels per day. While these restrictions have put pressure on the livelihoods of the people, they have also presented a golden opportunity to reassess the country's economic and revenue policies."

"Iran's membership in regional agreements such as BRICS, the Eurasian Economic Union, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as enhanced collaboration in the Caspian Sea region, represents valuable outcomes from our interactions with Russia. In the current global economic climate, comprehensive strategic agreements like this one can accelerate the country's economic development," the MP said.

Taqiani elaborated on the dimensions of this agreement: This document, which is the fourth agreement between Tehran and Moscow, consists of a preamble and

47 articles covering various areas including economy, energy, agriculture, environment, transportation, artificial intelligence, and security.

The initial articles of this document emphasize regional security and peace in the Caspian Sea. Expanding provincial connections, increasing joint investments, facilitating trade infrastructure, and strengthening banking cooperation are also key aspects of this agreement that need to be formalized into separate documents.

### Foundations for implementation

The collaborations that are set to not only address the obstacles in bilateral relations but also to strengthen and coordinate the decisions and positions of the two capitals on regional and international issues and challenges. This reflects the new approach of Iran and Russia in enhancing bilateral relations and strategically organizing long-term cooperation.

### New aspects of cooperation

An important point regarding the new strategic agreement between the two countries is the emphasis on strengthening modern areas of cooperation, such as cybersecurity, aerospace, the environment, media, and cultural

exchanges, in comparison to the economic and security aspects of previous agreements. This indicates that the new treaty has been crafted in response to mutual needs and the evolving regional and international landscape.

### Does deal hold potential for short-term improvement?

However, should we view this agreement as a magic wand for bolstering Tehran-Moscow relations? Does the comprehensive cooperation treaty hold the potential to enhance Iran's economy in the short term? The comprehensive strategic agreement opens up vast opportunities for economic cooperation between the two nations. Nevertheless, fully capitalizing on these opportunities requires the establishment of necessary infrastructure and meticulous planning.

In addressing these questions, it should be noted that this agreement provides a framework for cooperation across various fields. Significant changes must be reflected in domestic legislative processes aimed at facilitating and resolving challenges in achieving the agreement's objectives. In other words, this treaty lays the groundwork for the government and Parliament to enact the necessary laws. For in-



An important point regarding the new strategic agreement between Iran and Russia is the emphasis on strengthening modern areas of cooperation, such as cybersecurity, aerospace, the environment, media, and cultural exchanges, in comparison to the economic and security aspects of previous agreements.

stance, this could include easing customs regulations, foreign contracts, and fostering collaboration in new technologies through the private sector.

### Key challenges

One of the most pressing challenges facing the execution of this treaty is the lack of adequate infrastructure for the development of exports and transportation, particularly on Iran's side. Iran is striving to boost its non-oil exports and tap into the potential of the Russian market; however, without improvements to transportation networks, port development, expansion of rail and road routes, and strengthening customs structures—and most importantly, without a robust private sector supported by governmental institutions—the goals of this document will be hard to achieve.

Although the agreement emphasizes transportation cooperation and trade facilitation, implementing these provisions requires careful investment and planning from both countries. Another major obstacle to leveraging the treaty's potential is the banking and financial challenges. Given the Western sanctions against Iran and Russia, conducting financial transactions between the two countries is fraught with difficulties.

To address this issue, it is imperative to swiftly establish alternative financial mechanisms, such as utilizing national currencies, creating joint banks, connecting payment networks, or employing alternative payment systems, to minimize the challenges faced by private businesses in establishing trade relations with Russian counterparts. Considering various internal and external issues, expectations regarding this agreement must be realistic. Authorities and media should exercise fairness when discussing the benefits and existing challenges to avoid generating inflated and unrealistic expectations within society in the short term.

### Need for groundwork and practical action from both sides

It should be noted that while this agreement lays the groundwork for future collaborations, complete fulfillment will take time and effort from both sides. Some provisions of this treaty may take years to implement, and it should not be expected that all its benefits will materialize swiftly after signing the document. The government and private sector must gradually and purposefully bring the treaty's potentials into action and strategically leverage the opportunities created.

Following this comprehensive agreement, the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture has expressed its readiness to participate and mobilize advisory and operational capacities to design and implement mechanisms for executing this treaty. They emphasized their belief that the private sector's collaboration with the government can significantly contribute to revitalizing public hope and trust by yielding the fruits of diplomatic efforts. Currently, the Russian market has an import capacity of \$300b, and in recent years, Iran has managed to grow its share from \$218m to nearly \$2b annually. The comprehensive agreement aims to capture \$30b from the Russian import market.

Overall, experts view the 20-year treaty as a platform for developing and strengthening bilateral economic, scientific, technological, and cultural cooperation, which could alleviate the pressures of sanctions on both countries and break trade deadlocks by establishing financial networks and investment opportunities. By creating the necessary infrastructure and taking appropriate actions, both countries can effectively capitalize on this significant opportunity for economic development.

# Turkish Kartal on Reds rescue mission

## Sports Desk

Persepolis supporters will be hoping to see new head coach Ismail Kartal make an instant impact to save the Persian Gulf Pro League champion's domestic and continental campaigns ahead a hectic, season-defining fixtures list over the next month.

The former Fenerbahce boss was unveiled as the Tehran Reds' manager on Friday, bringing an end to weeks of speculation swirling around their bench.

Kartal, 63, replaces Juan Carlos Garrido, who was appointed to the job in June but parted ways with the club following a fourth defeat in six league outings – a 3-1 home loss to Mes Rafsanjan – on December 21, with the Spaniard's assistant Karim Baqeri serving as the interim coach for four games.

Numerous high-profile coaches, including ex-Napoli boss Walter Mazzarri, Spanish Rafa Benitez, and Croatian Niko Kovac, had been brought up in the Iranian media for the Reds' role, before Persepolis signed a contract with Kartal, which will run until the end of the next season.

Kartal had been without a job since leav-

ing Fenerbahce last June, making way for Portuguese Jose Mourinho ahead of the ongoing Turkish Süper Lig season.

A Turkish Super Cup champion with Fenerbahce in 2014, Kartal returned to the Istanbul-based club for a third spell for the start of the 2023/24 season and led his team to 31 wins in 38 outings as the Yellow Canaries finished second to city rival Galatasaray in the league despite a remarkable 99-point tally.

His team scored 149 goals in 58 games across all competitions last season, reaching the Europa Conference League last eight before being knocked out by eventual champion Olympiacos.

The second Turkish manager in Persepolis history, following Mustafa Denizli more than a decade ago, Kartal was accompanied by his coaching staff in arriving in Tehran on Saturday, but is unlikely to sit on the bench for today's crunch league encounter with Tractor at the Azadi Stadium, with Baqeri making instructions from the touchline for a fifth successive game.

Sitting fourth in the table with 30 points after 16 games, Persepolis is five points adrift of the top two Tractor and Sepahan and a defeat against today's formida-

ble opponent will all but finish the Reds' bid for an eighth league crown in nine years.

Kartal's first game in charge will come against third-place Foolad Khuzestan and ex-Persepolis boss Yahya Golmohammadi in Ahvaz on Friday.

Persepolis will resume AFC Champions League Elite action on February 4 with a visit to Saudi heavyweight Al Hilal. The Reds have endured a below-par run in the revamped Asian elite clubs' event, managing a single victory – a 2-1 win against bottom-club Al Shorta last time out in the competition – in six games to stand sixth in the West Zone's 12-team table with six points.

An Asian finalist in 2018 and 2020, Persepolis will be hoping to remain on course for a top-eight finish, and a knockout spot, when taking on Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr at home on the final day of the league phase on February 17. Kartal's men will play away to defending champion Sepahan in the Iranian Hazfi Cup last 16 on February 12, with tricky league tests against Golgozar Sirjan, Iralco, and archrival Esteghlal also coming their way over the next 30 days.



● fc-perspolis.com

## Ice climber Safdarian continues World Cup gold-winning run



● UAAA

## Sports Desk

There was further glory for Mohammadreza Safdarian in the UAAA Ice Climbing World Cup season as the Iranian bagged a second gold medal in this year's competitions on Friday.

Safdarian clocked 7.67 seconds in final race in Saas-Fee,

Switzerland, to beat Mongolian Mandakhbayar Chuluunbaatar to the ultimate prize in the men's speed event.

Friday's triumph came after Safdarian – also an Asian champion earlier in the month – had walked away with the speed gold, as well as the lead silver, in the World Cup season opener in

Cheongsong, South Korea, a fortnight ago.

Meanwhile, Safdarian's fellow-Iranian Mohsen Beheshi-Rad, who had won a speed bronze in Cheongsong, missed out on the podium this time around, finishing fourth despite registering a best qualification time of 7.75 seconds in in Saas-Fee.

## Iranian Safarpour takes charge of Kazakhstan's female taekwondo team

## Sports Desk

Iranian taekwondo coach Fatemeh Safarpour signed a one-year contract to lead Kazakhstan women's team. Safarpour steered Iran to the

women's title in the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Chuncheon, South Korea, last October.

Ghazal Houshmand, Parnian Nouri, Aynaz Nasiri, and Hana Zarrinkamar all walked away with

the gold medals of their respective weight classes, with Saghar Moradi settling for a silver, as Iran beat the host to the top spot in the team table, while Safarpour was named the Best Women Team Coach of the competition.



● WORLD TAEKWONDO

## Defiant Djokovic still targeting Grand Slam wins after Australia setback



● REUTERS

**REUTERS** – Novak Djokovic pledged to continue his hunt for a record 25th Grand Slam title as he processed the disappointment of retiring from Friday's Australian Open semi-final due to a muscle injury. Djokovic retired injured after losing the first set 7-6(5) to Alexander Zverev and the 10-times champion made a pained exit from Rod Laver Arena amid booing from sections of the crowd.

It was his second injury setback at the Grand Slams in a year, having pulled out of the French Open with a knee problem before his quarter-final against Casper Ruud. Four months before his 38th birthday, time may be catching up on the Serbian great but he remained adamant he had more to give in the twilight of an extraordinary career. "It's not like I'm worrying approaching every Grand

Slam now whether I'm going to get injured or not, but statistics are against me in a way in the last couple of years," he told reporters. "So it is true that (I am) getting injured quite a bit the last few years. "I don't know what exactly is the reason for that. Maybe several different factors. "But I'll keep going. You know, I'll keep striving to win more Slams. And as

long as I feel that I want to put up with all of this, I'll be around." The Serb said he might have continued to battle on if he had won the first set but questioned whether it would have been worth it. Though "upset and disappointed", Djokovic was ultimately philosophical, saying he would cheer for Zverev as the German bids for his first Grand Slam title after defeats in two finals.

# 2nd phase of Gaza cease-fire deal frees 200 Palestinians, four Israeli soldiers

## International Desk

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas and Israel implemented the second phase of a cease-fire deal in Gaza, which saw the release of hundreds of Palestinian inmates and several Israeli captives on Saturday. As part of the exchange, the second since the truce took effect last Sunday, four freed Israeli women captives, all soldiers, arrived home in Israel after more than 15 months of captivity in Gaza. In exchange, Israel's prison service confirmed that 200 Palestinian prisoners were freed. The Israeli captives, Karina Ariev, Daniella Gilboa and Naama Levy, all aged 20, and Liri Albag, 19, waved, smiled, and gave thumbs up as they were paraded on a stage in Gaza City. Soon after, buses carrying released Palestinian prisoners were seen departing from the Israeli Ofer military prison in the occupied West Bank. The releases on either side were welcomed by cheering crowds, including Israelis gathered in Tel Aviv and Palestin-

ians assembled in Ramallah. As dozens of the former prisoners reached the West Bank city, crowds of Palestinians erupted in joy, lifting many of them onto their shoulders. The Palestinian Prisoners Club advocacy group said among those to be released was Mohammed al-Tous, 69, who has spent the longest continuous period in Israeli detention. Bassem Naim, of the Hamas political bureau, had told AFP on Friday that Palestinians displaced by the war to southern Gaza should have been able to begin returning to the north following Saturday's releases. But Israel on Saturday said it would block such returns until civilian woman captive Arbel Yehud is released. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said she "was supposed to be released today" but a Hamas source told AFP Yehud will be "released as part of the third swap set for next Saturday." The truce has brought a surge of food, fuel, medical and other aid into the rubble-strewn Gaza Strip.



A Palestinian prisoner released by Israel gestures as he is surrounded by people cheering after disembarking from one of the buses of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on January 25, 2025. **● ZAIN JAAFAR/AFP**

The captive-prisoner exchange is part of a cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas that took effect on January 19 is intended to pave the way for a permanent end to the devastating war. The cease-fire agreement should be implemented in three phases, but the last two stages have not yet been finalized. During the first, 42-day phase, the 33 captives Israel believes are still alive should be freed in staggered releases in exchange for around 1,900 Palestinians held in Israeli jails. Three female captives returned home on the first day of the truce in exchange for 90 Palestinians. Israel launched the war on Gaza after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas launched the surprise Operation Al-Aq-



sa Flood against the occupying entity on October 7, 2023 in response to the regime's decades-long campaign of blood-letting and devastation against

Palestinians. More than 1,200 people were killed in Hamas' operation against Israel. Israel's strikes on Gaza have

also killed more than 47,000 Palestinians. Almost the entire Gaza population of 2.4 million has been displaced by the war.

## Pakistan welcomes Iran's participation in AMAN-25 naval drill

### International Desk

The Chief of the Naval Staff of the Pakistan Navy welcomed the participation of Iran's Navy in the international naval drill, dubbed AMAN-25, which is scheduled to be held in Pakistan's port city of Karachi in February. Pakistan deeply appreciates and thanks the Iranian Navy for its continuous presence in the past rounds of the AMAN naval exercise, said Admiral Naveed Ashraf in an interview with IRNA. Islamabad enjoys constructive interactions with Tehran, he said, adding that Pakistan is eagerly ready to increase this cooperation with neighboring Iran. During the official visit of the Chief of the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mo-

hammad Baqeri to Islamabad, Pakistan presented an official invitation to Iran to participate in the multinational exercise AMAN-25. "We have a lot to learn from each other in maritime issues, and about the upcoming AMAN-25, the Pakistan Navy looks forward to close cooperation and establishing stronger relations with Iran," Ashraf added. The current level of relations between the two navies is "satisfactory," he underlined. AMAN exercises are held every two years. This year's drill is scheduled to be held from February 7-11. General Baqeri recently visited Pakistan, during which he said the Armed Forces of Iran and Pakistan should further cooperate to fight terrorist and separatist groups and improve secu-

rity at the common border. Baqeri stressed the need to strongly safeguard border areas between Iran and Pakistan "because the enemies seek to exploit our borders and we need more cooperation and coordination." In a meeting with Pakistan's Army chief Lieutenant General Asim Munir, Baqeri said confronting the terrorist groups must continue with seriousness. The Pakistani army chief, for his part, said that Islamabad is taking necessary and urgent measures to stop terrorist activities. The common border between the two countries have been the scene of many terrorist attacks in recent years, which have claimed the lives of a number of Iranian and Pakistani security forces.

## Leader's aide hopes for reaching 'reasonable solution' to FATF case

### National Desk

Ali Larijani, an advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and a member of Iran's Expediency Council, expressed hope for reaching a reasonable solution to two conventions of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) after the council had decided to re-examine them two weeks earlier. Larijani said a joint committee had been formed within the Expediency Council to review the anti-money laundering and terrorism financing conventions adopted by the FATF. He made the remarks during a visit to IRNA on Saturday. Larijani, who served as parliament speaker from 2008 to 2020, said the council's members have different views on the issue. However, he hoped that the final decision will benefit the country and the members reach a reasonable solution in this regard. Back in January 12, the Expediency Council began to revisit various clauses of the Palermo and the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) conventions after Iran's Economy Minister Abdolnasser Hemmati said in December that the country's top leadership had allowed renewed discussions on FATF conventions in the council several years after the body stopped such debates fearing that the conventions may undermine Iran's financial independence.



Ali Larijani, a member of Iran's Expediency Council, talks with reporters during a visit to IRNA headquarters in Tehran on January 25, 2025. **● IRNA**

FATF restrictions imposed on Iran's banking system will be removed once the country enacts the Palermo and CFT conventions. The Iranian parliament has approved both but Iran's Guardian Council, which is responsible for vetting parliament legislation, has refused to ratify them, citing the need for some amendments. Iran has ratified other conventions and regulations adopted by the FATF. The renewed push to examine Iran's full accession to the FATF comes amid efforts by President Masoud Pezeshkian and his administration to open up to the world and to improve an economy affected by global inflation and foreign sanctions. In his presidential election campaign in mid-summer, Pezeshkian criticized the lack of action on FATF issues.

**Mohammad Ali Rajabi**  
Cartoonist



## Time to 'strike ...

Even the US, the top economic powerhouse, is pursuing a trillion-dollar investment from Saudi Arabia. Therefore, Iran is no exception especially given the fact that its infrastructure is aging because of sanctions that have discouraged investment. Trump might be aiming for an agreement that also benefits the US economically. During his first term, he joked that France had a right to oppose US sanctions on Iran since its carmakers had invested in Iran. He repeatedly labeled the JCPOA as a "bad deal" and once came clean it did not have economic perks for the US. It is no secret that Iran requires hundreds of billions of dollars in investment for its economic sectors. For instance, the oil industry alone needs over \$200 bil-

lion, according to officials, and attracting such financing under sanctions sounds like a mission impossible. Another positive signal being sent from Trump 2.0 is that he seems to be sidelining hardliners. He recently launched a scathing attack on his former national security advisor John Bolton, calling him a "dumb." Bolton was the same hawk who advocated striking Iran in a 2015 opinion published in the New York Times titled "To Stop Iran's Bomb, Bomb Iran." Brian Hook, one of the architects of the previous administration's sanctions regime on Iran, was fired on Trump's first day in office. Mike Pompeo, the former hawkish secretary of state, failed to make his way into the new administration. Last but not least, Trump does not have a regime change policy on Iran as he said

mid-October. "We can't get totally involved in all that. We can't run ourselves, let's face it," Trump said at the time. Contrary to expectations, Trump is currently talking about a deal instead of threatening Iran. A window of opportunity has opened for Tehran and Washington to iron out some of their differences. But both sides should be realistic. A comprehensive agreement between Iran and the US is just wishful thinking. However, hardliners on both sides should not be allowed to scuttle a deal on a stumbling block that safeguards Iran's rights. This might be the last chance to bring Iran fully back into global trade, so it is crucial to 'strike while the iron is hot' for the good of Iran's national interests and its resilient people.

# VP urges leveraging cultural dominance for national prosperity

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Vice President Mohammadreza Aref emphasized the crucial role of arts and culture in shaping a prosperous nation during the first Cinema Council meeting held at Cinema Museum of Iran on January 25.

He called for a cultural renaissance, asserting that "the dominance of arts and culture" is essential for national development and should not be viewed through a security lens, according to the official website of the official.

Aref advocated for cultural diplomacy as a means to address the country's challenges, suggesting that resolving cultural issues can lead to political solutions.

He also urged government support to elevate the international presence of Iranian filmmakers, particularly in regions rich in cultural heritage, given the country's membership in regional organizations such as Eurasia.

He remarked on the genuine unity emerging from recent elections, stating, "The unity in the country is not fabricated; it is a cultural achievement that reflects our inherent nature as a people who value harmony."

Aref lamented that despite Iran's rich cultural legacy, many young people today feel disconnected from their historical identity, urging societal efforts to

ensure they do not experience a sense of alienation.

During his visit to the Cinema Museum of Iran, Aref expressed pride in the accomplishments of Iranian filmmakers, reinforcing the need to nurture this cultural capital.

He called for artists and intellectuals to increase their resilience, suggesting that despite prevailing challenges, they must persevere to foster a space conducive to cultural and artistic growth.

Stressing that arts should lead national unity, Aref stated, "The advancement of these elements cannot progress without coordination and cohesion."

He posited that in today's world, unity cannot be achieved through fragmentation or prioritizing one aspect over another.

Aref described cinema as a powerful medium to address social issues, urging filmmakers to produce more socially relevant content.

He noted that while entertainment is essential, it is equally important for films to convey meaningful messages to audiences.

The meeting, attended by key figures including the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi and the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Peyman Jebeli, concluded with several resolutions.

The ministry was also tasked with es-



establishing cinema councils in provinces, particularly in cities with populations exceeding 100,000 that currently lack cinema facilities. Plans were initiated to ensure the construction of cinemas in these cities, with a focus on underserved areas.

Further decisions included upgrading

110 youth cinema association offices, producing a minimum of three documentaries on national projects, providing housing assistance to filmmakers, and reforming taxation on cinema activities. The establishment of a specialized working group within the Cinema Council was also discussed, alongside

Iranian Vice President Mohammadreza Aref speaks at the first Cinema Council meeting held at the Cinema Museum of Iran on January 25, 2025.  
 ● fvpresident.ir

the distribution of bonuses to 8,500 members of the House of Cinema.

## Top-tier world musicians to attend fajr music festival despite sanctions



## Arts & Culture Desk

In a recent press conference, the organizers of the 40th International Fajr Music Festival announced an exciting lineup of world-class musicians from countries including Turkey, the Netherlands, Spain, Tunisia, and Armenia, despite ongoing sanctions.

The conference was held at the Vahdat Hall with prominent figures in attendance, including Ahmad Sadri, head of the Music Office at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, festival secretary Reza Mahdavi, and executive secretary Mohammad Ali Mer'ati, Mehr News Agency reported.

Mer'ati discussed the festival's international section, stating, "We are in a pecu-

liar situation due to sanctions; however, we have successfully established connections with many artists."

He expressed optimism about the participation of top-tier musicians, noting, "Fortunately, everyone we reached out to had no issues attending."

Regarding ticket pricing, Mer'ati revealed that the festival's total budget has increased by 40% from the previous year, amounting to approximately \$217,000. "The final ticket prices will reflect the quality of the performances and will be announced by next week," he added.

During the conference, Ahmad Sadri reflected on the significance of the festival's 40th anniversary, describing the number as emblematic of abundance

and excellence.

He expressed gratitude towards the presidents of the previous editions and emphasized the importance of continual improvement: "Despite many ups and downs over the years, the festival has matured, and we hope to advance its legacy."

Sadri aimed to elevate the festival's artistic quality, focusing on more serious musical presentations this year. He stated, "We want to concentrate on serious music as much as possible, inviting the relevant artists."

Mahdavi emphasized the goal of enhancing the global presence of Iranian music. "The festival is recognized worldwide, and we hope to host the best international talents in the coming years," he remarked, also noting the revival of sections dedicated to children, youth, and women in the festival.

Mahdavi talked about the potential inclusion of protest music, specifically rap, into the festival.

He articulated a desire to maintain artistic integrity while allowing for expression, stating, "While we want to engage with the youth's passion, we will only accept those who align with Iranian culture."

The festival will also see the removal of the choral section to avoid redundancy in programming, as well as plans to establish a permanent secretariat to streamline operations in future events.

The culmination of the 40th International Fajr Music Festival will be celebrated with a closing ceremony on February 17 at the Vahdat Hall.

## Iranian artist Mirmola Soraya's 'Destiny' in Paris



## Arts & Culture Desk

Latest work of Iranian contemporary artist Mirmola Soraya titled 'Destiny,' went on display at the Maison & Objet 2025 exhibition in Paris. The event, held from January 16 to 20, serves as a platform for the design community, drawing designers, manufacturers, retailers, and industry professionals from around the globe.

Maison & Objet is renowned for showcasing innovations in interior design, decor, and lifestyle products. This year, the exhibition emphasized sustainable design practices and environmentally friendly products, reflecting the industry's commitment to addressing ecological responsibilities. Participants presented creative solutions aimed at reducing negative impacts on the environment, with a diverse array of sections dedicated to interior design, decor, and lifestyle trends, ISNA re-

ported.

Soraya's 'Destiny,' a remarkable piece in the realm of carpet art, captures the essence of his artistic vision. In his statement about the work, he described it as "a wordless ode," where "each knot resonates with a silence that emerges from history, and its weave speaks with both delicacy and strength of our roots."

The intricate designs and colors that traverse the boundaries of light and shadow invite viewers to reflect on the passage of time and the complexities of life. Soraya's artistry transcends geographical and temporal borders, weaving narratives that resonate universally.

Mirmola Soraya, an innovative painter and carpet designer, has gained recognition for his work exhibited worldwide. He specializes in crafting intricate patterns for carpets and felt, showcasing his unique approach to traditional art forms while addressing contemporary themes.