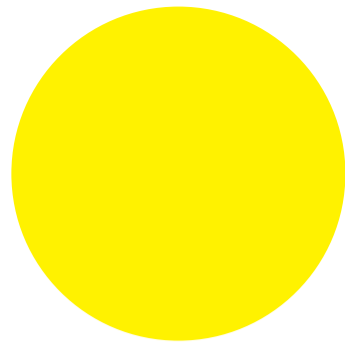


Iran fetched over \$8b of foreign investment since August: *Report*

3 >



President: Iran cannot be sanctioned owing to numerous neighbors

2 >

ICT serving as catalyst in Iran-Serbia ties



By Seyed Sattar Hashemi
Iran's Minister of ICT

**VIEWPOINT
EXCLUSIVE**

Iran and Serbia possess unique strengths that contribute to harness the potential of Information and Communication Technology and become global digital leaders. Tehran and Belgrade have the potential to foster ICT initiatives that can propel their collective aspirations.

The Information and Communication Technology is not only a technological advantage rather a catalyst for economic growth, social transformation and international cooperation. As countries increasingly invest in ICT infrastructure, including Artificial Intelligence, digital platforms, and optical fiber, they lay the cornerstone for innovation-driven economies that shape their future and that of the world.

Iran and Serbia are ready to sign the bilateral cooperation agreement in the field of Information and Communication Technology, which focuses on joint projects in telecommunications, launching cloud infrastructure, AI, exchange of modern knowledge and transfer of technology.

Despite facing economic sanctions, Iran has developed a resilient fintech ecosystem that continues to thrive and innovate. Moreover, our country's academic and research capabilities have propelled us to the forefront of AI advancements. We regard this as an opportunity for Serbia.

Serbia can mutually serve as Iran's gateway to the ICT market of the Balkans. My visit to Belgrade is aimed at facilitating presence of Iranian companies in southeastern Europe and to attract investment in startup companies, cyber security, and communication infrastructure.

Relying on Iran's technology diplomacy, we favor a bilateral framework that taps collective strengths of Iran and Serbia, conjoining the skilled human capital and ICT infrastructures of the two countries with their investment capabilities.

We trust in a future where co-operation of Iran and Serbia will lead them to emerge as leading forces in AI and ICT development, address shared challenges and propel us toward a prosperous future.

Iran, Russia rule out nuclear talks under pressure, threat

Potential for diplomacy still exists: *Lavrov*

2 >



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov walk together after their meeting to give a joint press conference at the Foreign Ministry headquarters in Tehran on February 25, 2025.
● ATTA KENARE/AFP



Embark on journey through history of Iran's tobacco industry

**INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE**

4+5 >



Roads minister says Iran's transit set record of 20m tons

3 >



FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers: Iran eases past Kazakhstan in dead rubber to win group

6 >



Enigmatic history of Takht-e Soleyman

7 >



Tehran, St. Petersburg Orchestras stage ensemble performance

8 >

Iran, Russia rule out nuclear talks under pressure, threat

Potential for diplomacy still exists: *Lavrov*

International Desk

Iran and Russia opposed negotiations on Iran's nuclear program under pressure and threat as the United States restored a "maximum pressure" policy against Iran earlier this month.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi hosted a meeting with visiting Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who landed in Tehran on Tuesday for talks with Iranian officials.

In a joint press conference with Lavrov, Araghchi dismissed the possibility of direct negotiations with the United States on his country's nuclear program under "maximum pressure."

His remarks came a day after Washington announced fresh sanctions on Tehran targeting more than 30 vessels and people, including the head of the national oil company, accused of involvement in brokering the sale and shipment of Iranian oil. The sanctions were the latest to be imposed since US President Donald Trump reinstated his "maximum pressure" policy towards Iran, reprising his approach during his first term. "There will be no possibility of

direct talks between us and the United States on the nuclear issue as long as the maximum pressure is applied in this way," Araghchi said.

"Regarding the nuclear negotiations, the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran is very clear. We will not negotiate under pressure, threat or sanctions."

Lavrov arrived in Tehran on Tuesday for talks with Araghchi and other senior officials on a range of topics including bilateral relations, regional developments and the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major powers. During Trump's first term, which ended in 2021, Washington withdrew from the landmark deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), that had imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.

Potential for diplomacy still exists: Lavrov

Lavrov said he was sure that diplomatic measures were still on the table when it came to resolving issues around Iran's nuclear program.

"We discussed the JCPOA status in detail and believe that the po-

tential for diplomacy still exists and should be used effectively, without threats and bullying. Russia hopes for this and will help find solutions. This crisis was not created by Iran," Lavrov said. On Monday, Iran held a new round of talks with Germany, France and Britain about its nuclear program after reviving engagement with the trio, known as the E3, late last year.

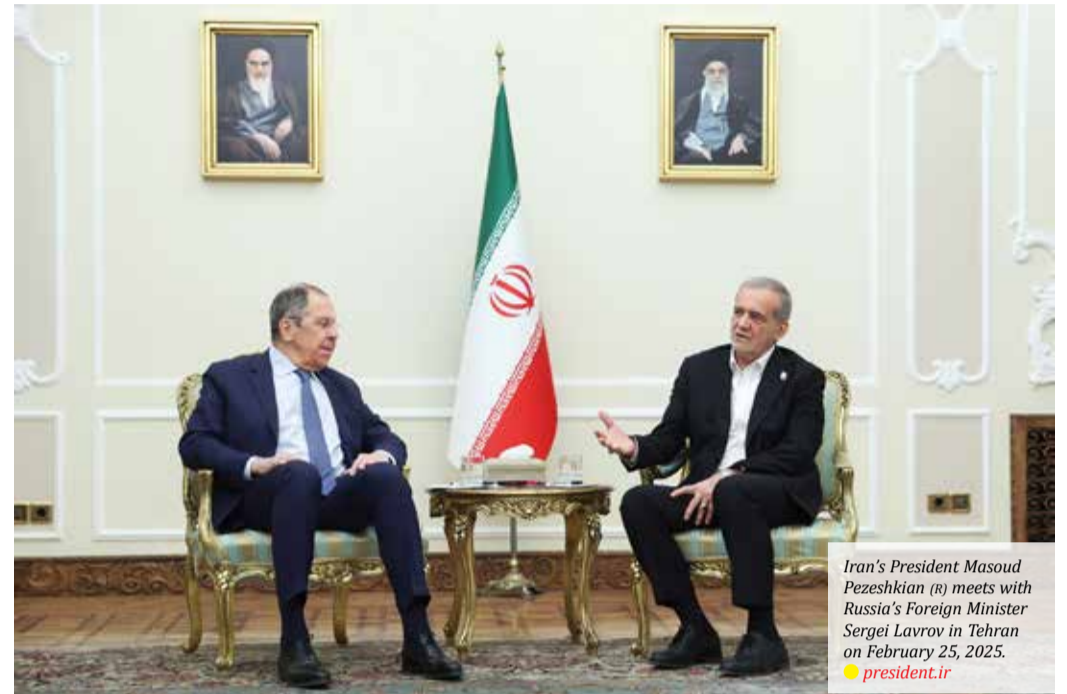
Araghchi said he had briefed Lavrov about the latest discussions. "On the nuclear issue, we will move forward with the cooperation and coordination of our friends in Russia and China," he added.

Lavrov's visit came one week after he met with his US counterpart Marco Rubio in Saudi Arabia to discuss the war in Ukraine.

On Monday, the United States sided with Russia in two votes in New York, signaling a seismic shift as Trump stakes out a drastically new position on Ukraine.

Implementation of agreements

Also on Tuesday, the Russian foreign minister held a separate meeting with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian.



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Tehran on February 25, 2025. president.ir

During the meeting, Pezeshkian hailed growing bilateral relations between Tehran and Moscow and underlined the acceleration of implementing the agreements reached between the two countries, especially the strategic comprehensive partnership

agreement recently signed by Tehran and Moscow. Pezeshkian said that Iran is determined to strengthen its relations with Russia. The president added that the two countries have close views on regional issues.

He stressed that Iran and Russia are strengthening their international cooperation through bilateral relations as well as regional and international organizations such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Union, and BRICS.

Army's Zolfaghar 1403 military drills end in southern waters

National Desk

Iran's Army joint military drills, codenamed Zolfaghar 1403, ended with a naval parade in the country's southern waters.

The military exercises started on Saturday in an area along the strategic Makoran coastline in the southern part of the country, the Sea of Oman, and the northern tip of the Indian Ocean, extending up to the 10-degree latitude. Commander of the Iranian Army's Air Defense Force Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard said on Tuesday that Army's forces successfully practiced countering possible enemy infiltration.

Various infantry, armored and mechanized units,

air defense systems, unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), unmanned surface vessels (USVs) as well as air force strategic bombers for logistical support participated in the military maneuver.

Organized under the theme "Stable Security under the Shadow of Self-Reliance, Unity, and Power," the exercise tested an array of military capabilities.

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, deputy chief of the Army for Coordination, and the commander of the joint drill, said on Saturday that the primary goal of the exercise is to enhance the defensive and deterrence capabilities of the Iranian Armed Forces in the face of potential aerial, ground and naval threats.



The senior military commander noted that the massive exercise also serves as a testing ground for the new tactics that are drawn up and employed by young personnel of the Iranian Army.

New generations of domestically-developed arms, indigenous smart munitions, and homegrown weapons equipped with pinpoint accuracy systems, in addition

to a wide array of missiles, were tested during the three-day military drill.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Aerospace Force also joined the drill on Tuesday.

During a joint missile operation, the Iranian Navy and the IRGC Aerospace Force hit naval targets in the northern parts of the Indian Ocean.

The Navy and the IRGC forces launched various ballistic and naval cruise missiles to detonate and sink a naval target.

Iranian military forces hold routine exercises according to a detailed schedule in various parts of the country in order to test their weaponry and equipment and evaluate their combat preparedness.

In recent weeks, Iran has conducted military exercises across the country, including near nuclear facilities in the west and center of the country.

The country's officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities and that Iran's defense capabilities will never be subject to negotiations.

President: Iran cannot be sanctioned owing to numerous neighbors



Masoud Pezeshkian president.ir

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized that Iran cannot be subjected to sanctions due to its long borders with numerous neighbors. Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting with several lawmakers after the United States announced a new set of sanctions against Iran. Since taking office for the second term on January 20, US President Donald Trump has restored his so-called "maximum pressure" policy against Iran.

The US has so far imposed two rounds of sanctions targeting Iran's oil supply chain.

On Monday, the US Treasury Scott Bessent announced sanctions against more than 30 Iran-linked people and vessels, including the head of the national oil company, for brokering the sale and shipment of Iranian oil.

"The United States will use all our available tools to target all aspects of Iran's oil supply chain, and anyone who deals in Iranian oil exposes

themselves to significant sanctions risk," he added.

The new sanctions came after the US State Department imposed sanctioned on several entities and individuals in China, India and the UAE for their links to Iran's oil sale on February 6.

Trump has issued a presidential memorandum which calls for the US to "drive Iran's export of oil to zero." At the time of the memo's signing in February, Trump said that "hopefully we're not going to have to use it very much."

"We will see whether or not we can arrange or work out a deal with Iran," the president said.

Iran's president said on Monday that his government's foreign policy strategy is dialogue, adding that the country's officials are currently negotiating with other countries, including neighbors and European countries, on various issues.

However, he said that, "We cannot negotiate with someone who openly threatens us and squeezes our throat."

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Roads minister says Iran's transit set record of 20m tons

National Desk

The minister of roads and urban development highlighted Iran's geopolitical and geostrategic position, stating that while some believe regional policies aim to bypass Iran, the country remains a key transit hub.

"We have not been sidelined, and transit connectivity remains one of our top priorities," said Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd on Tuesday during a meeting with the Council of Deputies at the national broadcasting agency, IRNA reported.

The minister emphasized the importance of establishing transit routes such as Rasht-Ashtar, Shalamchah-Basra, Sarakhs-Cheshmeh Sorayya, Sarakhs-Chabahar, and Zahedan, despite financial constraints. She recently attended international meetings in Switzerland, where she discussed the necessity of sustainable and green transportation with transport ministers from other countries. "It is natural to move toward clean and green transportation by shifting from gas to nuclear energy, and the world should grant us this opportunity," the minister added.

Record 20m tons in transit gained

Despite sanctions, Sadeq-Malvajerd noted that Iran has achieved a record 20 million tons in transit this year. "We must communicate to our neighbors that transport security and completing



IRNA

transit corridors are among our top priorities, and we are moving swiftly in this direction," she said. The minister also stressed the need to courageously combat corruption and uphold the rights of underserved communities, even if it comes at a cost. As a member of the current administration's cabinet, Sadeq-Malvajerd expressed openness to constructive criticism.

"We welcome constructive critiques and expect that our work is presented to the public as it is, without exaggeration or distortion," she said. She added that the ministry's responsibilities extend beyond road and housing construction to include wise land management and ensuring the welfare of citizens through supportive services. Sadeq-Malvajerd highlighted

the importance of transparency in her ministry's operations, stating that she has consistently opposed the manipulation of statistics. "Despite media backlash, I have always emphasized transparency in all inaugurations and programs," she said and underscored the significance of public judgment as the most important evaluation of the

ministry's activities.

Focus on justice-centered development

Sadeq-Malvajerd emphasized the importance of justice-centered development, particularly in transportation.

"For years, we have spoken about sustainable development. I hope that in the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, we can es-

tablish justice in various aspects, including flight equity, road construction, and railway lines," she said.

Despite sanctions impacting the transportation system and creating challenges, the minister stressed the need to ensure fairness in flight distribution, the number of passenger and freight trains, and road construction based on public needs.

NPC: Annual petchem output capacity nears 100m tons



IRNA

The CEO of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) announced that the production capacity of the petrochemical industry of Iran has reached approximately 100 million tons.

Hassan Abbaszadeh speaking at the specialized session of "The Future of the Petrochemical Industry" during the Third Petrotech Conference added that the petrochemical industry can accelerate its development by managing research, utilizing global knowledge and advanced technologies, and adopting innovative thinking and modern structures.

He noted that the production capacity of the petrochemical industry has reached approximately 100 million tons, with 60% of the output being dedicated to various base products such as meth-

anol, ammonia, ethylene, and other key products. Abbaszadeh acknowledged delays in the production of certain products like propylene but emphasized that completing the value chain for this critical product could enable the production of high-value-added goods, meeting domestic needs and allowing for exports. The deputy oil minister highlighted the goals set for completing the petrochemical industry's value chain, stating that development is achievable through the adoption of new technologies. He added that the Seventh Development Plan outlines the path for progress across various dimensions. Abbaszadeh pointed out that three petrochemical production complexes generate around 4,000 megawatts

of electricity, with surplus power fed into the national grid.

He also noted that the petrochemical industry uses only 4% of the country's produced gas as feedstock in its complexes.

Stressing the need for optimal use of oil and gas reserves, Abbaszadeh said the petrochemical industry can achieve production growth by diversifying its feedstock portfolio and leveraging modern technologies and renewable energy, in line with strategic planning. He emphasized the regulatory role of the NPC as a government representative, fostering collaboration, convergence, production growth, and balanced industry development.

Support for private sector

Mohammadreza Nematzadeh, former CEO of the NPC, highlighted the private sector's potential to contribute to the industry's development. He stated that supporting the private sector could drive transformation in the industry and the production of diverse products. Nematzadeh acknowledged current challenges in feedstock supply due to shortages but expressed confidence that with proper use of hy-

drocarbon resources, petrochemical companies should not face feedstock deficits for the next 50 years.

Parliamentary support for petchem development

Mostafa Nakhaei, a member of the Parliament's Energy Committee, discussed the legislature's supportive role for the petrochemical industry.

He noted that despite challenges such as sanctions, the industry is on a development path, and all available capacities should be utilized to support efforts to overcome these challenges.

Nakhaei emphasized the need to enhance global competitiveness, increase presence in international markets, and use advanced technologies to introduce higher-value-added products to global markets.

On the sidelines of the session, Nasser Noohjah, CEO of Petrochemical Research and Technology Company, and Gholamreza Jokar, CEO of Lorestan Petrochemical Company, also signed a cooperation agreement. The agreement focused on providing technical knowledge and designing process packages for the construction of polypropylene and high- and low-density polyethylene units.

Iran fetched over \$8b of foreign investment since August: Report



Iran's incumbent administration said that the amount of foreign investment attracted into the country since it came to office in August has exceeded \$8.2 billion.

A report by Tasnim News Agency said that projects in Iran's petroleum and energy sector were responsible for some \$5.5 billion worth of foreign investment between August and January.

It added that foreign investment in Iran's manufacturing sector had exceeded \$2 billion over the same period, adding that investors from other countries had also committed to some \$128 million worth of projects in Iran's agriculture and mining sectors, Press TV wrote. Foreign investment contracts approved for other sectors of the Iranian economy reached \$459 million over the six months to late January, the report said.

Investors from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were responsi-

ble for 64.9% of the foreign investment contracts signed and finalized in the past six months, said the report, adding that UAE investors would provide \$5.4 billion worth of funding to 35 projects in Iran based on the contracts.

The report said that Chinese investors had been approved for \$805 million worth of funding in 30 projects in Iran based on decisions adopted in the six months to late January, adding that investors from the Iranian diaspora would provide \$763 million worth of investment to 97 projects.

The report cited figures from the Organization for Investment & Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran which vets foreign investors seeking to contribute to projects in the country.

Iran has sought to relax its rules on foreign investment in recent years amid efforts to offset the impacts of foreign sanctions on its economy.

Embark on journey through history of Iran's tobacco industry

By Sadeq Dehqan & Leila Imeni
Staff writers

INTERVIEW INTERVIEW

Tobacco and cigarettes may appear to be straightforward subjects at first glance, but in Iran, they hold a historical, eventful, and even peculiar narrative. Those versed in Iran's history are likely familiar with the Tobacco Protest, a significant event that arose in opposition to the granting of the tobacco and cigarette trade monopoly to foreigners by Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831-1896 CE). This protest is renowned as the initial and most extensive movement against tyranny and colonialism in Iran.

The peak of this popular uprising came after Ayatollah Mirza Hassan Shirazi issued a historic fatwa (a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority), calling for a boycott of tobacco. This fatwa ultimately led to the annulment of the monopoly that had been bestowed upon the British for fifty years. The significance of this uprising underscores the economic implications of the issue and its impacts on the political and social spheres in Iran.

Tobacco and cigarettes were significant contributors to the livelihoods and incomes of the people during the Qajar and Pahlavi era in Iran. English historian Watson noted in the nineteenth century that during the rule of Mohammad Shah and Naser al-Din Shah, the population of Iran was estimated to be between five to 10 million, with around 200,000 individuals involved in the cultivation, purchase, and sale of tobacco. The cultivation and trade of tobacco and cigarettes in Iran thrived to the extent that a road named the Tobacco Road was established in the country, and specialized railway lines were constructed for their transportation. These factors collectively fueled the rapid expansion of the Iran Tobacco Company (ITC), recognized as the largest and oldest producer of cigarettes and tobacco in the Middle East.



ITC building

The building of this company, boasting a century-old history, was erected outside the old gate of Tehran, famously known as Qazvin Gate (now Qazvin Square). It remains intact, housing the company's ongoing production operations. Given the historical importance of tobacco and cigarettes in Iran, the Tobacco Museum was inaugurated within the premises in 2018. Its purpose is to curate a collection of relevant documents and antiquities.

Zahra Sheybani, the director of the museum, offered some insights to Iran Daily regarding the founding of the museum and the items on display.

She said, "The idea of establishing the museum took shape in the early 2010s. We initially intended to collect several documents and objects that were in the hands of company personnel or various individuals. On the other hand, tobacco and cigarettes played an important role in various social, economic, and other aspects in Iran, for example, during the Qajar period, a large portion of agricultural lands was allocated to tobacco cultivation, and we even had special railway lines for the transportation of tobacco."

She noted that eventually, the museum was established, and currently, 3,000 documents collected since 1934, including some historical documents, the company's administrative correspondence, and files related to personnel and former company heads, are on display in this museum. Furthermore, 300 valuable antique items from the 1940s to the 1970s have been gathered in this museum.

The building of the company is listed as a national heritage. It was constructed in 1289 by the Czech company SKODA and was inaugurated in 1937 by Reza Khan, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty. His photo, along with his son Mohammad Reza, is present in the museum while as-

ending the stairs of this building and inaugurating it.

"However, the building is registered under a German name because at that time, Czechoslovakia was under German occupation. SKODA, a renowned construction company, also built the central building of Bank Melli Iran at the time. SKODA has undertaken numerous constructions worldwide, and many of the buildings they constructed share similar structures and architecture," she continued.

Scientific advancement

At the entrance of the museum, a frame containing photos and images of former company executives from the past to the present is installed in rows side by side.

Sheybani pointed to the image of the first managing director of the tobacco company Feridlib Solhdoost and explained that he was the one who first proposed the establishment of the tobacco company. Of Swiss origin, he was nicknamed 'Solhdoost' (meaning peace lover) by the company workers due to Switzerland's neutrality in World War II. This name stuck with him. The establishment of the company and the tobacco monopoly aimed to prevent currency outflow from the country.

"Solhdoost was tasked with inviting foreign experts for this purpose because, in Iran, tobacco cultivation had traditionally been done unscientifically and with low efficiency. Solhdoost hired a person named 'Athanas Zafiroplous,' who was the director of a tobacco research center in Greece, and he, along with 40 other experts, came to Iran in 1934," she added.

Zafiroplous was allowed to purchase land from farmers at any suitable location in the country for tobacco cultivation, on the condition that up to three generations of the original landowners could work on those lands. It was also stipulated that over time, Iranian experts would replace



Zahra Sheybani

The ITC building, boasting a century-old history, was erected outside the old gate of Tehran, famously known as Qazvin Gate (now Qazvin Square).



the foreign individuals. Based on this, Zafiroplous, in collaboration with the University of Karaj's College of Agriculture, hired graduates in the field of agriculture and selected an area near Galugah, in Mazandaran Province, called Tir Taash for tobacco research activities. This center continues to operate as the largest tobacco research center in the Middle East. Zafiroplous dedicated 42 years to the cultivation and production of tobacco in Iran, training numerous experts who are all regarded as prominent professors in this field. Sheybani pointed out that after the Islamic Revolution, it was decided that the foreign experts leave Iran, but all subsequent CEOs prevented Zafiroplous from leaving and stated that as long as his physical ability allowed, the tobacco industry needed his services. Finally, in 1980, he was diagnosed with cancer and was forced to leave Iran with his wife, but he passed away after a year. Documents that he wrote from abroad to Iranian banks to claim his wages are now available in the museum and are considered among the first documents in the Latinized Persian language in Iran.

Tobacco monopoly

Sheybani pointed to a picture of a man, in a corner of the museum, wearing a Qajari hat, forcefully inserting a large cigarette pack into his mouth. She explained that this act symbolized a protest against Reza Khan's decision to monopolize tobacco production by the government. Reza Khan had ordered the closure of private commercial workshops and brought cigarette production under government control. The image represented a protest against the closure of private workshops and the resulting unemployment of workers. However, the tobacco company later decided to hire workers from these private workshops. She added that even later, for many years, when someone retired, their offspring would be employed in their place. However, it has been seven or eight years since the monopoly was lifted. Before that, anyone who wanted to work in tobacco production had to operate under the company's license, affix the company hologram on their

products, and pay revenue for the hologram. This revenue helped the company provide social services to its personnel and others.

Social responsibilities

The museum's director emphasized the company's social responsibility towards citizens and said that there is almost no province where the tobacco company has not built a school, university, hospital, or clinic. Currently, Toton Karan Hospital in Rasht, which was built in the early 1970s, is considered one of the largest hospitals in Gilan. The company, especially in the northern regions of the country where there are many tea plantations, has established many welfare, educational, and medical facilities. From the very beginning of its establishment, the Iran Tobacco Company has felt a responsibility to provide social services to citizens. In the early days of its establishment, as the company was built in a location outside the city and surrounded by villages and agricultural fields near Qazvin Gate, the company acquired a coal projector and showed films to the staff and people in the area on certain days of the week. This coal projector is still available, but due to its large size, it has not been transferred to the museum yet. She said, "In line with its social responsibilities, the company established a sports club named Dokhania in the early days of its operation, and its teams excelled in various fields. The club introduced numerous pioneers, champions, and well-known figures to the country's sports scene, including the world champion wrestler Gholamreza Takhti. The tobacco company also possesses one of the oldest Zurkhaneh (traditional Iranian gymnasiums) in the country. It houses a historic metal bell that has been stolen twice but was recovered on both occasions." "Currently, the Tobacco Museum is open to the public on Sundays and Tuesdays. With permission from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, ITC has devised a plan to expand the museum. While the museum currently operates within the company premises, we plan to allocate a two-story building next to the company for this purpose," she concluded.



Feridlib Solhdoost



FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers:

Iran eases past Kazakhstan
in dead rubber to win group

Sports Desk

Iran marched to an 88-45 victory at Kazakhstan on Monday to clinch the top spot in Group E of the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup.

Sina Vahidi contributed with a game-high 20 points for Iran, plus 4 rebounds and assists apiece, while Matin Aqajanzadeh finished on 16 points, dropping half of the team's 8 three-pointers, as all players of Greek coach Sotirios Manolopoulos got on the scoresheet.

Mohammad Amini, the star of the show for Iran in Friday's victory over India, chipped in 13 points and 7 rebounds off the bench in a game that saw Team Melli shoot an excellent 55.1% from the floor, thanks to their 22 assists as a collective.

Iran finished the qualifiers with a 5-1 record after a clean sweep of double wins in the final window, with the three-time Asian champion's lone defeat coming against Qatar, and former Iran coach Hakan Demir, last November.

Elsewhere on Tuesday, Demir's charges outperformed India 81-61 at home, with a third successive win helping the Qataris finish

runner-up to Iran in the group with a 4-2 record.

American-born Tyler Harris starred in the victory with 24 points, nailing his first seven shots from the field without a miss.

Ndoye Seydou went an efficient 6-of-8 from the floor and ended up with 15 points, while the debuting Donte Grantham came through with 11 points, 6 rebounds, and 6 assists. The Indians will still fancy their chances of a place in the finals in Jeddah, after a third-place finish in the group table – courtesy of head-to-head advantage against Kazakhstan – sent them into the six-team Final Qualifying Tournament.

Joining Iran and Qatar in August's main event are host Saudi Arabia, as well as two-time reigning champion Australia, Japan, Philippines, New Zealand, Lebanon, Jordan, South Korea, Syria, and China – the most decorated team in the continent's flagship international event with 16 titles – with four spots remaining up for grabs.

Iran, a back-to-back champion in 2007 and 2009, will be chasing a first Asian crown since 2013, having finished third in 2015 before the final defeat against Australia in the 2017 edition.



Iranian players are pictured ahead of the game against Kazakhstan in the FIBA Asia Cup qualifiers in Oskemen, Kazakhstan, on Feb. 24, 2025.



FIBA

ITTF Table Tennis World Ranking:
Iran's Faraji up by 20 spots,
sits seventh in U19 class

Sports Desk

Iranian table tennis prodigy Benyamin Faraji enjoyed a 20-spot jump to stand 166th in the latest ITTF World Ranking – released on Tuesday.

The remarkable rise came after the Iranian wunderkind, a world under-15 bronze medalist last year, walked away with the runner-up trophy at the WTT Youth Contender event in Cappadocia, Turkey, earlier in the month – courtesy of a 3-2 defeat against

the host's Gorkem Ocal.

Faraji, 17, still dropped by one place to sit 15th in the under-19 age class of the World Youth Ranking, while retaining the seventh place in the under-17 category with 4700 points.

Meanwhile, Noshad Alamiyan remained the highest-ranked Iranian in the men's standings, with a two-spot drop leaving him 55th. Alamiyan had a disappointing run in last week's ITTF-ATTU Asian Cup in Shenzhen, China, as defeats against Chinese world

No. 2 Wang Chuqin and Yukiya Uda of Japan, either side of a victory over Qatari Ahmed Korani, saw the Iranian crash out in the group stage.

Navid Shams is the second best among the Iranian men, standing 160th in the ranking, while Alamiyan's younger brother, Nima, stood in the 204th place. Nima Alamiyan also suffered three defeats against opponents from China, Japan, and South Korea to finish bottom in the group in Shenzhen.

Galatasaray accuse Mourinho of making 'racist statements'

BBC – Galatasaray said they would "initiate criminal proceedings" against Fenerbahçe manager Jose Mourinho after claiming he made "racist statements" following the teams' 0-0 draw on Monday.

It was not clear which statements Galatasaray were referring to. Speaking in the news conference after the Istanbul derby, Mourinho said the home bench had been "jumping like monkeys" and also repeated his criticism of Turkish referees, saying it would have been a "disaster" to use an official from the country.

Monday's match was refereed by Slovenian Slavko Vincic after both clubs requested a foreign official take charge of the fixture.

As well as the threat of legal action, Galatasaray said they would submit "official complaints" to football's governing bodies.

After the game Mourinho was asked about the performance of 19-year-old defender Yusuf Ak-

cicek and said: "I have to thank the referee. After the big dive in the first minute and their bench jumping like monkeys on the top of the kid... with a Turkish referee you would have a yellow card after one minute and after five minutes I would have to change him."

He added: "I went to the referee's dressing room after the game, of course the fourth official was there, a Turkish referee. I told him 'thank you for coming here, you come for a big match' and I turned myself to the fourth official and I said 'if you were a referee this match would be a disaster'."

In a statement, Galatasaray said: "Since the commencement of his managerial duties in Turkey, Fenerbahçe manager Jose Mourinho has persistently issued derogatory statements directed towards the Turkish people. Today, his discourse has escalated beyond merely immoral comments into unequivocally inhumane rhetoric.

"We hereby formally declare our intention to initiate criminal proceedings concerning the racist statements made by Jose Mourinho, and shall accordingly submit official complaints to UEFA and FIFA.

"Furthermore, we shall diligently observe the stance adopted by Fenerbahçe - an institution professing to uphold 'exemplary moral values' - in response to the reprehensible conduct exhibited by their manager."

Two-time Champions League winner Mourinho, 62, was appointed Fenerbahçe manager last summer and was banned and fined earlier this season for condemning refereeing standards in Turkey.

Before Monday's game he had welcomed the decision to use a foreign official after previously describing the environment in the country as "toxic".

"I think it's important for the credibility, for the image of the match," Mourinho said.



Enigmatic history of Takht-e Soleyman



IRNA



IRNA



ISNA

Iranica Desk

One of the most prominent and distinguished historical sites in the tourism sector of West Azarbaijan Province is Takab, which, with its UNESCO World Heritage Site designation and 155 nationally registered monuments, is considered one of the ancient, civilized, and historical counties of our country. This civilization harbors many unknown secrets of the past as part of its heritage.

Takab boasts favorable climatic conditions and mild mountainous weather during the warm seasons, featuring beautiful mountains, waterfalls, fruit orchards, meadows, hot springs, and unique historical sites — a collection of natural and historical attractions that have remained relatively unknown until now. This city has been home to many inhabitants, including the Medes, Achaemenids, Parthians, Sassanids, and Mongols, flourishing during all these eras at the height of prosperity and power, IRNA wrote.

Takht-e Soleyman, located in Takab in the south of West Azarbaijan Province, is one of Iran's important historical attractions, recognized as both a national heritage site and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This historical site is situated in a lush valley and is a must-see destination in Takab.

The history of Takht-e Soleyman dates back 3,000 years, representing a masterpiece of human



roozgeram.com



roozgeram.com

ingenuity and creativity, showcasing the exchange of human values. It was one of the largest educational and training centers during the Sassanid era. After Takht-e Jamshid, Chogha Zanbil, and Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Takht-e Soleyman is considered the fourth Iranian site on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The waters of Lake Takht-e Soleyman bubble up from a spring located 120 meters deep within the earth. This ancient lake, with thousands of years of history, can rejuvenate the spirit and body of its visitors. According to some beliefs, the Prison of Solomon was a place where demons were imprisoned by Prophet Solomon (PBUH). This conical mountain, rising 97 to 107 meters above the surrounding terrain, was formed over a thousand years ago due to the sedimentation of minerals from the lake's water and contains a

cavity 80 meters deep within it. The historical buildings of Takht-e Soleyman are surrounded by an oval-shaped wall and enclosure (1120 meters long and featuring 38 towers). Inside this enclosure, there are two squares, with the Azargoshasp Fire Temple located at the center of the northern square and the lake at the center of the southern square.

Additionally, in the northwest of the lake, there stands a tall porch known as the Ivan-e Khosrow, likely built during the time of Khosrow I, famously known as Anushiravan. In the southwestern section outside Takht-e Soleyman, there is a stone channel that is about 1.5 to 2 meters high and 250 meters long.

The Anahita Temple, the corridors of Takht-e Soleyman, and the structures from the Ilkhanid period — including the southern gate, octagonal and

dodecagonal buildings, hunting palace, council hall, mosque, bathhouse, industrial workshops, and the pillared hall — are additional parts of Takht-e Soleyman.

Numerous legends and stories surround Takht-e Soleyman, the lake, and the Prison of Solomon. Interestingly, one of the names for Takht-e Soleyman is Shiz, and many historians consider this place to be the birthplace of Zoroaster. Some also believe that this grand city belonged to Prophet Solomon (PBUH) and that, at his command, superhuman forces were responsible for constructing the monumental buildings at Takht-e Soleyman. Takht-e Soleyman and its fire temple were built by Bahram Gur, one of the Sassanid kings, although the Sassanids played a significant role in its prosperity and development. This city was destroyed in 624 CE due to an

attack by the Roman Empire, and after the downfall of the Sassanid government, this vast complex never returned to its former glory.

During the Ilkhanid period, Takht-e Soleyman served as a summer and seasonal capital, and the remaining structures in the complex indicate that some additions were made during this era. After the fall of the Ilkhanid dynasty, Takht-e Soleyman was used as a village and seasonal marketplace, and during the Safavid period, this area became a summer residence for nomadic tribes.

Ultimately, the fate of this magnificent and extraordinary city was sealed 250 years ago when Takht-e Soleyman became permanently uninhabited, gradually giving rise to many legends about it. The archaeological site of Takht-e Soleyman was discovered in 1819 by Sir Robert

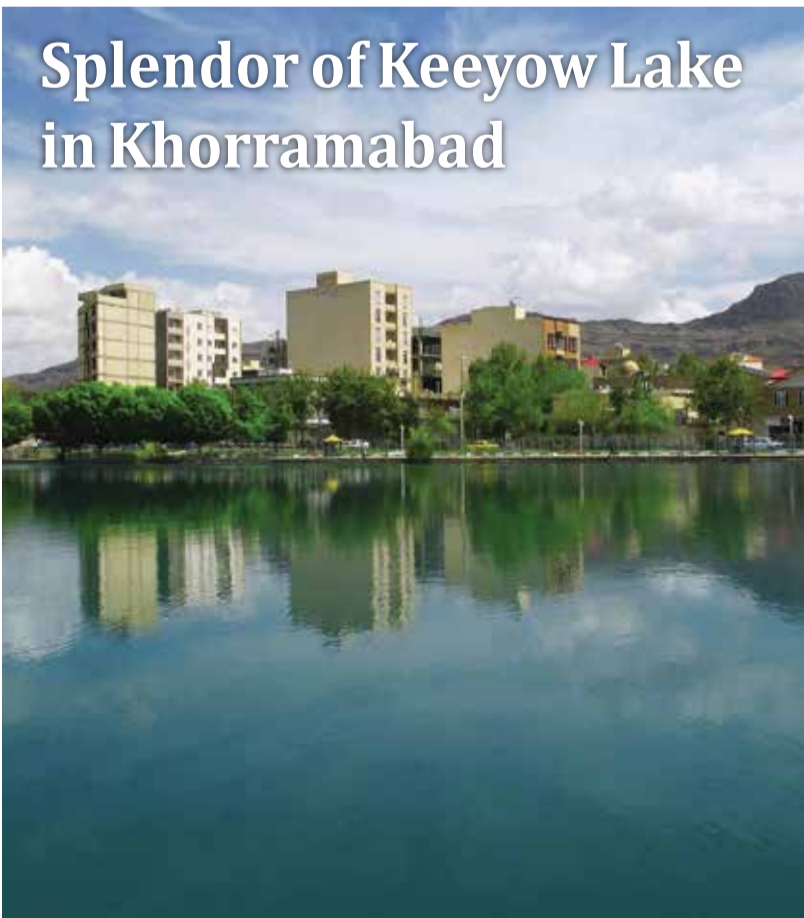
Ker Porter, and between 1958 and 1978, several seasons of excavation were conducted at this complex. No excavations were carried out at the site until 1993; however, Dresden University in Germany resumed excavations at Takht-e Soleyman in 2016 for a five-year period.

The Takht-e Soleyman complex is beautiful in every season of the year, showcasing its unique charms; nevertheless, most tourists choose to visit during spring and early summer when the weather is still pleasant, and the mountains and surrounding nature are lush and covered with beautiful plants and flowers.

Please note that the Takht-e Soleyman is illuminated at night; therefore, a nighttime stroll and photography will create a memorable experience for you. This year, approximately 70,000 domestic and foreign tourists visited the UNESCO World Heritage site of Takht-e Soleyman, representing a 10% increase compared to the same period last year. These tourists visited the archaeological and historical Takht-e Soleyman World Heritage Site, Mount Prison of Solomon, and the hot springs of Ahmabad separately.

Certainly, this level of visitation does not reflect the significance of such an important tourist destination and indicates that we have faced challenges in promoting its recognition on both national and international levels.

Splendor of Keeyow Lake in Khorramabad



Keeyow Lake is located in the northwest of Khorramabad, Lorestan Province. Covering an area of seven hectares, with depths ranging from three to seven meters, the lake is a vibrant ecological habitat. The water of this lake is supplied by the springs of Mahmel Kouh and Golestan, as well as from the springs of the lake bed. In the past, Keeyow was a seasonal lake, but the influx of Golestan Spring water, which flows through the historic Flak al-Aflak Castle, has transformed Keeyow Lake into a permanent body of water.

Adjacent to the lake is Keeyow Park, a popular spot for both locals and tourists. Within this area lies the Zagros Botanical Garden, established as a genetic repository for the preservation and study of the region's unique flora. Opened in 2016, the botanical garden spans twelve hectares on the west bank of Keeyow Lake and is divided into several sections, including areas dedicated to medicinal plants, wild and native fruits, a systematic garden, greenhouse, and nursery. This garden not



wikipedia.org

only serves a vital ecological purpose but also provides a serene environment for visitors who wish to learn about the diverse plant life of the Zagros Mountains.

The climate of Khorramabad significantly contributes to the allure of Keeyow Lake and its surrounding areas. The region experiences a temperate climate, characterized by mild, wet winters and warm, dry summers, which creates an ideal setting for outdoor activities throughout the year. The lush landscapes and diverse ecosystems thrive under these

climatic conditions, attracting nature enthusiasts, bird watchers, and families seeking recreational opportunities.

Khorramabad itself is rich in history and cultural heritage, with attractions such as Flak al-Aflak Castle — an ancient fortress that offers panoramic views of the city and its natural surroundings. The castle, along with Keeyow Lake and the botanical garden, makes Khorramabad a unique destination that blends natural beauty with historical significance. Visitors can explore hiking trails, enjoy picnics by

the lake, and immerse themselves in the enchanting landscapes, all while experiencing the hospitality and warmth of the local culture.

Among the wildlife inhabiting Keeyow Lake, various bird species can be observed, including egrets, pied kingfishers, pelicans, and storks. This rich biodiversity further enhances the lake's ecological importance and makes it a vital habitat for avian species, adding to the overall attraction of the area for nature lovers and bird watchers alike.

Tehran, St. Petersburg Orchestras stage ensemble performance

Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran Symphony Orchestra and the New Chamber St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra staged a joint ensemble playing at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on February 24. The concert, led by conductor Yaroslav Zaboynarkin, featured an impressive repertoire of classical music and works by Iranian composer Behzad Abdi, drawing attention from both Iranian and Russian music enthusiasts, IRNA reported. This performance was part of the 'Musical Bridge: Tehran-St. Petersburg' project, organized with the support of the Presidential Fund for Cultural Initiatives of Russia and in collaboration with the Rudaki Foundation. The program was graced by several prominent figures, including representatives from the Russian Embassy in Iran, Ahmad

Sadri, the head of the Music Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and Amir Abbas Setayeshgar, senior advisor to the Rudaki Foundation. The program included works by iconic composers such as Mikhail Glinka's 'Kamarinskaya' and 'Valse-fantaisie,' Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's 'Nocturne' and 'Variations on a Roco Theme' for cello, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 'Symphony No. 40,' and the moving 'Elegy' for cello by Behzad Abdi. These pieces highlighted the orchestra's smooth integration of Russian and Iranian musical traditions. The 52 musicians, split between 26 members of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and Russian musicians, showcased an extraordinary level of cohesion and coordination throughout the concert.

Special mention goes to Dmitry Ganenko, who performed a captivating cello solo and received standing ovations, leaving the stage three times in acknowledgment of the audience's appreciation. This collaboration was part of an ongoing exchange between the two nations, following an earlier performance in St. Petersburg, which featured Iranian string musicians alongside members of the Youth Symphony Orchestra of St. Petersburg. The Tehran Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1943 by Parviz Mahmoud, continues to thrive under the auspices of the Rudaki Foundation. The performance exemplified the power of music to unite cultures and demonstrated the impressive potential of international collaboration in the world of classical music.



● BORNA

Eleven natural sites in Isfahan join Iran's national heritage list

Arts & Culture Desk

The Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Isfahan Province announced on Tuesday that eleven natural sites in the region were officially listed as national heritage. Rouhollah Seyyed al-Asgari, the province's cultural heritage deputy, said that the Ponehzar Waterfall and the Durak Waterfall, along with the tulip fields in the Fereydunshahr County, have been included in the country's natural heritage register, IRNA reported. Plus, ancient mulberry trees located in the villages of Sarhang, Sardar Mesdaghi, and Haj Daneh in the Sarasiab region, Imamzadeh Badrud County of Natanz, as well as the botanical garden of the historical city of Kashan, have also been recognized as national natural heritage. The provincial official noted that the ancient plane



tree in Lanjan County, the old mulberry tree in Charamahin, and the plane tree in Najafabad of the historical city of Naein are among the other newly registered natural assets from Isfahan. With the national registration of these eleven natural sites, the total number of national natural heritage sites in Isfahan has now reached 60. According to IRNA, Isfahan Province is a major tourism hub in Iran, boasting over 22,000 historical sites (1,940 of which are registered nationally and 15 internationally), along with more than 600 historical houses and a variety of natural, cultural, religious, and recreational attractions.

9th Int'l Fajr Handicrafts Festival wraps up

Minister: Handicrafts promote cultural dialogue among nations

Arts & Culture Desk

The 9th International Fajr Handicrafts Festival, also known as Sarv-e Simin, concluded on February 24 at Tehran's Milad Tower, honoring the cultural heritage of Iran. The event saw the participation of prominent figures, including Reza Salehi Amiri, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts and Saad Al-Qaddumi, President of the World Crafts Council. A distinguished panel of 13 judges, both domestic and international, selected the winners from a competitive pool of 20 finalists, ILNA reported. Salehi Amiri stressed the significance of Iranian handicrafts, stating, "Handicrafts create a cultural dialogue among nations." This art form not only has economic potential but also serves to introduce the culture, art, and aesthetics of Iranians to the global stage, he added. He added, "This is a significant night for the large family of handicrafts, cultural heritage, and tourism," expressing gratitude for the presence of the Judiciary Chief and representatives from 20 different countries. The minister revealed that there are approximately 570,000 ac-

tive artisans in the handicrafts sector, many of whom are women. He emphasized that discussing handicrafts means discussing art, creativity, lifestyle, and cultural dialogue. He asserted, "Handicrafts should be exported beyond borders, as they have the potential to generate revenue surpassing that of oil, while simultaneously introducing the beauty and art of Iran to the world." The visibility of Iranian carpets abroad, for instance, showcases the artistry of Iranian women and craftsmen. Salehi Amiri also pointed out Iran's vast tourism potential, stating, "Iran has one of the largest tourism capacities in the world." He noted the country's diverse tourism offerings, from historical and cultural to natural and therapeutic, encouraging those who visit to take advantage of this variety. He criticized the negative portrayals in some foreign media, urging them to showcase the beauty and security of Iran, stating, "Our youth can dispel the dark cloud of Iranophobia with appropriate content creation." The minister addressed ongoing tourism projects, revealing that there are currently 18,043 active accommodations and over 2,700 tourism projects under

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri addresses the audience during the closing ceremony of the 9th International Fajr Handicrafts Festival, at Tehran's Milad Tower on February 24, 2025.



development. He affirmed that even during the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism projects continued, driven by the passion of those in the industry.

Iran's rich artistic heritage inspiring

The event also featured remarks from Saad Al-Qaddumi, President of the World Crafts Council (WCC), who expressed deep affection for Iran, stating, "Iran has always held a special place in my heart, just as it has in my mother's." He praised Iran's commitment to preserving its rich cultural heritage and highlighted the selection of 16 cities and villages as global handicraft locations as an evidence to the diversity and richness of Iranian arts.

Al-Qaddumi described the festival as a unique opportunity for participants to come together, share ideas, and honor the invaluable worth of traditional handicrafts. He expressed gratitude to all those who contributed to the event's success and emphasized the festival's role in enhancing connections between Iranian artists and the international handicraft community. As the festival drew to a close, Al-Qaddumi underscored the importance of preserving and promoting cultural traditions, encouraging participants to continue fostering the relationships formed during the event. He expressed hope that the connections established would lead to new collaborative opportunities in the future.

General Tender for Rexroth Permanent Magnet Motor
 Saipa Wheel Manufacturing Company intends to purchase 1 Rexroth Permanent Magnet Motor. Interested companies are requested to offer their quote based on the specifications mentioned in the attached file on: www.kswco.com. Please receive the tender form and send your PI to commercial2@kswco.com by March 03 2025. Please write Tender No 031195 in email subject.
 For further information please contact Mr. Zanganeh: +989123162409