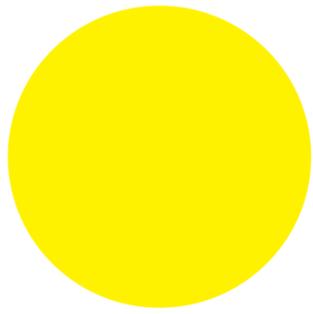


Iran VP stresses importance of transit growth, productivity reforms

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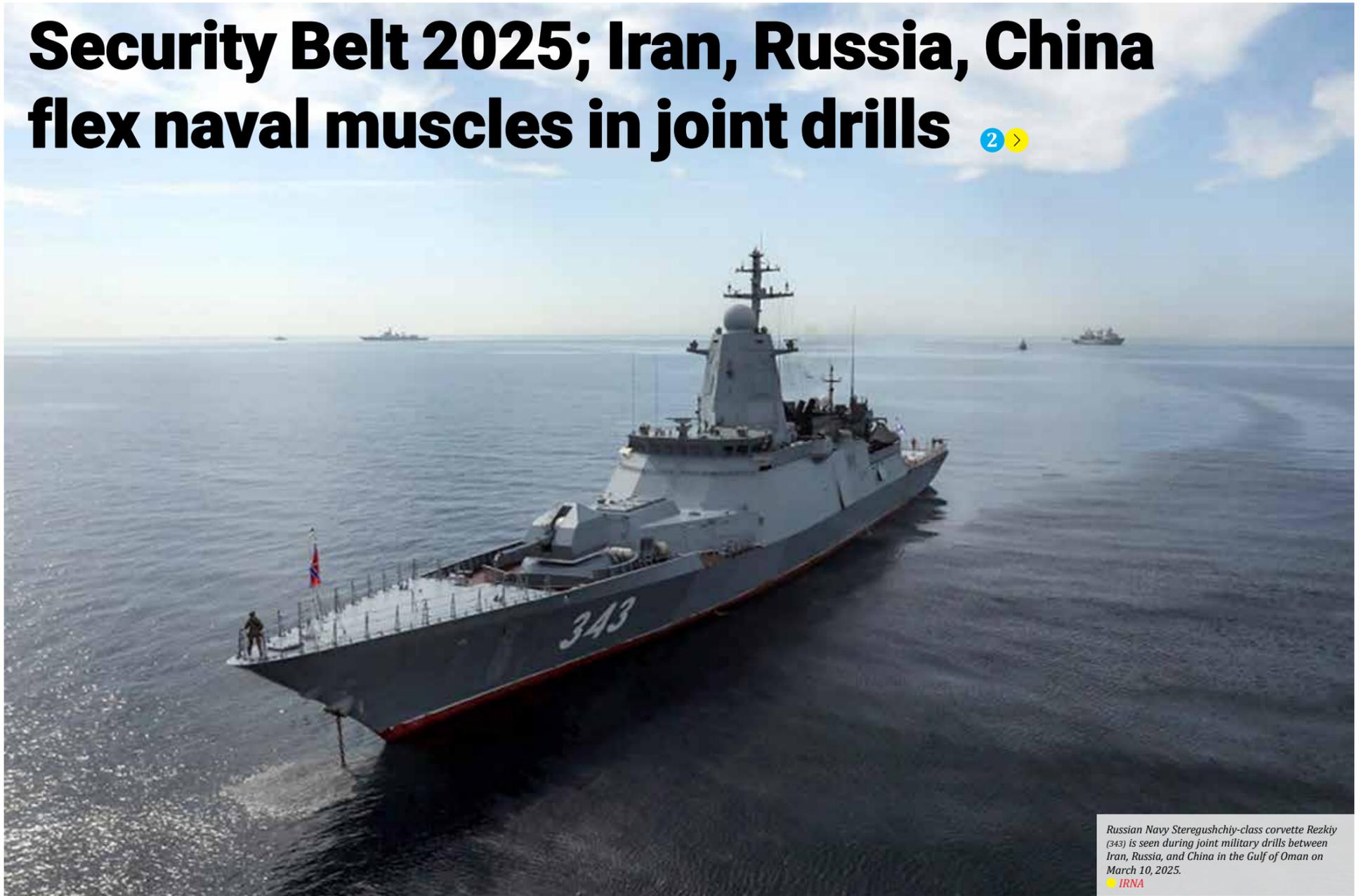
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Russian Navy Steregushchiy-class corvette Rezkiv (343) is seen during joint military drills between Iran, Russia, and China in the Gulf of Oman on March 10, 2025. IRNA



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Syria, Iran, and Turkey: A complex regional shift

By Gholamreza Mansouri
Mideast affairs expert

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

With the rise of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, in the wake of Bashar al-Assad's downfall, the geopolitical landscape in the region has been thrown into turmoil. Syria, under Assad's rule, had long been a linchpin of the Resistance Axis spearheaded by Iran, playing a key role in championing the Palestinian cause. Despite facing criticism from certain resistance factions following the October 7 operation in the occupied Palestinian territories,

Assad never outright turned his back on the cause. However, with his regime brought down, Sharaa—openly backed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan—seized the reins of power. One of his earliest moves was to rule out the renewal of Russia's lease on the Tartus port, a decision that ruffled feathers in Moscow but helped him curry favor with European leaders. Turkey's behind-the-scenes maneuvering to secure international support for his leadership was also hard to ignore. Moreover, Sharaa's recognition as a "president" at Arab summits signaled a growing consensus among Arab states, despite his lack of electoral legitimacy in Syria. Bolstered by Arab and Turkish

endorsement, he managed to claw back some authority for the Damascus central government. However, pressing issues remain unresolved, particularly concerning the Kurds in the northeast, the Druze in the southwest, and the Alawites along Syria's western coast. The Kurds, having carved out a degree of autonomy following the Arab Spring, have openly cooperated with the United States, shouldering the responsibility of guarding ISIS prisoners in northeastern Syria. As key US allies in the battle against ISIS, their rapport with Israel has also warmed. However, following Abdullah Ocalan's call for the PKK to lay down arms, Syria's Kurdish factions now find themselves in a weaker position

against potential Turkish offensives. In response, Kurdish leaders from the YPG and SDF are scrambling to work out a deal that would allow them to integrate into a unified Syrian government while safeguarding their civil rights and ensuring fair political representation. The Alawites, from whose ranks the Assad family hails, have long held sway over Syria's military and governmental institutions. With Assad's regime swept aside, they have found themselves at loggerheads with Sharaa. Reports of fierce clashes in Latakia and Tartus suggest that tensions are far from simmering down. Meanwhile, the Druze, backed by Israeli support, are pushing for an independent state of their own. However,

given their small numbers and limited territorial control, whether such a move will get off the ground remains uncertain.

Broader geopolitical picture

Beyond Syria's internal divisions, three external players remain heavily invested in shaping the country's future: Iran's Stance: Tehran has long stood by Syria, cementing ties through decades of cooperation. From Iran's perspective, keeping Syria within the Resistance Axis is a strategic necessity to fend off Israeli threats. Iran remains adamant that Syria must not fall out of step with regional security interests.

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Security Belt 2025; Iran, Russia, China flex naval muscles in joint drills

International Desk

The navies of Iran, Russia and China launched new military drills off the coast of Iran on Monday in a bid to "enhance naval cooperation" between the three countries' navies.

Flotillas of Russian and Chinese military vessels arrived in Iran's territorial waters in the northern part of the Indian Ocean on Monday to participate in the large-scale Security Belt 2025 joint naval exercise.

Russian Rezkiv and Gero Rossyskoy Federatsii Aldar Tsydenzhapov corvettes as well as Pechenga fleet oiler of the Pacific Fleet,

alongside Chinese Baotou destroyer and Gaoyouhu replenishment ship docked at Iran's southeastern Chabahar Port on Monday.

Representatives of several other countries, like Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates, also landed at Iran's only oceanic port city to take part in the military drills as observers.

Rear Admiral Mostafa Tajeddini, the spokesman for the joint naval drills, said on Monday that the main stage of the Security Belt-2025 naval military drills will kick off on Tuesday.

He said that the exercise

aims to enhance maritime security in the northern Indian Ocean and increase maritime interactions between the three countries in order to increase cooperation.

Vessels from the Iranian Navy and the Naval Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps will take part in the drills that mark the seventh edition of "Security Belt" exercises by Iran, Russia and China.

The US President Donald Trump also reacted to the military drills.

On Monday, while returning to Washington from Florida on Air Force One, Trump was asked by a reporter if he was concerned

about the joint military exercises between Iran, Russia and China. "No. Not at all. Because we are stronger than all of them," he said.

"I have rebuilt the United States. Unfortunately, Biden (former US president) did nothing about it, but I rebuilt the military."

The three countries have held similar exercises in the region in recent years. They have also been involved in joint efforts aimed at countering piracy and maritime terrorism, exchanging information in naval rescue and relief operations as well as sharing operational and tactical experience.



Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy guided-missile destroyer Baotou (133) is seen during joint military drills between Iran, Russia, and China in the Gulf of Oman on March 10, 2025.
● IRANIAN ARMY OFFICE

Iran: 'No justification' for attacks on minorities in Syria

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Monday condemned recent mass killings of civilians in Syria, saying that there was "no justification" for attacks on minorities.

"There is no justification for the attacks on parts of the Alawite, Christian, Druze and other minorities, which have truly hurt the emotions and conscience of both the countries of the region and the international community," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei during a weekly press conference. "In recent days, unfortunate incidents have taken place in certain areas of Syria. We are deeply concerned about reports of insecurity and violence," Baqaei said.

"We strongly condemn such actions, and any mass killing or action against civilians is unacceptable and unjustifiable," he added.

The remarks came after heavy crackdown by the country's new rulers' security forces on the Alawite minority.

Fighting erupted on Thursday between Syr-

ia's new security forces and loyalists of the former government of toppled president Bashar al-Assad.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Monday that 973 civilians have been killed in the violence in the coastal heartland of the country's Alawite minority.

The fighting has also killed hundreds of members of the security forces and pro-Assad fighters, according to the Observatory, which has reported the overall death toll at more than 1,300.

Clashes broke out in the country's northwestern coastal region, which is predominantly inhabited by the Alawite minority sect.

"The fact that certain Alawite communities have been targeted has wounded consciences [around the world]," Baqaei stressed.

He called the unwelcome development "a real test" for the new Syrian rulers to fulfill their responsibilities "in safeguarding the lives of Syrians."

Baqaei said that such incidents only complicate Syria's political situation further.

Pezeshkian: Iran regards conflicts as detrimental to region, world

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Tehran considers tension and conflicts in the region detrimental to itself, the region and the entire world, stressing that the Islamic Republic seeks unity in the region.

The Iranian president made the remarks in a phone conversation with Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støer, during which both sides discussed bilateral and multilateral issues.

Pezeshkian said Iran has never sought to produce nuclear weapons and affirmed the country's principled policy on defusing tensions and fostering unity in the region.

"However, we will definitely counter any threat against our country's security and interests with strength and power," he added.

He noted that Iran has always had and will have cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency on verification of the country's nuclear activities.

In an interview with Fox News recorded on March 6, US President Donald Trump claimed that he had sent a letter to Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Trump said he had warned Iran to open talks on a nuclear deal or be handled militarily.

In response to Trump, Ayatollah



Jonas Gahr Støer Masoud Pezeshkian

Khamenei said on Saturday that the insistence of some bullying powers on holding talks with Iran does not aim to solve issues, emphasizing that Iran would never accept the expectations of bullying states.

Elsewhere in the phone call, Pezeshkian pointed to good relations between Tehran and Oslo and common grounds for bilateral cooperation on regional and international fields and hailed Norway's efforts to establish peace in the region.

Referring to the ongoing sensitive situation in the region and the world, he said Iran has always made efforts to maintain regional peace, stability and security and prevented the occurrence of any war and conflict.

"Unfortunately, the Zionist regime, as the main factor of tension and crisis in the region, is inciting war and committing crime and genocide against the oppressed people of Palestine," Pezeshkian emphasized.

He added that the Israeli regime "is attempting to portray the peaceful nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a factor of insecurity through fabrication of lies."

Araghchi reaffirms Tehran will never negotiate under pressure, intimidation

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated Tehran's position over talks on its nuclear program, saying that the Islamic Republic will not negotiate under pressure and intimidation.

Iran's top diplomat in a post on his X account on Monday said, "We will NOT negotiate under pressure and intimidation. We will NOT even consider it, no matter what the subject may be." "Negotiation is different from bullying and issuing diktats," he added.

He reaffirmed the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear energy program, emphasizing that there is fundamentally no such thing as its "potential militarization."

Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations said on Sunday if the objective of negotiations with Iran is to address concerns about any potential militarization of Iran's nuclear program; such discussions may be subject to consideration.

"However, should the aim be the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful nuclear program to claim that what Obama (former US president) failed to achieve has now been accomplished, such negotiations will never take place," the mission said in a post on its X account.

In recent months, the US Presi-

dent Donald Trump has repeatedly expressed his interest to reach an agreement with Iran on its nuclear program.

However, his language of threats and imposition of sanctions against Iran have made Iranian officials skeptical of negotiations with the US administration.

Trump last month restored his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran which includes efforts to drive its oil exports down to zero.

Iranian officials have frequently said that negotiations under pressure are not meaningful.

In his post, Araghchi said consultations between Iran and the European troika - France, Germany and Britain - and separately with Russia and China are underway "on equal footing and mutual respect."

"The aim is to explore ways to build more confidence and more transparency on our nuclear energy program in return for the lifting of unlawful sanctions," the top Iranian diplomat explained. He noted that the US enjoyed Iran's respect in the past whenever it was respectful in its discourse, but it was confronted whenever it adopted a threatening posture.

"Every action compels a reaction," Araghchi stated.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that Iran and the three European countries will hold new talks in the coming days.

Syria, Iran, and ...

Israel's Strategy: Having occupied the Golan Heights for decades, Israel

has consistently pursued a policy aimed at keeping Syria on edge. Airstrikes targeting Syrian military installations have become a regular occurrence, often justified as preemptive measures against potential threats. Moreover, Israeli forces have inched closer to Damascus, advancing within 20 kilometers of the capital. From Israel's standpoint, a fractured and unstable Syria plays right into its hands.

Turkey's Ambitions: For years, Turkey has sought to bring Syria into its sphere of influence, a goal that continues to dictate its policies. While Ankara remains fixated on securing its southern border, Erdogan's over-

arching objective is to outmaneuver Iran in the region. Now, both Turkey and Israel find themselves reaping the benefits of Syria's instability. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for his part, has thrown his weight behind Russian military presence in Syria, viewing it as preferable to Turkish encroachment. This was underscored by Israel's foreign minister's recent visit to Moscow, during which he lobbied for Russia's continued presence in Tartus.

The Arab world is keen on welcoming Syria back into the fold, but given the lack of unified Arab leadership, the pressure to reintegrate the country remains lukewarm at best. What ultimately matters for Syria's future—and the wider

region—is how Iran and Turkey navigate their differences. Both nations are regarded as adversaries by Netanyahu, yet their ability to strike a pragmatic accord could be a game-changer. For Iran, Syria's role in the Resistance Axis is non-negotiable, while Turkey's primary concern is bolstering its economic and political clout. Meanwhile, Israel's endgame remains unchanged: a weakened Syria that can be easily kept in check.

In this intricate geopolitical chess game, a well-calculated agreement between Iran and Turkey could turn Syria into a formidable bulwark against Israeli expansionism. Achieving such an outcome would require direct, high-stakes negotiations—without outside interference.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran VP stresses importance of transit growth, productivity reforms

Economy Desk

Iran's Vice President Mohammadreza Aref emphasized the critical importance of transit development and the activation of key trade corridors across the country and the West Asia region, calling for swift action to remove obstacles hindering transportation growth.

Speaking at the 9th meeting of the Supreme Strategic Council for the Seventh Development Plan on Monday, he highlighted the need for Iran to play a more active role in regional and international agreements, which present significant opportunities for transit expansion.

The meeting, chaired by the VP and attended by members of the council, focused on the three key topics of national productivity systems, trade corridors, and the mining and industrial chain.

Aref noted that while past development plans have emphasized productivity growth, Iran's administrative system remains inefficient.

He criticized the lack of motivation among employees and the absence of courage and creativity among managers, calling for a se-

rious overhaul of the system. "We must set aside formalities and address the root causes of inefficiency," the VP said, adding that, "Our administrative system is not productive, and neither employees nor managers are motivated. We have stripped managers of their courage and creativity, and now we expect productivity to improve. This is the reality we face."

The vice president also pointed out that Iran's bureaucratic system stifles the potentials of university graduates, contrasting it with countries where graduates thrive and contribute to growth. He stressed the need to identify and resolve systemic issues, including restrictive regulations, while emphasizing the importance of adhering to the law to prevent chaos.

During the meeting, a comprehensive report on productivity in Iran's past development plans and the proposed National Productivity System was presented.

The vice president underscored the importance of improving productivity across government bodies, particularly as the country aims for an 8% growth rate. He acknowledged that productiv-

ity has long been a chronic issue in Iran and expressed hope that the Seventh Development Plan would lead to serious efforts to address it.

The council also reviewed a draft proposal for the National Productivity System, with the vice president calling for further detailed analyses. He urged participants to identify specific obstacles to productivity and take actionable steps to create a more efficient system.

The meeting concluded with discussions on strategies to enhance productivity and address the challenges facing Iran's administrative and economic systems.

On March 1, the minister of roads and urban development emphasized that completing transit corridors is a top priority for the ministry to optimize transit operations, and neighboring countries are relying on Iran's efforts in the field despite existing limitations and sanctions.

Speaking at a meeting with provincial governors in Tehran, Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajerd stated that while the completion of transit corridors should have been achieved sooner, it is still not too late to act.



She highlighted that countries like China continue to view Iran as a more efficient, cost-effective, and shorter route for cargo transit. This has also encouraged Turkey to increase cooperation with Iran. Sadeq-Malvajerd stressed that developing border terminals is among the ministry's key priorities. Over the past five months, she noted, significant efforts have been made to enhance relations with neighboring countries through joint commissions, vir-

tual meetings, and invitations for them to visit Iran to discuss border issues, terminals, and regional connectivity.

Sadeq-Malvajerd underscored that despite current challenges, including energy shortages, limitations, and the potential for intensified sanctions, transportation and transit remain vital solutions. She called for the necessary infrastructure to be established within the country. The minister emphasized that



Vice President Mohammadreza Aref (C) speaks at the 9th meeting of the Supreme Strategic Council for the Seventh Development Plan in Tehran on March 10, 2025. fvpresident.ir

the development of transit routes connecting to borders and railways will drive economic growth and wealth creation. She urged governors to advocate for this vision across the government, parliament, and judiciary.

Minister: Iran aims to generate 30,000 MW of renewables within three years

Economy Desk

Abbas Aliabadi, Iran's energy minister, announced plans to significantly expand the country's renewable energy capacity, aiming to produce 30,000 megawatts (MW) of renewable electricity within the next three years.

Talking to ILNA, Aliabadi expressed confidence in achieving a 25-fold increase in renewable energy production, stating that the necessary planning and infrastructure development are already underway.

Aliabadi emphasized that the financial resources for the expansion are available within the renewable energy sector itself.

He went on to say that the cost of fuel consumed for traditional electricity generation is substantial, and by adopting advanced technologies, the country can redirect these resources toward renewable energy projects. "If we can meet our energy needs through innovative technological methods, renewable power plants will undoubtedly increase 25-fold within three years," the minister said.

Aliabadi also expressed optimism that Iran's renewable energy capacity will reach 3,500 MW by the peak of next summer.

He added that the government is working to create the necessary conditions and infrastructure to achieve 30,000 MW of renewable energy production by the end of the current administration's term. The measure is part of a broader strategy to increase the share of renewables in the country's energy portfolio.



Gov't voices commitment to promoting solar power

On Sunday, the Iranian president emphasized the government's strong determination to advance the development of solar power infrastructure, stating that the necessary resources for the project have been secured.

He urged contractors and relevant sectors to expedite their efforts, affirming the government's resolve to remove any obstacles hindering the plan's implementation.

The cabinet, chaired by Masoud Pezeshkian, convened on Sunday, during which, various ministry-related issues were discussed, and Energy Minister Aliabadi presented a detailed report on the challenges and programs of the ministry, including the latest status of the country's electricity supply.

The report outlined the ministry's plans and measures to reduce energy consumption, invest in renewable energy, construct thermal power

plants, repair and activate existing power plants, and combat electricity theft, particularly the illegal activities of cryptocurrency miners.

It was noted that 800 MW of stolen electricity related to illegal mining operations have been identified and eliminated. In a section of the report focusing on the government's plans to generate 30,000 MW of electricity using solar panels, as well as thermal and wind power plants, Pezeshkian reiterated the government's firm commitment to advancing the program.

He stated that, through strategic planning and negotiations with Chinese partners, solar panels have been purchased and will be imported.

The necessary resources for the project are available, and contractors and relevant sectors are expected to mobilize swiftly, Pezeshkian said, adding that the government is determined to address any challenges that may arise during the implementation of this

initiative.

Iran has long relied on fossil fuels, particularly oil and natural gas, to meet its energy needs. However, in recent years, the country has faced growing challenges including the need to diversify its energy sources.

Renewable energy, particularly solar and wind power, has emerged as a key focus for the government as it seeks to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The push for renewable energy is also driven by economic considerations. Iran's vast geography and favorable climate conditions, particularly in regions like Yazd, Kerman and Khorasan, make it well-suited for solar and wind energy projects. By investing in renewables, the government aims to create new job opportunities, attract foreign investment, and reduce the financial burden of fuel subsidies, which have long strained the national budget.

First well of SP infill drilling project comes online: POGC



The first well of a 35-well infill drilling project in the South Pars field has been commissioned, according to the CEO of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC). The project aims to maintain and sustain gas production from the field. Touraj Dehqani stated that Well No. 5 at the SPD12B platform in Phase 12 of the South Pars gas field has been completed and connected to the platform's existing processing facilities. This marks the first well of the 35-well infill drilling project in the shared field to enter production, Shana reported.

Dehqani noted that the well has a daily production capacity of over 2 million cubic meters of rich gas. The initiative is part of efforts to offset natural reservoir depletion at the SPD12B platform and restore the platform's gas production to its initial design capacity.

The CEO highlighted that the 35-well infill drilling project in the South Pars field is being executed in four work packages as the drilling and completion of Well No. 5 at the SPD12B platform, along

with its connection to the production platform, was carried out after months of continuous efforts by specialists from POGC and Petroiran Development Company and Drilling Company International (DCI).

The work was conducted under the second package of an integrated engineering, procurement, and drilling (EPD) contract using the DCI-2 offshore drilling rig, Dehqani stated.

The infill drilling project is being implemented across 17 gas platforms in the South Pars field. Once fully completed and operational, the project is expected to increase the field's daily gas production capacity by 36 million cubic meters.

The contract for the 35-well infill drilling project in South Pars was signed in November 2023. The operational phase of the project began on July 9, 2024, at the SPD12B platform in Phase 12 of South Pars. After approximately seven months of drilling, the first well of the project has now been successfully completed and brought online.

Israel benefits from 'fragmenting Syria': *Envoy*

International Desk

INTERVIEW

Iran's Ambassador to Lebanon, referring to the recent developments in Syria and the aggressions of the Zionist regime against this country, emphasizes that neither the United States nor the Zionist regime is welcoming a unified Syria.

Mojtaba Amani participated in a special program on Iranian national television on March 8, where he shed light on the regional developments, including those in Syria and Lebanon. The parts of the conversation that pertain to Syria are as follows:



The illustration shows Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan competing over Syrian lands.
● JAMES FERGUSON/FINANCIAL TIMES

➤ Mojtaba Amani



What is currently happening in Syria? We are witnessing intense conflicts, the ongoing aggressions of the occupying Zionist regime on Syrian soil, and the rulers who have remained silent in the face of these aggressions and various issues related to the Zionist regime.

It was clear that after the fall of Bashar al-Assad and the ruling establishment in Syria, we would face such a situation. However, what Ahmed al-Sharaa established in Syria showed signs of a government that could maintain control over all regions of Syria, except for areas officially occupied by the Zionists and those under the control of American-backed forces, namely the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

But gradually, the situation has evolved in such a way that organized killings against various tribes have emerged, which is extremely dangerous and will have an impact on the region, especially in Lebanon, which borders Syria. What we see now, at the beginning of al-Jolani's or Ahmed al-Sharaa's rise to power, was an order to avoid filming any violent scenes. However, the intensity of the violence they employed was not as severe compared to what has happened in recent days, the images of which are being circulated. These images are such that they can encourage others to engage in the killings and violence that have generally been observed in Syria over the past 13 years. This violence has now escalated significantly and is very dangerous as some groups are emboldened to confront, for example, the Alawites or a segment of the

Sunnis or target the Druze. It should also be noted that all these tribes, sects, and religions — Sunnis, Christians, Druze, Alawites, and Shias — that exist in Syria are also present in Lebanon, and these concerns are being transferred to Lebanon. This is the impact we are seeing, and so far, Ahmed al-Sharaa has not been able to uphold the security he promised or stop the cycle of violence.

You mentioned something happening on the ground, which is the infiltration of the Zionist regime into Syrian territory. According to reports published, for example, in the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, Tel Aviv has briefed Washington and asked it to support its new military strategy in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza, out-

lining various objectives in passing and indicating that it does not intend to withdraw from southern Syria. What is the Zionist regime seeking in Syrian territory?

This is a question that, in my opinion, still holds ambiguity. There is a principle that the Zionist regime covets all the lands of its neighboring countries and has repeatedly attacked and occupied them. Whenever it sees weakness, it tries to advance this agenda and establish its occupation and dominance. This has been done several times throughout the history of this illegitimate regime, from 1948 to the present, in Lebanon, parts of Jordan, and parts of Egypt, from which it withdrew later. It has now occupied parts of Syria and has not withdrawn, taking advantage of the opportunity to

do two important things. First, it destroyed all of Syria's military infrastructure, and second, it occupied strategic areas and announced that it does not intend to withdraw anytime soon. This aligns with the territorial ambitions of the Zionist regime. But now, in my opinion, what the Zionist regime urgently needs is to present a victorious image. Although both the Gaza war and the war with Lebanon were concluded with agreements, there are clauses in these agreements that are against the Zionist regime. So, it has not achieved its objectives. It has used this opportunity to somewhat polish its defeated image in the face of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Gaza, to claim victory, and this is the second aspect that, in my opinion, the Israelis are pursuing.

There are also discussions about cutting off Syria's connection with Lebanon, and in their view, this land route leads to further arming of Hezbollah. However, with the rise of a group in Syria that has not shown much favor towards Iran, Hezbollah, and Shias, this possibility does not seem to be very significant. Certainly, the Zionist regime has grand ambitions for expansion in the region, and these are parts of that plan. We are talking about Israel repairing its image. Through these moves and occupations, it is trying to repair its image from one that was defeated in the hands of Gaza and Hezbollah.

You said that we have the same Syrian tribes and sects in Lebanon as well. You also mentioned the plans, tactics, and scenarios of the occupying Zionist regime. Could these conflicts expand, and could we witness a longer war? Is there a possibility or likelihood of Syria's fragmentation given the scale of the conflicts we are seeing?

Syria has long been a country with the potential for fragmentation. Perhaps one of the reasons a secular establishment was in place during the era of Hafez al-Assad and Bashar al-Assad was to prevent the creation of more sects and religions that would separate and fragment Syria. The Zionist regime also benefits from fragmenting Syr-

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There has always been a kind of institutionalized violence in Syria, even before the developments related to the Arab revolutions. This violence is now being used, unfortunately, in a way that the killing of people is akin to hunters going to the desert and wilderness just to kill their prey. This will force the victims to take arms and see this path as a better option than sitting at home and being killed.



➤ Syrian army forces fire a missile against fighters allegedly linked to Syria's ousted leader Bashar al-Assad on March 7, 2025.
● MOAWIA ATRASH/PICTURE ALLIANCE

ia as it causes Syrians to turn against each other and become somewhat oblivious to their main enemy, which is the Zionist regime. However, what we see on the ground now is that neither the United States nor the Zionist regime is seeking a unified Syria. Their track record over the past 13 years has shown that even before, they wanted parts of Syria to remain under Bashar al-Assad's control, parts under Turkish control, and parts under their own control. They did not see the time as appropriate for Israel to annex parts of Syria to its own territories or the occupied Palestinian territories. Neither did the Israelis want to give some form of recognition, for example, to the Druze, by carving out a territory for them and creating a secure backyard for itself within Syria. The trend we see today, given the interventions by the United States and the Zionist regime, is that some Arab countries are not very keen on a secure Syria either. They had made significant efforts over the past 13 years to disrupt the establishment there.

The Turks play a supportive role in such disruptive actions, too. Currently, Syria is dealing with a weak government and a number of neighbors and international actors who are not very concerned about Syria's fragmentation but rather, in some cases, welcome it.

What sense do you make of the brutal killings of Alawites by rebels affiliated with Sharaa, the moves of the European Union, the UK, and Switzerland in lifting some sanctions on Syria, and the visits of the officials of Western countries?

There was a time when the forces fighting against Bashar al-Assad's regime had a blatantly violent image. No matter how much those who supported them tried to give them a civilized face, they were not very successful. These groups have always operated under various names, such as ISIL, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, and Ahrar al-Sham, most of which have an Islamic background, meaning they claim an Islamic identity, except for a few Kurdish SDF, which are secular. They

came to Syria and became active there, and now the situation has become sectarian.

There has always been a kind of institutionalized violence in Syria, even before the developments related to the Arab revolutions. This violence is now being used, unfortunately, in a way that the killing of people is akin to hunters going to the desert and wilderness just to kill their prey. These groups show no defensive or offensive motives; they simply kill any living being they see, with no intention of taking prisoners. They behave in such a way, and the violence seen in recent days will certainly provoke a reaction from the other side when they see that the opposing side is not satisfied with surrender or staying at home but simply wants to kill them wherever they are found, without any reason. This will force them to take arms and see this path as a better option than sitting at home and being killed. This is a highly concerning trend inside Syria, and we will have to see how much Ahmed al-Sharaa can control this situation.



Syrian army personnel gather in Aleppo as they head towards Latakia to join the fight against the fighters allegedly loyal to Syria's ousted leader Bashar al-Assad.
● REUTERS

How do you think the situation in Syria will progress? What will be the outcome of these internal conflicts? Will the thirst for violence be quenched with the killings we are witnessing now?

As I've said, a kind of blood feud and revenge-taking is institutionalized within Syria. So, these killings will lead to further waves of killings. It's impossible to imagine that after the new government comes to power, there will be a general amnesty and that the

people will forget about revenge. But the wave that has started in the last few days is one that will certainly pose a serious challenge to the Syrian government.

The full article first appeared in Persian on Tasnim.

Al-Sharaa exposes his Daesh identity once again

Westerners, Arabs conceal his crimes against Alawites through silence, censorship

International Desk

OPINION

What is noteworthy is the silence of the West and Arab leaders in the face of the bloodbath Ahmed al-Sharaa has unleashed in western Syria. Historical experience across different eras, including the modern times, shows that no matter how much dictators attempt to present themselves as righteous, humanitarian, and peace-seeking before the public, circumstances will inevitably arise that strip away their masks. People will ultimately perceive their true nature with absolute clarity.



Syria's de facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa (front), also known as Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, is pictured after the overthrow of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad in Damascus on December 23, 2024.
● AMMAR AWAD/REUTERS

Recent days have seen the uprising of Alawites in western Syria — in the cities of Latakia and Tartus — create a situation that exposed the façade Sharaa adopted after seizing Damascus. Immediately after taking control of the capital and settling into the presidential palace, he discarded his Daesh attire. Dressed in a pressed suit and tie, with perfumed hair and face, he appeared before cameras, adopting the posture of an 'advanced liberal democrat.' He mingled with Arab leaders, interacted with unveiled women, welcomed leaders of various religions and sects, and openly declared freedom for all people regardless of group, ethnicity, religion, or sect, asserting that no one had the right to harm them. On his first foreign trip, he trav-

eled to Saudi Arabia. Accompanied by his wife — who had also significantly modernized her appearance — he performed the Hajj pilgrimage. With Mohammed bin Salman's explicit approval, he even entered the Kaaba. The United States waived the \$10 million bounty placed on Sharaa for his crimes during his affiliation with Al-Qaeda and Daesh, establishing friendly ties with him. Arab and Western media outlets worked tirelessly to portray Sharaa's liberal-democratic mask, depicting him as harmless "even to an ant." Behind the scenes of this political theater, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) terrorists, alongside Israeli regime death squads, carried out arrests of dissidents and assassinated nuclear and biological scientists in their homes. Alaw-

ites were slaughtered wherever found. Sharaa's crimes escalated to such extremes that Syrian Alawites had no choice but to rise against the HTS terrorist faction. In recent days, they launched a widespread uprising to liberate Latakia and Tartus. Though Western and Arab cameras recorded these atrocities, their owners deemed it inappropriate to report them or unmask Sharaa's polished façade. However, the people's uprising in northwestern Syria achieved this. When HTS tanks, drones, and terrorists began massacring civilians, Sharaa's true face — that of a bloodthirsty Daesh terrorist and Al-Qaeda murderer — was laid bare once more. Everyone remembered him in his original Daesh and Al-Qaeda garb. The Turkish government, too, became

complicit in his crimes. What remains striking is the West's and Arab leaders' silence toward the bloodbath Sharaa has ignited in western Syria. This very silence has crucially contributed to re-exposing the true faces of Western and Arab leaders — the same ones who remained silent during the Zionist regime's 16 months of war crimes in Gaza yet applauded Sharaa, who falsely declared himself Syria's president through a military coup. This suppression will not mark the end. By rising up in Latakia and Tartus, the Syrian people have made clear they will never tolerate Sharaa and his Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham.

The full article first appeared in Persian in the Jamhuri-e Eslami newspaper.



Smoke rises while members of the Syrian forces ride on a vehicle in Latakia on March 9, 2025.
● KARAM AL-MASRI/REUTERS



Though Western and Arab cameras recorded the atrocities committed by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, their owners deemed it inappropriate to report them or unmask Sharaa's polished façade. However, the people's uprising in northwestern Syria achieved this.

Asian Wrestling Championships: Olympic champs lined up as Iran confirms squads for Amman visit

The upcoming Asian Wrestling Championships – starting March 25 in Amman – will see Iran's Saeid Esmaeili and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi make their first international appearances since winning the Olympic gold medals in Paris last summer.

The Iranian freestyle and Greco-Roman squads for the visit to the Jordanian capital were confirmed on Sunday, as the country will vie for a fifth continental team title in six years in both categories.

Joining Esmaeili (67kg) and Saravi (97kg) in the 10-man Greco-Roman team is world silver medalist Pouya Dadmarz, who will be among the favorites in the 55kg contests again, having settled for a runner-up finish behind North Korean Ro Yu-chol last year in Bishkek.

Superheavyweight prodigy Fardin Hedayati – a world under-23 champion last October – will be looking to take his age-group momentum into the 130kg event.

Hedayati, 20, stole the show in last June's Ranking Series event in Budapest – only a second senior appearance for the Iranian – by outmuscling Turkish great Riza Kayaalp and Georgian Olympic silver winner Iakobi Kajaia on his way to the ultimate prize.

Pouya Nasserpour and Mohammad-Mahdi Keshkar will be the Iranian wrestlers in the 60kg and 63kg competitions, respectively, having earned their spots through gold-winning campaigns in December's National Championships.



Paris Olympic champion Saeid Esmaeili (blue), pictured in a training session in Tehran in February, will headline the Iranian Greco-Roman squad at the 2025 Asian Wrestling Championships.

● IAWF

in Amman – ahead of a likely domestic showdown with Olympic silver medalist Amirhossein Zare' for a place at the world event.

Amirhossein Firouzpour will also head to Amman on the back of a Ranking Series triumph in the international season opener, looking to defend his Asian 92kg title.

World U23 champion Mahdi Yousefi – silver winner at the Zagreb Open – will be the Iranian to watch in the 79kg event, with former world under-17 gold medalist Sina Khalili among the favorites in the 70kg class – following an emphatic victory over two-time world silver medalist Amir-Mohammad Yazdani in the Iranian Premier League final in December.

National champion Milad Valizadeh will compete in the 57kg contests, while Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan and Abbas Ebrahimzadeh will be part of the 61kg and 65kg draws, respectively, following their gold-winning runs in the Croatian capital. Former world U20 champion Mohammadreza Shakeri (74kg), Abolfazl Rahmani (86kg) – a 2024 bronze winner at the U20 Worlds – and Mobin Azimi (97kg) – world junior gold medalist in 2023 – complete the Iranian freestyle lineup in Amman.

Danial Sohrabi – a bronze winner in last year's U23 Worlds – will be keen on the 72kg title, knowing a gold medal in Amman will give him the edge over former world and Olympic champion Mohammadreza Geraei in the race for a place in September's World Championships in Zagreb. Alireza Abdevali will step into

the 77kg contests as the reigning world under-20 champion, while world U23 gold medalist Mohammad Naqousi (82kg) and Yasin Yazdi (87kg) – silver winner at the U20 Worlds – will also be looking to build on their impressive campaigns last year when making their senior debuts at the Asian Championships.

Freestyle test

The Iranian freestyle team will be facing a daunting task to defend its Asian crown after head coach Pejman Dorostkar decided to name an under-23 squad for the competitions.

Dorostkar's men will face a stiff test from Japan, which has excelled in major internation-

al events – particularly in the lightweight divisions – in recent years.

Six-time world age-group champion Amirreza Ma'soumi, who didn't give away a single point en route to the gold at the Zagreb Open Ranking Series in January, will be chasing the ultimate prize in the 125kg event

AFC Champions League Two: Tractor to pursue Asian dream at Al Taawoun

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League leader Tractor will play away to Saudi Pro League side Al Taawoun in the second leg of their AFC Champions League Two quarterfinal today, hoping to remain on course for a maiden Asian silverware when the final whistle blows in Buraidah's Wolves Park.

Both sides will have it all to play for following a goalless stalemate in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Imam Stadium last week, with the Saudi outfit having goalkeeper Abdulquddus Atiay for delivering a man-of-the-match performance to keep his side in the tie.

Head coach Dragan Skocic went on to rue Tractor's lack of cutting edge, after the Iranian club registered 16 shots – six on target – in the first leg, but remained confident of his team's chances of progressing to the semifinals.

"We had a strong rhythm, but unfortunately, we did not score. We showed how good a team we are and we are going to win the second leg," the Croatian said in the post-match press conference.

The first-leg result marked a second goalless draw for Tractor in as many games – following an Iranian top-flight encounter with title rival Sepahan – but Skocic showed little concern, saying: "It doesn't worry

me. Whenever the players give everything they can on the field, I'm happy. I know we'll have the same chances in the next game and I hope we write fate differently."

Prolific striker Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh will be the player to watch in the Tractor colors – after being denied by Atiay and the crossbar in the first leg – as he will be chasing a ninth goal in eight outings in the competition this season. While Tractor had its domestic trip to Foolad Khuzestan postponed on Friday, Al Taawoun – eighth in the table – will be fresh from Saturday's 3-0 home victory over 10-man Damac in the Saudi top flight.



● MOJTABA SALEH/MIZAN



● FFIRI

Iran runner-up to Brazil in friendly futsal tourney

Sports Desk

Iran settled for a runner-up finish to host Brazil in a four-team futsal tournament after a 3-0 loss to the reigning world champion in Sunday's final in Curitiba.

Felipe Valério put Brazil in front

with two minutes into the game before Neguinho scored twice in quick succession as Brazil got off to commanding lead early on in the first half.

Iran failed to capitalize on a much-improved performance after the break as Vahid Shamsaei's young and new-look team suf-

fered a second defeat against the futsal powerhouse in four days.

Iran began its campaign with a 5-2 loss against Brazil on Thursday, but went on to rout Greenland 11-2 before edging out Afghanistan 4-3 to set up a rematch with the Seleccion in the final.

Nowruz-e Sayyad welcomes fishing season in southern Iran



surfran.com



Nowruz-e Sayyad, an age-old ceremony deeply rooted in the traditions of southern Iran, specifically on Qeshm Island in Hormozgan Province, marks the commencement of the primary fishing season.

In this region of Iran, the sea and the practice of fishing hold profound significance in the daily lives of its inhabitants. For those residing on islands like Qeshm, nestled alongside the Persian Gulf, the sea is inextricably linked to their very existence, surfran.com wrote.

Here, the sea is synonymous with life itself, providing sustenance and vitality to the

communities that depend on it. Fishing is not merely an occupation but a defining element of life on the island, with distinct seasons and periods shaped by its cyclical nature.

While the rest of Iran observes the traditional Nowruz in late March, the fishermen of southern Iran celebrate their own unique New Year, known as Nowruz-e Sayyad (Fisherman's Nowruz). This celebration coincides with the beginning of the main fishing season in late July. Nowruz-e Sayyad, which translates to "a new day for the fishermen," is a ritual that has been observed by southern Iranians for generations.

On this day, fishermen abstain from fishing and refrain from consuming seafood, allowing the fish population to replenish. In addition, the local community celebrates the occasion by immersing themselves in the sea. People of all ages and genders participate, believing that this act of purification will protect them from illness throughout the year.

This ritual is particularly vibrant in the Salakh village on Qeshm Island. The entire community of Salakh participates in the ceremony, engaging in traditional rituals such as *razif khani*, a traditional ritual

in which the sailors sing, and performing the *shushi* dance to the accompaniment of local musical instruments.

Typically, a group of men dressed in white attire plays drums, while another group sings traditional songs and dances to the rhythm.

As previously mentioned, the avoidance of fish consumption on this day stems from the belief that it provides fish with an opportunity to reproduce, thereby ensuring an increase in their numbers. It is a day when fish can enjoy moments of freedom and tranquility in the vast expanse of the sea, undisturbed by

fishermen.

The people of Qeshm Island believe that on this particular day, all springs flow into the sea, and it is imperative to safeguard the fish population to ensure the continuation of divine blessings upon the islanders through the propagation of their species. Moreover, families bring the sick and elderly to the sea, pouring water over their bodies with the hope of healing.

Similar to the traditional Nowruz, the people of southern Iran don new attire on this day, symbolizing good fortune for the year ahead. They also adorn their animals with a

red mud called *gelak* and lead them to the sea to partake in the festivities. Women prepare a special pastry made from dates, known as *ranginak*, and participate in various games and contests such as rowing and tug-of-war. The essence of these games is rooted in coastal living and fishing, with older generations imparting the rules to children and adolescents.

Additional rituals include two men dressed in black to represent bandits, a wooden camel to symbolize the carrying away of spoils, and a man disguised as a white bird to evoke purity.

Siahgel Fire Temple; ancient treasure of Ilam Province

Iranica Desk

The Siahgel Fire Temple, also known as Siahgel Chartaqi, is a significant historical site located in Eyvan, Ilam Province. Dating back to the Parthian era, this temple has undergone several restorations over the years, reflecting its enduring importance.

According to Habibollah Mahmoudian, a faculty member at the Islamic Azad University of Ilam, the temple is situated approximately 10 kilometers from Sartang village, alongside the Gangir River, amidst an archaeological site rich with remnants of ancient civilization, ISNA wrote. Constructed with stone and plaster, the Siahgel Fire Temple is attributed to the Sassanid period. It stands out among other fire temples in Ilam Province due to its remarkable preservation and completeness, having benefited from multiple restoration efforts in recent years.

Mahmoudian noted that the temple's four-arch and dome-like structure suggests it may have served as a Mithraic temple during the Parthian period.

As one of the best-preserved fire temples from the pre-Islamic era in Ilam Province, the Siahgel Fire Temple showcases a design characterized by four foundational

bases and a single-layer dome. The side corridors and various surrounding artifacts enhance the site's grandeur, indicating that this religious center may have been associated with prominent rulers of its time.

Ilam's historical significance

Ilam Province, located in western Iran, has a rich tapestry of history influenced by various cultures and civilizations. The region has been inhabited since ancient times, with evidence of human settlement dating back to the Elamite period, around 3000 BCE.



The province's strategic location along trade routes has made it a melting pot of diverse cultures, contributing to its historical significance. Throughout history, Ilam Province has witnessed the rise and fall of various empires, including the Parthians and Sassanids, each leaving their mark on the region's cultural heritage. Today, the remnants of these ancient civilizations serve as a testament to the province's rich history and its significance in the broader narrative of Iranian heritage.

Eyvan's heritage

Eyvan, as a city within Ilam Province, has played a crucial role in

the region's history. The area's archaeological sites, including the Siahgel Fire Temple, reveal insights into the religious practices and architectural advancements of ancient Persian civilizations. Eyvan's strategic location has made it a crossroads of cultures and a focal point for various empires throughout history. Archaeological evidence suggests that the area has been inhabited since ancient times, with remnants of settlements and structures offering glimpses into the lives of those who once called this land home. The city's proximity to vital trade routes has also contributed to its historical significance, fostering an exchange of ideas, goods, and traditions that have shaped its unique identity. Beyond the Siahgel Fire Temple, Eyvan offers a wealth of attractions for history enthusiasts and cultural explorers. The surrounding landscapes are dotted with ancient mounds and archaeological sites, each holding clues to the region's past.

Eyvan is known for its vibrant local culture, including traditional music, and crafts. The warm hospitality of the local people adds another layer of charm to this historic city, making it a rewarding destination for those seeking an authentic Iranian experience.

IRNA

Society without art meaningless: Minister

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Interior, Eskandar Momeni, emphasized the vital role of arts in society during a recent gathering with personalities of various artistic guilds and prominent artists. Speaking candidly at the meeting, Momeni said, "A society without art is meaningless. For example, we read about history in books and writings, but when it is turned into a film or series, the life of that historical figure or national hero becomes immortal." Momeni outlined the ministry's commitment to supporting the continuity of artistic activities, saying, "We are working to ensure that the Ministry of Interior continues to aid and stand by you in the field of the arts." The minister also stressed the ongoing efforts to expand the ministry's focus beyond its traditionally known political and security roles. "The Ministry of Interior is typically recognized more for its political and security

aspects, with its economic and social dimensions often overlooked. Our new approach is to focus more on the social and economic aspects of the ministry." Addressing the importance of handling social issues effectively, Momeni said that social phenomena should not be treated as security issues. "We should address social issues through the appropriate mechanisms," he said. The senior official also pointed to the country's Social Affairs Organization, which operates under the Ministry of Interior, as having adopted a new approach to support artists. "This year, the organization supported two films at the Fajr Film Festival," he noted. Momeni acknowledged the significant impact of collaborative efforts between the media and artists. "Targeted and joint actions with the media and artists have the most influence on changing behavior. We will continue these meetings with you,



Iran's Minister of Interior, Eskandar Momeni (c), addresses cultural figures and artists during a meeting in Tehran on March 10, 2025. defapress.ir

the artists," he added. Mohammad Bathaei, Deputy Minister of Interior and Head of the Social Affairs Organization, also spoke at the gathering. He highlighted a recent meeting with sociologists where various pressing societal issues were openly discussed. Bathaei affirmed that these discussions would continue in the future, adding, "In the social realm, to increase joy and hope, your art is needed." Bathaei underscored the crucial role of arts, emphasizing that "the entry of art and the prioritization of artistic productions can help solve the problems we are currently facing in society." Topics of discussion during the meeting included mutual understanding between artists



and officials, defining common national interests and security, the value of critical and

constructive perspectives in cinema, the status of artistic guilds, and the necessity of co-

operation between provincial governments and the House of Cinema.



Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art to reopen in mid-March

Arts & Culture Desk

Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art, one of Iran's most significant artistic and historical treasures, will reopen on March 15. The museum, after undergoing extensive renovation, will welcome artists and art enthusiasts, along with seasonal tourists, marking its return after four years of restoration and reflection. Saeed Mohammadi-Panah, the director of the museum, confirmed the reopening and said, "This museum, also operating as the Isfahan Visual Arts Center, has completed a four-year phase of restoration and revitalization. Just in time for the New Year and on the occasion of its 30th anniversary, it is once again ready to host artists, art lovers,

and of course, the visitors arriving for the Nowruz holiday." In conjunction with the reopening, two exhibitions will be inaugurated with the presence of the mayor of Isfahan. The exhibitions, titled 'Thirty Years of Museum Posters' and 'Thirty Years of Museum Images,' will provide an in-depth look at the institution's rich history, inviting audiences to explore its legacy through visual representation. Mohammadi-Panah also highlighted the historical significance of the museum's building. "The construction of this building dates back to the Qajar era and is one of the valuable architectural complexes in the historical heart of Isfahan, located near the Chel Sotoun Palace. Over the years, it has undergone various changes in its

function. Originally, it was the personal residence of Zill al-Sultan, the ruler of Isfahan during the Qajar period. Subsequently, it served as the site for various administrative purposes, including housing the Rakibkhaneh (stable), Jobekhaneh (armory), and the Isfahan governorship, before officially becoming the Isfahan Museum of Contemporary Art in 1994." According to him, the museum has always played a pivotal role in shaping the art scene in Isfahan and Iran. "For exactly 30 years, this has been a home for both national and international artists, students in the visual arts field, and art researchers. The geographical proximity and close collaboration with the Isfahan University of Art, which nurtures a new generation of artists,

has further increased the significance of this institution." The museum, known for its unique architectural design, boasts four large galleries. Over the past three decades, it has hosted works by renowned local and international artists, including the celebrated Iranian artist Farshchian and the renowned German artist Günther Uecker. He concluded that the museum holds a rich collection of more than 700 invaluable visual art pieces, which will soon be displayed for public viewing in Gallery 4. The museum operates under the supervision of the Isfahan Municipality's Cultural, Social, and Sports Organization, continuing its vital role in the city's art and cultural landscape.

Tjeknavorian's 'Rostam and Sohrab' to be performed in Armenia

Arts & Culture Desk

The opera 'Rostam and Sohrab,' composed by maestro Loris Tjeknavorian, will be staged in Armenia in April 2025. The full, two-act performance will be conducted and composed by Tjeknavorian himself, with set design, costume, and direction by Yarta Yaran. The event will take place from March 31 to April 2, at the Yerevan Opera House, IRNA reported. In a video released on his personal social media account, Tjeknavorian shared the news with his followers: "Hello, dear friends. Today, I must say that one of my works is being born, the opera 'Rostam and Sohrab,' the masterpiece of Ferdowsi, which I have worked on for many years to transform this beautiful story into an opera." Tjeknavorian further expressed his excitement about the project, saying, "It is a great honor for me, and I am happy that my dear friend Yaran, who is a great actor, director, and poet, will be directing and designing this opera. He has done an incredible job, and I hope you, dear friends, will come and witness this literary masterpiece, 'Rostam and Sohrab' by

Ferdowsi with my music. See you soon. Goodbye." 'Rostam and Sohrab' is an opera by Loris Tjeknavorian based on the tragic tale from Ferdowsi's 'Shahnameh'. The opera, initially premiered in 2004, was first performed in a puppet opera format, directed and dramaturged by Behrooz Gharibpour. The composition was conceived after Tjeknavorian received a grant from the Carl Orff Foundation in Salzburg, Austria. The opera took 25 years to complete, and its first public performance was held in 2002, conducted by Tjeknavorian at the Milad Hall in Tehran. According to Tjeknavorian, two key influences in the creation of 'Rostam and Sohrab' music were the sounds of traditional Iranian zurkhaneh music and the mournful music performed during Muharram mourning rituals in Iran. Over 25 years, Tjeknavorian composed eight different versions of the opera, including one entirely with Iranian instruments. The final version, written for a full orchestra, is set to be performed in Yerevan. In addition to his opera works, Tjeknavorian has composed over 75 works, including symphonies, chamber music, concertos, ballet scores, and



choral music. His notable works include operas such as 'Persepolis' and 'Parisa,' 'Rostam and Sohrab,' 'Shams and Molana,' and 'Rostam and Esfandiar.' He also authored a humorous book titled 'Kharestan' (The Land of Donkeys), a collection of short stories. His recent work 'Harmonizing Notes on the Scale of Numbers,' was unveiled last year in tribute to the late Maryam Mirzakhani.

Iraq to be special guest at 36th Tehran Int'l Book Fair

Arts & Culture Desk

Iraq will be the special guest at the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, set to take place from May 7 to 17, 2025, at Imam Khomeini Mosalla in Tehran. The agreement for Iraq's special guest status was confirmed in a meeting on March 10 between Mohsen Javadi, the head of the Cultural Affairs Department of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran, and The Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, Ahmed Fakak Al-Badrani, IRNA reported. The meeting also included key cultural figures such as Ayoub Dehghan Kar, the cultural and scientific advisor to Iran's Cultural Affairs Department; Gholam Reza Abazari, Iran's cultural attaché in Iraq; and other cultural officials from both countries. During the meeting, both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening cultural interactions



and expanding bilateral cooperation in publishing and literature. The participants acknowledged that Iraq's participation as a special guest could foster deeper cultural ties between the two nations. The Tehran International Book Fair is Iran's largest cultural event, annually attracting publishers, writers, and book enthusiasts from around the globe. This year's event, the 36th edition, is expected to strengthen the cultural bond between Iran and Iraq further, showcasing a range of literary works from both countries.