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Iran Daily

Vol. 7772 • Monday, February 17, 2025 • Bahman 29, 1403 • Sha'ban 18, 1446 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



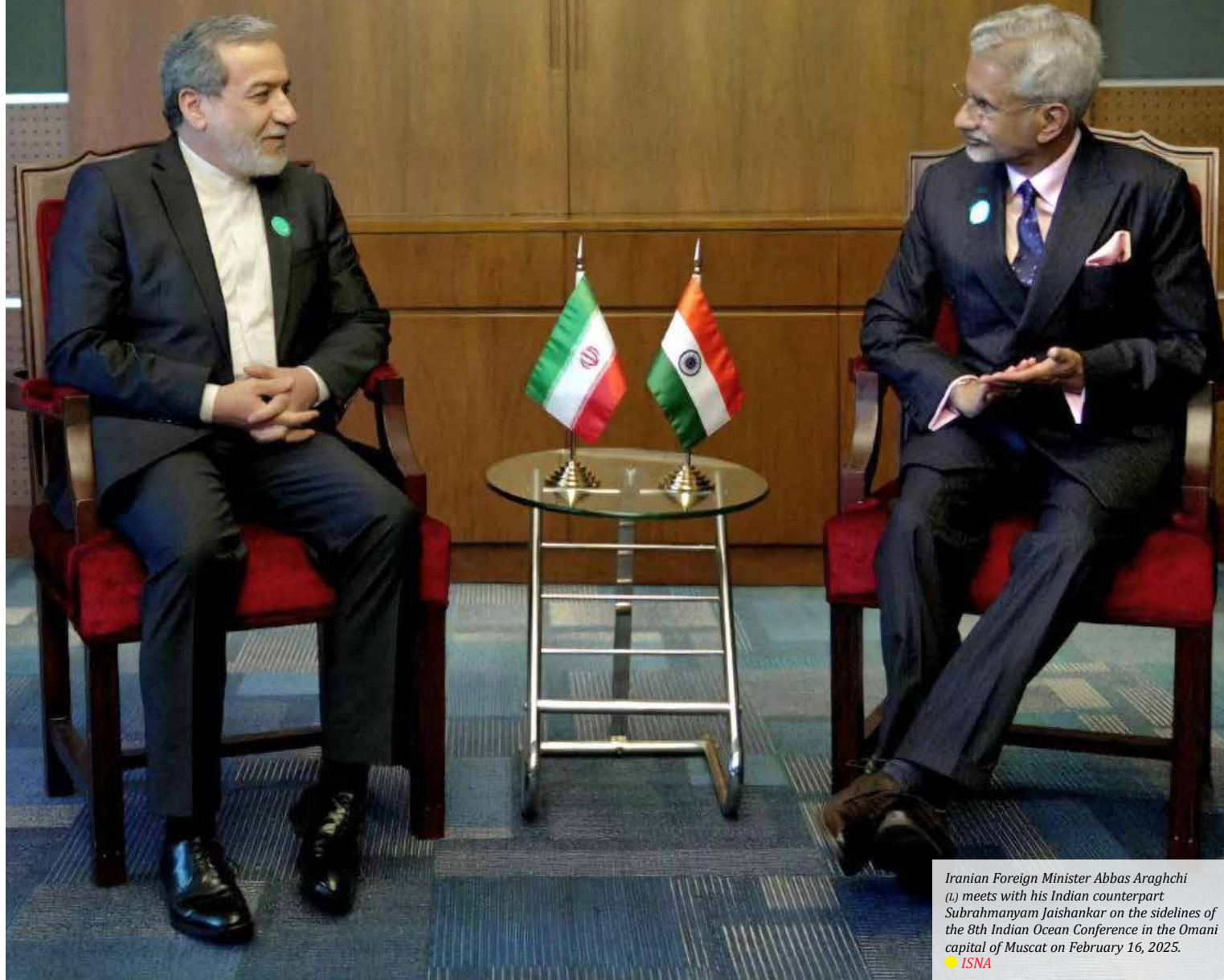
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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) meets with his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on the sidelines of the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in the Omani capital of Muscat on February 16, 2025.

ISNA

How the West weaponizes language to criminalize Iran's right to self-defense



By Reza Nasri

International lawyer & foreign policy analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The G7's recent statement—a barrage of accusations against Iran, from “destabilizing actions” to ballistic missile “proliferation”—is less a genuine call for global security than a calculated exercise in linguistic manipulation. By co-opting charged terms like “proliferation” to describe Iran's conventional ballistic missile capabilities, the G7 deflects attention from its own geopolitical transgressions and selective application of international norms. In doing so, it transforms a sovereign nation's defensive measures into fabricated threats, all to justify a broader strategy of securitization against Iran.

The power of linguistic distortion

Words are not neutral; they shape perception, dictate policy, and manufacture consent. “Proliferation” is a term that carries profound weight, evoking images of nuclear Armageddon. Its legal and moral gravity is rooted in treaties like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which classifies weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) as a unique and existential threat to humanity. However, by deliberately misapplying this term to Iran's conventional missiles and drones—defensive tools developed in accordance with international law—the G7 strips them of their context. This rhetorical sleight of hand recasts Iran's legally enshrined right to self-defense, as protected under Article 51 of the UN Charter, as an international menace.

The intent is clear: to stoke fear and rationalize extreme countermeasures. By branding Iran's missile program as “proliferative,” Western powers lay the groundwork for sanctions, embargoes, and even military escalation under the guise of global security. This is not a new tactic; it follows the pattern described in securitization theory, a concept from the Copenhagen School of international relations, which explains how elites frame issues as existential threats to justify extraordinary responses that bypass regular political and legal scrutiny. By portraying Iran's conventional arsenal as a survival-level crisis, the G7 effectively suspends normal diplomatic engagement, facilitating collective punishment.

The hypocrisy of the West's arms trade

The double standard is glaring. While the G7 condemns Iran for the so-called “proliferation” of ballistic missiles, the United States and European nations have spent the past decade flooding the Middle East with hundreds of billions of dollars in arms, fueling conflicts and prolonging civil wars. Meanwhile, Israel—armed with a clandestine nuclear arsenal maintained under the doctrine of “deliberate ambiguity”—faces allegations before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for violations of the 1948 Genocide Convention. Since World War II, U.S. military aid to Israel has exceeded \$130 billion, financing advanced weaponry such as F-35 fighter jets and bunker-buster bombs—the same weapons used in the devastation of Gaza and Lebanon. Yet, these military exports are framed as necessary defense measures, while Iran's efforts to bolster its deterrence capabilities are pathologized as threats to global stability.

This hypocrisy is no accident. By expanding the definition of “proliferation” to include conventional arms, the G7 criminalizes Iran's right to self-defense while normalizing its own arms trade and enabling Israel's offensive capabilities. The selective enforcement of international law is especially apparent when the International Criminal Court (ICC) issues arrest warrants for Israeli leaders, only for the U.S. to impose sanctions on the Court itself—illustrating that accountability exists only for adversaries, never for allies.

Private sector missing link in expanding Iran-Russia trade

OPINION There are growing concerns that Donald Trump's renewed maximum pressure policy could scare some countries away from trading with Iran. The Islamic Republic and its partners, particularly Russia, need to step up their efforts in response. Currently, Iran conducts trade with 178 countries, but 80% of its trade relies on just ten nations, including China and Russia, limiting diversity and increasing vulnerability to sanctions. The revival of maximum pressure might reduce this number even further, posing a major challenge to Iran's foreign trade landscape. As Iran navigates these turbulent waters, bolstering its trade ties and diversifying its partners will be crucial to weathering the storm of renewed sanctions and maintaining economic stability.

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Structure of fire temples in Zoroastrian tradition

Fire temples were central to Zoroastrianism in ancient Iran, housing sacred fires symbolizing Ahura Mazda's purity and divine light. These temples date back to Zoroastrianism's early days, gaining prominence during the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sassanid empires. Each dynasty contributed to their architectural and ritual evolution. Achaemenids established fire temples as worship centers, while Sassanids systematically built and maintained them. These temples featured domed structures for sacred fires and spaces for rituals, serving as community hubs for festivals and ceremonies, where the eternal flame was meticulously cared for, embodying Zoroastrian purity and the battle between good and evil.

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Consultations with Iraq necessary to boost common security: *Iran deputy FM*



International Desk

The Iranian deputy foreign minister for political affairs underlined the need for consultations between Iran and Iraq to strengthen common security. Majid Takht Ravanchi made the statement in a meeting with Iraq's National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji in the capital Baghdad on Sunday as they exchanged their views on joint cooperation to ensure stability and security in the West Asia region. Takht Ravanchi confirmed in an interview with Iran's Al-Alam Arabic-language news

channel that his visit to Iraq falls within the framework of regular political consultations between the two neighbors.

"The two sides discussed security issues between the two brotherly and Muslim countries, stressing the importance of joint cooperation to ensure stability in the region," he said.

Takht Ravanchi added that regional security is a priority for both Iran and Iraq, and it requires continued consultations and coordination between the two countries at various levels.

He expressed his satisfaction with the continuation of bilateral visits on a regular basis to strengthen relations and cooperation in different areas.

Takht Ravanchi also met with the Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Mohsen al-Mandalawi in the afternoon and discussed with him issues of mutual interest.



Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht Ravanchi (L) meets with Iraq's National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on February 16, 2025.

● AL-ALAM

Muggers of UT student yet to be identified, arrested: *Police*

National Desk

Iran's Police said the main perpetrators of the fatal stabbing of a 19-year-old university student in the capital Tehran have yet to be identified and arrested but some suspects are being interrogated.

Amir Mohammad Khaleghi, a business management student at the University of Tehran, was stabbed by two motorcycle-riding muggers who stole his backpack in front of his dorm on Wednesday. Khaleghi later succumbed to his injuries at the hospital.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and his vice president have in separate directives instructed the Iranian Judiciary to pursue the case immediately.

Ali Salehi, Tehran prosecutor general, offered condolences to Khaleghi's family, saying, "Immediately after this tragic incident, the head of the Judiciary ordered that the matter be followed up carefully, seriously, and quickly, so we referred the case to the Special Branch and Special Murder Investigation."

Stressing that this case is being investigated and monitored closely, he added, "We have held several meetings with colleagues in the law enforcement field to follow up on this case, and the necessary monitoring is being carried out in this area."

Tehran prosecutor general, pointing out that unfortunately, they have not yet reached the stage of discovering this crime, said, "The suspects



have been arrested in this regard, and investigations are underway in this field. Technical and intelligence work is underway. We are trying to arrest the perpetrator of this crime as soon as possible and punish him for his actions."

Salehi added that the Tehran Prosecutor's Office's dealings with perpetrators of specific and violent crimes and armed robbers have been very decisive and without any legal concessions to date.

"We are continuously and moment by moment following up to identify this murderous thief as soon as possible and deal decisively with him," he said.

The Tehran prosecutor concluded by emphasizing that the Islamic Republic has no tolerance for thieves and people who disrupt public order and security.

Hezbollah demands Lebanon government lift ban on Iran planes

Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement on Sunday urged the Lebanese government to reverse a decision blocking Iranian flights from landing in Beirut, following US warnings.

The popular movement said in a statement that it "demands that the government reverse its decision to ban Iranian planes from landing at Beirut airport and take serious measures to prevent the Israeli enemy from imposing its dictates."

A Lebanese source told AFP on Saturday that Lebanon had denied permission for Iranian flights to land twice this week, after the United States warned Israel might strike the airport.

The first incident occurred on Thursday, when Lebanese author-

ities sent word to Iran that a Beirut-bound flight should not take off.

"Through the Americans, Israel informed the Lebanese state that it would target the airport if the Iranian plane landed in Lebanon," the source said.

"The American side told the Lebanese side that Israel was serious about its threat," the source added. Lebanon's public works and transport ministry then refused clearance for the flight, after consulting the prime minister and president, the source added.

The message was passed on before the flight took off, said the source. Another flight was also barred from taking off from Iran on Friday, prompting protests in Lebanon

from Hezbollah supporters, who blocked the road to the airport.

"The security of Beirut airport takes precedence over any other consideration," Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said.

"And the safety of travelers as well as the safety of Lebanese citizens are elements on which we will not compromise."

Israel has on several occasions accused Hezbollah of using the airport in Beirut to bring in weapons from Iran, allegations denied by both the group and the Lebanese authorities.

A fragile ceasefire has been in place in Lebanon since November 27, after more than a year of hostilities and two of months of all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah.



● AFP

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



How the West ...

Undermining international law and reinforcing colonial hierarchies

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The real threat is not Iran's missiles, but the erosion of the international legal framework that is supposed to govern state behavior. When the term "proliferation" is diluted and manipulated to serve political ends, it weakens the credibility of the NPT and disrupts the global consensus required to contain WMDs. If any weapon—regardless of its function—can arbitrarily be labeled as "proliferative," the term loses its meaning, allowing powerful states to exploit legal ambiguity to suppress adversaries while arming their own allies with impunity. Moreover, this rhetoric perpetuates en-

trenched colonial hierarchies in international relations. Imagine if Indonesia or Mexico branded U.S. fighter jets as "proliferative" and demanded sanctions on Washington.

The absurdity of such a scenario reveals the underlying reality: "proliferation" is a rhetorical weapon used to deny certain states—particularly those in the Global South—the right to arm and defend themselves. The G7's framing ensures that countries outside the Western security order remain monitored, disarmed, and punished for resisting coercion.

A world where might defines right

The G7's narrative is not about security—it is about preserving a world order where might makes right. In this system, Western nations profit from a

\$1.7 trillion global arms industry, supplying weapons to fuel conflicts while dictating who may and may not possess the means to defend themselves. As long as international law is applied selectively, the term "proliferation" will remain a tool of hegemony, used not to protect humanity, but to subordinate those who dare to challenge Western dominance.

Iran's missiles and drone program is not the issue. The issue is who gets to decide what constitutes a "threat" and who gets to act with impunity. If the international legal order is to retain any credibility, it must abandon these double standards and ensure that principles of self-defense, sovereignty, and non-interference are applied equally to all nations—not just those favored by the West.

Iran, India committed to Chabahar project despite US threats: *Araghchi*

Economy Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Iran and India are committed to completing the development of the southern Iranian port city of Chabahar, despite threats of sanctions from the United States.

"Iran and India, as two major Asian civilizations, have always had close ties," Araghchi told India's WION News in Muscat on Sunday, where he attended a foreign ministerial meeting of Indian Ocean littoral countries. Although relations between the two nations have experienced ups and downs throughout history, both Iran and India are determined to continue their friendly ties, the foreign minister said.

He emphasized, however, that problems hindering the expansion of ties between Iran and India have always been caused by interventions from third parties. Araghchi criticized a decision by Washington to stop exempting India's involvement in the development of Chabahar Port from US sanctions.

"We are aware that the Indians are consulting with the US; therefore, we leave them free to make their own decisions."

In May 2024, Iran and India

signed a 10-year contract to develop Chabahar, Iran's only ocean port on the Sea of Oman.

On the sidelines of the event on Sunday and in a meeting with Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Araghchi reviewed various aspects of the relations between the two countries in various political, cultural, economic, and trade fields, and exchanged views on regional and international issues, especially the situation in Afghanistan.

Iran's 'lost paradise' of Makoran. Addressing the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in the Omani capital of Muscat on Sunday, Araghchi highlighted the significance of the Makoran coast along the Sea of Oman, saying the "lost paradise" must be transformed into the economic hub of Iran and the region.

"The Makoran coast holds a special place," said Araghchi during his speech. "These shores, whose natural and economic potential had been overlooked for centuries, have now become a national development priority."

"The lost paradise of Makoran must be transformed into the future economic hub of Iran and the region," he stressed.

The foreign minister further said



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (standing) delivers his speech at the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in the Omani capital of Muscat on February 16, 2025. [mfa.ir](#)

the Islamic Republic believes that its coasts are not merely natural borders but gateways connecting the country to the global economy.

Iran has placed a "maritime-oriented" policy at the forefront of its strategic development, he said, adding that the government has devised a plan for the devel-

opment of ports, maritime transportation, and the establishment of a regional supply chain.

"A country with over 5,800 kilometers of coastline — 4,900 kilometers of which stretches across its south along this vast ocean — cannot remain indifferent to its future. Developing a maritime-based economy is not just an option for Iran; it is an imperative," he maintained.

As a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), Iran affirms its commitment to multilateralism, as well

as economic and security cooperation in the region.

"Maritime security should be ensured by regional countries' In his speech, Araghchi also underlined the importance of ensuring maritime security through cooperation between the countries in the region, saying the issue should not be used as leverage by outside powers.

"We believe that maritime security should not be used as a lever for pressure or influence by extra-regional powers; rather, it should be the outcome of cooperation among regional nations,"

he said.

He also noted that Iran's Navy, in cooperation with regional states, has consistently played a part in anti-piracy operations, combating drug trafficking and organized crime, and ensuring navigational security.

The top Iranian diplomat further warned that certain extra-regional powers seek to exploit political, economic, and security gaps in the region and undermine natural cooperation among regional countries.

"We cannot allow the geopolitical rivalries of global powers to determine the future of this region," he stated. "Decisions about the destiny of the Indian Ocean must be made by the countries of this region and shall serve the interests of their people."

Hosting participants from over 60 countries and international organizations, the two-day conference began on Sunday under the theme "Voyage to New Horizons of Maritime Partnership," aimed at highlighting the importance of inclusivity and building new partnerships in the maritime sector. Araghchi said that the theme of the conference is not a mere slogan and reflects a historical necessity for all countries in the region.

Aref urges delegation of tasks to skilled private sector

Economy Desk

In a meeting with Sattar Beheshti, Iran's minister of communications and information technology (CIT), along with senior officials from the ministry, the country's vice president emphasized the need to delegate responsibilities to the skilled private sector.

Mohammadreza Aref highlighted the importance of advancing Iran's position in emerging communication and information technology fields, stating, "Cybersecurity is a critical priority for us. We must invest seriously in this area and collaborate with elite academics and university experts." The meeting, held Saturday evening at the Ministry of CIT, focused on Iran's progress in the digital economy and the role of self-confidence in achieving success.

The VP recalled the early post-Islamic Revolution years

when foreign technicians left the country, leaving behind unused telephone systems.

He praised young, motivated Iranian technicians who stepped in to establish digital infrastructure at the time, laying the groundwork for the country's transition from analog to digital systems.

Key roles of CIT Ministry

Vice President Aref outlined two primary roles for the ministry: creating jobs and increasing its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP).

He noted that while the law mandates 20% of job creation to occur in this sector, there is potential for even greater employment opportunities in the digital economy through increased efforts.

He added that under the Seventh Development Plan (2024-28), the ministry is tasked with contributing 10% to the GDP, but

he believes the sector has the capacity to reach 15% if necessary conditions are met.

Emphasis on int'l cooperation

The vice president stressed the importance of international collaboration, particularly with neighboring countries.

He highlighted Iran's participation in regional agreements such as ECO, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, and EAEU, noting that cultural similarities make these countries eager to cooperate with Iran. He also called for active engagement in international scientific forums and institutions.

He emphasized the role of specialized diplomacy in supporting political diplomacy, citing successful examples in Africa.

Cybersecurity a top priority

The vice president underscored the im-



portance of cybersecurity, urging continued collaboration with universities and relevant ministries.

He called for increased support for research and development in this field, particularly through partnerships with elite academics.

Aref also highlighted the need for cultural development in cybersecurity and encryption, praising the efforts of the Iranian Society of Cryptology in collaboration with the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology.

Bridging digital divide

The VP emphasized the need

to reduce the digital divide between urban and rural areas, ensuring that high-speed internet access available in cities is extended to rural regions.

He also stressed the importance of prioritizing emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and quantum encryption. He also highlighted the significance of the National Information Network as a key national priority, calling for public awareness and engagement with experts and users.

Space activities, financial challenges

Following a recent announcement by the Iranian Space

Agency about the upcoming launch of a micro-class satellite, the vice president praised the agency's efforts, emphasizing the importance of boldness in space activities.

Aref reiterated the government's commitment to supporting this sector and advancing Iran's position in space technology.

He acknowledged financial challenges but assured that the government would support efforts to generate revenue through asset utilization.

Minister's remarks

The minister of CIT, for his part, welcomed the vice president, noting Aref's past leadership in the ministry.

Hashemi described the Vice President's presence as "hopeful and encouraging" for the ministry's staff, emphasizing that he was not a guest but a member of the family.

During the meeting, ministry officials provided detailed updates on various initiatives, including e-government and smart government projects, industrial automation, regulatory efforts, and advancements in space research and digital economy investments.

Hemmati says OPEC Fund to finance Iranian contractors

Economy Desk

Iran's minister of economic affairs and finance announced negotiations with the head of the OPEC Fund, along with an agreement to secure financing for Iranian contractors in international projects through the fund.

Abdolnaser Hemmati, the economy minister, who traveled to AlUla, Saudi Arabia, to attend an annual conference on challenges and opportunities facing emerg-

ing economies, met with Abdulhamid Alkhalifa, the head of the OPEC Fund, on the sidelines of the event, IRNA reported.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Hemmati stated, "We have reached good agreements with the OPEC Fund's president. Accordingly, the fund, which provides financial resources for our country, will enable Iranian techno-engineering service providers and contractors to access the OPEC Fund's

resources."

The minister added, "More importantly, as an active member of the OPEC Fund, we will increase our participation and presence in its meetings. Furthermore, representatives from the fund will visit Tehran and engage with members of the Chamber of Commerce and Iranian economic players to expand cooperation at the regional level."

Hemmati traveled to Saudi Ara-

bia at the shared invitation of his Saudi counterpart and the head of the International Monetary Fund.

The minister aims to promote inclusive progress and build economic resilience through international cooperation by participating in the conference on challenges and opportunities for emerging economies and meeting with finance ministers, central bank governors, and selected policymakers.



‘Golden opportunity’ to approve FATF been lost: *Expert*

Task Force caught up in political distortions

INTERVIEW

“The FATF file is currently under review in the commissions of the Expediency Council, and certain aspects have been approved by the relevant commissions. However, regarding what decision the council will make, I must clarify that I am not a spokesperson for the council; I support both conventions and defend them.” This is part of the statements made by Mohammad Reza Bahonar, a member of Iran’s Expediency Council and Secretary General of the Islamic Engineers Society, during a press conference about the review of the Palermo and CFT conventions in the council.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) file is currently under review in Iran’s Expediency Council. The task force comprises four conventions, all of which were approved by Iran’s Parliament, but two are on hold in the Expediency Council [a legislative body with supervisory powers over all branches of government].

This raises the question once again: will the impasse surrounding the FATF-related bills finally be resolved after 15 years? In this context, Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, a political analyst and Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Parliament, stated: “Many opportunities have been lost. If Iran had not previously entered the blacklist, the possibility of FATF becoming a center for sanctions against Iran would not have existed. However, Iran is now on the blacklist, and the banks of Iran’s allied countries cannot engage with us. This was an opportunity that the hardliners took away from the national interests of the country.” Below is the full conversation with Falahatpisheh:



HESHMATOLLAH
FALAHATPISHEH

Recently, Mohammad Reza Bahonar stated that some clauses of the FATF-related bills have been approved in the joint commission of the Expediency Council. What is your prediction regarding the fate of these bills, and will they be approved during this term?

FALAHATPISHEH: The most important thing that needs to be done concerning FATF is to prepare a comprehensive report in line with national interests. Unfortunately, FATF has become entangled in political games in Iran, as exemplified by a recent program on state television—one of the few programs that claims to be free. In this program, two members of Parliament discussed the pros and cons of FATF, but many truths about FATF were not clarified.

The supporting representative had incomplete information in some cases, while the opposing voice failed to present the core facts. The opposing representative claimed that the preconditions set by Iran in the two conventions, Palermo and CFT, have not been accepted by FATF.

However, this claim is incorrect, as Palermo and CFT have not been enacted into law in Iran, meaning that Iranian officials have not presented their conditions to FATF. In reality, these two conventions have been under discussion in the council for six years. Furthermore, the opposing representative claimed that if we approve it and they do not accept our conditions, the country will face difficulties. One of the preconditions mentioned in CFT is that if FATF does not accept Iran’s conditions, the government is not entitled to membership. Unfortunately, FATF has fallen victim to political distortions in Iran.

The losses incurred in the past cannot be compensated for. During the four years of the Biden administration, Iran’s economic relations were relatively good, and many of the constraints that existed before, as they do now under Trump, were absent. However, due to Iran’s placement on the FATF blacklist, significant damage has been inflicted on the interests of the people and the government. This situation, arising from global banks’ reluctance to work with Iran, has benefited

middlemen, and the heads of the [governmental] branches have belatedly acknowledged that 30% of Iran’s currency value has been lost due to non-membership in FATF and sanctions.

This acknowledgment came too late. Had Palermo and CFT been approved at the time when FATF was passed in the 10th Parliament and Iran was on the grey list, there would have been a chance for Iran to be removed from that list. However, when Palermo and CFT were not approved by the Expediency Council, we saw Iran’s enemies, such as the reactionary countries of that time and Israel, gain positions in the FATF executive body. Under pressure from them, during a time when China was chairing FATF, Iran was placed on the blacklist.

Now, with the implementation of maximum pressure policies, even if Iran approves these two

conventions, the past damages will not be rectified, and the path will be tougher than before.

So, you do not have hope for the approval of FATF?

Numerous opportunities have been squandered. If Iran had not previously entered the blacklist, the possibility of FATF becoming a center for sanctions against Iran would not have existed. However, Iran is now on the blacklist, and the banks of Iran’s allied countries cannot engage with us. This was an opportunity in the country’s national interest that hardliners wasted.

Even if Iran approves these two conventions, due to the isolationist policies of the Trump administration and China’s dealings regarding Iran, it would mark the beginning of a rocky road. Therefore, the golden opportunity has been lost. Unfortunately, hardliners

have accustomed the country to making decisions from the depths of despair, and we only make decisions when we find ourselves in dire straits. We have seen this during wartime, during the JCPOA negotiations, and in various instances, which poses a threat to the country’s foreign policy.

Recently, various analyses have emerged concerning FATF. Some argue that if these two conventions are not approved, it will no longer be possible to circumvent the sanctions, while others believe that FATF lacks effectiveness without the lifting of the sanctions. What is your opinion on these analyses?

I believe that if FATF had been approved during the 10th Parliament, Iran would have had the necessary negotiating power to secure its preconditions.

At that time, European countries were aligned with Iran, and Israel did not hold a significant position or influence within FATF. However, now we find ourselves in a belated situation regarding FATF, with the United States pursuing a maximum pressure policy. Israel has gained a role, and European countries have adopted a tough stance against us.

Under these circumstances, if FATF is approved with the previous preconditions, I am convinced that serious obstacles will emerge for Iran in cooperating with this organization and in getting off the blacklist. The US, Europe, and other players will encounter challenges regarding these preconditions with Iran.

The interview was conducted in Farsi by the Khabaronline news agency.



The most important thing that needs to be done concerning FATF is to prepare a comprehensive report in line with national interests. Unfortunately, FATF has become entangled in political games in Iran.



Private sector missing link in expanding Iran-Russia trade



By Vali Kaleji
Member of Scientific Council of IRAS

OPINION

There is a concern that after the restoration of Donald Trump's policy of maximum pressure, some countries may back down from trading with Iran. One solution is for the private sectors of Iran and other partners, like Russia, to step up their game. Vali Kaleji, a member of the Scientific Council of the Institute for Iran & Eurasia Studies (IRAS), made the following statements in a meeting, titled "Prospects for Iran-Russia Trade in Light of the Strategic Partnership Treaty," held at the University of Tehran on February 12, 2025. He aimed to answer the commonly asked question: What is Russia's position after the restoration of the maximum pressure campaign?

According to the latest statistics provided by Iran's customs in November, Iran has trade with 178 countries, but 80% of our trade is with 10 countries, which, due to sanctions and other issues, lacks the necessary diversity. These 10 countries include China, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, Germany, and Kazakhstan. Therefore, Russia is one of the 10 countries that account for 80% of our foreign trade.

Currently, there is a concern that after the revival of Donald Trump's policy of maximum pressure, the number of these countries may fall below 10, and this is one of the biggest challenges facing our foreign trade. The total value of Iran's exports, according to November statistics, was \$38.032 billion, and our imports during this period were \$45.127 billion; in fact, by November, we had a trade deficit of nearly \$6 billion. During the same period, our exports to Russia were \$494 million, and our imports from Russia were \$1.1 billion; that is, we had a trade deficit of around \$606 million with the Russian Federation by November, which will certainly increase by the end of the year.

Mismatch between ruble, rial

Russia is among the top 10 exporters to Iran, but it is not among the top 10 importers of our goods. The main destinations for our exports are China, Iraq, the UAE, Turkey, and Afghanistan, while the main destinations for our imports are China, Turkey, Germany, and Russia. China, with around \$10 billion, accounts for 25% of our imports; Turkey, with \$16 billion, accounts for 6.5%; Germany, with \$1.4 billion, accounts for 3.6%; and Russia, with \$1 billion, accounts for 1.4%. We need to consider these facts. This imbalance and trade deficit with Russia, given that we have eliminated the dollar, have caused a mismatch between the ruble and the rial, which puts pressure on our traders and exporters; that is, to the extent that Russian exporters bring rubles into Iran, we do not have rubles to give to Russian exporters. It may not be desirable to ask Russian exporters to barter, as they are exporters and want to be paid for the goods they sell, and they may not have the necessary expertise or motivation to invest or barter with specific goods in Iran.

Russia is Iran's first trade partner in the Eurasian Economic Union. The total volume of our trade with the Eurasian Economic Union, until January of this year, was around \$1.494 billion, and our imports were



\$1.209 billion, which means we had a trade surplus of around \$285 million; This is in contrast to the trade deficit we had with Russia. This trade surplus is due to our exports to Armenia and Kazakhstan, which have covered our trade deficit with Russia at the level of the Eurasian Economic Union and made the trade balance positive.

Setting realistic goals

The situation I described in both bilateral relations and the Eurasian Economic Union between Iran and Russia cannot be compared to the \$14 billion trade volume between Iran and Turkey or the \$60-65 billion trade volume between Russia and Turkey. We should define our expectations very realistically. It is good that we set a goal of \$5 billion and add \$1 billion each year, but some Iranian officials say we should increase this to \$40 billion. It seems that such statements are made by those who are not necessarily experts on Russia. Announcing unrealistic figures that are not achievable, due to the lack of infrastructure and capacity, can lead to disappointment and despair. Our goal-setting should be realistic, and our perspective should match our capabilities. We have one trade representative from Russia, but the Chinese trade delegation in Russia has around 500 people, and the Turkish trade delegation in Russia has around 100 people. Regarding us, that one trade representative is supposed to connect 81 Russian provinces with 31 Iranian provinces.

The third point revolves around the new developments that have taken place in Iran-Russia relations and the developments that are happening at the interna-

tional level. As a result of these developments, we are facing a dual situation. On the one hand, Iran has become a full member of BRICS and an observer member of the Eurasian Economic Union, and the Iran-Eurasia free trade agreement is expected to come

Eurasian Economic Union begins, the policy of maximum pressure will have returned and will be even worse than before. This means that the exemptions we had in Chabahar port or some financial exchanges we had with some Arab countries will be stopped under American

third party. However, field developments are also important as it is a commitment made at the level of leaders and must be implemented.

So far, around \$40 billion worth of oil and gas agreements have been signed between Iran and Russia, all of which are memoranda of understanding and not contracts. After Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, several major Russian companies left the Iranian market. There is a concern that since there is no contract but only a memorandum of understanding and if the Ukraine war ends and Russia's sanctions are lifted, companies in the oil and gas sector, such as Rosneft, will leave the Iranian market and the active oil and gas fields in southern and western Iran. If we do not want these events to be repeated and we want to move forward and not repeat past mistakes, we should not make the same mistakes again.

Bushehr nuclear power plant could have helped

The next point is Russia's commitment to completing the projects it has undertaken in Iran, which is of great importance and can affect public opinion in Iran. The Iranian people are interested in history, and both positive and negative experiences remain in their minds. They remember, on one hand, the Turkmenchay and Golestan treaties and, on the other hand, the Esfahan steel plant and the early factories of the Machine Sazi Arak (MSA) company, which were built by the Russians during the Soviet era. In the 1960s, an agreement was signed to export Iranian gas to the Soviet Union, and a few years later, in 1973, these factories were

launched. The Iranian people have a historical approach to issues and phenomena, and when they refer to buildings, factories, roads, and railways, they say that they were built by the Germans, Americans, or French. The Esfahan steel plant and the MSA have been active for 50 years and employ thousands of people, and people still say that they were built by the Russians. Besides these two, we do not have another major and significant project in Iran that has been built and operated by the Russians. The symbol of Russian projects is the Bushehr nuclear power plant, which, if it had been fully implemented, could have been very effective in solving the current energy and power shortage that Iran is experiencing and could have created a more positive perception of Russia.

The project to electrify the Incheboron-Garmsar route, which is the eastern wing of the North-South Corridor, has been pending for several years and has been discussed and agreed upon by several governments. There is also a concern about the Rasht-Astara railway; if the three-year commitment made regarding this railway is fulfilled on time, it can have an impact on people's minds, just like the Esfahan steel plant and the MSA.

Relations should move beyond gov'ts

We can only say that Iran-Russia economic and trade relations have reached an ideal and desirable level when Iran-Russia trade relations are similar to Iran's relations with the UAE and Turkey. We did not have an ambassador in the UAE for nearly five or six years. However, why did Iran-UAE relations not cut off, despite not having an ambassador? These relations were weakened and became fragile, but they were never cut off because the economic and trade relations between the private sectors of Iran and the UAE are so strong that neither Iran nor the UAE can do without each other, and that is why relations have continued. We had significant differences with Turkey over Syria, but Iran-Turkey relations were not cut off.

If the private sector enters the field in all areas, including real estate and tourism, regardless of the political relations between the countries, bilateral relations will remain in place. Iran-Russia relations should completely move out of the governmental sphere and take on a form and nature similar to our relations with Turkey and the UAE as models.

The full article first appeared in Farsi on IRNA.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) shakes hands with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in Moscow, Russia, on January 17, 2025.

● REUTERS

into effect within the next two or three months after being approved by the Guardian Council. Iran's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has also been granted, and the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty between Iran and Russia has been signed. On the other hand, we are witnessing the return of Donald Trump's policy of maximum pressure, which has coincided with these events. We must certainly consider the coincidence of these developments. When our free trade with the

pressure. Some countries, such as India, may even withdraw from the Chabahar port project due to these pressures. Russia, as the eastern wing of the North-South Corridor, has also entered Chabahar port. At the same time, we should pay attention to Trump's threat to impose 100% sanctions on BRICS if the dollar is eliminated.

Not repeating past mistakes

The signing of the 25-year agreement between Iran and China and the 20-year agreement between Iran and Russia may have been due to the concern of the leaders of these three countries that they want to establish independent relations without being influenced by a

UWW Ranking Series:

Iran lines up star-studded roster for Muhamet Malo event

Sports Desk

World and Olympic champions will spearhead the Iranian wrestling squads when the Muhamet Malo Ranking Series tournament gets underway in Tirana, Albania, on February 26.

Mohammad-Hadi Saravi will make his first appearance since grabbing the Greco-Roman 97kg gold at the Paris Olympics last summer, with Iranian prodigy Saeid Esmaeili – a surprise gold winner in the Games – the favorite for the 67kg glory.

Having won the world 82kg title in Tirana last October, Mohammad-Ali Geraei will be back in the Albanian capital for the second Ranking Series event of the season, with Hungary's Erik Szilvassy and Georgian Gela Bolkvadze, who stood behind the Iranian on the world podium, promising a thrilling battle for the ultimate prize.

Reigning world champion and Olympic bronze medalist Amin Mirzazadeh will headline the 130kg draw.

His performance will play a decisive part in settling the three-way debate – also featuring former world champion Ali-Akbar Yousefi and world U23 gold medalist Fardin Hedayati – for the Iranian super-heavyweight spot in September's World Championships.

World and Olympic silver medalist Alireza Mohammadi will be eager to make up for his final defeat against Semen Novikov in Paris, should he take on the Bulgarian in the 87kg contests, with Danish Turpal Bi-



Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Mohammad-Hadi Saravi, pictured in a training session in Tehran, will make his first appearance since winning the Olympic gold last summer at the upcoming Muhamet Malo Ranking Series event in Tirana, Albania.

● IAWF

sultanov, who took the Olympic bronze, also in the mix.

Joining the five Iranians in the Greco-Roman squad are world silver medalist Pouya Dadmarz (55kg), world junior and under-23 champion Ali Ahmadi Vafa (60kg), two-time Asian silver medalist Mahdi Mohsennejad (63kg), Iman Moham-

madi (72kg), and Abolfazl Mohmadi (77kg). In the freestyle competitions, two Olympic silver medalists will be part of the Iranian nine-man team.

World superheavyweight champion Amirhossein Zare', who was beaten by Georgian Geno Petriashvili in the final showdown in Paris, will be the wrestler

to watch in the 125kg contests.

Givi Matcharashvili, also from Georgia, will be looking to throw down the gauntlet to the Iranian in his new weight class, having won the Olympic 97kg silver last year.

Meanwhile, Rahman Amouzad – runner-up to Japanese Kotaro Kiyooka in the

Games – will take part in the 65kg event, which will feature some high-profile contestants, including Russian two-time world U23 champion Ibragim Ibragimov, Turkish Ahmet Duman – a world 61kg silver winner last October – and home-favorite Islam Dudaev, who was beaten by Amouzad in Paris before grabbing a consolation bronze.

Two-time world 92kg champion Kamran Qasempour will be back in his favorite territory after missing out on the 97kg podium in the Wrestling Worlds less than five months ago.

Mojtab Goleij – a world bronze winner in 2021 – will be joined by 20-year-old Erfan Alizadeh in representing the country in the 97kg contests, though American great Kyle Snyder will be the ultimate favorite for the gold medal.

Iran will also be represented by two wrestlers in the 74kg class: 2021 world bronze winner Younes Emami and Hossein Abouzari, who will be looking to improve on his Ranking Series silver in the 2024 Zagreb Open.

Ali Moeini, a bronze medalist in last October's U23 Worlds, will compete in the 57kg contests alongside fellow-Iranian Hadi Rezaei.

AFC U20 Asian Cup:

Iran hit six past 10-man Yemen

AFC – Iran routed Yemen 6-0 on Sunday as Hossein Abdi's boys continued their perfect start to their Group C campaign at the AFC U20 Asian Cup in Shenzhen, China.

Yemen settled the quicker and issued a warning in the second minute when Anwar Al Turaiqi set Mohammed Al Awami free in the centre, only for the midfielder to send his long-range effort over the bar.

Al Awami again found space at the top of the box before pulling his shot wide four minutes later, while Adel Qasem came close for Yemen two minutes later as he tried to catch Iran keeper Arsha Shakouri with a looping shot. At the other end, Iran almost benefited from a chance in the 10th minute

when Mohammadhossein Sadeghi released a through ball for Reza Ghandipour, who set up Esmaeil Qolizadeh, only for Yemen keeper Osamah Mokref to intervene.

Yemen, however, found themselves in trouble in the 13th minute following Saeed Al Shaban's red card with Iran then attacking in numbers with Mohammad Dindar, Ghandipour and Mobin Dehghan threatening.

Iran's pressing play yielded the opener in the 26th minute after Abolfazl Zamani pounced on a loose ball at the top of the box before sending a stinging shot into the top left corner.

Zamani netted his second in the 34th minute after Yemen failed to deal with a cross from Yaqoob Barajeh, leaving

the Iran No 16 to head home past a rooted Mokref.

Yemen fell further behind in the 42nd minute after Esmaeil Qolizadeh pounced on a poor pass from Ahmed Al Hajj before slotting the ball into the bottom right corner.

Yemen conceded the fourth following Mohammed Moqbel's own goal, leaving the West Asian side on the ropes going into the break.

Iran stretched the lead a minute after the restart when Abbas Kahrizi sent a perfect cross for Ghandipour to nod home.

Yemen suffered further agony, conceding again in the 72nd minute after Nima Andarz supplied a cross for Abolfazl Zoleikhaei to finish with a



close range diving header.

The victory left Iran, who had beaten Indonesia 3-0 in their opener, on top of the group table with six points, ahead of Wednesday's game against

defending champion Uzbekistan.

The top two in each group will progress to the last eight, with the four semifinalists qualifying for September's under-20 World Cup in Chile.



● INA FASSBENDER/AFP

Title race 'not over yet', says Alonso despite Leverkusen setback

AFP – Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso was not willing to concede the Bundesliga title despite Saturday's 0-0 home draw with Bayern Munich which leaves them eight points behind the league leaders.

Defending champions Leverkusen were dominant but could not break through a Bayern side who sat back, safe in the knowledge a draw would maintain their lead with 12 games left in the season. It was just the second time since 1992 that Bayern failed to register a shot on goal in a league game.

"We played very well. We did everything we could do to win, other than score a goal," Alonso told reporters.

The coach said he was surprised with

his side's dominance against the league leaders.

"To be honest, and I've seen many Bayern games this season and they're very dominant, we were dominant.

"You can see from the stats today how dominant we were. We just missed some precision."

Alonso said his side could still make up the gap on the league leaders.

"For the table it wasn't enough (to make a difference). But the season is not over yet."

"As I said last year (with Leverkusen on the way to the title), we can speak in April. There's still many points to play for," the Spaniard said.

"Without a doubt we'll keep fighting in each competition and we want to keep

winning."

Despite the disappointment, Alonso said the performance "showed we can match it with anyone".

"It's something we can build on in the league, but especially in the Champions League."

In the Champions League, Leverkusen were the only German side to finish in the top eight.

Bayern coach Vincent Kompany hit back at suggestions his team did not deserve the draw.

"Leverkusen earned the right to put us under pressure, but we showed the mentality to block shots – guys like Harry (Kane) and Jamal (Musiala) who are normally scoring goals for us."

Embark on a journey through time in Taheri Mansion of Bushehr

Iranica Desk

The southern Iranian city of Bushehr, the capital of Bushehr Province, is steeped in history with valuable structures dating back to the Sassanid and Parthian eras. Recognized as the city of the sea and palm groves, Bushehr boasts a rich cultural heritage and features historical sites such as Malek Mansion, the traditional Bushehr Bazaar, the grave of the English General, and the Anthropology Museum, also known as Taheri Mansion, which annually attracts a significant number of tourists. The city's vibrant maritime culture is reflected in its bustling markets and the stunning beauty of its coastal scenery. Nasrollah Ebrahimi, the deputy head of the provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, stated that restoration work for the Anthropology Museum has commenced, focusing seriously on its content related to the history of the people of Bushehr. He added that part of the work involves restoring the building, including painting the courtyard and rooms, while another part involves adding a corridor to the first floor of the mansion for better visitor access. Once

the physical restoration is completed, the arrangement will begin, developed by the project's initial study consultants, chn. ir wrote. The land for the museum was purchased from a Bushehri merchant, and the order to construct this beautifully designed structure was issued by "Ahmad Khan Daryabegi," the governor of all the ports and islands of the Persian Gulf, in 1938 CE. The construction took two years to complete by 1940. Initially, the building served as the governor's residence. Located on the coastal road in the Behbahan neighborhood, like all old houses in the area, it is made of coral limestone. Initially referred to as the Amiriyeh Mansion, it was later acquired by an individual named Taheri, leading to its new designation as the Taheri Mansion. During the first Pahlavi era, when Seyyed Hossein Sa'adat was elected mayor, the Bushehr Municipality was established in the building. The structure retained its municipal designation even after the Islamic Revolution until 1997, when officials from the Bushehr Governorate, following recommendations from the Cultural Heritage Department and the

Iranology Foundation, initiated its conversion into an Anthropology Museum. The museum was designed to showcase the local customs and traditions of Bushehr's inhabitants, culminating in its inauguration in 1999. The two-story building comprises ten rooms arranged around a central courtyard. A wooden balcony on the second floor provides stunning views of the sea that captivate every visitor. The structure includes a large room believed to be the *shahneshin* (main hall) or reception area for guests. Today, the entire building, from the courtyard to both the first and second floors, has been transformed into a museum. Upon entering the courtyard, visitors can see agricultural tools and a model of a *lenj* (a traditional boat) registered globally as part of Iran's Intangible Cultural Heritage. The first floor displays aerial maps of Bushehr; a replica of the city's old historical and cultural fabric, boards featuring images of the city's natural historical sites, a water room, a kitchen, and a *hanna bandan* (a ceremony traditionally held one day before a wedding) room. The second floor showcases exhibits of traditional professions related



visitiran.ir

to handicrafts, a typical sitting room, and a room dedicated to traditional and ceremonial music. In the corridor and the balcony of the second floor, displays of marine species from the Persian Gulf and various maritime handicrafts are featured. The main materials used in this building are coral stones, gypsum, teak wood, and sandalwood. The pillars in front of the building are made from teak wood, and to prevent moisture, they are encased in coconut fibers, coated with decorative gypsum. The edifice was registered on Iran's National Heritage List on May 9, 1999. Bushehr's rich tapestry of history extends beyond the Taheri

Mansion. The city is renowned for its historical significance as a major port and trade center, influencing cultural exchanges throughout the Persian Gulf region. With its blend of history, culture, and stunning coastal views, Bushehr remains a captivating destination for those seeking to experience the essence of southern Iran.



chn. ir



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wikipedia.org

Structure of fire temples in Zoroastrian tradition

Fire temples, known as *atashkadeh* or *atashgah* in Persian, were central to the practice of Zoroastrianism in ancient Iran. These temples served as sanctuaries for the sacred fire, which represented Ahura Mazda, and symbolized purity and divine light. The reverence for fire in Zoroastrianism reflects the belief that it is a medium for spiritual insight. A noteworthy example of a surviving ancient fire temple is the Fire Temple of Yazd. The origins of fire temples trace back to the early stages of Zoroastrianism, with their prominence growing during the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires. Each dynasty contributed to the architectural and ritualistic development of these sacred spaces. Under the Achaemenids, fire temples were established across various regions as places of worship, destinationiran.com wrote. During the Sassanid period, fire temples were systematically built and maintained, reflecting the state's support for Zoroastrianism. These temples often featured specific architectural elements, including domed structures to house the sacred fire and spaces for ritual ceremonies. Fire temples also served as community centers for festivals, gatherings, and important rituals. The continuous burning of the sacred fire required meticulous care and reverence, underscoring Zoro-

astrian commitments to purity and the eternal struggle between good and evil. **Architecture** The architectural design of fire temples is significant in Zoroastrianism, reflecting ancient Persia's spiritual and cultural values. These structures served as both places of worship and symbols of religious purity. **Domed structure:** Many fire temples featured distinctive domes, symbolizing the heavens and cosmic order. The dome often covered the sanctum housing the fire, emphasizing the connection between the divine and earthly realms. **Fire chamber:** The central fire chamber, where the fire was housed, was typically elevated and separated from the rest of the temple to maintain purity. Only priests (*mobeds*) were allowed to enter this sanctum. **Four pillars:** Traditional fire temples often included a hall with four pillars, representing the four cardinal directions and symbolizing the temple as a microcosm of the universe. **Ceremonial area:** Surrounding the fire chamber were spaces designated for rituals and ceremonies, designed to accommodate large gatherings during festivals and religious events. **Archaeological excavation** Archaeological excavations in Iran have uncovered significant fire temples, pro-

viding insights into the religious and cultural practices of ancient Persia. These discoveries illuminate architectural, ritualistic, and social aspects of Zoroastrianism during the Sassanid period and earlier. Recent excavations have resulted in fascinating findings that deepen our understanding of Zoroastrian history in Iran. **Impact on Persian culture and society** Fire temples profoundly influenced Persian culture and society, shaping religious practices, social structures, and cultural identity: **Cultural identity:** Fire temples played a critical role in shaping Persian cultural identity. The architecture, rituals, and symbolism associated with these temples became integral to Persian heritage, fostering national pride and continuity. **Intellectual and philosophical development:** Fire temples were centers of intellectual discourse where scholars, philosophers, and thinkers gathered to discuss ideas and explore scientific knowledge, enriching the cultural legacy of ancient Persia. **Architectural influence:** The domed structures and symbolic decorations of fire temples influenced Persian architecture and art, becoming iconic elements of cultural heritage that inspired future generations.



Bazez Hur Fire Temple, Khorasan Razavi Province
yjc.ir



Fire Temple of Yazd
wikipedia.org



Iran's health tourism sector ready to flourish with vast opportunities

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's health tourism sector stands at a crossroads, brimming with untapped potential that could transform it into a leading destination for medical travelers. Despite generating less than \$500 million annually, the Iranian government has set an ambitious target of reaching \$6 billion in revenue.

With neighboring countries rapidly developing their own medical tourism industries, the time is ripe for Iran to leverage its strengths.

Yasser Nejadi, Secretary of the National Development and Empowerment Working Group of the Ministry of Health, recently shared insights on the country's health tourism landscape, Tasnim News Agency reported.

He noted that while Iran boasts advanced medical systems, skilled surgeons, modern equipment, and affordable treatment options, it struggles to capitalize fully on these advantages.

"As the dollar value rises, our medical services become cheaper compared to regional competitors. However, only 20% of health tourists are motivated by lower costs; over 68% prioritize the quality of services," he explained.

Iran's reputation in the health tourism

arena is built on its professional medical workforce and state-of-the-art facilities. Nevertheless, the number of international patients arriving in Iran remains low, with estimates suggesting fewer than 500,000 visitors each year.

"Most foreign patients come based on personal connections rather than organized efforts by tourism authorities," Nejadi added, pointing to traditional ties with countries like Iraq and Pakistan as key sources of health tourists.

The need for a systematic approach to attract health tourists cannot be overstated.

Nejadi expressed concern that many potential patients bypass Iran in favor of less familiar countries that have begun to establish themselves in the health tourism market.

"Unfortunately, many opportunities have been lost as emerging competitors gain traction," he lamented.

Despite its myriad advantages, Iran's health tourism industry grapples with many challenges, particularly the absence of a cohesive and transparent system for guiding medical tourists. Currently, many patients rely on informal channels, often leading to confusion regarding treatment costs and potential fraud.

Nejadi pointed out the dire consequences



of this lack of regulation, stating, "This not only breeds financial misconduct but also undermines tourists' trust in Iran's medical system."

To remedy these issues, experts advocate for the creation of an online platform that

showcases reputable medical facilities, simplifying the process for health tourists.

Establishing clear financial practices and enhancing marketing strategies are also critical to rebuilding Iran's image as a

premier health tourism destination.

"We must seriously commit to marketing and attracting health tourists. Streamlining the activities of intermediaries in this sector can also help clarify financial transactions," Nejadi concluded.

Fusion of Eastern, Western music at Fajr music festival



Arts & Culture Desk

In an appealing blend of sounds, the fifth night of the 40th International Fajr Music Festival showcased a unique musical exchange between Iran and the Netherlands, delighting audiences with an innovative performance.

The concert, held at Tehran's Vahdat Hall, featured a collaborative effort between local and international musicians, highlighting the significance of nurturing female talent in the music industry, IRNA reported.

Taking the stage at 9:30 PM, the concert brought together three internationally acclaimed musicians: Sjahin During, a percussionist from the Netherlands; Bram Stadhouders, a guitarist also from the Netherlands; and Bence Huszar, a cellist from Hungary. They were joined by the all-female Iranian group "Nushe," led by the talented Niusha Barimani.

The evening kicked off with

forming together."

He introduced his fellow musicians and expressed his admiration for Persian culture, mentioning that this was his third visit to Iran.

During also reminisced about his first trip six years ago, thanks to an invitation from Barimani, and conveyed hopes for continued collaboration.

Following this interaction, Barimani took the stage with her kamancheh, performing alongside During and the percussionist from Nushe. Her melodic improvisations created a novel fusion, drawing the audience deeper into the experience. As the concert progressed, other members of Nushe, all talented Iranian women, joined the stage, featuring instruments such as the oud, flute, bass, and piano. Initially, there was a slight lack of cohesion among the group, but as the performance unfolded, their harmony improved, resulting in a richer sound tapestry. Barimani's kamancheh performance was clean, melodious, and expressive, resonating with the audience through familiar Iranian tunes. The fusion of these sounds with jazz and blues piano solos, complemented by the Dutch guitarist, crafted a unique atmosphere that captured the essence of both traditional Iranian and contemporary Western music.

Tehran Auction House avows compliance over historical art sales

Arts & Culture Desk

The Tehran Auction House responded to claims by cultural heritage officials regarding the legality of selling historical artifacts during its 22nd auction.

The institute asserts that all items featured in the event have obtained the necessary permits, IRNA reported.

Scheduled for February, the auction showcased 100 pieces, including paintings, calligraphy, manuscripts, visual arts, and carpets, spanning from the Safavid era to the contemporary period. In a critical statement, Leila Khosravi, the director of museums at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts argued that the sale of 'Portrait of a Seated Girl' by Reza Abbasi was unlawful.

She explained that the artwork had passed down through a family, which sought permission to sell it. However, prior to the formation of a trade working group, the family proceeded with the sale.

Khosravi noted that they had not inspected the piece and could not confirm its authenticity. Consequently, communications were initiated with relevant authorities to halt the sale, and oversight agencies have been informed. Khosravi further clarified that a 2005 regulation mandates that owners of historical artifacts over 100 years old can only sell their pieces domestically after proper registration and obtaining a permit from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

The head of the museums de-

partment emphasized that permits for selling historical artifacts over a century old are issued only after assessments by the ministry's trade working group. For items under 100 years, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance is responsible for issuing permits.

According to Khosravi, selling or exporting any historical or cultural artifacts over 100 years old without proper authorization from the Cultural Heritage Department is illegal under the National Cultural Heritage Protection Law enacted in 1930.

On February 16, Fatemeh Davari, spokesperson for the Cultural Heritage Department, stated that the ministry had not issued any permits for the cultural-historical items presented at "Tehran Auction."

She explained that the auction organizers must submit detailed information about the items for the relevant committee's review before permits can be granted.

Davari noted, "After a letter dated February 15, the auction organizers sent information to the museums department, but this did not lead to the issuance of a permit."

The spokesperson underscored that the initial letter from the Tehran Auction, which they cited as a permit, merely indicated that the auction could proceed "upon obtaining necessary authorizations." However, subsequent communications did not result in any permits being granted.

In response to the controversy, the Tehran Auction House issued a statement on February



16, asserting its compliance with national regulations throughout its 12 years of operation. The statement highlighted that the auction had received the required permits from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and had followed proper protocols for presenting and selling the artworks.

The auction took place from February 11 to 13, culminating in a bidding event on February 14, attended by collectors, artists, and media representatives. The auction house insists that all presented works, including those over 100 years old, were deemed culturally and historically permissible for sale.

Despite the auction's successful run, Khosravi's remarks regarding the legality of the Abbasi piece sparked confusion, especially as earlier communications had suggested no issues with the auction's legality. The Tehran Auction House expressed concern that such statements could undermine its reputation and adversely affect the owners of the artworks.

In a final note, the auction house plans to pursue legal action against those responsible for the damaging statements, emphasizing its commitment to operate within the law and uphold the integrity of Iran's art market.