



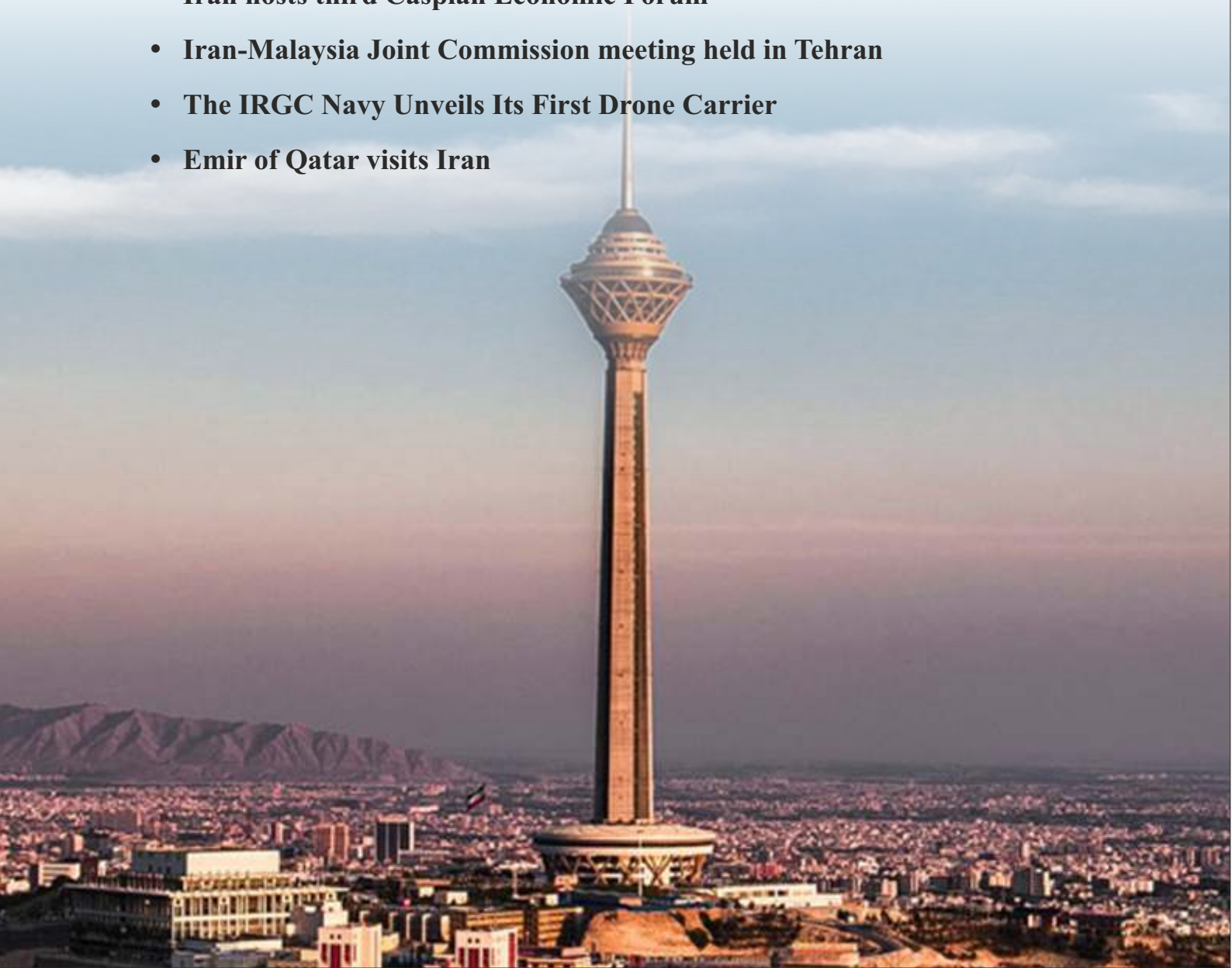
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Iran

Digest

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Russian Foreign Minister visits Tehran

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with his Russian counterpart [Sergey Lavrov in Tehran](#). Lavrov arrived in Tehran from Ankara, where he met Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for talks ranging from Turkey's potential mediation in talks between Russia and Ukraine to the situation in Syria. During the joint press conference, Araghchi reaffirmed Iran and Russia's shared positions on [critical regional matters](#), particularly in relation to Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. "Our positions on Syria are very close. We both support a resolution that guarantees security and stability for the Syrian people," he noted. Before arriving in Ankara, Lavrov informed the Duma, the lower house of Russia's parliament, that there would be [high-level talks with Syria](#). A Russian delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov visited Syria on 28 January 2025. Notably, Russia, Turkey and Iran are members of the Astana format on Syria. The two sides also coordinated their positions regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Araghchi noted that as long as the US continues its maximum pressure policy, direct negotiations between Tehran and Washington will remain impossible. Lavrov reiterated Moscow's commitment to pursuing key [joint projects](#), including the Rasht-Astara railway and participation in the construction of power plants in Iran, which has been struggling with power and gas shortages.

Iran hosts third Caspian Economic Forum

Iran's Vice President [Mohammad Reza Aref](#) hosted the third Caspian Economic Forum in Tehran on 18-19 February. The representatives and prime ministers of the Caspian Sea littoral states, Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan, participated in the forum, which aims to enhance economic and commercial

cooperation among them. In his address, Reza Aref emphasised the sustainable capacity of neighbourliness and called for collective efforts to deepen relations. Iran's Deputy Minister of Oil for International Affairs and Commerce emphasised Iran's readiness to collaborate on major oil and gas projects with regional partners. [Russia's Deputy Prime Minister](#) noted that since the second forum was held in Moscow in 2022, important agreements have been reached in the transport sector, creating a favourable ground for turning the region into a major international transport hub. He argued that by 2030, the volume of freight traffic along the North-South corridor may reach US\$25 to US\$32 billion. On 2 February, Hikmat Hajiyev, the Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan and Akbar Ahmadian, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, exchanged views on political and economic cooperation and regional security issues between the two countries, and especially emphasized the importance of the North-South transport corridor. On 11 February, Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov paid a working visit to Tehran. The two sides discussed cooperation in transit and the oil and gas sector, including the participation of Iranian companies in projects on the construction of highways in Turkmenistan and the transit of [Turkmen gas through Iran](#) to Türkiye through the SWAP scheme, which is set to begin on 1 March. However, Ankara's ultimate objective is to transport Turkmen gas to Türkiye through a pipeline crossing the Caspian Sea

Iran-Malaysia Joint Commission meeting held in Tehran

On 26 February, Araghchi and his Malaysian counterpart Mohammad Hasan co-chaired the eighth Iran-Malaysia Joint Commission Meeting (JCM). Malaysia hosted the last JCM in Putrajaya in November 2008. Hasan noted that the meeting enhanced the

government-to-government relationship and business-to-business connections between the people of both countries. In his remarks to the media, Hasan stated that “although Iran is under unilateral sanctions from the US, we cannot sever our bilateral relations. We need to explore ways to enhance cooperation in research, science, technology, health, and tourism, which are not subject to sanctions.” The Iranian side called on Malaysia to use [Iran's gateway position](#) to reach untapped markets of Central Asia, while Hasan invited Iran to make Malaysia, which is Iran’s largest trading partner in ASEAN, to use it as a gateway for trade in the ASEAN. In November 2024, Malaysia, a major [transshipment hub](#) for sanctioned oil from Iran and Venezuela, regained its position as the second-largest supplier of crude oil to China. On 11 February, Araghchi, in a [telephone call](#) with Mohamad Hasan, called for Malaysia's support for Iran's proposal to hold an emergency ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to discuss and decide about Trump's "illegal" plan for Gaza.

The IRGC Navy Unveils Its First Drone Carrier

On 7 February, at a ceremony held in Port of Bandar Abbas, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy added its first domestically developed [drone carrier](#), the IRIS Shahid Bagheri, into its fleet. The IRGC Commander-in-Chief, Major General Hossein Salami and IRGC Navy Commander Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri were present. Tangsiri emphasised that the new drone carrier aligns with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei’s directive to establish a highly mobile naval force and the military’s broader strategy to extend Iran’s operational reach into distant waters. The drone carrier is a converted commercial container ship repurposed in two years. It has an operational range of 22,000 nautical miles and can sustain

year-long missions in distant waters without refuelling. Equipped with a 180-meter runway, it accommodates multiple squadrons of unmanned aircraft, including the Ababil-3, Mohajer-6, and the advanced Qaer-313 stealth drones. The carrier features short and medium-range air defence systems, cruise missiles, and guided subsurface vessels, enhancing its ability to counter aerial and maritime threats. It can fire missiles with more than 1,000 km range. On 27 February, the IRGC Navy added the [Shahid Rais Ali Delvari](#) warship and new [high-speed missile boats](#) to its fleet. Shahid Delvari, a Shahid Soleimani class warship, has an operational range of 5,000 nautical miles and can launch 750-km-range missiles. During the commissioning ceremony, Salami stated that the IRGC’s plan for developing air defence capabilities at the sea has now materialised.

Emir of Qatar visits Iran

Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani visited Iran. Iran's Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Khamenei](#) received Sheikh Tamim and called on Qatar to return Iranian assets frozen in Qatari banks. US\$ 6 billion were transferred to Doha by South Korea as part of a prisoner exchange deal in 2023. Speaking at a joint press conference, [Pezeshkian](#) emphasized Iran's commitment to comprehensive relations with neighbouring countries. On Syria, he stated that "preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria and the participation of all its people in determining their fate." While praising "Qatar's mediation efforts to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza", Pezeshkian noted that Palestinians in Gaza must be able to lead a "safe life in their historical land." Sheikh Tamim stressed Qatar's support for agreements that lead to regional stability. Emphasising the importance of dialogue in resolving regional disputes, he noted that "we agreed that the best way to resolve current disputes is through [constructive dialogue](#)."