

The three allies convene in Beijing to discuss JCPOA, sanctions, and West's threats

# China, Russia Affirm Iran's Peaceful Nuclear Program



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov, and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazeem Gharibabadi attend a meeting regarding the Iranian nuclear issue at Diaoyutai State Guest House on March 14, 2025 in Beijing.

## Iran summons E3 envoys over 'provocative' closed-door UN security council session

TEHRAN - Tehran has summoned the ambassadors of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany to express strong opposition to their role in convening a recent United Nations Security Council meeting on Iran's nuclear program.

The meeting, which took place on March 12, was noted by Iranian officials as an unjustified and provocative act orchestrated in collaboration with the United States.

The closed-door meeting on Tehran's nuclear program, initiated by the UK, France and German at Washington's request, came a few days after the IAEA Board of Governors made its observations about Iran's nuclear issue.

Mohammad Hassan Nejad Pirkouhi, Director-General for International Peace and Security at Iran's Foreign Ministry, met with the envoys—representing France, Germany, and the UK's chargé d'affaires in the absence of its ambassador.

He criticized the three European nations' "irresponsible" alignment with U.S. policies, reiterating Iran's stance that the meeting lacked any legal or technical basis. ▶ Page 2

## 'Portraying a war with Iran as low-cost is Israeli deception: Leader's advisor

TEHRAN - Ali Larijani, an advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, emphasized that American officials must choose between engaging respectfully with Iran on the basis of shared economic interests or succumbing to the Israeli regime's deception by mistakenly perceiving conflict with Iran as low-cost.

Speaking at a ceremony in Tehran on Thursday, Larijani referred to the contradictory positions of U.S. officials, remarking, "Those who raise the banner of peace cannot simultaneously issue threats, as threats are incompatible with tranquility. Western officials speak of human rights and equality, but history reveals how they treated their colonies."

He emphasized that Tehran bases its decisions on fair and rational behavior. "While the Iranian nation cherishes peace, it remains unwavering in defending its own interests," he added. ▶ Page 2

## Iranian economy grows 3.7% in 9 months: CBI

Tehran - The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced that the country's economy has experienced a 3.7 percent growth in the first nine months of the current Iranian year (March 20 - December, 20 2024), IRNA reported.

Mohammadreza Farzin, referring to the stable and consistent economic growth of the country, said: "The economy of the country experienced a 3.7 percent growth in the first nine months of the current year, which is a suitable and acceptable growth rate compared to the global average and the regional countries."

Farzin compared Iran's economic growth rate to other countries, saying: "China and India remain the main engines of global economic growth, while European countries have had low growth rates for years. Iran's 3.7 percent economic growth rate, compared to regional countries like Turkey (2.8 percent), Saudi Arabia (1.4 percent), Pakistan (2.5 percent), Iraq (1.4 percent), and the average growth rate of the Middle East and Central Asia (2.4 percent), is relatively good and acceptable." ▶ Page 4

## From the mountains of Saada to the Red Sea... a force reshaping the equations of conflict

By Najah Mohammed Ali

LONDON - Once again, Ansarallah proves itself to be an influential force that cannot be ignored in creating a new map for the region, whether in the Yemeni scene or within the framework of the Resistance Axis that has redrawn the equations of conflict in the region.

What was previously viewed as a local rebellion movement with a tribal or sectarian character has now become a military and political force capable of imposing a new reality that transcends Yemen's borders to affect regional and international security equations. These transformations did not come out of nowhere but are a natural result of a long path of conflict and adaptation to pressures, and the strategic development that enabled Ansarallah to transform from a besieged group in the mountains of Saada to a major regional player capable of threatening international navigation routes and striking sensitive targets thousands of kilometers away, employing all of this in favor of the Palestinian cause.

## "More than a human can bear"

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - The UN has found that the Israeli occupation regime committed "genocidal acts" in Gaza, including ongoing attacks on women's healthcare.

A 49-page report has concluded that Israeli occupation forces have also used sexual violence as a weapon of war to "dominate and destroy the Palestinian people."

Critics argue that despite mounting evidence from international bodies of genocidal acts committed by the Israeli regime in Gaza, many regional and international politicians or media outlets are misinforming their audiences by refusing to cover the story.

According to the report from the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East al-Quds (Jerusalem), Israeli occupation forces have increasingly used sexual, reproductive, and other forms of gender-based violence against Palestinians.

## Why is Israeli normalization with Lebanon a distant dream?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT - Settlement, peace, normalization, and other terms in the imperialist lexicon are a continuation of the soft war aimed at further realizing Israel's expansionist ambitions by undermining the resistance front and engaging it in internal conflicts.

On Wednesday, Hebrew Channel 12 quoted an "exceptional statement" by an Israeli political source who claimed that "the discussions with Lebanon are part of a broad and comprehensive plan."

He added, "The policy of the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has already changed the Middle East, and we want to continue the momentum and reach normalization with Lebanon."

Hinting at imposing Israel's conditions after its war, the source claimed, "Just as Lebanon has demands regarding the borders, we also have demands. We will address these matters," i.e. normalization.

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## Iranian-made HPV, flu vaccines to be manufactured in Indonesia

TEHRAN -The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine (the virus that usually causes cervical cancer in women) and the recombinant influenza vaccine are projected to be produced in Indonesia, an official with the vice-presidency for science, technology, and knowledge-based economy has said.

Biofarma, an Indonesian vaccine manufacturer, produces different vaccines at government expense. However, they have not developed these two vaccines. The vaccines will be made there, and we would get a share of the sales market, Mehr news agency quoted Mostafa Qanei as saying.

Given Indonesia's population of around 300 million, ▶ Page 7



## MAPNA delivers 3,000hp freight locomotives

TEHRAN - A special ceremony was held for delivering the last 3,000 horsepower locomotive manufactured by MAPNA Locomotive Engineering and Manufacturing Company to Mobarakeh Steel Company.

According to a contract signed between MAPNA and Mobarakeh, 50 freight locomotives should have been delivered, the last of which was transferred on Thursday.

The chief executive of the Iranian Rail Equipment Manufacturing Company has said the country exports rail parts and equipment to Europe.

Morteza Mollanejad said the company has held negotiations with Iraq, Turkey, Cuba, Poland, and Afghanistan for exporting rail parts and equipment to these countries.



## TEHRAN PAPERS

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in the Thursday Iranian newspapers.

## It is an illusion that Europe would stand up to America for Iran

Kayhan wrote in a commentary on the Iran-Europe talks: Reportedly, the Iran-Europe talks in Geneva have not gone very well and promisingly, and the Europeans have expressed their harsh positions in the talks.

It was said that the recent round of talks between Iran and Europe was better than before, but if the talks had gone well, the French President and Swedish officials would not have made statements against Iran.

In the current state of relations between Iran and Europe, some realities cannot be ignored. The Europeans consider the American position in their interactions with Iran. They are moving in Washington's direction and prefer the United States over Iran.

Just as during Trump's first term, they gave in to American pressure in many cases, especially economic dealings. Contrary to popular belief, Europe and the United States are aligned on many issues related to Iran.

Like the United States, Europeans believe in containing Iran. Although they disagree on many issues, they largely agree on the Iran issue.

### Siasat-e-Rooz: A meeting for greater convergence

Siasat-e-Rooz devoted its editorial to the trilateral meeting between China, Iran, and Russia in Beijing. It wrote: At the same time as the issue of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the parties to the JCPOA intensifies, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that this country would negotiate with Iran and Russia on the Iran nuclear issue in Beijing.

These days, the Americans are trying to put Iran in a situation as if the country would have no choice but to obey their maximalist demands.

However, the Beijing meeting is a disappointment to the West, which claims that Tehran is alone in the world.

Iran, Russia, and China are the three major members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS that the United States has threatened to impose heavy sanctions on.

Given the great capacities of the three countries, the Beijing meeting is a kind of convergence that will resist the irrational and unilateral policies of the United States in the economic arena.

The meeting has a nuclear and global dimension that will strengthen the convergence between the three great powers in the new world

order in the face of Western pressure.

### Vatan-e-Emrooz: What is logic of America's domestic supporters?

In an analysis, Vatan-e-Emrooz discussed America's complicity with the Zionist regime and said: In contemporary history, few countries have supported crimes against humanity and state terrorism as much as the United States does. Using its military, diplomatic, and economic power, the country not only has supported oppressive regimes but in many cases has directly contributed to the emergence of humanitarian crises in the world. America's policies in supporting Israel's crimes show that this country shows no commitment to the principles of human rights and uses war criminals as its tools to advance colonial policies. However, there are still Western-leaning individuals who constantly talk about negotiating and reaching agreements with America, while history has proven that America is a disloyal, oppressive country and an enemy of humanity. With all these interpretations, informed consciences will definitely confirm that America has never been, is not, and will never be trustworthy, and relying on it will have no results. It will leave us with a disastrous outcome like Ukraine.

### Ettelaat: Let's not act as if whatever Americans want will happen

In an interview with Hassan Beheshtipour, an international relations expert, Ettelaat discussed Trump's letter and its delivery to Iran by Anwar Gargash, a top Emirati envoy.

He said: It seems that it is a new game. The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman are all interested in improving relations between Iran and the United States, especially the Emirates, as Dubai is a major trade partner of Iran. Now, if the relationship between Iran and the United States normalizes, it will benefit Abu Dhabi.

The UAE may feel threatened because it would lose if a conflict between Iran and the U.S. occurred.

We act here as if the Americans are the absolute power, that everything is dictated by their will, and that they are the ones who decide everything, but that is not the case. The reality is that in the message they have given, the security aspect is important to them and it has been given to a security figure. Anwar Gargash is apparently the highest security official of the Emirates and is like an advisor on foreign affairs.

## Iran backs prospective peace deal between Armenia, Azerbaijan to end conflict



TEHRAN – Iran has voiced support for a potential peace agreement unveiled by Armenia and Azerbaijan, aimed at resolving a nearly 40-year territorial dispute.

In a statement on Friday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei praised the development as "a vital and necessary step" toward securing "lasting peace" in the South Caucasus.

He expressed optimism that both nations would resolve lingering disagreements through continued dialogue and finalize the treaty promptly.

The breakthrough came after Armenia and Azerbaijan announced on Thursday that they had finalized the text of a peace deal.

Azeri Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov stated, "The negotiation process on the peace agreement text with Armenia has concluded," noting that Armenia had accepted

Baku's proposals on two previously contentious clauses.

Armenia's foreign ministry confirmed the progress in a separate announcement, declaring that "negotiations on the draft agreement have concluded" and that the treaty is "ready for signing."

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan described the milestone as "significant," affirming Yerevan's readiness to "discuss the timing and venue for formalizing the agreement."

"We consider this text a compromise, as any peace agreement should be," Pashinyan remarked.

However, he acknowledged that two key issues remained unresolved until the final stages: a provision barring the "deployment of third-party forces" along the shared border and disagreements over mutual withdrawal of legal claims from international courts.

Nagorno-Karabakh, internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, has fueled decades of hostility, including two devastating wars in the 1990s and 2020.

In 2020, Azerbaijan made significant territorial gains in a six-week war that killed thousands on both sides, before Moscow brokered a ceasefire deal that included the deployment of 1,960 Russian peacekeepers to the region for a five-year period.

Following the truce, the two sides had accused each other of breaching the peace deal.

# 'Portraying a war with Iran as low-cost is Israeli deception:' Leader's Advisor

From page 1 ▶ Larijani's remarks follows Ayatollah Khamenei's recent speech, during which he addressed the increasing tensions with the U.S., stating, "Iran is not seeking war, but if the Americans and their agents make the wrong move, Iran's response will be decisive and certain, and the one who will suffer the most will be the U.S."

The Leader denounced U.S. military threats as unreasonable and cautioned that such provocations could have severe repercussions. "Creating war and inflicting damage is not one-sided," he emphasized.

This comes as U.S. President Donald Trump repeatedly suggested he would consider military action if Iran refused to engage in talks and accept his proposed terms for a new agreement.

Trump announced earlier this month that he had written a letter to Iran's leader. "I wrote them a letter saying I hope you are going to negotiate," Trump said in an interview, coupling the plea with the familiar threat to either "handle" Iran militarily or "make a deal."

### 'We can burn all American interests in the region to ashes'

A video from four years ago featuring Major General Hossein Salami, Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), has resurfaced, gaining significant traction among Iranian social media users.

The video underscores Iran's unwavering stance against perceived



Ali Larijani, senior advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, speaking at a ceremony in Tehran on March 13, 2025

threats from the United States.

In the video, General Salami asserts, "The economic indicators of the Americans are not in a state that allows them to manage a new war."

The American society also lacks the capacity to endure new casualties because a war with Iran will be different."

He emphasizes that any conflict initiated by the United States would necessitate their presence in the region. "If the Americans want to fight us, they must be in the region."

They cannot fight us from outside the region. When they are stationed here, they are within our sight and range," he states.

Salami further declares Iran's capability to "set fire to and occupy all their interests and bases in the

region," adding, "We can sweep the region clean."

The IRGC commander elaborates on Iran's preparedness, explaining that the nation's military power has been built on the assumption of a worst-case scenario involving a war with the United States and its allies.

"We have developed our defensive power with the logic of winning a vast war against America," he remarks.

Salami also highlights Iran's readiness to retaliate against any aggression, boasting of "thousands of battalions on the ground" that could mobilize to seize and destroy all American interests in the region.

He concludes by reaffirming Iran's commitment to pursuing and punishing aggressors.

### Trump's threat to strike Iranian cultural sites

The IRGC chief's remarks were originally made in response to Trump's threats in 2020. During his first term, he made a controversial statement threatening to target 52 Iranian cultural sites.

This declaration came in January 2020, following heightened tensions between the United States and Iran. Trump claimed the number 52 symbolized the American hostages taken during the 1979 Iran hostage crisis [Den of Espionage].

His remarks sparked global outrage, with critics condemning the threat as an attack on Iran's rich cultural heritage and a potential war crime under the 1954 Hague Convention.

Despite his fiery rhetoric, Trump did not follow through on this threat. The international community's condemnation and the potential repercussions likely played a role in preventing such an act. This episode highlighted the volatile nature of U.S.-Iran relations during his administration.

In a separate incident in June 2019, Iran shot down an American RQ-4 Global Hawk drone, asserting that it had violated Iranian airspace. The U.S. claimed the drone was flying over international waters, but Iran provided coordinates to support its claim. In a surprising move, Trump decided against a military response, citing concerns over potential casualties.

## The Halabja massacre: remembering a chemical genocide funded by the West



### By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – On March 16, 1988, the town of Halabja in northern Iraq experienced unspeakable horror. It was the day Saddam Hussein unleashed the deadliest chemical attack in history against his own people—a crime born out of the brutal Iran-Iraq War; a conflict fueled by Western support.

Subsequently, numerous Western companies faced charges in various courts for supplying the Ba'athist regime with the lethal agents used in the brutal campaign.

At the time, the town was controlled by fighters from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), who had allied themselves with Iran against Saddam's Ba'athist regime. Consequently, the attacking regime framed the event as a conventional assault targeting pro-Iranian insurgents.

A subsequent United Nations investigation concluded that mustard gas and other, as yet unidentified, nerve agents had been deployed against the civilian population.

The United States Defense Intelligence Agency initially attributed the attack to Iran, in support of their ally in Baghdad. However, mounting evidence later revealed that Iraq had used chemical weapons to reinforce a military offensive against Iran, rival Kurdish fighters, and the civilian population of Halabja.

On June 20, 2010, the Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal in Baghdad recognized the chemical bombardment of Halabja as an act of

genocide, rather than merely a crime against humanity. Ali Hussein Majid, Saddam's defense minister, infamously known as 'Chemical Ali', and others were convicted of ordering and orchestrating the gas attack, which resulted in the deaths of over 5,000 civilians and injuries to approximately 10,000 more.

Kurdish historians contend that the Arab League convened a meeting a week after the tragedy but deliberately ignored the event, possibly due to fear of reprisals from the Saddam regime and its Western backers.

### Western companies' role in the genocide

After the tragedy, especially after the Saddam regime was overthrown, tribunals were held in Iraqi Kurdistan Region in which Western companies were discovered to have played a central role in making the genocide campaign possible.

It was clear that Saddam Hussein ordered the genocide, but he did not do it alone. Saddam had the knowing consent and willing assistance of hundreds of some of Europe's largest corporations, some of whom knowingly chose to profit off the murder and prolonged suffering of innocent children and families.

The Iraqi Ba'ath regime in fact, acquired the capability to produce gas and chemical bombs with the help of Western countries.

The TUI AG, a German multinational entity, was one of those European companies.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## Iran summons E3 envoys over 'provocative' closed-door UN security council session



From page 1 ▶ Iran repeatedly states that its nuclear program operates within the frameworks of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Safeguards Agreement. Officials emphasized that the program remains consistent with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an agreement that allowed Iran to scale back its nuclear activities in exchange for relief from sanctions.

After the U.S. withdrawal, Iran remained fully committed to the JCPOA for a full year. Finally, in May 2019, after the European sides failed to honor their commitments, Iran started to gradually lift limits on its nuclear activities. At the time Iran announced if the European parties would abide by their share of the agreement it would reverse its decision. However, the Europeans failed to do so.

Revival talks for the JCPOA have stalled due to Western hesitation and excessive demands. Despite these challenges, Iran has continued its diplomatic engagement with the IAEA and has shown willingness to restore the JCPOA—provided that sanctions relief is guaranteed. Recent negotiations with the European Troika in Geneva highlight Tehran's continued preference for diplomacy.

During the security council meeting, James Kariuki, the United Kingdom's envoy, expressed alarm over Iran's alleged production of highly enriched uranium, saying that if the situation demands it, they will not hesitate to

invoke the snapback mechanism.

The issue of the snapback mechanism has been a contentious one for years. During his previous administration, Donald Trump pressured Europe to activate snapback sanctions before Iran had even begun enriching uranium to 60%. Under the mechanism, pre-JCPOA sanctions could be reinstated, forcing Iran to halt all uranium enrichment, reprocessing, and heavy-water projects. Meanwhile, Europe's latest resolution at the IAEA Board of Governors has increased tensions further by demanding a comprehensive report on Iran's nuclear activities by Spring 2025. Tehran has called this move a sign of European hostility.

In response to these latest threats, Iran has warned that it may withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) if the snapback mechanism is fully reinstated. This warning was conveyed by Iranian diplomat Majid Takht-Ravanchi following Geneva talks with UK, French, and German representatives in December 2024.

The Foreign Ministry further criticized the Security Council session as politically driven, saying it undermines the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) authority and disrupts the established cooperation between Iran and the IAEA.

The European diplomats reportedly assured Iran that its objections would be conveyed to their respective capitals.



# China, Russia affirm Iran's peaceful nuclear program

By Shahrokh Saei

BEIJING – The tripartite talks held in Beijing on Friday regarding Iran's nuclear program have thrown a spotlight on China's unique role in advocating for political solutions to both regional and international challenges.

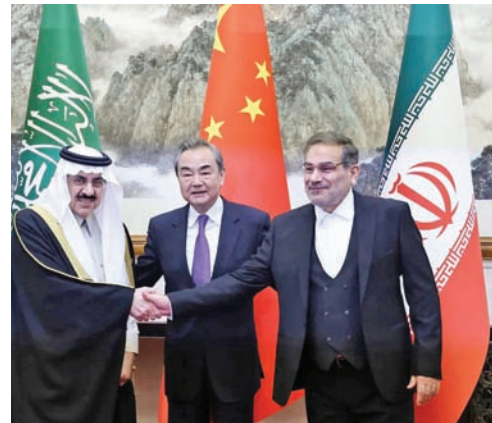
On Friday morning, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxian chaired a meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi.

In a joint statement following the meeting, the three countries stressed the importance of removing U.S. sanctions on Iran.

"China, Russia and Iran engaged in in-depth discussions



Later on Friday, Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a separate meeting with the Iranian and Russian deputy foreign ministers. The top Chinese diplomat proposed his points on the proper settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue.



China was instrumental in facilitating reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March 2023

on the latest state of play with regard to the nuclear issue and sanctions lifting. The three countries emphasized the necessity of terminating all unlawful unilateral sanctions," the statement said.

It also urged diplomacy over pressure, threats and sanctions.

China and Russia welcomed Iran's reiteration that its nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Besides, they hailed Iran's commitment to full compliance with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and Comprehensive Safeguard Agreement. Furthermore, Moscow and Beijing stressed the need to fully respect Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy as a State Party to the NPT.

He said Beijing remains committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes through political and diplomatic means, and opposes the use of force and illegal sanctions.

Wang added that his country is committed to balancing rights and responsibilities, and takes a holistic approach to the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Chinese foreign minister further stated that the East Asian nation remains dedicated to the framework of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the foundation for establishing a new consensus.

He also expressed opposition to intervention by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Since returning to the White House on January 20, U.S. President Donald Trump has restored his "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

He has demanded that the U.S. Treasury impose sanctions on Tehran and ramp up their enforcement.

Last week, Trump intensified his anti-Iran rhetoric saying, "there are two ways Iran can be handled: militarily, or you make

a deal. I would prefer to make a deal, because I'm not looking to hurt Iran."

Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign was launched in 2018 after he withdrew from the JCPOA during his first term in office.

The subsequent campaign included the re-imposition and intensification of anti-Iran sanctions that had been lifted under the JCPOA in exchange for limits on the country's nuclear activities.

Washington's unilateral pullout from the JCPOA and the reinstatement of sanctions have been described as a failed policy even by officials in the administration of former President Joe Biden.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, Trump downplayed the tripartite talks in Beijing.

"Well, maybe they're going to talk about non-nuclear problems. Maybe they're going to be talking about the de-escalation of nuclear weapons," Trump told reporters.

Iran has stressed that it will not hold talks with the U.S. under pressure and threats.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei issued a stern warning to the U.S. on Wednesday saying Iran "was not seeking war, but if someone takes action, our response will be decisive and certain".

Iran has also condemned the

recent closed-door meeting of the UN Security Council on its nuclear program that was held at the U.S. request.

"We strongly object to this provocative and unwarranted meeting.

This is not a legitimate discussion on non-proliferation—it is a blatant political maneuver and a misuse of the Security Council to advance narrow agendas," Amir Saeid Iravani, Iran's ambassador to the UN, said in response to the Wednesday meeting.

Presently, as the U.S. is attempting to impose the law of jungle, China's diplomatic engagement, exemplified by the Friday talks in Beijing, demonstrates its commitment to multilateralism and international stability.

Furthermore, China has consistently contributed to peace and stability efforts, particularly in West Asia.

In 2023, China played a key role in brokering a rapprochement



In July 2024, Hamas and Fatah reached a consensus through a Chinese-mediated agreement in Beijing to resolve their disputes

between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

In July last year, Hamas and Fatah signed a Chinese-brokered deal in Beijing in line with efforts to settle their differences.

Officials from these Palestinian groups met with the Chinese foreign minister following reconciliation talks that also involved a dozen other Palestinian factions.

For now, China's position as a global mediator has come to the fore amid the diminishing influence of the United States on the international stage.

## SPORTS

### Iran into FIVB Snow Volleyball World Tour final

TEHRAN – Iran defeated France to book its place in the FIVB Snow Volleyball World Tour.

A total of 17 teams from France, Georgia, Iran, Italy, Ukraine and host nation Turkey are competing in the event.

For the first time since its inaugural season in 2019, the FIVB Snow Volleyball World Tour is holding an event, finally overcoming obstacles like a global pandemic or an apocalyptic earthquake that prevented it from returning to action sooner.

The competition is holding in Erzurum Palandoken in northeastern Turkey, featuring men's and women's teams from France, Georgia, Iran, Italy, Ukraine and the host nation.

### Iran to defend title at AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup 2025

TEHRAN – The pristine sand of the Jomtien Beach Arena is set to provide the stage for the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2025 when it gets underway on Thursday, March 20.

Located in the eastern Thai city of Pattaya, which also served as hosts during the previous two occasions when the tournament was held in Thailand, the arena will welcome 16 contenders for the 11th edition.

Familiar faces will be on show as 13 of the cast from the previous iteration in 2023 return for another shot at glory, including reigning champions Iran and all four other former winners – Bahrain, Japan, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

The trio of China, Iran and Japan are the only sides to appear at every tournament to date while at the other end of the spectrum, India, Indonesia and Vietnam are aiming to notch their first ever victories.

The top three finishers will qualify for the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Seychelles 2025 – Bahrain (2), Iran (8), Japan (12), Oman (5), Thailand (1) and UAE (8) are the only teams to have appeared on the global stage previously.

### Taremi's future in Inter Milan in doubt

TEHRAN – Inter Milan will make at least one signing in attack this summer with Marko Arnautovic, Joaquin Correa, and maybe Mehdi Taremi heading for the exit door.

According to the Corriere, however, it is possible that the clearout will be even bigger than just Arnautovic and Correa.

Striker Taremi is another player with his Inter future in doubt. Taremi signed for the Nerazzurri last summer. However, so far he has failed to live up to expectations. Moreover, Taremi will turn 33 next summer. Therefore, there are doubts about whether the former Porto striker will fit in with Oaktree Capital's youth-focused project at Inter.

Accordingly, there could be just Martinez and Thuram left for strikers at the Nerazzurri.

In that case, Inter would certainly make a couple notable attacking signings next summer.

### Nassaji eye Uzbekistan international winger Yakhshiboev

TEHRAN – Iranian football club Nassaji have reportedly reached an agreement with Uzbekistan international right winger Jasurbek Yakhshiboev.

The 27-year-old player most recently played at Kazakhstan's Ordabasy Yakhshiboev has also played at Pakhtakor Tashkent and Navbahor Namangan. Nassaji Mazandaran, headed by Savo Milosevic, sit 15th in Iran football league's 16-team table.

### Iran's Akbari, Mirjalili ambassadors of 2025/2026 BSWW

TEHRAN – Beach Soccer Worldwide (BSWW) have officially announced their 2025/2026 Ambassadors which is compiled of 36 men's and women's players, and also contains some new faces.

This list has been finalized according to various criteria, including the individuals influence in their relative countries (with social media presence being a core factor) as well as, of course, their extra-ordinary beach soccer abilities.

With these traits, the beach soccer ambassadors and BSWW can work to reach, influence and inspire new generations of beach soccer stars, and boost the presence of the sport in their home countries.

Team Melli defender Amirhossein Akbari and goalkeeper Mehdi Mirjalili are among the 2025/2026 BSWW ambassadors.

### Saipa win 2024/25 Iranian Women's Volleyball Premier League

TEHRAN – Saipa defeated Paykan 3-1 (25-20, 25-17, 25-27, 25-19) to win 2024/25 Iranian Women's Volleyball Premier League on Thursday.

Saipa, headed by Samira Imani, defended their title. It was Saipa's third title since the inaugural edition in 2001.

Saipa outside hitter Mahsa Saberi was named as the league's MVP.

Saipa will represent Iran at the 1st Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) Women's Volleyball Championships League.

The Iranian team are drawn in Pool C alongside Baic Motor of China, and Vietnamese VTV Binh Dien Long An.

### Sepahan held by Nassaji in PGPL

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team suffered a setback in Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League title race after a 1-1 draw against Nassaji on Thursday.

In the match held at the Shahid Vatan Stadium in Ghaemshahr, Reza Shekari gave the visiting team a lead in the 43rd minute but Kevin Yamga leveled the score just before the halftime from the penalty spot.

Struggling Havadar lost to Shams Azar 3-2 in Tehran and Kheybar defeated Chadormalou 2-0 in Khorramabad.

On Friday, Persepolis will host Malavan in Tehran, Mes face Esteghlal Khuzestan in Rafsanjan and Foolad meet Aluminum in Ahvaz.

Sepahan moved up top with 46 points, one point above Tractor, who have two matches in hand.

### Iran, Belarus handball federations sign MoU

TEHRAN – The Iranian and Belarusian handball federations signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU).

The MoU was signed during a ceremony attended by Alireza Pakdel, the head of the Iranian handball federation, and Vladimir Konoplev, his Belarusian counterpart.

According to the MoU, the two federations will have further interactions regarding holding joint camps as well as preparatory matches in different age groups. Dmitry Koltsov, the ambassador of Belarus to Iran, was also present at the ceremony. The Belarusian national handball team has arrived in Iran to participate in the Shiraz International Quadrangular Tournament.

## Yale University suspends Iranian scholar in AI-backed crackdown on Palestinian solidarity

TEHRAN – USA's Yale University has suspended Iranian scholar Helyeh Doutaghi, Deputy Director of the Law and Political Economy (LPE) Project, following a smear campaign by the AI-powered Israeli outlet Jewish Onliner.

The case underscores the escalating use of technology and state power to silence pro-Palestine voices during Trump's second administration, exposing the hypocrisy of U.S. claims to defend free speech while weaponizing McCarthyist tactics against dissenters. Doutaghi, an Iranian-born international law expert and associate research scholar at Yale Law School, was placed on administrative leave within 24 hours of Jewish Onliner's March 3 article accusing her of ties to Samidoun, a pro-Palestine group sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury.

The Zionist outlet, exposed by Haaretz as an AI-driven bot network with ties to Israeli military entities, labeled Doutaghi a "terrorist" for her outspoken criticism of the Israeli regime's war crimes in Gaza.

Yale conducted no independent investigation, instead relying on AI-generated disinformation to justify interrogating Doutaghi under conditions she described as a "pre-determined guilty verdict."

Denied religious accommodations during Ramadan and access to campus, Doutaghi condemned the university's actions as "retaliation against Palestinian solidarity" and a "blatant act of Zionist McCarthyism."

### Yale's links to war profiteers and Zionist donors

Yale's appointment of David Ring from Wiggin and Dana for Doutaghi's interrogation hints at a possible conflict of interest.

Ring, a State Department appointee and advocate for defense contractors like Lockheed Martin, profits from F-35 jets used by the Israeli regime in Gaza.

Doutaghi noted Yale's financial ties to these firms, stating the university "prioritized Zionist donors over fairness."

Eric Lee, Doutaghi's lawyer, accused Yale of "bending the knee to Trump's dictatorship," linking her suspension to the administration's "Catch and Revoke" policy.

This initiative, led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, uses AI to revoke visas of international students accused of supporting Palestinian rights—a policy that entangled Mahmoud Khalil, a green-card-holding Columbia graduate detained by ICE for leading pro-Gaza protests.

### Double standards in free speech

The U.S. government's selective enforcement of free speech is striking. While platforms such as Jewish Onliner are allowed to spread AI-generated disinformation unchecked, Iranian and Palestinian advocates face censorship, deportation, and even death threats for expressing their ideas.

The Trump administration's designation of 60 universities under investigation for



Iranian scholar Helyeh Doutaghi, deputy director of the Law and Political Economy (LPE) Project in Yale University

"antisemitism"—a pretext to criminalize pro-Palestine speech—highlights this hypocrisy.

Doutaghi warned that "Zionist McCarthyism treats solidarity with Palestine as a crime," drawing parallels to Cold War purges in the U.S. Khalil's detention, she noted, exemplifies the criminalization of dissent: "This is not about national security—it's about silencing resistance to U.S. imperialism and Zionist settler-colonialism."

Her case has galvanized demands to defend academic freedom and Palestinian rights as legal battles continue.

"This is the last refuge of a crumbling empire," she asserted, urging resistance against "brute repression masquerading as law."



## Aluminum production reaches 550,000 tons with growth in bauxite, alumina output

TEHRAN – Iran's aluminum production has exceeded 550,000 tons in the first 11 months of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2024–February 18, 2025), with notable growth in the production of bauxite and alumina.

According to the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the country's four major aluminum producers – South Aluminum, Eralco, Almahdi, and Iran Alumina – produced a total of 552,185 tons of aluminum ingots from the mentioned period. This is a slight decrease from the 582,200 tons produced in the same period last year.

Breaking down the production figures, South Aluminum produced 222,397 tons, Eralco 160,237 tons, Almahdi 138,915 tons, and Iran Alumina produced 30,636 tons of aluminum ingots during the 11-month period.

In addition, Iran Alumina produced 212,520 tons



of alumina powder, 358,485 tons of aluminum hydrate, and 725,335 tons of bauxite from March to February. These figures show an increase of approximately 3 percent in alumina powder, 3 percent in aluminum hydrate, and 35 percent in bauxite production compared to the same period last year, when production figures were 206,438 tons, 347,313 tons, and 537,317 tons, respectively.

## U.S. sanctions Iran's oil minister for efforts to maximize oil sales

TEHRAN – Iran's Oil Minister, Mohsen Paknejad, has been placed on the latest U.S. sanctions list by the U.S. Department of the Treasury for his extensive efforts to sell Iranian oil despite ongoing sanctions.

According to Shana, the sanctions on Paknejad are part of the latest actions taken by the United States as part of its "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran. These sanctions have been imposed less than seven months into Paknejad's tenure as Oil Minister.

Paknejad has repeatedly emphasized that Iran's oil exports will never cease, declaring that the U.S. maximum pressure policy has failed. He has also stated that Iran has found numerous ways to bypass sanctions and continue selling its oil in global

markets.

One of Paknejad's key positions during this short period in office has been that "there are no issues with selling Iran's oil" and that "necessary measures have been taken to confront sanctions." The U.S. pressure campaign, he added, will not hinder Iran's efforts, but rather has strengthened his resolve and that of his team.

The sanctions on Paknejad, along with other officials in Iran's oil sector and a range of entities linked to the industry, reflect the U.S.'s continued maximum pressure strategy against the Islamic Republic. Iran has shown time and again that it possesses the ability to circumvent sanctions and continues to sell its oil in international markets using various methods.

## Iran to host ECO transportation ministerial meeting on April 1

TEHRAN – Iran is scheduled to host a meeting of transportation ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member states on April 1, according to the country's Minister of Transportation.

During a meeting with ECO Secretary General Asad Majeed Khan on Tuesday, Farzaneh Sadeq highlighted Iran's policy of boosting economic multilateralism and promoting the level of coop-

eration with neighbors.

He noted that transportation, as one of the three top agendas of ECO, can further accelerate cooperation in different areas such as trade, tourism and energy within ECO members.

The Iranian minister referred to ECO region as being home to international transit corridors, which she said reflects the potentials of this organization.

## Iran's non-oil export to Armenia increases 21%

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's non-oil export to Armenia increased by 21 percent during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024–January 19, 2025), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesperson for the Trade Development Committee of the House of Industry, Mining, and Trade announced.

Ruhollah Latifi said that Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$402.494 million to Armenia in the ten-month period.

The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has underscored the need to enhance trade cooperation between Iran and Armenia during a meeting with Armenia's deputy economy minister on February 22.

Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi met with Armenian Deputy Economy Minister Edgar Zakaryan and Armenia's Ambassador Grigor Hovhannisyan, highlighting the strong friendship between the two nations and expressing Iran's willingness to expand trade relations.

Dehnavi noted that the trade volume target between Iran and Armenia has been set at \$3 billion, but there remains a significant gap to bridge before achieving that goal. "We are striving to reach this target," he said.

He emphasized the importance of sending trade delegations and participating in business events, stating that the presence of merchants, traders, and economic actors in exhibitions and trade events would help foster trade growth.

The Iranian official also reiterated the coun-

try's interest in strengthening trade ties with Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states and called for a strong presence of Armenian businesses at the Eurasian International Trade Exhibition.

Armenia's Deputy Economy Minister Edgar Zakaryan emphasized the historical friendship between the Iranian and Armenian people, saying this could play a key role in advancing economic cooperation between the two countries.

"Armenia is prepared to collaborate with Iran across various sectors to strengthen mutual trade relations," Zakaryan said.

He pointed to the vast potential for economic cooperation between the two neighbors and stressed that utilizing these opportunities would help achieve their trade goals.

Zakaryan also expressed Armenia's readiness to follow up on economic and trade matters through specialized working groups.

Iran and Armenia signed a barter trade agreement on the sidelines of the 3rd Eurasian Economic Forum in Yerevan in last October.

The agreement was signed by TPO Head Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi at the presence of Iranian Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Mohammad Atebak and Armenian Economy Minister Gevorg Papoyan.

Under the agreement, the two countries would appoint representative companies to implement barter trade after three months from the signing of the agreement.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

# Iran's oil output rises by 34,000 barrels in February 2025

TEHRAN – Iran's crude oil production increased by 34,000 barrels per day (bpd) in February 2025, reaching 3.308 million bpd, according to OPEC's latest monthly report.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) reported that Iran's oil production in February rose from the previous month's level of 3.274 million bpd.

The increase comes as the new administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump has taken office, vowing to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero.

Iran's average crude output stood at 3.257 million bpd in 2024, up from 2.884 million bpd in 2023.

The price of Iranian heavy



crude in February 2025 was \$77.41 per barrel, marking a decline of \$2.24 from the previous month.

OPEC's total oil production in February rose by 154,000 bpd, reaching 26.86 million bpd.

Iran's oil production has been

on an upward trend in recent months despite U.S. sanctions and geopolitical pressures. The country managed to increase its output steadily throughout 2024, adding more than 370,000 bpd compared to the previous year. The rise in production has been supported by the govern-

ment's efforts to boost investment in upstream projects and secure alternative trade routes for its crude exports.

In addition to increasing output, Iran has been working to expand its oil sales, particularly to Asian markets, where demand remains strong. China continues to be a key buyer of Iranian crude, while other regional customers have also shown interest in maintaining supplies despite Western pressure.

The resilience of Iran's oil industry has been evident even in the face of tightening restrictions. The country has utilized a mix of official and unofficial channels to sustain its exports, ensuring that oil revenue remains a crucial source of foreign exchange for the economy.

## Iranian economy grows 3.7% in 9 Months: CBI

From Page 1 ▶ The official emphasized that while the 3.7 percent growth is satisfactory, it still falls short of the target growth rate of 8.0 percent, and efforts must be made to achieve this goal. "We hope that in the fourth quarter of the year, the growth rate figures will improve."

Farzin also explained that despite a slight decline in growth in the summer, there was a resurgence in economic growth in the fall across various sectors.

Regarding the growth rates in various sectors, Farzin explained that services account for almost 50 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), agriculture makes up 10 percent, industries and mining account for 30 percent, and oil represents only 10 percent of GDP. Therefore, the services sector has a significant impact on overall economic growth.

On growth based on expenditure items, Farzin shared the growth rates for private sector consumption, government consumption, and capital formation. Private sector consumption grew by 3.3 percent in the first nine months, while government consump-

tion showed a recovery over the course of the year, with a 3.4 percent decrease in the first quarter, followed by 4.4 percent growth in the second quarter and 7.9 percent growth in the third quarter.

He added that the rate of investment formation showed an increasing trend throughout the year, with growth rates of 2.2 percent in the spring, 3.3 percent in the summer, and 4.4 percent in the fall. In total, the growth rate of capital formation reached 3.4 percent in the first nine months.

Farzin discussed the country's monetary policy and the central bank's strategies to control inflation. The annual inflation rate decreased significantly from 55.7 percent in early 2022 to 35.4 percent in February 2024. He emphasized that with new policies for the coming year, further reductions in inflation are expected.

He also addressed the point-to-point inflation rate in February 2024, stating that it had slightly increased due to fluctuations in the exchange rate in the NIMA system and expectations of a rise in the exchange rate

from 28,500 to 38,000 toman. However, he reassured that this rate is manageable, and the continuation of the preferential exchange rate policy for essential goods is a priority.

The CBI governor also commented on the producer price inflation, which had risen to 82.6 percent at certain points but decreased sharply to around 40.4 percent at the beginning of 2022. By February 2024, it had further decreased to 26.7 percent. He explained that producer price inflation serves as a good predictor of consumer price inflation, and with the expected reduction in producer price inflation, consumer inflation is expected to follow the same downward trend.

In conclusion, Farzin emphasized that despite the challenges, all sectors of the economy had shown growth, with the non-oil sector being the main driver. He stated that the central bank would continue to pursue policies aimed at stabilizing the monetary system while providing adequate liquidity to businesses through new credit policies, especially for working capital, to ensure economic growth without fueling inflation.

## Iran-Eurasian free trade agreement to take effect in 60 days

TEHRAN – Iran's embassy in Moscow reported that the free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) will come into effect in 60 days.

According to the report, Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali officially confirmed the approval of the agreement in a telephone conversation with Andrei Slepnev, the EAEU's trade minister. The formal conclusion of the legal procedures for the free trade agreement between Iran and the EAEU member countries was announced by Jalali as the agreement progresses through all signatory nations.

The two sides expressed their satisfaction with the upcoming implementation of the agreement, calling it a key factor in boosting trade exchanges in the region.

The Iranian embassy added that under the terms of the agreement, the free trade agreement between Iran and EAEU

member states will be enforceable 60 days after all participating countries have completed their legal processes. Signed in December 2023 in St. Petersburg, the agreement will exempt 87 percent of trade goods between Iran and the EEU member countries from customs tariffs.

The free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union is a significant milestone in the region's economic integration. The EEU, which comprises Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, represents a strategic bloc that spans a vast geographical area and includes some of the largest markets in the post-Soviet space. For Iran, the deal opens up opportunities for enhanced access to these markets, which are especially vital amid ongoing economic challenges and sanctions.

The agreement aims to improve bilateral trade and strengthen economic ties by re-

ducing tariffs and easing trade barriers. With 87 percent of traded goods now exempt from tariffs, Iranian businesses are expected to benefit from reduced export costs, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, industrial goods, and energy. Similarly, EAEU countries will gain easier access to Iran's markets, known for its growing demand in various sectors, including construction materials, consumer goods, and energy resources.

Additionally, the free trade agreement is likely to have a broader geopolitical impact. It signals closer economic ties between Iran and the Eurasian region, aligning Iran with its broader foreign policy goals of diversifying economic partnerships outside of Western spheres. This agreement strengthens Iran's position in the region, especially as it looks to integrate more deeply into the global economy despite the pressures of sanctions and dip-

lomatic isolation.

In related news, Iran's exports to EAEU member states have increased by 22 percent, according to recent figures. Furthermore, the agreement will enable zero-tariff trade with five countries in the Eurasian region.

On March 3, 2025, The spokesman for the Iranian Guardian Council, confirmed that the free trade agreement between Iran and the EAEU had been reviewed by the council and found to be in compliance with Islamic principles and the Constitution. The agreement was initially approved by the Iranian parliament in December 2023, after addressing earlier objections raised by the Guardian Council.

The Eurasian Economic Union is an intergovernmental economic union comprising Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia, with observer members including Iran, Uzbekistan, Moldova, and Cuba.

## Iran to strengthen economic ties with Africa, launch shipping line to West Africa

TEHRAN – Iran's head of Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced plans to enhance economic cooperation with African countries, including establishing a shipping line to West Africa and expanding commercial centers in African nations.

In a meeting to discuss the upcoming third Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Summit, Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi revealed that the summit would be held from May 7 to May 11, 2025. Dehghan Dehnavi highlighted the strategic importance of this partnership, emphasizing that President Pezeshkian has placed a strong focus on guiding Iran's economic cooperation with Africa.

He further announced the creation of a permanent secretariat for Iran-Africa coop-

eration within the TPO. This move aims to encourage greater private sector involvement in Africa and to increase Iran's economic footprint on the continent.

According to Dehghan Dehnavi, the Trade Promotion Organization has various tools at its disposal to foster stronger ties, including organizing events, exhibitions, business delegations, and bilateral meetings. He added that the organization is actively studying different sectors and opportunities for collaboration in Africa to further develop economic relations.

The official noted that significant progress is being made in improving trade logistics, with efforts to establish a shipping line to West Africa and expand trade centers in Af-

rican countries. Additionally, cooperation is being pursued through the Central Bank of Iran to establish financial transfer channels.

Iran is also looking to increase investment in oil, petrochemical, and mining sectors in Africa. Dehghan Dehnavi confirmed that the country has received authorization from the Africa Headquarters to proceed with the purchase of African goods, further boosting trade between the regions.

The official emphasized the importance of foreign embassies' role in facilitating private sector engagement, adding that more information exchanges are needed between Iran and Africa to foster deeper collaboration.



# “More than a human can bear”

UN finds Israelis waged systematic “genocidal acts” in Gaza

From page 1 ▶ The Commission found specific forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including forced public stripping and nudity, sexual harassment such as threats of rape, and sexual assault, are part of the Israeli Occupation Forces’ standard operating procedures toward Palestinians.

Other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape and violence to the genitals, were carried out either under direct orders or with implicit encouragement from top Israeli political and military leadership.

The report states that these actions are part of a broader effort to undermine Palestinians’ right to self-determination and have included genocidal acts through the systematic destruction of sexual and reproductive healthcare facilities.

The Commission documented cases where women and girls of all ages, including maternity patients, were targeted. These are acts that constitute the crime against humanity of murder and the war crime of willful killing.

It highlights a wide range of violations committed against Palestinian women, men, girls, and boys across the Occupied Palestinian Territory since October 7, 2023.

The UN report titled “More than a human can bear” found these violations as a significant part of the mistreatment of Palestinians and



links them to the unlawful occupation and persecution of Palestinians as a group.

This is while Israeli forces have imposed a siege and a ban on humanitarian aid, including essential medication and equipment needed for safe pregnancies, deliveries, and post-partum and neonatal care.

These actions violate women’s and girls’ reproductive rights and autonomy, as well as their right to life, health, family life, human dignity, physical and mental integrity, freedom from torture and other cruel or degrading treatment, self-determination, and the principle of non-discrimination.

Women and girls were found to have died from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth

because the conditions imposed by Israeli authorities have denied access to reproductive healthcare.

These acts, the report found, amount to the crime against humanity of extermination.

The report documents how Israeli authorities have partially destroyed the reproductive capacity of Palestinians in Gaza as a group through the systematic destruction of sexual and reproductive healthcare.

This amounts to two categories of genocidal acts under the Rome Statute and the Genocide Convention, including deliberately inflicting conditions of life designed to cause the physical destruction of Palestinians and implementing measures aimed at preventing births.

“The evidence collected by the Commission reveals a deplorable increase in sexual and gender-based violence,” said Navi Pillay, Chair of the Commission.

“There is no escape from the conclusion that Israel has employed sexual and gender-based violence against Palestinians to terrorize them and perpetuate a system of oppression that undermines their right to self-determination,” the report states.

“The targeting of reproductive healthcare facilities, including through direct attacks on maternity wards and Gaza’s main in-vitro fertility clinic, combined with the use of starvation as a method of war, has impacted all aspects of reproduction,” said Commissioner Pillay.

“These violations have not only caused severe immediate physical and mental harm and suffering to women and girls, but irreversible long-term effects on the mental health and reproductive and fertility prospects of Palestinians as a group.”

A climate of impunity exists regarding sexual and gender-based crimes committed by illegal Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank, aimed at instilling fear in the Palestinian community and driving them out.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## Why is Israeli normalization with Lebanon a distant dream?

From page 1 ▶ Since its illegitimate inception, the Israeli occupation entity has relentlessly sought to impose normalization with Lebanon by various means, but the military, security, and political realities have not helped it achieve this.

The Israeli enemy’s current motivation is its belief that the resistance front has been weakened after all the painful blows it has endured, especially after losing its main supply line through Syria and the strengthening of the cordon around it, followed by the formation of a weak Lebanese authority that is indifferent to national sovereignty and blatantly subservient to the dictates of the American spy den (embassy) in Beirut.

The first and fundamental step for normalization is to crush the Lebanese resistance front. This has not and will not be achieved as Israel failed in its recent aggression on Lebanon with the US backing. Moreover, the resistance movement relies on broad popular support.

This is what prompted Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen to rule out the possibility of normalization with Lebanon at the present time, as-

serting that “it is too early to talk about it.”

Cohen acknowledged that—even given the emerging regional dynamics—it will be difficult to impose normalization on Lebanon without neutralizing Iran.

The Israeli colonial entity always seeks to ensure its qualitative military and security superiority in West Asia. It will benefit far more from any normalization agreement than it will “give”, as many analysts point out.

Tel Aviv feels no moral obligation to spy even on its closest allies, and it has done so against the United States.

It’s worth noting that the US Department of Commerce has placed NSO Group, the Israeli company that developed the Pegasus spyware, on its list of banned companies, citing its perceived threat to US national security.

In any case, Washington and Tel Aviv’s efforts are certainly serious, but they realize that there are many difficult obstacles to achieving this.

In the 1980s, after Egypt’s withdrawal from the Axis of Resistance and the signing of the



Camp David Accords, Tel Aviv believed the opportunity was ripe to impose normalization with Lebanon. However, the newly formed resistance movement quickly nullified the shameful May 1983 normalization agreement in February 1984.

Netanyahu has previously emphasized on several occasions that “peace” with Lebanon cannot be achieved while the resistance exists. This proves that only Hezbollah can ward off the trap of normalization!

## From the mountains of Saada to the Red Sea... a force reshaping the equations of conflict

From page 1 ▶ When Ansarallah decided to enter the equation of regional deterrence in favor of the Palestinians by targeting Zionist enemy navigation in the Red Sea, it was not merely a tactical move or a response to a temporary situation, but an extension of a strategic approach based on a clear vision within the framework of comprehensive confrontation with the Zionist project.

The messages carried by Ansarallah’s military operations were multi-level. On one hand, the movement and its allies in the Sanaa leadership affirmed that the era of absolute hegemony over the Red Sea has ended, and that any Israeli movement in the region will no longer be safe. On the other hand, it revealed the fragility of the security system that the United States and its allies in the region have long promoted, which appeared incapable of protecting the interests of the Zionist entity despite intensive military and intelligence efforts.

Iranian support for resistance movements (which was limited with Ansarallah to media and political initiatives due to the type of total blockade imposed on Sanaa) was not just traditional support

based on military and logistical backing, but part of a comprehensive strategy aimed at creating a new balance in the region that redraws the lines of engagement with the Zionist and American project.

In this context, the relationship between Tehran and Ansarallah was not only built on the basis of ideological loyalty to the Palestinian cause but on pragmatic foundations based on common interests and a unified vision for the future of the region. Ansarallah, despite their independence in political and military decision-making, found in Iran a strategic ally that enables them to strengthen their regional position.

Ansarallah has proven since their initiative to support Gaza after Operation Al-Aqsa Flood that resistance in the region is no longer confined to specific geography, but has transformed into an interconnected system extending from Gaza to Beirut, from Damascus to Sanaa, and from Baghdad to Tehran. This system has succeeded in imposing new rules of engagement, where the enemy can no longer carry out aggressive operations without facing a painful response on more than one front.

What is happening today in the Red Sea is not just a show of force, but part of this system that seeks to make the Zionist entity pay a heavy price for all its aggressive policies, whether in Palestine or any other point in the region.

The war on Yemen, which initially aimed to crush Ansarallah and return them to square one, turned into a golden opportunity that enabled them to develop their capabilities and expand their influence. The coalition that led the war, with direct American and British support, did not realize that the war they thought would be swift and quick would turn into a quagmire that drains their capabilities and reshapes the balance of power in the region.

Yemen, which was traditionally viewed as merely a marginal conflict arena, has today become a strategic axis capable of threatening international navigation security and directly influencing the equations of conflict with the Zionist entity.

The United States, which has long seen the Red Sea as a strategic passage protected by its regional alliances, found itself facing an unprecedented dilemma. Its attempts to mobilize an interna-

tional coalition to confront Ansarallah’s threats did not achieve the desired results, not only because of the military challenges it faces but also because of the complex political equations imposed by the new reality.

In light of this reality, Iran emerges as a major player not only in supporting the resistance but in reshaping regional strategies. Tehran has not only worked through allies as its enemies promote, but has become a direct party to the confrontation, whether through its logistical and technical support for the resistance, or through its political and diplomatic presence that has succeeded in creating a network of international alliances that restrict American and Zionist movements.

This strategy, which has proven effective in more than one arena, has put the Zionist entity and its allies in an unprecedented predicament, where they no longer have the ability to decisively end battles in the way they were accustomed to, but are now fighting extended wars of attrition that drain their resources and weaken their hegemony.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## US, Israel working on displacing Palestinians from Gaza to Somalia, Sudan and Somaliland

The US and Israel have reached out to officials of three East African governments to discuss using their territories as potential destinations for resettling Palestinians forcibly displaced from the Gaza Strip under President Donald Trump’s plan for the devastated territory, American and Israeli officials say.

The contacts with Sudan, Somalia and the breakaway region of Somalia known as Somaliland reflect the determination by the US and Israel to press ahead with a plan that has been widely condemned and raised serious legal and moral issues, The New Arab reported.

Because all three places are poor, and in some cases wracked by violence, the proposal also casts doubt on Trump’s stated goal of resettling Gaza’s Palestinians in a “beautiful area”.

Officials from Sudan said they have rejected overtures from the US, while officials from Somalia and Somaliland told The Associated Press that they were not aware of any contacts.

Under Trump’s plan, Gaza’s more than two million people would be permanently sent elsewhere. He proposed that the US take ownership of the territory, oversee a lengthy clean-up process, and develop it as a real estate project.

The idea of a mass transfer of Palestinians was once considered a fantasy of Israel’s ultranationalist fringe. However, since Trump presented the idea at a White House meeting last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has hailed it as a “bold vision”.

Palestinians in Gaza have rejected the proposal and dismissed Israeli claims that the departures would be voluntary.

Arab nations have expressed vehement opposition and offered an alternative reconstruction plan that would leave the Palestinians in place.

Rights groups have said forcing or pressuring the Palestinians to leave could be a potential war crime.

Still, the White House says Trump “stands by his vision”.

Speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss a secret diplomatic initiative, US and Israeli officials confirmed the contacts with Somalia and Somaliland, while the Americans confirmed Sudan as well. They said it was unclear how much progress the efforts made or at what level the discussions took place.

Separate outreach from the US and Israel to the three potential destinations began last month, days after Trump floated the Gaza plan alongside Netanyahu, according to the US officials, who said that Israel was taking the lead in the discussions.

Israel and the US have a variety of incentives — financial, diplomatic and security — to offer these potential partners. It is a formula that Trump used five years ago when he brokered the Abraham Accords — a series of mutually beneficial diplomatic accords between Israel and four Arab countries.

The White House declined to comment on the outreach efforts.

The offices of Netanyahu and Ron Dermer, the Israeli Cabinet minister and Netanyahu confidant who has been leading Israel’s post-war planning, also had no comment.

But Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a long-time advocate of what he calls “voluntary” emigration of Palestinians, said this week that Israel is working to identify countries to take in Palestinians. He also said Israel is preparing a “very large emigration department” within its Defense Ministry.

## Persian Gulf Arab states linked to Israeli businesses on UN settlements blacklist

An investment firm headed by Jared Kushner and backed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates is the largest shareholder in an Israeli company which in turn holds shares in businesses accused by the United Nations of operating in illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Affinity Partners has received several billion dollars in funding from the Persian Gulf Arab states’ sovereign wealth funds since it was launched by Kushner, US President Donald Trump’s son in law and former Middle East advisor, in 2021, Middle East Eye reported.

In January, just weeks after securing further funding from the Qatari Investment Authority (QIA) and an Abu Dhabi-based investment firm, Affinity completed the purchase of a near-10 percent stake in Phoenix Financial.

Phoenix, formerly known as Phoenix Holdings, is an Israeli financial services group that offers insurance and asset management services, and holds shares in other Israeli companies in its own name and through a subsidiary, Phoenix Investment House.

An investigation by Middle East Eye has established that these include 11 public companies and one private company currently named in a database of businesses with links to Israeli settlements in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, compiled by the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The businesses include banks and companies involved in telecommunications, transport, energy, engineering, and retail.

According to Tel Aviv Stock Exchange data reviewed by MEE on March 12, Phoenix’s total holdings in the 11 public companies are currently valued at around \$4.5bn.

In a statement to MEE, Affinity said: “Affinity is proud to be the largest shareholder of Phoenix, one of the best performing and well regarded Israeli financial institutions.

“Affinity’s investors are passive, meaning they have no role in Affinity’s or Phoenix’s operations.”

At the time of writing, Phoenix’s share price was up more than four percent on Thursday as the company announced its 2024 results, including a comprehensive income of 2.087bn Israeli shekels (\$0.57bn).

The money trail linking Persian Gulf Arab states to Israeli firms

Commenting on the results, Phoenix chief executive Eyal Ben Simon described the acquisition of shares in the company by international investors as “a significant vote of confidence in Phoenix and the Israeli economy”.

Ben Simon said: “We are pleased that the group’s results, leading position, and the business opportunity it represents support continued investment by prominent international investors.”

MEE has approached Phoenix for comment.

Kushner, who is considered to be close to Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was a key architect during Trump’s first term of the so-called Abraham Accords which established diplomatic ties between Israel and several Arab states including the UAE.

He has spoken openly of his support for, and desire to invest in Israel, describing Affinity last year as “long-term bullish” on the country, and his hopes for a future normalization deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Affinity agreed a deal last July to buy an initial 4.95 percent stake in Phoenix for around \$470m Israeli shekels (\$130m) with an option to double its stake for the same price pending approval by the Capital Market Authority, Israel’s markets regulator.

That purchase was completed on 20 January, with the increase in Phoenix’s share price since Affinity’s initial investment realizing the firm a current profit on paper of around 700m Israeli shekels (\$191m), according to Tel Aviv Stock Exchange data.

Commenting in January on Affinity’s investment in Phoenix, Kushner said the deal was “a decision rooted in my belief in Israel’s resiliency”, and described Affinity’s partners as “some of the most sophisticated investors from around the region”.

But MEE’s investigation raises questions as to whether the Gulf states are now indirectly facilitating or profiting from settlement-linked businesses even as Palestinians in the West Bank face an escalating military assault that has displaced tens of thousands of people, and a surge in settler attacks.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))



## Healthcare without borders: Iran's growing role in medical tourism



By Sahar Dadjoo

Medical tourism, the practice of traveling to another country for medical treatment, has become a significant global industry. With the rising costs of healthcare in developed nations and the availability of high-quality, affordable medical services in developing countries, patients are increasingly crossing borders for treatments ranging from cosmetic surgery to complex cardiac procedures. Iran, a country with a rich cultural heritage and a rapidly advancing healthcare system, has emerged as a key player in the medical tourism industry, particularly in the Middle East.

### Role of medical tourism in the global economy

Medical tourism is a multi-billion-dollar industry that contributes significantly to the global economy. According to a report by Grand View Research, the global medical tourism market was valued at \$44.8 billion in 2019 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 21.1% from 2020 to 2027. The industry's growth is driven by factors such as the high cost of healthcare in developed countries, long waiting times for certain procedures, and the availability of affordable, high-quality medical care in developing nations.

Countries like Thailand, India, Turkey, and Mexico have long been popular destinations for medical tourists. These countries offer a combination of advanced medical facilities, skilled healthcare professionals, and lower costs compared to Western countries. For instance, a heart bypass surgery that costs \$130,000 in the United States can be performed in India for just \$10,000, including travel and accommodation expenses.

### Medical tourism in the Middle East

The Middle East has also seen a surge in medical tourism, with countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Jordan, and Iran leading the way. The UAE, particularly Dubai and Abu Dhabi, has invested heavily in state-of-the-art medical facilities and has positioned itself as a hub for medical tourism in the region. Jordan, on the other hand, has leveraged its reputation for high-quality healthcare and its proximity to conflict-ridden countries like Iraq and Syria to attract medical tourists.

Iran, however, stands out in the Middle East for its unique combination of affordable healthcare, highly skilled medical profes-

sionals, and a rich cultural heritage that attracts tourists. Despite facing economic sanctions and political challenges, Iran has managed to develop a robust healthcare system that rivals those of its neighbors. The country's medical tourism industry has grown significantly in recent years, driven by government support, private sector investment, and the increasing reputation of Iranian hospitals and clinics.

### Medical tourism in Iran: a success story post-Islamic Revolution

Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran has made significant strides in various sectors, including healthcare. The government has prioritized the development of the healthcare system, resulting in a network of hospitals, clinics, and medical research centers that offer a wide range of services. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Iran's healthcare system ranks among the top in the Middle East, with a life expectancy of 76 years and a maternal mortality rate of 16 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is lower than the global average.

The success of Iran's healthcare system has laid the foundation for the growth of medical tourism. The country offers a wide range of medical services, including cosmetic surgery, dental care, fertility treatments, and orthopedic procedures, at a fraction of the cost compared to Western countries. For example, a rhinoplasty (nose job) that costs \$8,000 in the United States can be performed in Iran for just \$2,000. Similarly, dental implants that cost \$4,000 in Europe are available in Iran for \$1,000.

Iran's medical tourism industry has also benefited from the government's efforts to promote the sector. In 2004, the Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education established the "Health Tourism Council" to coordinate efforts between various stakeholders, including hospitals, travel agencies, and government agencies. The council has implemented policies to streamline visa procedures for medical tourists, improve the quality of healthcare services, and promote Iran as a medical tourism destination.

When compared to its neighboring countries, Iran's medical tourism industry stands out for its affordability, quality, and accessibility. Turkey, for instance, is a major competitor in the region, attracting millions of medical tourists each year. However, while Turkey offers high-quality healthcare services, the cost of treatment is generally higher than in Iran. For example, a hair transplant in Turkey costs around \$3,000, while the same procedure in Iran costs \$1,500.

(See full text at [www.tehrantimes.com](http://www.tehrantimes.com))

## Russia lifts Abkhazia travel advisory following pro-Kremlin leader's election win

Russia's Foreign Ministry announced Friday that it lifted a travel advisory for Abkhazia following protests over a controversial investment deal that led to the election of another pro-Moscow leader in the breakaway Georgian region.

The advisory had been issued in November after mass demonstrations erupted over a Russian investment bill that critics argued would allow wealthy Russians to push out local businesses.

Acting Abkhazian leader Badra Gunba was declared the winner of the region's runoff election on March 2 after his predecessor stepped down in response to protesters' demands.

"With the situation in Abkhazia now stabilized, the Russian Foreign Ministry is canceling the earlier recommendations. Russians who wish to travel to Abkhazia may now proceed with their plans," the ministry said in a statement.

Abkhazia, which has been under de fac-

to Russian control since the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, is a popular destination for Russian tourists. Russian nationals do not need international travel documents to enter and can cross the border using a domestic passport.

In 2024, around 1.4 million Russian tourists visited the small mountainous region, home to just over 240,000 people.

"Moscow knows that Abkhazia eagerly awaits guests from Russia for the opening of the new holiday season," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Gunba traveled to Moscow for meetings with Russian officials, including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, just days before the first round of voting — an move that opposition figures criticized as giving him an unfair advantage.

Russian President Vladimir Putin later congratulated Gunba, saying the Abkhazian people had expressed their "free popular will."

(Source: *The Moscow Times*)

# Evidence of Neanderthal habitation discovered in Qamari Cave, western Iran

TEHRAN – A team of archaeologists has discovered some evidence of Neanderthal habitation during their recent survey conducted in Qamari Cave, located on the outskirts of Khorramabad in Lorestan province, western Iran.

They have uncovered significant evidence of human habitation dating back 40,000 to 80,000 years, as well as from the late prehistoric and historical periods. Lorestan's department for Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism has announced the findings.

Ata Hassanpour, the director of the department, stated that the excavations began on February, 2024, under the supervision of Fereidoun Biglari from the National Museum of Iran and Sonia Shidrang from Shahid Beheshti University. The project was authorized by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. Initial findings reveal a rare cultural sequence in the cave, spanning from the Middle Paleolithic era to historical periods.

According to Biglari, artifacts from the Middle Paleolithic period include stone tools, bones of hunted animals such as wild goats and red deer, and remnants of fireplaces. These findings are likely linked



to Neanderthal habitation. Hassanpour added that the discovery of painted buff ware and red ware from the Chalcolithic period (over 5,500 years ago) indicates the cave's continued use by pastoral communities of that era and highlights advancements in pottery technology during that time. Evidence from other periods, such as the Iron Age, Seleucid, and Parthian eras, has also been found.

Shidrang noted the identification of a rock shelter near the cave, containing evidence of habitation from both the Middle Paleolithic and Chalcolithic periods, suggesting it was used concurrently with the

cave. She mentioned that Qamari Cave had been excavated twice before: first in 1965 by American archaeologist Frank Hole and again in 2011 by Behrouz Bazgir.

Biglari emphasized that the new findings, particularly the rich evidence of Neanderthal habitation, make the cave a focal point for studying cultural and biological evolution in Lorestan and western Iran over an extended period. He added that continued excavations in the deep archaeological deposits of the cave could potentially uncover Neanderthal skeletal remains and other archaeological evidence from this lesser-known era, open-

ing new horizons for Paleolithic research in Iran and the Middle East.

Qamari Cave was registered as a national heritage site in 2001 under the registration number 4144.

A 2019 study published in the *Journal of Human Evolution* suggests that Neanderthals were roaming at the Iranian Zagros Mountain sometime between 40 to 70 thousand years ago.

Until the late 20th century, Neanderthals were regarded as genetically, morphologically, and behaviorally distinct from living humans. However, more recent discoveries about this well-preserved fossil Eurasian population have revealed an overlap between living and archaic humans.

Neanderthals lived before and during the last ice age of the Pleistocene in some of the most unforgiving environments ever inhabited by humans. They developed a successful culture, with a complex stone tool technology, that was based on hunting, with some scavenging and local plant collection. Their survival during tens of thousands of years of the last glaciation is a remarkable testament to human adaptation.

## Iran to host largest eco-tourism gathering in May



A view of Dadmehr Eco-Lodge, a 19th-century traditional house situated in the UNESCO-listed historic city of Yazd, central Iran.

TEHRAN – Iran is set to host its largest eco-tourism gathering on May 21 ("Ordibehesht 31"), bringing together hundreds of eco-lodge managers, government officials, and international representatives to celebrate and promote sustainable tourism.

Yavar Abiri, who presides over the Iranian association for eco-lodge operators, announced that the event is scheduled for Ordibehesht 31 in Kerman province. This initiative follows the recent designation of May 21 as Iran's National Eco-Tourism Day. Despite the official recognition, no celebratory event was held in 2024, prompting orga-

nizers to plan a large-scale gathering next year.

The event is expected to attract between 500 to 700 eco-lodge managers from across the country, as well as related officials. Invitations have also been extended to foreign ambassadors and representatives of the UN Tourism (formerly known as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)). Among the anticipated guests is the head of the UN Tourism's rural tourism registration division, who may conduct a specialized workshop on registering Iranian villages for global recognition.

Furthermore, a specially designed train operated by the private sector will transport 300 to 400 participants from Tehran to Kerman. The train, featuring customized decorations and cultural elements, will make stops in Isfahan and Yazd, offering passengers a chance to explore other historical cities along the way. Additionally, traditional performance groups will entertain guests throughout the journey, creating a dynamic cultural experience.

With strong support from the Kerman provincial government, this two-day event aims to highlight Iran's commitment to eco-tourism and sustainable rural development. The gathering is expected to strengthen collaborations among eco-tourism operators while showcasing Iran's rich cultural and natural heritage on an international stage.

## Exhibit of Iranian handicrafts on sidelines of joint naval drill with Russia and China

TEHRAN – An exhibition showcasing Iranian handicrafts was held on the sidelines of the joint naval drill conducted by Iran, Russia, and China in the Sea of Oman.

Hosted by the Iranian Navy in Chabahar, the exhibit showcased arrays of works crafted by artisans from Sistan-Baluchestan province, which is situated in southeast Iran, CHTN reported on Thursday.

The exhibition was intended to introduce the province's treasured handicrafts to the participants of the naval exercise, said Vahideh Rakhshani, the deputy tourism chief of Sistan-Baluchestan.

"Like in previous years, we have set up this exhibition to present our exquisite and meaningful handicrafts to international attendees," she stated.

"The exhibition consists of seven booths at the Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar, where local artisans

are showcasing a variety of handmade products. The display has been well received by both domestic and international participants of the drill, many of whom have shown appreciation by purchasing handicrafts and supporting local

artisans."

Rakhshani underlined that Sistan-Baluchestan's handicrafts are admired internationally, and the positive reception at the exhibition underscores their appeal. "The exhibition will continue to run until

the conclusion of the naval exercise."

On March 10, Iran, Russia, and China began joint naval drills in the region, marking the fifth year the three countries have conducted military drills together.

First Announcement



### Brief Notice of International Two-Stage Tender No. 667293

It is hereby notified that Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) intends to purchase 50,000 pcs. Short Casting Semi-Nozzle as per the required conditions and technical specifications through two-stage international Tender. Accordingly, all the prospective bidders are kindly requested to visit ESCO's website [www.esfahansteel.ir](http://www.esfahansteel.ir) so as to obtain the tender document no later than 09.03.2025 and upload their techno-commercial offer to ESCO's website (through Sourcing Field) up to max. 12.04.2025 at 15:00 p.m.

It is evident that this letter is only for notification purpose.

Yours Respectfully,

M.J.Salehi,

Purchasing Deputy

Esfahan Steel Company



# Special traffic plan to be implemented during Nowruz

TEHRAN – Some 22,000 traffic police officers and 3,000 unmarked police will be on duty to implement a special traffic plan that aims to lower road accidents and ensure the safety of the roads during Nowruz holidays, which start on March 21.

The plan will commence on Saturday, March 15, IRNA reported.

Since about 70 percent of car accidents occur within 30 kilometers of cities, these areas are prioritized for monitoring as danger zones. Police will notify drivers of their traffic violations to prevent further problems, IRNA quoted Ahmad Karami Asad, an official with the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran, known as Faraja, as saying.

Some 700 law enforcement university students will monitor the behavior of drivers. Moreover, penalties for traffic violations have surged by 30 percent for March 10-April 9 period.

**National campaign 'say no to accidents'**

The World Health Organization (WHO) representative to Iran, Jaffar Hussain, has announced WHO office in Iran is committed to strengthening a national campaign titled 'say no to accidents' through providing strategic support, raising public awareness, and collaborating with responsi-



ble organizations.

The campaign developed by the health ministry website mainly aims to manage road traffic, reduce accidents, and save the lives of thousands.

Road accidents are one of the main challenges of the health system in the country. Thousands of individuals are killed in road crashes every year, the health ministry's website quoted Hussain as saying.

Although such accidents are preventable, some 20,000 people lost their lives in Iran in 2023, a majority of them youth, the official added.

"We will actively disseminate key campaign messages across the World Health Organization digital platforms to provide engaging, informative, and accessi-

ble texts to audiences. We will also facilitate high-level advocacy and endorsement of evidence-based interventions, as well as the use of global models and expertise to further enhance road safety," Hussain highlighted.

The official went on to say that the WHO will also actively promote partnerships among policymakers, law enforcement, and different communities to encourage observing road safety regulations and promoting safer driving behaviors.

"Together, by raising public awareness and developing road safety culture, particularly during Nowruz holiday, we will significantly minimize road accidents and their devastating consequences.

Let's unite in saying a resound-

ing no to accidents and make the roads safer for everyone, as every single life matters," Hussain highlighted.

Road traffic injuries are now the leading killer of people aged 5-29 years. The burden is disproportionately borne by pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, in particular those living in developing countries.

Traffic-related accidents have claimed the lives of 10,097 Iranians during the first six months of the current Calendar year (March 20-September 21), which marks a decrease of 618 deaths compared with the same period last year, IRNA reported.

About 62 percent of the accidents are attributed to private vehicles; cars and motorcycles accounted for 25 percent each, vans for 6 percent, trucks for 5 percent, and public transportation for 1 percent of the accidents.

In the country, pedestrians account for 16 percent of victims of all accidents. Their share reaches 24 percent in inner-city districts, and 8 percent on roads.

Accidents are more likely to happen in the evening and at night as 25 percent of the accidents occur from 4 to 8 p.m., and 22 percent from 8 p.m. to midnight.

## Iranian-made HPV, flu vaccines to be manufactured in Indonesia

TEHRAN –The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine (the virus that usually causes cervical cancer in women) and the recombinant influenza vaccine are projected to be produced in Indonesia, an official with the vice-presidency for science, technology, and knowledge-based economy has said.

Biofarma, an Indonesian vaccine manufacturer, produces different vaccines at government expense. However, they have not developed these two vaccines. The vaccines will be made there, and we would get a share of the sales market, Mehr news agency quoted Mostafa Qanei as saying.

Given Indonesia's population of around 300 million, it will be a huge benefit to Iran if these two vaccines are added to Indonesia's immunization program.

The official went on to say that Iran could also transfer plasma refining technology to Indonesia, as there are two large companies in plasma refining in the country.

Providing medical services to patients with cardiovascular diseases in Jakarta takes about two to three months. "While we have the technology to provide these services in Iran, we do not prefer selling a product, but selling a service, that is, supplying the devices to hospitals in Indonesia and offering services to them at the same rate."

**New Iranian-made telesurgery systems installed in Indonesia**

Following the installation of two Irani-

an-made remote robotic surgery systems in Indonesian hospitals in November 2024, the third and fourth systems have been launched.

Highly welcomed by Indonesian's surgeons for their high quality and precision, the systems were installed in Wahidin Sudiro Husodo General Hospital in Makassar, and Haji Adam Malik General Hospital in Medan, IRNA reported.

Among the key advantages of the systems are affordability (one-fifth of the price of foreign models), low maintenance, and cost-effective consumables.

The first two Iranian-made telesurgery systems had been installed in the hospitals in Bandung and Yogyakarta.

In December 2023, the former Iranian Vice-President for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy, Rouhollah Dehqani-Firouzabadi, and the Indonesian Health Minister, Budi Gunadi Sadikin, signed a memorandum of understanding based on which Iran will establish a robotic remote surgery center in a hospital in the city of Makassar, Indonesia.

Developing a robotic remote surgery training service center at Wahidin Sudiro Husodo General Hospital and strengthening the capacity of surgeons and resident doctors through advanced surgical skills training based on the latest scientific methods were among the main topics of the agreement.

Moreover, creating an interdisciplinary



platform between clinical doctors, researchers, and engineers, creating a dynamic environment for promoting new ideas in the field of medical education, and encouraging new research projects in the field of medical and surgical interventions were other axes of cooperation, IRNA reported.

According to the head of Iran's Union of Medical Equipment Manufacturers and Exporters, Abdolreza Yaqoubzadeh, Medical equipment worth around \$20 million is exported to more than 60 countries annually.

Medical equipment manufacturers in the country produce and supply over 10,000 types of medical equipment to domestic and foreign markets. Now, various pieces of laboratory equipment are manufactured at prices much lower than the same foreign products.

## Iran urges Italy, Switzerland to play active role in anti-drugs fight

TEHRAN – The Secretary General of Iranian Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), Brigadier General Hossein Zolfaqari, in separate meetings with the Central Director for Italy's Anti-Drug Services DCSA (Central Directorate for Anti-Drug Services), General Pierangelo Iannotti, and the head of the International Affairs Division of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) of Switzerland, Barbara Schedler Fischer, has called for expanding cooperation to play a more effective role in combating drug-related issues.

The officials met on the sidelines of the 68th session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), which was held from March 10 to 14 in Vienna, Austria.

During the meeting with the Italian official, Zolfaqari elaborated on the structure of the Anti-Narcotics Headquarters and Iran's geographical location on the Balkan transit route to Europe. "The attractive European market tempts drug traffickers; one of the negative consequences of this economic corruption is the irreparable losses that we are going through in our own region."

Referring to the discovery of approximately 440 tons of narcotics in Iran, including 38 tons of methamphetamine, in 2024, he said, "Some of the shipments were destined for European countries."

The two countries used to collaborate in the fight against drugs by sharing expertise and information and holding training courses. Still, this cooperation has come to a halt recently, Zolfaqari noted.

For his part, Iannotti said, "We are well aware of Iran's extensive activities and great measures in detecting drugs being trafficked from Afghanistan to Europe."

Commending Iran's efforts, the official said, "Our liaison officer at the Italian Embassy in Tehran is responsible for promoting cooperation, exchanging information, and holding training workshops for drug detection dogs."

In the meeting with Schedler Fischer, the secretary general of Iranian DCHQ, said, that despite Iran's measures and achievements in the fight against drugs, the country is unfortunately facing discrimination from some countries, particularly Western countries."

Highlighting the discovery of 5,000 tons of different sorts of narcotics, over the past five years, Zolfaqari said as the result of Iran's countermeasures, such as focusing on intelligence-based operations, the risk factor for smuggling from the country has increased; in the last five years, international smuggling gangs have started to use alternative routes like sea.

The official went on to enumerate Iran's efforts in demand reduction, harm reduction, treatment, rehabilitation, and reunification of recovered individuals to society. "In this regard, a comprehensive document on primary prevention of addiction has been developed and implemented, the main goal of which is to reduce the incidence of addiction by covering 40 percent of the country's entire population."

Prevention activities are offered in families, educational centers (schools and universities), work environments, and neighborhoods. Harm reduction programs in the form of developing mobile teams and mobile centers have focused on providing services such as sterile syringes and needles, distributing meals, hygiene items, bathing facilities, sleeping overnight in shelters, and

low-threshold methadone to drug addicts who are homeless, destitute, and have sexually transmitted diseases, he stressed.

"Improving the country's treatment capacities, management of treatment centers, including industrial and synthetic substances, the number of addiction treatment centers has increased to 7,200 centers in residential, outpatient and inpatient rehabs.

Thanks to prevention programs, harm reduction, treatment, rehabilitation, and implementation of the 'Life Helpers' project over the past five years, the transmission rate of HIV, hepatitis C, and other blood-borne infections associated with drug use, as well as injection drug use, and its prevalence in the country, have been contained and controlled.

Recognizing the significance of Iran's efforts, Schedler Fischer said, "We understand Iran's geographical location and conditions, and the resultant hardships and challenges."

Calling the harm reduction program of Iran significant, Schedler Fischer said the Swiss harm reduction program aims to strengthen the prevention of addiction and ensure the long-term treatment of people with an addiction. She announced the country's readiness to exchange knowledge and experiences in this field.

**'Unilateral sanctions hinder counter-narcotics measures'**

Addressing the 68th session of the United Nations CND, Zolfaqari said imposing unfair sanctions against Iran not only increases the costs of implementing treatment and harm reduction programs but also challenges developing effective strategies for combating drug trafficking.

Despite all efforts made to overcome the problem, national and international drug control systems are struggling with the rapid emergence of the new psychoactive substances (NPS), Zolfaqari stressed.

The official went on to propose some methods for treating drugs and drug-related issues more effectively, underscoring the need for expanding cooperation, strengthening mechanisms for information exchange, sharing experiences, providing technical assistance and equipment, and transferring needed technologies to countries affected by illegal production, transit, and consumption of drugs.

Diversifying treatment methods and facilitating access to drugs for medical purposes are among the top priorities of countries to reduce demand for illegal use of drugs. Hence, facilitating the exchange of the latest expertise and findings is essential, he added.

Referring to successful initiatives that have been ceased or are partially active, such as the agreement supported by the UNODC between Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, to cooperate in the area of counter-narcotics enforcement, Zolfaqari said international communities are expected to fund the UNODC to support such regional agreements.

"In line with the implementation of numerous resolutions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Human Rights Council, we call for an end to sanctions and the procurement of effective technical and equipment assistance to countries on the front lines of the fight against drugs," Zolfaqari further noted.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## \$1.2m donated to provide the underprivileged with warm clothing

Iran's Welfare Organization has managed to collect a contribution of 50 billion rials (nearly \$1.2 million) to provide the underprivileged with warm clothing, Tasnim news agency reported on Thursday.

Within the framework of a campaign dubbed "kindness smile" from December 10, 2018 to January 9 some \$1.2 million was solicited from the public for procuring warm clothing for the financially struggling children in underprivileged areas, an official with the Organization has said.

Mohammad Ali Kozehgar explained that some 50,000 packages of warm clothing were obtained by the money and distributed among the children.

## کمک ۵ میلیاردی برای تامین لباس زمستانی کودکان در مناطق کم برخوردار

به گزارش خبرگزاری تسنیم سازمان بهزیستی کشور با هدف تامین تهیه لباس گرم برای کودکان مناطق کم برخوردار مبلغ ۵ میلیارد تومان جمع آوری کرده است.

رئیس مرکز مشارکتهای مردمی و توانمندسازی سازمان بهزیستی کشور با اشاره به اتمام پوشش لبخند مهربانی با هدف تامین تهیه لباس گرم برای کودکان مناطق کم برخوردار اظهار کرد: این پوشش از ۱۹ آذر با مشارکت خیرین و نیکوکاران آغاز شد و تا ۱۹ دی ماه ادامه داشت و در این طرح یک ماه ۵ میلیارد تومان جمع آوری شده است. محمد علی کوزه گر گفت: ۵۰ هزار بسته لباس گرم به ارزش ۵ میلیارد تومان تهیه شده است و در اختیار کودکان قرار گرفت.



## Isfahan, main producer of stock flowers

The city of Khomeini Shahr in Isfahan Province is the main producer of matthiola incana, commonly known as stock flower or hoary stock, in the country.

Stock flowers are mainly used to decorate Haft Seen tables during Nowruz holidays.





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MARCH 15, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*In the morning, charity is due on every joint bone of the body of every one of you. Every utterance of Allah's glorification (i.e. saying Subhan Allah) is an act of charity, and two rakath prayers which one performs in the forenoon is equal to all this (in reward).*

**Prophet Muhammad (S)**

Prayer Times » Noon:12:13 Evening: 18:12 Dawn: 4:50 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:14 (tomorrow)

## Tehran's City Theater to host Albert Camus' "Caligula"



TEHRAN-The play "Caligula" written by Albert Camus will go on stage at the City Theater in Tehran from March 27.

Mehrdad Mostafavi is the director of the play that has Negin Javid, Zahra Jalilvand, Ava Hakimi, Kamyar Daryakenari, Nima Dodangeh, Ali Rahimi, Mohamadreza Ranjbar, and Afshin Rahgozar in the cast among others, ILNA reported.

Published for the first time in 1944, "Caligula" was later the subject of numerous revisions. It is part of what Camus called the "Cycle of the Absurd," together with the novel "The Stranger" (1942) and the essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1942).

A number of critics have reported the piece to be existentialist, though Camus always denied belonging to this philosophy. Its plot revolves around the historical figure of Caligula, a Roman Emperor famed for his cruelty and seemingly insane behavior.

The play depicts Caligula, torn by the death of Drusilla, his sister. In Camus' version of events, Caligula eventually deliberately manipulates his own assassination. (Historically, Caligula's

assassination took place in AD 41)

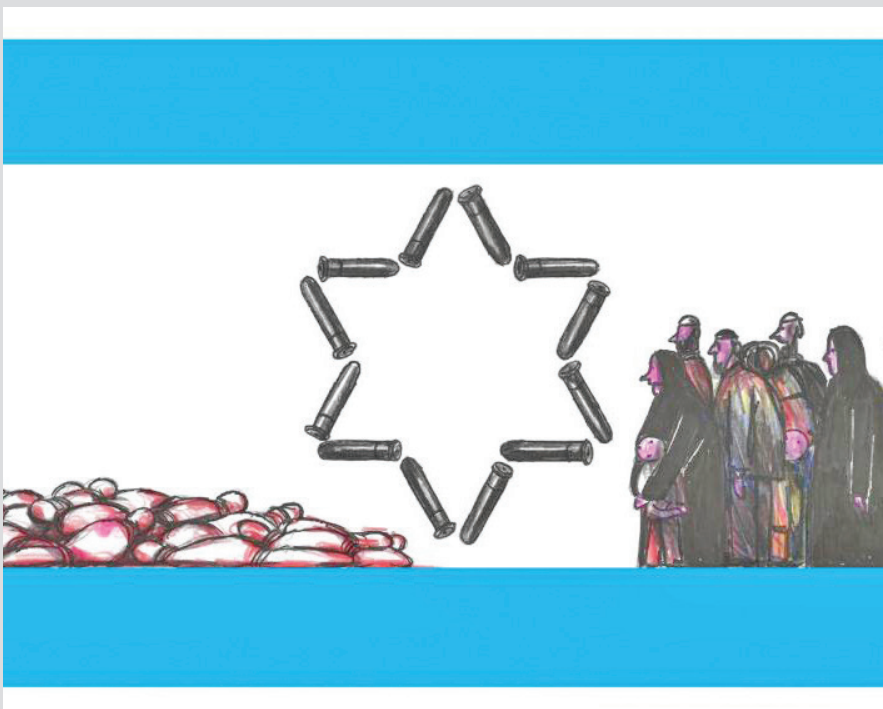
Albert Camus wrote of his piece, "Caligula, a seemingly kind prince, realizes upon the death of Drusilla that men die and they are not happy. Obsessed by the quest for the Absolute and poisoned by contempt and horror, he tries to exercise through murder and systematic perversion of all values, a freedom, which he discovers in the end is not truly freedom. He rejects friendship and love, simple human solidarity, good and evil. He takes the word of those around him, he forces them to logic, he levels all around him by force of his refusal and by the rage of destruction which drives his passion for life."

"But if his truth is to rebel against fate, his faculty is to oppose, and deny other men. One cannot destroy, without destroying oneself. This is why Caligula depopulates the world around him and, true to his logic, makes arrangements to arm those who will eventually kill him. Caligula is the story of a superior suicide. It is the story of the most human and the most tragic of errors. Unfaithful to man, loyal to himself, Caligula consents to die for having understood that no one can save himself all alone and that one cannot be free in opposition to other men," Camus continued.

Albert Camus (1913-1960) was a French philosopher, author, dramatist, journalist, world federalist, and political activist. He was the recipient of the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature at the age of 44, the second-youngest recipient in history. His works include "The Stranger," "The Plague," "The Myth of Sisyphus," "The Fall," and "The Rebel".

"Caligula" will remain on stage until April 29 at the City Theater, located at Daneshjoo Park, junction of Valiasr and Enghelab streets.

## Cartoon of Day



Faces of a War

Cartoonist: Silvano Mello from Brazil

# 18th Resistance International Film Festival slated for May

TEHRAN-The 18th Resistance International Film Festival will be held from May 17 to 24 in Iran.

According to an announcement by the festival, the closing ceremony, slated for May 24, coincides with the anniversary of the liberation of Khorramshahr.

The secretary of the 18th edition of the festival Jalal Ghaffari announced that the closing ceremony of the festival will henceforth be held annually on May 24. He elaborated that the choice of this date goes beyond merely an executive decision; it represents the intersection of resistance cinema with one of the most important periods in contemporary Iranian history.

Emphasizing that the festival is not just a venue for showcasing cinematic works but also a platform for narrating the steadfastness of the Iranian people through the seventh art, he added: "May 24 is not merely a date on the calendar; it symbolizes the breaking of siege, overcoming obstacles, and achieving victory. The selection of this day for the festival's closing ceremony emphasizes that resistance cinema, like Khorramshahr, can overcome the siege of censorship and dominant media narratives, bringing the voice of truth to the ears of the world."

He asserted the importance of the event's international dimension, stating that resistance cinema reflects the ideals of freedom and anti-imperialism, not only within the country but on a global scale. Over the years, this festival has established its position among committed and concerned filmmakers and has provided a platform for interaction and synergy among resistance artists worldwide.

According to the festival secretary, this year's festival aims to transcend geographical boundaries in resistance cinema, offering a fresh perspective and transforming it into a powerful tool for cultural and media diplomacy.

Ghaffari continued by stating that the festival has become one of the most important cinematic events in the region in the areas of resistance and justice-seeking in recent



years. This year's edition, with a broader approach and a deeper insight into regional and global developments, aims to convey the message of resistance, justice, and the pursuit of truth to the world through cinema.

He also stated that the permanent secretariat of the festival will begin its work this year and added that the details of the programs for this edition will be announced soon.

As Ghaffari said, the festival's secretariat has received more than 6,000 works from 50 countries in various categories of documentary, fiction, and animation.

Additionally, in the humanities category, more than 460 works, including books, articles, and research related to humanities and resistance cinema, have been submitted.

"The main theme of this festival is the oppressed, Palestine, Gaza, and the voices of those who are less heard in cinema. This is the unique feature of the Resistance Film Festival," he told IRNA.

feature of this festival and said: "More than 340 works produced using artificial intelligence have been submitted to the festival. Also, after holding an AI training course, more than 10 outstanding short films have been produced using AI technology, and we are working towards producing the first AI-generated feature film by next year."

Ghaffari stated that the concept of resistance is the most global theme and added: "So far, festival secretariats have been established in 18 countries."

Referring to the fact that the screening of festival works began in the Fajr decade, he said: "110 locations across the country have been identified for mobile screenings, and we are striving to ensure that mobile screenings are also held in underprivileged areas of the country."

This year's edition will have a new award, the Morteza Badge, as stated by the festival secretary. The prestigious award aims to recognize documentarians whose works resonate deeply with the ideologies of the legendary Martyr Seyyed Morteza Avini, known as the master of martyred writers.

Sayyid Morteza Avini (1947-1993) was an Iranian documentary filmmaker, author, and theoretician of Islamic Cinema. He studied architecture at the University of Tehran in 1965. During the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Avini started his artistic career as a director of documentary films, and is considered a prominent war filmmaker.

He made over 80 films on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. His most famous work is the documentary series Ravayat-e Fath (Narration of Victory), which was filmed during the war and focused on the daily life of Iranian soldiers. It consisted of five series and dealt with the spiritual aspect of the war.

Avini was martyred by a landmine in 1993 during his last trip to the former Iran-Iraq war zone in southwestern Iran while making the documentary "A City in the Sky" about the fall of Khorramshahr and the liberation of the southwestern Iranian city during the Iran-Iraq war.

Referring to the revision of this festival since the previous edition, the secretary added: "From the last edition, the name of this festival was changed from the Sacred Defense Film Festival to the Resistance Film Festival."

"The focus of this edition of the festival is on events following the Operation Al-Aqsa Storm and a special section titled 'Gaza Section' has been organized," he added.

Stating that the main section of the Resistance Film Festival is named after Martyr Soleimani, Ghaffari noted: "Sacred Defense, A World Without Israel, Gaza, Narration Generation, Pen Narrative, Humanities and Cinema Criticism, and Artificial Intelligence are among the sections of this festival."

He also mentioned that the winners under 30 years old will become members of the National Elites Foundation and benefit from its support.

The secretary highlighted the attention to artificial intelligence technology as another

## "Legend of Sepehr" named best animation at New York International Film Awards

TEHRAN-The Iranian animated film "Legend of Sepehr" directed by Emad Rahmani and Mehrdad Mehrabi has won an award at the latest edition of the New York International Film Awards (NYIFA).

"Legend of Sepehr" won the Best Animation award at the February edition of the festival, ILNA reported.

In a fabled land, a young boy named Sepehr and his loyal cheetah, Baboo, embark upon a brave yet light-hearted quest to rescue their family and friends from the clutches of Ahri-

man, the dark lord of evil, who seeks an eternal reign of shadows.

From peaceful island life to chaotic adventures across mystical lands, this duo faces monsters, meets eccentric allies, and discovers the power of laughter along their journey. As they strive to defeat Ahri-man and save their world, Sepehr and Baboo prove that sometimes, the greatest weapon against darkness is a heart and an unbreakable spirit.

Emad Rahmani, 35, is the CEO at the Permanent Way Entertainment, a game and ani-

mation studio. He has managed and directed more than ten projects. He also has published plenty of game screenplays and essays.

New York International Film Awards is a monthly film and script competition with a public screening event held at Producer's Club, in the heart of Manhattan, New York City, every three months. It seeks to celebrate films and filmmakers from all over the world and to be the next step in their career. Each month, NYIFA will award the best projects through private screenings.

## Iranian documentary wins at Polish festival

TEHRAN-The documentary "Habibullah" by Adnan Zandi from Iran has won an award at the 28th International Film Festival Zoom-Zblizenia in Poland.

The film won the Best Documentary Award among 29 documentaries competing in the festival last week, ILNA reported.

Made in 2023, the 24-minute movie depicts the life of a veteran folk singer from the Leylax region in Dehgolan City, Kurdistan Province. As he ages, he faces new challenges and doubts.

The titular character is an 80-years-old Kurdish folk singer and poet, Habibullah Zandi. For decades, he has been a beacon of joy in his village, performing at weddings and gatherings and entertaining people with his songs about love. Currently, though, his passion faces opposition when some radical figures demand he ceases singing, accusing him of promoting immorality.

Things get worse when one of his performances is recorded and posted on TikTok, mostly by

youths who mock his performances, bringing his son to also criticize his continuing performances. Tensions rise, but so does his defiance. The film mirrors its protagonist - it is quietly self-assured, joyful and with a deep love for the beauty of this world.

Adnan Zandi, 39, holds a Master's degree in cinema. He has directed several documentary films and won awards at numerous festivals. He is the founder and director of the Riga Student Film Festival.

The International Film Festival Zoom-Zblizenia is one of the largest and most important independent cinema festivals in Poland. It seeks to present the author's cinema, ambitious, high artistic value, moving independent and original subject matter, as well as promotion of independent film art.

In addition to the international film contests, the festival includes non-competition screenings and open meetings with famous filmmakers.