

# TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 100,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 46th year | No. 15020 | Tuesday | April 8, 2025 | Farvardin 19, 1404 | Shawwal 9, 1446

## Iran-China annual non-oil trade stands at \$34.1b

TEHRAN - The value of non-oil trade between Iran and China stood at \$34.1 billion in the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, 2025, according to an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Abolfazl Akbarpour, the deputy head of IRICA for planning and international affairs, said that importing non-oil goods worth \$14.8 billion from Iran, China was the first destination of Iranian products in the past year.

He also announced that by exporting non-oil products valued at \$19.3 billion to Iran, China was the second source of import for Iran in that year.

Hossein Eyvazlou, a member of the executive board of Iran's National Development Fund (NDF), has announced plans for collaboration with China in the field of foreign investment in Iran.

Speaking at a press conference on January 4, Eyvazlou highlighted the importance of attracting foreign capital to boost Iran's economic projects, emphasizing the role of strategic partnerships with countries like China.

Details on the scope and nature of the cooperation were not disclosed, but it is expected to focus on key sectors that align with Iran's long-term development goals. ▶ Page 4

## Iran is world's oldest country based on organized government

TEHRAN - In a newly revisited global ranking published by the World Population Review, Iran has been officially recognized as the oldest country in the world in terms of its earliest known organized government and sovereign identity, dating back to 3200 BC.

This distinction places Iran ahead of other ancient civilizations such as Egypt (3100 BC), Vietnam (2879 BC), Armenia (2492 BC), and North Korea (2333 BC), which round out the top five in the global list. The ranking is based on historical analysis of early state formation and evidence of organized governance.

### A cradle of civilization

Previously known as Persia, Iran boasts a rich cultural and political history that stretches back to the Lower Paleolithic period. Among Iran's earliest civilizations were Elam and Jiroft, with the Elamite civilization being the most prominent and widely recognized for laying the foundations of early Iranian governance during the Proto-Elamite era, also known as Susa III. This period, around 3200 BC, marks the emergence of Iran's self-sovereignty, making it not only one of the world's oldest inhabited regions but also the earliest known state to form a recognizable government. ▶ Page 6

## Book on martyr General Soleimani to be unveiled in Moscow

TEHRAN - An unveiling ceremony for the Russian novel "Jackals Cannot Defeat a Lion," inspired by the life of the martyr Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, will take place on Wednesday, at the Moscow Book House in Russia.

The event will showcase the work of Oleg Roy, the distinguished Russian writer and producer, which draws from the life of General Soleimani, Mehr reported on Monday.

The writing and publication process of the book, initiated by the Cultural Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russia, took two years, the report added.

This narrative presents a compelling account of martyr Soleimani's journey from adolescence to martyrdom in 285 pages, aimed at a Russian audience. ▶ Page 8



© president.ir

▶ Page 3

## 'Foreign Ministry sole authority on negotiations,' Araghchi dismisses speculations around talks

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi categorically rejected rumors circulating in media and social platforms about alternative negotiators representing Iran in potential indirect talks with the United States.

In a Monday interview with an Iranian news agency, Araghchi addressed swirling rumors about alternative negotiators being tasked with backchannel talks, including former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

"None of the conjectures circulating are accurate," he stated, emphasizing, "Any potential negotiations will unequivocally fall under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Ministry and its leadership."

The remarks follow weeks of unverified claims in Iran's media sphere suggesting that figures outside the Foreign Ministry—including Zarif—were engaged in discussions with US officials. ▶ Page 2

## Any realized U.S. threat will trigger swift reaction: Tehran

TEHRAN - Spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Minister Esmail Baghaei has warned that any U.S. threats, if carried out, will be met with a rapid, decisive, and all-encompassing response from Iran.

Baghaei made the remarks during a weekly press conference on Monday, addressing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent visit to the U.S. and accompanying threats against Iran.

Baghaei also rejected speculation that possible talks could include non-nuclear issues. "Negotiations are solely focused on the nuclear file. Any claims to the contrary are inaccurate," he emphasized.

### Iran condemns Israeli actions in Gaza, cites U.S. complicity

Turning to the situation in Gaza, Baghaei condemned the "catastrophic crimes" committed by Israel, accusing Tel Aviv of repeated violations of international law and human rights. ▶ Page 2

Scan the barcode to watch the highlighted moment from the Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's press conference in Tehran.



## "What victory are they talking about?"

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Settlers outraged after Hamas launches rockets at Israeli cities despite 18 months of genocide in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli media reported a wave of intense anger among settlers following renewed rocket fire from Gaza toward Ashdod and Ashkelon.

A surge of fury spread among settlers after Gaza resumed shelling on Sunday night, with around ten rockets launched toward Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gan Yavne.

According to Nitzan Shapira, the southern correspondent for Israeli Channel 12, only half of the rockets were intercepted.

The channel reported that settlers expressed their outrage, with Uri, a resident of Ashkelon, stating: "It's been a year and a half of war in Gaza, and they're still firing rockets at our city."

He added that "the situation is absurd. We're still under attack," continuing, "A year and a half has passed, and we're still running to bomb shelters. What victory are they talking about?!"

Rafi, another resident of the same settlement, said, "The siren went off, and as always, we rushed to the safe room. Before we could even close the door, an explosion hit nearby. It's a miracle we're unharmed." ▶ Page 5

## Is Trump-Netanyahu summit geared toward escalation or de-escalation?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT - Analysts have focused on the result of the Monday meeting between Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu, given the convergence of interests between the two men in the next phase.

Meanwhile, both Trump and Netanyahu have crowned themselves as the saviours who will lead the world to its final liberation from the "axis of evil," i.e., the axis of resistance.

Yedioth Ahronoth reported that the U.S. envoy to West Asia, Steven Witkoff, was to attend the meeting.

Obviously, amid the absence of a buildable US-Israeli strategy, Trump and Netanyahu's megalomania may drive them to further genocidal massacres, in addition to financial and economic sanctions. ▶ Page 5

## Diplomatic armor: How Netanyahu uses Washington as a shield

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN - Netanyahu's journey to Washington came on the heels of a four-day visit to Hungary, where he was hosted by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, a vocal critic of the ICC. Hungary, despite being an EU member and theoretically obligated to enforce ICC warrants, openly defied the court's authority, allowing Netanyahu to attend without risk of arrest. This pattern of selective non-compliance with international law set the stage for his U.S. visit, where the absence of ICC jurisdiction similarly shields him from legal repercussions.

The timing of the trip is significant. It follows a period of heightened tension in the Israel-Hamas conflict, with Israel expanding its military operations in Gaza and facing global criticism. The ICC's warrant, issued on November 21, 2024, accuses Netanyahu and his former war minister Yoav Gallant of war crimes, including starvation as a method of warfare and crimes against humanity such as murder and persecution. The court's decision was met with fierce opposition from Israel and its allies, including the U.S., where President Joe Biden called it "outrageous" in 2024, and the incoming Trump administration, which imposed sanctions on ICC personnel in February 2025. ▶ Page 5



## Global pro-Palestine protests erupt amid ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza

Massive pro-Palestinian rallies erupted across the globe as public outrage intensifies over Israel's continued bombardment of Gaza. From North Africa to Europe and South Asia, demonstrators poured into the streets demanding an immediate ceasefire, an end to Israeli occupation, and international accountability for what many protesters describe as crimes against humanity.

Tens of thousands rallied across Morocco, calling on Muslim nations to take a unified stand against Israeli aggression. ▶ Page 5



## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

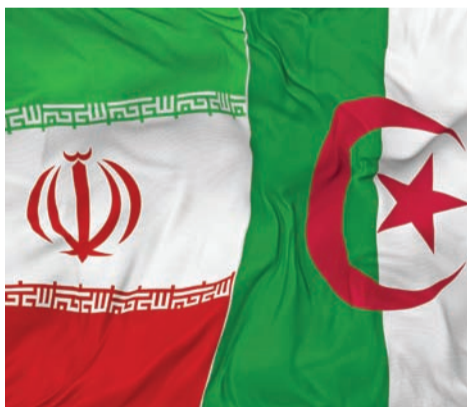
## America and the Libya model

In a commentary, Arman-e-Melli discussed Trump's various moves and claims against Iran and wrote: Political analysts believe that Trump's main goal is to revive the policy of maximum pressure on Iran. Some even believe that Trump is seeking to implement the "Libya model" in regard to Iran's nuclear program, a model based on which the other party must abandon all of its nuclear activities. For this reason, Trump is practically demanding the closure of Iran's nuclear facilities and not genuine negotiations. However, such a demand is not acceptable to Iran in any way. Tehran had previously emphasized that uranium enrichment capacity is a red line in negotiations and is not willing to give it up under any circumstances. However, Trump and some of his regional allies, including Israel, are seeking to reduce Iran's resistance in the region and bring it to the negotiating table unilaterally through a combination of economic and security pressures. In this regard, Trump has taken steps to impose broader sanctions on Iran. He has not only tightened sanctions on the Iranian oil industry but also is trying to completely block Iran's oil exports by threatening private Chinese companies that buy Iranian oil.

## Jam-e-Jam: Psychological warfare against Iran in Western media

Jam-e-Jam examined the axis of psychological warfare against Iran in an interview with Dr. Hamid Reza Asefi, former spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He said: The purpose of the axis of the psychological warfare is to inspire an idea that that Islamic Republic of Iran has been weakened, especially after the developments in Syria and the martyrdom of Hezbollah leaders and many Hamas officials; actions that were taken to show the decline of Iran's influence and authority in the region. At the same time, the United States was trying to target the historical memory of the Iranian people and prevent them from comparing the current situation with the past in such a way that their evaluation is made solely based on current conditions. Whether we like it or not, the United States has been somewhat successful in these two areas by using various media outlets. But the chief goal of this psychological operation is to create confusion and polarization, intensify economic problems and pressures, and consequently provoke unrest to weaken the Islamic Republic, as it has taken such actions on several occasions in the past.

## Iran top diplomat embarks on key diplomatic visit to Algeria



TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi departed for Algiers on Monday, leading a delegation to advance bilateral and regional discussions with Algerian officials.

The visit builds on recent high-level engagements, including President Masoud Pezeshkian's recent phone call with Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, where both leaders hailed "brotherly and expanding relations."

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baqaei earlier announced the trip, stating that Araghchi's agenda includes "consultations on strengthening bilateral relations and exchanging views on pivotal regional and international developments."

It also follows recent interactions, including a December 2024 meeting between the Iranian foreign minister and Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf during the UN Alliance of Civilizations forum in Portugal, where they discussed topics of mutual interest.

In February, Araghchi praised Algeria's stead-

## Iran: Iran has the right to negotiate indirectly

In a note, the Iran newspaper cited reasons why Iran is distrustful of the United States, and it is because of this lack of trust that Tehran refuses to negotiate directly with Washington. It wrote: The fact is that the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran over the past 80 years has always centered on pursuing American interests and ignoring the national interests of the Iranians. Given America's bad record concerning Iran, the Islamic Republic should be given the right to have a pessimistic view of the new round of possible negotiations and pursue the path of indirect negotiations as experience has proven that America cannot be trusted. In recent years, after months/years of negotiations on the Iran nuclear issue, with a change of presidents in the White House, they turned their back on the JCPOA. They wasted months of intensive diplomatic efforts by six world powers and the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, Iran has still not closed the path to diplomacy and has prepared the situation for "indirect" negotiations. Their good intentions must be proven in indirect negotiations, and then Iran will take further steps. But threats will lead to counter-threats.

## Farhikhtegan: Celebrities who joined the opposition have been isolated

Farhikhtegan analyzed the isolation of celebrities who joined the opposition. It said: Celebrities who left Iran and joined the opposition are now acknowledging their isolation. This admission shows the bitter realities of life after joining the opposition. It also reflects changes in financial and media structures that once supported the managers of these media outlets. The reduction in financial help, which has been exacerbated by political developments such as Trump's rise to power, as well as the fading presence of these individuals in media space due to changes in media algorithms and the failure of sabotage projects, have brought them to a point where they are forced to recount their failures. During the 2022 events (that followed the Masha Amini death), the platforms favored opposition content, helping them gain a greater audience and voices being heard by their supporters. But over time, and especially after the failure of the sabotage project, this situation changed. This isolation is not only a result of the reduction in financial support but also a change in media paradigms that no longer view these individuals as influential voices.

fast support for the Palestinian resistance in a phone call with Attaf, describing it as a principled stance.

Araghchi's agenda includes meetings with Attaf and other senior officials, focusing on trade, energy, and regional stability.

Iran and Algeria, both founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, have maintained pragmatic ties while navigating historical complexities.

Tehran and Algiers align on anti-colonial principles and Palestinian statehood, emphasizing multilateralism and South-South cooperation to address regional challenges.

Both nations have reinforced their shared commitment to Palestinian self-determination, condemning forced displacement in Gaza as a "colonial plot."

Recent years have seen renewed cooperation, including joint naval drills in 2023 and expanded energy partnerships.

In March 2024, President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Algeria—the first by an Iranian leader in 14 years—focused on gas cooperation within the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) and infrastructure development.

Bilateral trade has grown steadily, with Algeria importing Iranian petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals.

"New agreements foster collaboration in renewable energy and education, reflecting a mutual commitment to sustainable development and global partnerships."

Analysts note that Algeria's influence in the Arab Maghreb Union could help Iran expand its economic footprint in North Africa.

## Any realized U.S. threat will trigger swift reaction: Tehran

From page 1 ▶ "Over the past two years, we have witnessed flagrant disregard for the UN Charter and international humanitarian principles. The attacks on aid workers—including the killing of fifteen humanitarian personnel—are just one example," he stated.

He added that these actions, including operations in Rafah and the West Bank, are "undoubtedly carried out with the backing of the United States," warning of the "normalization of evil" in the region.

## 'Iran, IAEA in contact following recent developments'

Responding to questions about a phone call between Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi, Baghaei confirmed that Tehran had expressed its concerns regarding recent developments. "We conveyed our expectations to Mr. Grossi and reminded the Agency of its responsibilities to all member states," he said.

He confirmed an agreement in principle for Grossi to visit Iran, adding that details and timing are under discussion. "This is part of our ongoing technical engagement with the IAEA to resolve remaining safeguards issues," Baghaei noted, calling on the Agency to respond to threats against Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities in accordance with international law.

## 'Oman remains a key mediator in possible indirect talks with U.S.'

Addressing speculation about indirect talks with the United States, Baghaei reiterated that Oman has historically played a constructive role. "This is not a new development. Oman and the EU's foreign policy chief have facilitated indirect talks in the past. Should the process resume, Oman will be among the key mediators," he explained.

## 'No U.S. talks Yet; Tehran awaiting Washington's response'

Baghaei rejected reports of resumed talks with the U.S., stating: "That claim is baseless. Iran has responded to a letter from the United States and is now awaiting their decision. Our proposal for indirect talks is both responsible and forward-looking."

Baghaei emphasized that only the Foreign Ministry is authorized to lead any negotiation process and dismissed all other speculation.

## 'Afghan consulate in Birjand not on the agenda'

Asked about reports of a planned Afghan consulate in Birjand, Baghaei responded: "We have received no formal request, and the Foreign Ministry is not considering such a proposal. Establishing diplomatic missions involves formal procedures,

modest increase in diplomatic engagement between Iran and the United States.

## 'Foreign Ministry sole authority on negotiations,' Araghchi dismisses speculations around talks

From page 1 ▶ Zarif, who previously spearheaded nuclear negotiations with global powers, dismissed these claims as baseless.

"These rumors are more akin to an April Fools' Day joke that began early and persists needlessly," he remarked in a separate interview on Monday.

The speculation arose amid a

modest increase in diplomatic engagement between Iran and the United States.

## Second round of Iran-Russia-China talks on nuclear issue set for Tuesday in Moscow

TEHRAN — Senior diplomats from Iran, Russia, and China are scheduled to hold their second round of trilateral talks in Moscow on Tuesday, reinforcing collaborative efforts to address challenges surrounding Tehran's civilian nuclear program and counter Western pressure.

The meeting follows a March 14 session in Beijing, during which the three nations reportedly agreed to end unilateral sanctions, support peaceful nuclear development, and favor dialogue over intervention.

This consensus also reaffirmed Tehran's right to pursue peaceful nuclear energy as recognized under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

They also pledged to coordinate within BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to advance diplomatic solutions.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi participated in the Beijing session alongside Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov Sergey Alexeevich and Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, who chaired the session.

Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali outlined the agenda for the Moscow session on Monday, stating, "Tuesday's expert-level discussions will build on the progress of our prior dialogue, focusing on sustainable solutions to the nuclear issue."

He emphasized that Tehran engages in "uninterrupted strategic consultations with Russia and



and this matter is not under review."

## 'Nuclear weapons fatwa still governs Iran's policy'

Reaffirming Iran's longstanding position on nuclear weapons, Baghaei cited the Leader's fatwa (religious order) prohibiting their development. "Our peaceful nuclear strategy remains unchanged and is based on religious and legal foundations," he said.

## 'Iran-Turkey relations strong despite regional disagreements'

On ties with Ankara, Baghaei stressed that Iran and Turkey enjoy long-standing relations as neighboring Muslim nations. "Regional disagreements should not overshadow our cooperation. Since the outset of the Syria conflict, we have warned that Israel stands to gain from instability in Islamic countries," he said, condemning recent Israeli attacks on Syrian infrastructure.

## 'Trump's letter was a mix of threats and offers'

Commenting on a letter reportedly sent by former U.S. President Donald Trump, Baghaei said it contained both threats and proposals.

"Our response was balanced and did not shut the door to diplomacy," he said. "Iran's response was responsible and comprehensive in its approach to regional security."

## 'Germany should reconsider hostile policy approach'

Baghaei criticized recent German policies toward Iran and expressed hope that the new government in Berlin would revise its stance.

"At one time, confrontational approaches harmed our bilateral ties and negatively impacted Iranian nationals. We urge a reassessment," he said.

## 'Snapback threat would damage EU credibility'

Responding to recent remarks by the French

Foreign Minister about the potential reactivation of the JCPOA's snapback mechanism, Baghaei said: "Europe had a rare opportunity to demonstrate its diplomatic credibility. The EU's failure to compensate for the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA only undermines its standing."

## 'Iran reaffirms rights of Afghan migrants, calls for orderly migration'

Baghaei highlighted ongoing discussions with Kabul, including migration, water, and border security issues. "Afghans have been our guests for over 50 years. Iran believes migration must be orderly—this is a universal principle acknowledged by all governments," he said.

## 'U.S. bill on Iraq offensive and hypocritical'

Commenting on a U.S. congressional bill titled "Freeing Iraq from Iran," Baghaei called the proposal "insulting," especially coming from a country that previously occupied Iraq. "The goal is clearly to drive a wedge between Muslim neighbors," he said.

## 'President's visit to Azerbaijan under preparation'

Baghaei confirmed that preparations are underway for President Pezeshkian's upcoming trip to Azerbaijan, though no specific date was announced.

## Iran denies claims of military presence in Yemen

Baghaei dismissed reports that Iranian personnel were killed in Yemen as "baseless fabrications" aimed at discrediting the Yemeni resistance.

"There is no confirmation of such claims. Peace in Palestine is the key to ending regional conflict," he stated.

## 'Allegations about plot against Trump too absurd to address'

He also brushed off reports about a supposed Iranian plot to assassinate Donald Trump, calling the story "so exaggerated it's not worth discussing."

Baghaei reiterated that Iran continues to seek legal justice for the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani.

## 'Detention of Iranian national in France violates Vienna Convention'

Finally, Baghaei criticized France for the continued detention of Mahdieh Esfandiari, an Iranian national held for several weeks without explanation or consular access.

"This is a clear violation of Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. We are pursuing the matter with urgency," he said, expressing hope that French authorities will comply with international legal norms.

Zakharova has previously condemned European

attempts to trigger sanctions snapback mechanisms as "illegitimate," arguing that Western nations forfeited their moral authority after the U.S. withdrew from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"The U.S. violation of UNSC Resolution 2231 created this crisis," she asserted, referencing Russia's opposition to unilateral punitive measures.

China's participation in the upcoming talks aligns with its broader push to challenge Western dominance.

China to counter unilateral Western actions and defend Iran's legitimate rights."

Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov earlier announced the meeting, affirming, "Russia remains committed to resolving the nuclear issue through dialogue and will continue close coordination with our Iranian and Chinese partners."

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova also confirmed it, noting that Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran aim to "harmonize positions" ahead of critical diplomatic junctures.

China's participation in the upcoming talks aligns with its broader push to challenge Western dominance.

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



# Pezeshkian: U.S. must prove commitment to genuine negotiations

TEHRAN – As calls for fresh nuclear negotiations resound in Western capitals, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has issued a stark reminder: diplomacy does not equate to surrender, and trust cannot be restored through intimidation.

“We believe in negotiations,” he stated firmly, “but not at any price. We are not seeking war... or nuclear weapons. We seek dialogue—but the Americans must also prove they seek it too.”

The message, delivered at a Sunday evening gathering with political and grassroots leaders, went beyond rhetoric. It captured the essence of Iran's position in the face of relentless U.S. pressure and posturing.

“How can we negotiate with a country that applies maximum pressure and threatens us on a daily basis?” Pezeshkian asked, pointing to Washington's track record of broken commitments and economic warfare. “We speak with the world, we speak with our neighbors, and we've improved those relations. But the U.S. is a different story.”

At the heart of Pezeshkian's comment lies a deep frustration felt by the Iranian leadership—that even with Tehran's flexibility, restraint, and willingness to engage, it continually faces sanctions, pressure, and threats.

Pezeshkian reiterated Iran's principled position, saying: “We interact with the world with respect, and we seek no conflict. However, we will never tolerate humiliation. We are not seeking a bomb, and we've communicated that repeatedly. Our peaceful motives are also supported by a religious ruling



from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.”

In the mid-1990s, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a fatwa prohibiting the production, stockpiling, and use of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

**A record of compliance met with betrayal**

Iran's doubts about the United States stem from its historical experiences. Following the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, Iran fully complied with its commitments. This was validated through 15 regular reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which repeatedly confirmed that Iran fulfilled the deal's conditions.

Nevertheless, in May 2018, the United States, under President Donald Trump, unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA and reintroduced a sweeping sanctions regime. This action not only violated international norms but also went against UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the agreement.

The European signatories to the agreement—namely France, Ger-

many, and the UK—voiced regret but ultimately failed to shield Iran from the consequences of Washington's withdrawal.

In reply, and in accordance with Articles 26 and 36 of the JCPOA, Iran progressively diminished its obligations in a transparent and reversible way. Tehran consistently asserted that complete adherence could recommence if sanctions were removed and solid assurances were given against future violations.

Despite the repeated setbacks, Iran has kept diplomatic channels open. The high-level discussions with the E3 in Geneva and with China in Beijing demonstrate Tehran's continued dedication to diplomatic efforts. Iranian officials have reiterated their readiness to reach a reliable and lasting agreement—one that includes the full lifting of sanctions and verifiable safeguards against future non-compliance, especially by Washington.

However, the U.S. continues to undermine trust with provocative rhetoric. In addition to constant threats, the U.S. keeps issuing new sanctions against Iran. Just recently, on April 1st, the U.S. Treasury said

in a statement last Tuesday that its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), in coordination with the Department of Justice, had taken actions against three individuals and six companies based in Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and China for their alleged role in the procurement of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) components to an Iranian drones manufacturer.

Iran's skepticism toward the U.S. is not limited to the JCPOA. From the 1953 CIA-pushed coup against Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh to the downing of Iran Air Flight 655 in 1988, Tehran's apprehensions stem from decades of historical resentment.

Even outside Iran, Washington's history of abandoning significant international accords—like the Paris Climate Accord which was decided by Trump on January 20, 2025, shortly after his second inauguration.

In contrast, Iran has consistently demonstrated its willingness to engage in dialogue. Its involvement in global frameworks, ongoing collaboration with the IAEA, and constructive regional diplomacy demonstrate that Tehran is open to dialogue—but only when it is based on respect, not pressure.

Pezeshkian's message is clear: Iran is willing to discuss, but not to surrender. The Islamic Republic will reject any agreement that doesn't include protections or permits future treachery. If Washington genuinely values diplomacy, it needs to restore trust via tangible, verifiable measures—not by making threats.

Until then, Iran insists, the door to diplomacy remains open—but it cannot walk through it alone or under duress.

## Iran marks 27th death anniversary of Sirous Ghayeghran

TEHRAN – April 7 marks a special day in the history of Iranian sport – the anniversary of the tragic death of national football team hero Sirous Ghayeghran.

The date remains frozen in time for Iranian football fans, as this was the day in 1998 when Ghayeghran died in a car crash along with his eight-year-old son Rastin. He was 36 years old at the time.

The fans remember him as a hero who scored one of the most memorable goals in Iranian football history, against South Korea in the semi-final of the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing.

Iran went on to win the gold medal by beating North Korea 4-1 on penalties following a 0-0 draw.

The football devotees commemorate the anniversary of his death in his hometown Bandar Anzali, but his family has announced that the ceremony will not be held this year due to coronavirus concerns and requested them to stay home.

In February 1986, Ghayeghran, who was known for his long-range shooting ability, made his debut for the Iran national team against Pakistan.

One year later the midfielder became captain of the national team. In 1988, thanks to Ghayeghran's leadership, an underprepared and inexperienced Iran won a bronze medal in the AFC Asian Cup tournament.

Ghayeghran won 43 caps for his country and scored six goals.

He played most of his club football with Malavan and finished his playing career with Keshavarz.

## Ex-Iran goalie Zelli laid to rest

TEHRAN – Former Esteghlal and Iran national football team goalkeeper Faramarz Zelli was laid to rest on Monday at Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery in Tehran. Zelli passed away on April 1 at the age of 83.

He was a member of Team Melli, who won a gold medal in the 1968 AFC Asian Cup. Two years earlier, he earned a silver medal at the 1966 Asian Games.

Zelli began his playing career in 1962 with Kian Football Club and also played for Tehran-based clubs Pas and Taj.

The Tehran Times extends its deepest sympathies to Zelli's family, loved ones, and friends during this difficult time.

## Iran runners-up in 2025 SAT Futsal Championship

TEHRAN – Iran's women's futsal team were held to a goalless draw by Thailand in the SAT Futsal Championship Thailand 2025 on Monday and finished in second place in the tournament.

Team Melli had defeated Uzbekistan 5-0 and played out a goalless draw with Japan.

The Japanese team, who had defeated Uzbekistan earlier in the day, won the title.

The competition was held at Terminal Hall, Terminal 21 Korat in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand.

The Iranian football team prepare for the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup 2025, which will be held in Hohhot, China, from May 7 to 18.

## Rising star Masoumi praises young wrestling team

TEHRAN – Rising star Amir Reza Masoumi defeated Lkhagvagerel Munkhtur from Mongolia in the 125 kg final as Iran won the 2025 Asian Wrestling Championships.

The young Iran squad, which medaled in all but one weight class, compiled 190 points to run away with the team title for the second straight year and sixth time in seven years.

Japan finished second with 146, while Kazakhstan edged Mongolia by two points for the third place with 125.

“Iran did something really great and valuable this year by bringing young wrestlers to the Asian Championships, proving that we can win the title with them and that they deserve our trust,” said Masoumi, whose father Fardin was a two-time world medalist and finished fifth at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

“The championship age is getting lower in the world, and I believe the more opportunities we give these young athletes, the bigger achievements they can accomplish,” he said.

## Iran, Tajikistan sign sport cooperation document

TEHRAN – The National Olympic Committees of Iran and Tajikistan have signed a sports cooperation document.

Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, hosted the Regional Forum of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) for West and Central Asia on April 6, 2025. During the meeting, a sports cooperation document was signed between the National Olympic Committees of Iran and Tajikistan.

Signing the cooperation document reflects Iran and Tajikistan's efforts to boost relations, including in sports. The document can help both Persian-culture countries improve the quality of sports activities.

In line with boosting Tehran-Dushanbe ties, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian traveled to Tajikistan in January 2025 and met his counterpart Emomali Rahmon.

Pezeshkian described the trip as a privileged relationship between the two countries and called for the development of cultural, scientific, economic, and security relations between the two nations. Emomali Rahmon called for the deepening of the relations.

Mehdi Alinejad and Zolfaqar Gol Ahmadzadeh, respectively the Secretary General and Deputy Chairman of Iran and Tajikistan's National Olympic Committees, signed the agreement.

The document emphasizes cooperation in the fields of coaching, refereeing, and joint sports camps.

## Chamanian: we have to improve for Oman match

TEHRAN – Iran coach Abbas Chamanian believes that they have the upper hand in their face off with Oman in Group D of the AFC U-17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2025 on Tuesday.

The Central Asian side played to a 1-1 draw with DPR Korea on Matchday One, and head coach Abbas Chamanian knows a win will firmly lodge his team in the group's top two alongside Tajikistan.

“Our responsibility for the coming match is to improve all our lines,” he said, adding that he would review footage of their opponents' first match to decide on how best to counter them.

“The team doesn't really have enough time to recover or to even think about strategies, but we will sit our players down and advise them on how best to tackle their opponents,” he added.

## Oman ready to do better job against Iran: Al Habsi

TEHRAN – Oman U17 football team head coach Anwar Al Habsi says that they are ready to do a better job against Iran than they did against Tajikistan.

Oman lost 2-1 to Tajikistan despite a strong start and more shots at goal in the first half. They began to run out of steam after conceding the second goal right after the break.

“The goals were our only mistakes,” said head coach Anwar Al Habsi. “But we will work on boosting both our defensive and attacking capabilities to do a better job against Iran.”

While Al Habsi acknowledges defeat would mean elimination for the two-time champion, he remained philosophical.

“All the teams in this group are connected to each other on the same level, so any of us can win or lose any of our games.”

## Iran deputy parliament speaker urges collective push against unilateralism at NAM conference

TEHRAN – Iran's Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hamid Reza Hajibabaei, called on members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to unite against unilateralism and forge a new global order based on justice, peace, and multilateralism.

Speaking at the 4th NAM Parliamentary Network Conference on Monday in Uzbekistan, he underscored the urgency of multilateral cooperation amid mounting global crises.

“In today's complex and turbulent world, the erosion of international law and the failure of global decision-making institutions have created a vacuum,” Hajibabaei said. “To counter these threats, NAM must become a platform for responsible, forward-looking action.”

He warned that the future will be shaped either by coercion and insecurity or by collective peace and prosperity, depending on the choices NAM members make now. “This is a moment of historic responsibility,” he said. “No single nation can solve global challenges alone.”

Hajibabaei emphasized that the world must escape the grip of neo-colonial and hegemonic policies through a collective political project. “We need a fresh cooperative framework rooted in the Bandung Principles,” he said. “This is not one option among many—it is the only viable path forward.”

He argued that NAM's founding ideals



Iran's Deputy Speaker of Parliament Hamid Reza Hajibabaei (C) attends the 4th NAM Parliamentary Network Conference in Uzbekistan on April 7, 2025.

must not be diluted by the emergence of parallel regional organizations. “The Movement must remain anchored in its original vision, and its parliamentary network must take a central role in shaping international policies and giving a voice to the Global South.”

Iran, he added, has long embodied these values. “For over four decades, Iran has resisted U.S. unilateralism and illegal sanctions. This resistance is not just national—it's a universal fight for independence, justice, and dignity.”

Addressing the issue of Palestine, Hajibabaei said the continued oppression of Palestinians is “one of the most brutal modern

tragedies,” in violation of the UN Charter and the core principles of the Bandung Declaration.

“The Zionist regime's atrocities in Gaza pose a serious threat to regional and international peace,” he said. “A just solution must include a national referendum among all Palestinians and the creation of an independent state with Al-Quds as its capital. The two-state proposal merely evades the fundamental issue.”

Hajibabaei called on the NAM Parliamentary Network to actively support Palestine and confront illegal unilateral actions. “To fulfill its mandate, the Network must raise its voice against injustice and become a true parliamentary body representing NAM's ideals,” he said.

He added that only through bold, coordinated action can the Movement help shape a more just international order. “As we enter a global transition period, the Network must assert itself as a key actor in decision-making and resist neocolonial policies.”

Iran's parliamentary delegation to the NAM conference included Deputy Speaker Hamid Reza Hajibabaei, Fada-Hossein Maleki (Secretary-General of Iran's Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Delegation), and MPs Seyed Shamseddin Hosseini, Mojtaba Yousefi, Ebrahim Rezaei, Somayeh Rafiei, and Abbas Golrou.

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

## IRGC dismantles Daesh terror cell in western Iran

TEHRAN – The Hamzeh Seyyed al-Shohada Headquarters of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) announced the dismantling of a Daesh-affiliated terrorist cell in Kurdistan Province in the opening days of the Iranian New Year.

In a statement issued by the headquarters' Public Relations Office, the IRGC confirmed that the team of foreign nationals—trained operatives of the Daesh terrorist group—had planned suicide attacks during Nowruz festivities. Thanks to timely public reporting, close coordination among local security and intelligence agencies, and swift action by the Law

Enforcement Command (Faraja), the plot was uncovered and the terrorists were eliminated before they could carry out their mission.

Security forces seized several suicide belts, firearms, and grenades during the operation.

“The aim of transregional intelligence services and their proxy terrorist groups is to destabilize Iran and sow division among ethnic and religious communities,” the statement read. “We warn all those involved in planning such acts that any attempt to undermine the security of the Iranian people will be met with a firm and decisive response.”



A group of Foreign Ministry veterans, diplomats, and former ministers met with Ali Akbar Velayati, Senior Advisor on International Affairs to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on April 7, 2025.



## Energy Ministry prepares 36 electricity consumption management packages

TEHRAN- Iran's deputy energy minister announced the preparation of 36 consumption management packages in the electricity sector for the first time and said: "Consumption management is the front line of controlling and reducing the imbalances in the electricity industry; advancing this issue requires serious management and action."

In a training course on electricity consumption management to overcome the peak load period in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21), attended by Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi, Homayoun Hayeri, the deputy minister for the electricity affairs, added: "Until the past one or two years, production has always followed consumption; in a way that consumption increased annually, and we were trying to respond to this increase in consumption by constructing new power plant."

Last year, supply and production capacity did not respond to the growth in consumption; according to various indicators, including population growth, consumption growth was such that increasing supply capacity did not meet this need in any way, he added.

In late March, the energy minister announced the implementation of 14 mega projects by the Energy Ministry to address electricity imbalance in the country in the new Iranian calendar year.

Announcing implementation of these projects to successfully manage peak electricity consumption in the new year, Abbas Aliabadi said that one of the most important measures is making the electricity industry more appealing to the private sector and preventing excessive consumption by high-usage cus-



tomers.

Additionally, specific plans in the fields of thermal power and renewable energy are on the agenda, whose execution could minimize the electricity imbalance problem during the hot season, he added.

Iran was tackling with significant energy imbalances as cold weather drove up demand, exacerbating fuel shortages and straining the country's power plants. The government responded with systematic power outages across several provinces, highlighting deep-rooted challenges in the country's energy infrastructure.

Alireza Kolahi Samadi, head of the Industry Committee at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TC-CIMA), stated that \$35 billion is required to address power shortages and modernize the country's electricity grid.

He also called for the establishment of a unified energy command to tackle systemic inefficiencies, the TCCIMA portal reported.

Kolahi noted that Iran faces a shortage of at least 10,000 megawatts in electricity production capacity.

## Gasoline consumption stands at 2.823b liters in Nowruz holidays



TEHRAN - Gasoline consumption in Iran stood at 2,823,600,000 liters during Nowruz holidays (March 21-April 2).

Efforts to provide people with the gasoline they need for Nowruz trips on time have been at the forefront of the Oil Ministry and National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIODC) plans since the beginning of the last month of the previous year.

At the same time, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejd announced extensive efforts to provide Nowruz gasoline and said that people should not worry about gasoline supplies.

As announced by a senior oil official, Iran's total daily gasoline production—including refinery output and reserves—has reached approximately 120 million liters, as the country pushes to bridge the growing gap between supply and consumption.

Mohammad Sadegh Azimifar, deputy oil minister and head of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC), told state media that Iran's 10 main refineries are currently processing over 2.4 million barrels of crude oil and condensates per day.

To address the country's liquid fuel imbalance, he said, the government has implemented a dual-track strategy in its 14th administration, focusing primarily on maximizing output from existing refineries.

Azimifar noted that in the second half of the Iranian year 1403 (ended on March 20, 2025), enhanced refinery efficiency led to an average increase of 8.0 million liters per day in gasoline production and 7.0 million liters in diesel output.

Overall, the refining sector expanded by five percent compared to the previous year, adding around 100,000 barrels per day to total refined products.

Efforts to manage the production-consumption gap this year include quality and quantity upgrades at existing facilities. For example, a

project at Tehran refinery is set to boost gasoline output by 20 percent and upgrade its fuel standard to Euro-5. A diesel quality improvement project is nearing completion at Shiraz refinery, and Esfahan refinery will soon launch a white oil hydro-desulfurization unit.

Beyond optimizing current infrastructure, the country is working to bring new refining projects online. Azimifar said at least one, and possibly two, new refining projects could be added to the current network of ten refineries in the current year.

Among these is the 60,000-barrel-per-day Alish refinery, under construction by the private sector in Siraf, and the first unit of the 120,000-barrel-per-day Mehr Parsian Gulf refinery in Bandar Abbas.

The ultimate goal, according to Azimifar, is to reach daily production of 129 million liters of gasoline and 130 million liters of diesel.

He added that the increase in output over the past six months has contributed to the government's seventh development plan.

However, he stressed that production growth alone cannot resolve the energy imbalance.

"Iran's energy consumption intensity is about 2.5 times the global average," he said, adding that over 53 percent of the country's transport fleet is outdated and consumes more than twice the global average fuel per vehicle.

He called for fleet modernization, electrification, and stronger coordination among relevant agencies.

Azimifar also highlighted a drop in compressed natural gas (CNG) use as a contributing factor to higher gasoline demand. CNG consumption has declined from roughly 24 million cubic meters per day in late 2020 to 18-19 million cubic meters in 2024. This drop, he said, has played a role in pushing up gasoline consumption.

He stressed that alongside expanding high-quality fuel production, managing consumption is vital. Current gasoline production stands at around 105 million liters per day from refineries and 20 million from storage, while national demand in 1403 is averaging 124 million liters daily.

To narrow the deficit, the government is focusing on slowing consumption growth through vehicle scrappage, fleet modernization, and vehicle quality upgrades—all while seeking to minimize fuel imports.

# Iran-China annual non-oil trade stands at \$34.1b



TEHRAN - The value of non-oil trade between Iran and China stood at \$34.1 billion in the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, 2025, according to an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Abolfazl Akbarpour, the deputy head of IRICA for planning and international affairs, said that importing non-oil goods worth \$14.8 billion from Iran, China was the first destination of Iranian products in the past year.

He also announced that by exporting non-oil products valued at \$19.3 billion to Iran, China was the second source of import for Iran in that year.

Hossein Eyvazlou, a member of the executive board of Iran's National Development Fund (NDF), has announced plans for collaboration with China in the field of foreign investment in Iran.

Speaking at a press conference on January 4, Eyvazlou highlighted the importance of attracting foreign capital to boost Iran's economic projects, emphasizing the role of strategic partnerships with countries like China.

Details on the scope and nature of the cooperation were not disclosed, but it is expected to focus on key sectors that align with Iran's long-term development goals.

On December 20, 2024, a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) representative announced that the Chinese investors are prepared to fund the construction of combined-cycle power plants in Iran's energy-rich Khuzestan province to help address the country's energy imbalance and boost regional economic development.

Zhao Bin He, the Executive Director of SCO's Iran Office, made the remarks during a meeting with Khuzestan's governor and local religious leaders. "We are here to pay our respects to provincial authorities and outline China's plans for strengthening economic and trade ties, with a particular focus on Khuzestan," Zhao said.

He highlighted the historical and enduring relationship between Iran and China, describing it as built on mutual respect, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange.

"Khuzestan's strategic position in southwest Iran and its vast economic potential make it a key player in enhancing Iran-China relations," Zhao added. "With access to the Per-

sian Gulf and proximity to strong regional economies, Khuzestan offers exceptional opportunities for port infrastructure development and maritime transport."

Zhao reiterated China's readiness to actively participate in developing Khuzestan's infrastructure, expanding port capacity, and exploring joint projects in energy, industry, and agriculture.

In a meeting with Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Cong Peiwu on October 15, 2024 Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Abdolnasser Hemmati emphasized the importance of implementing the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) signed between Iran and China.

In the meeting, held at the place of the ministry, the Iranian minister followed up on the negotiations that took place during the BRICS Economic Ministers' Meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, stressing the importance of implementing the MOUs between the two countries.

He also considered the two countries' Joint Economic Committee as a suitable platform for negotiations on economic, trade, and investment cooperation, and welcomed the holding of the 19th Joint Economic Committee in Tehran.

Cong Peiwu, for his part, stated that Beijing aims to expedite the implementation of the MOUs and enhance practical cooperation to deepen relations between the two countries.

Both sides also highlighted the commitment of their statesmen to comprehensive development, expressing hope that consultations between senior officials of Iran and China will continue to expand bilateral relations.

In late September 2024, Hemmati had also met and held talks with Chinese Minister of Finance Lan Foa'an, during which the two sides empha-

sized the implementation of the two countries' long-term strategic partnership plan.

Hemmati met with Foa'an on the sidelines of the 9th ministerial meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) members in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

In addition to the issues related to the cooperation of the two countries in AIIB, the two sides discussed the most important issues related to bilateral relations, especially the follow-up of the results of previous agreements.

Holding the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting in the new future was another topic discussed by the two officials.

In the meeting, the ministers of the two countries emphasized that Iran and China have put a more serious and deeper implementation of the comprehensive long-term strategic plan of the two countries on their agenda and will continue this path in the official interactions of the two countries until concrete practical achievements are reached.

Also, in a meeting with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Head Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi on October 28, 2024, Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Cong Peiwu emphasized that his country is willing to strengthen trade ties with Iran in all fields.

The ambassador emphasized the importance of enhancing trade cooperation between Iran and China.

He highlighted the necessity of developing trade relations across all economic sectors and expressed China's willingness to strengthen trade exchanges with Iran in every field.

Dehghan Dehnavi, for his part, emphasized that trade cooperation between Iran and China is at its highest level, adding that the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran is

keen to enhance and grow constructive trade relations between the two countries.

Additionally, he highlighted that Iran's membership in regional agreements like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will facilitate trade cooperation.

Dehnavi also underscored the importance of developing bilateral ties through international exhibitions, technology transfer, and commercial advancements in the industrial and mining sectors.

It is worth mentioning that Mohammad Aghajani, the head of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), was also present at the meeting and shared his insights on developing joint cooperation between Iran and China in the mining and mineral industries.

He emphasized the importance of transferring modern technologies from China to Iran, noting that this updated knowledge would enhance productivity in mining and enable the processing of mineral products with higher added value.

Moreover, he pointed out that sharing knowledge and experiences between mining experts and engineers from both countries could help improve skills and standards in the industry.

Iran and China officially signed the document for 25-year comprehensive cooperation in March 2021.

The document was signed between Iran's former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Back in December 2022, Iran and China finalized 16 MOUs under the framework of the two countries' strategic 25-year agreement.

The MOUs were signed in an Iran-China comprehensive cooperation program summit which was held in Tehran on December 13 in the presence of Iran's former First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber and China's Vice Premier Hu Chunhua.

The summit was focused on four areas explored by four committees between the two countries with the aim of paving the way for the implementation of the 25-year agreement.

Iran and China also signed 20 memoranda of understanding in the presence of the presidents of the two countries in Beijing in mid-February, 2023.

## Over 200 investment opportunities worth \$137b to be introduced in oil industry

duced in this event."

Amir Moghiseh, the NIOC deputy director for the investment and business affairs, stated that one of the goals of holding the major national investment event in Iran's oil industry is to introduce the Oil Industry Guarantee Fund as a major measure to finance oil

plans and projects, adding: "In this regard, agreements will be signed with the presence of banks, which will play an important role in attracting investment to the oil industry."

Referring to the importance of this event, he added: "Senior government managers, executive

officials from the presidential office and ministries, as well as the private sector and investors interested in investing in the upstream sector, will participate in this event. We invite all interested parties to register for this event and take advantage of this opportunity."

## 25% of nomadic society enjoy solar panels

TEHRAN - As announced by the acting head of Iran's Nomadic Affairs Organization, 25 percent of the nomadic society in the country is now supplied with the solar panels.

Jahanbakhsh Mirzavand said that the figure should be increased.

Iran has issued permits for 29,000 megawatts (MW) of solar power capacity, reflecting growing private sector interest in renewable energy. However, the Planning and Budget Organization and economic authorities must further facilitate investment conditions for private sector participation.

President Masoud Pezeshkian has emphasized the need to shift towards renewable energy to address Iran's power imbalance. In a high-level meeting on power shortages, he stressed the urgency of accelerating solar and wind power plant construction by private investors.

"With the current electricity supply-demand gap, all relevant agencies must work together to ease the development of clean energy power

plants by private investors," Pezeshkian said.

He noted that investors have expressed readiness to develop 30,000 MW of solar and wind power capacity, requiring only permits and limited financial support from the government. "This meeting is aimed at removing obstacles for these investors so that projects can begin without delay," he added.

Speaking at the "Clean Air Day" conference, Pezeshkian highlighted Iran's high energy consumption, stating that the country uses three to four times more electricity and gas than European nations. He reiterated the government's commitment to generating 30,000-50,000 MW of solar power in the coming years.

To expedite renewable energy projects, a government meeting in February gathered officials to assess progress on Iran's goal of adding at least 30,000 MW of renewable power capacity.

"The key priority is achieving a power generation capacity that enables stable management of peak

summer demand," Pezeshkian said, proposing the formation of a consortium led by the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SAT-BA) under the Energy Ministry. The consortium would include financial institutions and industry stakeholders to collectively procure solar panels at the lowest cost and highest quality.

"This approach will ensure the fastest implementation of projects with minimal expenses," Pezeshkian added.

Following the president's directive, government agencies have moved to simplify investment processes, including reducing the time required to obtain permits and secure land for projects.

Mohsen Tarzatab, deputy energy minister and head of SATBA, reaffirmed the government's priority of allocating renewable energy development sites to private investors. "The government will not interfere in projects where the private sector is ready to invest," he stated, urging provincial authorities and power distribution companies to cooperate in facilitating projects.



# Diplomatic armor: How Netanyahu uses Washington as a shield

From page 1 ▶ While the ICC warrant dominates international headlines, Netanyahu faces equally pressing domestic challenges, most notably his corruption trial in Israel. As of March 2025, Netanyahu has been embroiled in legal proceedings in Tel Aviv, where he stands accused of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in three separate cases.

During his April 6 visit to Washington, Netanyahu's domestic legal woes were momentarily overshadowed by international diplomacy, but they remain a critical factor in his political survival. The trial has fueled protests in Israel, with thousands demanding his resignation and accusing him of prioritizing personal gain over national interest. Critics argue that his foreign trips, including to Hungary and now the U.S., are attempts to divert attention from these domestic pressures and bolster his image as a global leader unafraid of international criticism.

Therefore, Netanyahu's visit to Washington can be seen as a strategic endeavor aimed at addressing several pressing issues that are pivotal to Israel's national interests.

## Talks on Iran and Gaza at the center stage

Beyond economic concerns, Netanyahu's visit encompasses critical regional security issues. Discussions with President Trump addressed tensions with Iran, the ongoing conflict in Gaza. The urgency of these talks is underscored by the recent deployment of advanced U.S. missile defense systems to Israel, including THAAD and Patriot batteries, amid heightened regional tensions.

Trump told reporters on Sunday: "We're going to talk about trade, and we're going to talk about the obvious subject. You know what the obvious subject is, right?" According to media sources, this was interpreted in Israel as likely referring either to the prisoners held in Gaza or to Iran's nuclear program.

## Strategies to solve Gaza war, prisoners issue

In recent months, tensions in Gaza have escalated significantly. On April 6, 2025, in response to "massacres" by Israel in Gaza, Hamas launched several rockets into southern Israeli cities. In retaliation, the Israeli military conducted airstrikes on targets in Gaza, resulting in the deaths of at least 39 people.



Netanyahu meets U.S. Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff in Washington on Monday, April 7.

According to reports, Israel has expanded its control over more than 50% of the Gaza Strip by establishing buffer zones. This move has led to widespread destruction of Palestinian homes, agricultural land, and infrastructure. Some analysts have described these actions as potential ethnic cleansing and war crimes.

During the meeting, Netanyahu and Trump would likely discuss a proposed plan for the future of Gaza. The plan involves the relocation of more than 2 million Palestinians from Gaza and the development of the area into a tourist destination. The proposal has faced widespread criticism, with many condemning it as a violation of international law and an act of ethnic cleansing.

Among the actions of opposition against Netanyahu's violent policy in Gaza, the protest demanding a ceasefire in Gaza and a prisoner exchange deal on his arrival in Washington, DC can be mentioned.

The meeting occurred amid growing international concern over the escalation of violence in Gaza and its humanitarian impact. Human rights activists and international organizations have called for an immediate halt to the violence and the initiation of peace negotiations.

## Diverging paths of Trump and Netanyahu on Iran

The Iran question is the linchpin of Netanyahu's U.S. visit and reveals both the alignment and friction between the two leaders. Both Trump and Netanyahu share the goal of neutralizing what they perceive as Iran's threat to regional stability and their respective national interests. However, their strategies, timelines, and underlying motivations diverge significantly, raising questions about the feasibility and consequences of their collaboration.

sibility and consequences of their collaboration.

Netanyahu's arrival in the U.S. on April 6 came at a pivotal moment for both Israel and the Middle East. Since Trump's return to office, his administration has signaled a return to the "maximum pressure" policy against Iran, a strategy first employed during his first term, which involved stringent sanctions and a withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). For Netanyahu, who has long claimed Iran is an existential threat, Trump's presidency represents an opportunity to align U.S. policy more closely with Israel's hawkish stance. The Israeli leader's visit, therefore, was not merely a diplomatic courtesy but a strategic play to solidify U.S. support for potential military action against Iran.

The Iran question is the linchpin of Netanyahu's U.S. visit and reveals both the alignment and friction between the two leaders. Both Trump and Netanyahu share the goal of neutralizing what they allege as Iran's threat to regional stability and their respective national interests. However, their strategies, timelines, and underlying motivations diverge significantly, raising questions about the feasibility and consequences of their collaboration.

He has consistently claimed that Iran seeks to destroy Israel, citing Tehran's backing for the Axis of Resistance. Trump, meanwhile, sees Iran as a destabilizing force in West Asia that undermines U.S. interests, particularly its oil exports and influence in the region. During his first term, Trump withdrew from the JCPOA, imposed severe sanctions, and authorized the assassination of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, actions that Netanyahu applauded as decisive blows.

Despite their alignment on goals, Trump and Netanyahu differ on tactics, timing, and the role of the U.S. in any confrontation with Iran. Netanyahu, facing domestic pressure from his far-right coalition partners and a public weary of prolonged conflict, appears eager to escalate military action against Iran sooner rather than later.

Trump, however, has signaled a preference for negotiation over immediate military engagement, at least initially. In April 2025, he expressed openness to direct talks with Iran, arguing that intermediaries slow down progress. This stance contrasts with Netanyahu's skepticism about diplomacy, as the Israeli prime minister believes any deal with Iran would be a repeat of the JCPOA, which he and Trump both derided as insufficient. Furthermore, Trump's domestic challenges, tariff disputes, economic volatility, and political polarization may make him cautious about launching another West Asia conflict, especially given his campaign promises to avoid foreign wars.

## Bigger picture: Question of narrative

Netanyahu's trip to Washington is more than a diplomatic engagement; it is a high-stakes gambit by a leader facing unprecedented challenges. By aligning with Trump and defying the ICC, he seeks to project strength and impunity, but this strategy comes at a cost. Domestically, his corruption trial and public discontent could erode his power base. Internationally, his refusal to engage with the ICC risks further isolating Israel and alienating allies who value multilateralism.

The visit also highlights the fragility of global justice mechanisms in the face of geopolitical power. While the ICC's warrants are a symbolic victory for accountability, their lack of enforcement power reveals the limits of international law when confronted with determined resistance from powerful states and their allies. For Netanyahu, the trip may offer temporary relief, but the long-term consequences remain uncertain.

As the world watches, the question remains: Can a leader accused of war crimes and corruption continue to evade justice, or will the weight of international and domestic pressure eventually force accountability?

## Is Trump-Netanyahu summit geared toward escalation or de-escalation?

From page 1 ▶ As for Netanyahu, he is deliberately pursuing a strategy of evading accountability both within and outside the entity to ensure his continued rule, especially after October 7, 2023, which has demonstrated his abject failure to protect his colonial entity without direct American support.

Netanyahu, who views himself as a loyal son of the Zionist movement, is currently seeking to exploit every opportunity to consolidate the foundations of his fascist entity, even if that requires the extermination of all Palestinians.

Netanyahu's visit to Washington came amid escalating protests in the occupied Palestinian territories, demanding a deal with the Palestinian resistance that would lead to the release of

the remaining Israeli prisoners held in Gaza.

While Trump and Netanyahu are treating the peoples of West Asia as their common enemies, there is a contradiction in the mechanisms and limits of their authoritarian expansionist project, which may make it difficult for Netanyahu to persuade Trump to proceed with his plan to expand the circle of fire toward Iran.

While it's true that Washington doesn't prioritize anything other than own imperialist interests, the ongoing U.S.-led Israeli aggression has become an embarrassment to Washington's allies in West Asia, especially the Persian Arab sheikhdoms.

Indeed, American officials who recently visited several countries in the region—particularly

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey—have sensed disturbing impressions regarding the American-Israeli project, particularly with regard to these takeaways: the fate of Gaza and the West Bank, the future of Lebanon and Syria, the extent of confrontation with Yemen's Ansarullah, and, most importantly, the policy for dealing with Iran.

Bloomberg already quoted an Israeli official as saying that Netanyahu was to discuss with Trump the war in Gaza, the situation in Syria and Turkey's role, in addition to Iran's nuclear program.

To prevent war from taking us by surprise, we, as resistance peoples, must be prepared in every way!

## "What victory are they talking about?"

From page 1 ▶ The channel noted that rocket shrapnel caused damage to vehicles in Ashkelon, prompting the city's mayor, Tomer Glam, to demand a harsh military response against Hamas.

Meanwhile, Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir vowed to continue the U.S.-

backed genocidal war on Gaza, stating that "rocket fire must be met with a severe response".

The fascist minister also emphasized that "Israel will not tolerate attacks on its territory."

Earlier, the al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, claimed responsibility for the rocket barrage on occupied Ash-

dod, stating it was "a response to Zionist massacres against civilians."

Israeli media confirmed several casualties in Ashkelon and damage to vehicles from the rocket fire.

The Israeli occupation army acknowledged that ten rockets were fired from Gaza, claiming to

have intercepted five.

The 18-month genocidal war on Gaza has killed upwards of 50,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children. The genocide has left the regime isolated on the international stage with its leaders wanted in the Hague.

## Israeli soldiers describe clearance of 'kill zone' along Gaza boundary: rights group

Israeli troops have flattened farmland and cleared entire residential districts in Gaza to open a "kill zone" around the enclave, according to a report by the Israeli rights group Breaking the Silence.

It quoted soldiers who served in Gaza during the creation of the buffer zone, which was extended to a depth of 800 to 1,500 metres (875 to 1,640 yards) inside the enclave by December and has since been expanded further by Israeli troops.

"The borderline is a kill zone, a lower area, a lowland," the report quotes a captain in the Ar-

mored Corps as saying.

Soldiers said troops using bulldozers and excavators along with thousands of mines and explosives destroyed around 3,500 buildings as well as agricultural and industrial areas that could have been vital in post-war reconstruction.

"Essentially, everything gets mowed down, everything," the report quoted one reserve soldier serving in the Armored Corps as saying. "Every building and every structure."

Another soldier said the area looked "like Hiroshima".

## Israel prevents entry of polio vaccines into Gaza

Gaza's Health Ministry said Israel is preventing the entry of polio vaccines into Gaza, threatening the gains made in seven months of efforts to combat the spread of an epidemic.

On World Health Day, the ministry said sanitary conditions across Gaza were deteriorating amid

the disruption of water pumps and the ban on food and medical aid.

It added that Palestinians, especially children, were exposed to malnutrition as well the spread of diarrhea, skin diseases and epidemics.

## Macron: We stand against forcible transfer from Gaza

France "condemns the continued Israeli attacks on Gaza and violations of the ceasefire" and calls for resumption of ceasefire negotiations without delay, Macron said on Monday.

"We stand against the forcible transfer of any people out of their land, including Gaza, as well as the annexation of the Gaza Strip or the West Bank," the French president said at a joint news conference

with his Egyptian counterpart in Cairo.

"[Such moves are] an utter violation of international law and constitute a direct threat to the entire security of the region – including Israel."

Macron said France supports a plan proposed by Arab countries on March 4 for the reconstruction of Gaza.

## Israel 'deliberately targeting' journalists in Gaza, studies show

Israel has been targeting journalists in the occupied Palestinian territory with more intensity since October 7, 2023, journalist and author Antony Lowenstein has told Al Jazeera, pointing to studies that track the number of media workers killed in conflicts.

"The number of journalists killed in Gaza is greater than that of all conflicts in the last 100 years combined," Lowenstein said, citing a study by Brown University's Cost of War project.

He added that the figures pointed to a "deliberate targeting of journalists".

## Global pro-Palestine protests erupt amid ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza



From page 1 ▶ Also, tens of thousands rallied in Lebanon to denounce Israel's ongoing military operations in Gaza and express solidarity with Palestinians, with protests erupting in Beirut and other cities calling for an immediate ceasefire.

In France, thousands marched in Paris and other cities waving Palestinian flags to protest Israel's devastating war in Gaza as it approached its two-year mark.

People in Bangladesh staged demonstrations, holding banners reading "Free Palestine" and "Stop Genocide" to protest Israel's actions in Gaza.

Tunisia witnessed one of its largest pro-Palestine demonstrations with thousands marching in solidarity with Gaza.

Thousands of Moroccans took to the streets in cities to show solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, waving Palestinian flags and demanding an end to Israel's bombardment.

In Pakistan, protesters gathered in Faisalabad, chanting "Free Palestine" to condemn Israel's military campaign in Gaza.

Hundreds rallied in Mauritania, waving Palestinian flags and chanting in support of the Palestinian resistance, denouncing Israel's aggression in Gaza during a solidarity protest.

Egypt saw a nationwide "boycott Israel" movement gain momentum, with protests in solidarity with Gaza, as citizens revived local brands and called for an end to Israel's military actions.

In Turkey, large crowds gathered in cities like Istanbul, chanting against Israel and saluting Hamas, stating the West and Israel of committing "crimes of war" in Gaza.

Canadians joined pro-Palestine rallies in cities like Montreal with thousands marching to demand a ceasefire and condemn Israel's actions in Gaza, holding signs and chanting "Free Palestine."

Thousands of pro-Palestine demonstrators took to the streets of cities in Italy during a national rally calling for an end to Israel's ongoing military campaign in Gaza and expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people.



## Bangladeshi envoy calls for promotion of Ali-Sadr Cave

TEHRAN - Bangladesh's ambassador to Iran Manjurul Karim Khan Chowdhury has stressed the need for further promotion of Ali-Sadr Cave, one of the world's largest water caves, among foreign tourists.

Chowdhury emphasized the importance of better introducing Ali-Sadr Cave, an extraordinary tourist attraction located in Hamadan province, to a broader audience, Mehr news agency reported.

During his visit to the cave on Sunday, the ambassador lauded the tourist attraction, stating, "I have visited various caves around the world, but I can confidently say that Ali-Sadr is the most remarkable and unique water cave in the world." He highlighted that increased efforts in promoting this natural wonder could attract Bangladeshi tourists to Iran.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the envoy praised Hamadan's historical significance, noting its thousands of years of heritage.

Ali-Sadr Cave, known for its extensive net-



A view of Ali-Sadr Cave in west-central Iran

work of water-filled passages, draws thousands of visitors each year and is regarded as one of the world's largest water caves.

The cave embraces a huge matrix of sunless channels, ponds, grottoes, and water passages which are stretched along with imposing rock formations and stalactite-covered tops in a span of several kilometers.

## Visits to attractions in Kerman province soar 85%



cars that entered the Lut Desert, over 300,000 tourists visited desert attractions such as Kalut Shahdad.

He added that 550 handicrafts pavilions including 400 temporary and 150 permanent ones were active across the province during Nowruz holidays.

He also said that 25 ecotourism museums were launched across the province to introduce local customs, traditions, and culture to Nowruz tourists.

TEHRAN - Visits from Kerman tourism attractions grew 85 percent during the recent Nowruz holidays, said Reza Bordbar, the deputy director of investment at Kerman province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department.

He told IRNA on Sunday that nearly 2,387,000 visits from Kerman's historical, cultural, and natural attractions were registered from March 13 to April 5. He mentioned that the Gohar Park Tourism Complex in Sirjan, which can also be reached from the provinces of Fars and Hormozgan, was considered the most favored site of Kerman province with 290,000 visits during Nowruz vacations.

He added that Shahzadeh Garden in Mahan, the Anthropology Museum of Ganjali Khan Bathhouse, and Bam Citadel registered over 93,000, 67,000, and 38,000 visits respectively during Nowruz holidays.

### 300,000 people tour Lut Desert

Bordbar said that based on the number of

The Kerman region is something of a cultural melting pot, blending various regional cultures over time. It is also home to rich tourist spots and historical sites, including bazaars, mosques, caravanserais and ruins of ancient urban areas.

The Bazaar-e Sartasari, one of Iran's oldest and longest covered bazaars, is a bustling hub of commerce and culture where travelers can experience local crafts, textiles, and spices.

The ancient Jabalieh Dome, a mysterious octagonal structure made of stone and gypsum, showcases the city's architectural ingenuity. Additionally, the Ganjali Khan Bathhouse, an exquisite example of Persian bathhouse architecture, reflects the artistic heritage and sophisticated urban planning of the Safavid era.

Kerman province is bounded by the provinces of Fars in the west, Yazd in the north, South Khorasan in the northeast, Sistan-Baluchestan in the east, and Hormozgan in the south. It includes the southern part of the central Iranian desert, the Dasht-e Lut.

## Guati music performed in Makran

TEHRAN -- Traditional custom of Guati music as an intangible heritage was performed as an effect of the rich culture of Baluch people in Makran, Chabahar, Sistan-Baluchestan province.

According to Mehr news agency, Adnan Hosseini, the tourism director for the Chabahar Free Zone Organization said that the ceremony was held with the participation of tourists, local people, and cultural officials at an old building that was once a local administration office in Chabahar.

Local artists performed Guati tradition -- a combination of music, movement and religious dhikrs -- during the ceremony.

The old music has been used for mental treatments and psychological pain relief since old times.

Home to natural and historical attractions, Chabahar could be named one of the most underrated destinations in Iran. However, in re-



Local musicians perform Guati music in Makran, Chabahar, Sistan-Baluchestan province.

cent years various measures have been taken to promote Iran's sole oceanic port as a safe and hospitable choice for both domestic and foreign visitors.

## Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Garamba National Park

Covering vast grass savannas and woodlands interspersed with gallery forests and marshland depressions, Garamba National Park is located in the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the transition zone between the dense tropical forests of the Congo Basin and the Guinea-Sudano savannas.

It contains the last worldwide population of the northern white rhinoceros, endemic sub-species of Congolese giraffe and a mixed population of elephants, combining forest elephants, bush elephants and individuals demonstrating morphological characteristics common to the two elephant sub-species.

It is also characterized by an excep-

tionally high level of biomass of great herbivores as a result of the vegetation productivity of the environment. Extending over 490,000 ha and surrounded by 752,700 ha of three hunting grounds that contribute to an effective protection of the property against threats from the adjacent area, this property is an outstanding sanctuary with its unusual mix

of large spectacular mammals.

Garamba National Park is delineated to the east, south and west by major rivers that constitute natural and precise boundaries, recognized by all. To the north, it shares its boundaries with the Lantoto National Park in South Sudan, offering interesting possibilities of protection on the transfrontier and regional level. In a virgin

landscape, no human presence or installations were indicated in the Park at the time of the nomination and the peripheral population was sparse. Garamba National Park is surrounded by three large contiguous hunting grounds, constituting an ecosystem of a sufficiently extensive area (1,242,700 ha) to support vast populations of large mammals with their local season-

al migration routes. The hunting grounds contribute towards the effective protection of the property against the threats from the surrounding zone. Their value is primordial, particularly for the seasonal movement of elephants and for the maintenance of viable populations of bush species.

(Source: UNESCO)

From Page 1 ▶ Among Iran's earliest civilizations were Elam and Jiroft, with the Elamite civilization being the most prominent and widely recognized for laying the foundations of early Iranian governance during the Proto-Elamite era, also known as Susa III.

This period, around 3200 BC, marks the emergence of Iran's self-sovereignty, making it not only one of the world's oldest inhabited regions but also the earliest known state to form a recognizable government.

The concept of sovereignty in Iran has deep historical roots that persisted through a succession of dynasties and empires, including the Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sassanids, laying the groundwork for a continuous national identity unmatched in duration.

### How the ranking was determined

According to the World Population Review, establishing the precise age of a nation is a complex process. "State formation is often gradual and layered with myths, legends, and archaeological evidence," the report notes.

"However, it is possible to

## Iran is world's oldest country based on organized government



A view of the UNESCO-listed Tchogha Zanbil, a prehistorical ruined ziggurat in Khuzestan province, southwest Iran. Its construction started in c. 1250 BC upon the order of the Elamite king Untash-Napirisha (1275-1240 BC) as the religious center of Elam dedicated to the Elamite divinities Inshushinak and Napirisha.

identify a reasonable estimate for the beginning of organized governance through historical and archaeological analysis."

Some nations use the date of constitutional adoption as a benchmark for state age, but this method is less effective when

analyzing ancient civilizations whose governance predates written constitutions by millennia.

### A living legacy

Iran's status as the world's oldest country by sovereignty is not only a historical marker but

also a testament to its enduring cultural and political influence.

Despite the many invasions and dynastic shifts over the centuries, the country has maintained a continuous thread of national identity and governance stretching over five millennia.

## Restoration work resumes on Apadana Palace and tomb of Artaxerxes III in Persepolis



A view of the rock-carved tomb of Artaxerxes III located inside the UNESCO-registered Persepolis, southern Iran.

TEHRAN - Restoration efforts have officially resumed at several key heritage sites within Persepolis, a famed UNESCO World Heritage site in southern Iran, following a temporary pause during the Nowruz holidays.

Among the major projects are the Apadana Palace, the rock-carved tomb of Artaxerxes III, and the southern inscription of the Terrace (Takht-gah), each representing invaluable legacies of the ancient Achaemenid Empire (c. 550 - 330 BC).

According to Shahram Rahbar, head of the Conservation and Restoration Department at Persepolis, the restoration workshops, which had been semi-active due to the high volume of Nowruz visitors from March 15 to April 4, are now fully operational.

Rahbar described the southern inscription of the Terrace, attributed to Darius the Great, as one of the most significant and technically challenging restoration projects underway.

Rahbar noted that this inscription is not only one of the earliest examples of Achaemenid royal texts but also of immense historical value due to its content.

Its complexity has led to multiple technical reviews by conservation, archaeology, and structural engineering experts. A joint team was formed to develop a consensus-driven plan for the site's restoration.

Work has also resumed on Column Base B2 in the northern portico of the Apadana Palace, one of the earliest and most important

structures of the Persepolis complex. Originally built by Darius I the Great (r. 522-486 BC), the Apadana served as the main audience hall where the king received tributes from across the vast Achaemenid Empire.

The palace is notable for its intricate reliefs, especially those on the eastern and northern staircases, which depict representatives of various nations bringing gifts to the king — powerful imagery reinforcing the unity and diversity of the empire.

The rock-carved tomb of Artax-

Also known as Takht-e Jamshid, Persepolis ranks among the archaeological sites that have no equivalent, considering its unique architecture, urban planning, construction technology, and art.

erxes III (r. 359/58-338 BC), which had previously been reported to suffer from water damage, is an essential component of Persepolis's architectural ensemble.

It reflects the enduring grandeur

and funerary traditions of ancient Persian kingship.

The renewed focus on this monument follows concerns raised by cultural heritage advocates about its preservation.

"Despite disagreements among technical teams in the past, the current collaborative approach has yielded promising results," Rahbar stated, expressing optimism about the ongoing work.

Persepolis, once the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, remains a symbol of Iran's ancient grandeur. The continuation of these restoration projects after Nowruz reflects Iran's commitment to preserving its world-renowned heritage for future generations.

Also known as Takht-e Jamshid, the site ranks among the archaeological sites that have no equivalent, considering its unique architecture, urban planning, construction technology, and art.

Majestic approaches, monumental stairways, throne and reception rooms, and dependencies have made that 13-ha ensemble one of the world's greatest archaeological sites.

Narratives say that Persepolis was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as revenge against the Persians, because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

## A taste of tradition: Masghati festival returns to Lar

TEHRAN - The ancient city of Lar in southern Iran is set to host its fourth Masghati festival as part of its culinary heritage.

According to organizers, this year's festival aims to introduce Masghati as a national souvenir with global potential, while also spotlighting Larestan's rich culinary heritage, tourism opportunities, and artisanal craftsmanship.

The three-day festival kicks off today, April 8, at its traditional venue, Park-e Shahr (Boustan-e Mellat) in Lar, featuring a rich blend of gastronomy, culture, music, and tourism promotion.

As in previous years, the event includes three main sections such as an exhibition zone that features local producers of Masghati, traditional foods, and handicrafts from the Laristan region.

It also includes live demonstrations in the evenings when festivalgoers can watch the traditional preparation of Masghati, offering a rare

behind-the-scenes look at this beloved sweet's creation.

Stage performances are another highlight of the event. Music groups from Lar, Khonj, and the historic port city of Bandar Lengeh will take the stage alongside artists from neighboring cities including Yazd, Bushehr, Bandar Abbas, and Shiraz.

The event will also feature tours to historical and cultural landmarks in Larestan, providing visitors a broader experience of the region's deep-rooted heritage.

Organizers hope that by showcasing Masghati of Lar and the culinary and cultural treasures of the region, the festival will continue to grow in significance and earn its place as a key annual event in southern Iran's cultural calendar.

### A jewel of Persian sweets

Masghati of Lar, with its soft, glossy texture and subtle blend of rosewater, saffron, sugar,



File photo depicts people visiting a Masghati festival in Lar, 2024.

and starch, often topped with pistachio or almond slivers, is more than a dessert. It is a symbol of hospitality and celebration, deeply woven into the fabric of life in Lar and the surrounding villages. Served at family gatherings and festive occasions, Masghati has become a recognizable cultural ambassador of the region.



# Iranians are into humanitarian activities: ICRC representative

TEHRAN – Vincent Cassard, the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Iran, has said people in Iran are highly interested in supporting and helping each other as exemplified by their participation in humanitarian and healthcare programs.

“Despite the high level of conflicts in Iran’s neighboring countries, as well as the impacts of the Iran-Iraq war on Iranian society, including families who lost loved ones in the war, I have found the society to be very strong and resilient,” IRNA quoted Cassard as saying.

Referring to the ICRC’s cooperation with the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), the official said committed volunteers have dedicated themselves to assisting others; the society has proved to be successful not only in providing relief and rescue services but also in addressing crises such as earthquakes.

Iran is among the countries that have always supported international humanitarian laws; the ICRC seeks to boost cooperation with the country, the official further noted.

Currently, the ICRC and IRCS are conducting several joint activities such as promoting national humanitarian law, assisting vulnerable refugees as well as the host country, and providing rehabilitation services.

The two societies also collaborate in family reunification, as one of their key priorities.

## Joint measures

During a meeting held on March 13, Cassard stressed the need to prevent disabilities and develop psychosocial support services in less privileged areas.

These valuable actions can pave the way for further cooperation.

For her part, the director of the IRCS for international affairs, Ra-



Vincent Cassard, the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Iran

zieh Alishvandi, highlighted the successful partnership between the two organizations.

Lauding the ICRC’s endeavors in the country, the official stressed the importance of holding training courses on international humanitarian law (IHL) and the need to get acquainted with the Red Cross movement.

Iran is among the countries that have always supported international humanitarian laws.

The IRCS has taken various measures to serve the people utilizing the capacity of 270,000 personnel, relief workers, and volunteers, she noted.

Cassard commended the IRCS for taking measures during the Nowruz holidays and announced the ICRC’s readiness to support IRCS in organizing the World Red Crescent Day and expanding medical, rehabilitation, and humanitarian services in under-

privileged areas.

On February 17, the IRCS and the ICRC agreed on setting up a joint secretariat on rehabilitation services in Tehran.

During a meeting in Tehran to prepare for the first international conference on physical disability and rehabilitation, Pirhossein Kolivand, the head of the IRCS, said rehabilitation is an essential part of universal health coverage.

“Due to war and other accidents, rehabilitation services are greatly needed in the country. That’s why the Society started providing rehabilitation services and manufacturing prostheses and orthotics.

Currently, 200 rehabilitation centers are operating in Iran, and the conference will focus on the activities of these centers,” he added.

François Friedel, the head of the ICRC physical rehabilitation, for his part, said, “Social and psychological aspects of rehabilitation are highly important. Undoubtedly, the establishment of the secretariat in Tehran can help address the problems and enhance cooperation among societies.

The issue of rehabilitation is important for the International Red Cross Committee, and we are ready to cooperate with the

Iranian Red Crescent Society in this field.”

On February 5, Cassard, announced the ICRC readiness to provide educational support for refugee children.

Referring to Iran’s generous hosting of foreign nationals, Cassard lauded the country’s remarkable services and efforts including family reunification and training on the prevention of risks from weapons’ contamination, IRNA reported.

The official made the remarks during a meeting with Nader Yar-Ahmadi, the head of the National Organization for Migration.

Yar-Ahmadi, for his turn, referred to the suspension of the U.S. financial aid, the surge in the number of Afghan refugees, and the resulting financial burden, expressing optimism to benefit from ICRC’s capacities to address related problems.

The official also highlighted the large number of refugee pupils in the country and the significance of the education sector in developing and empowering nations, particularly Afghanistan, as well as reducing their problems.

He went on to propose conducting joint educational activities, which was well-received by the representative of the ICRC.



TEHRAN – Over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2024–March 2025), benefactors contributed to releasing 11,380 prisoners of unintentional crimes in the country.

Also, 2,441 prisoners were pardoned during

## Benefactors help free some 11,400 prisoners of involuntary crimes

the same period, ISNA reported.

The number of released prisoners has increased by 22 percent compared to the Iranian year 1402 (March 2023–March 2024).

Of the total released prisoners, 682 were female and 10,698 were male who were incarcerated due to inability to pay financial debts.

The total debt of the released prisoners was over 270 trillion rials (about 270 million dollars).

Tehran, Fars, and Khorasan Razavi provinces ranked first to third with releasing 1,088,

878, and 829 prisoners of involuntary crimes, respectively.

Currently, there are 14,591 inmates of unintentional crimes nationwide. Tehran (with 2,536), Fars (with 1,331), and Isfahan (with 1,183) provinces have the highest number of prisoners of involuntary crimes.

Freeing prisoners of involuntary crimes is done in three ways. The first way is granting prisoners leave and the second way is providing a number of them with loans to be paid inside the prison.

The third way of assistance is the release of unintentional convicts by paying their debt.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Kish to host World Health Summit Regional Meeting 2019

The 7th World Health Summit Regional Meeting will be held on April 29-30 in the Persian Gulf island of Kish, IRNA reported on Monday.

Ali Jafarian, international president of World Health Summit 2019, said that it is the first regional meeting in West Asia and North Africa to host 700 participants, including 150 foreign guests.

Pointing out that playing host to the event is an important opportunity for the country, he added that over 100 health experts from different countries have expressed readiness to attend the meeting.

## نشست منطقه‌ای مجمع جهانی سلامت در کیش

### برگزار می‌شود

به گزارش روز دوشنبه ایرنا هفتمین نشست منطقه‌ای مجمع جهانی سلامت در روزهای ۹ و ۱۰ اردیبهشت ۹۸ در جزیره کیش برگزار می‌شود. علی جعفریان نماینده دانشگاه علوم پزشکی تهران در مجمع جهانی سلامت گفت: این نخستین نشست منطقه‌ای در غرب آسیا و شمال آفریقا است که قرار است ۷۰۰ شرکت کننده از جمله ۱۵۰ مهمان خارجی در آن حضور یابند.

جعفریان، میزبانی از این نشست منطقه‌ای را برای جمهوری اسلامی ایران فرصتی مهم دانست و گفت: حدود ۱۰۰ نفر از افراد سرشناس حوزه سلامت کشورهای مختلف جهان به عنوان سخنران برای شرکت در این نشست اعلام آمادگی کرده‌اند.

## Over 6 million Afghan nationals residing in Iran

TEHRAN – According to the head of the National Organization for Migration, Nader Yar-Ahmadi, a total of 6.1 million authorized and unauthorized Afghan nationals are living in the country.

Iran is host to one of the largest and most protracted refugee populations in the world, the majority of whom are Afghan refugees.

Some 2.1 million of the immigrants are documented, the information of the two million others have been registered, and the rest have illegally entered the country, ISNA quoted Yar-Ahmadi as saying.

Over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2024 – March 2025), more than one million undocumented nationals were deported to their own country, of whom forty percent returned voluntarily, the official noted.

Women and children make up the majority of unauthorized foreign nationals, who may be even working in the country and pose no threat. However, due to high costs (of food, transportation, fuel, and so on), imposed by refugees on the country, and inadequate international aid, Iran wants them to return to their own home country, he added.

In a recent meeting between Afghanistan’s Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation and the Director General for South Asia at Iran’s Foreign Ministry, the Taliban called for joint meetings with Tehran to address the situation of Afghan migrants.

According to reports on Saturday, Afghanistan’s Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Mawlawi Abdul Kabir met with Mohammad Reza Bahrami and his accompanying delegation in Kabul.

During the meeting, Abdul Kabir highlighted the deep historical ties between the two nations and expressed appreciation for Iran’s decades-long hospitality toward Afghan migrants. He also called for continued Islamic compassion in Iran’s treatment of these migrants.

The Taliban official noted that Kabul is implementing plans for the voluntary return of Afghan refugees and revealed that 46 residential



townships are currently under construction to accommodate returnees.

In response, Bahrami acknowledged the presence of several million Afghan nationals in Iran, many of whom lack legal documentation. He emphasized the need for greater cooperation between the two countries to address ongoing challenges and extended an official invitation to the acting minister to visit Tehran.

The Iranian diplomat also welcomed Afghanistan’s housing initiative, describing it as a positive step toward facilitating the voluntary return of migrants to their homeland.

## Afghan refugees will return gradually, with dignity

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has said Afghan refugees will return to their country in a process that will be gradual and with dignity.

He said that officials of the two countries are working on a plan to return Afghans residing in Iran, IRNA reported.

“We are negotiating with the Afghan government so that this process can be done in a principled and organized way.

We do not want the return of [Afghan] nationals to become a social crisis for the two countries. The important principle for us is to do the work based on a logical and reasonable procedure,” he explained.

In case the international community refrains from taking responsibility and fairly sharing the burden of hosting refugees, the Islamic Republic of Iran will probably revise its immigration policies, Yar-Ahmadi has said.

## World Health Day: healthy beginnings, hopeful futures



By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – Every year, World Health Day is celebrated on April 7 worldwide to mark the establishment of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948. The day aims to raise awareness of global health issues and mobilize forces to address them and improve public health.

World Health Day 2025 themed ‘Healthy beginnings, hopeful futures’ seeks to encourage governments and health communities to minimize preventable deaths of mothers and newborns by adopting initiatives that focus on mothers’ and babies’ survival, and prioritize women’s longer-term health and well-being.

WHO and partners will also share useful information to support healthy pregnancies and births, and better postnatal health.

Helping every woman and baby survive and thrive is a critical task. Tragically, based on currently published estimates, close to 300,000 women lose their lives due to pregnancy or childbirth each year, while over 2 million babies die in their first month of life, and around 2 billion more are stillborn. That’s roughly 1 preventable death every 7 seconds.

Based on current trends, a staggering 4 out of 5 countries are off track to meet targets for improving maternal survival by 2030. 1 in 3 will fail to meet targets for reducing newborn deaths.

Women and families everywhere need high-quality care that supports them physically and emotionally, before, during, and after birth.

Health systems must evolve to manage the many health issues that impact maternal and newborn health. These not only include direct obstetric complications but also mental health conditions, noncommunicable diseases, and family planning.

Additionally, women and families should be supported by laws and policies that safeguard their health and rights. The main objectives of this year’s campaign are as follows.

To raise awareness about gaps in maternal and newborn survival and the need to prioritize women’s longer-term well-being.

To advocate for effective investments that improve the health of women and babies.

To encourage collective action to support parents as well as health professionals who provide critical care.

To provide useful health information relating to pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period.

According to the report of the United Nations Development Program, the life expectancy index at birth increased from 49.5 years in 1960 to 51.5 years in 1978. However, the report of the World Bank shows that after the Islamic revolution, the Iranians’ total life expectancy has increased by 25 years reaching more than 76 years now.

Increased access to improved health services in Iran has brought about a change in the pattern and occurrence of diseases which has by itself affected the number of deaths by infectious illnesses.

Statistics show that the raw mortality index in Iran from 13 deaths per 1000 births during 1970-1978 has decreased to five people now. Also, the mortality rate reduction among infants in the last four decades has been significant, it has lowered from 13,000 to 18 deaths currently.

In March 2024, Iran hosted an international congress on family health with a focus on the significant role of mothers in the family’s well-being.





Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**

Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 43051601

Email: info@tehrantimes.com

Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

Advertisements Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430

Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 43051505

Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430



No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.O. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

APRIL 8, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Unfortunate is he who cannot gain a few sincere friends during his life and more unfortunate is the one who has gained them and then lost them (through his deeds).*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:06 Evening: 18:50 Dawn: 4:13 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:40 (tomorrow)

## “Doubt: A Parable” on stage at Tehran theater

TEHRAN- An adaptation of American playwright and screenwriter John Patrick Shanley’s “Doubt: A Parable” is currently on stage at Iran-shahr’s Samandarian Hall in Tehran.

Kourosh Soleimani is the director and producer of the play, which has been translated into Persian by Mohammad Mon'em.

Roya Afshar, Behnam Tashakor, Vida Javan and Sanaz Najafi are the main members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until May 9.

First performed off-Broadway at the Manhattan Theatre Club in 2004, “Doubt: A Parable” made a successful transition to the Broadway stage at the Walter Kerr Theatre in March 2005, ultimately closing in 2006, after 525 performances and 25 previews.

The play garnered critical acclaim, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2005 and the Tony Award for Best Play.

In 2008, it was adapted into a feature film, also titled “Doubt,” starring Meryl Streep as Sister Aloysius and Philip Seymour Hoffman as Father Flynn, receiving several Academy Award nominations.

Set in the fictional St. Nicholas Church School in the Bronx during the fall of 1964, the play opens with Father Flynn, a progressive and popular parish priest, delivering a sermon on the theme of uncertainty.

He states, “Doubt can be a bond as powerful and sustaining as certainty,” setting the stage for the moral complexities that ensue.

The play introduces Sister Aloysius, the school’s strict principal, devoted to her order, the Sisters of Charity, who believes in constant scrutiny of her students and staff. In a meeting with Sister James, a young and



impressible nun, Aloysius reveals her deep-seated mistrust towards nearly everyone around her, providing a stark contrast to Flynn’s inclusive and modern approach.

The tension escalates when Aloysius learns from Sister James that Father Flynn has had a private meeting with Donald Muller, the school’s first African-American student.

Suspecting potential misconduct, Aloysius confronts Flynn about her concerns under the pretense of discussing the Christmas pageant.

ing the Christmas pageant.

Flynn vehemently denies any wrongdoing, claiming he was merely disciplining Donald for drinking altar wine. Sister James finds solace in Flynn’s explanation, in stark opposition to Aloysius’s growing suspicions.

Determined to uncover the truth, Aloysius meets with Donald’s mother, Mrs. Muller, who surprisingly supports Flynn, dismissing Aloysius’s accusations. Over the course of their conversation, Mrs.

Muller suggests that Donald may be experiencing abuse at home, adding another layer of complexity to the narrative.

As the conflict deepens, Flynn threatens Aloysius with possible repercussions if she does not retract her claims.

Aloysius reveals her deceptive tactics; she fabricated a phone call to Flynn’s previous parish while claiming to have found a history of misconduct.

Despite this deception, her actions leave her with lingering doubt, just as they instill uncertainty in the audience.

Ultimately, the play concludes without a definitive resolution regarding Flynn’s guilt or innocence, compelling the audience to grapple with the theme of doubt and its implications on faith, authority, and community.

## Cartoon of Day



Ambulance in Gaza  
Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

# Book on martyr General Soleimani to be unveiled in Moscow

TEHRAN- An unveiling ceremony for the Russian novel “Jackals Cannot Defeat a Lion,” inspired by the life of the martyr Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, will take place on Wednesday, at the Moscow Book House in Russia.

The event will showcase the work of Oleg Roy, the distinguished Russian writer and producer, which draws from the life of General Soleimani, Mehr reported on Monday.

The writing and publication process of the book, initiated by the Cultural Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russia, took two years, the report added.

This narrative presents a compelling account of martyr Soleimani’s journey from adolescence to martyrdom in 285 pages, aimed at a Russian audience.

The book has been published by a reputable publishing house and was made available in the Russian book market at the beginning of this year.

Oleg Roy, who has authored over 90 novels for adults, is a celebrated figure in Russia, consistently ranking among the top five authors in the country based on annual book sales, particularly in the fiction genre.

In a meeting with Masoud Ahmadvand, the cultural attaché of Iran, Roy remarked that the novel was crafted in a manner that resonates with today’s youth regarding a significant figure who remains relatively lesser-known in Russia.

He added, “This novel tells the story of one of the most remarkable individuals who sacrificed his life for the dignity and glory of his country and religion.”

Roy emphasized his intention to counteract the misinformation portrayed by Western media about Martyr Soleimani, stating, “I aimed to present the truth



about this hero through the voices of the characters in this work.”

“Jackals Cannot Defeat a Lion” intertwines two timelines: one in present-day Iran and another exploring the past.

The narrative follows American writer Margarita Valdentshein as she embarks on a journey to write a critical book about General Qassem Soleimani.

However, as she delves deeper into his life and character, her preconceived notions are challenged, leading to a profound transformation in her understanding of him.

Alongside Margarita’s journey, the book presents a biographical account of Hajj Qassem Soleimani, as viewed through the eyes of those who were closest to him, including Fereshte Kermani-Betani, an Iranian police officer, and her family.

This dual perspective not only highlights Soleimani’s significant role in shaping the region’s history but also offers insights into the personal lives of the Iranian people affected by the broader socio-political context.

As readers navigate through these intertwined stories, they come to recognize the complexities of Hajj Qassem Soleimani’s character, showcasing how personal relationships can shape perspectives amidst challenging times in the Middle East.

The book ultimately serves as a commentary on the intricacies of perception, identity, and the shared human experience.

Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, a highly esteemed Iranian military strategist and prominent figure in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), left an indelible mark on Iran’s defense efforts.

Born in 1957 in Qanat-e Malek, Iran, Soleimani devoted his entire life to safeguarding his country’s interests.

He gained widespread recognition for his crucial role in leading successful military campaigns, particularly in the battle against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

His exceptional strategic planning, exemplary leadership abilities, and unwavering commitment to preserving Iran’s

security earned him profound respect both within the military and among the Iranian populace.

General Soleimani, with his remarkable charm and fearless demeanor, commanded immense admiration from his comrades as well as the general public.

His resolute dedication to safeguarding Iran’s sovereignty and ensuring its security solidified his position as an emblem of fortitude and perseverance.

Despite facing numerous hurdles, such as international sanctions and political tensions, Soleimani remained an indispensable figure in Iran’s military and foreign policies.

His assassination in January 2020 had a seismic impact on the region, profoundly grieving the Iranian people and intensifying tensions between Iran and the United States.

General Qassem Soleimani’s impactful contributions to Iran’s defense will forever be etched in the nation’s memory, serving as a testament to his enduring influence on the geopolitical landscape of the region.

## Iranian documentaries, jurors participating in 56th Visions du Réel

TEHRAN-Three documentaries and two jurors from Iran are present at the 56th Visions du Réel, underway in Nyon, Switzerland.

“Cutting Through Rocks” by Mohammadreza Eyni and Sara Khaki, “Within the Sun” by Sepideh Jamshidi Nejad, and “Higher Than Acidic Clouds” by Ali Asgari are the Iranian films participating in the event while Elaheh Nobakht and Mohammad Rezaeian are serving as jurors in various sections of the festival, Honaronline reported.

“Cutting Through Rocks” tells the story of Sara Shahverdi, the first elected councilwoman of her village, who aims to break long-held patriarchal traditions by training teenage girls to ride motorcycles and stopping child marriages.

When accusations arise questioning Sara’s intentions to empower the girls, her identity is put in turmoil.

A joint production of Iran, Germany, the U.S., Qatar, Netherlands, Chile, and Canada, the 94-minute movie was the winner of the World Cinema Documentary Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

“Within the Sun” depicts the suffocating heat of a remote salt mine, where six elderly women work seasonally. While their hands and faces are weathered by years of labor, their resolve remains unshaken.

The 28-minute film is a collective portrait of resilience and quiet strength, offering a glimpse into the rhythm of these women’s daily lives, and how the harsh environment shapes their existence and soul.

In “Higher Than Acidic Clouds,” a defiant filmmaker is forced to confront his life’s work through a surreal journey of the imagination – all while apocalyptic clouds loom over the city, threatening to snuff out his creative rebellion.

For this year’s edition of the festival, respected film personalities and professionals are invited to award the festival’s prizes to filmmakers whose works stand out for their uniqueness and ambition.

Elaheh Nobakht is a producer in Iranian cinema, renowned for her achievements in international film production and distribution. She is one of the jurors in the National section of Visions du Réel.

With a portfolio that includes seven feature films and two short films, she has earned recognition at prestigious festivals like Berlinale, IDFA, and Hot Docs.

Her notable works include “Dreams’ Gate” (Berlinale 2023), “The Apple Day” (Berlinale 2022), “Silent House” (IDFA 2022), “Holy Bread” (IDFA 2020, Hot Docs 2021, ZagrebDox 2021), and “Beloved” (IDFA, Berlinale, Hot Docs; over 65 international festivals).

She also distributed “Finding Farideh,” Iran’s official Oscar entry in 2020. She has also served as a jury member at multiple international film festivals and received prestigious accolades, including the Producers Network Prize for Promising Young Producers at Cannes Marché du Film (Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival 2022). In 2025, she was selected as a Berlinale Talent.

As the CEO of ELI Image since 2018, Nobakht plays a pivotal role in global film production and distribution. She is also a board



member of the Iranian Producers Association (IPA) and a member of the Iranian Documentary Producers Association (AOIDP).

Currently, she is working on four feature films in co-production with France, Norway, and Germany.

Mohammad Rezaeian is another Iranian juror who is on the jury panel of the Interreligious section of the festival.

Born in Tehran, Rezaeian grew up in Berlin, Tehran, and Bern, studied law in Bern and business administration in Tehran.

He works with and in the different cultures of the East and West as a builder of bridges, intercultural translator, lawyer and project manager, and brings people and cultures together.

His main topics are economic analyses, legal implementation and the development of culturally appropriate implementations in new market openings.

Through his interest in literature and film, which oscillates between the rationalism of Descartes and the love of Rumi, he tries to better understand his own and other cultures and to bring people together.

Visions du Réel (Visions of Reality) is an internationally renowned documentary film festival held in April each year in Nyon, Switzerland.

Established in 1969 as the Nyon International Documentary Film Festival, the event adopted its current name in 1995 and is the largest Swiss documentary festival.

For over five decades, Visions du Réel has been presenting audacious and singular works, imbued with past, present or future realities.

Over ten days, the festival turns Nyon into a focal point at which several generations of filmmakers and artists from all over the world find a loyal audience on a voyage of discovery.

Recognized globally as one of the major festivals dedicated to non-fiction filmmaking, it presents a majority of films as world or international premieres, and constitutes an essential platform for creation for the thousands of film professionals who meet there every year.

Launched on April 4, this year’s edition of the festival will conclude on April 13, awarding the winners of various sections.