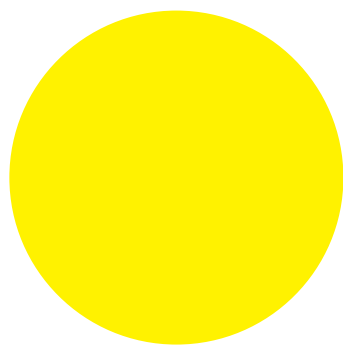


Leader highlights Iran's progress despite plots by 'arrogant powers'



Iran Daily

Vol. 7761 • Monday, February 3, 2025 • Bahman 15, 1403 • Sha'ban 4, 1446 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages

irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb



Pezeshkian: Only scholars, elites can help overcome Iran's problems

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks with reporters at an exhibition showcasing defense and space achievements in Tehran on February 2, 2025. president.ir

Iran as key AI player in Persian Gulf region

By Seyed Sattar Hashemi
Iranian Minister of ICT

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The Persian Gulf region plays a pivotal role in evolving the Artificial Intelligence (AI) ecosystem. AI is reshaping how we approach challenges and seize opportunities. It is not only a technological revolution but also a catalyst for economic growth and social transformation. This region possesses unique strengths that causes us to harness AI's potential and become a global digital leader. As regional countries increasingly invest in AI infrastructure, they lay the cornerstone for innovation-driven economies that shape the future. The Persian Gulf region offers an unparalleled opportunity

to foster AI initiatives that cater to our collective aspirations. By cultivating environments that encourage collaboration and investment, we can transform our region into a powerhouse of AI excellence, attracting global tech giants while strengthening intraregional partnership for shared prosperity. As a major stakeholder in the regional digital landscape, Iran brings invaluable assets to the table. Our domestic mobile phone operator, with over 50 million users, and our thriving digital service platforms such as Snapp! and digikala, each serving more than 30 million users, provide an abundance of multifaceted data — an essential ingredient for AI development. Despite facing economic sanctions, Iran has successfully developed a resilient fintech ecosystem that continues to thrive and innovate.

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Kazakh envoy lauds Iran's rail corridor as safest route to high seas



Economy Desk

Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Tehran Ontalap Onalbayev said that Iran's rail corridor is the safest and shortest route for cargo transfer to the high seas. He made the comment in a meeting with CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways Jabbar-Ali Zakeri, according to a press release by the Iranian railways company on Sunday. The Kazakh envoy called for holding meetings between officials of the two countries in order to achieve desired goals set by the two sides. Zakeri, for his part, said that Iran has the capacity to transfer five million tons of cargo a year through its rail corridor, adding that the two sides will make efforts to achieve that goal within the next five years.

Iran's trade attaché stresses need to identify new markets in India

Economy Desk

The commercial attaché of Iran in India emphasized the importance of identifying new markets in India, citing the trade advantages of the two countries. Hossein Bamiri, speaking on Sunday, outlined efforts to expand trade relations with India, stating that during meetings with Indian economic officials, they prioritized facilitating trade to strengthen bilateral commercial ties, IRNA reported. "Our goal is to create opportunities in untapped trade sectors between the two nations," he said. Highlighting the importance of exploring new markets in India, Bamiri said efforts have begun to engage with chambers of commerce in southern Indian states, particularly Gujarat. For the first time, a delegation from Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province visited Gujarat, resulting in approximately 30 B2B meetings between Iranian and Indian businesses. He also pointed to the start of trade collaborations in medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, noting that while Iran's medical equipment exports to India are currently limited, Iran has significant potential to supply hospital beds, operating room equipment, and other medical devices at competitive prices.

Water industry spox:

Afghan dam construction impacts eastern Iran's water resources

Economy Desk

The spokesperson of Iran's water industry stated that the country would not allow unilateral water usage by neighboring Afghanistan to harm downstream regions and citizens, calling such actions unacceptable.

In an interview with ILNA, Issa Bozorgzadeh addressed Afghanistan's dam construction on shared rivers and emphasized that Iran has clearly conveyed its stance to Afghan officials through diplomatic channels.

Bozorgzadeh underlined that any actions by Afghanistan on shared rivers must observe customary rights and international law.

The official said the construction and filling of the Pashdan Dam on the shared Hari River (Harirud) have reduced its natural flow, causing social and environmental damage downstream, particularly affecting the drinking water supply to Mashhad. He warned that imposing

restrictions or pressure on one part of the river basin inevitably impacts all residents of the basin.

Bozorgzadeh noted that Afghanistan's unilateral actions not only jeopardize drinking water and sanitation for millions but also cause significant environmental harm downstream. The spokesperson reiterated that unilateral and non-cooperative exploitation of the Hari River's water resources benefits neither upstream nor downstream countries. He stated that Iran's Ministry of Energy had raised



IRNA

these concerns in meetings with Afghan counterparts and through diplomatic channels, emphasizing that Iran would not tolerate harm to its citizens and regions due to unilateral actions by its neighbor. In a related report, Abbas Aliabadi, Iran's energy minister, commented on Iran's response to Afghanistan's recent dam construction on shared rivers. He underscored the importance of border waters, saying Iran both receives and delivers water in various areas and strives to act

in accordance with international regulations.

Aliabadi added that Iran aims to treat neighboring countries receiving water from Iran fairly while ensuring it receives its rightful share from others.

The minister noted that Iran is pursuing necessary political measures through relevant channels to secure water rights, including leveraging local capacities, which have proven effective.

During a recent visit to Kabul, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi discussed

the country's water rights from the Helmand River with Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi of the Taliban-ruled government in Afghanistan.

Araghchi described the talks as constructive, with Taliban officials reaffirming their commitment to honoring Iran's water rights under the Helmand River Treaty.

He added that Afghan officials expressed a moral and humanitarian obligation to provide water to Iran, even in the absence of a treaty. Technical issues and the

impact of drought, which affects the entire region, were also discussed, with both sides agreeing to collaborate on solutions.

Araghchi expressed hope that the agreements reached would be implemented, ensuring that Iran's water rights are secured.

A Taliban official also emphasized the importance of water for both countries, stating that the people of Sistan and Baluchestan are considered brothers.

He explained that water scarcity is primarily due to

drought, with limited rainfall and snowfall reducing water flow.

The official noted that water travels 600-700 kilometers from central Afghanistan to Sistan and Baluchestan, passing through sandy and evaporative terrain, which further diminishes the supply. The Taliban official reiterated that, regardless of agreements, Afghanistan feels a religious and humanitarian responsibility to ensure water reaches the people of Sistan and Baluchestan.

Minister: Bilateral pacts with neighbors poised to boost Iran's economy

Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade stated that bilateral agreements with neighboring countries, alongside joining the Eurasian Union and the BRICS treaty, have positioned Iran's resilient economy on the verge of a significant leap. In a message issued Saturday, Mohammad Atabak congratulated the nation on the anniversary of the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution as he emphasized that despite obstacles imposed by enemies, Iran has achieved remarkable growth and prosperity in industry, mining, and key industrial sectors.

He highlighted the country's increasing self-reliance in critical industrial and mining areas, reliance on domestic engineering expertise,

the rise of new technology-based firms, rapid advancements in nanotechnology, and the training of young, skilled managers and human resources as factors that have elevated Iran's role as a key player in the region and the world.

Atabak noted that observer status in the Eurasian Union and joining the BRICS, combined with bilateral agreements with neighboring countries, have set the stage for a transformative phase in Iran's economy. He reiterated that this progress reflects the nation's belief in its capabilities.

The minister expressed hope that with the collective efforts of all citizens, the path toward a more advanced and prosperous Iran will become smoother than ever before.



Iran's postal service climbs 14 spots in global ranking

Economy Desk

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) announced that Iran's postal service has climbed 14 spots in the 2024 Integrated Index for Postal Development (IIPD), securing the 37th position out of 174 countries. This advancement reflects a 28% growth in Iran's postal development.

According to the report, Iran's postal service scored 73.2 points, placing it ahead of several regional postal operators, including those of India, Russia, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

The UPU's 2024 IIPD report evaluates member countries' postal development based on four key indicators of reliability, reach,



relevance and resilience. The report analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of selected postal operators in delivering quality services, focusing on speed, predictability, international connectivity, business model success, and the ability to overcome economic, social, technological and environmental challenges. In the 2024 rankings, the Switzerland and Germa-

ny's postal services topped the list with 108.6 points, followed by Japan with 105.9 points, and the United States with 102 points, securing the top three positions.

This achievement highlights Iran's continuous efforts and strategic planning to improve service quality, expand access to postal services, and enhance customer satisfaction.

Qabeli polo; a delicious legacy of Silk Road

Iranica Desk

Khorasan was a province in northeastern Iran until September 2004, when it was divided into three new provinces: North Khorasan, South Khorasan, and Khorasan Razavi. The region, with its diverse geological structure, varied climate, and unique geographical position, has long served as a significant hub for commerce and military activities. Notably, the Silk Road, which connects the East to the West, runs through this region. The geographical diversity of Khorasan includes a hot, desert climate in the south and a temperate climate in the north, creating vast valleys and plains that can reach widths of up to 200 kilometers. The fertile areas between the mountain ranges of Koppeh Dagh and Hezar Masjed lend themselves well to agriculture.

Northern part of the region generally features a temperate and cold mountainous climate, making it the most densely populated and economically developed part of the province. The natural potential of these regions has also enabled livestock farming and red meat production.



MEHR

Influence of agriculture

The abundance of agricultural and livestock products has led to a rich diversity of food among various ethnic groups. *Qabeli polo*, also known as *Kabuli Pulao*, is one of the most renowned dishes that reflect the agricultural and livestock prosperity of the area. This meal holds a special place at family gatherings and significant ceremonies, embodying the essence

of local heritage.

Polo is a style of cooked rice, known in English as *pilaf*. It typically involves cooking rice with various ingredients, including vegetables, meat, or spices, to create flavorful and aromatic dishes that are often served as a staple in various cuisines. The dish, popular in North Khorasan Province and Tabriz, also has many fans among Afghan and Research indicates that



yjc.ir

this dish is a remnant of the Silk Road, as merchants and traders consumed it during their travels to gain the physical strength and energy needed along the route.

Cooking instructions

To prepare *Qabeli*, follow these steps:

Preparation: Pour a small amount of oil into a suitable pot and sauté chopped onions until golden.

Adding meat: Next, incorporate the red meat and cook it until browned.

Optional cumin: Sprinkle cumin on the meat for enhanced flavor if desired.

Cooking the meat: Once the meat is browned, add boiling water and let it simmer until tender. Season with salt to taste afterward.

Adding legumes: After the meat is cooked, introduce pre-

cooked beans and lentils.

Cooking the rice: Finally, add the rice to the mixture and let it steam until fully cooked.

This dish can also be prepared with chicken.

Qabeli polo not only represents the cultural richness of the region but also serves as a reminder of the historical significance of the Silk Road and the thriving trade that once passed through it.

Unveiling secrets of Niasar Fire Temple

Iranica Desk

Niasar Fire Temple is a notable *chahartaq* structure topped with a dome, located on the hillsides of Karkas Mountain, overlooking the Kashan plain, Isfahan Province, at an elevation of 1,741 meters above sea level. This historical site is situated in the megalithic lands on the eastern side of Kashan.

Historical background

According to historical accounts, after defeating the nobles of Kashan, Ardashir Babakan (or Ardashir I) returned to Isfahan while carrying their heads. He camped at a spring, which is now known as Niasar, and later established a city there, naming it Niasar. At one point, it was also referred to as Niastar.

Architectural features

The Niasar Fire Temple features a cube-shaped structure made of limestone and plaster mortar, with each side measuring approximately eleven meters. Its *chahartaq* plan is intentionally aligned just eleven degrees off true north, a characteristic common in many Sassanid fire temples, reflecting the significance of north in Zoroastrianism.

Although the dome of the Niasar Fire Temple is now in ruins, it is believed to have originally resembled an eggshell. A reconstruction in 1955 took place, but the new dome reflects Islamic architectural styles rather than the ancient Iranian design.

Archaeologists suggest that the *chahartaq* may have featured stucco decorations. Today, visitors can see the plinth stones of the outer façade and the plaster covering of the interior. The pointed arches of the structure are formed by layered stone arrangements, likely sourced from nearby Niasar Cave.

In addition to the fire temple, remnants of three other structures can be found on the eastern side of the site. Artifacts discovered at the fire temple include pottery fragments, such as urns and pots adorned with cream, red, and intricate designs, as well as glazed pottery in turquoise, green, blue, and white.

Attractions in Niasar

Niasar is not only known for its historical significance but also for its natural beauty and cultural richness. Here are some of its attractions:

● **Niasar Waterfall:** Just a short distance from the village, this picturesque waterfall is a popular spot for visitors seeking natural beauty. The surrounding area offers walking trails and picnic spots.

● **Niasar Cave:** A fascinating geological site, the cave consists of stunning formations and serves as a habitat for various animal species. It is a popular destination for adventurers and cave explorers.

● **Traditional village atmosphere:** Niasar village is recognized for its quaint architecture and vibrant local culture. Visitors can walk through its narrow lanes, experience local hospitality, and sample traditional Persian cuisine.

● **Historical sites:** Besides the fire temple, the area is rich with other ancient structures and remains, allowing for exploration of Iran's rich history.

● **Local handicrafts:** Niasar is known for traditional crafts such as pottery and weaving. Visitors can purchase handmade

items from local artisans or even participate in workshops.

● **Natural scenery:** Surrounded by the Karkas Mountains, Niasar offers breathtaking landscapes, making it an excellent destination for hikers and nature lovers.

Visiting Niasar

Niasar Fire Temple is recognized as a National Heritage Site of Iran. The region, despite its cooler climate compared to Kashan, is an ideal summer tourist destination, with spring and autumn — particularly March and May — being the best times to visit. Visitors are encouraged to engage with the local community and enjoy the tranquility that Niasar offers, making it a perfect getaway for history enthusiasts and nature lovers alike.



Government fulfilling presidential campaign promises Inclusion of 70 women in leadership roles within government

Social Desk

The government of Massoud Pezeshkian fulfilled the promise of utilizing the capabilities of women in managerial positions by appointing 70 women. One of Pezeshkian's commitments during the election was to enhance the participation of women in government leadership roles. In his statement on July 6, he emphasized that "I believe that the presence of women in high management and decision-making levels is their right and a necessity for the country's progress. My goal is to increase the share of women in managerial positions based on meritocracy and fairness. I recognize women's right to be elected to political positions and will elevate the status of women's affairs within the government structure. I will pursue the acknowledgment of the right to be elected and the inclusion of women as political figures alongside them."

In line with this commitment, Pezeshkian opened the doors of his cabinet to women, appointing Farzaneh Sadeq as the Minister of Roads and Urban Development, securing a vote of confidence for her from Parliament. Fatemeh Mohajerani was named the government spokesperson, Shina Ansari became the head of the Department of the Environment, and Zahra Behrouz Azar was appointed as the vice president for Women and Family Affairs, enabling four women to participate in government meetings at the presidential palace.

The government did not merely adopt a decorative approach to women's roles; rather, it sought to create opportunities for women to play their part in management and to address this historical oversight. Mohammad Reza Aref, the first vice president, stated at the inauguration ceremony of the Women's Affairs Department that "there can be no discrimination between men and women in governance, and we must witness the elevation of women's status in decision-making and policymaking processes." In this vein, the appointment of women to the cabinet was not limited, as Kowsar Yousefi became the head of the Central Bank's Supervisory Board and Zahra Alipour was appointed as the head of the Privatization Organization.

The Ministry of Interior, being one of the key ministries in the government, also focused on the involvement of women and facilitated their leadership in the provinces. Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni highlighted the importance

of employing women in managerial positions during the current government, stating, "During the election, the president repeatedly emphasized the slogans of national unity, justice, and fairness, as well as the involvement of youth and women in various fields... The presence of women in different domains has shown that if equal opportunities are created, they can be a great asset to the country; we cannot expect the country to progress while failing to provide necessary opportunities for nearly half of the population, namely women... We must all work hand in hand to ensure that women can participate equally in various fields... The first decree I signed for a governorship was for Ms. Zarghamnejad; a capable woman from the proud land of Kurdistan, and this process will hopefully continue." Soudabeh Zarghamnejad is the first woman entrusted with the responsibility of governing the Dehgolan County in Kurdistan. Although no woman was appointed as a governor general, Samira Hassani became the governor of Rudbar, Esmat Mohammaddoost governor of Khomam, Batool Moalem governor of Sarvestan, Jamileh Qayipasha governor of Northern Savadkuh, and Shadi Fazli governor of Kouhpayeh, all selected by the appointed governors. According to the interior minister, the process of appointing female governors will continue.

On January 27, the vice president Zahra Behrouzazar announced that the government has made "over 70 appointments, marking the first time these positions have been en-



Fatemeh Mohajerani



Zahra Behrouz Azar



Farzaneh Sadeq



Shina Ansari

trusted to women." Sediqeh Torabi was appointed as the head of the Human Environment Affairs Department, Naderah Rezaei as the Deputy for Artistic Affairs at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Elham Gholami as a member of the Central Bank Supervisory Board, Sediqeh Khazaei as the head of the Management Development and Human Capital Department at the Ministry of Oil, Maryam Jalili Moqaddam as the

head of the Plant Protection Organization, Fatemeh Khamseh as an advisor to the Minister and Director General of Provincial Affairs at the Ministry of Agriculture, Athareh Nejadi as a senior advisor to the Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Ghazal Raheb as the head of the Research Center for Roads, Housing, and Urban Development, Farideh Olad Qobad as the head of the Cooperative and Social Affairs Department of

the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, Leili Orangi as the head of the Export Office of the Iranian Customs, and Parvin Daad-Andish as the head of the Center for Women and Family Affairs at the Ministry of Interior, among other women appointed by the ministers and vice presidents.

The article was published in Persian service of the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA).

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Unprecedented political journey of a woman in Islamic Republic's history

What led to a 'complete repentance' from politics?

Social Desk

The news of the passing of Monireh Gorji Fard on January 12, 2024, came as a great surprise to many who were unfamiliar with her, particularly when they learned that she was referred to as "the only female representative in the Assembly of Experts [Iran's only constitutional body with the authority to appoint and dismiss the leader]." So, who was this woman with such a unique experience in the history of the Islamic Republic, and how did she live her life?

Monireh Gorji, a name intertwined with the struggle for women's rights and the promotion of Qur'anic teachings during Iran's Islamic Revolution (1979), is a remarkable example of courage, faith, and awareness. She not only stood against beliefs rooted in inequality but also became a voice for equality and justice by interpreting the Qur'an with a new perspective, from her childhood up to her membership in the Assembly of Experts. Described by "Seyyed Abbas Salehi," the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, as a "pioneering Qur'an scholar, a virtuous teacher of ethics and knowledge," she consistently defended the role of women in society. Her social, political, and Qur'anic activities serve as a model for women seeking to effect change and make an impact in society. This report explores the life, contributions, and perspectives of this enduring figure.

Path from Qur'anic learning to family life

Monireh Gorji was born in 1929 on Iran Street in Tehran. Her original name was Monireh Ali, but she later adopted her husband's surname. At the age of five, during the reign of Reza Shah, she began attending school, where her love for the Qur'an took root. A blind elderly man taught her the Qur'an at school. Once she memorized a few verses from Surahs Ale Ma'idah and Ale Imran, she dedicated herself to the understanding and interpretation of these verses. She also learned Arabic from a teacher, but it was her own determination and effort that brought her a deeper understanding of the Qur'an's meanings. At 15, she married Mehdi Gorji, which left her secondary education unfinished. However, her passion for knowledge drove her to pursue studies and research in Islamic texts at the age of 35.

Collaboration with Ayatollah Taleqani

Before the Revolution, Gorji encouraged women to engage politically and socially by holding Qur'an interpretation classes with a revolutionary approach. She also played an active role in rallies and demonstrations.

During the pre-revolution era, Ayatollah Taleghani [an Iranian theologian, senior Shia Islamic scholar, and democracy advocate] invited her to accompany him in Qur'anic sessions, where she would respond to the concerns of women. This request marked a turning point in her social life. However, her involvement was not without pressures; although she was never arrested, she received warnings from the SAVAK (Organization of National Security and Information, the secret police).

Gorji emerged as a revolutionary speaker in the years leading up to the Islamic Revolution, with her sermons from 1978 to 1980 gaining significant notoriety. She founded the first specialized non-governmental organization for women, named the Women's Studies and Research Institute, and played a crucial role in raising women's awareness.

Participation in the Assembly of Experts: 'I am sure I am not sinning; anyone who thinks they are, should leave!'

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Gorji participated in the elections for the Assembly of Experts at the insistence of Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti [the poetic philosopher, cleric and politician] and was elected as the only woman in this assembly.

Despite the opposition and protests regarding her presence in this assembly, she remained steadfast in her responsibilities, declaring that she was there to represent the women of society. With 1.5



● IRNA

million votes from the people of Tehran, she accepted her role and advocated for women's rights.

What led to a 'complete repentance' from politics?

Gorji played an undeniable role in drafting the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran during her time in the Assembly of Experts, even as her presence in this inaugural electoral body was fraught with challenges. She made significant efforts to defend women's rights within the assembly. When one of the representatives remarked, "This assembly is a place of sin; a woman among 70 men?" she boldly responded, "I am sure I am not sinning. Anyone who thinks they are, should leave!"

In pursuit of women's rights and their empowerment

In her speeches, Gorji repeatedly emphasized that "God addresses all humanity in the Qur'an without distinction between men and women or social class." She criticized the misuse of Islam to demean women, reminding her audience that Islam placed great value on women 1,400 years ago. Gorji made the teachings of the Qur'an the foundation of her life, stressing the respect for all individuals regardless of gender or class. She hoped

for a day when humanity would be recognized in the same honor and dignity that the Qur'an bestows upon them. This devout and courageous woman never wavered from her ideals and remained loyal to the Qur'an and humanity until the very end of her life.

In a part of the message from President Masoud Pezeshkian regarding her passing, it was stated, "This committed and popular figure, who was the first female member of the Assembly of Experts, left an indelible mark in the history of this land through her effective presence in various political, cultural, and social arenas, including teaching, clarifying, and promoting Qur'anic concepts and Islamic values, founding the first Women's Studies and Research Institute, and having a special focus on the status of women and families within the political and social structures of the country."

Shahindokht Molaverdi, the former deputy for Women and Family Affairs, described her as a Muslim fighter and eloquent speaker who played a significant role in raising awareness among women through her speeches.

Masoumeh Ebtekar, another prominent female political figure, praised Gorji's services over the years, calling her a teacher for others and stating, "Lady Gorji taught us to dare to think about the Qur'an at a

time when some believed we should follow it without question." She advocated for critical thinking within the Qur'an.

Reza Salehi-Amiri, the current Minister of Cultural Heritage, referred to Monireh Gorji as a "human capital" of society, representing a balanced and rational approach to women's roles, which are defined both at home and in the community. The words used by Mohammad Khatami, the former Iranian president (1997-2005) in his message on the occasion of Gorji's passing, describing her as "a learned and virtuous lady who understood pain," reflect a facet of her character.

The dedicated Qur'an scholar consistently fought for women's rights and sought to elevate their status in society. Her efforts in the Assembly of Experts, particularly regarding women's rights, did not go unnoticed. Mohammad Javad Hojji Kermani, a member of the assembly, recounted that "many principles related to women in the Constitution are the result of Ms. Gorji's efforts. She opposed the use of the term 'men' in the presidential election law, asserting that the Qur'an recognizes all human beings as equal, regardless of gender."

Gorji's views on certain women's issues

- Polygamy: She considered this ruling

applicable to a specific historical context and believed there is no justification for polygamy in the present time.

- Mandatory Hijab: She opposed the compulsory nature of the hijab, arguing that it should be accepted through personal choice and inner faith.

- Women as Presidents: Regarding the interpretation of the term "men" in the Constitution, she believed this term means "person" and should not be a barrier to women's presidency.

[In Arabic, the term "rejal" is a masculine plural noun that primarily means "men". However, when examining its usage in the country's Constitution, it is possible to consider the implications of gendered language. While "rejal" may be used as a reference to individuals or persons].

Gorji exemplified the efforts of Iranian women to achieve equal rights and participate in political and social spheres. Her activities in the Assembly of Experts and her advocacy for women's rights mark a pivotal moment in contemporary Iranian history.

Stepping back from politics

Throughout her political career, Gorji faced numerous challenges, including opposition from some traditional clerics and the male-dominated society of that time. During her brief tenure in the Assembly of Experts, she endured significant hardships while defending women's rights and a progressive interpretation of Islam. However, after that period, she never ran for any elections again and, as she put it, made a "complete repentance". Consequently, following her time in the assembly, she withdrew from political activities due to certain political irregularities and turned to Qur'anic interpretation. She stated, "When I left the assembly, I drew a line around everything. You have no idea what was going on in the Assembly of Experts. I neither took a bite of bread nor received a single rial in salary. Nothing."

Cultural advocacy

After completing her term in the Assembly of Experts, she stepped away from public office and focused on academic and educational activities. Her work included teaching jurisprudence, interpretation, rulings, and ethics. In 2008, she published the book "The Qur'an's Perspective on Women's Presence in the History of the Prophets," which reflects her profound understanding of women's status in religious texts. This book meticulously examines the place of women through the lens of Qur'anic verses and the history of the prophets. In it, Gorji not only offers a detailed analysis of women in the Qur'an but also critiques various interpretations while providing innovative perspectives on the history of the prophets and women's roles. The book "Half a Century of Struggle and Thought by Monireh Gorji" is a publication from the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs. It explores the life and Qur'anic thoughts of this esteemed scholar. The book recalls Gorji's childhood, including her studying the Qur'an by the light of the moon, and addresses her Qur'anic and social activities over half a century, highlighting her impact on various generations of women.

Ultimately, this Qur'an scholar, who taught us to seek refuge in the Qur'an during difficult times, passed away on January 12, 2025. "Fateme Mohajerani," the government spokesperson, referred to Gorji's commitment, faith, and unparalleled role, considering her a model for devout and influential women in contemporary Iranian history.

Passing

Ultimately, this Qur'an scholar, who taught us to seek refuge in the Qur'an during difficult times, passed away on January 12, 2025. "Fateme Mohajerani," the government spokesperson, referred to Gorji's commitment, faith, and unparalleled role, considering her a model for devout and influential women in contemporary Iranian history.



The photo grab from a movie by IRNA features Monireh Gorji Fard as the only female member of the Assembly of Experts of the Constitution after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Persian Gulf Pro League: Tractor hammers Havadar to close gap on top

Sports Desk

Tractor thrashed bottom-side Havadar 4-0 at home to move within one point of Sepahan on top of the Persian Gulf Pro League table on Saturday.

Sepahan, meanwhile, was held to a 1-1 away draw against Shams Azar but stayed atop the standings with 39 points.

Mahdi Limouchi gave Sepahan a 31st-minute lead, finding the net from the spot for his eighth goal of the campaign, only to see his strike cancelled out by Ehsan Mahrouqi five minutes later as the home side, rejuvenated under new coach Seyyed Mahdi Rahmati, moved up to 12th in the table with 18 points – three points clear of the relegation zone.

In Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium, Tractor bounced back from last week's defeat against Persepolis in style, scoring three in the first half through Mahdi Torabi, Saeb Mohebbi's own goal, and Croatian striker Tomislav Strkalj, who joined Limouchi on top of the league's leading marksman chart.

Seyyed Mahdi Hosseini rounded off Tractor's commanding performance with a fourth goal in the 81st minute – four minutes after being introduced as a substitute.



Tractor's Mahdi Torabi (red) scores during a 4-0 victory over Havadar in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Tabriz, Iran, on February 1, 2025.
● ATA DADASHI/FARSNEWS

Tractor opened a three-point gap on Foolad Khuzestan, which had played to a 1-1 draw at home against fourth-placed Persepolis on the preceding night, while Havadar

is rock bottom with nine points. Elsewhere, Golgozar Sirjan continued its impressive run with a 2-1 win against Nassaji Mazandaran in Sirjan to stand fifth with

28 points. Omid Hamedifar headed home Abolfazl Razzaqpour's corner-kick in the 64th minute – 12 minutes after Nassaji's Siamak

Nemati had been dismissed for a second booking – and then Tajikistani substitute Amadoni Kamolov's effort from behind the box hit the post and went in off

Nassaji keeper Luan Polli's shoulder to double the advantage for Mahdi Tartar's men.

Mehrdad Rezaei's point-blank header pulled one back for the visiting side in the third minute of added time, but it proved too little, too late as Nassaji remained second from bottom in the table with 15 points.

In Isfahan, Zob Ahan and Khaybar shared the spoils in a 2-2 stalemate at the Fooladshahr Stadium.

Fariborz Gerami and Omid Latifi scored for Zob Ahan either side of strikes from Kahybar's Faraz Emam-Ali and Mohammad-Javad Mohammadi inside three minutes in the second half.

Zob is sixth in the table with 24 points, with Khaybar in 13th on 17 points.

Chadormalou won a first game in nine league outings, beating Malavan 1-0 at home, courtesy of Ali Khodadi's goal seven minutes from normal time.

The home side is eighth with 23 points, while Malavan – without a victory in eight games – dropped to 10th with 20 points.

AFC Champions League Elite:

Persepolis facing daunting Al Hilal test, Esteghlal eyeing Al Shorta win

Sports Desk

The scale of the opposition will be in stark contrast for Tehran archrivals, Persepolis and Esteghlal, when they resume action in the AFC Champions League Elite.

Sitting sixth in the 12-team table, Persepolis will have to visit Riyadh's Kingdom Arena to take on West Zone leader Al Hilal on Tuesday, with eight-placed Esteghlal playing bottom-side Al Shorta at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Monday.

The game in the Saudi capital will be the second for new Reds manager Ismail Kartal, whose team played to a 1-1 away draw to Foolad Khuzestan in the Iranian top flight on Friday, and the Turkish boss will be looking to keep his side in contention for a top-eight finish, and thus, a knockout place ahead of the final game in the league phase against Cristiano Ron-

aldo's Al Nassr on February 17.

The Iranian league champion will be without injured trio Oston Urunov, Vahid Amiri, and Milad Sarlak, while skipper Omid A'lishah and Moroccan fullback Ayoub El Amloud are doubtful after missing the Foolad game.

Midfielder Mohammad Khodabandelou is available for selection after serving a one-match suspension against Foolad, with Turkish striker Serdar Dursun, who signed from Alanyaspor last week, expected to be named in the squad.

Al Hilal, meanwhile, will have to do without injured Serbian striker Aleksandar Mitrović, who has bagged 20 goals in 24 games across all competitions this season.

A first win of the campaign for Persepolis, which has six points, came against Al Shorta last time out in the competition, thanks to Giorgi Gvelesiani's spot-kick deep into stop-

page time, and a fourth loss in seven games could see the Reds drop out of the top eight before the final day. Esteghlal – a single point behind Persepolis – could mount the pressure on its city rival, should the Blues walk away with maximum points against Al Shorta today.

Esteghlal is yet to win a game in the competition since beating Al Gharafa 3-0 at home on the opening day back in September, but will be eager to build on Thursday's 2-0 victory over Esteghlal Khuzestan, which ended the club's six-game winless run in the domestic league.

Interim coach Sohrab Bakhtiarzadeh took charge of the Blues bench for a second spell against Es. Khuzestan – after South African Pitso Mosimane had walked away from his job on Wednesday – and knows an Asian last-16 spot could well prove his credentials for the job until the end of the season.



● AFC

James stars for Lakers amid Doncic trade reports



● FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

BBC – LeBron James inspired the Los Angeles Lakers to a 128-112 win over the New York Knicks amid reports Dallas Mavericks star Luka Doncic could soon become his new team-mate in a huge three-way trade deal.

James scored 33 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists as the Lakers ended the Knicks' five-game winning streak at Madison Square Garden.

Shortly after the game finished, reports emerged that five-time NBA All-Star Doncic could be joining James on the west coast.

ESPN reported Anthony Davis, an NBA title winner with the Lakers in 2020, would head to

Dallas as part of the deal, along with guard Max Christie.

The Mavericks would also get a 2029 first-round draft pick, while Maxi Kleber and Markieff Morris will head to the Lakers. The three-way trade also reportedly includes the Utah Jazz, who would get Lakers guard Jalen Hood-Schifino and a pair of second-round picks in this year's draft.

Slovenian Doncic, currently sidelined with a calf injury, has averaged 28.1 points, 8.3 rebounds and 7.8 assists per game for the Mavericks since being traded from the Atlanta Hawks in 2018.

The 25-year-old has been an NBA All-Star for the past five seasons

and finished as the league's top scorer in 2024 to help his side reach the NBA finals.

Though Doncic could be seen as James' long-term successor, the 40-year-old showed he can still compete at the highest level with a standout display in New York.

"He led tonight with his spirit, his force, his voice," said Lakers coach JJ Redick.

"Obviously he played a fantastic statistic game, but from the beginning it was very clear that he was on a mission."

Elsewhere, reigning NBA Most Valuable Player (MVP) Nikola Jokic scored 28 points with 13 rebounds and 17 assists as the Denver Nuggets won 107-104

against the Charlotte Hornets, who suffered a fourth successive defeat.

Aaron Wiggins scored a career-high 41 points as Western Conference leaders the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Sacramento Kings 144-110.

Kyle Kuzma scored 31 points as the Washington Wizards ended a 16-game losing streak with a 105-103 victory at the Minnesota Timberwolves, while the Utah Jazz ended an eight-game losing run of their own with a 113-99 home win over the Orlando Magic.

The Atlanta Hawks were beaten 132-127 by the Indianapolis Pacers, despite 34 points and 17 assists from Trae Young.

Leader highlights Iran's progress despite plots by 'arrogant powers'

National Desk

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Sunday that Iran has made progress in various fields over the past four decades despite plots hatched by the "arrogant" powers against the Islamic Republic. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with a group of Qur'an reciters and memorizers attending the 41st International Holy Qur'an Competitions in the Iranian capital, Tehran. "The Iranian nation has shown patience and perseverance for over 46 years, while all the arrogant world powers stood against it, working and plotting against it," the Leader said. "Yet, not only has the Iranian nation not

been harmed, but it has also advanced and grown. Today's Iran is not the Iran of 40 years ago — we have progressed in every aspect," he added. The Leader stressed that the Islamic Republic is confronting global arrogance alongside other countries in the world. However, he went on, "What distinguishes Iran from many other nations is the Iranian people's courage to denounce the United States as an aggressor, a liar, a deceitful and arrogant power while proclaiming down with America." Ayatollah Khamenei also extolled the sacrifices of Palestinian resistance groups against the Israeli regime and underscored the imminent victory of people in the besieged Gaza Strip against the occupying entity.

"God willing, Gaza will prevail over the Zionist regime," he asserted. Ayatollah Khamenei underlined the victory of the people of Gaza over the Zionist regime and the American regime as an example of the realization of what seemed impossible. "If it had been said that the people of the small region of Gaza would fight against a great power like the US and emerge victorious, no one would have believed it, but this impossible matter has been realized by God's permission," he noted.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (C) meets with Qur'an reciters in the Iranian capital, Tehran, on February 2, 2025. [khamenei.ir](#)



Pezeshkian: Only scholars, elites can help overcome Iran's problems

National Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian on Sunday pointed to the importance of science in national progress as he underlined the role of scholars and academic elites in helping to overcome the country's problems and crises. Thanks to the efforts made by the country's youth and experts, Iran has achieved many successes in the field of defense technologies, Pezeshkian said while addressing a ceremony held in Tehran to mark National Space Technology Day. "We want science, knowledge, and technology in various fields, including defense and military, not for aggression, but for the defense, dignity, and pride of the people of our country." Pointing to Iraq's imposed war on Iran in 1980s, Pezeshkian said the entire world supported former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to destroy Iran's Islamic Revolution, but when the first Iranian missiles hit Iraqi soil, they refrained from aggression. The president underlined that, "We should transfer our knowledge and capability to the next generations in order to defend our beloved country's water and soil." Stressing that, "We are proud of the elites, youth, and scientists of this country," Pezeshkian said only scientists, experts, and those whose hearts beat for Iran can get the country out of the current situation.

New satellites unveiled

The president also attended a ceremony



at the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), where three satellites were unveiled. Pars-1 and Pars-2 remote-sensing satellites and Navak communications satellite were the three satellites that were unveiled at the ceremony. The upgraded version of the Pars-1 satellite reportedly has made significant improvements in comparison with its predecessor. Pars-2 remote-sensing satellite enjoys much higher imaging accuracy, with a visual spectrum of 8 meters in color and 4 meters in black and white modes respectively. Moreover, the Navak satellite is manufactured to test communications in an elongated elliptical orbit and would be placed in such an orbit for the first time. Also on Sunday, Pezeshkian visited an exhibition showcasing the Iranian De-

fense Ministry's latest achievements. He oversaw the unveiling of a new ballistic missile named "Etamad" with a range of 1,700 kilometers. Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Pezeshkian said Iran's defense capabilities and space technologies are meant for deterrence and preventing other countries from thinking about an invasion against the Islamic Republic. "Iran's advancement in defense capabilities and space technologies serves to deter aggression and guarantee that no country dares encroach on Iranian soil or even thinks about it," he added. Pezeshkian also noted that despite attempts by the enemies to prevent Iran from standing on its own feet, the country — relying on its youth and experts — proudly produces and even exports military equipment and makes scientific progress.

China, Canada, Mexico vow swift response to Trump tariffs

Canada, Mexico and China vowed to respond to sweeping new tariffs to their exports to the US announced by President Donald Trump.

Trump said a levy of 25% on Canadian and Mexican imports as well as an additional 10% tax on Chinese goods would come into force on Tuesday.

The US president said the move was in response to his concerns about illegal immigration and drug trafficking — two of the main promises on which he was elected.

In response, both Canada and Mexico said they were preparing similar tariffs on US goods, while China added it would take "necessary countermeasures to defend its legitimate rights and interests".

The implementation of tariffs and the subsequent retaliation could mark the start of a new era of global trade wars. Economists have warned the introduction of the import taxes by the US, and the responses from other countries, could lead to prices rising on a wide range of products, from cars, lumber, and steel to food.

Consumers in all countries could see an increase in the cost of living if businesses decide to pass on higher costs to customers, with US industry groups already raising the alarm.

But Trump has indicated he is ready to escalate the duties further if the countries retaliate.

"Today's tariff announcement is necessary to hold China, Mexico, and Canada accountable for their promises to halt the flood of poisonous drugs into the United States," the White House said in a statement on X on Saturday.

Together, China, Mexico and Canada accounted for more than 40% of imports

into the US last year.

Canada has already announced retaliatory tariffs against the US, with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau matching the 25% imposed on his country.

The Canadian prime minister pushed back on the suggestion the shared border posed a security concern, saying less than 1% of fentanyl going into the US comes from Canada. He also added less than 1% of illegal migrants entered the US through the border.

Canada is America's largest foreign supplier of crude oil.

China said it "firmly opposes" the tariffs, but has not yet announced any retaliatory measures. The 10% tax on its imports to the US will be added over and above tariffs already imposed on China by Trump in his first term and by President Joe Biden.

"Trade and tariff wars have no winners," said a spokesperson at China's Washington Embassy. Meanwhile, Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum ordered retaliatory tariffs against Trump's decision. In a lengthy post on X, she said her government sought dialogue rather than confrontation with its top trade partner to the north, but that Mexico had been forced to respond in kind.

"I've instructed my economy minister to implement the Plan B we've been working on, which includes tariff and non-tariff measures in defense of Mexico's interests," Sheinbaum posted, without specifying what US goods her government will target.

Sheinbaum also rejected as "slander" the White House's allegation that drug cartels have an alliance with the Mexican government, a point Trump's administration used to justify the tariffs.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran as key ...

Moreover, our country's academic and research capabilities have propelled us to the forefront of AI advancements.

In 2023, Iran ranked second in the region in terms of the number and quality of scientific papers in AI, demonstrating our commitment to cutting-edge research and development. Moreover, Iran holds the second position in the region for the number of AI developers, highlighting the depth of our skilled workforce, and stands fourth in the region in terms of the number of AI firms, showcasing our dynamic and rapidly growing ecosystem.

Our human capital, available at competitive costs is a strategic ad-

vantage that depicts Iran as a valuable partner in regional AI initiatives. This combination of talent, data, and innovation makes Iran a key player in the regional AI value chain, capable of driving meaningful cooperation and development. Looking ahead, Iran is committed to fostering regional cooperation and building a future where AI drives prosperity and unity.

We propose a strategic framework for collaboration that leverages our collective strengths, combining Iran's skilled human capital and its infrastructure with the investment capabilities and infrastructure of our neighboring countries. By establishing AI acceleration hubs, facilitating joint investment in free trade zones, and

enhancing academic collaboration and elite exchange programs, we can unlock new opportunities for innovation and economic growth. The utilization of the regional processing capacity by Iranian companies, along with the creation of shared ecosystems, will enhance our collective competitiveness on the global stage. We envision a future where the Persian Gulf region emerges as a leading force in AI development, driving solutions that address our shared challenges and propel us toward a prosperous future. Together, let us act boldly, invest wisely, and transform our shared vision into a reality because the future of AI belongs to us.

The time to act is now.

New Delhi Int'l Book Fair 2025 underway with Iran's presence

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's book and publishing industry is being featured at the 32nd New Delhi International Book Fair, which was inaugurated on February 1, 2025, by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu.

This year's fair, which is being held in celebration of 75 years of India as a republic, runs under the theme "We the People" and will continue until February 9, IRNA reported.

Yuvraj Malik, the Director of the National Book Trust of India, highlighted the significance of this year's event, noting that it provides a platform to explore the diverse facets of India through a wide range of literary works. He stated, "This year's focus on the 75 years of India as a republic showcases a nation's aspirations on the path to global progress."

With over 2,000 publishers and exhibitors, 1,000 speakers, and 600 cultural and literary stations, the fair aims to play a key role in promoting reading culture and literary engagement. Participants include writers and thinkers from more than 50 countries, including Iran, France, Qatar, Spain, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Colombia.

The Iranian Book and Literature House is making a significant presence at this year's event, collaborating with the Cul-



tural Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran in New Delhi to showcase over 500 titles in Persian, Urdu, English, and Hindi. The featured books span a variety of themes such as classical and contemporary literature, Iranology, arts, children's literature, Islamic Revolution literature, and religion.

In addition, publishers such as Nakhle Sabz and the Saba Literary Agency will

represent the Iranian publishing industry, engaging in discussions with international publishers present at the fair.

A variety of programs are lined up, including book launches, an Iranian cultural day, meetings with prominent Indian publishers, dialogues with foreign representatives, and presentations introducing the Tehran International Book Fair, along with discussions on the Iranian publish-

ing sector.

This edition of the fair has designated Russia as the guest country, further enriching the event, which is organized by the Ministry of Education and the National Book Trust. With thousands of attendees, authors, and publishers from around the globe, the fair is poised to be a significant cultural gathering.

This year's showcase also pays tribute to

Sergei Rachmaninoff, the renowned Russian composer, emphasizing the global influence of Russian classical music. A special part will feature the translation of Russian literary works into Hindi, featuring popular novels by Eugene Vodolazkin, which have gained considerable acclaim among Indian readers. This initiative is in collaboration with the Russian Writers and Publishers Association, focusing on the crucial role of translation in introducing Russian literature to a wider audience.

Noteworthy guest Mostafa Mastoor will also participate, with several events planned around his work, including book launches and meet-and-greet sessions.

In addition to showcasing the latest publications, the fair's international events part will host diverse literary discussions. Among these is a session exploring the Indian character in Emirati literature, featuring the prominent Muhsin Suleiman, as well as a dialogue on literary interactions between Saudi and New Delhi novels, organized in partnership with the Saudi publishing and translation authority. Another highlight includes a panel titled "From Cooking to Art: Cultural Interaction," led by New Zealand High Commissioner Patrick John Rata, featuring writers from New Zealand and India.

Turkey repatriates 55 smuggled Iranian artifacts

Arts & Culture Desk

Turkey returned 55 ancient artifacts of Iranian origin that were illicitly transported into the country. The collection, which had been seized by Turkish authorities in the eastern city of Erzurum, was handed over to Iranian diplomatic representatives in June 2024.

Now, following coordination between Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the artifacts have been transported via a land route and delivered to the cultural authorities of West Azarbaijan Province, ILNA reported.

According to Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the repatriation process was set in motion after Iran's Consulate General in Erzurum provided intelligence on a confiscated trove of cultural and historical objects. Images of the seized artifacts were promptly sent to the General Directorate of Museums for expert evaluation and

authentication. These relics, smuggled out of Iran through illicit channels, had been recovered in the Turkish provinces of Erzurum and Erzincan.

Once specialists confirmed that several of the items were undeniably linked to Iran's rich cultural heritage, Tehran formally requested their return under the 1970 UNESCO Convention. This demand was reinforced by a bilateral agreement between Turkey and Iran aimed at curbing the illegal trafficking of cultural assets. In line with this accord, a formal handover ceremony took place at the Erzurum Museum, where the artifacts were officially transferred to the Iranian Consulate by the Director-General of Cultural Heritage and Museums of Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, alongside the Deputy Governor of Erzurum.

The repatriated collection consists of a sword believed to date back to the Sassanian era, animal figurines characteristic of the Iron and Bronze Ages, glass and metal bowls, a copper ewer, and 42 historical coins.



● ISNA



Iran aims for 1,000 museums to promote cultural heritage: Deputy minister

Arts & Culture Desk

In a recent press conference, Ali Darabi, the Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, outlined the government's plan to increase the number of museums in Iran from 824 to 1,000 as part of the Seventh Development Plan. Held on Sunday, February 2, at the Fajr Hall of the ministry, the session highlighted various ongoing projects and initiatives within the cultural sector, IRNA reported.

Darabi announced that there are currently 26 museums under construction across the country, comprising 12 regional and 14 provincial museums. "Some of these museums have been in the pipeline for over three decades," he noted, emphasizing the ministry's commitment to expedite their completion as part of prioritized collaborative projects. As part of the ongoing efforts, the

deputy minister revealed that six new museums and exhibition halls are set to open during the celebrations to commemorate the anniversary of Islamic Revolution. He also mentioned the recent approval of a technical and executive regulation for historical buildings by the Cabinet, which he described as a significant step forward for engineering standards in heritage conservation.

Plus, Darabi reported that a historical fabric mapping initiative has been successfully implemented in 197 cities, with only four cities remaining. "This is one of our major achievements in the heritage sector," he added. He also acknowledged the need for revisiting regulations regarding the preservation of historical sites.

On the issue of cultural heritage repatriation, Darabi stated that over 8,000 historical artifacts have been returned to Iran, with more than

nine additional cases currently in progress.

He highlighted the challenges faced by protection forces in Ilam, who have been threatened by smuggling groups. He emphasized the urgent need for better compensation for personnel, indicating that staff salaries have been historically low. "Following an agreement with the Planning and Budget Organization, we are committed to ensuring timely salary disbursements," he assured.

This year, from January 31 to February 10, 55 restoration projects will be inaugurated across 15 provinces. Alongside these developments, a series of cultural events will take place, including 69 exhibitions, 27 conferences, 15 training workshops, and 17 unveiling ceremonies focused on museums.

Reflecting on the progress made since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Darabi noted that the number of museums has grown from 35 to the current 824, alongside significant efforts in restoration and registration of historical artifacts. A budget of \$3.57 million has been allocated for restoration work, with \$238,000 available as cash reserves from the ministry, while the remainder will be funded by private benefactors. In line with ongoing registration efforts, Darabi revealed that the historical heritage of Rey is on the verge of global recognition, and an impressive album showcasing world-registered artifacts is in the works.

Addressing concerns over recently auctioned historical coins, Darabi clarified that those sold were counterfeit, underscoring the need for vigilance against exploitation in the cultural heritage sector.