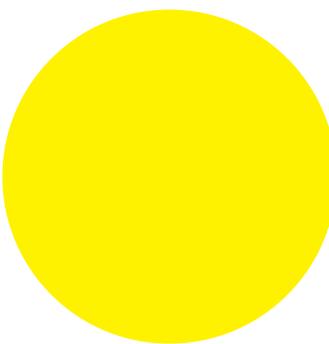


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Heads of the Iranian branches of power, President Massoud Pezeshkian (r), Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf (c) and Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei walk inside the Presidential Office to a meeting room in Tehran, Iran on November 15, 2025.

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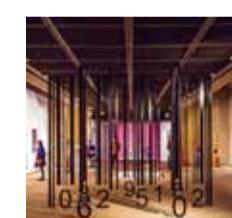
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Relying on people as source of political power key to thwarting enemy plots

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Mahmoud Abbaszadeh Meshkini
In the early weeks of 2026, Iran witnessed economic protests that escalated into violence with the involvement of external elements, resulting in casualties. Following the deployment of security forces, the deadly unrest was ultimately quelled. However, the roots and causes of this tragic event warrant examination. Iran Daily talked to Mahmoud Ab-

baszadeh Meshkini, a national security expert, to explore the dimensions of the riots. Meshkini said that preserving Iran's integrity was the most important historical duty of all political factions, and that relying on the people as the source of political power was the most crucial step in foiling such plots.

IRAN DAILY: What is your assessment of the government's management and response to the public protests that escalated into violence? What strengths and weaknesses do you see in this approach?

MESHKINI: The constitution autho-

rizes assembly for peaceful protests, with two stipulations: no carrying of weapons and adherence to Islamic principles and public order – a standard practice in all countries worldwide. These recent events began as peaceful protests, as evidenced by a video circulating at the time that showed people rejecting calls for violence and vandalism. The government promptly acknowledged the protests and committed to reviewing the situation and addressing shortcomings within its capabilities and authority, and pledged to do so. Things were progressing well until external elements stepped in, as was

anticipated. Naturally, the government has weaknesses that contribute to problems, which the enemy exploits. A clear weakness is the need for greater transparency with the people. Every day, people hear news of corruption and rent seeking, but they hear less about serious crackdowns. The government must first reform itself, eliminating rent seeking and ensuring fair justice in economy. It must also keep the public informed about its capabilities, limitations, and obstacles, so they can understand that the country is facing a sanctions war.

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Iran's top echelons resolved to address economic woes, ensure security



National Desk

Heads of the three branches of government in Iran in a joint statement on Monday said they are committed to do their utmost to resolve the people's economic problems and ensure public security after the recent protests over livelihood hardships caused a serious security crisis for the country.

During the recent "complex sedition", which was orchestrated by the longtime enemies of the "Islamic Revolution", the


The undated photo shows President Masoud Pezeshkian (c), Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf (l) and Judiciary Chief Gholamhosseini Mohseni-Ejei.
president.ir

vigilance of the Iranians in distinguishing protesters from rioters and the sacrifices of the security forces, thwarted the "sinister plan of the designers of the scenario" in Iran, President Masoud Pezeshkian, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Judiciary Chief Gholamhosseini Mohseni-Ejei said in their statement.

Some shopkeepers last month staged peaceful protests in different Iranian cities over economic grievances, which are directly linked to unilateral US sanctions. The demonstrations, however, were steered toward violence after public statements by US and Israeli regime figures encouraged vandalism and disorder. During the unrest, foreign-backed armed

rioters damaged public property and caused casualties among civilians and security forces. Hundreds of people have been arrested for their involvement in the riots.

In their Monday's statement, the three top officials vowed to address the root causes of the recent events in the country.

While placing a premium on administering "decisive punishment for the murderers" and terrorist elements in the country's riots, the three said they will extend leniency toward those who did not play a fundamental role in the events.

They also praised the nations' awareness which neutralized the "most complex conspiracies by enemies against the unity of a strong and independent Iran."

Pezeshkian: Riots rooted in negligence toward young generation's demands

Parl. speaker likens recent terrorist acts to Israel's pager attack in Lebanon

National Desk

The Iranian president called the negligence about young generation and their demands one of the factors behind recent foreign-incited violent incidents across the country, stressing that the government alongside the cultural, security, and intelligence institutions should be held accountable and figure out their shortcomings in this regard.

In a meeting with the Leader's representatives on Monday, Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the necessity of identifying the causes of the incidents and recalled the important role and duties of the government and other institutions to address the people's demands and prevent the repetition of such crises.

The fact that the "enemies are able to negatively influence the mindset of our children and make use of them for their own purposes is truly unimaginable and unacceptable," Pezeshkian noted.

While stressing the necessity of punishing the ringleaders of the recent riots and terrorist acts in the country, the president said that the main issue in this regard is finding out the reasons behind the occurrence of such

incidents and their solutions. Late last month, Iran witnessed street protests triggered by a sharp fall in the rial, the Iranian currency, and economic hardships in the capital, Tehran, and other cities.

The peaceful protests across Iran turned violent after US President Donald Trump and other American officials alleged that the United States would resort to fresh military aggression against Iran in the event of what they called Tehran's "suppression" of the foreign-backed terrorist riots.

The Islamic Republic has repeatedly underlined that it would exert due effort to address economic protests, but stands firm in the face of attempts at derailing protests towards disorder. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf on Monday said the recent "Daesh-style terrorist war" against the country had similar objectives to Israel's terrorist pager attack on Lebanon in September 2024.

On September 17, 2024, thousands of wireless communication devices belonging to members of the resistance movement Hezbollah exploded in unison in different locations across Lebanon and Syria, killing at least 12 people, including two children, and injuring around 3,000 others, mostly

ordinary citizens. The Israeli regime officially claimed responsibility for the attacks. Speaking at a Parliament session, Qalibaf said the predetermined plan consisted of "naked and organized violence, terrorist and armed attacks, extremely violent civil commotion, and the brutal killing of several thousand civilians, members of Basij (voluntary forces) and police and security forces."

The plan aimed to cause fear among the Iranian people, make them lose the capacity to analyze issues and stop supporting the country, thereby paving the way for the United States and its mercenaries to carry out an attack against Iran and disintegrate it, he added.

He noted that there are few countries in the world that are able to swiftly restore security and protect their peoples after being suddenly confronted with such "organized and brutal terrorism", which was openly and officially supported by the US president.

The top parliamentarian emphasized that the recent plot was a continuation of the 12-day war waged by the US and the Israeli regime against Iran in mid-June.

Trump source of 'provocative, absurd' messages on Iran riots: Envoy

Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali said the US President Donald Trump provoked violence in Iran while sending a conflicting message about "protecting the Iranian people" during the recent foreign-backed riot in the country.

In an op-ed for TASS, Jalali called Trump the "architect and implementer of the policy of maximum pressure and sanctions."

At the same time, he added, the US president sends "absurd and contradictory signals about 'supporting,' 'saving,' or 'protecting the Iranian people.'"

While Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian was meeting with members of the Chamber of Commerce, businessmen and entrepreneurs, and receiving them at cabinet sessions, Trump "issued provocative statements, political messages and public threats, through which he encouraged violence, supported terrorist groups, fueled social instability and attempted to




A car, burned down during recent riots, is parked in a street in Tehran, Iran.
IRNA

On Saturday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Iran considers the US president the main culprit for the killings and destruction carried out by foreign-linked elements in recent riots.

"The US president is responsible for casualties, damage, and false accusations directed against the Iranian nation," the Leader said, calling Trump a criminal.

'Europe won't be blackmailed,' over Greenland: Danish PM



Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said "Europe won't be blackmailed" by Donald Trump's tariff threats over Greenland.

The US president has said he will impose a new 10% levy on goods from eight allied nations if they oppose his proposed takeover of the autonomous Danish territory, BBC reported.

Frederiksen and other European leaders issued a joint statement on Sunday, saying the tariffs risked "undermining transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous

downward spiral".

On Monday, Trump said NATO had been "telling Denmark, for 20 years, that 'you have to get the Russian threat away from Greenland.' Unfortunately, Denmark has been unable to do anything about it. Now it is time, and it will be done!!!"

Trump insists Greenland is critical for US security and has previously said Washington would get the territory "the easy way" or "the hard way". He has not ruled out use of force, which has drawn widespread criticism.

The new tariffs – taxes on imports – would be imposed on Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK, Trump said on Saturday.

He said an initial 10% tariff would come into force on February 1 "on any and all goods" sent to the US, but could rise to 25% in June.

The levies would "be due and payable until such time as a Deal is reached for the Complete and Total purchase of Greenland", he wrote on his Truth Social platform.

In their joint statement, the leaders of those eight countries reiterated their "full solidarity with the Kingdom of Denmark and the people of Greenland".

They also stressed their commitment to "strengthening Arctic security as a shared transatlantic interest" as members of the NATO military alliance. "We stand

ready to engage in a dialogue based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that we stand firmly behind," the statement reads. Separately, Frederiksen wrote on Facebook: "We want to cooperate and we are not the ones seeking conflict. And I am happy for the consistent messages from the rest of the continent: Europe will not be blackmailed."

According to the Deutsche Welle, Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Europe must hold firm in the face of Trump's threat.

"It is clear that we want to stand our ground, as a country and as a continent," Merz said. "It is up to us, and in Germany we want to accept the realities, take responsibility and lead the way for Germany."

"We want to avoid any escalation in this dispute if at all possible," the chancellor said.


Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran stands among Tajikistan's top five trade partners in 2025



Economy Desk

Iran has joined the list of Tajikistan's top five trading partners in 2025, as bilateral trade volume rose sharply to \$483.9 million from \$377.7 million in

2024 — a 28% increase equivalent to \$106.2 million, according to Tajik customs data released Monday. Tajikistan exported \$112.8 million worth of goods to Iran last year while importing \$371.2

million, resulting in a trade deficit of \$258.4 million in favor of Tehran, IRNA quoted the Tajik Customs Committee as reporting. Non-energy exports from Iran to Tajikistan surged by more

than 30% in 2025. Key Iranian exports included petrochemicals, construction materials, and foodstuffs. Among them were bitumen valued at approximately \$15.4 million; polymers — polyethylene and polypropylene

worth over \$10 million and \$11.1 million respectively; and Portland cement clinker totaling around \$12.8 million. Food imports also held a prominent place in Tajikistan's trade structure. Imports of matzo (a type of flatbread) were estimated at \$3.2 million, white sugar at \$3.3 million, fresh oranges at \$2.6 million, and kiwi fruit at more than \$2 million. Additional bitumen used in road construction was imported at an approximate value of \$2.5 million.

In contrast, Tajikistan's exports to Iran consisted mainly of raw materials. Cotton fiber made up the largest portion, exceeding \$74 million. Other exports included cotton yarn with a minimum of 85% cotton content, valued at more than \$480,000, and aluminum worth approximately \$95,000.

The figures reflect a significant expansion in economic relations between the two countries in recent years.

Visa-free trucking deal

Separately, Tajikistan's For-

ign Ministry has recently announced that, starting in March, the two nations will abolish visa requirements for international truck drivers. A Tajik Foreign Ministry official told local media on Monday that the decision was made by mutual agreement between the two governments.

Under the new arrangement, drivers will be allowed to stay in either country for up to 30 days within any 90-day period without a visa.

"This measure facilitates international transport, strengthens trade and economic cooperation, and increases logistics profitability between the two countries," the ministry told Asia-Plus news agency.

Earlier in 2025, the two countries fully lifted visa requirements for air travel to all cities in both nations. Citizens may now travel by air for stays of up to 30 days within any 90-day period without restriction. However, those entering by land still require visas.

Farzad B gas field enters new development phase with 84% completion of offshore jacket



Economy Desk

The development of Iran's shared Farzad B gas field has entered a new phase, marked by significant progress in offshore infrastructure, engineering studies, and well design, according to Hamidreza Saqafi, managing director of the Petropars Group.

The country has moved forward with the development of the Farzad B gas field — a shared reservoir with Saudi Arabia — reaching 84% completion on a key offshore jacket as part of efforts to harness one of the region's

most technically challenging energy assets. Speaking in Tehran, Saqafi said the project is advancing cohesively and purposefully, with execution, engineering, and technical studies being carried out through domestic expertise by Petropars — the project's operator — alongside Pars Oil and Gas Company as client, Iranian contractors, and engineering consultants, IRNA reported. A major milestone has been reached in offshore construction as the four-legged jacket for one of the field's wellhead platforms

has achieved 84% physical completion after 14 months of round-the-clock work at the yard of Iran Marine Industrial Company (SA-DRA).

Loading of the massive jacket is scheduled for this month, followed by mooring, transportation to its final location, and installation in the coming weeks. Geophysical and geotechnical surveys at the jacket installation site have already been completed.

"Farzad B, a shared reservoir between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia, is among the region's most complex gas fields due to its challenging geology, high-pressure, high-temperature sour gas conditions," Saqafi noted.

"Its development — driven by national consensus, solidarity, and the capabilities of Iranian experts — will play a vital role in boosting the country's gas production capacity, addressing part of the energy imbalance, and safeguarding national interests." Saqafi added that the contract for preliminary and detailed engineering consultancy for offshore facilities and subsea pipelines has been finalized.

IMF forecasts 1.1% growth for Iran's economy in 2026



Economy Desk

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects Iran's economy to expand by 1.1% in 2026, improving on its projected 0.3% growth for 2025, according to the fund's latest World Economic Outlook report. The IMF's assessment, reported by Tasnim News Agency, contrasts sharply with projections from the World Bank. While the IMF sees modest expansion in both years, the World Bank estimates Iran's economy contracted by 1.1% in 2025 and forecasts a further decline to negative 1.5% growth in 2026.

The divergence highlights markedly different outlooks between the two major international financial institutions regarding Iran's near-term economic trajectory. The IMF anticipates stronger performance in 2026 compared to 2025, whereas the World Bank projects a worsening econom-

ic situation over the same period. The World Bank's report in December also indicated that Iran's external debt declined by 2.5% in 2024, totaling \$9.654 billion, marking a rare reduction amid rising debt levels in developing countries.

The report, released by the World Bank on the status of debt in developing economies, showed that total external debt for these countries increased by 1.1% last year, reaching \$8.9 trillion, about \$110 billion higher than in 2023.

While overall debt in developing countries grew, Iran's external obligations dropped by \$247 million from roughly \$9.901 billion in 2023 to \$9.654 billion in 2024.

Despite Western sanctions, Iran has managed not only to avoid increasing its foreign debt in recent years but also to reduce it significantly, from around \$19 billion in 2010 to more than \$9 billion in 2024.

TPO reports surge in export gains as forex reforms boost trade flow

Economy Desk

A senior Iranian trade official said a significant volume of foreign currency from past and new export commitments is returning to the formal economy, signaling improved liquidity under recent foreign exchange reforms.

"An appreciable amount of export-related foreign currency — from both past obligations and new earnings — is flowing back into the economic cycle," said Mohammad Sadeq Qannadzadeh, deputy for commercial services at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO),

ISNA reported.

He added there was "no particular issue regarding the entry of foreign currency into the country," noting that large companies are also settling past obligations under the new framework.

Qannadzadeh outlined the implementation of the government's foreign exchange reform package, highlighting its positive impact on trade development and a shift in policymaking approach toward foreign trade. He attributed previous distortions to the existence of multiple exchange rates across different trading platforms.

"The provision of different exchange rates in separate trading halls had created an exchange rate rent in the country, which fostered widespread corruption and strongly discouraged exporters from repatriating their earnings through official channels," he said.

Under the new policy, approved by the government's economic team, all foreign currency transactions are now centralized in a single trading hall with a negotiated rate aligned closely with market prices. "This allows exporters to benefit directly from the export process by offering currency at a rate close to the

market value," Qannadzadeh explained. The policy's main thrust is a shift from allocating foreign currency at the beginning of the supply chain to transferring subsidies to the end of the chain and the final consumer.

The official pointed to developments over the past two weeks as evidence of the policy's early success. "Signs of this strategy's implementation confirm that a considerable amount of foreign currency has returned, import financing for essential goods is underway, and the commercial foreign exchange hall has performed relatively well."

Qannadzadeh noted tangible improvements, including the re-entry of money exchange offices into formal currency transfer operations and enhanced foreign exchange facilitation mechanisms. The TPO also reported that strategic reserves of essential goods — which had declined in recent months — have begun to recover. "In recent weeks, following the policy shift, a significant volume of essential commodities has been imported and is now ready for offloading and storage at ports, which is a very positive development," Qannadzadeh said.

US intervention in Iran's unrest flagrant violation of int'l law

The overt interference of the United States of America in Iran's internal affairs, coupled with the unending threats from President Donald Trump against Iran, have diverted the trajectory of domestic protests and transmuted them into a novel pretext for escalating pressure upon Tehran. Within the contemporary conjuncture, a vigilance and statecraft, both domestically and amongst regional nations, more distinct than ever is requisite, so that under its aegis, we may traverse the arduous path which the Israeli regime and America have prepared for Iran and the region. Present realities in West Asia evince the intertwinement of security among nations more than ever before, and perhaps it is precisely for this reason that Badr al-Busaidi, the Omani foreign minister, during his recent visit to Tehran, emphasized that "regional security is ensured through the participation, cooperation, and coordination of all regional countries." In this same meeting, Abbas Araghchi, Iran's foreign minister, also stressed that "the independent sovereignty of nations is a cardinal principle of international law, and the internal affairs of countries will not be resolved except through internal deliberation; no party possesses the right to intervene or prescribe outcomes in the internal matters of any other nation." To scrutinize the US's objectives regarding intervention in Iran's internal affairs, as well as the regional approach to this degree of interventionism, Hossein Noushabadi, Iran's former ambassador to Oman, provided his insights in the text below.



By Hossein Noushabadi
Former Iranian ambassador to Oman

O P I N I O N

The Islamic Republic of Iran has perpetually communicated its profound disquiet concerning the overt interventions of certain nations, particularly the United States of America and its president, to international institutions and global assemblies. The duplicitous and insidious ingress of the American government and the Zionist regime in support of internal rioters and criminals has been executed with the objective of fomenting schism within Iranian society and debilitating national solidarity. The declarations of certain odious personages, such as the prime minister of the Zionist regime and radical, extremist American officials, inciting rioters with promises of support and encouraging armed terrorists toward violent and criminal comportment, manifest the sinister intention of America and the Zionist regime to exploit the subversive activities of rioters.

It is axiomatic that, pursuant to international norms, the United Nations Charter, and global organizations, belligerent and interventionist postures regarding the internal affairs of nations constitute an egregious violation of the foundational principles of the United Nations and a manifest encroachment upon international law — specifically, a violation of the principles of Iran's national and territorial sovereignty — and, in practice, constitute an incitement to violence and terrorism against Iranian citizens.

The American president, in his declarations that entail incitement to violence, disturbance, and terrorist actions within Iran, has explicitly threatened the Islamic Republic with recourse to force and military intervention, and expressed a readiness for unbridled support of terrorists and rioters. Based upon international law and the United Nations Charter, any endeavor to instigate, encourage, or legitimize the internal disturbances of United Nations member states, or military intervention, is considered a flagrant violation of the sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of these nations and a flagrant transgression of the United Nations Charter.

The visit of the Omani foreign minister to Iran at this present juncture signifies that nation's belief in the stability and enduring internal security of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is our hope that other neighboring nations, who today witness the adventurist and separatist comportment of the Zionist regime in regional countries, particularly Yemen, Somalia, and Syria, will — adopting the approach the Islamic Republic has repeatedly emphasized, namely ensuring regional security through the collective participation of regional nations — resist the expansionism and sinister designs



The photo shows the US President Donald Trump to the right and violent riots in Iran to the left.

▲ NHK WORLD

of the Zionist regime and not permit the stability and security of the West Asian region and Muslim nations to be imperiled by the spurious regime. Iran safeguards the legitimate political, economic, and cultural rights of its citizens and recognizes the fundamental rights of its nationals to civil and social participation within the framework of the constitution. Iran shall provide for the rightful demands of the people and considers itself obligated to observe human rights protocols, but does not permit foreign intervention in its internal affairs. Iran is committed to di-

alogue and constructive engagement in addressing legitimate economic and social concerns and demands through legal mechanisms, and resolutely opposes any exploitation of the lawful desires of the people by external intervenors who seek to derive benefit from creating insecurity and instability within the country. This policy is entirely congruent with international human rights obligations and domestic law. Tehran also possesses a thorough cognizance of the objectives and intentions of the Zionist regime and America over the preceding five decades,

during which it has confronted their conspiracies.

The esteemed people of Iran also possess full awareness of how to demonstrate forbearance and resilience in the face of these challenges and hardships, to surmount the challenges fabricated by enemies and foreigners, and are fully cognizant of the American military and economic pressures and unjust sanctions, from which a portion of their subsistence difficulties result.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



Iranians bid farewell to security forces who were martyred during the recent violent riots, on January 12, 2026.

▲ YJC

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Based upon international law and the United Nations Charter, any endeavor to instigate, encourage, or legitimize the internal disturbances of United Nations member states, or military intervention, is considered a flagrant violation of the sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of these nations and a flagrant transgression of the United Nations Charter.

Enemy undeniably seeking to exploit Iran's internal affairs

The articulation of contradictory statements and the concomitant transmission of signals of threat and willingness to advance diplomacy have become a consistent modus operandi of the United States administration under Donald Trump. Days ago, the United States president claimed he had received a negotiation request, and the White House spokesperson, in complementing these remarks, had asserted Trump's proclivity for diplomacy with Iran. However, after less than 24 hours, with a palpable pivot, he abruptly demanded the continuation of presence in the streets and declared assistance is en route. The US president also claimed that, in support of individuals on the streets, he canceled his meeting with Iranian officials.

The American president, in response to a question by CBS regarding the objective of his policy toward Tehran, stated, "My ultimate goal in Iran is victory, I love to win!" Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, in remarks delivered on January 12, before an assembly of ambassadors and heads of foreign missions resident in Tehran, highlighted, "We do not desire war but possess complete preparedness for war and are even more prepared than the previous 12-day war. The optimal method to prevent war is preparedness for war so that adversaries do not miscalculate. We are also prepared for negotiation, but fair, honorable negotiation, from a position of equality and with respect and based on mutual interests. Negotiation that is serious and genuine, not ordering and dictation, which is the ethic of some countries."

Abdolreza Faraji-Rad, a former Iranian diplomat and a professor of geopolitics, shared his assessment of recent developments and also contradictory statements from United States officials in a text, translated below.



By Abdolreza Faraji-Rad
Former diplomat and international affairs expert

OPINION

That which has transpired these days inside Iran possesses economic roots. Sanctions have caused the government's hands to be tied, foreign currency is lacking, the government has also announced it cannot order agricultural and pharmaceutical commodities in a timely manner, and consumer goods have experienced excessive price increases. This very matter also precipitated the emergence of dissatisfaction among the populace.

Perhaps it was necessary to address foreign policy issues much sooner and initiate dialogues. Certainly, it is true that Mr. Trump articulates coercion, and that this coercion applies to all countries of the world including America's allies, but the reality is that in confrontation with a coercive entity, although steadfastness is necessary, diplomacy and negotiation also must not be entirely discarded.

Iran possesses adversaries and rivals, and these actors obstruct potential negotiations between Tehran and Washington, at the forefront of which is Israel; also, some countries in our region do not welcome a reduction of tension between Iran and the United States and an improvement of Iran's economic situation and its becoming more powerful. Therefore, that which we heard recently and prior to Trump's new clamor regarding Iran's preparedness for negotiation and Donald Trump's statements that negotiations might commence, is a notable, albeit cautious, development. The reality is, if we had resolved these economic problems prior to this, none of the occurrences of the last several days would have transpired.

Until sanctions are removed, we will not witness a transformation in the economy. Recently, we also witnessed Trump declare that for every commercial partner of Iran, a 25% tariff will be imposed. This is a perilous issue that makes our task of continuing commercial dealings more difficult. I believe we must, in negotiations, be able to achieve a result. Yes, we must preserve our missile industry and also possess an acceptable level of enrichment, which is among the necessities, but when we enter negotiation, we will observe what apertures exist through which to engage in quid pro quo. We have thus far been unable to optimally utilize those instruments that negotiation places in our hands.

For them to say, "We only accept this outcome and nothing else," and for us to merely repeat the same thing, the result that accrues for us is nothing except economic problems. I hope, based on what we heard in the news, that the two sides enter serious negotiations, and America also refrains from repeating that which occurred in the previous round of negotiations. I believe that the United States also does not desire war



US President Donald Trump (c) looks out a window at the White House in Washington.

TRT

with Iran because Iran is different from Venezuela, and our region possesses its own particular conditions. Until our foreign policy moves forward and proceeds on the path of removing sanctions, the economic pressure on the people also prepares the conditions for foreign exploitation.

Trump administration prefers diplomacy with Iran

That the adversary, comprising the Zionist regime and the United States, utilizes Iran's internal milieu, is not a subject regarding which any doubt or

skepticism exists. Until two months ago, officials of the Zionist regime daily threatened to initiate a new round of aggressions against Iran, but abruptly, we witnessed that the Israeli prime minister, in a message to the Russian president, declared that they do not seek tension with Iran.

The reason is that they had a plan and executed this plan and propagated via foreign media, and this matter coincided with the commencement of a new wave of price increases inside Iran, which is another undeniable reality. This very matter also caused the

American president to resort to threatening rhetoric, but this is while the White House spokesperson declares that Washington, despite its capability in terms of power, prefers diplomacy. Concurrently, I believe confidential negotiations can prepare the ground for a quid pro quo. Trump, on the threshold of Senate elections, seeks an achievement and is simultaneously avoiding entry into a new conflict in the Middle East so as not to lose his supporters.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (c) arrives at the government palace to meet Lebanon's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam (not pictured) in Beirut, Lebanon, on January 9, 2026.

JOSEPH EID/AFP

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I believe that the United States also does not desire war with Iran because Iran is different from Venezuela, and our region possesses its own particular conditions. Until our foreign policy moves forward and proceeds on the path of removing sanctions, the economic pressure on the people also prepares the conditions for foreign exploitation.

Persian Gulf Pro League roundup: Persepolis stunned by Sepasi; Esteghlal, Tractor draw blank

Sports Desk

Persepolis missed the opportunity to go top of the Persian Gulf Pro League table after suffering a 2-1 away defeat to Fajr Sepasi at the Pars Shiraz Stadium on Sunday.

Hossein Shahabi, who was on target when the two sides played to a 1-1 draw in the reverse fixture, put the home side ahead eight minutes into the game, before Reza Shekari drew the visiting Reds level midway through the first half.

Persepolis desperately pushed for a second goal afterwards but it was the home side which restored the lead through former Reds striker Mahdi Sharifi in the 65th minute. Fajr held on to inflict only a second league defeat on Brazilian head coach Osmar Loss Vieira across his two spells on the Persepolis bench and move up to seventh in the table with 21 points.

A win would have seen the Reds

leapfrog Sepahan, which was held to a goalless stalemate at home the previous day, to top the table on goal difference. Instead, their second defeat of the league campaign saw them drop to third – level on 28 points with Tehran archrival Esteghlal.

Playing without their foreign star duo Jasir Asani and Munir El Haddadi, Esteghlal shared the spoils with defending champion Tractor at home later on Sunday to go second thanks to a superior goal difference.

Dragan Skocic's Tractor, meanwhile, was left lagging behind in fourth with 26 points after settling for a seventh goalless scoreline in 16 outings in the domestic league.

It also finished goalless between Shams Azar and Esteghlal Khuzestan in Qazvin. The point was enough for the home side to move out of the relegation zone on goal difference over Zob Ahan, which fell 2-0 to Paykan on Friday. Esteghlal Khuzestan sits

12th on 17 points. In Arak, Golgohar Sirjan claimed a 2-1 away win against Iralco to go fifth – tied on points with Tractor.

Star winger Mahdi Tikdari bagged his fourth goal of the campaign from the spot in the 20th minute, only to see his opener canceled out by Iralco's Ali Vatandoust nine minutes later.

Pouria Shahrabadi scored the winner nine minutes after the break to lead Mahdi Tarta's Golgohar to a third successive league victory.

The Iranian top flight will resume on Thursday, with Tractor hosting bottom-club Mes Rafsanjan in Tabriz, while Esteghlal will visit Zob Ahan in Isfahan.

The eagerly-awaited fixture of the weekend's action, however, will see Persepolis and Sepahan go head-to-head on Friday in a crunch 'Iranian Clasico' at the Sardar Azadeyan Stadium in Qazvin, which will serve as the Reds' home venue for the day.



Fajr Sepasi striker Mahdi Sharifi (78) reacts after scoring the winner during a 2-1 victory over Persepolis in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Shiraz, Iran, on January 18, 2026.

IRNA

Iran targets top-three finish at Asian Para Games, NPC chief says

Sports Desk

Iran is targeting a top-three finish in the medals table at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games in October, said Ghafor Kargari, chairman of the country's National Paralympic Committee (NPC).

Iran has finished in the top four in all four previous editions of the multi-sport event. Its highest position came at Hangzhou 2022, where Iran collected 131 medals – including 44 golds – to place second behind host China, which dominated with a remarkable 214 gold medals.

"Iranian athletes have already begun their training camps following the Asian Youth Para Games [in December], as we have set our sights on a top-three finish in Japan. Achieving this will require a collective effort and progress in technical and scientific areas," Kargari said on the sidelines of the NPC's 25th General Assembly on Monday. The assembly was also attended by Iranian Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali,



IRAN NPC

Mohammad Shervin Asbavian, the deputy minister for professional sports development, and Mahdi Alinejad, secretary-general of the National Olympic Committee.

"We are compelled to equip ourselves with the latest equipment and scientific knowledge to avoid falling behind our competitors. Our strategy is qualitative development with a focus on new sports and

athletes," added Kargari, who hopes a strong result in October will lay the groundwork for a milestone achievement at the Los Angeles Paralympics in two years' time.

"For the Los Angeles Paralympics, we have two goals: ranking among the top 10 countries and achieving our highest number of gold medals compared to previous editions," Kargari

said. Iran's highest Paralympic gold medal count is 12, achieved at both Sydney 2000 and Tokyo 2020. Its best finish in the overall standings, however, came at London 2012, where Iran's 11 gold medals placed it 11th. At the most recent Paralympic Games in Paris 2024, Iran won a record 25 medals – including eight golds – to finish 14th.



Iran Women's double friendlies called off

Sports Desk

Iran's preparations for the upcoming AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia have suffered a significant blow after two scheduled friendlies against Uzbekistan and Belarus were canceled. "We had held talks with Uzbekistan and Belarus, and both had agreed in principle to either play in Iran or host us. The match-

es were scheduled for one week before our departure for the Asian Cup, but currently, neither option is feasible," Farideh Shojaei, the head of women's football at the Iranian Football Federation, told ISNA. The official did not specify the reason for the cancellations, but it is believed to be driven by the escalating regional tensions and recent unrest in the country.

Team Melli Baanavan will begin its Group A campaign at the Asian Cup against South Korea – runner-up to China in the 2022 final – on March 2. They will then face the formidable hosts Australia, who reached the semifinals of the 2023 Women's World Cup, in Gold Coast three days later. Iran will conclude the group stage against the Philippines, which

reached the semifinals in the previous edition, on March 8.

The top two teams from each group, plus the two best third-place finishers, will advance to the quarterfinals.

Iran made its Women's Asian Cup finals debut in 2022, exiting at the group stage after comprehensive defeats against nine-time champion China (7-0) and the Chinese Taipei (5-0).

Sports Desk

Iranian epee and foil fencers delivered disappointing results at the latest FIE World Cup events in Fujairah and Paris, indicating that significant work is needed before expecting notable achievements on the global stage.

The second World Cup event of the international season in Fujairah earlier this month marked Iran's return to top-level epee competition after a long absence. However, all Iranian competitors suffered early exits in the pool phase of both the men's and women's individual events.

In the women's division, Reihaneh Rezaei, Sara Seyyed-Rezaei, and Fatemeh Khorasani each finished with two wins and four losses. The Iranian women's team was defeated 45-12 by the United States in the first round, finishing second-last among 29 teams.

In the men's individual event, Mohammad Rahimi and Ali Namazi each suffered four defeats in six

bouts, while Behnam Beik failed to record a single victory in the pool phase. The Iranian men's team was also eliminated in the first round after a 45-22 loss to Japan.



disciplines. The Games are scheduled to begin on September 19 in Japan. While foil is unlikely to secure a spot in the Iranian delegation, epee may still have a slight chance of obtaining a quota for the multi-sport event.

Given these results, it re-

Naqadeh wetlands host up to 100,000 migratory birds annually

Iranica Desk

The wetlands of Naqadeh in West Azarbaijan Province, a vital ecological hub in Iran's northwestern region, annually host between 50,000 and 100,000 native and migratory birds during autumn and winter, announced Akbar Qaemi, head of the city's Department of Environment. This influx is drawn to the area's unique environment, characterized by a continental climate with cold, snowy winters and relatively mild summers. The seasonal precipitation, particularly snowmelt from surrounding highlands, is crucial for sustaining the region's network of wetlands, which serve as essen-

tial oases along major migration flyways.

Referring to the satisfactory water levels this year, Qaemi recalled that last season, the wetlands provided refuge for approximately 15,000 flamingos. "Various species of waterfowl and shorebirds choose these wetland shores and water bodies for both temporary stopovers and permanent residence," he added, according to a report by chtn.ir.

While this year's conditions have improved, Qaemi emphasized the ongoing vulnerability of the ecosystem. "Environmental efforts are squarely focused on legally securing the wetlands' water rights," he stated, "but these measures must

be underpinned by consistent and adequate rainfall."

Highlighting recent conservation work, Qaemi noted the completion of dredging over eight kilometers of channels leading to the Dargah Sangi Wetland and several other sites this year, aimed at improving water flow and habitat quality. Nevertheless, significant challenges persist. The head of the Department of Environment identified insufficient rainfall — a symptom of broader climatic variability and drought cycles impacting the region — and a critical shortage of environmental patrol officers as the primary obstacles to the long-term protection and management of these invaluable natural assets.



IRNA

North Khorasan's museums feature 7,400 artifacts

Iranica Desk

About 7,400 historical artifacts are housed in the storage facilities of museums across North Khorasan Province. In an interview with ISNA, Ali Akbar Vahdati, the Head of the Historical Artifact Preservation and Restoration Group at the North Khorasan Province's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization, elaborated on museum management. He emphasized that a local museum should not be a static entity. Its aesthetic presentation must evolve across different periods, artifacts should not remain permanently in place, and a regular rotation of items should be implemented to keep



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the exhibits dynamic.

"Not every discovered artifact can be put on public display," Vahdati added.

"For instance, 3,750 coins unearthed during excavations in the province include many similar specimens. Therefore, a

single representative coin from such a group is selected and allocated for exhibition in the museum."

Highlighting the defining characteristic of the province's museums, he stated that their most important feature is the presentation of North Khorasan Province's documented history. He continued that North Khorasan has been one of the provinces subjected to the most extensive archaeological excavations and studies. Consequently, the artifacts stored in the museums' repositories belong to various historical periods and are indigenous to this region.

Regarding the Museum of Documents and Manuscripts, he noted, "The majority of holdings in this

museum, ranging from endowment deeds (Vagnameh) and peace treaties (Solhnameh) to sale contracts (Mobaya'eh Nameh), originate from within the province itself."

Discussing the chronological range of the stored collections, Vahdati explained, "The oldest artifacts currently in the provincial museum storage date back to the Neolithic period. This era marks humanity's first steps towards communal living, transitioning from a nomadic life of cave-dwelling and hunting to settled village life and agriculture."

"Artifacts from this period have been recovered from sites such as Khan Hill in Samalqan and Pahlavan Hill in Jajarm," he detailed.

"Subsequent discoveries include items from the Chalcolithic (Copper-Stone) period, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age." Vahdati confirmed that artifacts from all historical epochs are represented in the province's museums.

"During recent surveys, a series of stone tools were discovered in the province. Preliminary analysis suggests they may belong to the Epipaleolithic period, which would make them approximately 50,000 years older than the Neolithic artifacts. This classification, however, is still awaiting final confirmation."

He noted that plans are now being made to conduct a formal archaeological excavation at a cave site located in Samalqan.

Reading Room

Introduction to the book:

The Architect and Architecture in the Social History of Iran

Patrons, builders, social order

The book "The Architect and Architecture in the Social History of Iran," authored by Gholamreza Jamal al-Din, was published in 2023 by Rozaneh Publications. This research work, employing a social history approach, examines and analyzes lesser-discussed aspects of the social status of the architect and the esteem and concept of architecture in Islamic-era Iran. The primary goal of the book is to move beyond merely descriptive historiography of architectural works and toward a more precise understanding of the roles, status, authority, and limitations of both the creators and patrons of these works within their social context.

In an interview with IBNA, the author states that the main motivation for writing this book was a sense of research gap in this field. Although historical texts from the Islamic period frequently mention diverse titles such as Me'mar (architect), Mohandis (engineer), Banna (builder), Ostadkar (master craftsman), and Sanna'tgar (artisan), researchers in Iranian architectural history have paid little attention to the actual share, role, and real position of these groups

in the complex process of creating an architectural work. This neglect is particularly evident concerning professional hierarchies, scopes of authority, and supervision over architects' work.

Jamal al-Din believes that analysis without attention to this social standing has led to incorrect generalizations and theoretical confusion. Citing sources that report on guilds and professions, he demonstrates that architects and engineers were not a uniform or homogeneous group. In fact, during a given historical period, several groups with different social statuses — from court-affiliated masters to urban guild-based artisans — could exist, playing varied roles depending on their connections to the government and political conditions.

The book is organized into four main discourses:

The social status of the architect-engineer: This discourse analyzes the different classes and groups of architects, their varying social statuses, and consequently, their authority and limitations in the design and construction process. It also briefly touches on the role of

governmental patrons and supervisors who oversaw the work of urban and guild-affiliated architects.

The esteem of architecture in Islamic texts: The focus of second chapter is examining the concept and value of architecture, development, and urbanization (Omran va Abadi) in the thought of writers and historians of the Islamic era. It analyzes the importance that architecture held for a government and society, as well as the criteria and components that historians considered and how they recorded them when describing architectural works from different periods.

Architecture in the context of Sufism and Fotovat (spiritual chivalry): This discourse examines the social structure of Sufism in Iranian history. It explores the descriptions and reports in various mystical texts regarding the group and social structure of Sufism, and investigates the architecture of Khanqahs (Sufi lodges) and related buildings. Following this, it briefly considers the status of shrines (Mazar) and pilgrimage (Ziyarat) based on historical texts.

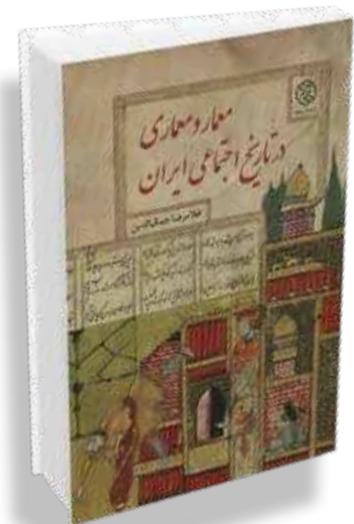
Female patrons and founders: The fourth and final discourse of the

book focuses on the status of female patrons and supporters. It offers a look at women's entry into the field of architecture and the active role they played in the financial and spiritual patronage of architectural works. Reports dedicated to women in various books from the Islamic period, which speak of their services and support in the realm of architecture, can bring a fresh perspective to architectural historiography.

In general, the book attempts to answer fundamental questions such as: What social status and rank did the architect have in Iran's social history, and what responsibilities did they undertake in erecting architectural works? What structure did the guild of architects have in Iranian history, and who were their supervisors? What individuals or groups were the patrons and founders of architectural works? What descriptions and accounts of architects and their conditions are found in historical texts? And what esteem and prestige did the very act of architecture hold?

The process from starting to write to publishing the book took about ten years. The content originated from

notes and articles written and published between 2014 and 2016. It was intended for publication at that time but, for various reasons, was not completed until 2023. However, due to the passage of time and the evolution of the author's perspective on the subjects, the material was repeatedly reviewed, refined, and revised. In fact, the writing process spanned approximately a decade.



Iran scraps competition in revamped Fajr visual arts festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance will overhaul the flagship Fajr Visual Arts Festival into a non-competitive national exhibition, senior official Aidin Mehdizadeh announced on Monday. The move marks a fundamental shift for the state-sponsored event, transforming the eighteenth edition from a traditional contest into a curated showcase of existing artistic output, a decision analysts view as an attempt to foster unity and show a broader "national celebration" of the arts, IRNA reported.

Dubbed the "National Celebration of Visual Arts," the revamped festival will amalgamate publicly-held events, previously issued open calls, and specially curated projects from the current Persian calendar year.

"We have taken this edition out of the

competition format," said Mehdizadeh, director general of the ministry's Visual Arts Office.

He described the new structure as "multi-episodic," featuring a provincially-focused segment titled "My Homeland." The comprehensive event will stage exhibitions across Tehran and Iran's 31 provinces, displaying this aggregated annual "achievement." Provincial artistic directors are currently being appointed for the decentralized program.

Authorities have cancelled the standard model of issuing a new open call, conducting judging panels, and awarding prizes.

Mehdizadeh expressed hope that the arts community would accept this "major difference" from past iterations, framed as a product of collective deliberation within the festival's policy council and secretariat.



IRNA

Tourism sector plagued by soaring prices, internet disruptions



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's tourism sector is facing significant challenges as prices surge and internet access remains disrupted, said Hormatollah Rafiei, head of the Air Travel and Tourism Services Association.

The Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has pledged to restore internet access for select travel agencies within days, he added.

Rafiei stated that these outages have completely cri-

pled agencies' ability to issue tickets, book hotels and tours, and process cancellations. He highlighted the precarious state of the sector, noting that tourism has yet to recover following recent unrest and that many countries now view Iran as an unstable region, severely curtailing tourist exchanges. Rafiei also revealed that airfare prices within Iran jumped by a sudden 60% just one week before the recent protests began. He attributed this increase

to deliberate supply restrictions by authorities, believing it was intended to inflate prices. "When prices were reasonable, there was little enthusiasm for air travel. But now, with these prices, no one can afford to travel."

The crisis has led to a dramatic rise in prices on international routes still serviced by Iranian carriers.

Rafiei reported that a Tehran-Dubai ticket, previously sold for 40 to 60 million rials, has skyrocketed to over 500 million rials. Tehran-Istanbul fares have reached between 800 and 900 million rials – a tenfold increase he condemns as exploitative given the country's economic climate.

Rafiei emphasized, "Given the public's lack of travel motivation and the challenging economic conditions, there should be no exploitation through selling tickets at prices many times higher than before."

Relying on people ...

Evidence shows the involvement of external actors, particularly groups affiliated with Israel and the United States, in fueling the unrest. What is your analysis of this matter?

These adversarial countries have been working through television channels to stir up riots in Iran's streets, attempting to orchestrate casualties, cause bloodshed, increase resentment and reproduce violence. Information emerged that on Thursday, January 8, these groups, organized and armed, moved into several cities with the intent to create casualties. Law enforcement and the Basij forces were instructed not to carry weapons and were prohibited from firing. The highest number of casualties occurred that Thursday evening. Finally, when the country was on the brink of a full-blown urban war, security, military, law enforcement, and Basij forces prepared to counter

the threat. However, the situation was ultimately contained because the unrest was not homegrown and was directed from abroad.

The United States, whose outpost in the region is, in effect, the Israeli regime, launched an attack on Iran in June. They realized that continuing the conflict would leave nothing of Israel remaining. They concluded that a direct air war with Iran would not achieve their goal – to overthrow the government and disintegrate the country. It should be noted that they consider ousting the government a crucial step toward partitioning the nation. US President Donald Trump has clearly concluded that unless a ground war and an urban war are launched in Iran, and the people are brought into confrontation with the government, he will not succeed. Accordingly, in my opinion, Trump will double down on economic pressure.

What lessons can be learned from this experience to prevent similar incidents in the future?

In an economic war, temporary rise in prices due to foreign obstruction is natural and the government must honestly tell the people. The Iranian people are enlightened; they have a good understanding of history and are politically astute. The government must be very transparent with the people, both about its capabilities and its obstacles. The Iranian people are willing to accept economic hardships for the sake of independence, freedom, and a positive future, provided the government is completely transparent and honest with them.

Furthermore, in both the June war and the recent unrest, the people were the ultimate game-changers and the key to victory. Obstacles to the people's presence and participation must be quickly removed. Reliance must

be placed on the people as the source of political power. It is the most important historical duty of all pillars of the state and the people to preserve this Iran, especially in a situation where powerful nations seeking to swallow the world are trying to break it up. The easiest, most cost-effective, most beneficial, and most productive way to preserve Iran is to respect Iranians and all those with Iranian credentials. Respect, ensuring rights, defending security, providing the best welfare, and honesty and transparency with the people are crucial.

What actions can be taken to promote national unity, reduce divisions and foster empathy in society?

In the past protests, some officials' focus on the issue of the hijab law after the unrest was not well-calculated. However, after the 12-day war in June, when the people forgot

the divisions and became united, the Islamic Republic demonstrated that it had heard the protests, felt the pain and was pursuing a remedy. It has sought to get to the root of the problem. In my opinion, this approach, compared to the response to the hijab issue after those previous unrests, is more mature and honest.

The Iranian government must constantly seek feedback on its actions and decisions and pursue a corrective process. Fortunately, most of the people have come to the conclusion that the Israeli regime, which has killed 20,000 children in recent months, and the Americans, who have imposed the most wars in history on the world, want to destroy Iran and do not bring prosperity, freedom, independence, or dignity to the country. Fortunately, after many years of experience, the government has made significant progress in this regard.