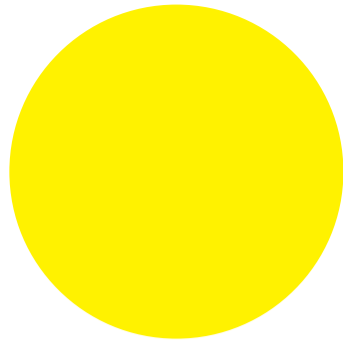


President calls for unity among Islamic nations as Ramadan begins

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) speaks with Economy Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati at the Parliament on March 2, 2025 in Tehran during a session in which lawmakers impeached the latter. FARS

EU-US rift; an opportunity for Iran

By Gholamreza Mansouri
Political science expert

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

The heated meeting between Zelensky and Trump on February 31 in Washington has made important points for political observers. Of course, many of them believed that the new Trump presidency would be a shock to the world. But the most important issue is the depth and stubbornness of Trump in announcing his administration's policies and trying to implement them. As for Ukraine, experts have already stated that Trump will face difficulties as a businessman. He is very eager to acquire minerals and rare discovered materials from Ukraine instead of financial assistance provided by the United States. Before explaining the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, it is worth reviewing some of the main aspects of Trump's approach to global and regional problems. First, one should understand the moral point that

Trump is not adhering to any of the commitments made by the previous Biden administration. The second aspect of Trump's approach is his unwillingness to fulfill America's global mission to uphold universal values such as liberalism, democracy, etc. The third issue is the preference of America's immediate needs over long-term needs, especially in economic matters. In response, Europeans got the message and reacted to the heated Zelensky-Trump meeting. As the New York Times reported: European leaders quickly extended their support for Ukraine on Friday after President Trump sharply criticized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during a White House meeting. Leaders rallied behind Ukraine and praised its embattled president, with statements coming one after the other from France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Norway, Finland, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Belgium, Lithuania. The leaders of Canada, Australia and New Zealand added their voices to Europe.

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Iran could gain from Russian support in JCPOA negotiations

Moscow opposes new military conflict in region

INTERVIEW In an interview, Mahmoud Shouri, a political analyst, breaks down the tangled web of international relations, especially the shifting dynamics between Russia, the US and Iran. He digs into the complexities of these interactions, pointing out how the thaw in US-Russia ties could affect Iran's position on the world stage. Shouri brushes aside the pessimistic views, suggesting instead that Russia's current focus might just line up with Iran's interests, particularly regarding nuclear talks. As tensions with Europe bubble beneath the surface, he sheds light on how Russia's game plan could shape Iran's future. The interview uncovers the behind-the-scenes maneuvering of global powers and their impact on Iran's path forward.

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Pezeshkian urges solidarity amid full-scale economic war with 'enemy'

International Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian called for further unity and solidarity among government sectors as he underlined on Sunday that the Islamic Republic is in a full-scale economic war with "the enemy," and pointing the finger of blame at "one person" would not address the country's economic woes.

Pezeshkian made the remarks in an address to the Parliament where he defended his Finance Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati who was sacked by Iranian lawmakers on the same day after impeaching him over soaring inflation and a plunging national currency value.

"We are in a full-scale (economic) war with the enemy... we must take a war formation," Pezeshkian said. "The economic problems of today's society are not related to one person and we cannot blame it all on one person."

On the black market on Sunday, the Iranian rial was trading at

more than 920,000 to the US dollar, compared with less than 600,000 in mid-2024.

Pezeshkian took office in July with the aim of reviving the economy and ending decades of Western-imposed sanctions which have battered Iran's economy, with double-digit inflation causing an increase in consumer prices since Washington unilaterally pulled out of a landmark 2015 nuclear deal in 2018.

The deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, provided for an easing of sanctions and the return of Western investment to Iran in return for limits on the country's nuclear activities.

US President Donald Trump, who returned to the White House in January, has revived his policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran, further tightening restrictions on the Islamic republic but at the same time calling for talks.

Nevertheless, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah

Seyyed Ali Khamenei, later rejected the idea of negotiations with the US altogether, saying that experience has proven that talks with US are "not smart, wise, or honorable".

"I personally believe in dialogue, and I will continue to do so," said Pezeshkian during the impeachment session.

"However, we will stand by the position the supreme leader has taken regarding America until the end, and we will not do anything else."

Listing a series of problems facing the country after his inauguration in July, including Israel's assassination of Hamas' leader in Tehran, war in Gaza and Lebanon, the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria as well as US' maximum pressure on Iran, Pezeshkian said these problems have been added to the country's woes during the last months.

"Today, some countries, such as Qatar, Iraq, and Turkey, have blockaded a large amount of our assets, and it is not possible to



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses members of Parliament in Tehran on March 2, 2025, during impeachment proceedings against the country's finance minister. [president.ir](#)

transfer them into the country," the president said.

He also said the country's oil and gas tankers are left on the seas after the US imposed new

sanctions on Iran. The president noted that the enemy is systematically putting pressure on the country's trade and economy. However, he said that, "We must

be vigilant," and not allow the enemies' policies to affect the country's internal affairs. He also called for unity and solidarity to overcome the problems.

Leader's X page reposts 2022 warning to Ukraine about US policy shift

International Desk

The official website of the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution reposted a 2022 comment by him, in which Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei had warned against relying on the West, especially the United States, and urged countries to learn a lesson from the situation in Ukraine.

Ayatollah Khamenei had said in the post that the first lesson to be learnt is that the support of Western powers for their puppet countries and governments is a mirage and a delusion.

The Leader said this is a fact that every government should know.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that the governments that are leaning on the US and Europe should look at what is happening to Ukraine today and what happened to Afghanistan yesterday.

Since taking office in January, the US President Donald Trump, whose country has been the main supporter of Ukraine in its war against Russian, has been trying to force Kiev to sign a minerals deal with Washington in exchange for the US military support. The Leader's message was reposted



US President Donald Trump (R) and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky meet in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, on February 28, 2025. [SAUL LOEB/AFP](#)

days after a fiery exchange between the Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and his American counterpart Donald Trump at the White House.

The US relationship with Ukraine erupted in a storm of acrimony on Friday as Trump and Vice President JD Vance berated Zelensky in an explosive televised Oval Office showdown and abruptly cut short a visit meant to coordinate a plan for peace. In a fiery public confrontation unlike any seen between an American president and foreign leader in modern times, Trump and Vance castigat-

ed Zelensky for not being grateful enough for US support in Ukraine's war with Russia, and sought to strong-arm him into making a peace deal on whatever terms the Americans dictated.

With his voice raised and temper flaring, Trump threatened to abandon Ukraine altogether if Zelensky did not go along. After journalists left the Oval Office, Trump canceled the rest of the visit, including a planned joint news conference and signing ceremony for a deal on rare minerals, and US officials told the Ukrainians to leave.

Resistance groups: Israel bears responsibility for 'sabotaging' cease-fire

International Desk

Palestinian resistance groups said Sunday that Israel "bears responsibility" for the fate of captives held in the Gaza Strip and the fate of the cease-fire deal after it suspended the entry of humanitarian aid over a dispute on extending the agreement. "The occupation (Israel) bears responsibility for the consequences of its decision on the population of the (Gaza) Strip and for the fate of its prisoners" held by Hamas or other armed groups, Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said in a statement. The Islamic Jihad resistance group also said Israel bore responsibility for "sabotaging" the cease-fire in Gaza.

"We, in the Islamic Jihad Movement and the resistance factions, reaffirm our commitment to the cease-fire based on the three phases, and we will continue to abide by what was agreed upon," the group said in a statement. "The occupation is the one responsible for the consequences of sabotaging this."

On Sunday, Israel stopped the entry of all humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip and reneged on the truce after the first phase of the cease-fire deal ended without agreement on continuing into a second phase.

Earlier, Israel announced it would adopt a US-backed proposal for the extension of the cease-fire in Gaza throughout Ramadan and Passover, in exchange for the



[AFP](#)

release of half of the remaining captives in the Palestinian territory.

"Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided that, from this morning, all entry of goods and supplies into the Gaza Strip will be suspended," his office said in a statement.

"If Hamas persists with its refusal, there will be other consequences," it added. Hamas has repeatedly rejected extending the first phase, instead insisting on moving directly to the second stage.

This would involve the release of all remaining hostages and a more permanent end to the fighting in Gaza.

Hamas slammed the Israel's move, saying that the "decision to suspend humanitarian aid is cheap blackmail, a war crime and a blatant coup against the (cease-fire) agreement".

Meanwhile, Gaza's civil defense agency reported "artillery shelling and gunfire from Israeli tanks" east of Khan Yunis city in the southern Gaza Strip.

EU-US rift ...

French President Emmanuel Macron reiterated his support for Ukraine and emphasized

Russia's role as the aggressor. Not only European politicians, but many experts are declaring the deep rift that Trump is creating in transatlantic relations.

Unlike all Europeans, Trump does not feel any threat from Russia, but the European Union feels it every day and every second. Because of Trump's preference for economic rather than political conditions, the EU is itself a competitor to the US. In this case, the more the fight in the EU, the more benefits it will bring to America.

So, the Zelensky-Trump meeting has revealed Trump's main goals in international relations, and the EU is

not happy about that. So time is the most important competitor for the EU during the Trump administration. An important point that concerns Iran in this regard is the gap between the EU and the US. This is an opportunity for Iran to strengthen its relations with the EU. Due to the gap between the EU and the US, as well as Russia, the demand for Iranian energy will increase, and Iran can play a big role in this regard. Another important issue is the need for the EU to find Iran neutral in the Ukrainian conflict. An issue that is possible for Iran and Tehran can help the bloc is providing energy and security at the same time.

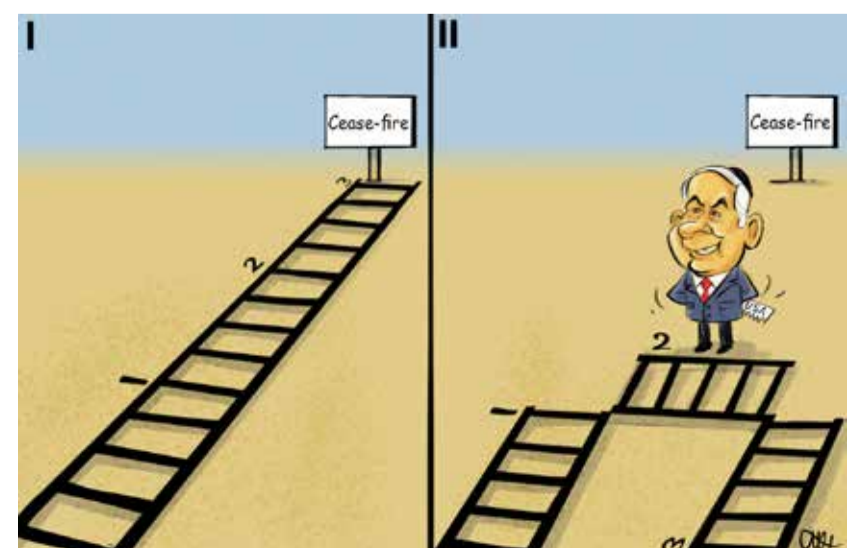
On the other hand, the comprehensive Iran-Russia agreement will stop the threat against Iran if Russia ad-

heres to its commitments. By maintaining this balance, Iran can gain its national interests. Subsequently, due to the EU's focus on Russia instead of Iran, Israeli pressure on Iran will decrease. And this situation will create a new opportunity for Iran to start a new era of diplomacy with the world and its neighbors.

The EU needs Iran's energy and assistance to make the union more secure. Both missions are available for Iran to offer to the EU. This is a new opportunity for both sides. The EU distances itself from Trump, and so does Iran. This common demand could be the beginning of a deep and long-term chapter of cooperation between the two sides. If Iran fails to use this opportunity, regional rivals will benefit from it.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Parliament ousts Economy Minister Hemmati in no-confidence vote

Economy Desk

Abdolnaser Hemmati failed to secure a vote of confidence from Parliament on Sunday, which led to his removal from office as the economy minister.

The motion to impeach Hemmati was approved by 182 out of 273 lawmakers, with 89 votes against, one abstention, and one invalid vote.

Under Article 135 of Iran's Constitution, ministers remain in their posts until they are formally dismissed or Parliament withdraws its confidence through impeachment or a vote of no confidence.

President Masoud Pezeshkian defended Hemmati during the session, stating, "It is not the case that one person can make decisions and expect everyone to follow them. The economy is a complex system dependent on various factors. There have been mistakes in some actions and perspectives, but we must address them with a realistic approach." He also warned of external pressures on Iran's economy, urging unity and informed decision-making to counter these challenges.

Hemmati's defense

During the public session of Parliament, Hemmati defended his tenure, highlighting achievements such as a 40% growth in the stock market and a 25% increase in non-oil exports over the past five months.

He referenced his recent trip to Saudi Arabia, where officials questioned how Iran had endured seven years of sanctions. Hemmati attributed this resilience to the Iranian people, though he acknowledged the hardships they face, including 10 million people falling below the poverty line during this period. Hemmati welcomed the impeachment

process, calling it a right of Parliament and an opportunity to strengthen solidarity in the face of domestic and external challenges.

He emphasized his commitment to accountability, stating, "I do not shy away from economic questions. All members of the government are obligated to answer to the people."

Economic achievements, challenges

Hemmati noted a recent decline in inflation, from 42% last year to 32% by the end of the eleventh Iranian calendar month (February 18). While acknowledging that 32% remains high, he compared it favorably to previous years when inflation reached 55% and 45%. He attributed long-term inflation to liquidity growth outpacing production, a legacy issue that persists.

He also highlighted efforts to address budget deficits, including raising 850 trillion rials in the past five months through bond sales and privatization initiatives and stressed that the Ministry of Economy had funded 80% of the national budget, ensuring timely salary payments.

Hemmati pointed to a 25% growth in non-oil exports, with significant increases in exports to regional markets (37%) and Eurasia (27%). Specific sectors, such as pistachios (147% growth) and petrochemicals (47% growth), showed strong performance. He also noted a 17% recovery in saffron exports, which had previously declined.

Arguments, counterarguments

Critics, including lawmaker Qassem Ravanshakh, argued that the impeachment was necessary due to Hemmati's perceived failures.

Ravanshakh expressed hope that



Ousted economy minister Abdolnaser Hemmati walks to the Parliament podium to deliver his speech on March 2, 2025. president.ir

Pezeshkian would appoint a more capable minister and that Parliament would exercise greater oversight.

However, opponents of the impeachment, such as lawmaker Mohammad Movahed, warned that removing Hemmati would further destabilize the economy.

Movahed emphasized the need for rational decision-making and leveraging domestic production capacities amid

international challenges.

Hemmati concluded his defense by vowing to continue managing the country's economic challenges, particularly in the face of US sanctions. He called for unity and cooperation to navigate the difficult road ahead, describing the coming year as critical for Iran's international and political developments.

The gold and currency markets reacted positively to the impeachment, with

prices declining.

The exchange rate of US dollar witnessed a one-percent drop following the removal of Hemmati as gold selling price registered a 0.3 percent drop.

Ahmad Naderi, a member of Parliament's presiding board, stated that the president has up to three months to nominate a new economy minister. Until then, the ministry will be led by a caretaker appointed by the president.

Lufthansa resumes flights to Tehran after short respite



The Lufthansa LH 600 Flight landed at the Imam Khomeini International Airport on Saturday night, marking the resumption of the airline's services to Tehran after a period of suspension.

Saeid Chalandari, the chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO of Imam Khomeini Airport City Co., said earlier that both Lufthansa Group and Austrian Airlines decided to resume flights to Imam Khomeini International Airport, IRNA reported.

The Office of Communications, Information and International Affairs of Imam Khomeini Airport City announced that the Lufthansa LH 600 Flight from Frankfurt arrived at Imam Khomeini International Airport at 10:29 PM on Saturday, signaling the return of the airline to Tehran.

Flights between Iran and Europe were suspended in mid-October 2024 after the EU imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic over allegations that it had sent drones to Russia for use in the Ukraine war. Iran vehemently denied the allegations.

Iran, Australia resolved to boost trade in non-sanctioned sectors

Economy Desk

During a meeting between the head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce and the Australian ambassador to Tehran on Sunday, both sides emphasized the expansion of cooperation in the trade of non-sanctioned goods and exploration of alternative financial methods.

Samad Hassanzadeh, head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, stated that while sanctions have hindered the development of trade relations between Iran and Australia, there are ways to overcome these challenges, according to otaghiranonline.ir.

In a meeting with Ian McConville, Australia's ambassador to Iran, Hassanzadeh noted that alternative financial mechanisms could be utilized, provided both sides reach an agreement. He added that the Australian Embassy could play a significant role in facilitating this process.

Hassanzadeh stressed the importance of continuous communication between the Australian ambassador, trade

counselors, and the Iran Chamber of Commerce.

He highlighted Iran's strong potential for trade collaboration in various sectors, including food products, construction materials, medical supplies and dried fruits, which are competitive in the Australian market due to their high quality and affordability.

He further emphasized Iran's capabilities in high-standard production industries such as casting, automotive parts, textile machinery, industrial equipment and engineering services, including the construction of power plants, dams, bridges, refineries and petrochemical facilities.

Hassanzadeh also pointed to Iran's potential in tourism, suggesting visits to cities like Shiraz, Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashhad, Kerman, and Yazd to explore opportunities for bilateral cooperation. He expressed hope that the Australian Embassy would take steps to facilitate trade relations between the two countries.

Banking-related bans as major obstacle to ties

Ian McConville, Australia's



Head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce Samad Hassanzadeh (R) discusses expansion of economic ties with Australian ambassador to Iran Ian McConville (L) on March 2, 2025 in Tehran. otaghiranonline.ir

lia's ambassador to Iran, expressed his country's interest in deepening relations and cooperation, particularly through the Iran Chamber of Commerce and joint chambers.

He pointed to his visits to various Iranian cities, including Shiraz, Yazd, Isfahan and Kashan, and noted that Iranian carpets have always left a strong impression. McConville stated that he is eager to meet with heads of chambers of commerce across Iran. He acknowledged the current reasonable level of bilateral trade relations between the two countries but stressed the need to increase cooperation in non-san-

tioned sectors. He highlighted that significant quantities of Australian meat are exported to Iran, while non-sanctioned Iranian goods are imported into Australia, and these trade ties should be further developed.

The ambassador termed banking-related sanctions as a major challenge to expanding trade relations, noting that these restrictions hinder cooperation. He expressed hope that ongoing communication and dialogue could help overcome these limitations.

In conclusion, Hassanzadeh reiterated that no country can progress under isolation and re-

striction and emphasized that Iranian officials are committed to fostering international relations with all countries under the principles of peace and security, and are working to establish stronger global ties.

He called on other nations to stand against discrimination and unreasonable pressures and to contribute to greater international cooperation.

Iran could gain from Russian support in JCPOA negotiations

Moscow opposes new military conflict in region

INTERVIEW

The impact of Russia's involvement in the negotiations surrounding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is advantageous for Iran. Additionally, Moscow is firmly against the prospect of a new military conflict in the region.

The influence of Russia in the negotiations surrounding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) appears to be beneficial for Iran, particularly in light of the current geopolitical landscape. The deputy of the Institute for Iran and Eurasia Studies (IERAS) highlighted that, historically, there may have been concerns regarding whether Russia's policies aligned with Iran's interests, raising the possibility that Russia could have pursued a different trajectory in nuclear negotiations. However, he stated, "now that the nuclear agreement (JCPOA) has been signed and the only remaining issue is the restoration of its implementation, it seems that Russia cannot play a seriously negative role in advancing the negotiations."

On Tuesday, Sergey Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, arrived in Iran as part of his regional diplomatic tour after visiting Turkey. Although this visit was framed within a regional diplomatic context, its relative timing with the meeting between the foreign ministers of Russia and the United States in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, as well as the telephone conversation between the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the US President Donald Trump has raised questions about Lavrov's mission in Tehran.



Mahmoud Shouri

IRNA conducted an interview with Mahmoud Shouri, the deputy of the IERAS and a senior analyst on Russian affairs on Lavrov's readiness to assist in resolving Iran's nuclear file through diplomacy, combined with the differing perspectives in Iran regarding Russia's role over the years:

Lavrov stated in a press conference with his Iranian counterpart that, in light of the existing maximum pressure on Iran, it is not negotiating, asserting, "Russia believes that the window for diplomacy is still open, and Moscow is ready to play a role in this regard." Given the current tensions in the relationship between Russia and Europe, alongside Russia and the US working towards de-escalating their relationship, what role do you think Russia can play in this context? The reality is that the sit-

uation is exceedingly complex, and the influencing variables are changing constantly. As a result, analyzing the status and accurately determining the role of each actor and the prevailing conditions remains a challenging task. However, at present, we are confronted with the situation where Russia and the US are entering a process of normalizing their relations, attempting to resolve some of their past differences. In this process, it is natural that various issues and topics will be discussed and reviewed, and Iran's situation is likely to be one of those subjects. Amidst this, there are concerns—particularly in Iran—where some believe that the dialogues between Russia and the US may negatively impact Iran's international standing and become a topic of interaction between the two countries. However, this perspec-

tion, in my opinion, is rather pessimistic. It is essential to recognize that Russia is currently striving to resolve one of its most significant challenges in recent years and to extricate itself from the difficult circumstances it has faced over the past three years. Therefore, as long as Moscow cannot re-establish itself as an influential player on the international stage and exert influence over other major powers like the US and Europe, it still has a long way to go. My assessment is that the discussions between Russia and the US will not have a significant impact on Iran's fate in the short term. Even if they do exert influence, it will not be negative in any way. Russia still faces numerous obstacles, and until it can resolve these issues, it will remain far from returning to a position where it can seriously influence global matters.

Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi emphasized after the second round of talks with the European Troika that the 1+5 format in the JCPOA negotiations may not be effective due to the differences arising between Russia and Europe. Following these remarks, the Russian ambassador in Tehran stressed that without China and Russia, the lifting of sanctions and the revival of the JCPOA would not be possible. In such a scenario, what do you think the path forward for Iran will be in these negotiations, assuming they commence?

In the short term, it seems unlikely that the conditions will arise for the five major global powers to convene again on the issue of Iran's nuclear program, especially given the existing rifts between Russia and Europe. However, another question arises: is there even a necessity for these meetings and discussions to take place again? Do the members of the P5+1 really need to come together once more to talk about Iran's nuclear issue? In this context, there are a number of technical matters that need to be worked out between Iran and the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Additionally, the issues surrounding the disagreements between Iran and Europe, particularly regarding the potential activation of the trigger mechanism or snapback, are special concerns between Iran and the European Troika.

From Iran's perspective, it can be said that the influence of Russia and China in nuclear negotiations will certainly be beneficial, and it is in Iran's interest for some of the existing challenges with the European parties to be managed by Russia or China. In the past, there may have been concerns that Russia's policies were not necessarily aligned with Iran's interests and that Russia might pursue a different path in nuclear negotiations. However, now that the nuclear agreement has been signed and the only remaining issue is the restoration of its implementation, it seems that Russia cannot play a seriously negative role in advancing the negotiations.

In fact, Russia's current role appears to function more as a balancing factor against Europe and the challenges that have arisen with them. It seems unlikely that the Russians would be eager to activate the trigger mechanism or snapback, nor would they be pleased with European efforts to activate this mechanism. For this reason, I do not see Iran's and Russia's interests in the nuclear file as being in conflict with one another. Therefore, we should not be overly concerned about the possibility of the Rus-

sians becoming active again in nuclear negotiations. However, as I mentioned, there may not be much room for Russia to play a significant role and have a serious impact in these negotiations.

According to published reports, Syria has been one of the key topics in the discussions between the foreign ministers of Iran and Russia. Unlike Tehran, Moscow has begun engaging with the new Syrian government, and the discussions between Lavrov and Turkish foreign minister Fidan have centered around Syria as well. What do you think will happen to Iran-Russia relations in Syria given the change in government there?

The Russians have interests in Syria that remain intact. Despite the changes in the Syrian government, although some of these interests have experienced interruptions, certain Russian interests, especially in relation to their military bases in Syria, are still in place. One of Russia's primary concerns in this regard is the fate of these bases. Russia has two scenarios in mind:

The first scenario is that Russia aims to stabilize the current Syrian government so that it can extend and solidify its sovereignty over all of Syrian territory. In line with this scenario, the Russians have naturally prioritized engagement with the current Syrian government. Part of this engagement takes place through Turkey, while another part



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (1st R) leads the Russian delegation in a meeting with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi (not seen in the picture) in Tehran on February 25, 2025.

● MOHSEN VANAEI/IRNA



Given that Iran still retains some influence over various factions and groups in Syria, the Russians will seek to capitalize on Iran's assistance. Their primary objective is to keep tensions in Syria under control and ensure that the situation does not jeopardize Russian interests in the country.



US President Donald Trump (L) and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, give a joint news conference at the Presidential Palace in Helsinki, Finland, on July 16, 2018.

● AP

relates to Russia's direct interactions with the new Syrian government.

In a more optimistic scenario for the Russians, if the situation in Syria stabilizes, they will seek to maintain their interests through engagement with the new government. In this context, while Iran may not be able to play a significantly influential role in Syria, Russia could potentially act as a facilitator for Iran—not as a mediator. This means that Russia could assist Tehran in re-establishing its relations with Damascus and regaining its role in Syria. In the second scenario, given that Iran still maintains some of its influence over various factions and

groups in Syria, the Russians will look to benefit from Iran's assistance. The main goal is to control tensions in Syria and ensure that the situation does not develop in a way that jeopardizes Russian interests in the country. Thus, part of the objectives of Lavrov's visit to Turkey and Iran is to advance these dual scenarios that Russia has regarding Syria.

There are varying opinions within Iran regarding Russia's role in the establishment of the JCPOA and subsequent efforts to revive it. Some believe that Russia is throwing obstacles in the path of de-escalat-

ing relations between Iran and the West. What kind of relationship between Iran and the West do you think is desirable for Russia?

The circumstances have changed significantly, and the analytical clichés that we often rely on to assess situations may not always hold true. In this case, I think the situation is markedly different; Russia is currently in a process of de-escalation with the United States, while tensions with Europe remain high and unresolved. Conversely, Iran has serious tensions with the US but has begun to ease tensions with Europe, as European countries may be inclined to activate the

trigger mechanism, which is not favorable for Iran. Therefore, under these conditions, the Russian perspective is naturally somewhat different from the past.

In the past, Russia tried to advance its goals and interests while engaging with the West, which at that time exhibited a certain unity between Europe and the US. Within this framework, we occasionally observed actions from Russia that may not have been in Iran's favor, especially regarding UN resolutions. During that period, Russia would sometimes vote in favor of anti-Iran resolutions to align itself with Western powers.

However, the situation is now different. Iran is faced with the question of whether the Europeans will activate the trigger mechanism. In this context, it is only natural that the Russians should not be inclined to activate this mechanism, as doing so would mean reverting to the past and restarting all previous negotiations. Moreover, such an action could provoke severe reactions from Iran, with a potential exit from the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty), which would certainly not be in Russia's interest. Therefore, in the conflict between Iran and Europe, Russia cannot side with the Europeans, both due to its own issues with Eu-

rope and because what the Europeans seek is not suitable for Russia.

Regarding the US, Russia faces two options: either the tensions between the US and Iran escalate to a critical point, leading to a new conflict in the region—which is certainly not a preferred option for Russia, as it could endanger its interests—or Iran may choose to back down in the face of US pressure, which would also be undesirable for Russia.

In my opinion, what the Russians will certainly aim for in their dealings with the US is to prevent the escalation of tensions between Iran and the West as much as possible. Of course, within the

limits of what the circumstances allow, we know that Moscow's hands are not entirely free in this situation. However, if we assume that Russia can somehow normalize its relationship with the US, it will likely strive not only to prevent tensions between Iran and the West from reaching an uncontrollable stage but also to avoid excessive efforts at de-escalation.

Thus, it can be said that Russia will continue its previous policy: that is, to prevent military tensions and promote limited de-escalation between Iran and the West.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

Washington's game plan for Iran, Russia and China



By Abdulnasser Noorzad
Scholar

OPINION

The United States, under the leadership of Trump, will make a tremendous effort to maintain its international standing with one key difference this time: Trump is demanding a significant reduction in the costs that America has paid for years to preserve this position. This means that the US aims to win the global power game and hegemonic competition with minimal expenditure and by employing covert tactics.

These efforts by the United States are aimed at curbing the activities, endeavors, and actions undertaken by the Asian allied axis, which includes Russia, China, and Iran, in recent years. The US has been closely monitoring the moves of these Asian allies — from making

investments to establishing strategic global connections, from signing defense and security pacts to finding alternatives for economic lifelines, from attempting to seize geographical control through military aggression to supporting America's enemies.

Trump has an idea to keep the US at the forefront of global politics with the least economic and financial expenditure. Since Joe Biden took office, the US seriously pursued a strategy of creating divisions between China and Russia, between Russia and Iran, and between every other member of the axis. During his first term in office, Trump, through unprecedented and historic meetings with the leader of North Korea Kim Jong Un, warm relations with Putin, and a deceptively close connection with China's leader, also sought to prevent the progress and consolidation of this alliance by driving wedges. Now, by trying to resolve the Ukraine issue, which seemingly benefits Russia as well, the US is attempting to push Iran and Russia away from China through a policy of maximum pressure. The American goal is to isolate and leave China alone in the heat of global competition with the US, which could significantly demoralize the Chinese and limit their anti-American and de-Americanization sentiments.



● IRNA

The US strategy includes encircling China, cutting off its maritime economic lifelines, and creating difficulties in the implementation of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Meanwhile, driving a wedge in the Asian alliance, where China plays a central role, constitutes the security, military, and political components of this strategy. On the other hand, supporting Taiwan as a tool to pressure China psychologically reflects the traditional American policy of exerting pressure on the Chinese. Thus, by distancing Russia and Iran from the Asian axis, the US has tightened the encirclement of China and is striving to limit all areas of China's competition with America. Moreover, the US intends to target Iran, the weakest member of the Eurasian alliance, and remove it from this coalition. This alliance, comprising China, Russia, and Iran, has positioned itself against the US-led global order through its

diplomatic, economic, and military cooperation. The Americans believe that during Trump's second term, the US should adopt a more aggressive approach than the defensive policies of the Biden administration. They say that instead of continuing deterrence policies, Washington must exert maximum pressure on Iran to force it to cease cooperation with China and Russia. The strategy of pressuring Iran should include multiple dimensions: economic pressure, military actions, diplomatic and ideological pressure, limiting nuclear programs, and weakening Iran within the so-called "Axis of Resistance," so that Iran is compelled to reject the Eurasian alliance.

Meanwhile, by resolving the conflict in Ukraine, Washington believes that Moscow should be calmed down for the time being by establishing a political bridge with Putin and giv-

ing assurances that NATO's eastward expansion will be halted. Then, what remains in their game plan will be China, which must be restrained from pursuing expansionist policies against the US through a policy of encirclement and international pressure.

A question arises here: What do the Americans have in mind for the next stage of this game? The answer forms the core of this analysis. Regardless of whether this plan succeeds or not, the Americans aim to place Iran in a strategic vacuum by applying maximum pressure, isolating it from its alliances with China and Russia, and include it in international agreements to pacify Iran for the time being. Then, by pressuring it without resorting to violence, they will pave the way for regime change in Iran.

Russia, having compromised in the Ukraine issue, will remain under the suffocating pressure of

economic sanctions, preventing it from retaliating against America's traditional expansionist ambitions. Later, by strengthening alliances with Russia's neighbors and regional countries that have poor relations with Russia, the US will encircle Russia with a chain of hostile al-

liances, leaving it no room to breathe.

Only China, under the current encirclement strategy, will be forced to fight for its survival and expend all its resources. From the American perspective, China alone will not be able to withstand this suffocating strategy and counter the US. This way, America will be safe from the rebellious expansionism and ambitions of the Asian axis. As the famous saying goes, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!"

Removing Iran from the Eurasian alliance would strengthen America's position in the Middle East and weaken both China and Russia. This approach is comparable to past strategies, such as the defeat of the Ottoman Empire

in World War I and Italy's withdrawal from its alliance with Nazi Germany in World War II. America aims to prevent the Asian allied axis from becoming a major headache for its global leadership.

The Asian axis has also initiated preventive measures to counter this US strategy, which are worthy of discussion and analysis in future writings. Obviously, Washington is not the only player devising strategies and making moves. Key players like China and Russia, as part of the Asian axis and the other side of this competition, possess significant economic, military, and hegemonic capacities that can ensure balance in this power game.

The article first appeared in Persian on Iranian Diplomacy.



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Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) and US President Donald Trump walk toward the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, on November 9, 2017.

● JONATHAN ERNST/
REUTERS

AFC Champions League Elite:

Esteghlal keen to bounce back from derby blues against Al Nassr



AFC

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Esteghlal will be looking to rise from the ashes of Thursday's defeat against Persepolis when hosting Saudi Pro League heavy-weight Al Nassr in the AFC Champions League last 16 today.

A 2-1 loss to their city rivals, which saw Esteghlal drop to ninth in the Iranian top-flight table, was not the kind of the debut new head coach Miodrag Bozovic had wished for. However, a decent result against their star-studded opponents today could help the Montenegrin win over the Blues' faithful in the early days of his tenure.

Esteghlal has been struggling with lack of consistency on and off the pitch, as Bozovic, who was only appointed to role on Wednesday, is the fifth coach, including interim Sohrab Bakhtiarzadeh and

Mohammad Navazi, to sit on the Blues bench this season. History and numbers are on Al Nassr's side ahead of the encounter, with the Riyadh-based outfit unbeaten in 11 games against the Iranian clubs, while Esteghlal is on a five-game winless run against the sides from Saudi Arabia.

The Iranian club netted only eight goals in the league phase of the revamped Asian competition, drawing blanks in four outings, while the Saudi club has the joint-best defensive record in the west zone with only six goals conceded.

Qualification to the round of 16 was only sealed on the final league stage matchday, thanks to a 2-0 defeat of Qatar's Al Rayyan SC, which ended the Blues' six-match winless streak on the continent and Esteghlal will hope to maintain the momentum today, especially with their fans backing them in an

expected jam-packed Azadi Stadium – arguably the most daunting venue in Asian football.

Al Nassr will also head into the tie on the back of a domestic defeat, a 2-1 loss to Al Orobah on Friday leaving its Saudi Pro League title hopes in tatters.

Stefano Pioli's men, however, will be confident of their chances against Esteghlal, having already defeated the Iranian side 1-0 when the teams met in the league stage last October in Dubai.

The good news for Esteghlal is that Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo decided to skip the visit to the Iranian capital, for unknown reasons, and will join a long list of injured players, including Spanish center-back Aymeric Laporte and Portuguese midfielder Otávio, in sitting out the game.

The two sides will square off in the second leg next week at Al-Awwal Park.

UWW Ranking Series:

Iran's Mohsennejad wins consolation bronze in Greco-Roman event

Sports Desk

The second day of the Greco-Roman competitions at the Muhamet Malo Ranking Series tournament saw Iranian Mahdi Mohsennejad win a bronze medal in Tirana, Albania.

Mohsennejad got off to losing start in the 63kg event, suffering a 5-1 defeat against three-time world junior champion Kerem Kamal of Turkey.

However, the Iranian, who

left the Paris Olympics empty-handed last year, bounced back to beat Kazakhstan's Nurzat Marat by superiority (8-0), before defeating Romanian Razvan Arnaut 3-1 in the bronze-medal contest.

Mohsennejad shared the third podium with Baiaman Apilov of Kyrgyzstan, while Kamal went on to come out victorious against Doolotbek Kanbolotovich Choibekov, also from Kyrgyzstan, 10-0 in the final and walk away with the ultimate prize.

Mohsennejad's medal came after his fellow-Iranian Ali-reza Mohmadi had won the 87kg gold medal on the preceding night in the Albanian capital.

Mohmadi was only awarded the top prize after Hungarian David Losonczi pulled out of the final showpiece with injury, but the pinnacle of the Iranian's campaign came in the last-eight round, where he outmuscled reigning Olympic champion Semen Novikov 5-0, avenging the

final loss to the Bulgarian in Paris.

Iran also collected six medals, including four golds, in the freestyle event of the second Ranking Series event of the season last week.

Ali Mo'meni (57kg), Rahman Amouzad (65kg), Kamran Qasempour (92kg), and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) were the Iranian gold medalists, while Erfan Alizadeh settled for the 97kg silver and Younes Emami took the bronze in the 74kg class.



UWW

Iranian Vafaei to replace O'Sullivan in World GP



SKY

Sports Desk

Iranian Hossein Vafaei will replace snooker great Ronnie O'Sullivan at the upcoming World Grand Prix in Hong Kong after the seven-time world champion pulled out of the event for medical reasons.

The English player was due to face Si Jiahui of China

in the opening round on Wednesday, but will now be replaced by Vafaei, who is 33rd in the Johnstone's Paint One-Year Rankings and will be placed directly in the draw and will play the Chinese opponent.

The tournament features the leading 32 players of the season so far and will run from March 4th to 9th,

staged in Hong Kong for the first time.

"It's a real shame that Ronnie is not able to play at the moment and I wish him all the best," Vafaei said, adding: "I am thrilled to have this opportunity to travel to Hong Kong and compete in such a big tournament. It is a huge and exciting event for all the players."

Real's Ancelotti hopes Betis defeat is wake-up call for Champions League

REUTERS – Real Madrid must raise their game ahead of the Champions League Round of 16, coach Carlo Ancelotti warned after Saturday's 2-1 defeat at Real Betis,

calling the loss a "heavy blow" to his side's LaLiga title hopes.

Ancelotti criticised his team's poor performance at the Benito Villamarin stadium and said a

similar display at home to Atletico in Tuesday's Champions League first leg could prove costly.

"This is a heavy blow, we have to bounce back. Losing at this point in the

season is tough because everyone is on form and we didn't do well in this game," the Italian told reporters.

"We lost 27 balls in the first half and Betis got back into the game. If we play like this, we certainly won't win on Tuesday.

"I hope this serves as a wake-up call. It seemed that lately we were more organised, more compact, and today we weren't able to do it like in the previous games."

Ancelotti explained his decision to bring on Endrick for the team's top scorer Kylian Mbappe in the closing stages of the game, saying the French forward had been unable to fully train due to a dental issue.

"(Mbappe) had a problem this week and didn't train much and wasn't at his best level," he said.



REUTERS

One-day cultural odyssey in Qazvin



Chehel Sotoun Palace
● borna.news



Aminiha Hosseiniyeh
● kite.ir



Barajin Forest Park
● pinorest.com

Iranica Desk

Qazvin, a city with a rich historical background, has always held a special status throughout Iran's history. Chosen as the capital during the Safavid period, it boasts numerous valuable historical artifacts from that era.

A memorable trip

A one-day trip to Qazvin can be a memorable and enriching experience. You can visit the city's historical and cultural attractions, such as the Chehel Sotoun Palace, Sepah Street, the Aminiha Hosseiniyeh, and the Jaame Mosque of Qazvin, IRNA wrote. Additionally, you can explore the historic bazaar and enjoy the beautiful nature surrounding the city. With proper planning and a one-day travel guide, you can visit the most important sights of Qazvin in just one day.

Accessibility and proximity

Located near major cities like Tehran, Karaj, Rasht, Saveh, and Zanjan, Qazvin is easily accessible for a day trip. Many tourist attractions are in close proximity, allowing you to explore without spending too much time commuting.

Best time to visit

The best times to visit Qazvin



Ovan Lake
● kojaro.com

are spring and autumn, when the weather is mild and pleasant, enabling you to fully enjoy the city's natural and historical beauty.

Morning

Start your day by visiting Sepah Street (Shahada Street), the first street in Iran, which dates back to the Safavid era and is listed on Iran's National Heritage List. Next, head to the historic Qazvin Bazaar, located nearby. This bazaar, one of the covered markets in Iran, offers a memorable experience with its traditional architecture and diverse shops.

Midday

Afterward, visit the Sa'd al-Saltanah Caravanserai and enjoy wandering through this masterpiece of Qajar architecture. After lunch and a bit of rest, proceed to the Chehel Sotoun Palace. In addition to exploring its beautiful gardens, you can visit the pavilion, which has been transformed into a calligraphy museum.

Afternoon

The Jaame Mosque of Qazvin, one of the oldest and most beautiful mosques in Iran, is about



Alamut Castle
● borna.news

1.5 kilometers from the Chehel Sotoun and could be your next stop. Just 700 meters from the mosque, you can visit one of Qazvin's most beautiful historical houses, the Aminiha Hosseiniyeh. The stunning architecture and decorations of this house will surely captivate you. If time permits, include a visit to the Anthropology Museum in your itinerary to learn about the culture and traditions of various ethnic groups in Iran.

Nearby attractions

Located in the foothills of the Alborz Mountains, Qazvin serves

as a gateway to a variety of attractions, from historic sites and monuments to natural wonders. Whether you're exploring the city's royal palaces, ancient mosques, or venturing out to the surrounding countryside, Qazvin is sure to captivate with its charm and beauty. Let's take a closer look at some of the must-see attractions nearby that will make your visit unforgettable.

Barajin Forest Park

Barajin Forest Park is among the other fantastic attractions near Qazvin which is perfect for leisure time and enjoying na-

ture. The park features various facilities, including an amusement park, numerous gazebos for relaxation and picnics, a beautiful artificial lake, a café, a restaurant, and restrooms. One of the highlights of Barajin is the Qazvin Nature Village (Qazvin Zoo), which is among the most well-equipped zoos in the country.

Ovan Lake

Ovan Lake is situated in a mountainous and temperate region, accessible by car. In addition to enjoying the tranquility of nature and the scenic views of the lake, you can also experience boating on its waters. The best times to visit Ovan Lake are in spring and summer when the weather is cool and pleasant, and the surrounding nature is at its most beautiful.

Alamut Castle

Alamut Castle is a historical landmark located in the Alamut region of Qazvin. Built on a high and difficult-to-access rock, this castle served as the headquarters of Hassan Sababah, the founder of the Ismaili state. Its unique architecture is cleverly adapted to the rocky topography and includes two upper and lower forts, four towers, an entrance, a cistern, and more.

Fascinating Fakhrigah Rock Tomb in West Azarbaijan Province



As visitors approach the Fakhrigah Rock Tomb near Mahabad, West Azarbaijan Province, they are greeted by a striking signboard that reads: "Date: One thousand years BCE." Not long after, the tomb reveals itself, nestled deep within the heart of the mountain. Two stone pillars stand at the entrance, or porch, having safeguarded the tomb for centuries. Apart

from the porch, there is no other means of entry; visitors must scale the rock to reach the tomb. Upon entering, visitors are greeted by the two pillars, which have been gradually weathered by the elements — sunlight, rain, and wind. Only the bases and capitals remain. The pillars differ in diameter, with the lower section being wider than the upper, giving them the appearance of up-



side-down vases. As visitors move through the pillars and into the depths of the tomb, a spacious main room becomes visible, separated from the entrance by two steps. Remarkably, the height from the terrace to the top of the carved ceiling is five hundred and thirty centimeters, and the tomb itself sits ten meters above the mountain plain. However, reaching the tomb re-

quires special climbing skills, as no established pathway exists. It is believed that the front porch of the Fakhrigah Rock Tomb was used specifically for burial ceremonies, while the actual tombs are located within the inner chamber. There are three tombs in total, with one larger than the others. The larger tomb is positioned parallel to the terrace, while the two smaller tombs are



perpendicular to it. These tombs have been carved into the rock and are approximately fifty centimeters deep. Inside the tomb, four additional pillars can be found. Compared to those on the porch, these pillars are thinner and feature rectangular bases and capitals. Numerous rock tombs are scattered throughout the mountains of Iran, and Fakhrigah lies at the

northernmost point. It is part of the Medes heritage that has endured in the region. Other notable Medes rock tombs include the Shirin and Farhad Tomb in Sahneh and the Dokan-e-Davood tomb near Sarpol-e Zahab. Fakhrigah is located in a limestone mountain and was registered as a national heritage site of Iran in 1937, thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Culture and Arts.



President calls for unity among Islamic nations as Ramadan begins

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian extended heartfelt wishes for the arrival of the holy fasting month of Ramadan to leaders and citizens of Islamic nations. In a message issued on Sunday, he called the month a "valuable opportunity" for reflection on the creation of humanity and the universe, as well as a call to adhere to divine principles that foster compassion and support for the needy, president.ir reported.

Pezeshkian expressed hope that, through collective efforts among Islamic leaders, this blessed month would lead to enhanced cooperation among Islamic countries. He stressed the importance of working towards alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people, particularly those in Gaza and Lebanon.

Iran's VP says only 17 Asiatic cheetahs remain worldwide, urges collaboration for conservation

Social Desk

Iran's Vice President and head of the Department of Environment (DoE), Shina Ansari, announced that only 17 Asiatic cheetahs are left in the world, all of which inhabit Iran. She emphasized the urgent need for collaboration among various agencies, particularly the traffic police, to control vehicle speeds in their habitats, IRNA reported.

During a signing ceremony for a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Environment and the traffic police, Ansari highlighted that the Turan area is one of the most crucial habitats for the cheetahs, with parts of it located along the road from Abbas Abad to Mashhad. She noted that there have been annual fatalities of cheetahs due to collisions with passing vehicles, and the traffic police have been instrumental in implementing speed reductions in these areas.

"This cooperation is essential for the protection of the valuable cheetah species and all living beings in nature," Ansari added. Ansari underscored the importance of education and public awareness in environmental issues, referencing Article 50 of the Constitution, which designates environmental protection as a collective responsibility. She urged every Iranian to become an environmental ally to effectively address the pressing challenges facing the environment. While acknowledging that this endeavor will take time, Ansari is optimistic that success can be achieved through the joint efforts of various entities. She mentioned that the memorandum will enable the traffic police to leverage their resources in safeguarding the environment and the Asiatic cheetah's habitat. Ansari also said that the police could assist in identifying offend-

ers, as they have successfully reduced speeds in areas frequented by cheetahs. She pointed out that issues such as waste management and the illegal dumping of sewage present significant challenges that could be better managed with police collaboration. "Vehicle inspections, addressing polluting cars, and noise pollution are other areas where the police can work effectively with the Department of Environment," she added. Ansari expressed hope that the signing of this memorandum would lead to constructive steps towards environmental preservation and the well-being of Iran's natural heritage. Hadi Kiadaliri, the Deputy for Education and Public Participation at the Department of Environment, praised the traffic police's awareness and responsibility regarding environmental issues, stating it



provides reassurance. He emphasized that protecting the environment directly impacts public health and that the police can assist in preventing certain violations. Kiadaliri highlighted the challenges posed by natural and human-induced degradation, wildlife fatalities, and the necessity for serious action against offenders, alongside educational efforts. He referred to the successful issuance of green rulings and their deterrent effects, expressing hope that the newly signed memorandum would lead to practical solutions, advocating for a "covert environmental police" to bolster conservation efforts.

Iran unveils funding agreement to boost tourism infrastructure, investment



Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian government is positioning itself as a facilitator for investment in the tourism sector, emphasizing the need for collaboration among banks to complete key tourism projects. To this end, a memorandum of understanding was signed to provide funding from the National Development Fund for priority projects within the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, IRNA reported.

The signing ceremony, attended by Reza Salehi Amiri, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, along with key leaders from the banking sector, including Mehdi Jahangiri, Chairman of the Board of the Tourism Financial Group, and Mohammad Reza Fahimi, CEO of Tourism Bank, was held at the central office of the Tourism Bank. Salehi Amiri described the signing of this agreement as a strategic step to accelerate the completion and operation of 223 hotels that are over 70% physi-

cally completed. He noted that the memorandum is the result of ongoing discussions with the Central Bank and the National Development Fund, culminating in an agreement for loan disbursement through Tourism Bank as the executing bank. "This agreement will allocate financial resources from the Central Bank, the National Development Fund, and a substantial portion of Tourism Bank's resources to expedite the completion of tourism projects and strengthen the necessary infrastructure for this industry," Salehi Amiri stated. The minister underlined the critical importance of enhancing tourism infrastructure to attract both domestic and international visitors, stressing the need for comprehensive support from governmental and banking institutions. According to the country's seventh development plan, the Ministry is tasked with increasing hotel capacity from 455,000 to approximately one million beds,

with the goal of inaugurating 100 new hotels annually. Achieving these objectives necessitates collaborative efforts with financial institutions. "The government acts as a facilitator and supporter in this process, committed to removing barriers to expedite investment and project development. Capital, investors, and infrastructure development are the key pillars for tourism growth and must remain a focal point, as infrastructure development is essential for the advancement of the tourism industry," he added. Mohammad Reza Fahimi, CEO of the Tourism Bank, highlighted the investment volumes and funding allocations, revealing that around \$21.8 million from the Central Bank and National Development Fund have been earmarked for completing tourism projects. A portion of these funds, along with resources from the Tourism Bank, will be dedicated to financing the completion of the 223 hotels. Ali Asghar Shalbfavian, head of the Investment and Economic Affairs Center at the ministry, identified securing financial resources for tourism projects with over 70% physical progress as one of the center's key missions. He expressed optimism that with the support of the Central Bank, National Development Fund, and cooperation from executing banks, 2,700 ongoing tourism projects will gradually be completed.

Manuscripts of Qur'an on display in Tehran

Arts & Culture Desk

In celebration of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, a new exhibition titled "Finest Manuscript Works of the Qur'an" opened at the Museum of Books and Documentary Heritage in Iran's National Library and Archives. According to a report by ILNA, the exhibition was inaugurated by Gholamreza Amirkhani, the head of the library, alongside senior officials and department heads. It features a collection of exquisite handwritten Qur'ans, including an octagonal Qur'an dating back approximately 660 years and a Qazvini Qur'an from



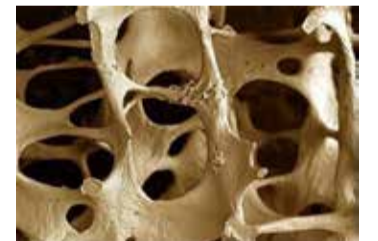
around 227 years ago. The exhibition will be open to visitors from March 2 to 18.

Iranian scientist innovates injectable gel for enhanced bone tissue regeneration

Social Desk

Iranian researcher Mehri Sohrabi has made significant strides in improving bone tissue with her project titled "Investigation of the Osteogenic Behavior of Injectable Gels Based on Bioactive Glasses Containing Quercetin." According to a report from the Iranian National Science Foundation (INSF) on Sunday, Sohrabi, who holds a PhD in Materials Engineering from Iran University of Science and Technology, explained that bone is the most studied tissue in the field of tissue regeneration, IRNA reported. Despite its intrinsic ability to heal after injury, various damages can disrupt the highly organized process of bone formation. Bone tissue engineering aims to mimic the extracellular matrix of tissues and the various biochemical pathways that lead to successful regeneration. For many years, the use of external agents to modulate these biological processes has been the preferred approach in this field. Sohrabi noted that various materials and forms, including dense or porous blocks, granules, and molds with moldability, have been employed to treat bone diseases or

fill bone defects. However, each of these materials and forms poses specific challenges, such as machining difficulties or migration to adjacent tissues. She further explained that injectable gels have eliminated these issues, allowing for controlled drug release and delivery. Bioactive glass gels offer many advantages over bulk ceramics, with their flow and injectability properties making them suitable for a wide range of applications. One significant advancement in this field is the development of hydrogels that can be used alone or in combination with bioactive materials like hydroxyapatite and bioactive glass, providing suitable properties for biomedical applications. Structurally, these systems resemble the extracellular matrix of many natural tissues and offer variable processing methods. They can serve as scaffolds in drug, cell, and growth factor delivery systems or act as barriers or adhesives at the biomaterial-tissue interface. Injectable hydrogels provide minimal invasiveness, low injection costs, and suitable scaffolding for drug encapsulation, tissue repair, and reconstructive surgery. However, Sohrabi pointed out that



while injectable hydrogels may be suitable for tissue repair, they must also be biocompatible, biologically stable, and non-toxic. Sohrabi noted that the use of quercetin in the formulation of the aforementioned injectable gels has not yet been explored. The addition of this osteogenic agent represents an innovation in her research, as it enhances bone formation at the defect site and aids in faster healing. Quercetin has been approved as a bone density enhancer when administered orally and has also been investigated in scaffolds and polymer microspheres. Sohrabi highlighted that while there have been no prior reports on the use of this drug in injectable gels, its effects on other properties such as injectability and washout remain unclear, questions that her research aims to address.