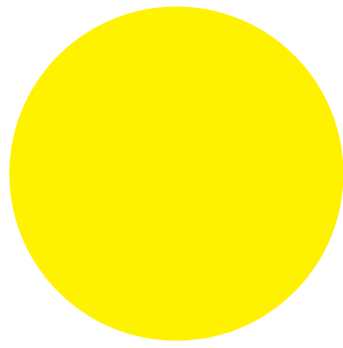


## Holiday Notice

Iran Daily extends its warm wishes to readers ahead of the Persian New Year. The newspaper will not be published during the Nowruz holidays. The first issue of the next year will come out on April 5.



# No justification for snapback mechanism but pressuring Iran: *Baqaei*



## World won't put up with US bullying tactics



By Salar Velayatmadar  
Iranian lawmaker

### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

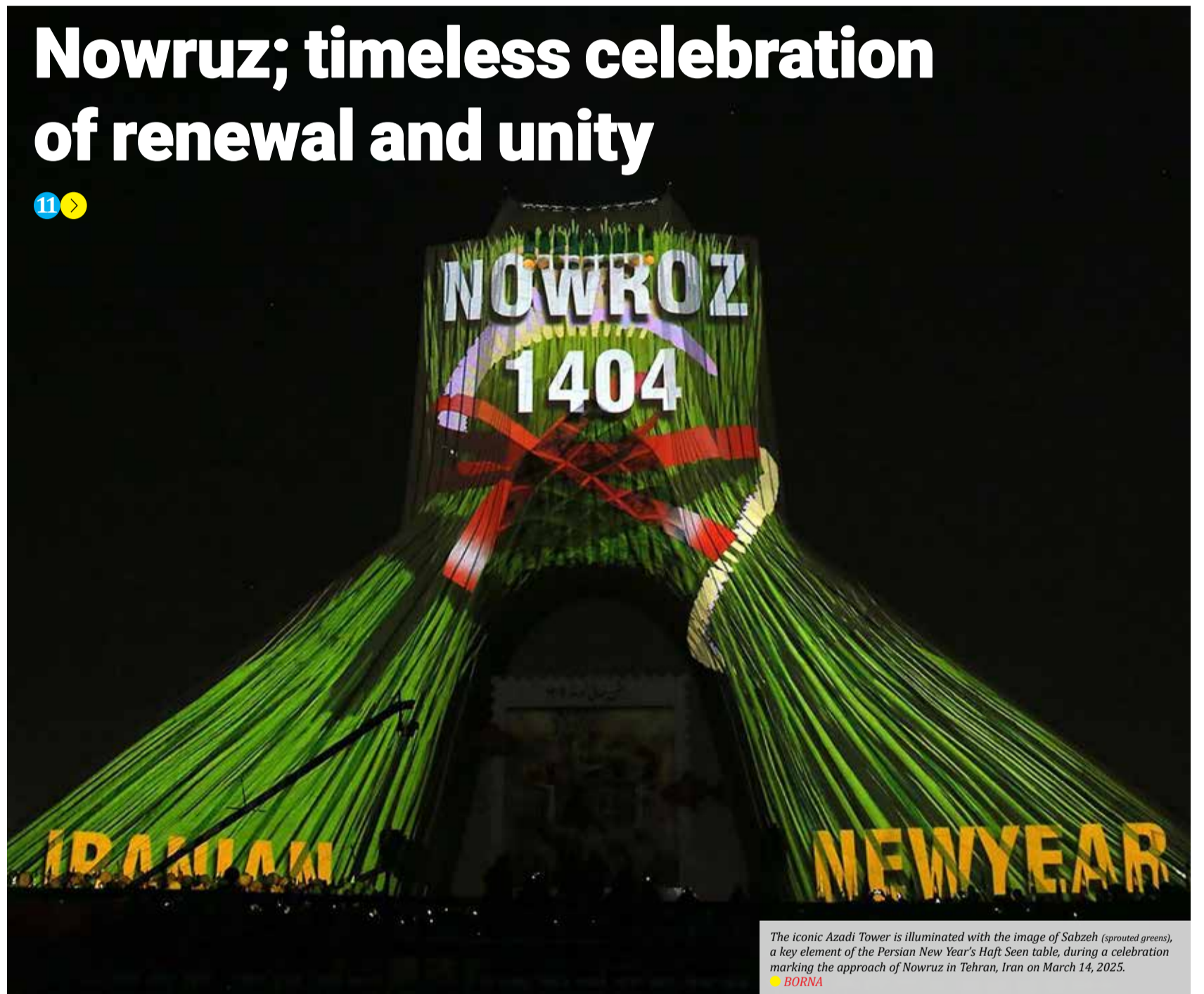
Nearly a year and a half has passed since the start of Israel's mass killings and atrocities in the Gaza Strip. During this time, Tel Aviv has done its utmost to crush the oppressed Palestinian people, unleashing every brutal tactic in its playbook. Those who turned a blind eye to these crimes or kept their heads down in the face of Israeli aggression are just as complicit, especially the Islamic and neighboring countries that failed to step up when it mattered most. Their inaction will go down in history as a lasting stain on their legacy.

Yet, the people of Gaza have held their ground. They have become a symbol of sacrifice, resilience, and defiance for the world. Their unwavering resistance has set the stage for oppressed nations everywhere to rise against tyranny and injustice.

Recent developments in Gaza have laid bare the true intentions of Israel and its backers. From the indiscriminate killing of civilians—even after a cease-fire agreement was signed—to blocking humanitarian aid and cutting off electricity, it is clear that the ultimate goal is to grind down Gaza's resistance and force its people to surrender and submit to the greedy schemes and plans of the Zionists and the United States. Top of Form However, the opposite has happened. The fierce defiance of Hamas and the people of Gaza has worn out the Israeli regime, forcing it to accept peace negotiations.

Page 2 >

## Nowruz; timeless celebration of renewal and unity



The iconic Azadi Tower is illuminated with the image of Sabzeh (sprouted greens), a key element of the Persian New Year's Haft Seen table, during a celebration marking the approach of Nowruz in Tehran, Iran on March 14, 2025.

BORNA

## Iran Daily reflects on tumultuous year in Special Issue

As the Persian calendar year (20 March 2024 - 20 March 2025) winds down, Iran and the wider world have witnessed a series of major events, some of which have shaken up global and regional affairs. From the Israeli bloodshed in the Gaza Strip and the presidential elections in both Iran and the United States to the success of two Iranian filmmakers in coming away with the Academy Award for Best Animated Short. In the run-up to the Iranian New Year and Nowruz, Iran Daily has put together a seven-page special issue, taking stock of the year's most momentous political, economic, social, cultural, artistic, and sporting events both at home and abroad. The publication aims to shed light on the defining moments of a year that has left a lasting imprint on local and global affairs.

See pages 4-10 >



SPECIAL ISSUE

# No justification for snapback mechanism but pressuring Iran: *Baqaei*

## International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Monday that there is no justification for triggering the snapback mechanism against Iran except for exerting political pressure on the Islamic Republic. During his weekly presser, Esmail Baqaei warned that using the snapback mechanism against Iran has consequences that will definitely affect the opposing parties. His remarks came days after the UK, France, and Germany – three European parties to the Iran nuclear deal – threatened to trigger certain provisions of the agreement, known as the “snapback mechanism,” which would reimpose a broad range of international sanctions on Iran that had been suspended under the 2015 nuclear pact. After a closed-door UN Security Council's meeting on Iran nuclear program, initiated by the UK, France and German at Washington's request, Britain indicated that Iran's actions could trigger the snap-

back of UN sanctions.

Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Amir Saeid Iravani on Thursday called the meeting an “unwarranted interference” in its ongoing cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iravani described the Wednesday's meeting as a “blatant political maneuver” which misuses the world body in an attempt to “advance narrow agendas.” “Such actions set a dangerous precedent that undermines the Council's credibility,” he added.

“We categorically reject the baseless claims made by the United States, the United Kingdom and France. These countries have conveniently ignored the reality that they themselves are responsible for the current situation.”

Iravani said the Security Council meeting had been held for discussing purely technical issues and thus fall exclusively within the mandate of the IAEA, which were just discussed last week at the Board of Governors in Vienna.



Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei speaks during his weekly press conference in Tehran on March 17, 2025.  
● IRNA

## Opposition figure Karroubi's house arrest 'over' after 14 years



Mehdi Karroubi

and harming the national security.

“My father's detention is over in accordance with the order of the head of the Judiciary,” his son, Hossein, was quoted as saying by ISNA news agency.

He said the restriction on his father's activities had been lifted but security forces would remain at the residence until April 9 for “safety concerns.”

Mousavi, would also be released from house arrest in the coming months, Hossein told Jamaran news website.

Iran's Judiciary has yet to confirm his release.

Iran's incumbent President, Masoud Pezeshkian, promised during his election campaign to release both politicians. Karroubi backed the candidacy of Pezeshkian, who took office in July last year.

In September, Pezeshkian said the issue surrounding Karroubi's case “has been resolved.”

## International Desk

Iranian authorities ordered the release of opposition figure, who has been under house arrest since 2011, local media reported Monday.

The 87-year-old, together with former premier Mir Hossein Mousavi, led the “Green Movement” that contested Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election as president in 2009.

He was placed under house arrest in February 2011 following accusations of orchestrating street protests.

Karroubi and Mousavi, who had lost in the election, claimed that the results had been rigged. Both remain under house arrest on charges of provoking the public

## Iran, Japan accentuate dialogue to resolve Tehran's nuclear issue

### International Desk

Iran and Japan underscored the significance of dialogue to resolve a long-standing dispute over Iran's nuclear program.

On Monday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in a phone call with his Japanese counterpart Takeshi Iwaya exchanged views on regional and international issues and stressed the

need to employ diplomacy to resolve issues, especially a dispute over Iran's nuclear activities. Araqchi and Iwaya emphasized the necessity for the continuation of dialogue and consultations to strengthen the relations between Iran and Japan and ensure peace and stability in the region.

Japan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the 30-minute phone call involved “frank

discussions” on various issues concerning Iran, including its nuclear program.

Iwaya expressed deep concern over the current situation and emphasized the importance of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

He stressed the need for Iran to take constructive and tangible steps to advance discussions aimed at peacefully resolving its nuclear issue.

## Grossi: Cooperation with IAEA vital to prove peacefulness of Iran's nuclear program

### International Desk

Head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi in a meeting with Iran Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said cooperation with the UN agency is indispensable to provide credible guarantees of the peaceful nature of Iran's program.

“Timely meeting with Iran's deputy foreign minister Gharibabadi,” Grossi said in a post on X after his meeting with the Iranian official in Vienna on Monday.

Gharibabadi also took to the X, described the meeting as “frank and constructive” and said that Iran is “committed” to cooperating with the UN's nuclear agency. “While safeguarding its national security and interests, Iran remains committed to cooperating with the IAEA within the framework of its safeguards' obligation,” he said, referring to agency protocols aimed at deterring the spread of nuclear weapons.

He said both sides discussed the Iran-IAEA cooperation, the resolution of two outstanding issues, the security of nuclear facilities, the latest developments surrounding the nuclear issue, and the lifting of sanctions.

Gharibabadi emphasized that the settlement of the remaining issues requires the elimination of external political pressure on the IAEA and the agency's adoption of an “independent, technical, impartial, and professional” approach.

Currently, Iran and the IAEA are in a dispute triggered by the agency's claims of “uranium traces” found at “undeclared nuclear sites” in Iran.

Iran has categorically rejected the accusations regarding undeclared nuclear activities or materials. Tehran maintains it is prepared to cooperate with the IAEA to settle disputes.

Earlier Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said the meeting was a “part of our

ongoing engagement with the agency.”

The discussions in the Austrian capital come after Gharibabadi took part in talks with his Russian and Chinese counterparts in Beijing on Friday.

“As threats against Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities have increased, it is natural for us to intensify consultations with the IAEA,” Baqaei said.

On March 7, US President Donald Trump said he had written to Iran's leadership urging new talks on the country's nuclear program, but warning of possible military action if it refused.

Iran has confirmed receiving the letter, with Baqaei saying Monday that “the content of the letter is not far removed from Trump's public statements and repeats the same talking points.”

“Our response will be provided through the appropriate channels once the assessment is complete,” he added.

For decades, Western countries

led by the United States have suspected Tehran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran rejects such claims, insisting its nuclear activities are solely for peaceful purposes, including energy production.

In 2015, Iran signed an agreement with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States - plus Germany to limit its nuclear activities.

But Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the deal in 2018.

Tehran remained committed to its obligations under the deal for a year but then started to roll back from them, increasing the levels of uranium enrichment.

In recent months, Iran has held several rounds of talks with Britain, France and Germany in a bid to revive the agreement, which had lifted sanctions on Tehran in exchange for curbs on its nuclear activities.

## World won't put ...

Even before the cease-fire deal was reached, it was widely expected that Israel would go

back on its word and sabotage the process. The plan was clear—secure the release of Israeli captives in the first phase and then tear up the agreement. But the Resistance Front, through calculated strategy, has backed Israel into a corner. Now, with the release of its remaining captives still on the line, Tel Aviv has no choice but to follow through with phase two. Israel's track record shows that, whenever it gets what it wants, it looks for a way out of its commitments. That is why every clause of the current deal must be implemented step by step, with solid guarantees in place. Despite Israel's stalling tactics, the

second phase of the cease-fire will likely move forward. Washington and President Donald Trump, in particular, have emboldened Israel to drag its feet, giving Tel Aviv the confidence to stall for time. Trump has even threatened Hamas with an all-out massacre if it refuses to release the remaining captives—ignoring Israel's repeated violations of the agreement.

This brand of strong-arm diplomacy is precisely the approach the US has taken with many nations in recent years. But this bullying behavior no longer holds water in today's world. Countries are gradually coming to grips with the reality that Washington's threats are losing their weight, and the global stance on US hegemony is shifting for good.

Iran and several other nations caught on to America's coercive tactics long ago—especially when Trump ripped up international agreements like the JCPOA and walked away from multiple global treaties. His reckless approach to diplomacy has left no doubt about his country's self-serving agenda. Trump has been playing with fire, making outrageous demands of other nations. If they comply, his hunger for domination is fed—if they refuse, they face threats of sanctions, economic strangulation, or even military action. But all this behavior has done is blow the lid off his erratic and authoritarian nature, exposing him to the world as nothing more than a power-hungry opportunist.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



# Pezeshkian highlights plans to address energy deficits



The meeting to discuss solutions for addressing energy shortages was held chaired by President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) in Tehran on March 17, 2025.  
● [president.ir](http://president.ir)

challenges, including energy imbalances and consumption management.”

Pezeshkian also emphasized the need for accurate data on the distribution and consumption patterns of different regions and the creation of an operational framework involving experts to implement innovative energy management solutions.

He suggested leveraging the expertise of private sector technology companies, particularly those specializing in energy.

During the 16th meeting of the Economic Council, held on Monday at the office of Vice President Mohammadreza Aref, a performance report on “the implementation of Economic Council resolutions regarding the construction and development of power plants” was presented by Minister of Energy Abbas Aliabadi and experts from the ministry.

The report provided comprehensive information on power plants under construction or development, challenges in the sector, and proposed solutions.

## Minister announces 400 MW boost in renewable energy capacity



● [IRNA](http://irna.ir)

### Economy Desk

Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi revealed that Iran has added 400 megawatts (MW) to its renewable energy production capacity over the past seven months, equivalent to one-third of the total renewable energy capacity developed in all previous years.

Speaking on Monday, Aliabadi stated that the country's renewable energy capacity stood at 1,200 MW at the start of the current administration's term. With the addition of 400 MW in the past seven months, the sector has grown by an amount equal to one-third of the total capacity developed in prior years, IRNA reported.

He noted that an average of 57 MW of renewable energy capacity was added monthly during this period. Aliabadi emphasized that if the country had pursued renewable energy development at half the pace of the past seven months over the last 20 years, the current renewable energy production capacity would have exceeded 6,000 MW.

Aliabadi attributed the lack of focus on renewables in past decades to the unattractiveness of the electricity industry for clean energy development. He highlighted the Energy Ministry's commitment to making the sector more appealing to private investors by liberalizing renewable energy pricing and facilitating its trade on Iran Energy Exchange.

The minister outlined plans to increase renewable energy capacity to over 3,500 MW by the peak demand period of the new year. He projected that, based on current forecasts and planning, the country's renewable energy production capacity will reach 5,000 MW by September 2025.

Aliabadi detailed the ministry's strategies for renewable energy development, including partnership with energy-intensive industries, installing solar panels for beneficiaries of support organizations, and leveraging Article 12 of the Law on Removing Production Barriers and Article 61 of the Consumption Pattern Reform Law.

He pointed to land allocation, financing from financial institutions, streamlining corporate guarantee processes, expediting equipment imports, and obtaining permits for power plant equipment as critical requirements for advancing renewable energy development in the coming months.

Aliabadi expressed confidence that, with strong government support and enhanced financing capabilities from banks and financial institutions, the renewable energy sector will progress as planned.

### Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized that updating heating equipment, banning the production of outdated and non-standard devices, and activating smart meters are essential steps to reform household energy consumption patterns. He also stated that the use of solar panels will become mandatory in government offices

and executive bodies, particularly in the electricity sector. The meeting to discuss solutions for addressing energy shortages was held on Monday with the attendance of Pezeshkian as innovative proposals for smart energy distribution and consumption management were reviewed and debated. The president stressed that any plan to address energy imbalances and manage distri-

bution and consumption must be based on fairness and equitable allocation for all Iranian citizens.

He noted that resolving energy imbalances should not be confined to a single approach. Instead, various methods and solutions should be implemented in tandem, tailored to the specific conditions of each region and climate. This would provide flexibility for manag-

ers and expand operational capabilities.

Pezeshkian also highlighted the importance of reforming consumption patterns through education, leveraging the capacity of mosques, health centers, and influential groups, including artists.

He stated, “If we convince the public of our decisions and involve them in implementa-

## Gov't spokesperson: Slashing Iran's oil exports to zero 'impossible'



● [SHANA](http://shana.ir)

### Economy Desk

The government spokesperson, referring to the US sanctions recently imposed on Iran's oil minister, stated that the “illegal” bans demonstrate that Mohsen Paknejad has been performing his duties effectively.

Fatemeh Mohajerani, while commemorating March 19, the National Day of Iran's Oil Industry, addressed the US sanctions against the oil minister, saying, “These sanctions indicate that Oil Minister Paknejad has been doing his job correctly. I emphasize that reducing Iran's oil exports to zero is absolutely impossible,” IRNA reported.

She highlighted that the signing of a \$17 billion agreement within the Oil Ministry, structured through four contracts, will create 17,000 jobs and increase Iran's share in the joint gas fields with Qatar.

At the beginning of her remarks, the spokesperson underscored controlling inflation, boosting economic growth, and addressing imbalances as the government's top priorities.

Mohajerani added that such programs remain as serious priorities on the president's agenda, with related meetings being held regularly.

## 8% decline registered in monetary base growth rate

# CBI: Liquidity growth rate reaches 27.8%

### Economy Desk

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced that liquidity volume in Bahman, the eleventh month of the Iranian calendar year of 1403 (Jan. 20-Feb. 18, 2025) increased by 26.2% compared to the end of 1402 (March 19, 2024), while the 12-month liquidity growth rate in Bahman reached 27.8%.

Liquidity volume in Bahman amounted to 99,420.1 trillion rials, reflecting a 26.2% growth compared to the end of the year 1402. The 12-month liquidity growth rate in Bahman of the current year stood at 27.8%, marking a 0.3 percentage point increase compared to the same period in 2024 (27.5%).

### Monetary base

The monetary base in Bahman reached 12,729.4 trillion rials. The 12-month growth rate of the monetary base in the eleventh month of the current Iranian year was 22%, showing an 8 percentage point decline compared to the same period in 1402 (30%). Additionally, the monetary base in the month to Feb. 18, 2025 grew by 16.6% compared to the end of the previous Iranian year. In line with the General Assembly directive of the CBI (1401) regarding the



● [IRNA](http://irna.ir)

reevaluation of foreign assets (based on their quality) and foreign liabilities in 1401 (2023), the CBI's financial statements for the end of that year were revised and adjusted.

Furthermore, in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual and Compilation Guide (MFSMCG, 2016) and considering the principle of economic territory, the classification of monetary base components was reviewed to better align with international standards.

In the 11 months leading to February 2025, the CBI's net foreign as-

sets were the primary driver of monetary base growth, contributing 88 percentage points to the 11-month growth. The main factor behind the increase in net foreign assets was the rise in the exchange rate.

The second-largest contributor to monetary base growth by the end of Bahman (Feb. 18, 2025) was the CBI's claims on banks, accounting for 17.9 percentage points.

### Government sector, other factors

From Bahman of 1403 compared to the end of 1402, the net debt of the government sector to

the CBI contributed 8.8 percentage points to the 16.6% growth in the monetary base during that period.

The increase in the government sector's net debt to the CBI was primarily due to higher claims by the CBI on the government.

The only factor reducing monetary base growth by the end of Bahman 1403 compared to the end of the Iranian year 1402 was the CBI's net other items, which accounted for -98.1 percentage points. Additionally, the liquidity increased by 8.3% by the end of Bahman (Feb. 18, 2025) compared to the end of 1402, reaching 7.81.

# Iran 1403 at a glance

## International Desk

The Iranian people are preparing to celebrate their new calendar year which begins on March 21. The country experienced a wide range of events, one of which shocked the people and led to a political transition in the country i.e. the death of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash.

Here is a short list of significant events to have unfolded across the country over the year:

## President Raisi's tragic death in chopper incident

On May 19, former Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi, 63, died in a helicopter crash in foggy weather in the mountains near the border with the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The helicopter carrying Raisi crashed in the Dizmar forest, nestled between the cities of Varzaqan and Jolfa in Iran's East Azarbaijan Province, about 375 miles (600km) north-west of the Iranian capital, Tehran.

It was transporting Raisi, Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian, East Azarbaijan Governor General Malek Rahmati, Friday Prayers leader of the city of Tabriz Seyyed Mohammad Ali Al-e Hashem and a member of the president's bodyguard team Mahdi Mousavi. The helicopter's pilot, co-pilot and crew were also among others on board the chopper.

Raisi and his accompanying delegation were returning from a ceremony to inaugurate a dam

on the Aras River with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. The final inquiry into the crash that found the crash was caused by bad weather.

The main cause of the helicopter crash was the "complex climatic and atmospheric conditions of the region in the spring," said the final report of the Supreme Board of the General Staff of the Armed Forces.

The report added that "the sudden emergence of a thick mass of dense and rising fog" caused the helicopter's collision into the mountain.

According to the report, there were no signs of sabotage in parts and systems.

Country's then vice-president, Mohammad Mokhber, took over as interim president. The deputy foreign minister, Ali Bagheri Kani, was also appointed as acting foreign minister.

Raisi had won Iran's 2021 presidential election.



Rescue team members work at the crash site of a helicopter carrying former Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi in northwestern Iran on May 20, 2024.   
 ● Moj News Agency

## Masoud Pezeshkian wins presidential election

On July 6, the Reformist Parliamentarian Masoud Pezeshkian won the presidential runoff, replacing Ebrahim Raisi who lost his life in a helicopter crash in May.

Pezeshkian won 16,384,403 votes to defeat the Conservative Saeed Jalili, who received 13,538,179 votes, on a final turnout of 49.8% – a big increase on the record low turnout of 39% recorded in the first round. In the first round, Pezeshkian came top, defeating three Conservative rivals.

The snap presidential election was caused by the tragic death of Raisi in the chopper incident.

On June 28, the first round of presidential elections was held among four candidates, including Pezeshkian, Jalili, parliament speaker and former Tehran mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Mo-

stafa Pourmohammadi, a cleric who had served in Iran's Interior and Intelligence Ministries.

But no candidate secured the majority of votes, with Pezeshkian leading with 10.4 million votes while Jalili trailed in second with 9.4 million. The two advanced to the runoff election.

A heart surgeon by profession, Pezeshkian entered politics first as the country's deputy health minister and later as the health minister.

In 2006, Pezeshkian was elected as a lawmaker representing Tabriz in northwest Iran. He later served as a deputy parliament speaker described by many as an "independent" politician, a label that was embraced by Pezeshkian in the campaign. Since his victory, he has tried to improve relations with the world. However, ten-



President Masoud Pezeshkian clenches his fists during a campaign rally in Tehran, Iran, on July 3, 2024.   
 ● AP

sions with the West over Iran's nuclear program have made it hard for his administration to enhance the relations with European countries.



● IRNA

## Floods hit many provinces

In May, heavy rainfalls caused severe floods across many provinces from north to south of Iran, affecting residential areas and agricultural lands. Several people lost their lives in the floods. Despite forecasts that the new wave of rain

might not lead to flooding, it damaged infrastructure in various cities.

The floods came after mid-April's floods destroyed dozens of villages in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan.

## Economy minister impeached

On March 2, just six months after Pezeshkian's government took office, his Economy Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati was impeached after parliament voted to dismiss him amid rising inflation and a falling national currency value.

Hemmati was removed from office after 182 of 273 lawmakers voted against him. In 2015, the Iranian rial was worth 32,000 to the United States dollar, but by the time Pezeshkian took office in July, it had plummeted to about 600,000 to the

dollar on the open market. With regional tensions escalating recently, it dropped even further, trading hands in Tehran's exchange shops and on its streets for about 920,000 rials to the dollar. The rial's devaluation has led to widespread public discontent due to the rising cost of living and heightened inflation as the Nowruz New Year approaches this month.

Some lawmakers accused the minister of intentionally devaluing the national

currency to fill government coffers with a short-term windfall that would cover budget deficits at the cost of harming the economy and average Iranians.

Hemmati rejected the accusation and pointed to a 10-percentage-point reduction in inflation. He admitted that inflation still remained high, standing at 35 percent. He told lawmakers that his team was working hard to address the issue but warned that the process would take time.



Iran's Simorgh satellite launch vehicle launches a homegrown space tug and two payloads into space from the Imam Khomeini Space Launch Terminal in Semnan on December 6, 2024.   
 ● SNN

## Iran launches first space tug

On December 6, a space tug domestically designed and manufactured by Iranian technicians was launched into space aboard a homegrown satellite launch vehicle (SLV).

The Saman-1, along with a CubeSat and a research payload, was successfully sent into space, using a Simorgh launcher.

The payloads were placed in an orbit around the Earth, with an apogee of 410 kilometers and a perigee of 300 kilometers.

Simorgh is a two-stage SLV with liquid fuel developed by the Iranian Ministry of Defense. In its eighth launch, the Simorgh set a new record for the liftoff of payloads. During this multi-phase mission, it successfully placed the Saman-1 orbital transfer block and two other research payloads, weighing nearly 300 kilograms, into orbit.

# Strategic partnerships, growth for Iran's economic milestones

## Economy Desk

The Iranian year 1403 (started March 20, 2024) marked a transformative period for Iran's economy, characterized by significant developments and strategic initiatives. Among the standout economic news was the unanimous approval of President Masoud Pezeshkian's entire cabinet,

including key economic ministers, by the Iranian Parliament—a historic achievement not seen in over two decades. This signaled a unified approach to addressing economic challenges. Another landmark event was the signing of a 20-year strategic partnership agreement between Iran and Russia, aimed at deepening economic, energy, and trade cooperation. This

agreement, coupled with Iran's observer status in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), promised to enhance trade ties and eliminate tariffs on 87% of goods, further integrating Iran into regional markets. Additionally, Tehran hosted the 26th Ministerial Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), reinforcing Iran's pivotal role in global

energy markets. Lastly, the Expediency Council's re-examination of FATF conventions signaled a potential breakthrough in addressing Iran's banking restrictions, aligning with Pezeshkian's vision of economic openness. These developments underscored Iran's efforts to navigate sanctions and foster growth through strategic partnerships and reforms.

## Parliament okays economic ministers



President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at the start of parliamentary sessions to review the qualifications of proposed ministers for the 14th administration on August 17, 2024. [president.ir](#)

Iran's Parliament on August 21, 2024 approved all members of Pezeshkian's cabinet, including economic ministers, the first time in over two decades a president has been able to receive vote of confidence for all of his proposed ministers. Pezeshkian submitted the list of his proposed

ministerial picks to the Parliament for a vote of confidence on August 11, twelve days after his swearing-in ceremony. Among those in Pezeshkian's 19-member cabinet are economic minister. Pezeshkian put Raisi's minister of industries, Abbas Aliabadi, in the post of energy minister. Here's a breakdown of the total number of votes for economic ministries:

Minister of Communications: Sattar Hashemi, 264 votes  
Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance: Abdolnaser Hemmati, 192 votes  
Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare: Ahmad Meidari, 191 votes  
Minister of Roads: Ms. Farzaneh Sadeq-Malvajer, 231 votes  
Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade: Mohammad Atabak, 231 votes  
Minister of Agriculture: Gholamreza Nouri-Quezeljeh, 253 votes  
Minister of Oil: Mohsen Paknejad, 222 votes  
Minister of Energy: Abbas Aliabadi, 255 votes

## Tehran hosts meeting of world's largest gas exporters

World's largest gas exporters, who collectively hold 70% of global gas reserves, 40% of production, 47% of pipeline exports, as well as 51% of LNG exports, gathered in Tehran for the 26th Ministerial Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) during December 6-8, 2024, with Mohsen Paknejad, Iran's oil minister, chairing the event.

The GECF comprises 12 member nations, including Iran, Russia, Qatar, Algeria, and Venezuela, alongside eight observer countries such as Angola, Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Malaysia.

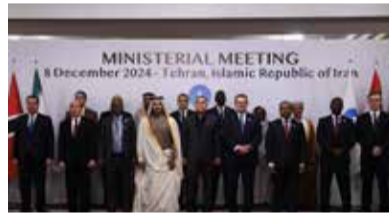
Iran, a founding member, hosted the GECF's inaugural meeting in 2001. The GECF secretariat is based in Qatar. Iran has hosted several high-profile GECF events, including the 3rd Heads of State Summit in 2015. On December 6, 2024, an extraordinary executive board meeting took place, followed

by industry site visits and bilateral meetings on December 7.

The ministerial meeting on December 8 featured an open session, including speeches from the GECF president and secretary-general, followed by a closed-door session.

Iran, with the world's second-largest natural gas reserves and a strategic geographic location, plays a crucial role in the GECF and the global gas market, Paknejad said in an interview on December 8, 2024.

"The country has become one of the leading natural gas producers globally by developing projects such as the South Pars gas field. Furthermore, Iran plays a key role in global energy security through the development of gas transmission and export infrastructure," he added noting that despite unfair sanctions, Iran has been able to expand its gas resources using domestic capacities. Iran is also working to strengthen its en-



Attendees pose for a group photo after the 26th Ministerial Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) held in Tehran on December 8, 2024. [SHANA](#)

ergy diplomacy and expand international cooperation through the development of gas swaps.

Six member countries, including Iran, Qatar, Russia, Nigeria, Libya, and Algeria, representing half of the world's gas reserves, participated at the ministerial level.

## Iran gains observer status in EAEU

Iran was granted observer status in the EAEU during the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council meeting held in St Petersburg, Russia, on December 26, 2024.

The Iran-Eurasian Economic Union Free Trade Agreement promises to eliminate tariffs for 87% of traded goods.

Both parties will compile a negative list comprising items deemed sensitive by one party and exempt from tariff elimination. The remaining 13%, classified as the negative list, includes goods whose tariff reduction could adversely impact Iran's domestic industry or agriculture. Conversely, the EAEU countries will also present their list of sensitive goods, ensuring equitable regulation.

The Russian Minister of Economic Development, Maxim Reshetnikov, confirmed the announcement, which comes a full year after the agreement was signed by Putin and the previous Iranian Raisi administration.

"During the meeting, the heads of the union countries decided to grant Iran the status of an observer state of the EAEU to strengthen ties with the promising Iranian market," he said in a statement. Bakytzhan Sagintayev, Chairman of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC)'s board, met with Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade, to mark the occasion in Moscow.

With Iran's inclusion, the number of observer countries in the EAEU has expanded to three. This joins Uzbekistan and Cuba,

which previously received this status.

The EAEU, comprising Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan, seeks to foster economic collaboration and development among its members and observers.

The initial steps toward this landmark agreement were taken in 2017 when a draft agreement on preferential export tariffs was signed in Yerevan. Subsequently, in 2018, a temporary agreement was signed, reducing tariffs for a range of goods over three years.

With an 82% increase in Iran's exports of preferential items in the first year, negotiations were initiated in 2020 to elevate the temporary agreement to a comprehensive free-trade deal.

## Expediency Council begins revisiting FATF case

Iran's Expediency Council began on January 12, 2024 re-examining the anti-money laundering and terrorism financing conventions adopted by the global financial crime watchdog FATF, with a lawmaker saying that "positive signals" have been received from the council's meeting.

The spokesman of Iran's Expediency Council Mohsen Dehnavi said that various clauses of the Palermo and the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) conventions will be reviewed during the meetings.

Abbas Golrou, a member of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said on January 12 that, "We have heard positive signals from the Expediency Council" meeting.

He expressed hope that cooperation among the country's political institutions would lead to a right decision to overcome the country's complicated situation.

FATF restrictions imposed on Iran's banking system will be removed once the country enacts the Palermo and the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) conventions. The Iranian Parliament has approved the Palermo and the CFT, but Iran's Guardian Council, which is responsible for vetting parliament legislation, has refused to ratify them, citing the need for some amendments. Iran has ratified other conventions and regulations adopted by the FATF.

The renewed push to examine Iran's full accession to the FATF comes amid efforts by

Pezeshkian and his administration to open up to the world and to improve an economy affected by global inflation and foreign sanctions.

In his presidential election campaign in mid-summer, Pezeshkian criticized the lack of action on FATF issues.

Deputy Finance Minister Hadi Khani said in January that FATF is not allowed to collect economic information from member states or pressure them in this regard, but it evaluates documents it has obtained from "certain entities" in their relevant countries to determine whether they have properly implemented the standards defined by the international organization about fighting money laundering and terrorism financing.

## Iran, Russia ink strategic partnership agreement

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) shakes hands with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin as exchanging signed strategic cooperation documents in Moscow, Russia on January 15, 2025. [president.ir](#)



Iranian and Russian presidents signed a long-awaited strategic partnership agreement on January 17 to further expand cooperation between the two nations.

The 20-year agreement covers economic, transportation, energy, health, tourism and agricultural areas, in addition to Tehran-Moscow cooperation to deal with common challenges, reduce the consequences of natural disasters, combat organized crimes, fight terrorism, and make joint investments.

After the signing ceremony, Pezeshkian at a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin called the agreement a "new chapter" in relations between the two countries, especially in the economic area.

Pezeshkian said that the agreement, which is based on the interests of the two nations, can shape the path of cooperation between the two countries.

The Iranian president said both Tehran and Moscow are determined to remove obstacles to customs tariffs, banking, investment guarantees, facilitation of meetings among traders and visa issues.

He added that the increase in level of relations using the capacities of the Eurasian Economic Union, improving the level of cooperation on issues such as combating terrorism and organized violence have been emphasized in the agreement.

"It is truly a breakthrough document," Putin said after the signing ceremony, adding that the two countries were "united... in taking our relationship to a new level." He said that the agreement offers variety to the economic cooperation between Tehran and Moscow.

He also said Russia and Iran are discussing the supply of Russian gas. Putin said that if the project is implemented, gas supplies to Iran could eventually reach 55 billion cubic meters per year, but it would need to start with small volumes of up to 2 billion bcm.

The Russian leader added that his country and Iran were resolutely opposed to external pressure from abroad.

"Our countries firmly uphold the principles of the rule of international law, the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in internal

affairs... and resolutely oppose dictates from the outside," Putin said. Ahead of the signing ceremony, both leaders held a meeting during which Pezeshkian said Iran considers its strategic cooperation with Russia as pivotal, sensitive and strategic and has tried to remove all the hurdles facing expansion of relations between the two countries.

He also said that Tehran and Moscow signed new agreements on the construction of a new power plant in Iran.

Pezeshkian, on his first Kremlin visit since winning the presidency last July, said that Iran believes that regional issues should be resolved by the countries in the region.

"There is no need for others from the other side of the world to come here and disrupt the region and implement their own policies," the Iranian president emphasized.

He said that the development of Tehran-Moscow relations will thwart their plans.

Russian president said the new treaty will add "momentum" to their ties.

"This will give us the opportunity to give additional momentum to almost all areas of cooperation," Putin told Pezeshkian, who replied that the document would become a "solid foundation" for relations.

"We will discuss all areas of our cooperation and sign a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement," Putin said. "We have been working on it for a long time and I am very pleased that this work has been completed," he said, adding it should further boost trade and economic ties.

Putin said that the increase in trade between the two countries is acceptable, noting that, "In the first 10 months of 2024, we witnessed a growth of more than 15% in bilateral trade."

Iran and Russia are both subject to illegal Western sanctions. They have over the past years deepened their cooperation in various sectors.

In 2001, Tehran and Moscow signed a long-term cooperation deal, officially known as the Treaty of the Foundation of Mutual Relations and the Principles of Cooperation. It was initially set for 10 years but was extended up until 2026.

# A world in turmoil and transition



By Zohreh Qanadi  
Staff writer

*The past Iranian year — March 20, 2024, to March 20, 2025 — is drawing to a close, a year in which events have unfolded at an accelerated pace, whether due to the demands of the communication age or the so-called Aquarius era. In any case, the world has witnessed a year filled with significant developments, from the continuation of the devastating war in Gaza to the eventual attainment of a cease-fire. It has been marked by both intensifying conflicts and diplomatic efforts. From escalating tensions between Israel and Iran to the formal easing of heightened tensions between Moscow and Washington, the geopolitical landscape has remained dynamic. Amidst all this, the US presidential elections and speculation surrounding a potential return of Donald Trump captivated analysts and continue to fuel discussions.*



Missiles launched from Iran towards Israel streak across the night sky as seen from Gaza Strip, on October 1, 2024.  
● ABDEL KAREEM NANA/AP

## Nowruz dawns as Gaza bloodshed persists

On Nowruz, March 20, 2024, the Gaza war — in its sixth month with over 32,000 Palestinians killed — escalated as Israeli forces intensified their military campaign with a prolonged siege and an operation targeting Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, the territory's largest medical facility. The assault on the hospital, which Israel claimed Hamas used as a command center — a charge denied by hospital staff and Hamas — sparked global outcry. The World Health Organization condemned the raid as "unconscionable." Meanwhile, the broader humanitarian toll continued to mount: over 32,000 Palestinians had been killed, 70% of them civilians, according to Gaza's health ministry. Aid agencies warned of famine as Israel restricted food and aid deliveries.

## Hezbollah-Israeli clashes

Tensions ran high in the Middle East amid Israel's war on Gaza, which erupted following Hamas's attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023. Hezbollah and Israel had been engaged in a low-intensity conflict. Hezbollah initiated the clashes with the stated aim of pressuring Israel to end the war on Gaza, which has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians. Israel mounted a ground invasion of Lebanon, claiming it aimed to confront and destroy Hezbollah. This followed 12 months of tit-for-tat strikes between Israel and Iran, which had gradually escalated in intensity. The Israelis were eventually forced to withdraw due to Hezbollah rocket fire, just as vast swaths of southern Lebanon were depopulated as a result of Israeli attacks.

Israel's assault on Lebanon killed nearly 4,000 people — many of them civilians — and uprooted hundreds of thousands from their homes. The war between Israel and Hezbollah was paused by a US-brokered cease-fire in late November 2024.

## Cease-fire: A victory for Palestinians?

After 15 months of bloody war, a cease-fire between Israel and Palestinian groups took effect on January 19, 2025. Israel's war in Gaza had by then displaced more than 90% of the enclave's population and destroyed most of the Gaza Strip.

## Truce at risk

As global attention remained focused on hostage-prisoner swaps between Hamas and Israel, another cease-fire in the region hung in the balance.

The original 60-day cease-fire was intended to give both sides time to negotiate a longer truce. Under the deal, Israel was supposed to fully withdraw its troops from parts of southern Lebanon it had invaded, while Hezbollah agreed to move its fighters and weapons north of the Litani River, about 25 km from the border. The truce agreement was to be monitored by a peacekeeping mechanism chaired by the US, with France also involved. However,

the US, as Israel's closest ally, has historically allowed Israel to renege on both verbal and legal commitments. Washington does not appear to be pressuring Israel to fully withdraw from Lebanese territory as per its agreement with Hezbollah. Instead, Israel claims it will remain in "five strategic points" until the Lebanese army fully implements its side of the deal. While Israeli officials describe this as a "temporary" troop deployment inside Lebanon, it effectively constitutes an occupation that could lead to the cease-fire's collapse.



Palestinians walk through the destruction in the wake of an Israeli offensive in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, on April 8, 2024.  
● FATIMA SHBAIR/AP

Meanwhile, in early March 2025, the Gaza cease-fire also seemed at risk of breaking down. For nearly a week, Israel blocked food and medical supplies from entering the Gaza Strip to pressure Hamas into accepting a revised cease-fire plan. Israel is now calling for an extension of phase one's prisoner exchanges, which expired on March 1, rather than proceeding with the second phase of the original cease-fire agreement. Israel missed the early February deadline to start phase two talks, and there is no indication that they ever began. According to The Cradle on February 27: "Israel has made extensive plans to resume its genocidal war on Gaza. ...Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said that Tel Aviv will not withdraw its army from the Philadelphi Corridor on Gaza's southern border with Egypt, marking a stark violation of the cease-fire agreement."

## 'A complete failure'

The attack by Hamas in 2023, on Israel, killing about 1,100 people and taking more than 200 captives was declared "a complete failure" for Israel by the regime's military on February 27, 2025. An investigation by the military determined that Hamas was able to carry out the deadliest attack in Israeli history because the much more powerful Israeli army misjudged the resistance group's intentions and underestimated its capabilities. The findings could pressure Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to launch a widely demanded broader inquiry into the political decision-making that preceded the attack.

## Acts of terror

Following Hamas's October 7 attack, Israel intensified its campaign against Resistance leaders, framing its terror acts as retaliatory measures to dismantle Resistance groups. This strategy, which began with the January 2024 assassination of Hamas deputy leader Saleh al-Aroui in Beirut, signaled a willingness to extend operations beyond Gaza.

Israel also violated Iran's sovereign borders by assassinating Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in July 2024. These operations targeted not only Resistance figures but also disrupted Hamas's diplomatic channels, as Haniyeh had been a key negotiator in cease-fire talks. Concurrently, Israel expanded covert tactics against Hezbollah, including an April 2024 pager bomb campaign that killed dozens of the group's members and commanders, as well as civilians in Lebanon. These operations, coupled with strikes on Hezbollah-linked sites, reflected a broader escalation aimed at degrading Resistance capabilities. Palestinian officials and human rights groups argue that these assassinations constitute acts of state terror. Israel also killed Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in a missile attack in Beirut on September 27, 2024.



Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump waves at an election night watch party in Fla. on Nov. 6, 2024.  
● EVAN VUCCI/AP

and one civilian. Earlier, in April 2023, the IRGC had carried out Operation True Promise, a large-scale missile and drone offensive against Israel that damaged military bases across occupied territories.

## Syria still in crisis

Syria remained in crisis three months after foreign-backed militants from Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), led by Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, declared the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's government following a swift two-week offensive in December. By the

2022, at least 46,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed, while Russian military casualties approach 300,000, including approximately 120,000 deaths and 170,000–180,000 wounded troops.

The conflict has not only turned Ukraine into a bloody battleground but also severely tested Western unity. With Trump's return to power in January 2025, the US approach shifted significantly, exacerbating tensions with Europe over support for Ukraine.

The war initially drew substantial financial backing from Western nations, but Trump decided to pause military aid following a contentious late-February 2025 White House meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This decision aligned with his strategic pivot toward Moscow.

Not all countries disclose their full aid commitments to Ukraine, making it difficult to calculate total funding — particularly for sensitive categories like military assistance — using public data. However, reports indicate that the European Union has collectively provided \$138 billion in financial, military, and humanitarian aid. The US remains the largest single donor, having allocated \$119 billion, according to Germany's Kiel Institute for the World Economy.

As of mid-2024, the war showed no signs of resolution, with frontlines remaining largely static.

On March 12, Kyiv expressed "readiness" to accept Washington's proposal for a 30-day cease-fire. Accordingly, the US agreed to resume military aid and intelligence sharing with Ukraine.

## US presidential election

The 2024 US presidential election shaped up as a major global event, influencing everything from foreign policy to economic markets. The campaign intensified as global attention focused on whether a second Trump presidency could drastically shift US foreign policy. In one of his final rallies in New York, Trump delivered an amplified version of his typical stump speech, promising "the strongest economy, the most secure borders, and the safest cities." Trump won a second term as president against Vice President Kamala Harris in November after securing victories in key battleground states, leaving Democrats questioning what went wrong.

## US-Russia ties

After Trump entered the White House, the US and Russia increasingly worked toward de-escalating tensions. In February, foreign ministers from both sides met in Saudi Arabia for their most substantive talks in years, initiating a dramatic diplomatic reset. The two nations agreed to collaborate on ending the Ukraine war, expanding economic cooperation, and normalizing bilateral ties. The meeting between US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russia's Sergey Lavrov marked a stark contrast to three years of US-led isolation campaigns against Moscow over its ongoing invasion of Ukraine.



A Ukrainian officer watches a howitzer fire at Russian positions in Donetsk, on March 25, 2024.  
● AP

## Escalation of Israel-Iran conflict

Iran and Israel engaged in tit-for-tat strikes, amid broader tensions over Israel's war on Gaza. This signaled a shift in regional power dynamics, as Iran retaliated against Israeli aggression. On October 1, the Iranian military launched a direct attack on Israel, firing 180 long-range ballistic missiles — at least 90% of which struck their intended targets. Dubbed Operation True Promise II, the assault was a response to Israel's broader atrocities against Iran and regional nations, including the assassinations of Haniyeh, Nasrallah, and IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan. Tel Aviv, having repeatedly vowed retaliation, struck military sites in Iran later that month, killing four soldiers

second week of March, international concern intensified over escalating violence in northwestern Syria, where hundreds of Alawite civilians were killed during clashes between the new regime and Assad loyalists in Latakia and Tartus. Also, Israel, which has illegally occupied the Syrian Golan Heights since 1967, has further escalated its encroachment by invading a UN-patrolled buffer zone in southwestern Syria, following the collapse of the.

## Ukraine war

In Eastern Europe, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine persisted into its second year — a conflict characterized by geopolitical gravity and immense human cost. Since the war began in late February



Syria's Abu Mohammad al-Jolani meets Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in Riyadh on Feb. 2, 2025.  
● REUTERS

# Social ambition meets global fears

By Amir Mollae Mozaffari  
Staff writer

**R E C A P**

As the current Iranian calendar year (which began on March 20, 2024) draws to a close, one has to admit that it has been a period marked by remarkable advancements, pressing challenges, and profound social shifts. From groundbreaking technological innovations that continue to reshape industries to the escalating urgency of climate crises and the renewed vigor of humanity's quest beyond Earth, this year has been a tapestry of progress and peril. While achievements in artificial intelligence have dazzled the world, offering both promise and concern, the planet's environmental struggles have reminded us of the fragility of our shared home. Meanwhile, the space race has reached new heights, fueled by both public and private ambitions. Together, these events have defined a year of hope, fear, and relentless transformation.



TELECOM REVIEW AFRICA

## AI achievements continue to amaze world



DeepSeek has touted one of its latest AI models, R1, released on January 20, 2025, as being particularly good at problem-solving, performing on par with OpenAI's o1 reasoning model but at a fraction of the cost per use.

ANDRE M. CHANG/ZUMA PRESS

For the second year in a row, the year starting March 20, 2024, was undoubtedly the year of AI, at least in social, technological, and academic areas. While we stepped into this year enjoying the services of generative AIs as a

chatbot-driven novelty, it has branched off into various practical tools, from music and video generation to significantly smarter robots. So, instead of dying down, the AI frenzy continued to build up, completely transforming the landscapes of some professions. To be sure, chatbots and generative AI models did not lose attraction. If anything, more companies and even states threw their hat in the ring, each promising to offer something extra or different. This year, we saw the launch of, to name a few, OpenAI's GPT-4o and Sora, Google's Gemini 1.5 and 2.0 Models and NotebookLM, Meta's Llama series, Microsoft's Copilot+, China's free DeepSeek AI assistant, and the latest of them all, xAI's Grok, which has a "sense of humor" and direct access to X. Also considering the release of Google's quantum computer, Willow, which is capable of solving complex problems exponentially faster than traditional computers, it's safe to say that next year, we will also be marveling at achievements of AI. However, there are still prominent

achievements of AI to talk about, interestingly, in other new areas. The Nobel Prizes for Physics and Chemistry recently honored groundbreaking AI-related research. The Physics Prize was awarded to John J. Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton for their work on artificial neural networks, which revolutionized machine learning. The Chemistry Prize went to the Head of Google AI Sir Demis Hassabis and John M. Jumper for developing AlphaFold 2, an AI model that predicts protein structures from amino acid sequences, solving a 50-year scientific challenge. This breakthrough has vast potential for advancing medicine, vaccines, and material sciences, encouraging others to use AI to address unsolvable problems in their own fields. When all of these developments were unfolding with dizzying speed, fears and pessimisms were also being voiced by legislators, ordinary people, and AI visionaries alike. Mainly focused on the dangers of unethical use of AI, these fears were eventually partly addressed by the EU — which is spearheading

legislation on such modern problems. In August 2024, the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act took effect, introducing the world's first comprehensive AI regulation. It categorizes AI systems by risk, banning "unacceptable" uses like public facial recognition and social scoring, while regulating high-risk applications. The law focuses on controlling AI providers and professional users rather than granting individual rights. It applies broadly across sectors but excludes military, national security, research, and non-professional uses. Adopted by the EU Parliament in March 2024, the Act aims to ensure safe and ethical AI development, setting a global precedent for AI governance and safeguarding against harmful misuse. So, we are slowly covering all bases, or are we? With the speed at which AI is developing, it's quite likely that we will miss a spot, so the fears will never really subside. In the meantime, humanity seems to be doing better overall because of such efforts and models, and we thank our great, well-meaning minds that brought us here.

## Rocket rivalry reaches new heights

Although, as you will see, we are evidently not doing much to save our own planet — allow me to poke fun a bit here — we are at least still exploring space and scanning for alternative global residences, and we are working toward it hard. This year was a great year for the so-called space race. Interestingly enough, this time private companies are taking center stage, to various degrees. The Boeing Starliner (or CST-100), developed by Boeing under NASA's Commercial Crew Program, turned heads when it was launched into space in June 2024. However, the jubilation shortly turned into worries as it was revealed that the spacecraft's thrusters malfunctioned on approach to the International Space Station (ISS), making it too risky to return its astronauts to Earth. This extended their eight-day stay on the ISS to nine months as they waited for a SpaceX Crew Dragon to return them home in March. Speaking of SpaceX, the private company tested its two-stage fully reusable super heavy-lift launch vehicle five

times this Iranian calendar, each edging the company's CEO Elon Musk closer to his lifelong dream of sending humans and cargo to the moon and, subsequently, Mars. The eighth and latest test was both a success and a failure, as the launch tower successfully caught Booster 15, but during its initial burn, four of the six engines of Ship 34 experienced premature shutdowns, exploding the ship. In relative silence, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) launched its sixth robotic lunar exploration mission, named Chang'e 6, on May 3. It was the first lunar mission to retrieve samples from the far side of the Moon. The mission concluded on June 25 after approximately 53 days, when the return capsule, carrying the collected samples, descended through the atmosphere and safely touched down in Inner Mongolia using a parachute. Some pundits believe that "the slow but sensible Chinese tortoise is likely to beat the complacent US hare". Not only time but also space will tell.

## Endless damage control with climate change

During the past year, the news about the climate of our beloved planet was primarily not as upbeat, not even some of the time. To be fair, the trend started a while ago, but people all around the globe really felt the shockingly heightened magnitude of some of the environmental events in their bones this year. Who can forget that when the Iranian calendar year started on March 20, 2024, the people of the world, one by one, were already starting to hear more and more about the outbreak of another virus, Dengue Fever. Iranians slowly got the memo around July, but by April 30, more than 7.6 million dengue cases had been reported to the WHO, with 3.4 million confirmed cases, over 16,000 severe cases, and more than 3,000 deaths. While the virus is a mosquito-borne disease, with the increase in temperatures and rainfall — which was characteristic of yet another year in a row — the mosquitoes that carried dengue viruses extended their range, just like Malaria-carrying mosquitos did this year. According to a recent study by researchers at Harvard and Stanford Universities, nearly one-fifth of dengue cases in Latin America and the Caribbean — approximately 45 million infections annually over the past decade — are linked to climate change. Now, there were other cases of extreme events caused by the increased temperature that at first glance, may have not been attributable to it, but we also simply saw record-setting heat waves all around the world. The situation quickly got out of hand



The photo shows a hellish spectacle where the Palisades Fire ravages a neighborhood amid high winds in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, US, on January 7, 2025.

ETHAN SWOPE/AP

in some countries. The South Asian nation of Bangladesh, for example, faced an unprecedented 24-day heatwave in April 2024, with temperatures hitting 42°C (108°F), 16°C above average. Shattering a 76-year record, it caused nationwide school closures, disrupted education for 33 million children, and severely impacted farmers. Deadly and devastating tropical cyclones hitting the shores of the United States and neighboring countries are unfortunately not met with the same surprise as before. Still, Hurricane Helene made news in September as it was the deadliest and strongest by many standards, causing at least 221 deaths and \$78.7 billion in damage. We ended the year with yet another devastating environmental and social disaster. Almost for the whole month of January 2025, the Los Angeles metropolitan area

and San Diego County went through a series of wildfires. By January 31, the wildfires killed at least 29 people, forced more than 200,000 to evacuate, and destroyed more than 18,000 homes and structures. In total, the wildfires burned over 57,000 acres (23,000 hectares) of land. Contributing to the intensity of the fires were drought conditions, low humidity, a buildup of vegetation from the previous winter, and hurricane-force Santa Ana winds. More than a series of unfortunate events, what we briefly read shows that due to the worsening of global warming, we will be dealing with more extreme weather and disease events, sometimes sidelining us from where we do not expect. And when it's done, it's done; You can manage the crises as much as you can, but the damage will be done. Can we live with that?

# A brief overview of Iranian sport



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour  
Staff writer

*The year 1403 will be remembered for sensational Olympic medals for the Iranian sports, though there were more reasons for both joy and grief for the fans in the country over the past year.*

*As the Persian calendar year draws to a close on March 20, the following provides a quick summary of how Iranian athletes and teams performed on the international stage over the past 12 months.*

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Saeid Esmaili celebrates after winning a gold medal at the Paris Olympics on August 8, 2024.  
● [olympic.ir](http://olympic.ir)

## Paris podiums

The peak of excitement for the Iranian sport came in Paris in July and August, where taekwondo practitioners and wrestlers, as expected, took credit for yielding Olympic success for the country's 40-athlete delegation. Eight members of the Iranian 11-man wrestling squads across the Greco-Roman and freestyle events finished their campaigns on the Olympic podium, while there was a clean sweep of four medals for the taekwondo team as Iran finished 21st in the overall standings of the sporting extravaganza – six places better off than the Tokyo Olympics three years ago, where Iran had collected seven medals despite sending 65 athletes to the Games.

The final outcome at the taekwondo competitions was definitely beyond the wildest dreams of any Iranian supporter, who had been longing for a medal in the event since Kimia Alizadeh's sole bronze medal in Rio 2016.

Young prodigy Arian Sailmi rounded off a thrilling, action-packed four days for the Iranians at the Grand Palais by notching up the ultimate prize in the men's +80kg class – a first Olympic taekwondo gold for the country since Hadi Saei, now the chairman of the national governing body of the sport, bagged one in Beijing 2008.

History was made in the wom-

en's competitions as Nahid Kiani became the first Iranian girl ever to settle for the -57kg silver after a loss to South Korean Kim Yu-jin, while teenage sensation Mobina Ne'matzadeh picked up a precious bronze in the -49kg event to make sure this year's Games were the most prolific for Iranian female athletes.

Mehran Barkhordari also produced magnificent performances to end Iran's 12-year wait for a men's final spot, though he was ultimately beaten in the -80kg showdown.

The wrestling event, meanwhile, was packed with mixed emotions for the Iranian fans.

Some up-and-coming stars made their presence felt in style on the grandest stage of all, securing impressive victories over high-profile opponents. However, the country's quest for its first Olympic freestyle gold since Hassan Yazdani's triumph in Rio de Janeiro ended in vain.

Looking to dethrone Saei as Iran's most decorated Olympian, Yazdani was hit with a recurring shoulder injury in the untimeliest fashion – the early seconds of the 86kg final against Bulgaria's Magomed Ramazanov, which cost him a 7-1 defeat.

Amirhossein Zare' was the ultimate favorite for the super-heavyweight gold in Paris prior to the event but a crazy three minutes of action in the final saw the Iranian trail Geno Pe-

triashvili by nine points at the break and the second-period surge proved too little too late as it finished 10-9 in the Georgian's favor.

Rahman Amouzad hammered a couple of world champions in American Zain Retherford and Bulgaria's Ismail Musukaev to reach the final but was stunned 10-3 by low-profile Japanese Kotaro Kiyooka in the 65kg final. Young Iranian Amir-Ali Azarpira, meanwhile, did a great job to bounce back from a first-round setback against ultimate gold medalist Akhmed Tazhudinov to finish off his 97kg campaign with a bronze medal – courtesy of a win against American great Kyle Snyder.

Iranians had much more to revel in the Greco-Roman contests, after Saeid Esmaili (67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg) took the Games by storm to emerge as the surprise gold medalists of their respective weight classes. Alireza Mohammadi, 21, could have added a third Greco-Roman gold to Iran's medal haul, had it not been for a 7-0 loss to Bulgarian Semen Novikov in the 87kg final.

Amin Mirzazadeh headed to Paris as the reigning world super-heavyweight champion, but an unfavorable draw condemned him to a second-round defeat against legendary Cuban Mijaín López – who went on to grab record fifth successive Olympic gold – before he beat Iranian-born Sabah Shariati,

representing Azerbaijan, for the 130kg bronze.

At the conclusion of the Games, Iran's 12-medal haul marked a second-best performance in 19 Olympic appearances, just shy of the record set at London 2012, where the nation claimed 13 medals, including seven golds.

The year also brought further glory in taekwondo and wrestling for the country. In October, the World Junior Taekwondo Championships served as a testament to Iran's rising prowess, as the team clinched seven gold medals, along with double silvers and bronzes, to beat South Korea to both the men's and women's team its home turf. Wrestling also saw continued success for Iran in age-group competitions. A double under-23 crown in Tirana in October took nation's tally to an impressive 14 team trophies in just five years across various youth-level World Championships.

## Record haul

Iran celebrated its most successful Paralympic campaign to date since making its debut in Seoul 1988, securing an impressive haul of 25 medals over 11 days of competition in Paris during August and September.

The Iranian men's sitting volleyball team claimed a magnificent eighth title, while shooting star Sareh Javanmardi claimed her third consecutive gold in the

women's 10m air pistol event. Further successes in powerlifting, athletics, archery, taekwondo, and judo contributed to a stellar tally of eight golds, 10 silvers, and seven bronzes.

However, the outcome could have been even more remarkable had Sadeq Beit Sayyah not been stripped of his javelin throw prize when his celebration with a religious flag was deemed a violation of the Games' code of conduct, costing Iran an additional gold.

## Highs and lows in football

There were mixed results and receptions for Iranian football – arguably the most popular and talked-about sport in the country – over the past 12 months. The Iranian national team is top of the group in World Cup qualifiers with 16 points – three clear of Uzbekistan and six above the United Arab Emirates – and with the top two winning direct qualification, Team Melli looks well placed to punch its tickets for the finals in North America in 15 months.

Indeed, Amir Qalenoee's men could secure a fourth consecutive appearance in the showpiece, when resuming action in the upcoming international break with back-to-back home games against the UAE (March 20) and Uzbekistan (March 25).

However, despite a run of five wins in six matches – including a 4-1 rout of Asian Cup champion

Qatar – Team Melli came under scrutiny from fans and pundits due to a series of unconvincing and inconsistent performances throughout the campaign.

The criticism peaked in November, when Qalenoee's side dominated the first half of the away games against North Korea and the Kyrgyz Republic but still had to survive a late fightback by the minnow oppositions to walk away with 3-2 victories.

The Iranian club football, meanwhile, was given a reality check in 1403, as the widening gulf between the top-flight sides in the country and their Middle East rivals became evident at the AFC Champions League Elite.

While Saudi Pro League heavyweights, blessed with a massive spending spree and world-class players, have been dominating the revamped competition, Tehran archivals Persepolis and Esteghlal had a campaign to forget. Persepolis – the dominant force of the Iranian top flight for nearly a decade – failed to progress to the knockout phase after finishing ninth in the west zone's 12-team table in the league stage, before Esteghlal's run came to an end in the round of 16 against Al Nassr.

Esteghlal's 3-0 defeat at Al Nassr in the return leg of their tie on Monday meant that two Iranian clubs managed a combined three victories across 18 games in the competition, suffering eight defeats in total.



Iranian taekwondo girl Nahid Kiani (L) is seen in action against Laetitia Aoun of Lebanon in the -57kg semifinal at the Paris Olympics on August 8, 2024.  
● [WORLD TAEKWONDO](http://WORLD.TAEKWONDO)



Iranian players celebrate a goal during a 3-2 victory over North Korea in the World Cup Asian qualifiers in Vientiane, Laos, on November 14, 2024.  
● [AFC](http://AFC)



Persepolis defender Farshad Faraji reacts after his team concedes a goal during a 4-1 defeat against Al Hilal at the AFC Champions League Elite in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on February 5, 2025.  
● [FFM](http://FFM)



# Iran's strides in cultural heritage preservation and tourism development

## Iranica Desk

**With Nowruz, the Iranian New Year, arriving on March 21 and signaling the year's end, it's a perfect moment to consider the significant progress in Iran's cultural heritage and tourism sectors. These areas not only protect Iran's deep history and artistic achievements but also boost the economy, encourage cultural exchange, and strengthen Iran's identity. Throughout the year, Iran has been involved in various projects to preserve its culture, promote responsible tourism, and enhance its global appeal as a destination rich in history, heritage, and hospitality.**

**This past year, there's been a stronger emphasis on international cooperation, understanding that partnerships are vital for protecting cultural treasures and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Efforts have focused on creating sustainable tourism that values local involvement and minimizes environmental impact, ensuring the benefits of tourism are shared fairly. Simultaneously, ongoing archaeological discoveries continue to uncover new chapters in Iran's rich past, shedding light on the civilizations that have shaped the nation's identity. These combined efforts show Iran's dedication to preserving its cultural legacy while embracing opportunities in an interconnected world, paving the way for continued growth and innovation.**

## Artifacts repatriation from Turkey



Some of the artifacts returned to Iran  
● MEHR NEWS AGENCY

Turkey has repatriated 55 historical artifacts to Iran, fulfilling an agreement established last year to prevent cultural property trafficking between the two nations. The handover took place on June 4, 2024, at the Erzurum Archaeology Museum, where Turkish officials presented the artifacts to the Iranian Consulate. Birol Incecikoz, Director-General of Turkey's Cultural Heritage and Museums, stated that the artifacts' Iranian origin was confirmed. The collection includes 42 coins, a Sassanid-era sword, a bronze jug, and 11 items from the Bronze Age and Islamic periods.

## Return of 1,100 Achaemenid tablets



The unveiling ceremony of the Achaemenid tablets  
● ILNA

Following his participation in the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York in late September, 2024, President Masoud Pezeshkian brought with him 1,100 historical clay tablets from the Achaemenid era. This repatriation was the result of intensive consultations between the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Iranian Vice President for Legal Affairs Majid Ansari, and the Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS) at the University of Chicago. Dating back to the sixth century BCE, the Achaemenid tablets are considered invaluable works of Iranian art and history. They offer critical insights into Achaemenid society, including road resource management, social relations, basic necessities, wages, and the economy. According to Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Ali Darabi, these tablets represent records of "the rituals and the way of life of our ancestors." Originally, around 30,000 clay tablets were unearthed in the 1930s by University of Chicago archeologists during excavations in Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Persian Empire. Approximately 90 years ago, these tablets were loaned to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. While several batches of tablets and fragments have been returned to Iran in recent years, thousands more remain at the institute.

## Attendance in BRICS Tourism Forum

The First BRICS Tourism Forum took place in Moscow on June 20-21, 2024, with delegations from all nine member states participating: Iran, Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia.

The first day featured a work group meeting for industry representatives, along with negotiations and presentations from travel agents showcasing products, services, and tourism projects from various countries.

On the second day, Evgeny Kozlov, the First Deputy Head of the Office of Mayor and the Government of Moscow, addressed journalists, emphasizing the importance of tourism as a key strategy for the city's mayor. He highlighted the mutual benefits of tourism, stating, "We share a lot of love and genericity with the tourists and there is much money



Flags representing participating countries  
● IRAN DAILY

and profit in tourism sector." When discussing the potential impact of BRICS membership on tourism cooperation between Tehran and Moscow, Kozlov noted the complementary nature of the two cities. He mentioned a

specific Moscow hotel popular with Iranian visitors, possibly due to its location or nearby restaurants. He also pointed to the success of the visa-free group regime launched the previous year, which has already facilitated visits for hundreds of Iranian tourists to Moscow. "We have this special visa preferences for Iranian groups come here".

Kozlov urged Iranian representatives to further promote their country's attractions to Russian travelers. He also emphasized the sister-city relationship between Moscow and Tehran, stating that while valuable, it's not enough. "It is because tourism is the partnership between tourism operators and we should support at the federal level or the official level. So, it is really important to hold the sister-city partnership between local authorities."

## Hegmataneh's designation as UNESCO World Heritage Site

The archaeological remains of Hegmataneh, also known as Ecbatana, located in northwestern Iran, have been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This inscription, made during the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee held in New Delhi July 21-31, 2024, marks Iran's 28th entry on the prestigious list. Hegmataneh, or ancient Ecbatana, is situated in modern-day Hamadan, Iran, and boasts a rich history spanning over 3,000 years. It is believed to have been the capital of the Median Empire and later served

as an important administrative center for the Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires, often functioning as their summer capital.

The site offers invaluable archaeological insights into these civilizations. Discoveries include a massive defensive wall and a distinctive checkerboard urban plan, providing tangible evidence of the city's historical importance and urban organization. Hegmataneh stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of ancient Near Eastern civilizations.



The historical site of Hegmataneh  
● IRNA

## Discovery of 6,000-year-old skeleton



Reydokht's skeleton  
● IRAN DAILY

An excavation team from Shahid Beheshti University unearthed a more-than-6,000-year-old skeleton of a girl in Cheshmeh Ali, an important archeological mound at the edge of the ancient city of Shahr-e Rey and a few kilometers from Tehran, on November 11, 2024.

Some archeology students, who were cooperating with the excavation team, immediately named her as Reydokht or the Daughter of Rey.

Head of the excavation team Hamidreza Valipour told Iran Daily that the most important achievements of the excavation in Cheshmeh Ali, which opened on October 1, was unearthing the architectural remains of a prehistoric village and this grave, dating back to approximately 4,300-4,000 BCE. He said these new findings could shed light on the life and burial rites of prehistoric humans.

Evidence showed that the prehistoric girl had tiny shell, bone and stone ornaments and beads, which were worn by her as anklet, necklace, bracelet, and headband. There was also ochre clay in her grave.

## Achaemenid find in Gonabad

An ancient site dating back to the Achaemenid period has been discovered in Gonabad, Khorasan Razavi Province. The announcement was made in early December of 2024 by the head of the Gonabad Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

A local resident with a passion for cultural heritage discovered the site. Its discovery fills a gap in the archaeological map of the Gonabad, promising to complete our understanding of the area's past. The site's age, contemporary with the Qasabeh Qanat of Gonabad, strongly supports the idea of the region's importance during the Achaemenid period.

The presence of historical and prehistoric pottery, remnants of glass containers, stone construction materials, sarooj mortar, stone tools, and plaster, all point to the historical significance of the site.



Artifacts found in Achaemenid site of Gonabad  
● IRNA

## 18th Int'l Tourism Expo held in Tehran



Visitors exploring the pavilions at the exhibition  
● hamshahrionline.ir

The 18th Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition took place from February 11-14, 2025, at Tehran's Permanent Fairgrounds. The event hosted 700 domestic and international companies.

Eight foreign delegations and fourteen countries, including Turkey, Qatar, Malaysia, Thailand, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Indonesia, Madagascar, and the

UAE, were represented with their own pavilions.

This year, 395 square meters were dedicated to international exhibitors.

The exhibition showcased a diverse range of activities, including 20 expert-led workshops, 10 specialized panels on tourism organizations, contributions from academic and scientific associations, and presentations by inno-

vative students.

As part of the exhibition's side programs, international students participated in tourism tours designed to cultivate them as ambassadors for Iranian tourism. A dedicated pavilion also highlighted the potential of nomadic communities and ecotourism, emphasizing their role in initiatives like reducing road accidents.

# Celebrating triumphs, resilience in Iranian arts, culture

The current Persian calendar year, spanning from March 20, 2024, to March 21, 2025, was a significant period for Iran's cultural and

artistic landscape. It was marked by the loss of notable artists and a vibrant display of Iranian creativity on both national and inter-

national platforms. From film festivals to art exhibitions, this year showcased the resilience and dynamism of Iranian art. The following

reviews the most important cultural and artistic events of the year, reflecting on the challenges and triumphs that shaped the year.

## Loss of prominent artists

The Iranian art community faced profound sorrow with the passing of several influential figures. The film industry mourned the loss of celebrated actors such as Reza Davoodnejad, Zari Khoshkam, and Zhaleh Olov, as well as notable directors like Saeed Rad and Pari Saberi. Also, the voice of beloved dubbing artists, including Manouchehr Valizadeh and Iraj Rezaei, was silenced. The literary world also grieved the death of great poet Mohammad Ali Bahmani. These losses left an indelible mark on the cultural fabric of Iran, prompting reflections on the importance of preserving the legacy of these artists.

## National Music Document

On January 30, 2024, the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council approved the National Music Document, a strategic framework aimed at developing and organizing the music sector in Iran. This document was officially announced by the President on March 2, 2024, and its unveiling ceremony took place on June 15, 2024, attended by Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili. The National Music Document aims to clarify the true position of music in cultural governance and promote a cohesive and effective policymaking approach in the music sector. This project reflects a commitment to enhancing the role of music as a cultural asset and facilitating its growth both nationally and internationally.

## 'Eye to Eye' exhibition at TMOCA

Amidst these losses, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA) launched a significant exhibition titled 'Eye to Eye' in late June 2024. Running until January 15, 2025, the exhibition showcased the works of 120 Iranian and international artists, drawing over 2,000 visitors. The event not only celebrated the museum's hidden collection but also highlighted the importance of contemporary art in fostering dialogue and understanding within society. It became one of the most well-received exhibitions in recent years, offering a platform for artistic expression and community engagement.



## Iran's presence at 60th Venice Biennale

In April 2024, Iran made a strong showing at the 60th Venice Biennale with a pavilion themed "Art without Border." This global art event, which took place from April 20 to November 24, 2024, attracted participation from 95 countries, marking a significant post-pandemic resurgence in international art engagement. The Iranian pavilion, curated by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, featured renowned artists such as Abdolhamid Qadirian, Gholamali Taheri, and Kazem Chalipa. This participation not only showcased the richness of Iranian contemporary art but also fostered cultural exchanges on a global scale.



## Auction houses and sales of Iranian art

In the first half of the Persian year, Tehran's Auction house emerged as the leading venue for Iranian art sales, achieving approximately \$3.2 million in revenue. Following closely were Christie's and Sotheby's, with sales of \$1.3 million and \$1.2 million, respectively. However, there was a notable decline of around 26% in Tehran's auction revenue compared to the previous year. While Christie's experienced an increase in sales, Sotheby's faced a decline. The dynamic landscape of art sales reflects the complexities of the market, influenced by economic factors and shifting consumer interests. Cities such as Tehran, London, Dubai, Paris, and New York were the most successful in selling Iranian artworks during this period. Although Tehran remained a frontrunner, it faced a significant decrease in sales compared to the previous year. London also saw its sales halved, while Dubai experienced a 27% growth. This fluctuation in sales illustrates the evolving nature of the art market and its response to global economic conditions.

## Picasso exhibition at TMOCA



On March 12, 2025, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art unveiled a rare exhibition featuring 66 works by the legendary artist Pablo Picasso. Titled 'Picasso in Tehran,' the exhibition offered an unprecedented opportunity for visitors to explore the evolution of Picasso's artistic career. The showcase included prints, paintings, sculptures, and artist books, highlighting Picasso's profound influence on modernist movements, including those in Iran. Running until May 21, 2025, the exhibition strategically coincided with the Nowruz holiday, attracting a diverse audience eager to engage with the richness of Picasso's legacy.

## Oscar win for Iranian animation



In a remarkable achievement for Iranian cinema, the animated short film 'In the Shadow of Cypress,' co-directed by Hossein Molayemi and Shirin Sohani, won the Oscar for Best Animated Short Film at the 97th Academy Awards held on March 2, 2025. This film, produced by the Iranian Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, became the first Iranian animated short to win an Oscar, marking a significant milestone in the country's cinematic history. With this victory, Iran celebrated its third Oscar win, following the success of Asghar Farhadi's films 'A Separation' and 'The Salesman.'

## Fajr Film Festival



The 43rd Fajr Film Festival, held during a transitional period between two administrations, was marked by notable changes. While it faced criticisms regarding its organization, the festival saw the return of the People's Simorgh award after a three-year hiatus, awarded to the film 'Peshmerga' by Ali Ghaffari. This return was a significant development, emphasizing the importance of audience engagement in evaluating cinematic works. Despite challenges, the festival remains a vital cultural event that continues to promote Iranian cinema both nationally and internationally.

# Nowruz; timeless celebration of renewal and unity

## Iranica Desk

Nowruz is an ancient and historical celebration passed down from our ancestors. With unique customs added over time, it has become an integral part of Iranian culture. Today, it serves as a symbol of connection and solidarity among various Iranian ethnic groups. The beginning of Nowruz falls on the first of Farvardin in the Iranian calendar (March 21). This celebration is one of the oldest festivities in ancient Iran and has been joyfully celebrated for many years, continuing into the future. Although Nowruz was first celebrated in ancient Iran, this beautiful festival is also observed in neighboring countries like Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

While many people might assume, based on the name of this ancient festival, that Nowruz means "new day", this belief arises because Nowruz coincides with the first day of spring, representing renewal, freshness, and the vibrant beauty of nature and the world.

This celebration takes place in various parts of the world, particularly within the civilizations of Iran and Central Asia, featuring different rituals but sharing a common message. It symbolizes new beginnings, the renewal of nature, friendship, peace, and solidarity among nations. These qualities elevate Nowruz beyond a mere national festival, transforming it into a significant element of cultural identity.

In this context, Nowruz serves not merely as a national celebration; it acts as a tool for cultural diplomacy and international relations. Countries in the Nowruz region can leverage this shared heritage to strengthen their cultural and economic ties.

Nowruz encompasses many rituals and traditions observed in nearly all parts of Iran, including:



Preparing sprouts  
ashmazi.com



Khaneh-tekani  
aftabnews.ir

## Spring cleaning

Spring cleaning (known in Persian as *khaneh-tekani*) is a tradition that is hard to forget, characterized by the effort it requires from household members and the satisfying results it offers. Just as Iranians celebrate the renewal, freshness, and greenery of spring and nature, they also engage in spring cleaning. They empty their cupboards of unnecessary items, wash carpets, paint walls in fresh colors, and clean windows of dust and dirt, allowing the bright spring sun to beautifully fill their homes.

In ancient times, Iranians believed that the spirits of the deceased would return to Earth in the last days of the year, particularly in the five days leading up to the new year, visiting their homes. In preparation for their arrival, family members would engage in various tasks to welcome these spirits, with spring cleaning being one of the most notable practices.

## Celebrating Chaharshanbe Suri

Chaharshanbe Suri is one of the Nowruz traditions that

has many admirers, especially among the younger generation. It is celebrated on the last Tuesday night of the year, where families gather around bonfires, exchange flowers and good wishes, jump over the fire, and wish for good health for themselves and others. On Chaharshanbe Suri, various treats such as sweets, chocolates, nuts, and *aash reshteh* (a type of noodle soup) are typically enjoyed. *Qashogh-zani* (spoon-tapping) is another custom celebrated on this festive night. In this tradition, a man, woman, child, or adult visits their neighbors' homes with their head and face covered.



Chaharshanbe Suri  
millichronicle.com

Without introducing themselves or making any noise, they receive their gift and return. While moving through the neighborhood, they continuously tap a spoon against a metal bowl or pot to create noise. This sound signals to the homeowners that the spoon-knocker has arrived at their house to collect gifts. The gifts can include chocolates, snacks, and toys for children, or cash and nuts for adults.

## Establishing peace and reconciliation

The Iranian tradition of spring cleaning is not limited to their homes; these kind-hearted individuals also practice cleansing their hearts of any hatred, malice, or doubt. Instead, they cultivate seeds of hope, peace, love, and friendship within themselves. For this reason, friends, acquaintances, and especially those who have had disagreements strive to reach out to each other to promote peace and reconciliation.

## Preparing sprouts

As previously mentioned, the tradition of sprouting greens, known as *sabzeh*, for Nowruz has been practiced for thousands of years. People begin to sprout wheat, mung beans, lentils, and other seeds about 20 to 25 days before the New Year. As the symbol of rebirth and renewal is one of the most inspiring elements of the Haft Seen Table. The presence of *sabzeh* in the home holds great significance for those celebrating Nowruz around the world. Greenery symbolizes good character, joy, and vitality; it serves as a miniature representation



Visiting relatives and friends  
yjc.ir

in the most honored spot and then arrange the accompanying items around it.

**Sabzeh:** Represents purity and freshness.

**Senjed** (dried oleaster): Symbolizes rebirth and new beginnings.

**Samanu** (sweet wheat pudding): Represents health and growth.

**Sekkeh** (coin): Symbolizes wealth and prosperity.

**Sib** (apple): Represents love and knowledge.

**Somaq** (sumac): Symbolizes joy and happiness.

**Sir** (garlic): Represents health and protection.

This beautiful spread also includes other items, such as dyed eggs, which are often colored and designed by children, symbolizing rebirth. A bowl of clear water signifies the purity and honesty of family members. The mirror, which brings light into the home accompanied by candles that multiply the light and reflect upon the Haft Seen items.

## Wearing new clothes

On the first day of spring and during the Nowruz celebration, nature itself is renewed. Wearing new clothes is an ancient tradition in the Nowruz celebrations of Iran, deeply rooted in this concept of renewal. The revival of the Earth and the greening of trees symbolize a fresh start for Iranians. Inspired by this natural rebirth, they associate the arrival of spring with donning new clothes, which they regard as a significant part of the celebration.

During this time, both the rich and the poor prepare to wear new outfits. Historically, providing clothing for those less fortunate, especially children,

has been of great importance.

## Visiting

Visiting relatives and friends, known as '*did and bazdid*,' is a significant custom of Nowruz. This tradition commences with visits to the elders of the family or community, as well as other respected social figures. These gatherings are held among relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and both near and distant acquaintances. Typically, these visits take place from the first to the thirteenth of Farvardin and may continue until the end of Farvardin. It is heartwarming when these visits extend beyond Nowruz and persist throughout the year, fostering deeper connections and friendships.

## Giving gifts

One of the beloved customs during Nowruz is giving gifts, which brings joy to everyone involved. Gifting money, known as '*eydi*,' is a tradition that has been part of Iranian culture for a long time. Elders traditionally give gifts to the younger members of the family, who visit the elders to show respect and receive their blessings. While the act of receiving a gift from elders has always held significance, this tradition has evolved over time, with cash gifts now replacing older customs. Among Iranians, *eydi* is not limited to family and relatives; it also extends to the caretaker, local waste collector, mail carrier, and other hardworking members of society. This practice is considered auspicious and is believed to bring good fortune, reflecting the spirit of generosity that characterizes the Nowruz celebrations.



Haft Seen table  
homsaz.com

## Karate 1 Premier League:

Golshadnejad wins gold as  
Iranians notch up five medals

## Sports Desk

The final day of the Karate 1 Premier League series in Hangzhou saw Iranians collect five medals, including a kumite gold in the women's competitions.

Representing the country in the -61kg weight class, Atousa Golshadnejad defeated German grand winner Reem Khamis 4-3 to walk away with the ultimate prize.

This was a six victory in Hangzhou for the Iranian girl, who also won a gold medal at the Karate 1 Premier League in Paris last year.

Fatemeh Sa'adati was the other Iranian female finalist on Sunday, settling for a silver medal in the -55kg class after a 4-0 defeat against Japanese rising star Rina Kodo.

In the men's draw, former Asian champion Saleh Abazari bagged a second silver medal for Iran.

Having beaten opponents from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Thailand, Italy, Turkey, as well as Egyptian grand winner Taha Tarek Mahmoud en route to the final, Abazari suffered a 5-3 loss to Georgian Merabi Gelashvili in the +84kg showdown.

Four-time world gold medalist Bahman Asgari bounced back from a last-four setback against Enzo Berthon of France to beat Croatian Ivan Martinac 1-0 and finish his campaign with a consolation bronze in the men's kumite -75kg contests.

Berthon still had to settle for a silver medal after a defeat by Senshu against reigning world and African champion Abdalla Abdelaziz of Egypt.

A second bronze medal for Iran came in the men's -84kg class, where Mahdi Khodabakhshi defeated Dutch opponent Brian Timmermans 3-0 to share the third podium with Rikito Shimada of Japan.

Egypt's Youssef Badawy, who had beaten Khodabakhshi in the semi-finals, went on to snatch the gold, thanks to a Hantei win against Jordanian Mohammad Aljafari after the final showpiece finished scoreless.



Iran's Atousa Golshadnejad (R) won a gold medal in the women's kumite -61kg event on the final day of the Karate 1 Premier League series in Hangzhou, China.

WKF



## Persian Gulf Pro League:

Tractor back on top after  
hard-fought win against Golgohar

## Sports Desk

Tractor came from behind to beat Golgohar Sirjan 2-1 in the Persian Gulf Pro League at home on Sunday.

Third in the Iranian top-flight table with two games in hand prior to the contest, Tractor will now finish the Persian calendar year on top of the standings with 48 points – one point clear of defending champion Persepolis and two above Sepahan. Maximum points in the rescheduled fixture at four-placed Foolad Khuzestan will leave Tractor in pole position to lift a maiden domestic league trophy come the end of season.

Alireza Kazemi gave the visitors a second-minute lead at the Yadegar-e Imam Stadium, capitalizing on an error by Tractor skipper Shoja Khalilzadeh to dink the ball past charging goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand.

Beaten by Saudi side Al Taawoun in the shootout in the AFC Champions League Two quarterfinals last Tuesday, Tractor managed to restore parity in the 25th minute,

when Brazilian Ricardo Alvez's low effort hit the post and deflected into the net off Golgohar defender Abolfazl Razzaqpour's leg on the rebound.

Tractor started the second half on the front foot and took the lead through Mahdi Hashemnejad, who finished off an exquisite team move down the middle with a left-footed strike from inside the box seven minutes after the break. Tractor missed several clear-cut chances to secure all points before the final whistle and had to hold off a desperate late surge by the visiting side for the massive victory.

A sixth defeat of the campaign left Golgohar fifth in the table with 35 points.

Elsewhere, Zob Ahan and Esteghlal shared the points in a 1-1 draw at the Fooladshahr Stadium in Isfahan.

Mohsen Azarbad's looping header found the bottom corner to put Zob Ahan in front in the 47th minute, before Ramin Rezaeian headed home from close range with five minutes left on the clock to avoid

further misery for the visiting Tehran Blues, who will finish the year in a below-par ninth place in the 16-team table with 27 points – one point adrift of Zob Ahan, which played to a 10th stalemate in 23 games.

Iranian fans will be treated to a tight race at both ends of the table with seven rounds of games remaining, when the top-flight clubs resume action after the international break.

Tractor will visit seventh-placed Iralco on March 29, a day before Persepolis plays at relegation-threatened Shams Azar in Qazvin, and Sepahan and Foolad – on 41 points with a game in hand – square off in Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium.



Tractor players celebrate a goal during a 2-1 victory over Golgohar Sirjan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Yadegar-e Imam Stadium, Tabriz, Iran, on March 16, 2025.

MASOUD VAEZ/TASNIM

## Draper lives out dreams with Indian Wells breakthrough

REUTERS – Briton Jack Draper turned his childhood dreams into reality at Indian Wells on Sunday, claiming his maiden Masters 1000 title and catapulting himself into the top 10 for the first time after a rapid ascent through his sport. The 23-year-old downed Denmark's Holger Rune 6-2 6-2 in a display of total dominance in the final, after overcoming the twice defending champion Carlos Alcaraz in the semi-final and swatting aside top U.S. hopes Taylor Fritz and Ben Shelton. "I have been watching this tournament since I was a young guy, watching all the champions play on this big court," said Draper, who will be ranked seventh after picking up the title. "It means the world to me, hon-

estly, to be able to be a champion here."

It was only 18 months ago that Draper – then ranked 123rd in the world – emerged as the unlikely hope for British men's tennis when he defied injury and the odds to reach the fourth round of the 2023 U.S. Open.

He quickly added to his credentials from there, beating Italian Matteo Berrettini for his first ATP title in Stuttgart in June.

Weeks later, he was in the final four at Flushing, becoming the first British man since Andy Murray in 2012 to reach the U.S. Open semi-final and he picked up his first ATP 500-level title in October in Vienna.

"You dream of winning this stuff when you're a kid. I think over

the years, especially when you're playing pro and stuff, it kind of gets lost a little bit, because maybe that, you know, when you're young you think, 'Oh, I'm just going to rock up and win,'" he told reporters.

"It doesn't work that way. You've got to go through many ups and downs and emotions."

Draper, whose competition schedule early this year was limited due to a nagging hip issue, credited his coach with providing a structured approach to help him weather the highs and lows.

"I want to achieve amazing things in this sport, but my main goal is keep on improving and keep on knocking down," he said.

"I know there is a long way ahead of me. I'm very ambitious. I don't want to just stop here."



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

# 'Nowruznegar' blossoms in Tehran

Arts & Culture Desk

EXCLUSIVE

As spring unfolds and the joyous festivities of Nowruz approach, Tehran's Laleh Gallery opened its doors to the 'Nowruznegar' art exhibition, showcasing the beauty of nature through an array of artistic expressions. Mohammad Ali Saeidi, the gallery director and curator of the exhibition, told Iran Daily reporter that it is the second consecutive year the Laleh Gallery is hosting this distinguished event. The exhibition features approximately 120 pieces from 70 contemporary artists, all inspired by the delicate charm and liveliness of spring. "The majority of the artworks are presented in either realistic or abstract styles, with a portion created in the tra-

ditional Persian calligraphy painting technique," Saeidi explained. "We focused on selecting pieces that embody bright, joyful colors, reflecting the positive energy of this season for our visitors." Half of the participating artists are recognized figures in the Iranian art scene, while the other half consists of emerging talents who draw inspiration from nature in their creations. Saeidi added that last year's exhibition attracted a significant number of tourists and travelers from across the country during the Nowruz holiday, many of whom are eager to explore art galleries featuring themes of spring and the New Year. The exhibition began on March 8 and will run until April 7, providing a month-long celebration of art and nature in the heart of Tehran.



● Ahmad Mirza



● Reza Hedayat



● Akbar Nikanpour



● Kamelia Noohi

## Int'l Holy Qur'an Exhibition wrapped up

# Minister calls for broader appeal of Qur'anic teachings

Arts & Culture Desk



Iran's 32nd International Holy Qur'an Exhibition wrapped up in Tehran, highlighting the need for a broader approach to the Qur'an's teachings. Abbas Salehi, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, said that the Qur'an's message should resonate not just with believers, but with all of humanity. "We must broaden our perspective," he said during the closing ceremony in Tehran on March 17.

Salehi emphasized that the Qur'an addresses various groups, including the faithful, believers, and ultimately, all of humanity. He noted that Qur'anic initiatives, such as this exhibition, should aim to capture these layers of guidance. "Our primary concern should be the guidance of humanity," Salehi added. He expressed hope that events like the Qur'an Exhibition would effectively convey its messages to a wider audience. Hamidreza Arbab Soleimani, head of

the exhibition, remarked on the significance of holding the exhibition twice in one year. "This is the only event at the Ministry that aligns with the lunar calendar," he noted. He stressed the exhibition's goals, which include promoting a Qur'anic lifestyle and enhancing understanding of its teachings among different societal segments, particularly the youth. Arbab Soleimani pointed out the exhibition's focus on developing digital Qur'anic resources, particularly for

children and adolescents. "This aspect received considerable attention," he stated. The exhibition featured 37 sections, each tailored to specific audiences, and was managed by content experts. "One way to uphold the divine book is through Qur'anic events like this exhibition," he concluded. The event aimed to foster international dialogue, with participation from 15 countries, strengthening Qur'anic diplomacy among experts and artists.

## Iran's 'Land of Kindness' moves to Guangzhou



Arts & Culture Desk

The 'Land of Kindness' exhibition, showcasing Iran's rich cultural heritage, is set to launch in its second destination in China at the Guangdong Provincial Museum in Guangzhou. Following a successful opening in Chengdu's Sichuan University Museum earlier this year, the exhibition will officially open in mid-April 2024. Organized in compliance with all legal and expert regulations, the exhibition is spearheaded by the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry, with collaboration from Tehran Governor-General's Office and the University of Tehran, ILNA reported. The exhibition features 151 historical and cultural artifacts selected from Tehran's museums and the University of Tehran, highlighting the visual and thematic richness of Iranian heritage. The initial show in Chengdu received significant media coverage and was warmly welcomed by Chinese visitors, reflecting the exhibition's success in promoting Iranian culture and civilization. The event underscores the vital role of museum exhibitions in fostering cultural understanding and cooperation between nations.

# China, Kyrgyzstan extend Nowruz greetings

Arts & Culture Desk

Diplomats from China and Kyrgyzstan extended their congratulations on the occasion of Nowruz (Persian new year), emphasizing the festival's cultural significance and its role in strengthening international ties. In a message to Mehr News Agency, Kyrgyz Ambassador to Iran Turdakun Sydykov described Nowruz as a cherished tradition among the Kyrgyz people, symbolizing peace, harmony, and renewal. "For the Kyrgyz people, as well as for Iranians and many Central Asian nations, Nowruz is an invaluable heritage of our ancestors, a festival of unity and prosperity," he said. Sydykov highlighted traditional Kyrgyz customs associated with the celebration, including the preparation of "sumolek," a nutrient-rich dish made from sprouted wheat, cooked collectively by families and neighbors as they sing folk songs and share stories. He also noted that Nowruz festivities in Kyrgyzstan feature theatrical performances, sports competitions, and traditional equestrian games. Recognizing the festival's international significance, he recalled that UNESCO added Nowruz to its Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2009, and the United Nations declared March 21 as International Nowruz Day in 2010. Sydykov expressed hope for continued strengthening of Kyrgyz-Iranian relations and extended his best wishes for peace and prosperity to the people of both nations. Similarly, Chinese Ambassador to Iran Zong Peiwu, in his congratulatory message, under-



scored the historical and cultural connections between China and Iran. He noted that both countries celebrate traditional new year festivals—Nowruz in Iran and the Chinese Spring Festival—reflecting a shared appreciation for renewal and happiness. "These two traditional celebrations, which symbolize the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of China and Iran for the new year, reflect the shared passion of two ancient civilizations for togetherness, happiness, and liveliness," Zong said. He further emphasized the enduring cultural

exchanges between China and Iran, dating back to the Silk Road era, and highlighted a recent cultural initiative by the Chinese Embassy in Tehran. The embassy hosted a joint concert, "Chinese New Year Together," featuring performances by musicians from the University of Tehran, as part of efforts to deepen mutual understanding through the arts. As both envoys acknowledged Nowruz's spirit of renewal and unity, their messages reflected a broader commitment to fostering cross-cultural ties and strengthening diplomatic relations through shared traditions.