



## A positive Muscat Start, but Will it End Well?

Iran, US agree to hold second round of indirect talks in a few days

▶ Page 3

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his accompanying delegation in Oman after the conclusion of indirect talks with the U.S. on April 12, 2025.

## Iran's air defense matrix: Blending indigenous innovation and geography to forge a fortress

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN – In a display of technological sovereignty, Iran's defense sector has achieved a milestone that underscores its transformation from a pre-revolutionary dependency to a military innovator.

Iran has redefined its security paradigm, with over 900 indigenous defense systems now operational, according to the Ministry of Defense, blending cutting-edge engineering, asymmetric tactics, and geographic ingenuity to counter existential threats.

Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's military relied on just 31 defense systems, largely rudimentary and imported from Western allies.

On Sunday, Rear Admiral Reza Talai-Nik, spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense, asserted that the nation produces a staggering array of 900+ defensive systems –from ballistic missiles to unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) – all engineered domestically. ▶ Page 2

## Transport, transit agreement to be signed in Pezeshkian's visit to Azerbaijan

TEHRAN- Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh announced that the transportation and transit agreement will be signed between Iran and Republic of Azerbaijan during the visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Azerbaijan.

She also referred to the upcoming specialized meeting between Iranian and Azerbaijani traders on the sidelines of the president's visit to Azerbaijan, aiming to increase international goods transportation between the two countries and transit of goods in cooperation with Iran's Chamber of Commerce.

Meanwhile, Sadegh and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, as the chairmen of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee, visited the Port of Baku, along with their accompanying delegation. This visit, conducted at the top levels of the two governments, aimed to explore ways to enhance bilateral trade and economic interactions.

The Iranian minister also announced that the Joint Committee on Transport between Iran and Azerbaijan will be established soon.

She stated, "The purpose of forming the joint committee is to hold regular sessions of this committee and accelerate the process of pursuing joint projects in all aspects of transportation, including rail, road, air, and sea." ▶ Page 4

▶ Page 5

## Yemen attacks Tel Aviv, US warships

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Despite increasing indiscriminate U.S. attacks on Yemen, the Arab nation has once again retaliated.

Just hours after announcing strikes on the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Truman and several hostile warships in the northern Red Sea, Yemeni forces launched a military operation against two Israeli targets in Tel Aviv, reaffirming their steadfast support for Palestine.

The Yemeni Armed Forces announced that their drone unit carried out a precision strike on two Israeli military targets in Tel Aviv using domestically-manufactured Jaffa-type drones.

Brigadier General Yahya Saree, spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces, declared, "The ongoing American aggression against Yemen will not deter us from fulfilling our duty to the steadfast people of Gaza until the attacks end and the siege is lifted."

The Yemeni Armed Forces reaffirmed their readiness to confront any escalation, emphasizing their unwavering commitment to the Palestinian cause.

They stated that their military operations "will only stop when the aggression ends and the blockade on Gaza is lifted."

## 50 years after eruption of Lebanon's infamous civil

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Those who witnessed the bloody events of Lebanon's civil war, which was triggered on April 13, 1975, had no idea that it would spark a series of crises 50 years later!

Historians of Islamic theological sects note that the name given to the Murji'ah sect is derived from the Arabic verb "arja'a," which means to delay.

According to Ibn al-Athir, they were called Murji'ah because they prioritized the importance of one's professed faith over his deeds. They also hold the false opinion that Muslims should practice postponing judgment on committers of major sins to God alone.

The Murji'ite doctrine was a methodology adopted by the Umayyads, following the assassination of Imam Ali and the self-appointment of Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan as Caliph in a bid to silence opposition to the validity of their caliphate.

This is what Geagea has held to silence the Lebanese. Today, in particular, the victims of the civil war, especially those killed at the hands of the Lebanese Forces militia, have not yet forgotten the devastating horrors caused by Geagea and other civil warlords.

## Meta's role in silencing Palestinian narratives

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN – The current digital age, where social media serves as the primary tool for global communication, is seeing recent revelations about Israel's efforts to block pro-Palestine content on Meta platforms (Facebook and Instagram), stirring widespread anxiety alongside heated discussions and anger.

The deliberate campaign by Israeli authorities to suppress critical narratives emerges from leaked information reported by sources such as Drop Site News, Al Mayadeen, and The Palestine Chronicle which documents an extraordinary effort to silence dissent regarding its actions amidst the Gaza conflict.

On April 12, 2025, The Palestine Chronicle's live blog emphasizes the severe nature of this crackdown by documenting Meta's deletion of 90,000 posts upon Israel's request within one day. This statistic, alongside Al Mayadeen's report about Israel's "directly orchestrated" efforts to suppress pro-Palestine narratives, depicts an intentional information control strategy. Israel's censorship efforts stand out as it targets international conversations instead of domestic content,

▶ Page 5

## Iran Film Week opens in Hanoi

TEHRAN-Iran Film Week in Hanoi was launched on Friday at the National Cinema Center in the capital of Vietnam in the presence of Ali Akbar Nazari, Iran's ambassador to Vietnam, and Quang Dong, Deputy Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Vietnam.

Organized by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Hanoi in coordination with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the event is held in honor of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and Vietnam, IRNA reported.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Iranian ambassador said: "Iranian cinema has long established itself as a distinctive and influential one in the world. With its minimalist yet emotional, poetic and deeply humanistic storytelling style, ▶ Page 8



## Lenj boats: guardians of maritime heritage in Persian Gulf

Tehran – Construction of Lenj boats is an ancient indigenous craft along the northern coasts of the Persian Gulf that has historically played an important role in navigation, trade, and the livelihoods of southern Iran's people.

Skills pertaining to the construction of Lenj boats and sailing them were added to UNESCO's World Heritage List as Iran's intangible cultural heritage in 2011.

Added to UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage, this industry now faces numerous threats and requires concerted efforts for its preservation and revival, IRNA reported. ▶ Page 6



## Muscat: Trump's test and Iran's superiority

By Najah Mohammad Ali

LONDON – Amid overlapping crises and competing interests of major powers—and in light of the far-reaching consequences of events following the "Al-Aqsa Storm"—Iran has emerged not as a country seeking to create crises but as a regional power that asserts its presence with confidence and authority.

Despite sanctions and maximum pressure, Iran has managed to establish a paradigm based on national sovereignty and human dignity while insisting on scientific and technological advancement—especially in peaceful nuclear energy. Within this framework, the new round of talks in the Sultanate of Oman is not just another negotiation stop; it marks a fundamental turning point. ▶ Page 3

## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## Important points about Iran-U.S. negotiations

In a note, the Iran newspaper discussed important points for the success of the new nuclear negotiations. It quoted Seyyed Hossein Mousavian, a researcher at Princeton University, as saying: Negotiations with intermediaries or indirect negotiations should not be prolonged. Reaching an agreement through direct negotiations will be faster. Iran and the U.S. have many significant differences, but there are also issues on which both sides share common interests. Steve Witkoff is one of the unique diplomats in the Trump administration who, like Trump, seeks an agreement.

Finally, the experience of the previous U.S. negotiator, Robert Malley, should not be forgotten. Robert Malley was very eager to revive the JCPOA and made a lot of efforts, but the Israeli lobby could not tolerate him and ruthlessly eliminated him. "Economic contracts" are very important to Trump. One of the factors that can accelerate and sustain the agreement is major economic contracts between Iran and the United States. The Netanyahu government wants to expand these confrontations and involve the U.S. in a military confrontation with Iran. Therefore, the Netanyahu government will use all its influence agents to bring the negotiations between Iran and the United States to a failure.

### Farhikhtegan: Global public opinion will have no choice but to accept existing narrative

In a commentary, Farhikhtegan addressed Iran's weakness in the face of Trump's media campaign and wrote: One of these weaknesses is the lack of figures who can speak on behalf of Iran at the international level. The JCPOA experience demonstrated why it is vitally important in the media battle with the United States to have people who are both trusted by the international community and who can present Iran's message sensibly and officially. At present, and given the lack of this tool, whatever the outcome of the negotiations, Trump will declare himself victorious, and international public opinion will have no choice but to accept the existing narrative. Today, there is a need for a campaign that includes diplomatic, media, or even cultural figures who have a relative understanding of international issues and can appear in reputable global media outlets and manage the affairs. A campaign that knows the general lines of Iran's message and prepares them for sensitive moments. If negotiations are underway, these figures can announce our main and fundamental point of view before Trump uses the outcome for his benefit.

## China FM urges IAEA to maintain professionalism in handling Iran nuclear issue



By Shahrokh Saei

BEIJING - China's significant position in advocating for dialogue to address global issues has been highlighted following a meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi in Beijing on Friday.

Wang said Beijing hopes that the IAEA will continue to uphold objectivity, neutrality and professionalism in properly handling issues such as the Iranian nuclear issue, AUKUS nuclear submarine cooperation, and the ocean discharge of Fukushima nuclear-contaminated water, according to Chinese media outlets, CGTN and Xinhua.

He demanded that the IAEA shoulder the important mission of safeguarding the basic norms governing international relations, promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and preventing nuclear proliferation. The top Chinese diplomat said in the face of rising unilateralism, power politics and bullying, the international community must present a unified voice. He warned that the world

### Arman-e-Emrooz: Friends and foes of negotiation

Arman-e-Emrooz spoke with political expert Peyman Khajavi about the internal and external enemies of the negotiations between Iran and the United States that started in Oman on Saturday. He said: The basis of international relations in the contemporary world is based on dialogue and reaching agreements between governments. It must be noted that Israel is a serious opponent of negotiations at the international level. Israel's political existence is defined in a way that it requires permanent hostility in the region. Therefore, this regime and its lobbies have always been against any dialogue between Iran and the United States. There are also groups within the country that see the continuation of their political life dependent on the continuation of tension between Iran and the United States. These groups have taken positions in complete coordination with Israeli lobbies in recent years. Additionally, another movement, commonly called "beneficiaries of sanctions," has also emerged. These groups have taken advantage of the sanctions by forming economic networks. In such a situation, it is necessary to adopt a realistic view of negotiations, avoid internal competition on national issues, and focus on long-term national interests to achieve stability and development.

### Hamshahri: What is Iran's red line in the negotiations?

The Iranian and American teams arrived in Muscat, the capital of Oman, before the afternoon of Saturday, April 12, and began the negotiations indirectly after meeting with the Omani Foreign Minister. The Omani Foreign Minister, as an intermediary, transmitted messages between the two sides. According to some sources, the necessity for the American delegation not to use threatening language, the necessity to avoid presenting any framework and excessive demands by this team regarding the nuclear program, as well as the necessity to refrain from raising any discussion on the issue of Iran's defense industry, are part of Iran's red lines, and Iran will not accept threatening language or crossing red lines in negotiations under any circumstances. Iran is always ready to build confidence about the peaceful nature of its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. So, the ball is in the Americans' court, and if the Americans sincerely say that they are only concerned about nuclear bombs, negotiations will not be difficult. But if the Americans hypocritically enter the scene and demand too much, they must also accept international responsibility for undermining negotiations.

risks reverting to the law of the jungle, with small and medium-sized countries bearing the brunt.

For his part, the IAEA chief said China is a force for stability in a volatile world since it firmly supports the status and role of the United Nations and its agencies. Grossi said the IAEA values its cooperation with China and appreciates its progress in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. He expressed willingness to deepen all-round cooperation with China and properly manage the Iranian nuclear issue and other relevant hotspots.

China has played an influential role in line with its efforts to resolve Iran's nuclear issue through dialogue. Last month, China's foreign minister hosted Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov in Beijing. The focus of the talks, which were held on March 14, revolved around the Iran nuclear issue. China and Russia acknowledged Iran's entitlement to peaceful nuclear technology and advocated for the removal of US sanctions imposed on Iran.

From page 1 ▶ This reflects "the genius of our youth in universities and knowledge-based companies," he emphasized, who have turned sanctions into a catalyst for self-reliance.

### The multi-layered shield

Iran's air defense capabilities tell a story of innovation, resilience, and national pride—a layered network built to intercept threats from low-flying drones to high-altitude aircraft.

This multi-tiered approach, underpinned by advanced technology and homegrown ingenuity, ensures that every aspect of Iran's airspace remains robustly protected.

I. The long-range segment of this robust defense system is a testament to domestic ingenuity and a strategic counterbalance in the region.

The Bavar-373, a proudly homegrown counterpart to the Russian S-300, boasts a formidable range of nearly 300 kilometers with an integrated radar system that vigilantly monitors the skies.

In parallel, an upgraded version of the Russian S-300PMU2 further refines this capability by skillfully tracking even stealth aircraft.

Adding to this impressive array is the Arman system, a recent indigenous breakthrough unveiled in 2023 and specifically designed to counter ballistic missile threats, thereby solidifying Iran's long-range defensive posture.

II. In the medium-range arena, Iran's tactical mobility and adaptive strategy are on full display. Mobile launchers equipped with Sayyad-3 missiles, exemplified by the Khorad-15 system, are engineered to effectively confront modern aerial threats from drones to fighter jets.

Building on this, the Raad-2 system offers an evolution from its Soviet-era 2K12 Kub predecessor, reconfigured to meet the demands of engaging contemporary cruise missiles with precision and agility.

Complementing these efforts is the Mersad system—a sophisticated reimagining of the U.S. MIM-23 Hawk, rebranded as Tawakalna-1, which benefits from enhanced guidance systems that underscore Iran's commitment to overcoming external challenges with homegrown solutions.

### By Xavier Villar

MADRID - In recent months, a wave of suspensions, dismissals, and disciplinary actions against academics and students linked to pro-Palestinian activism has shaken university campuses across the United States. From elite institutions such as Columbia and Harvard to smaller regional universities less exposed to media scrutiny, administrative responses to protests and political expression are beginning to reveal a troubling pattern: containment, silencing, and systematic exclusion.

Far from being isolated incidents, these measures reflect a broader logic that some analysts describe in biopolitical terms: the management of the social body through control, surveillance, and the neutralization of what is deemed politically dysfunctional or threatening. In the name of institutional order, many universities — traditionally presented as spaces for critical thinking and pluralism — are now adopting an increasingly reactive stance toward dissent, particularly when it openly challenges Israeli policy or expresses solidarity with Palestine.

Columbia University offers a clear illustration of this shift. Following intense external pressure, its Department of Middle Eastern Studies was placed under administrative oversight, raising serious concerns about academic autonomy. At the same time, pro-Palestinian student organizations have been suspended, and professors critical of Israeli violence have lost their positions.

One of the most striking cases is that of Helyeh Doughty, an Iranian legal scholar who was removed from her post after being linked — on tenuous grounds — to organizations accused of anti-Israel rhetoric. Doughty maintains that her dismissal was directly related to her public stance against the military offensive in Gaza.

"The university is becoming a space of surveillance and repression," she stated publicly. "In collaboration with the state's repressive apparatus, these institutions are setting dangerous new precedents for the rules of engagement across the country."

The campaign of academic repression currently unfolding in U.S. universities—particularly targeting Muslim professors and students who denounce the genocide in Gaza—can be interpreted through the theoretical lens proposed by Judith Butler in her analysis of the so-called "phantasm

## Iran's air defense matrix: Blending indigenous innovation and geography to forge a fortress



Iran's domestically built Bavar-373 air defense system in action during a 2024 drill

III. Closer to home, the short-range and point defense sector reflects a layered approach that ensures protection against immediate threats.

The Herz-9 system, adapted from the Russian Tor-M1, specializes in low-altitude interceptions, neutralizing swiftly moving targets with expert precision.

In situations that demand rapid, sustained responses, the Ya Zahra-3 stands ready to counter saturation attacks with its rapid-fire capabilities, while the Azarakhsh system offers the high precision of laser-guided missiles to defend critical nuclear installations—each innovation reinforcing a network of vigilant, ground-based protection.

IV. The country's commitment to a comprehensive defense strategy is further evident in its deployment of highly versatile man-portable systems. The Misagh-3, a heat-seeking missile system used by IRGC units, effectively safeguards mobile missile launchers, ensuring that the frontline of defense remains empowered and agile.

Meanwhile, the Soheil system provides infantry with a lightweight, fire-and-forget solution, underscoring the nation's holistic approach to equipping its forces with cutting-edge technology that can respond rapidly to emerging threats.

V. Enhancing the overall shield are the sophisticated air defense artill-

ery systems. A modernized version of the classic ZSU-23-4 Shilka outfitted with advanced thermal optics, guarantees operational effectiveness even under the cloak of night.

Equally impressive is the locally tailored Samavat, an adaptation of Swiss Oerlikon guns, that stands as a bulwark near critical infrastructure. Collectively, these systems fortify Iran's sovereignty—ensuring that every facet of its air defense network is as dynamic and formidable as the challenges it faces.

Furthermore, Iran's Zagros and Alborz mountains serve as natural fortresses, enabling Iran to hide mobile launchers and radars, turning geography into a force multiplier.

The country's mountains have been described as "natural fortresses," where mobile air defense units can disappear into terrain, while short-range systems guard high-value sites.

### Electromagnetic Gambit

Additionally, the country has significantly advanced its electronic warfare (EW) capabilities, positioning itself as a regional leader in asymmetric technological confrontation. Central to its strategy is the deployment of ground-based systems like the domestically developed Fajr and Nasr, which are designed to jam GPS signals, disrupt communication links, and interfere with ene-

my radar systems.

Recent drills have showcased Iran's integration of EW systems across military branches, testing radar deception, radio communication disruption, and coordinated attacks using micro aerial vehicles (MAVs).

### Operational resilience: lessons from conflict

During the Israeli regime's October 2024 attack on Iran, Iran's air defense reportedly intercepted 70-90% of incoming missiles and UAVs.

Analysts credit this success to Iran's mobile air defense systems, which are strategically deployed in mountainous terrain to evade detection—unlike vulnerable fixed radars, these units operate like elusive ghosts. While Tel Aviv farcically boasted of "crippling" Iran's defense infrastructure, Tehran dismissed these claims as psychological warfare, citing its decentralized, terrain-advantaged posture.

Since the attack, there have been multiple air defense drills, some introducing new systems, with top military figures Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces, and IRGC Chief Major General Hossein Salami making comments on the lessons learned and the strategic improvements Iran has implemented, drawing from past experiences and technological advancements.

## Palestine is the new taboo in U.S. academia

of gender." According to the philosopher, certain terms—such as "gender" in anti-gender discourse—are stripped of their original meaning and transformed into floating signifiers, all-powerful symbols onto which all social ills can be projected. They cease to describe concrete realities and instead operate as emotional catalysts: mobilizing fear, channeling frustration, and legitimizing repressive policies.

A similar dynamic is now at work with the term "antisemitism," whose instrumentalization by segments of the U.S. political and academic establishment has produced a comparable effect. Rather than identifying actual expressions of hatred, the accusation of antisemitism is increasingly deployed as a tool to stigmatize and punish any criticism of Israel—especially when such criticism comes from Muslim, Arab, or Global South voices.

Within this new framework, the figure of the Muslim academic—or simply anyone critical of Israeli violence—is recast as a political "phantasm": a suspicious, ideologized, infiltrated subject whose presence is perceived as a threat to institutional stability, campus security, or liberal consensus. Their professional record, intellectual rigor, or nuanced argumentation become irrelevant—they are turned into a target to be neutralized.

This symbolic mechanism serves a broader and deeply authoritarian logic. The university, far from functioning as a space for critical inquiry, is being redefined as a zone of ideological immunization, where any form of dissent linked to Palestine—especially if articulated by racialized or Islamic voices—is treated not as part of democratic debate, but as an anomaly to be eradicated. This operation is cloaked in the language of "tolerance," "coexistence," or "security," even as the foundational principles of academic freedom are emptied of substance.

In this context, Islam—particularly a political Islam that stands in opposition to the genocide in Gaza—is portrayed as an invasive and destabilizing force, an existential threat to Western civilization and national identity. This "specter of Islam," carefully manufactured and entirely detached from the lived realities of Muslim communities, functions as a scapegoat in a media and political climate increasingly shaped by fear and suspicion.

The outcome is familiar: the rhetoric of terrorism and national security is deployed to discipline discourses that, from an ethical and political standpoint, challenge the status quo. It is crucial



Helyeh Doughty was removed from her position as Deputy Director of the Law and Political Economy Project at Yale Law School following a campaign by Zionist groups

to remember here that "terrorism" is not merely a descriptive category—it is, above all, a prescriptive tool. To label something as terrorism is to trigger an immediate effect: a repertoire of repressive practices—censorship, persecution, detention, deportation, even physical violence—is activated and legitimized by the existence of a constructed threat that is rarely questioned.

From a discursive perspective, "terrorism" operates as a mark of exclusion. It identifies the "other"—the barbarian, the savage, the internal enemy—and symbolically expels them from the political community. Once dehumanized, any act against them becomes not only legitimate but necessary for the preservation of order.

What is happening in U.S. universities today is not merely a conflict between academic freedom and institutional governance. It is the visible symptom of a deeper drift, in which concepts like "terrorism," "antisemitism," or even "security" are weaponized to justify the systematic exclusion of critical voices—particularly when those voices belong to Muslim students and scholars or allies of the Palestinian cause. Under the rhetoric of order, neutrality, and tolerance, a regime of ideological surveillance is being consolidated, one that redefines the boundaries of what can be said or even thought within the academic sphere.

This is not an isolated or circumstantial phenomenon. It is part of a broader global offensive against all forms of dissent that challenge the foundations of Western geopolitical power. In this context, Palestinian activism—with its historical, ethical, and political weight—has become a primary target.

# A positive Muscat start, but will it end well?

Iran, US agree to hold second round of indirect talks in a few days

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – Indirect Iran-U.S. talks mediated by Oman appear to have concluded on a positive note Saturday, as the two sides agreed to schedule a second round for next week, though analysts caution that the path to any meaningful breakthrough remains long and fraught with challenges.

Iran's foreign ministry characterized the indirect discussions with the U.S. in Oman as "constructive" and generally "positive" in a statement released shortly after the talks concluded. The discussions centered on Iran's nuclear program and Washington's sanctions against the country.

Emphasizing the indirect nature of the talks, the statement noted that the Iranian and American delegations were situated in separate halls for the two-and-a-half-hour negotiation, communicating through written messages. At the end of the session, Iran's Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi and U.S. Special Envoy to West Asia Steve Witkoff had a brief face-to-face encounter and "exchanged greetings out of courtesy" as they departed.

Tehran had said prior to the negotiations that it is willing to give diplomacy a "genuine chance,"



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi in Muscat

but that requires Washington to also demonstrate a sincere commitment to clearing the hurdles. A source familiar with the matter told the Tehran Times that Iran is serious about striking an agreement but won't let the other side cross any of its red lines.

Witkoff, speaking to NBC, also said that Iran and the U.S. had managed to hold positive and constructive dialogue.

The talks followed a letter delivered last month in which U.S. President Donald Trump offered to limit discussions to Iran's nuclear program, excluding its military and foreign policy, if Tehran agreed to enter negotiations. This marked a shift, as it was the first time Trump expressed a willingness to limit discus-

sions to Iran's nuclear program since unraveling the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) during his first term. After withdrawing from the JCPOA in 2018, Trump imposed stringent sanctions on Tehran, hoping to force it to make further concessions, particularly regarding its missile and drone program and its ties with regional Resistance forces in West Asia.

In comments broadcast on Iranian national television, Araghchi stated that the upcoming round would focus on the "format" of the negotiations. "During this round, we were able to reach agreements on the content of the talks," he explained. "If we finalize the content next week, we will then be in a position to de-

termine the format as well."

The foreign minister further emphasized that Iran seeks a real agreement and wishes to avoid a "destructive" phase of negotiations. "However," he cautioned, "this will not be easy. Both sides must demonstrate seriousness and resolve."

Araghchi's assessment of the Oman talks, while not pessimistic, also lacked outright enthusiasm. Wendy Sherman, former U.S. deputy secretary of state and chief negotiator who negotiated with Araghchi during the Obama administration, has characterized him as "a tough and intelligent person," adding to American media that "Witkoff is facing a tough competitor."

Analysts are also hesitant to draw definitive conclusions, citing Washington's past record of broken agreements and withdrawn commitments.

"The U.S.'s agreement to indirect talks, despite initially preferring direct negotiations, and its acceptance of Oman as mediator after seeking a UAE role, suggests a temporary departure from its previous intransigence," noted Amir Ali Abolfath, an expert on North American affairs. "However, nothing is guaranteed. We need to see if the U.S. will maintain this course or abruptly change direction."

## Bilateral dialogue in focus as Iran, Norway deputy FMs hold talks



Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh (R) met with his Norwegian counterpart Andreas Kravik on the sidelines of the 4th Antalya Diplomacy Forum on April 12, 2025.

TEHRAN – On the sidelines of the 4th Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh met with his Norwegian counterpart, Andreas Kravik, for talks on key regional and international developments.

The two officials emphasized the importance of sustained political and diplomatic consultations between Tehran and Oslo, and also exchanged views on strengthening bilateral ties.

**Iran, Iraq reaffirm economic cooperation and regional coordination**

Khatibzadeh kicked off his

participation in the Antalya Diplomacy Forum with a meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein.

The two sides reviewed the current state of Iran-Iraq relations and stressed the need to deepen bilateral cooperation, particularly in the economic sphere.

High on the agenda was the Shalamcheh-Basra railway project, where both countries agreed to accelerate progress and remove remaining obstacles.

They also discussed regional security issues and the latest developments in indirect talks be-

tween Iran and the United States held on Saturday.

**Deputy FM meets with Iraqi Kurdistan region's head to discuss shared interests**

In another key meeting at the forum, Khatibzadeh sat down with Nechirvan Barzani, President of Iraq's Kurdistan Region.

The conversation centered on avenues of cooperation between Iran and the Kurdish regional government, as well as pressing regional and international developments.

Both parties expressed readiness to build on existing frameworks to foster deeper collaboration.

**Iran, Turkey talk regional tensions, bilateral expansion**

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh and Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Nuh Yilmaz held substantive talks in Antalya, highlighting the growing cooperation between Tehran and Ankara.

Khatibzadeh underscored the significance of the upcoming ninth meeting of the Iran-Turkey High Council of Cooperation and President Erdogan's planned visit to Tehran.

Regional developments dominated the talks, especially Israel's ongoing actions in Gaza and its expansionist moves in Syria.

Both sides discussed the implications of these issues and the recent indirect negotiations between Iran and the U.S. in Oman.

Yilmaz reaffirmed Turkey's interest in deepening bilateral ties and maintaining strong regional coordination with Iran.

**Tehran, Zagreb eye broader cooperation in politics, culture, and economy**

Saeed Khatibzadeh also met with Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic-Radman during the Antalya Forum.

The two officials reviewed the latest in Tehran-Zagreb relations and highlighted the potential for expanding cooperation across political, economic, and cultural sectors.

Khatibzadeh called for enhanced political consultations and stronger people-to-people ties, to which the Croatian foreign minister responded positively, expressing readiness for deeper bilateral and multilateral engagement.

## Muscat: Trump's test and Iran's superiority

From Page 1 ▶ What is unfolding in Muscat is not merely a continuation of nuclear talks; it is a real test of the seriousness of U.S. President Donald Trump—a man who unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 deal, a rare agreement endorsed by the UN Security Council. Now, he is attempting to return to the negotiating table through the gate of "power." The question remains: Is Trump trying to reproduce the same deal on his own terms, or is he staging a symbolic agreement in the name of regional stability?

As always, Oman hosted these negotiations with a spirit of neutrality and wise mediation, grounded in the belief that sustainable solutions come through dialogue, not threats. Here lies the fundamental difference between the two approaches: one flexes warships and drones, and the other extends a hand based on mutual respect and commitment to international law.

Iranian leadership, grounded in domestic legitimacy and international credibility

from principled independence, does not view negotiations merely as a way to avoid war. Rather, it sees them as an opportunity to affirm its rightful access to peaceful nuclear energy under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This treaty includes mutual commitments, such as enabling non-nuclear states to access peaceful technology—not punishing them for pursuing it.

Leaked details from the talks suggest the goal is to reach a preliminary agreement that paves the way for broader discussions. Iran believes that the two-month deadline set by Trump is insufficient to craft a complex, comprehensive deal—unless he agrees to return to the previous accord. Thus, Tehran seeks a transitional formula that keeps the doors open for a lasting solution without compromising its rights.

It is no secret that Trump's withdrawal was more than a political retreat; it marked the beginning of a maximum pressure policy against Iran—pushed by the White House



with support from the Zionist regime and some regional governments. But what Washington miscalculated was Iran's steadfastness. Not only did Iran not retreat, but it advanced its peaceful nuclear program, increased enrichment levels, and returned to the table with even greater leverage.

Trump believes that escalating threats, military deployments, and regional maneuvers will force Iran to back down. But experience shows that the more pressure is applied, the more resilient Iran becomes.

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

## SPORTS

### Iran defeat Thailand in 2025 SAT Futsal Championship

TEHRAN – Iran's men's futsal team defeated Thailand 6-2 in the SAT Futsal Championship Thailand 2025 on Saturday.

Mohammadhossein Derakhshani, Hossein Sabzi, Hossein Tayebi (two goals), Mohammadhossein Bazary, and Amirhossein Gholami scored for the Iranian team.

Iran lost to Russia 2-1 in their opening match but defeated Kuwait 5-0 in their next match.

Earlier in the day, Russia defeated Kuwait 10-1 and won the title.

This tournament serves as preparation for the AFC Futsal Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers (September 16-24, 2025).

### Tajikistan U17 coach Ragini delighted by win over Iran

TEHRAN – Tajikistan head coach Marco Ragini was understandably delighted by Tajikistan's showing against Iran.

Tajikistan defeated Iran 3-1 in an engrossing Group D match to make the quarter-finals of the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2025.

"This is an amazing feeling as we achieved our goal of qualifying for the World Cup," he said. "We played very well against Iran, closed all parts of the pitch and won the match tactically."

"Their goalkeeper (Abolfazl Khalilian) was brilliant and kept his team in the match until the last five minutes. I congratulate them because they are a very good team with a very good coach."

### Our players gain experience from AFC U17 Asian Cup: Chamanian

TEHRAN – Iran U-17 head coach Abbas Chamanian says that the AFC U17 Asian Cup will help his players to gain experience for the future.

Iran lost to Tajikistan 3-1 in an engrossing Group D match and failed to make the quarter-finals of the AFC U-17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2025.

"We didn't have a good start," said Chamanian. "We drew level and then tried our best to get back into the game but Tajikistan scored when we were on the offensive."

"The tournament has ended but not for our players because football doesn't stop," he added. "They've gained experience here which will help them in the future, which I think is the philosophy of the AFC U-17 Asian Cup."

### Sepahan, Persepolis emerge victorious, Tractor held: PGPL

TEHRAN – Sepahan and Persepolis football teams defeated their rivals in Matchweek 26 of the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Friday.

In Isfahan's Naghsh-e Jahan Stadium, Sepahan edged past Mes thanks to a goal from Javad Aghaeipour in the sixth minute.

In Ghaemshahr's Vatani Stadium, Persepolis defeated struggling Nassaji 1-0. Alireza Enayatzadeh scored the winner in the 65th minute.

PGPL leaders Tractor were held to a 2-2 draw by Chadormalou in Yazd. Hadi Habibinejad gave the hosts a lead in the 21st minute but Amirhossein Hosseinzadel leveled the

score one minute before halftime.

Chadormalou midfielder Mohammadreza Hosseini scored an own goal in the 56th minute but Reza Mahmoodabadi equalized the match six minutes later.

In Ahvaz, struggling Havadar earned a 1-1 draw against Esteghlal Khuzestan, Malavan defeated Kheybar 3-0 in Bandar Anzali, Shams Azar were held to a 1-1 draw by Zob Ahan in Qazvin, and Gol Gohar and Aluminum shared the spoils in a goalless draw.

Tractor lead the table with 55 points and one game in hand, followed by Sepahan and Persepolis with 53 and 51 points, respectively.

### Tabiat beat Al Difaa rally in 2024/25 WASL

TEHRAN – Tabiat Basketball survived a furious late-game rally to outlast Al Difaa Al Jawi, 87-83, in a dramatic West Asia Super League (WASL) battle Friday night at the Nouhad Nawfal Stadium.

Down by as many as nine in the first half, the Iranian side shook off a sluggish start and leaned on the one-two punch of Ivan Buva and Perry Petty, alongside a timely defensive stand from Rasoul Mozafari, to clinch their fourth win of the season and remain firmly in the hunt for a spot in the WASL Final 8.

Buva dominated the paint en route to a 22-point, 11-rebound double-double, shooting 9-of-13 from the field and anchoring a pivotal third-quarter surge where he dropped 15 points to turn a 41-40 halftime deficit into a commanding 70-55 lead.

Petty added 19 points, 6 assists, and 3 steals, including two clutch free throws with 5 seconds left to seal the deal after Al Difaa tied the game late, fiba.com reported.

But it was Mozafari's timely defense that saved the night. With Tabiat clinging to an 85-83 lead, the veteran guard stripped Ramon Galloway in the final seconds to prevent a potential game-tying shot.

Al Difaa, coming off their first win of the season, showed renewed fight. Abbas Alqarnawi sparked a 10-1 run in the fourth quarter with five straight points, helping trim a 15-point deficit to just two. Ihab Al-Zuhairi then tied the game at 83-all with a hook shot over Buva with 36 seconds to go, but it would be the last time the Iraqi side scored.

Galloway led Al Difaa with 24 points, 8 rebounds, and 6 assists, but also committed 6 of the team's 18 turnovers. Jordan Hamilton had a strong showing with 15 points, 13 boards, and 4 assists, while Ali Ismael added 17 points.

Tabiat forced 18 turnovers and scored 26 points off those errors, finishing with 14 steals – another key stat in a game where every possession mattered.

The win lifts Tabiat to 4-2, keeping them in strong contention for a top-three finish. Al Difaa drop to 1-6 despite another gritty performance that showed their underdog spirit remains very much alive.

### Saket Elhami returns to Nassaji: PGPL

TEHRAN – Saket Elhami has been appointed as the coach of Nassaji for the remainder of the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) season.

The 54-year-old coach parted ways with Nassaji in January after being banned for five months by the Disciplinary Committee of Iran's Football Federation due to offensive comments made against Foolad coach Yahya Golmohammadi at the end of their match.

Now, Elhami has returned to the team with the mission of helping them avoid relegation.

He replaces Savo Milosevic at the Ghaemshahr-based club.

With four weeks remaining, Nassaji sit in 15th place in the table and are at risk of relegation.

## Transport, transit agreement to be signed in Pezeshkian's visit to Azerbaijan



TEHRAN - Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh announced that the transportation and transit agreement will be signed between Iran and Republic of Azerbaijan during the visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Azerbaijan.

She also referred to the upcoming specialized meeting between Iranian and Azerbaijani traders on the sidelines of the president's visit to Azerbaijan, aiming to increase international goods transportation between the two countries and transit of goods in cooperation with Iran's Chamber of Commerce.

Meanwhile, Sadegh and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, as the chairmen of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee, visited the Port of Baku, along with their accompanying delegation. This visit, conducted at the top levels of the two governments, aimed to explore ways to enhance bilateral trade and economic interactions.

The Iranian minister also announced that the Joint Committee on Transport between Iran and Azerbaijan will be established soon.

She stated, "The purpose of forming the joint committee is to hold regular sessions of this committee and accelerate the process of pursuing joint projects in all aspects of transportation, including rail, road, air, and sea."

Iran and Azerbaijan signed Persian and Azeri versions of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on April 8, during the 16th Joint Economic Committee meeting, co-chaired by Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister.

According to the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, the meeting between Iranian Minister Farzaneh Sadegh and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev focused on reviewing bilateral projects and cooperation in economic, transport, trade, energy, and banking sectors.

The two sides also finalized agreements and action plans to be highlighted during the upcoming visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Azerbaijan.

The signed Persian and Azeri texts of the memorandum were appended to the English version of the MOU, which had been previously signed in Tehran in February 2025.

As part of her official visit, Minister Sadegh also inspected joint transport infrastructure projects between the two countries.

Sadegh, who also chairs the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee, also met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku to discuss bilateral ties and economic cooperation.

According to a statement from Iran's Transport and Urban Development Ministry, the meeting focused on expanding joint projects across key sectors including transportation, customs, water and energy, oil and gas, and preferential trade.

At the beginning of the meeting, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev appreciated the recent reciprocal visits of high-level delegations from Azerbaijan and Iran, noting that these visits

provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen friendship between the two countries and promote bilateral cooperation.

He mentioned the holding of the meeting of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee and emphasized that the meeting's agenda includes important projects aimed at expanding cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, energy, and transportation.

The Iranian minister, for her part, emphasized her country's interest in developing relations with Azerbaijan in all areas, and pointed to the strong historical, cultural, and religious ties between the two nations.

Sadegh led a high-level Iranian delegation to Azerbaijan from April 7 to 10 to review progress on past agreements, remove barriers to joint ventures, and lay the groundwork for an upcoming visit by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Baku.

The visit included field inspections of joint border infrastructure projects and the unveiling and signing of the Farsi and Azerbaijani versions of the joint committee's cooperation document, which was originally signed during a session held in Tehran in February after a three-year hiatus. Both versions will be appended to the English-language document.

Proposals for a new memorandum of understanding on transport and border cooperation were also being discussed, aimed at facilitating deeper collaboration ahead of Pezeshkian's trip.

Amin Tarafo, advisor to the minister and head of the ministry's international affairs office, said the trip was being made at the formal invitation of Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev.

He emphasized that the talks will build on recent momentum in bilateral trade, which grew by 20 percent in 2024 to a record \$580 million. Iran aims to raise this figure to \$10 billion within five years.

Sadegh's meetings were expected to clear the way for a more robust bilateral partnership, with both countries seeking to activate untapped capacities in trade and infrastructure development.

In late January, the 16th meeting of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee was held with the participation of Iran's minister of transport and urban development and Azerbaijan's deputy prime minister in Tehran.

The second day of the meeting took place on January 22, with the presence of Farzaneh Sadegh, and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev.

The Iranian minister expressed her satisfaction with the renewed collaboration, stating, "After a hiatus of over three years due to various circumstances, I am pleased that we successfully convened the 16th session of the Joint Economic Committee in Tehran. I hope that by following up on agreements in transportation, customs, energy, oil, gas, electricity, water, banking, preferential trade, investment, and other areas, we can open new avenues of collaboration and witness further growth in bilateral trade relations."

She highlighted transit cooperation opportunities, stating: "While notable steps have been taken in recent years to enhance this aspect of our relations, the current capacity in road, rail, air, and maritime transportation between the two nations is far greater than what is currently utilized."

Sadegh noted the necessity of resolving transit issues, proposing the establishment of a comprehensive transport committee and expert consultations to address these challenges.

tem, the revised figure stood at 57.7 quadrillion rials (\$115.4 billion).

Among consumer loans, 6.199 quadrillion rials (\$12.4 billion), or 36.5 percent, were issued as interest-free emergency loans.

In the industrial and mining sector, 20.4 quadrillion rials (\$40.9 billion) were allocated for working capital, representing 43.9 percent of total working capital loans across all economic sectors. Of the 24.1 quadrillion rials (\$48.2 billion) in total loans disbursed to this sector, 85 percent went toward working capital needs — underscoring the banking system's focus on supporting this segment.

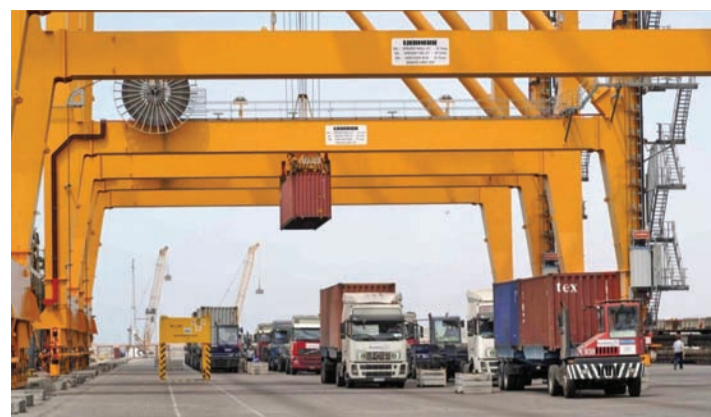
# Nearly 235m tons of cargo handled at ports in a year

TEHRAN - Iran's ports handled a total of 234.8 million tons of goods in the Iranian year ending March 2025, according to Saeed Rasouli, Deputy Minister of Transport and Acting Head of the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO).

Of this total, 82.3 million tons were unloaded and 152.5 million tons were loaded at the country's northern and southern ports. Oil products accounted for 103 million tons of the total, while non-oil goods made up nearly 131.8 million tons.

Rasouli said that oil cargo unloading amounted to 28.4 million tons, and non-oil cargo unloading stood at 53.9 million tons. On the export side, 74.7 million tons of oil products and 77.9 million tons of non-oil goods were loaded at ports.

Container handling also saw a notable uptick, with 3.08 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) processed in 2024—a 13



percent increase from the 2.73 million TEUs recorded in the previous year.

The figures reflect the ongoing expansion of Iran's port infrastructure and logistics capacity, despite international sanctions and logistical challenges.

In recent months, Iran's port operations have demonstrated resilience and growth, despite facing significant challenges. The Caspian Port, located in the Anzali

Free Zone of Gilan Province, has emerged as a pivotal hub in the International North-South Transport Corridor. Since its connection to the Iranian railway network in June 2024, the port has enhanced its cargo handling capabilities, facilitating more efficient trade routes between Iran and its northern neighbors.

Meanwhile, the Port of Shahid Rajaee continues to play a dominant role in Iran's maritime logistics, accounting for approximate-

ly 85 percent of the country's total cargo throughput. The port has seen a significant increase in container loading for export, reflecting its strategic importance in Iran's trade infrastructure.

However, the country's port operations have not been without challenges. The energy crisis that intensified in late 2024 led to widespread power outages, affecting various sectors, including port activities. Despite these disruptions, Iranian ports have managed to maintain a steady flow of cargo, showcasing the sector's adaptability and the government's commitment to sustaining trade operations under adverse conditions.

Looking ahead, Iran's focus on expanding and modernizing its port infrastructure, coupled with strategic investments and international collaborations, positions the country to enhance its role in regional and global trade networks.

## Iran invites foreign investment in oil sector ahead of major energy expo

TEHRAN - Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said the country welcomes the participation of foreign investors—particularly from neighboring states—in its oil industry, as Tehran prepares to host several key energy events in the coming weeks.

Speaking on Wednesday following a meeting with Qatar's Ambassador to Iran Saad Abdullah Saad Al Mahmoud Al Sharif, Paknejad told Shana that the two officials discussed potential areas for bilateral cooperation.

He noted that an invitation has been extended to Qatar's Energy Minister to attend the upcoming Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition (Iran Oil Show). A separate meeting is also planned for next week, led by the Oil Ministry's Department of International Affairs and Commerce, where numerous foreign ambassadors will be briefed by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) on the scope of the upcoming exhibition.

"The purpose of the meeting is to encourage ambassadors and relevant ministers to visit the exhibition and explore opportunities for international investment, particularly from neighboring countries," Paknejad said.

He added that Iran specifically invited Qatar to consider involvement in various joint projects, especially in the oil sector, highlighting the country's openness to regional cooperation.

Paknejad also referenced a major upcoming event titled Transformation in Investment and Development of Iran's Oil and Gas Upstream Sector, scheduled for Monday, April 21, at the Summit Conference Hall in Tehran. Foreign diplomats have been invited to attend, where Iran will unveil over 200 investment packages worth more than \$130 billion and provide detailed briefings during specialized sessions aimed at potential investors.

During a meeting between Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati and Qatari Minister of Finance Ali Ahmed Al-Kuwari, on February 17, the two sides discussed the ways to expand the economic and financial relations between the two countries.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the Al-Ula Conference for Emerging Market Economies, held in AlUla city.

The 10th Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee meeting concluded on December 12, 2024, in Doha, with officials from both nations pledging to enhance bilateral economic ties and increase trade to \$1.0 billion annually.

The meeting, co-chaired by Iran's Minister of Energy Abbas Ali-Abadi and Qatar's Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal Al Thani, focused on expanding cooperation across multiple sectors, including energy, infrastructure, and trade.

The event featured four specialized committees: Trade (covering commerce, banking, and insurance), Infrastructure (transport, agriculture, and ICT), Social and Cultural (tourism, health, and research), and Energy (water, electricity, oil, and gas). Over 60 representatives from public and pri-

vate sectors of both countries participated in the discussions.

Ali-Abadi emphasized the strategic importance of the partnership, saying, "Today's economic relations between Iran and Qatar require a strategic outlook." He noted that current trade between the two countries stands at approximately \$200 million annually, with plans to increase it fivefold to \$1 billion in the near future.

The official further highlighted a significant energy project involving a 200-kilometer undersea power line to connect Iran and Qatar's electricity networks. Initiated in March 2023, the feasibility study is in its final stages, with implementation set to follow approval.

"This project will revolutionize power transfer between the two nations during peak demand periods and enable electricity transit to third countries," Ali-Abadi stated.

He also expressed Iran's readiness to welcome Qatari investors, envisioning mutual investments of at least \$1 billion annually. Key focus areas include energy, transport, free trade zones, tourism, healthcare, and agriculture.

The Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee, established in 1995, has facilitated significant achievements, particularly in water and electricity sectors. The 10th session underlined both nations' commitment to translating agreements into tangible outcomes and fostering regional cooperation.

At the end of the meeting, the two sides signed a comprehensive cooperation document to determine the framework of cooperation in the coming year.

Speaking in an online meeting with Saleh Alkhulaifi, the deputy Industry and Commerce minister of Qatar, in late November 2024, Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), said that Iran seeks to reach one billion dollars in annual trade with Qatar.

Referring to the extensive political and cultural relations between the two countries, Dehghan Dehnavi said: "Despite the efforts of both sides, economic relations between Tehran and Doha have not reached the desired level."

"Fruits and food products are Iran's top exported items to Qatar, and it cannot be expected that the trade between the two countries will exceed one billion dollars with the export of such products, the official said.

According to the TPO head, the challenges in developing trade with Qatar are clear, and Iran is trying to increase the volume of trade with Qatar by developing a well-considered and coherent work plan.

Alkhulaifi for his part stated that the strict customs regulations in Qatar affect all countries, saying: "We will work to expedite the clearance of Iranian goods from Qatari ports and issue visas to Iranian businessmen, and we hope that the prospect of a billion-dollar trade between the two countries will be realized in the near future."

During a meeting between Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Ali-Abadi and Qatar's Ambassador to Iran Saad Abdullah Saad Al Mahmoud Al Shareef,



at the place of the ministry in Tehran, in mid-November 2024, the two sides discuss the ways to expand economic and trade ties between the two countries.

In this meeting, the Iranian minister emphasized the implementation of the economic cooperation documents signed by the two sides and offering necessary facilities to the traders and those active in the economy sector.

Addressing the same meeting, Reza Jabari, an Iranian MP and also the chairman of Iran-Qatar Friendship Group, referred to the scientific, technical and economic potential and capacities of Iran and called for the facilitation of the relation between Iranian and Qatari traders.

In early October 2024, high-ranking officials from Iran and Qatar signed six cooperation documents in the fields of trade and economy, culture, education, sports, and agriculture.

The documents were signed during an official visit to Doha by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Iran's Minister of Energy Abbas Ali-Abadi, who is the Iranian head of the Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee, was also present at the signing ceremony.

The documents were inked by the Iranian and Qatari ministers of energy, foreign affairs, and sports and youth affairs.

On the sidelines of the Iranian delegation's visit to Doha, the Iranian energy minister met with Mohammed bin Hamad bin Qassim Al Abdullah Al Thani, the Qatari minister of commerce and industry, who is the Qatari head of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee.

In this meeting, Ali-Abadi emphasized the need for joint investment and production by the private sectors of the two countries.

Ali-Abadi also held a meeting with Qatari Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida Al Kaabi in Doha, in which the two sides stressed the need to finalize feasibility studies about the connection of the electricity grids of the two countries.

Also, the issue of exporting technical, energy and engineering services from Iran to Qatar was raised by Iran's minister of energy, which was welcomed by the Qatari side.

The Iranian official invited his Qatari counterpart to visit Iran to learn about the country's high potential and capability in the electricity industry.

Joint-venture investment using the capabilities of the two countries in the field of electricity was among the other topics discussed at the meeting.

## Annual bank lending in Iran rises 32.9%

TEHRAN - Iran's banking system disbursed 76.6 quadrillion rials (\$153.3 billion) in loans during the Iranian year ending March 2025, marking a 32.9 percent increase compared to the previous year, according to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

Out of the total, 17 quadrillion rials (\$34 billion), or 22.2 percent, went to end consumers, including households, with a portion issued via credit cards. The remaining 59.7 quadrillion rials (\$119.3 billion), or 77.8 percent, was allocated to business owners, both corporate and non-corporate.

In the previous year (ending March 2024), total loans amounted to 56.5 quadrillion rials (\$113 billion). Following adjustments by the banking sys-

tem, the revised figure stood at 57.7 quadrillion rials (\$115.4 billion).

Among consumer loans, 6.199 quadrillion rials (\$12.4 billion), or 36.5 percent, were issued as interest-free emergency loans.

In the industrial and mining sector, 20.4 quadrillion rials (\$40.9 billion) were allocated for working capital, representing 43.9 percent of total working capital loans across all economic sectors. Of the 24.1 quadrillion rials (\$48.2 billion) in total loans disbursed to this sector, 85 percent went toward working capital needs — underscoring the banking system's focus on supporting this segment.

## Gas supply to industrial sector surges over 6.5 bcm in 18 days

TEHRAN - Iran's Oil Ministry has significantly ramped up natural gas deliveries to key industrial sectors in the early weeks of the new Iranian year, following a successful winter of uninterrupted supply to households.

According to the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), a total of 6.49 billion cubic meters of gas was delivered to power plants, petrochemical units, steelmakers, and cement factories from March 20 to April 7, 2025—marking a 6.89 percent in-

crease compared to the same period last year.

The power generation sector recorded the highest volume and growth, receiving 3.63 billion cubic meters of gas—up from 3.39 billion

the previous year. This rise underscores the Oil Ministry's focus on ensuring stable electricity production, particularly as the country prepares for increased energy demand in the summer months.

# Meta's role in silencing Palestinian narratives

From page 1 ▶ setting it apart from other governments which usually restrict their focus to internal media.

## Mechanisms of control collaboration and automation

This censorship system exposes a disturbing partnership between Meta and the Israeli regime.

Meta did more than just passively follow takedown requests; it actively facilitated the Israeli government's mass censorship campaign by giving it a legal pathway to do so.

The evidence points to complicity that surpasses mere compliance which prompts scrutiny regarding Meta's purported neutrality and its possible alignment with governmental agendas.

The incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) into censorship systems expands their reach while boosting operational performance.

Posts on X suggest that Meta's AI now automatically censors worldwide criticism of Israel, potentially eliminating human oversight and diminishing content creators' due process rights.

This automated system speeds content removal while simultaneously creating a risk of excessive censorship which silences legitimate dissent without examination.

The lack of transparency in how these algorithms are programmed and the criteria they use adds another layer of con-



cern, as does the potential for bias embedded in the training data.

## Censorship's legal and ethical implications

Legally speaking, Israel's censorship campaign highlights serious concerns about whether its censorship program adheres to international human rights law, notably the right to freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The deliberate targeting of pro-Palestine voices as evidence of war crimes and genocide in Gaza creates an impression that censorship is aimed at manipulating public opinion about Israel while counteracting reputational damage and preventing accountability.

The legal determination from the International Court of Justice that Israel's conduct regarding

Gaza could amount to genocide adds further complexity to the ethical discussion on censorship as an attempt to hide evidence and prevent witnesses from speaking.

From an ethical standpoint, we need to take a closer look at Meta's part in this operation. Meta, as a private company, doesn't have to follow the same rules as governments.

But as it runs such big communication platforms worldwide, it has a moral duty to stand up for free speech. The company chose to put Israel's requests ahead of its users' rights.

At the same time, it made exceptions for Israeli accounts. This seems like a double standard that undermines trust in its platforms.

## Israel's digital wall on Meta

The Israeli censorship activities on Meta platforms estab-

lish a perilous benchmark that threatens digital freedom.

Through its control of a major technology corporation, Israel constructed an intricate digital barrier that blocks the flow of information and suppresses dissent with unmatched severity.

State entities and private firms use advanced technologies such as AI to establish mass surveillance and censorship as standard practices across the globe beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The disclosures about Meta's assistance with the inquisition by Israeli censorship authorities highlight the urgent need for accountability, transparency, and content moderation policies that respect rights.

Social media platforms will continue to provide an essential site for political engagement and information sharing; therefore, digital rights and freedom of expression should remain an utmost priority.

To address this issue, international organizations, civil society, and technology companies must hold Israel and Meta accountable.

Actions such as transparency in content moderation policy, independent audits of AI systems, and legal challenges to extra-territorial censorship would be a good start. Simultaneously, journalists and activists must keep testing the limits of these practices.

## Some 100,000 rally against Israel in Bangladesh's capital

Tens of thousands of protesters rallied in Bangladesh's capital on Saturday to condemn Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, AP reported.

The protesters, estimated at some 100,000, gathered at the Suhrawardy Park in the Dhaka University area. They carried hundreds of Palestinian flags and chanted slogans such as "Free, Free Palestine."

Many among them beat the images of U.S. President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing them of backing Israel. Symbolic coffins and effigies representing civilian casualties were carried during the rally.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party, headed by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, and Islamist groups and parties expressed their solidarity



with the rally.

Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation of 170 million people, maintains no diplomatic relations with Israel and it officially supports an independent Palestine.

## Mercosur to expand common tariff exemptions as trade war rages



a meeting of foreign ministers of the bloc originally formed by Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, according to a statement published Friday, Bloomberg reported.

"The ministers have agreed it's important to face the challenges presented by the current foreign environment," they wrote in the statement, mentioning an international scenario that's "constantly changing."

The request, made by Argentina at a dinner on Thursday, was well received by other Mercosur members and the need for additional exemptions was consensual, according to people familiar with the negotiations.

It will be up to each country to decide which products will be added to the list of exemptions and what their tariffs will be.

Mercosur countries have decided to relax common external tariffs on 50 products of the choice of each of its members, giving them more flexibility to negotiate deals as they seek to avoid Donald Trump's tariffs, or retaliate against them.

The decision was made in Buenos Aires during

## US removes commander in Greenland following Vance's controversial visit

The U.S. announced it removed the commander of the Pituffik Space Base in Greenland on Thursday because of a "loss of confidence in her ability to lead," after Vice President JD Vance's controversial visit to the semiautonomous island last month, CNN reported.

"Actions to undermine the chain of command or to subvert President Trump's agenda will not be tolerated at the Department of Defense," Chief Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell wrote in a statement posted to X on Thursday announcing the removal of Susannah Meyers.

Following Vance's visit to the island in late March, Military.com reported that Meyers sent out an email to the space base pushing back on the vice president's actions and comments during the trip. Parnell included a link to the

Military.com story in his X post.

The news site reported the ousted commander wrote in an email, "I do not presume to understand current politics, but what I do know is the concerns of the U.S. administration discussed by Vice President Vance on Friday are not reflective of Pituffik Space Base."

Colonel Shawn Lee took over Meyers' position, according to a press release from the Space Operations Command.

The removal highlights continued moves for United States control over Greenland as President Donald Trump has vowed to acquire the land "one way or another," and Vance has repeatedly claimed the island is vulnerable and that the U.S. had "no other option" than to ramp up its presence there.

## US, Ukraine hold tense talks as mineral deal remains elusive, source says

U.S. and Ukrainian officials met on Friday on a U.S. proposal to gain access to Ukraine's mineral wealth, a source with knowledge of the matter said, adding that prospects for a breakthrough were scant given the meeting's "antagonistic" atmosphere.

The strains in the Washington talks stemmed from the Trump administration's latest draft proposal, which is more expansive than the original version, the source said, according to Reuters.

"The negotiating environment is very antagonistic," the source said, pointing to the "maximalist" draft submitted by the Trump administration last month.

A Treasury Department spokesperson confirmed the discussions, calling them "technical in nature."

The latest draft would give the U.S. privileged access to Ukraine's mineral deposits and require Kyiv to place in a joint investment fund all income from the exploitation of natural resources by Ukrainian state and private firms.

The proposed deal, however, would not provide U.S. security guarantees to Kyiv - a top priority of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelens-

kiy - for its fight against Russian forces.

The source said that one of the "Easter eggs" found in the document was a U.S. demand that the U.S. government's International Development Finance Corporation take control of a natural gas pipeline from Russian energy giant Gazprom across Ukraine to Europe.

The Ukrainian government has hired law firm Hogan Lovells as an outside adviser on the minerals deal, the source said.

Zelenskiy on Wednesday said a minerals deal should be profitable for both countries and could be structured in a way that would help modernize Ukraine.

Top Ukrainian officials including Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and Finance Minister Serhiy Marchenko will be in Washington in two weeks for International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings, including a Ukraine-focused ministers' meeting on April 25, multiple sources familiar with the plans said.

U.S. President Donald Trump is seeking a deal covering Ukraine's minerals, which include prized rare earths, as part of his effort to end the war and as a way to recover billions of dollars in U.S. military assistance to Kyiv.

## Yemen attacks Tel Aviv, US warships



From page 1 ▶ Earlier, Yemeni forces had targeted the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Harry Truman and several hostile warships in the northern Red Sea using cruise missiles and drones.

According to Saree, these strikes are a direct response to American aggression against Yemen and a show of solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine.

On Thursday, Ansarallah leader Sayyed Abdul-Malik al-Houthi asserted, "The Americans have not and will never be able to weaken our military capabilities."

He stressed that Yemen's position has economic, security, military, and strategic consequences for the Israeli regime, impacts that deeply worry its adversaries.

Amid continued U.S. support for the Israeli occupation regime, American warplanes launched fresh attacks on Yemen, targeting Sanaa, Marib, and Hodeidah.

In the latest wave of U.S. aggression, over 14 airstrikes hit residential areas in the capital, causing extensive damage.

Eleven more airstrikes struck Marib province, northeast of Sanaa, with some obliterating civilian homes.

As the bombing campaign continues, Mohammed Abdul Salam, head of Yemen's National Delegation for Negotiations, condemned the American attacks as a failure.

He said the attacks have done nothing but inflict humanitarian suffering on civilians and damage vital infrastructure.

In a social media statement, Abdul Salam called the U.S. campaign a blatant crime against the Yemeni people, stressing that such atrocities would only strengthen the people's resolve to pursue their just and legitimate cause.

He added that nearly a month into the aggression, millions of Yemenis took to the streets in Sanaa and other provinces in a powerful show of defiance, rejecting the attacks and reaffirming their solidarity with

Gaza.

Abdul Salam also dismissed U.S. claims that the strikes are intended to safeguard maritime navigation in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb.

These claims are "false, misleading, and completely unfounded," Abdul Salam added.

He argued that the true objective of the American campaign is to protect the Israeli occupation regime and enable its ongoing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.

Abdul Salam emphasized that the Yemeni people, and all free people around the world, clearly see the U.S. role as one of enabling Israeli crimes, with no genuine concern for international maritime security.

He concluded that the real threat to global maritime routes is the U.S. militarization of international waterways, which aims to guarantee Israeli security at the cost of regional stability.

On Friday, massive rallies swept through Sanaa and hundreds of other locations across multiple provinces, expressing unwavering solidarity with Gaza and full support for the Yemeni Armed Forces' operations in defense of Palestine.

## 50 years after eruption of Lebanon's infamous civil

From page 1 ▶ But why so much focus on Samir Geagea? It is simple and plain.

He was the successor to Bashir Gemayel, whom the enemy's army hired after 1980 as the spearhead for eliminating the resistance movement because he volunteered for a mission the enemy failed to achieve militarily and politically during the ongoing US-led Israeli aggression.

Samir Geagea dictates his unhinged positions to others without the slightest shame about being a pawn in the hands of the American surveillance den (embassy) in Beirut.

At that time, the US government, in the context of the Cold War, sought to prevent Lebanon from transforming into a socialist camp.

Geagea has learned nothing from the civil war, nor from the consequences of toying with civil peace, sectarian and religious incitement, or the dream of erasing a particular sect from existence,

as he is attempting to do today with the popular base of the Shiite factions.

Geagea has never condemned the Israeli aggression but condemned Hezbollah.

He "uses these violations (Israeli violation of Lebanese territory) as an excuse to preserve his existence," as he claims in light of repeated Israeli attacks and its disregard for any international resolutions, agreements, or commitments.

In the aftermath of every war waged by the Israeli enemy, some Lebanese blame the victim, not the perpetrator, to the point of almost aligning with the enemy in justifying massacres and attacks.

This time, the situation does not seem different from what it was after the July 2006 war, when WikiLeaks documents revealed elements of the anti-Hezbollah team who acted as informants for the enemy.

Then, while the Lebanese citi-



zens were returning to their destroyed homes and had not yet buried their martyrs, the same voices emerged to herald the defeat of the resistance and demand its disarmament.

Civil war is nothing more than an Israeli project, and the Israeli resistance group is primarily concerned with avoiding and repelling it, albeit forcefully—even if that requires licking the wounds.

This is despite the fact that the conditions that accompanied the outbreak of the civil war in the

1970s are present today, including the intense Western-Israeli enthusiasm to eliminate the resistance.

The circumstances at that time were also accompanied by the anti-resistance group's insistence on defending the sectarian, factional, and isolationist regime.

This is a precedent in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as the resistance forces have become more frightening to the U.S.-Israeli enemy than the Arab armies have been since 1948.

## Iran's Central Bank introduces rial debit cards for tourists, foreign nationals

TEHRAN - The Central Bank of Iran has officially issued a directive to the national banking network outlining the procedures for providing Iranian rial-denominated bank cards to foreign tourists and non-resident individuals.

Under the new initiative, licensed banks and affiliated exchange offices are authorized to issue renewable, time-limited rial bank cards to foreign tourists, investors, businesspeople, and other non-resident individuals.

The scheme is aimed at facilitating financial transactions for international visitors during their stay in the Islamic Republic.

The value of these cards corresponds to the amount of foreign currency that an applicant deposits with a participating bank or exchange bureau, either inside or outside Iran, based on the daily agreed exchange rate.

Any unused balance remaining at the end of the card's validity period will be reimbursed at the same daily agreed rate.

Applicants must be non-resident foreign nationals over the age of 18.

Each individual is eligible to receive only one such card. Banks can process applications through a variety of physical and digital channels, including bank branches, airport counters, ATMs, self-service kiosks, or other authorized service points.

Based on the guideline, the initial loading and subsequent recharging of the rial cards must be funded solely through the purchase of foreign currency or the transfer of foreign currency transfers from the individual applicant.

In addition, all transactions must comply with the detailed operational requirements outlined in the attached directive and can only be executed through the issuing bank or its affiliated exchange services.

The cards can be used for common bank-



ing operations such as purchases, fund transfers, ATM withdrawals, and utility bill payments.

The transaction limits for these cards are set to match those established for domestic debit cards held by Iranian citizens.

The issuance of these cards comes amid ongoing international sanctions imposed on Iran which have restricted the use of international payment networks like Visa and Mastercard within Iran.

Consequently, tourists often face challenges when trying to make electronic payments in the country.

By introducing these rial-denominated debit cards, the Central Bank aims to reduce the need for foreign visitors to carry large amounts of physical currency and enhance their freedom and flexibility in making everyday purchases and transactions.

It's worth noting that the agreed exchange rates used in this system are typically lower than the open market rates for foreign currency.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 28 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

## Lenj boats: guardians of maritime heritage in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN - Construction of Lenj boats is an ancient indigenous craft along the northern coasts of the Persian Gulf that has historically played an important role in navigation, trade, and the livelihoods of southern Iran's people.

Skills pertaining to the construction of Lenj boats and sailing them were added to UNESCO's World Heritage List as Iran's intangible cultural heritage in 2011.

Added to UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage, this industry now faces numerous threats and requires concerted efforts for its preservation and revival, IRNA reported.

Wooden Lenj boats which are made by skilled locals, have sailed in Persian Gulf waters for centuries.

They are considered a symbol of Iran's cultural identity and global heritage.

However, this ancient art faces challenges like replacement with fiberglass boats, high manufacturing costs, low demand, and negligence of traditional skills.

However, over the past couple of years, there have been critical voices warning about an imminent threat to that time-honored know-how, which is tied to many cultural values.

Moreover, there are growing concerns that this element is at risk of being removed from UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage.

Generally speaking, the UN recognition distinguishes the importance of the preservation and protection of the Lenj construction boat as the unique maritime heritage of southern Iranian coasts.

The Iranian Lenj boats are traditionally hand-built and used by the people of the north coast of the Persian Gulf for sea voyages, trade, fishing, and pearling.

As mentioned by the UN cultural body, the traditional knowledge surrounding Lenj ves-



sels includes oral literature, performing arts, and festivals, in addition to sailing and navigation techniques as well as terminology and weather forecasting associated with sailing, and the skill of boating.

The maritime knowledge used for sailing in Lenjis is traditionally passed down from father to son.

Iranian navigators can locate ships based on the positions of the sun, the moon, and stars; they used special formulas to calculate latitude and longitude, as well as water depth.

As for the impending threats, several factors contribute to the potential loss of UNESCO status for that skill passed down from generation to generation.

Firstly, a rapid pace of modernization and urbanization in Iran, especially in the coastal areas, has led to a decline in the practice and spread of traditional skills related to Lenj building and sailing.

Moreover, the younger generations are increasingly losing interest in acquiring these skills, opting for more modern forms of employment.

Secondly, as the world becomes more interconnected, traditional practices and cultural heritage are gradually being eroded when young people are exposed to a globalized culture, which causes changes in values, lifestyles, and preferences.

# Lost quarry believed to supply Achaemenid palace in Susa discovered in western Iran

TEHRAN - In a landmark archaeological breakthrough, Iranian researchers have discovered what is believed to be the long-lost quarry used to source the massive stones for Achaemenid-era masterpieces such as the palace of Darius the Great in the ancient city of Susa.

The site was found near the city of Abdanan in Ilam province, western Iran, and is being hailed as one of the most significant archaeological discoveries in West Asia in recent years.

Mohammad-Ebrahim Zarei, head of Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, announced the discovery during an official visit to Abdanan on Friday. "For over two millennia, the origin of the stones used in Darius's palace remained a mystery. This discovery is astonishing and could solve a 2,000-year-old historical puzzle," he said.

The monumental find was made possible through the efforts of a local teacher, Mohammad Heydari, who first proposed the site, and archaeologist Luqman Ahmadzadeh-Shohani, who led the excavation project. The research team, operating under the Institute's Archaeology Department, combined field surveys, satellite imagery, and geological studies to identify extensive remnants of ancient quarrying operations. Among the findings were stone-cutting tools, extraction evidence, and significant quantities of limestone and iron ore, which may have been used in crafting metal joints for Achaemenid stone architecture.

Historical references to a site named "Abiradush" — mentioned in inscriptions by Darius I as the source of stones for the Apadana Palace — had long intrigued scholars. Until now, its exact location remained unknown. The newly identified quarry in the Kabir Kuh mountains near Abdanan matches the descriptions and is believed to be the fabled Abiradush.

"The Apadana Palace in Susa is one of the most majestic royal structures of ancient Iran. Identifying the true origin of its building materials opens a new chapter in our understanding of Achaemenid construction logistics, architectural planning, and resource management," Zarei said.

The research team estimates the distance from the quarry site to Susa at roughly 150 kilometers.



Members of an archaeological team pose for a photo near a recently discovered ancient quarry, which is believed to be once a source for giant stones used for the construction of Achaemenid palaces in Susa, western Iran, April 11, 2015.

The stones were likely transported via a complex route combining mountainous roads and riverways, particularly the Karkheh River.

Archaeologists are hopeful that this find will lead not only to a deeper understanding of the Achaemenid Empire's engineering and architectural achievements but also to the potential nomination of the site for UNESCO World Heritage status. The discovery could spark new avenues in cultural tourism and sustainable heritage development in the central Zagros region.

Although detailed studies are ongoing and more visual documentation is expected to be released, the discovery has already drawn comparisons to the famed Pentelic marble quarries used in building the Parthenon in Athens, Zarei added.

This is not the first Achaemenid quarry to be identified in Iran. Around a decade ago, archaeologists uncovered large-scale stone extraction sites near Pasargadae, including the extensive "Almas-Bori" quarry and others used for building foundational and decorative elements in royal structures.

Experts believe that continued research into these ancient quarrying systems will further illuminate the sophisticated techniques employed by Achaemenid builders — from the extraction of 2- to 50-ton stone blocks, to their transportation by ox-drawn carts, and eventual polishing using date palm fibers and sharkskin.

### Susa, a gateway to must-see destinations

The UNESCO-registered Susa was once the winter residence of Persian kings after having been captured by Cyrus the Great. Susa became part of the Persian Empire under Cyrus II, the Great in 538 or 539 BC.

Various archaeological seasons in Susa have yielded ample relics including pottery, arms, ornamental objects, metalwork, bronze articles, as well as clay tablets. Susa is also a gateway to several worthy destinations such as the UNESCO-tagged ziggurat of Tchoghga Zambil, the ruins of Achaemenid Apadana Castle, Shush Castle (Akropol), Prophet Daniel Shrine, Museum of Susa, the archaeological mount of Haft Tappeh.

Situated in the lower Zagros mountain range, Susa is identified as Shushan in the Book of Esther and other Biblical books.

To the left of the entrance ramp, follow the self-guided signage past date palms into the excavation site of the 521 BC Palace of Darius, the mighty Achaemenid king.

To the east lies the Royal City, an area of deep excavations through 15 strata; south of the castle is an eroded earthen watchtower overlooking teenagers riding dirt bikes.

Dominating the landscape on the right is the fortress-like Chateau de Morgan (Shush Castle), built on the bones of an Elamite acropolis by the French in the early 20th century to protect their loot from marauding tribesmen.

It is not open to the public, but there are fine views from the path around the base, including a view of the Tomb of Daniel from the southern side.

In the Bible, Susa is known primarily from the story of Esther in which Haman the Agagite planned to defeat the Jews of Persia. According to the story, Esther outwitted him by persuading her husband, King Ahasuerus of Persia, to sabotage Haman's plan. The episode is commemorated every year in the Jewish Purim festival which is marked with costumed parties and other celebrations, according to Ancient Origins.

It is said that Alexander of Macedonia captured Susa in 330 BC and plundered the city, seizing some 40,000 talents of gold and silver from the treasury. Alexander initiated Shushan's decline by favoring Babylon and shortly after, following a revolt, the city was burnt to the ground. Subsequently rebuilt by Sapor II (309-379 CE), it was renamed Iranshahr Shapur and later helped in the resistance against the Arab invasion of 645.

After the fall of the Achaemenid Empire and the reign of Alexander the Great, who married in Susa, the city became part of the Seleucid empire. It was now called Seleucia on the Eulaeus. A palace in Greek style was erected, next to Darius' palace. The administrative center, however, was in the southern part of the city, where nearly all Greek and Parthian inscriptions were discovered. In the Parthian age, the city minted coins.

## Fakhr-e Davoud Rabat, a Timurid monument in Silk Road route

TEHRAN - Fakhr-e Davoud Rabat is one of the most prominent roofed caravanserais of the Khorasan region with unique architecture and a special geographic situation in the Silk Road route.

It was registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List in September 2023 as a historical monument dating back to the Timurid era.

Rajabali Labbaf-Khaniki, a researcher and archaeologist from the Khorasan region, told ISNA that various forms of caravanserais or rabats used to be built with special construction materials in proportion to the geographical situation.

For example, a caravanserai located on a mountainous road was a roofed building built with stone and mud mortar, he said. While a caravanserai located in a plain were bigger and accommodated more travelers, he added.

He said royal caravanserais (Rabats) were built in busy roads which connected big cities to each other. They were palaces to accommodate kings and high-ranking officials, he added.

Fakhr-e Davoud Rabat is one of the most beautiful and roofed caravanserais along Silk Road in Khorasan region, he said.

It is located near southern part of Fakhr-e Davoud village, 56 kilometers southwest of Mashhad and 400 meters off the Mashhad-Neyshabur road, he added.

This caravanserai has been built with construction materials like brick, gypsum mortar,



sand, limestone, and mudstone, he explained.

Labbaf-Khaniki added that there are four cylindrical towers at four corners of the caravanserai. Apart from empowering the monument, the towers were used as watchtower and defense tower to safeguard the security of caravanserai.

He continued that the interior space of the caravanserai includes a square-shaped hall in which four brick columns have been built in the middle and ivanches have been built on side walls. There is a dome on top of every ivanche to cover it.

Labbaf-Khaniki also said that Fakhr-e Davoud Rabat has been highly noticed by tourists and visitors.

Henri René d'Almany, French historian, has named it Hassanabad Rabat.

Hotham Schindler, an orientalist, wrote in his travelogue that Fakhr-e Davoud Village has a roofed caravanserai which has been repaired twice.

Also, "Afzal al-Molk", a travel writer in 1899, saw Fakhr-e Davoud and the caravanserai in this way: "The village of Fakhr-e Davoud is the place where caravans dock. There are 20 peasant families here. The caravanserai of Shah Abbasi was built here."

Sani' al-Dawla, the minister of impressions of Nassereddin Shah Qajar, who saw this building many times, wrote a detailed description of it and after stating its geographical location, he stated in the beginning of Al-Shams: "There is a caravanserai in Fakhr-e Davoud village, an equilateral square 20 cubits by 20 cubits, containing four towers. Inside the caravanserai is a square platform one cubit high, with a roof built above it. On this platform is a place for pilgrims and passersby, and eight other roofs have been built around this platform, under which the goods of the caravans are stored."

This Khorasani researcher and archaeologist stated: "Although Schindler and Afzal-ol-Molk have attributed Fakhr-e Davoud Rabat to Shah Abbas Safavi, there is no inscription or evidence to support this. Considering the architectural style of the building and its similarity to the covered space of the Alaqband caravanserai and the covered part of the Amir Alishir Navai caravanserai in Sangbast, it can be supposed that this building was founded in the Timurid era and was later renovated."

Fakhr-e Davoud Rabat was registered under the number 2108 on National Heritage List.

# 'Coercive measures, digital gap main challenges of information society'



TEHRAN – The head of the Information Technology Organization of Iran, Mohammad-Mohsen Sadr, has called the unilateral coercive measures and the digital divide the main challenges of the information society.

Addressing the 28th session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), which was held from April 7 to 11 in Geneva, Switzerland, he said that the session serves as a platform to address challenges facing information and communication technologies, [dolat.ir](http://dolat.ir) reported.

The main objective of the event is to create a shared vision and collective commitment to building an information society in which all the countries and individuals can benefit from information, he added.

"Iran, as a part of the global information society, has taken great strides in this direction. In line with economic and social advancement programs, Iran has achieved significant progress in expanding the fiber optic network, developing mobile broadband in rural and urban areas, and promoting electronic services in the fields of health, trade, education, agriculture, and science."

Unfortunately, international mechanisms designed to provide financial and technological assistance have failed to be implemented effectively, widening the technology gap between countries, the official added.

Referring to the goal of Internet governance as per the Tunis Agenda, Sadr noted that the declaration asserts that all governments should have an equal role and responsibility for international Internet governance, but this goal has

remained unfulfilled.

Unilateral sanctions have limited access to certain hardware and software preventing many developing countries from taking advantage of the available opportunities, it has also undermined the competitive and enabling environment needed for progress, Sadr stressed.

Referring to paragraph 70 of the global digital compact, the official went on to call for the development of practical mechanisms to strengthen international digital cooperation and eliminate unilateral measures.

Also, he asked cross-border companies operating in digital and artificial intelligence to be more responsible, preserve cultural diversity, and multilingualism, and take into account the national sovereignty of countries in the implementation of the compact.

The official expressed optimism that with the cooperation of all nations and international institutions, the challenges will be identified and practical solutions will be proposed to address them.

## 28th CSTD

The Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) held its twenty-eighth session from April 7 to 11.

The CSTD is a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations focal point for science, technology, and innovation (STI) for development, in analyzing how STI, including information and communications technologies (ICTs), serve as enablers of the 2030 Agenda.

It acts as a forum for strategic planning, sharing lessons learned and best practices, providing foresight about critical trends in STI in key sectors of the economy, the en-

vironment, and society, and drawing attention to emerging and disruptive technologies.

For this, it facilitates concrete collaborations between member states, NGOs and actors in the science, technology and development space. Every year, the commission has two priority themes, for the twenty-eighth session, the themes included 'diversifying economies in a world of accelerated digitalization', and 'technology foresight and technology assessment for sustainable development'.

**Cuba seeks to benefit from Iran's expertise in smart government**



Ernesto Rodríguez Hernández, the Cuban first deputy minister of communications, in a meeting with Sadr, expressed Cuba's interest in utilizing Iran's experiences in establishing a smart government and cybersecurity, as a top priority, Mehr news agency reported.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 28th session of the United Nations CSTD).

Expressing satisfaction with positive former interactions between the two countries, Hernández said, "Cuban officials are determined to develop relations with Iran, and our companies are preparing proposals for further cooperation with Iran."

The official also referred to the presence of the Iranian companies at last year's technology exhibition in Cuba and said: "Positive interactions have been established between the two countries in the field of cybersecurity."

For his turn, Sadr underscored the need to develop and deepen cooperation between the two countries. Referring to the interactions that have existed between Iran and Cuba over the recent years, the official said Iran's strategy focuses on developing these relations. He also announced Iran's readiness to boost joint activities in sectors such as e-government and smart gov-

ernment, as well as to hold training courses for Cubans.

Sadr also proposed establishing a joint committee to follow up on the issues between the two countries.

The Cuban official also extended an official invitation to Iranian companies to attend the country's 2026 exhibition and announced Cuba's readiness to participate in international events in Iran.

**Tehran, Havana boost co-op in different ICT sectors**

On November 24, 2024, Iran and Cuba signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to enhance cooperation in postal services.



A delegation led by Information and Communications Technology Minister Sattar Hashemi visited South America and the Caribbean region to boost joint efforts in the ICT sector.

During a meeting held in Havana, Hashemi and Cuban Deputy Prime Minister, Eduardo Martínez Díaz, explored avenues for boosting ICT ties, ISNA reported.

Referring to Iran's substantial progress in scientific and technological fields, Martínez called for expanding joint activities in artificial intelligence (AI), and telecommunication fields, as well as postal services.

The officials highlighted that there are many opportunities available for fostering cooperation and conducting collaborative efforts.

Iranian official, for his part, announced the country's readiness to transfer knowledge and expertise in the field of science and technology to Cuba, "by sharing technology, the two countries will start implementing joint activities," Hashemi noted.

The signed MOU focuses on improving and facilitating postal exchanges between Tehran and Havana, within the framework of the general regulations of the Universal Postal Union (UPU).

## Iran ranks 72 in technology and innovation: UNCTAD

TEHRAN –According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Technology and Innovation Report 2025, Iran is ranked among upper middle-income countries, ranking 72 among 166 countries.

The country's ranking has by one position compared to 2022.

UNCTAD has categorized 17 types of technologies as frontier technologies including artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, big data, 5G, 3D printing, robotics, drone technology, solar photovoltaic, concentrated solar power, biofuels, biogas and biomass, wind energy, green hydrogen, electric vehicles, nanotechnology and gene editing.

The Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development surveys the complex artificial intelligence landscape, aiming to help decision-makers design science, technology, and innovation policies that foster inclusive technological progress.

The Report 2025 calls for AI that puts people first and is shaped through global cooperation in which all countries have a say. The Report identifies three key leverage points – infrastructure, data, and skills – offering a broad socioeconomic perspective on AI while analyzing requirements and policies to promote sustainable industrialization and innovation.

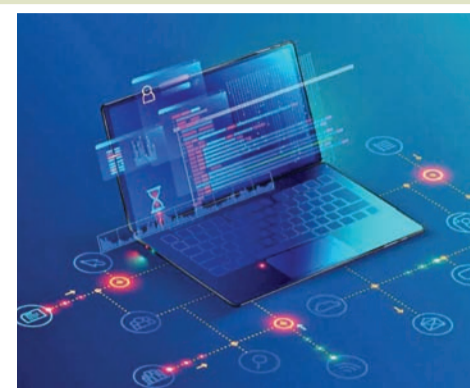
The sub-indices of readiness for frontier technologies in 2025 show that Iran's best ranking is in the research and development sub-index (35th in the world).

In the finance sub-index, the country's ranking has improved from 62 in 2022 to 56 in 2025. In other sub-indices like skills, and the establishment of information and communication technology, its ranking has lowered from 74, and 78 in 2022 to 82, and 94 in 2025, respectively.

**GII 2024: Iran moves up in technology output, business sophistication**

According to the 2024 edition of the Global Innovation Index (GII) report, the Islamic Republic of Iran's ranking in knowledge and technology output, but one thing is certain: the future of work won't look like the past.

Also, the country's ranking in market so-



phistication and infrastructure has risen by two positions from 19 and 97 in 2023 to 17 and 95 in 2024.

However, Iran's ranking in creative output, human research, and capital, as well as institutions has lowered compared to 2023.

The Global Innovation Index ranks the world's leading economies according to their innovation capabilities.

According to this year's report, Iran ranks second among the countries of the Central and Southern Asian region, unchanged compared with the last two years.

India and Kazakhstan ranked first and third, respectively.

Iran ranks 5 among the 38 lower-middle-income group economies, which has improved compared to the 2023 ranking (6).

However, the country's ranking, among the 133 economies featured in the GI 2024, has dropped from 62 in 2023 to 64 this year.

Switzerland secured the first rank in the GI 2024 report with a score of 67.5 for the 14th consecutive year, closely followed by Sweden and the U.S. at the second and third positions with scores of 64.5 and 62.4, respectively.

As stated in the 2024 edition, over the past four years (2020-2024), the statistical confidence interval for the ranking of Iran in the GI 2024 is between ranks 56 and 80.

Iran performed better in innovation outputs (48) than in innovation inputs (85) in 2024.

Published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the report ranks Iran first in Market capitalization, and Trade-marks by origin.

## Parkinson's in Iran %40 higher than global average: expert

TEHRAN – The incidence rate of Parkinson's disease in Iran is 40 percent higher than the global average, according to the vice president of Iran's Parkinson's Association.

Parkinson's is the second most prevalent neurodegenerative disease characterized by tremors, muscle stiffness, slow movements, and trouble with balance.

Currently, there is no cure for Parkinson's disease in the world. The treatments help reduce the movement symptoms, IRNA quoted Mohsen Mir-Mohammadi as saying.

The official made the remarks on the occasion

of World Parkinson's Day which is observed annually on April 11. The Day serves as a global moment to raise awareness, foster resilience, and bring hope to individuals living with Parkinson's.

Parkinson's disease incidence is increasing in the country, and it is estimated that the number of people with Parkinson's in Iran has reached more than 250,000 cases now.

The cause of Parkinson's disease is unknown but people with a family history of the disease have a higher risk. Stress, excessive use of agricultural pesticides, and parasites are the main contributing factors to Parkinson's. Many Parkinson's disease symp-

oms are caused by a loss of neurons that produce a chemical messenger in the brain, called dopamine. Decreased dopamine leads to irregular brain activity which causes movement problems.

Referring to patients' problems, the official said people with Parkinson's face many problems, mainly a lack of adequate access to quality medicine, and proper insurance coverage.

"The treatment costs including medication, speech therapy, and proper nutrition, reach more than 300 million rials (around 300 dollars) per month, which most people cannot afford.

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

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Iranian knowledge-based firms in Iraqi medical exhibition

TEHRAN – Iranian knowledge-based companies will attend an exhibition of medical, laboratory, pharmaceutical, and dental equipment in Baghdad, Iraq.

The third edition of the four-day exhibition will be held from September 10 to 13, ISNA reported.

On the sidelines of this exhibition, a pavilion of Iranian knowledge-based companies will be set up with the support of the Innovation and Prosperity Fund, and these companies will be able to present their products and capabilities.

## حضور شرکتهای دانش‌بنیان ایرانی در نمایشگاه پزشکی عراق

با حمایت صندوق نوآوری و شکوفایی، پویون اختصاصی شرکتهای دانش‌بنیان ایرانی در نمایشگاه چهار روزه تجهیزات پزشکی، آزمایشگاهی، دارویی و دندانپزشکی بغداد برپا خواهد شد. به گزارش ایسنا، سومین نمایشگاه چهار روزه تجهیزات پزشکی، آزمایشگاهی، دارویی و دندانپزشکی بغداد از روز ۱۰ تا ۱۳ شهریور ماه ۱۴۰۱ برگزار می‌شود.

در حاشیه این نمایشگاه، پویون شرکتهای دانش بنیان ایرانی با حمایت صندوق نوآوری و شکوفایی برپا می‌شود و این شرکتهای حضور در این نمایشگاه می‌توانند محصولات و توانمندی‌های خود در حوزه‌های مرتبط را ارائه دهند.



APRIL 13, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*There is no price for your soul but heaven; so, beware of selling it for anything else.*

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:05 Evening: 18:55 Dawn: 4:05 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:33 (tomorrow)

## Tehran gallery hosting "Iranian Abstraction" painting exhibit

TEHRAN-Karchive Gallery in Tehran is playing host to a painting exhibition, showcasing a collection of works by prominent Iranian artists alongside a noteworthy American artist.

The exhibit, titled "Iranian Abstraction," is part of a collaborative project by Karchive Gallery and displays remarkable creations from artists such as Reza Bangiz, Sadegh Barirani, Sadegh Tabrizi, Mohammad Ali Tarqijah, Iran Darroudi, Reza Daryabeigi, Hossein Zendehtroudi, Jamshid Samavatian and Iraj Shayestepour, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The exhibit also features artworks by Masoud Arabshahi, Nasser Assar, Monir Farmanfarmaian, Marcos Grigorian, Sirak Melkonian, Manouchehr Niazi, Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam, and the American artist Robbie Austin, the report added.

Each of these artists explores the realm of abstract art while distinctly imbuing their unique Iranian identity into their works.

Included in the exhibition is a selection of pieces by Robbie Austin, whose participation in numerous exhibitions and art fairs has established him as a significant figure in contemporary American art.

Austin's enthusiasm for Iranian culture and symbolism has inspired him to create abstract pieces that echo the Iranian spirit.

In the exhibition statement penned by Tuka Maleki, a historical overview of modernist Iranian artists is provided. It reveals that the first wave of Iranian modernists sought to respond to the question of modernity by revisiting the visual traditions of the Kamel al-Molk school, grounding their work in figurative painting. These early works sought realism and, through the simplification of forms and colors, they took their initial steps towards modernization.

The second generation of artists, equipped with a fresh perspective acquired from their studies in the West, brought home the influence of European modernism, particularly abstract painting. Pioneers such as Behjat Sadr, Mansoureh Hosseini, and Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam played a crucial role in the proliferation of abstract painting in Iran, further expanded during the 1960s and 1970s.

The exhibition also showcases the natural landscapes captured by artists like Sirak Melkonian, Iran Darroudi, Nasser Assar, Sohrab Sepehri, and Farideh Lashai, alongside the integration of Iranian and Eastern calligraphy in the works of Mansoureh Hosseini, Sadegh Barirani, Hossein Zendehtroudi, and Sadegh Tabrizi.

The exploration of motifs and elements of Iranian folk art is evident in the works of Marcos Grigorian, Monir Farmanfarmaian and some other artists, while geometric abstraction can be seen in the works of Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam, Masoud Arabshahi, and Mohammad Reza Joodat.

Though there is a consistent Iranian storytelling desire, it has historically prevented abstract art from becoming the predominant current of Iranian modernism. Iranian painting constantly oscillates between familiar visual elements, holding itself at the intersection of figurative and abstract art. The imaginative world of the Iranian artist, intertwined with music and poetry, continues to cultivate a romantic and lyrical essence within Iranian abstraction. As Sohrab Sepehri eloquently puts it: "Where Western art depicts a moment in time, a halted action, or a light phenomenon, Eastern art reveals a continuous essence."

The exhibition will run until April 21 at Karchive Gallery, located at No. 13, 12th Alley, Sanaei St.

## Cartoon of Day



Netanyahu Is a War Criminal  
Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

# Iran Film Week opens in Hanoi

TEHRAN-Iran Film Week in Hanoi was launched on Friday at the National Cinema Center in the presence of Ali Akbar Nazari, Iran's ambassador to Vietnam, and Quang Dong, Deputy Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Vietnam.

Organized by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Hanoi in coordination with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the event is held in honor of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and Vietnam, IRNA reported.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Iranian ambassador said: "Iranian cinema has long established itself as a distinctive and influential one in the world. With its minimalist yet emotional, poetic and deeply humanistic storytelling style, the films not only touch the hearts of audiences in the West Asian country but also receive admiration on the international stage".

"Since the early 20th century, when the first cinema opened in Iran, just five years after the invention of cinema by the Lumière brothers, the country has quickly approached the seventh art. The first Iranian sound film was produced more than 90 years ago, beginning a long journey of strong development, constant innovation, and creativity," Nazari added.

"Over the course of nearly a century, Iranian cinema has overcome many political and cultural barriers to become a globally respected cinematic powerhouse. At prestigious film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice, and even the Oscars, Iranian films are regularly honored for their depth of content, humanity, and unique cinematic language," he noted.

Referring to the film week an opportunity for audiences to enjoy Iran's internationally awarded works, the ambassador said: "The event also opens up a space for exchange and understanding between the two cultures, thereby strengthening the friendship between the people of the two countries".



strengthen the friendship between our two nations," Nazari concluded.

Also speaking at the ceremony, Quang Dong, said: "With its profound culture, science, and philosophical foundations, Iran possesses a strong film industry that has significantly contributed to humanity's cultural heritage. Iranian cinema, with its meaningful stories rooted in everyday life, has captivated global audiences while maintaining a close connection to the realities of this beautiful country and its people".

"We believe that the Iran Film Week will offer Vietnamese audiences deeper insights into the essence of Iranian customs, culture, and people, highlighting shared values between our two cultures such as life, love, and family," he asserted.

The five Iranian films shown during the week include "In the Arms of the Tree," directed by Babak Khajehpasha, "Fragrant" by Hadi Moghadamdoost, "A Passenger from Ganora" by Ahmad Alamdar, "Beyro" by Morteza Ali Abbasmirzaee, and "Goodbye Shirazi Girl" by Afshin Hashemi.

"In the Arms of the Tree" tells the story of Kimia and Farid, married for 12 years, whose complex crisis disrupts the beautiful world of their children, who have known nothing but simplicity and kindness in their life.

"Fragrant" is about a struggling

"Goodbye Shirazi Girl" tells the story of an alien who arrives on Earth and, with the help of a disabled boy and his friends, embarks on a quest to find the ruler of the planet Ganora, lost somewhere on Earth, in order to restore peace to their homeland.

"Beyro" follows the life of Alireza Biranvand, from his childhood to entering professional football and becoming the goalkeeper of Iran's national football team.

"Goodbye Shirazi Girl" is based on Neil Simon's "The Goodbye Girl". It's a romantic story in which a man named Nasim, who is from Abadan, and Shabnam, a widow who lives with her daughter, end up renting the same house. They put up with each other with difficulty until they finally find a solution.

The film week is free to the public and will run until April 15 at the National Cinema Center where the audience has the opportunity to explore and enjoy traditional and creative Iranian cinema.

## Sheena Iyengar's "The Art of Choosing" published in Persian

TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the book "The Art of Choosing" written by Sheena Iyengar has been released in the Iranian book market.

The book has been translated by Sepideh Reisi and published by Bidgol Publishing House in 363 pages, Mehr reported.

Originally published in 2010, it is a non-fiction work that explores the many facets of choice, a cornerstone of the human condition. It delves into how people make choices and the role of choice in our personal and professional lives.

Drawing from research in psychology, behavioral economics, and neuroscience, Iyengar explores the complexity behind decision-making processes and offers insights into how choices shape our lives, our world, and our future.

The book also reflects on how cultural and environmental factors influence our choices, arguing that understanding these factors can help us make better decisions.



Iyengar asks the difficult questions about how and why we choose: Is the desire for choice innate or bound by culture? Why do we sometimes choose against our best interests? How much control do we really have over what we choose?

How can we minimize the influence of such

powerful factors, including bias and culture? Is it possible to re-train our intuition? How do we balance the competing forces of gut and reason to make better decisions? "The Art of Choosing" answers these questions and raises many more.

Iyengar's award-winning research reveals that the answers are surprising and profound. In our world of shifting political and cultural forces, technological revolution, and interconnected commerce, our decisions have far-reaching consequences.

Sheena Iyengar is a world expert on choice and decision-making. She is the S.T. Lee Professor of Business at Columbia University and a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award. She holds an undergraduate degree from the Wharton School of Business and a doctorate in social psychology from Stanford University. Her work is regularly cited in periodicals such as the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, Fortune and TIME.

## Arasbaran cultural center to review "Here"

TEHRAN-"Here", a 2024 movie by prominent American filmmaker Robert Zemeckis, will be reviewed at the Arasbaran Cultural Center in Tehran on Sunday evening.

Film critic Kurosh Jahed is set to attend a screening of the film followed by a review session.

"Here", which is an adaptation of Richard McGuire's acclaimed 2014 graphic novel, takes a nonlinear approach to storytelling, exploring the events that transpire on a single plot of land and its inhabitants, stretching from prehistoric times to the 21st century. Throughout the film, visuals are often split into multiple frames, illustrating different periods simultaneously and enhancing the narrative's depth.

The plot unfolds in a nonlinear fashion, beginning with dinosaurs roaming the land before their extinction, followed by an ice age that eventually gives way to verdant landscapes. The narrative shifts to

the Lenni-Lenape people, focusing on a couple whose love story is punctuated by heartache and loss marked by the occasional appearance of a hummingbird.

As time progresses, the land becomes part of the estate owned by William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin. By the turn of the 20th century, a house emerges as the central location for much of the story's action. The Harter couple occupies the home, where John's passion for flying ultimately leads to his untimely death from the Spanish flu.

Subsequent residents include Lee, a bohemian inventor, and his wife Stella, a pin-up model during the 1940s, who eventually leave to pursue their dreams in California. The Young family moves in after World War II, raising three children and facing life's challenges—including Richard's marriage to Margaret after an unexpected preg-



nancy.

The film further chronicles the lives of Al and Rose, who downsize to Florida as they face health challenges, followed by changes in the household after their departures. By the early 2000s, Richard and Margaret navigate the complexities of divorce, while a new family—the Harrises—experiences their own share of heartbreak when a family tragedy strikes amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a poignant conclusion, Richard returns to the now-empty house, attempting to spark memories in a dementia-stricken Margaret. As he revisits special moments in their lives, the film culminates in a nostalgic reflection on love and memory, revealing the enduring significance of "Here." The final shot of a hummingbird ties together the emotional tapestry that weaves throughout this narrative.