

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) meets with his Omani counterpart, Badr al-Busaidi, in Muscat on April 12, 2025.

# What Happened at Albusaidi's Home on Saturday

Tehran Times gains details of indirect Iran-US discussions in Oman

Exclusive

## Over 1800 Iranian artists and journalists urge world to 'do something' for Gaza

TEHRAN – In a statement addressed to “all freedom-loving people of the world,” a group of more than 1800 Iranian artists and media professionals issued a plea for action to end the genocide that’s been taking place in Gaza since October 2023.

In the past 18 months, Israel has pummeled Gaza with U.S.-supplied bombs, killed over 50,000 people, and razed entire neighborhoods to the ground. The regime’s actions have been characterized as a genocidal campaign by rights bodies, who have also been accusing Western states of enabling Israel to continue committing the harrowing crimes.

Below is the full text of the statement:

“Allah dislikes the disclosure of [anyone’s] evil [conduct] in speech except by someone who has been wronged, and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” (Quran 4:148)

From representatives active in Iran’s culture and media to all freedom-loving people of the world: ▶ Page 2

## Iran FM talks with regional countries on Oman negotiations with US

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has held a series of phone calls with top diplomats from the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, and Egypt to discuss regional developments and the ongoing indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States in Oman.

Iran and the US said over the weekend that they had held “positive” and “constructive” talks although the negotiations remain indirect with Oman acting as mediator.

An Iranian delegation led by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and an American delegation led by U.S. Special Envoy to West Asia Steve Witkoff sat in two separate halls for two and a half hours as Oman’s top diplomat acted as go-between.

Iran’s chief negotiator, Abbas Araghchi, stated ahead of the session that Tehran was offering diplomacy a “sincere opportunity” to resolve outstanding nuclear issues and achieve a lifting of sanctions, while also cautioning against prolonged negotiations. ▶ Page 2

## Anti-Hezbollah team openly doesn't oppose Israel!

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Following the September-November Israeli aggression on Lebanon, there are signs of extreme rudeness and impudence among the anti-resistance team in approaching political matters, especially those related to the historical hostility with the Israeli occupation entity.

Interior Minister Ahmad Hajjar systematically ignores the fact that the American film Captain America: Brave New World, starring Israeli actress Shira Haas, who plays the role of Sabra, the head of security for President Thaddeus Ross, is being shown in Grand Cinemas in Lebanon.

The film is inspired by the story of an Israeli character with superpowers and wears a blue and white costume (the colors of the Israeli flag).

Haas was a conscript in the Israeli army but was relieved of her duty after being diagnosed with cancer. So, she decided to volunteer in the military band and theater unit of the Israeli occupation army.

This suggests that Lebanese cinemas may also be screening Snow White, starring former Israeli soldier Gal Gadot. ▶ Page 5

## The world powers and Iran-US talks

By Abbas Akhondi

TEHRAN – International media assessments of Iran-US negotiations before the talks on Saturday, April 11, essentially suggested that a military confrontation between the two countries was inevitable.

Most domestic analytical sessions on the Tehran-Washington relationship echoed these views, and most Iranian analysts also believed it was highly unlikely that the two nations could avoid conflict or escalation. However, it is still too early to judge, and we must wait to see how negotiations progress.

That said, I personally have not and do not share this perspective. My analysis, at least thus far, differs. I believe the risk of military conflict between Iran and the United States—or even Iran and Israel—is not so high. To explain why I do not share the belief of an imminent confrontation, various factors must be considered. After examining these factors, I conclude that a military conflict between the two countries is somehow unlikely. ▶ Page 3

## West Asia is a stage for Iranian diplomacy; Muscat is the first stop

By Mino Khaleghi  
Jurist and political analyst

TEHRAN – In a tense regional atmosphere where diplomacy often takes a backseat to power politics, the recent indirect talks between Iran and the United States in Muscat signal a return to rationality in global equations.

Conducted discreetly yet transparently under the professional stewardship of Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these negotiations showed several clear signs of diplomatic progress and a shift in tone from the American side. In nine key points, I analyze the significance of these recent developments and what lies ahead.

### Location Determined by Iran: a sign of strength

Holding the talks in the Omani capital was not a neutral choice—it was the result of Iran’s proactive diplomacy. The fact that the United States came to West Asia to talk means they accepted that Iran sets the terms. This choice of venue is a clear indication of Iran’s upper hand in the negotiations and its considerable influence in regional dynamics. ▶ Page 2

## Araghchi to visit Moscow soon, Iran foreign ministry confirms

TEHRAN – Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is scheduled to travel to Moscow later this week.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei Kani announced the upcoming trip during his weekly press briefing on Monday, noting that the visit had been planned in advance but will also include discussions on the latest developments in indirect Iran-US negotiations.

Iran and the US said over the weekend that they had held “positive” and “constructive” talks although the negotiations remain indirect with Oman acting as mediator.

“Mr. Araghchi will head to Russia later this week in a visit that was previously arranged,” Baghaei stated.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed on Monday that Foreign Minister Lavrov will meet Araghchi.

“We are expecting Iranian colleagues, talks with Sergey Lavrov as well as meetings with Russian officials are planned,” ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

Baghaei also added that Iran continues its consultations with European counterparts, referencing a recent trip to Europe by another senior diplomat, Majid Takht-Ravanchi. ▶ Page 2

## Jolani's trial in France: A long-awaited justice and opportunity to restore Syrians' dignity

By Najah Mohammed Ali

LONDON – At a critical juncture in the trajectory of the Syrian conflict, the lawsuit filed by human rights organizations against Ahmad Hussein al-Shara (Abu Mohammad al-Jolani) before the French judiciary on charges of genocide and war crimes opens an important door for Syrians and the world: the door of long-awaited international justice.

Though delayed, this legal action restores the voices of the victims and reaffirms that impunity is no longer a foregone conclusion, even in the most complex of conflicts. ▶ Page 5



## Oil minister visits Baghdad to boost cooperation with Iraq

TEHRAN – Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad arrived at Baghdad International Airport on Monday for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening energy cooperation between the two countries.

During his stay, Paknejad is scheduled to hold meetings with senior Iraqi officials to discuss ways to expand collaboration in the energy sector, according to Shana.

Prior to his departure, the Iranian minister had noted that various areas of cooperation had already been discussed between the two countries. “We hope that during this visit, with the finalization of these discussions, memorandums of understanding will be signed in the field of energy,” he said, adding that Iran and Iraq enjoy strong and multifaceted relations, particularly in the oil industry and joint energy projects.

## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

### Iran's upper hand

In a note, Jam-e-Jam discussed the nuclear negotiations in Muscat. It wrote: In recent days, the capital of Oman, Muscat, has once again become the center of global diplomacy. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States began their indirect negotiations in this city. These negotiations were not only a diplomatic procedure, but in the background, there was also a global psychological war centered on Western media. While the negotiations were specifically focused on nuclear issues and the lifting of sanctions, some Western media, especially Reuters, attempted to distort the nature of the talks unrealistically and create a false narrative in this regard. Despite the media atmosphere that at times attempted to mislead the purpose of the negotiations and spread an imaginary narrative that Iran has retreated, the reality is that the negotiations solely focused on the nuclear issue and lifting sanctions. The negotiations, especially considering the Islamic Republic of Iran's determination to secure its national interests through diplomacy, demonstrate Iran's responsible and constructive approach in the international arena.

#### Farhikhtegan: Pakistan awaits good news from Muscat talks

In an analysis, Farhikhtegan discussed Pakistan's enthusiasm for an Iran-U.S. agreement and said: The failure to realize the ideal conditions for comprehensive cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan has largely depended on the bilateral relations of both countries with the U.S. The massive Peace Pipeline project is a perfect reflection of this situation. For nearly two decades, this project has been caught in the ups and downs of Pakistan's decisions and relations between Washington and Tehran and has practically reached a dead end. Given Pakistan's economic situation and the country's need for energy resources, many Pakistani politicians have tried to complete this national project, but the U.S. sanctions on Iran have made these efforts useless. With this in mind, it seems that Pakistanis are now looking to Muscat, so that perhaps, with an agreement between Washington and Tehran, they can regulate their economic relations with Tehran and create new conditions for their energy-hungry economy.

#### Etemad: In case of an agreement, US must provide necessary guarantees

Etemad spoke with political activist Nasser Imani about the first round of nuclear negotiations with the U.S. in Oman on April 11. He said:

### West Asia is a stage for Iranian diplomacy; Muscat is the first stop

From page 1 ► **The Witkoff appointment: A sign of changed approach**

Steve Witkoff, a real estate attorney and a close associate of Donald Trump, represented the American side. Unlike the typical choice of seasoned political figures for such negotiations, selecting someone without political ambition or diplomatic history reveals an intent to engage in focused, result-oriented dialogue.

Israeli journalist Emily Schrader's ridicule of Witkoff, calling him "dangerously naive," and extremist media like Terror Alarm attacking him only reveal Tel Aviv's frustration. Netanyahu's visible discomfort during his recent meeting with Trump, following the announcement of the talks, further underscored Israel's concern.

#### Araghchi: a Symbol of composure and credibility

Representing Iran was Dr. Seyed Abbas Araghchi, a seasoned diplomat known for his calm demeanor and distaste for political theatrics. His prominence within the Islamic Republic became even clearer when the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's official publication featured Araghchi's photo on its front page the night of the talks, captioned "Iran's Upper Hand"—a signal of institutional trust in his negotiating path.

#### Positive signals from both sides

Following the meeting, both parties described the atmosphere as "constructive" and "positive." Unusually, the White House statement lacked any threatening tone and expressed a willingness to resolve disputes

Some news stories suggest that people think that immediately after the negotiations, all their economic and livelihood problems will be solved and prices will be reduced. These negotiations may just solve some of Iran's economic problems.

It should be noted that the majority of the cruel sanctions imposed against Iran are related to the U.S. Senate and Congress and have nothing to do with the U.S. government. If Trump wants to cancel or reduce these sanctions, he will need the approval of Congress. Even if Iran and the U.S. agree on the issues of interest, this agreement can only reduce some of the sanctions, not all of them. There is also no guarantee for the implementation of U.S. commitments. Just as we witnessed such cases in the previous round when the JCPOA was signed.

Therefore, the necessary guarantees must be obtained from the United States. Therefore, we must be cautious about the results of these negotiations. We should not unreasonably make the people happy or disappoint them about the results of the negotiations.

#### Javan: Israel's anger at the nuclear negotiations

In the days leading up to the indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States, the Zionists and their media affiliates published numerous reports claiming "Iran's weakness in the negotiations."

The Zionists, dissatisfied with negotiations between representatives from Tehran and Washington, have either become silent or used their affiliated media to attack the indirect talks between the parties.

After the end of the first round of negotiations, not only the Iranian side but also the Americans and countries around the world spoke of the positive atmosphere in the negotiations, and by constructively assessing what happened, announced next week as the date for the next round.

However, the Zionist media outlets practically tried to downplay the indirect negotiations. According to former CIA officer Graham Fuller, these talks have surprised and angered Netanyahu.

All Netanyahu wants is to dominate the region. But he will not achieve that as long as Iran exists. The Iranians will not allow anyone to force them, and any conflict with Iran would be disastrous for the region.

through diplomacy. Trump—known for inflammatory post-meeting comments and sudden tweets—remained notably silent, a gesture more telling than words and indicative of Washington's relative satisfaction.

#### Mutual respect: erosion of threat-based language

Sources close to the talks reported that the discussions were grounded in mutual respect. This simple yet powerful phrase implies that the rhetoric of threats and pressure was abandoned. Notably, there was no mention of dismantling Iran's nuclear program—a clear recognition of Iran's red lines.

#### Focus exclusively on nuclear issues

The negotiations centered solely on Iran's nuclear activities, with no mention of its missile program. This demonstrates that the American side now understands that Iran's defensive capabilities are non-negotiable.

#### Face-to-Face exchange: a tangible sign of progress

A brief in-person exchange between the delegations at the end of the meeting reflected a certain level of mutual understanding. Even a few minutes of direct dialogue at this level of diplomacy is highly significant—especially given the American insistence on face-to-face engagement.

#### Outlook toward October

As October approaches, the risk of the European Troika—particularly France—activating the snapback mechanism increases.

## Iran FM talks with regional countries on Oman negotiations with US

From page 1 ► In his call with UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Araghchi shared updates on the Muscat talks. Sheikh Abdullah welcomed Iran's commitment to diplomacy and expressed hope that the negotiations would yield positive outcomes for the wider region.

Speaking with Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, Araghchi thanked Kuwait for its support and laid out Tehran's positions on the Muscat talks.

Al-Yahya referenced Kuwait's official statement endorsing the discussions and voiced optimism for a productive conclusion.

During a Sunday evening con-



versation with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Araghchi reviewed the outcomes of the first

round of indirect talks with the U.S., emphasizing Iran's resolve to pursue diplomatic avenues to address key issues.

Sheikh Mohammed welcomed

the initial results and reaffirmed Qatar's readiness to assist in advancing the process.

Earlier on Sunday, Araghchi also held a call with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty. Both sides exchanged views on the Muscat negotiations and the broader regional picture. Abdelatty reiterated Cairo's support for the talks, citing Egypt's formal statement of welcome. Araghchi, in turn, elaborated on Iran's perspectives.

The two also discussed the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the continued loss of civilian lives, and the urgent need to intensify diplomatic efforts toward achieving a ceasefire.

### Araghchi to visit Moscow soon, Iran foreign ministry confirms

From page 1 ► On the Iran-Russia comprehensive strategic agreement, Baghaei confirmed it has passed the Russian Duma and is now moving through Iran's legislative process. "This has been a Foreign Ministry priority," he noted.

#### 'Iranian governance not dependent on nuclear talks'

Baghaei also noted that the country will not tie its internal governance to the outcome of nuclear negotiations, emphasizing that all institutions must continue to operate according to regular procedures, regardless of ongoing diplomatic talks.

Baghaei emphasized that while the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, remains legally valid, Iran is pursuing diplomatic engagement with all original signatories to address outstanding issues. "The JCPOA is still a living agreement with clearly defined parties. We continue our interactions in that framework, and we believe these consultations will prove beneficial," he said.

Baghaei stressed that any sanction relief must be tangible, not symbolic. "We've learned from past negotiations.

Commitments must come with guarantees," he said.

He highlighted Iran's diplomatic activity amid major regional and international developments, including the continued Israeli assault on Gaza and the West Bank. "The genocide continues.

Despite international guarantees, the ceasefire has been flagrantly violated. Hospitals, journalists, and civilians have been deliberately targeted," he said.

Baghaei also condemned ongoing attacks on Yemen, noting Iran's clear positions on these developments.

"The root cause of instability is the Zionist regime's occupation and apartheid policies," Baghaei stated. "This entity is the only one occupying two nations and yet enjoys full

Western support."

#### 'U.S. must resolve its contradictions'

In response to comments from the U.S. State Department urging Iran to act seriously in talks while also threatening continued sanctions, Baghaei said, "These contradictory statements reveal why the talks remain indirect. You can't call for dialogue while simultaneously applying pressure. This dual-track approach is unacceptable."

He reiterated Iran's position that its nuclear program remains peaceful, with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) repeatedly verifying this in its reports. "Our main demand is the removal of illegal and oppressive sanctions," he said.

On the future venue for talks, Baghaei confirmed Iran remains in touch with Oman and will announce the location once finalized.

#### Iran is serious about reaching a new deal with the U.S., but it's not counting on it

Baghaei dismissed the prospect of direct talks with the U.S., saying they will not occur while Washington continues its pressure campaign.

"This language undermines diplomacy and violates the UN Charter," he said.

He also stressed that indirect talks are not unusual and have proven effective in the past. "We remain open to meaningful diplomacy, but it must be based on trust and guarantees—not symbolic gestures."

Baghaei clarified that Iran's indirect talks with the U.S., mediated by Oman, remain unchanged in structure.

#### 'Grossi to visit Tehran on Wednesday'



Baghaei said a general agreement has been reached for IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi to visit Iran, with logistical details being finalized. "The trip will likely take place this week," he said.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi also confirmed on Monday that Rafael Grossi will visit Tehran on Wednesday.

Gharibabadi noted that Grossi is scheduled to hold meetings with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami.

"The trip falls within the framework of ongoing interaction and cooperation between the two sides," he added.

#### 'Genocide in Gaza must end'

He emphasized Iran's diplomatic efforts to end the war in Gaza and expressed regret over the lack of accountability for Israeli actions supported by Western governments.

Baghaei condemned the alleged plan to forcibly displace Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank. "The people of Palestine remain steadfast and will not abandon their land," he said.

#### 'Iran-Egypt relations on the path of progress'

Baghaei noted steady progress in Iran's bilateral dialogue with Egypt, with increasing diplomatic contacts indicating growing ties.

### Over 1800 Iranian artists and journalists urge world to 'do something' for Gaza



From page 1 ►  
"Let's do something!"

A missile strikes the heart of a building, and the sound of the explosion fills the heavens. First, there's smoke, dust, and fire rising into the air.

Moments later ... black specks fill the entire frame of the scene. They're dots that are hurled into the sky at an unbelievable speed before plummeting to the ground.

What are these dots? What has the force of the explosion left wandering between the sky and the earth? Time passes, and we realize those dots are hands, bodies, heads, and limbs.

It's human beings burning in the fire of the savagery of a hand-

ful of creatures viler than the vilest of beasts. These people have been torn apart and flung into the sky. Do you see that? That's a human being who is burning and has been flung into the sky ... in a land whose name is intertwined with suffering: Gaza.

We're living in an era where it seems the world has grown accustomed to watching the unfiltered images of "genocide" in the Gaza Strip. So, shame on humanity if it sees the suffering in Gaza and remains silent.

Shame on humanity if it doesn't speak out in the face of these clear, stark images of human slaughter.

Woe to the "international community" and the United Nations

that sees the river of blood and the mountain of bodies of innocent people, yet they choose to remain silent.

Shame on the rulers of the "Islamic world" who lack even the strength displayed by the 50 government leaders who joined hands and held a march in protest against the blasphemous magazine Charlie Hebdo.

They lack the courage to defend the honor of humanity or the dignity of Palestinian Muslims. Like corpses, they have fallen into a deadly silence in the face of the organized savagery of the Zionists.

And woe to us ...

Woe to us if we witness this havoc and remain silent like all the disgraceful figures in today's history whose names have faded and become a source of shame for humanity.

We, a number of people who are active in the fields of culture and the media in Iran, can no longer tolerate witnessing the painful, sorrowful plight of Muslims in the Gaza Strip.

With teary eyes and hearts brimming with rage against the Zionist enemy, we extend our

hand in solidarity with anyone on this planet who considers themselves to be a "human being" ...

Sisters! Brothers! Fathers! Mothers! Dear people! We must raise our voices to express the suffering in Gaza with all our might.

We must be the voices of Palestine and change the world into a battleground against the Zionist genocide being perpetrated by Israel's brutal killing machine.

Today, the Zionist regime is serving as a proxy for the oppressive US government in igniting flames in the West Asian region. Not only is it acting on behalf of that government, which is against human rights, but it also seeks to serve as Satan's proxy on Earth.

With this savage genocide, it's setting not only the Gaza Strip but also the entire planet of "humanity" on fire.

Today, Gaza stands as the front line in the battle of humanity against Satan. We, imploringly, pleadingly call upon all those who still feel a pure heart beating within their chests to come together and "do something" for the oppressed people of Gaza. We must not remain silent. This is the very least we can do.

# What happened at Albusaidi's home on Saturday

Tehran Times gains details of indirect Iran-US discussions in Oman

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – Iran and the United States spoke indirectly in Oman on Saturday, as tensions remained smoldering between the two countries, and the Iranian side approached the talks gingerly and with deep mistrust. The Tehran Times had obtained new information about what went on that day and whether any concrete results could be expected from the first major encounter between the two states in several months.

The talks began around 3:00 pm local time at the residence of Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Albusaidi, who acted as a go-between. From the Iranian side, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi and from the American side, Special Presidential Envoy Steve Witkoff, were present at the top diplomat's home. Less than 10 written messages were exchanged, with Araghchi delivering the first one.

The two officials accompanying delegations stayed at their hotels. Witkoff arrived in Oman with two individuals accompanying him, one of them a nuclear expert. He exchanged greetings with Araghchi as the two were departing their separate rooms at the end of the session.

## What was said

In his messages, Araghchi declared that Iran is not engaging in the indirect talks for show and that it is not trying to play a game of chicken, according to information obtained by the Tehran Times. Teh-



Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi (R) shakes hands with US envoy Steve Witkoff in Muscat on April 12, 2025.

ran's primary objective is to gauge the U.S. side's sincerity and determine the feasibility of reaching an agreement, he told Witkoff.

Araghchi emphasized that Iran wants a win-win agreement. It would not, under any circumstances, agree to dismantle its nuclear program. However, he stated that the country would be willing to take steps to provide assurances against the militarization of its nuclear activities. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would be the only external entity permitted access to Iran's nuclear sites.

What Tehran wants in return is for sanctions to be removed on several sectors. Once those sanctions are removed, the U.S. cannot bring them back under other pretexts.

Araghchi also stipulated that a general framework agreement

was necessary for the continuation of the talks. If the U.S. objects to the framework proposed by Iran during the initial session, it should present its own alternative for Iran to consider.

The Tehran Times has learned that Witkoff, for his part, acknowledged that Washington needs to make concessions. He did not mention the potential dismantlement of Iran's nuclear program, nor did he reference the original accord, the JCPOA, from which former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew in 2018.

## What's happening on the sidelines

A key development revealed to The Tehran Times suggests that European states may be attempting to sabotage the talks, as they believe they must also be part of them.

Germany, Britain, and France argue that, as the only parties having the capability or will to trigger the snapback mechanism (set to expire by mid-October and designed to reinstate pre-JCPOA UN sanctions against Iran), they should not be kept in the dark. Consequently, they are trying to get Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu somewhat involved in the negotiations so they would be able to influence the process.

Iran, however, told the U.S. on Saturday that it would be on Washington to make sure snap back does not get activated.

Europeans are also considering additional measures to exert pressure on Iran, including designating the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist entity. The Tehran Times understands that they are currently seeking individual member state support before bringing the proposal to the European Parliament.

Furthermore, the E3 is planning to launch propaganda campaigns to draw a rift between Iran, Russia, and China, believing that with the potential resentment of the two biggest allies of Iran, the country would have more hurdles in striking a deal with the United States.

## What to expect

While the indirect Oman talks gave fresh life to diplomacy, the future still remains uncertain. Iran, particularly, finds it difficult to trust the U.S. again after Washington's abandonment of the JCPOA.

## The world powers and Iran-US talks



From Page 1 ▶

One key reason is the internal developments within the United States. Donald Trump's character—as both the President and a unique political figure—plays a crucial role in U.S. policymaking.

What he wants and pursues is extremely important.

I believe Trump does not ultimately wish to engage in military conflict anywhere, particularly with Iran.

When he says he does not want the U.S. to head toward war, he is truthful, despite his reputation for dishonesty.

While Trump is generally not considered an honest politician and often deliberately misleads, in this specific matter regarding Iran, he is being sincere.

Many figures in his administration, such as Michael Waltz—a former U.S. military officer now serving as National Security Advisor—do favor military confrontation with Iran, influenced by the Israeli lobby.

They push for conflict and continue to pressure Washington.

Despite all of this, Trump, just as he resisted efforts by Pompeo and Bolton during his first term to escalate tensions with Iran (eventually dismissing both), is unlikely to succumb to current pressures for military action.

Steve Witkoff, in an essential interview with Tucker Carlson, explained Trump's decision-making style, noting that Trump doesn't read reports or listen to briefings but responds best to direct conversations that outline his desires and what he's willing to pay or not pay to achieve them.

Witkoff, who has worked with Trump for over three decades and is now a trusted figure in his administration, highlighted that Trump seeks peace and stability in West Asia in exchange for preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

As long as that goal is attainable,



there is no indication that Trump intends to push toward conflict.

Another factor to consider is Trump's pragmatic nature. He is far from foolish; his estimated \$4 billion fortune didn't come easily.

He is aware of his position and the challenges he faces.

Trump is already involved in several economic and political conflicts with no success—Europe, China, Russia—and these have caused inflation and stock market declines in the U.S. Adding a costly, long-term war with Iran would be disastrous.

Past wars in Iraq and Afghanistan cost trillions—Afghanistan alone exceeded \$2.6 trillion.

Trump, whose decisions are typically economically driven, is unlikely to start a new war that could further harm the U.S. economy and public perception.

Some argue that war benefits the U.S. arms industry, but in reality, American weapons are sold even without war. For example, Saudi Arabia and other regional countries remain major buyers.

In summary, economic considerations, Trump's decision-making model, and history suggest that he is not inclined toward war.

## Regional Actors' Role

It is also essential to consider the role of regional players. During the JCPOA negotiations, many Persian Gulf countries opposed it. But today, none of them want war.

Even the UAE, Israel's closest ally in the region, does not seek mili-

tary escalation. Contrary to some perceptions, the U.S. and Trump are responsive to these countries' desires.

## Iran's Position

Iran's stance also helps reduce the risk of conflict. As General Bagheri, Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces, stated—conveying the Supreme Leader's position—Iran does not desire war or military escalation.

## Europe, Russia, and China's Roles

Despite being displeased with Iran's stance on Ukraine, the European Union also does not appear interested in starting a war in the region.

Russia, initially hoping to use Iran and Ukraine as bargaining chips with the U.S., lost that leverage when Trump announced his intent for direct talks with Iran. Moscow is now sidelined, so for the time being, it is an inactive player.

China's stance is less clear. Historically, China helped Iran with nuclear technology and remains a major provider of modern tech to Iran.

While the Chinese role is significant, their current policy is ambiguous.

## Global supply chains

Beyond all these factors, the global supply chain may be the most critical deterrent to war. West Asia is key in raw materials, energy, transportation, and markets.

Stability in the region is in the shared interest of the U.S., EU,

China, and regional countries. This mutual interest in regional security is a powerful barrier against military escalation.

## Spoilers

Globally, there is little appetite for a new conflict, with Israel and Netanyahu being the primary proponents of confrontation.

However, they now realize that the U.S. and other global and regional powers do not support military escalation.

Instead, Israel is pursuing two main strategies:

1. Strengthening the U.S. military presence in Diego Garcia under the "peace under might" doctrine to maintain pressure on Iran.

2. Undermining the Muscat negotiations through political and media efforts, not by preventing talks outright (as they did during Trump's first term), but by disrupting them and steering them toward failure.

Internally, there are also groups in Iran that, while not advocating direct war, may seek to trigger conflict through proxies to profit economically. Thus, protecting the negotiation process is essential.

The risk of military conflict appears to be decreasing overall. However, it is important to clarify that this applies mainly to conventional war.

Other forms of conflict—such as assassinations, instability, or cyber warfare—remain possible and cannot be ruled out.

## IRAN IN FOCUS

APRIL 15, 2025

Straight Truth  
TEHRAN TIMES

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## SPORTS

### Iran aim for the 2025 Women's Futsal Asian Cup title: Sara Shirbeigi



TEHRAN – Iconic futsal player Sara Shirbeigi is hopeful that the women's national team can become champions of the Asian Cup for the third time.

Shirbeigi has been dealing with an injury recently, making it difficult for her to be included in the national team lineup. However, her recovery process gives her hope that she will reach the required fitness level for the Asian Cup, which will be held next month.

"I hope we can become champions of Asia for the third consecutive time. All our goals and efforts will be focused on this. However, as you know, achieving this is challenging since teams like Japan and Thailand are strong competitors. Nonetheless, we are Iran," she told Tehran Times.

Iran competed in the SAT Futsal Championship Thailand 2025, finishing as runners-up against Japan and Thailand.

"The Thailand tournament was a significant opportunity for us to participate in a quality event after many years and face our main rivals in Asia. Our team, along with others like Japan and Thailand, have transformed significantly. Participating in this event was very beneficial for us, allowing us to test our team and better understand our rivals," she said.

"To become champions, it's essential for the young players to compete against larger teams and gain experience. Since joining the team, they have only participated in the CAFA competition, and I must emphasize that the level of CAFA cannot be compared with this tournament in terms of quality. Thus, participating in such tournaments is extremely advantageous for us," the national futsal team forward stated.

"Our team still have weaknesses that we worked on during the Thailand tournament, and I hope that by addressing these issues, we can lift the championship trophy for the third time and make our nation proud. The Thailand tournament showcased the significant progress of women's futsal in Asia."

Shirbeigi has been dealing with injuries and is still not fully recovered. However, she remains optimistic about her physical condition for the Asian Cup, where Iran are grouped with Vietnam, Hong Kong, and the Philippines.

"I've been working hard to be ready for the Asian Cup, following my rehabilitation workouts. Unfortunately, I was injured on the last day of training during the Thailand tournament, and the team doctor did not permit me to play. Currently, I am not at 100% readiness, but my goal is to prepare for the Asian Cup," she concluded.

### Iran to send nine boxers to Yerevan Mayor's Cup 2025

TEHRAN – Nine Iranian boxers will participate in the Yerevan Mayor's Cup 2025.

From April 14 to 19, the Armenian capital will host the event — an open international boxing tournament included in the official calendar of the European Boxing Confederation (EUBC).

The Armenian Boxing Federation is going to organize the tournament. The capital city

of Armenia will host it among elite men boxers who will box in all 13 weight categories.

The tournament will be organized in the Mika Sports Arena, a venue that was used for the European and World championships.

Yerevan has been a great host of many boxing events during the last several years.

### Al Riyadi own Tabiat anew in WASL

TEHRAN – Buoyed by their ever-supportive home fans, Al Riyadi completed a mighty sweep of the 2024/2025 FIBA WASL-West Asia League following a 92-78 victory over Tabiat Basketball at the Stade Nouhad Nurfal, Sunday night.

Wael Arakji top-scored for Riyadi with 27 points, starting out hot with two treys to open the game before helping apply the finishing touches. He shot 11-of-15 from the floor and finished with an efficiency of 31.

Tabiat were led by Ivan Buva with 29 points and 10 rebounds although it was practically a one-man show for the team, with Sina Vahedi serving as his lone backup with 14 points in the defeat.

Regardless, the defending Iran Basketball League champions are finishing at second place in the tourney with a 5-3 record and are bound for the Final 8 as well, together with Riyadi and third-placers Sagesse SC (3-5).

For now, the said teams are heading back to their respective domestic leagues before shifting into high gear for WASL's culminating event, the date and venue of which to be announced soon.

### Iran fall short against Indonesia in 2025 IHF World Championship Division IV

TEHRAN – Iran lost to Indonesia 2-1 (1-0, 0-1, 1-0) in the 2025 IHF World Championship Division IV on Sunday.

Team Melli will face Malaysia on Monday. In addition to Malaysia, Iran's opponents in the tournament include Uzbekistan, Armenia, and Kuwait.

The tournament started on April 13 in Yerevan, Armenia, and will continue until April 19.

It follows a round-robin format, and the team with the highest points at the end will be declared the champions.

### Iran to meet Syria, Jordan in FIBA Women's Asia Cup Div. B qualifiers

TEHRAN – Iran will play Syria on Tuesday in the 2025 FIBA Women's Asia Cup Div. B – WABA Qualification Tournament Group A.

Team Melli Banovan will also meet Jordan on Thursday.

The winners will qualify for the 2025 FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B.

The matches will be held in Amman, Jordan.

### Iran's fixture in 2026 World Cup qualifiers revealed

TEHRAN – Iran national football team will play Qatar and North Korea in June in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualification – AFC third round.

Team Melli will face Qatar at the Lusail Stadium in Doha, Qatar on June 5.

Amir Ghalenoei's Iran will play North Korea five days later in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Iran have previously booked its place in the 2026 World Cup.

### Iran's dam reservoirs reach 50% capacity

TEHRAN - Iran's dam reservoirs have reached 50 percent capacity, a slight increase from the previous week, according to the Iran Water Resources Management Company. Despite the modest rise, inflows have dropped sharply compared to the same period last year, underscoring the need for continued water conservation as the country approaches the hot season.

Since the beginning of the current water year, which started in late September 2024, total inflows to dams have reached 15.06 billion cubic meters, marking a 35 percent decrease from the 23.32 billion cubic meters recorded over the same period last year. The volume of water stored in the country's large and strategic dams has fallen 16 percent year-on-year, reaching 25.87 billion cubic meters compared to 30.76 billion cubic meters a year ago. Outflows from the dams have also declined by 6 percent, dropping from 14.86 billion cubic meters last year to 13.72 billion cubic meters so far this year.

Twelve of the country's major dams are now operating at less than 20 percent of their capacity. These include Lar Dam in Tehran Province, Doosti and Torq Dams in Khorasan Razavi, the 15 Khordad Dam in the Qomrud Basin, Esteghlal, Shamil, and Neyan Dams in Hormozgan Province, Tahm Dam in Zanjan, Roudbal Dam in



Fars, Tangouyeh Dam in Sirjan, Kerman Province, and Saveh Dam in Markazi Province.

Additionally, 13 other dams have shown significant declines in water levels, ranging from 25 to 75 percent compared to last year. These include dams in the Lake Urmia basin, Amir Kabir, Dez, Karkheh, and Marun in Khuzestan, as well as Sardasht, Jegin, Raisali Delvari, Azad Dam in Kurdistan, and several dams in Golestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, and Markazi provinces.

Despite the recent increase in total storage, officials warn that half the country's dam capacity remains unfilled and that water use must be carefully managed to address the ongoing shortage.

### Private sector favors talks between Tehran, Washington

TEHRAN - Iran's private sector has expressed strong support for the beginning of indirect talks between Tehran and Washington, citing the potential for improving the country's economic landscape.

Speaking on Sunday, Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (IC-CIMA) Samad Hassanzadeh referred to the commencement of these talks in Oman as a key step in revitalizing economic activities in the country.

Iran's business community and entrepreneurs, while maintaining a realistic outlook on the negotiations, have a vital role to play in supporting the government and contributing to the shaping of the nation's economic diplomacy, Hassanzadeh said.

"At this critical juncture, we must work together with the government to fulfill our responsibilities as key players in defining the country's economic diplomacy."

He also praised the efforts of Iran's negotiating

team, highlighting the recent increase in national unity and collaboration, especially during the early days of the New Year.

Referring to the Supreme Leader's call for "investment in production" as the motto for the Iranian New Year, Hassanzadeh noted that this message has sparked hope within the business community.

He stated that the country's economic challenges, particularly those facing entrepreneurs and the hardships people endure, can be alleviated through a series of strategic measures. "Some of these measures include reforms in domestic management, while others are focused on establishing an efficient and comprehensive economic diplomacy," Hassanzadeh explained.

In closing, he emphasized that while the new negotiations have fostered optimism within the private sector, the true source of hope lies in Iran's domestic capabilities and its educated, skilled workforce, which is well-regarded worldwide.

### Oil minister visits Baghdad to boost cooperation with Iraq

TEHRAN - Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad arrived at Baghdad International Airport on Monday for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening energy cooperation between the two countries.

During his stay, Paknejad is scheduled to hold meetings with senior Iraqi officials to discuss ways to expand collaboration in the energy sector, according to Shana.

Prior to his departure, the Iranian minister had noted that various areas of cooperation had already been discussed between the

two countries. "We hope that during this visit, with the finalization of these discussions, memorandums of understanding will be signed in the field of energy," he said, adding that Iran and Iraq enjoy strong and multifaceted relations, particularly in the oil industry and joint energy projects.

In a move to enhance bilateral energy ties, Paknejad and Iraq's Electricity Minister Ziyad Ali Fadel met in Tehran in March, where they reaffirmed their commitment to expanding cooperation in oil, gas, petrochemicals, and electricity.

### Annual non-oil export from Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province up 5.8%

TEHRAN - The value of non-oil export from Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province increased by 5.8 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20), according to the director-general of the province's customs department.

Mazaher Rabiei said that 388,780 tons of goods worth \$185,299,360 were exported from the province in the previous year, indicating also 9.5 percent growth in terms of weight year on year.

Stating that urea fertilizer is the most important product exported from the province, he said that Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province's products are exported to 23 countries around the world, including Oman, Turkey, Iraq, Armenia, India, and the UAE.

The official further announced that 94,344 tons of non-oil goods worth \$113,307,949 were imported to the province in the past year, with 219 percent rise in value, and 588 percent growth in weight, as compared to the preceding year.

The main imported products have been raw materials for factories, equipment, and raw materials for production line machinery, which have had a direct impact on increasing exports from the province, he highlighted.

As previously announced by an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran exported over 152 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$57.8 billion in the past Iranian calendar year.

# Iran Oil Show offers golden opportunity for intl. cooperation

TEHRAN - Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trade emphasized the importance of energy diplomacy, highlighting the unique opportunities for expanding international cooperation in the oil industry at the upcoming Tehran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition (Iran Oil Show 2025).

Speaking at a briefing session on Sunday, April 13, Seyed Ali Mohammad Mousavi said the 29th edition of the exhibition, which will be held from May 8 to 11, 2025, is not only the largest energy trade event in West Asia but also a platform for the exchange of ideas and shaping the future of the global energy landscape.

"This exhibition has served as a cornerstone of energy diplomacy for nearly three decades, fostering practical collaborations and political dialogue," Mousavi noted. "As a leading country in oil and gas reserves, Iran is ready to attract foreign investment and modernize its energy infrastructure."

Mousavi pointed to recent ef-



orts by the Oil Ministry to adopt advanced technologies across upstream, midstream, and downstream sectors. He said Iran aims to create a transparent and stable environment for international investors, enabling the implementation of key projects—such as the development of oil and gas fields—through modern financial frameworks, including Iran Petroleum Contracts (IPC).

He introduced a series of specialized sessions scheduled during the exhibition, stressing

their central role in outlining investment prospects and technical collaboration. Among these is the "Conference on Investment Transformation and Project Financing" hosted by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), which he described as a unique opportunity for joint ventures and technical partnerships.

Mousavi added that Iran is positioning itself as a reliable global partner by investing in emerging energy sectors such as petrochemicals, renewables, and hydrogen technologies.

He reiterated that diplomacy and energy policy are interconnected, stating, "This exhibition provides a platform for building mutual understanding and long-term cooperation that meets both economic and environmental goals."

Mousavi concluded by inviting all stakeholders in the energy sector—including governments, companies, and research institutions—to join the event and play an active role in shaping the future of global energy.

### ICOFC unveils \$9b gas investment opportunity

TEHRAN - The Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC) has prepared 11 investment packages worth approximately \$9.0 billion to develop gas fields, aiming to boost the country's daily gas production capacity by 100 to 140 million cubic meters, the company's managing director said.

According to a report by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Peyman Imani underscored the importance of the upcoming "Transformation in Investment and Upstream Oil and Gas Development" event, stating that

ICOFC is presenting a diverse portfolio of oil and gas projects totaling around \$9.0 billion for potential investors. Some of these projects are already underway in the oil field sector, while nearly half of the total investment is earmarked for gas field development.

Highlighting the strategic value of gas production investments, Imani said that the operationalization of these packages would significantly raise Iran's gas output. "With the implementation of the proposed investment packages in the gas sector, national daily gas

production could rise by 100 to 140 million cubic meters," he noted.

Imani expressed hope that investors, in cooperation with the National Iranian Oil Company, would contribute meaningfully to realizing this year's national economic objectives.

The "Transformation in Investment and Upstream Oil and Gas Development" event is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23, 2025, at the Summit Hall in Tehran, and will be attended by senior political, economic, and energy sector officials.

### Iran, Turkey to establish joint free trade zone

TEHRAN - Iran is pursuing the creation of a joint free trade zone with Turkey, as part of broader efforts to resolve long-pending investment challenges and boost cooperation with neighboring countries, the secretary of Iran's Free Trade and Special Economic Zones High Council said.

Speaking to Tasnim News Agency, Reza Masrouf said a special task force has been formed to resolve unresolved projects that have lingered in Iran's free zones for over 15 years. "We are actively following up on the establishment of a joint free trade zone with Turkey," he noted, adding that a joint working group between Iran and Turkey will take charge of advancing the plan.

Masrouf stressed the need for a major shift in investment strategy across the country's free trade zones, stating, "We must move decisively beyond what was done in the past. Investment incentives should be swiftly approved and implemented by each zone's board of directors."

To facilitate bilateral cooperation, a joint forum is planned for July this year, bringing together Iranian and

Turkish free zone officials and investors in one of Iran's free trade zones.

The official said that each zone must update its investment offerings and identify sector-specific priorities to attract investors based on its unique capacities. He added that investor satisfaction is critical, and new investment decisions are often influenced by the experiences of previous investors.

He criticized prolonged unresolved projects, noting that some have remained inactive for up to 15 years. "Creating task forces is necessary, but not enough. Problems must be addressed fundamentally. CEOs must be personally involved, and outcomes should be achieved within six months."

Masrouf said feasibility studies are underway to create similar joint zones with Pakistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan. He also announced that a bylaw for a Financial Support Agency would soon be issued, aimed at facilitating investment inflows to free zones.

Emphasizing that free zones are intended for production and ex-



port—not domestic consumption—he warned that using them merely as a sales point for the internal market would lead to complications.

He further underscored the importance of local community satisfaction in investment success. "In areas with strong local presence, gaining public support is crucial. Projects must be transparent so that local populations can back them," he said.

Highlighting the government's broader service-oriented approach, he noted that community satis-

faction has become a key metric in evaluating the performance of free zones.

He called for closer coordination between free zone managers and the council's secretariat, urging them to actively attract knowledge-based companies by offering tailored incentives and permits.

Masrouf concluded by stressing the importance of improving infrastructure for tourists and managing the proliferation of electric scooters in Kish Free Zone, as part of efforts to enhance public health and safety.

### IKAC plans \$4 billion in new projects amid push for investment

TEHRAN - Imam Khomeini Airport City (IKAC) is reviewing investment projects worth 2.0 quadrillion rials (approximately \$4.0 billion), in addition to 400 trillion rials (\$800 million) already under contract, the company's head said during a visit by members of parliament's civil affairs commission.

Speaking during a tour of the site by the parliamentary commission, Saeed Chalandari said the airport city's development has accelerated significantly over the past year, earning praise from lawmakers. The visit included inspections of Phase 2 expansion plans, infrastructure in the free trade zone, and strategic projects such as the health city, knowledge-based firms hub, and aircraft maintenance center.

Chalandari outlined a three-year track record of performance and revenue growth, noting that the company's income has increased sixfold under

guidance from the transport and urban development ministry.

The official added that lawmakers, including Civil Commission Chairman Mohammadreza Rezaei Kouchi, commended the efforts of Transport Minister Mehrdad Sadri and his predecessors for steering the company toward a prominent regional role. Chalandari said that following a recent directive from the minister, steps are underway to expedite implementation of the airport city's Phase 2.

One of the key proposals raised was allowing free-zone registered vehicles to operate within Tehran—a move Chalandari said could bring transformative benefits to the capital. He also requested allocation of commercial goods quotas from the Supreme Council of Free Zones, a matter lawmakers pledged to pursue.

He called for resolution of unresolved issues concerning land ownership and debts of companies under the transport ministry that currently occupy IKAC territory but remain outside the company's administrative control.

Lawmakers also requested faster land allocation to investors, and were briefed on the status of the 40 trillion tomans in signed investment contracts. Chalandari highlighted that an additional 200 trillion tomans in projects are now under review.

Given the Leader's naming of 1404 (March 2025–March 2026) as the year of "Investment for Production," lawmakers emphasized that these projects must move forward swiftly to turn Imam Khomeini Airport City into a key hub for national economic development.

# Blood money or justice: The controversy behind the Luxembourg Agreement

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN - Israel's relationship with Germany is arguably one of the most complex and most historical diplomatic relations of the 20th century. Rising from the ashes of the Holocaust, this relationship evolved from profound enmity and trauma to a cautious, pragmatic engagement, culminating in the landmark Luxembourg Agreement of 1952. It referred to reparations to survivors of the Holocaust and was one among many historical events that would turn around bilateral ties between Israel as a newly established regime and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany).



The establishment of Israel in 1948 on the Palestinian lands, just three years after the end of World War II, was partly influenced by the Holocaust. Israel was designed to be a vault for Jews, a response to centuries-old persecutions that found their peak and most horrendous manifestation at the hands of their Nazi executioners. By the immediate post-war period, it was most unimaginable for any Jew,

including the otherwise young preliminary leadership of the Israeli regime, to be reconciled with or have any form of engagement with Germany. The wounds were too fresh, the pain too raw. But the high demands of the young regime and the harsh realities of geopolitical conditions soon compelled Israeli leaders to close the gap and consider the unthinkable relationship with West Germany.

## The early years: Reluctance and pragmatism

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the global landscape was

characterized by the Cold War.

The chancellor of West Germany, Konrad Adenauer, sought to rehabilitate the German image and reintegrate the country into the Western bloc. Adenauer recognized that addressing the crimes of the Nazi regime were unavoidable for Germany's moral and political rehabilitation.

On the other hand, Israel was struggling to absorb millions of Jews from Europe and West Asia, while its economy faced numerous challenges. Being under heavy financial strain, the regime spent

almost all of its budget on building infrastructure and providing housing for its citizens.

In spite of urgent needs, accepting reparations from Germany was deeply controversial within many circles in Israel. Most Holocaust survivors and citizens did feel that any engagement with Germany was to betray the victims.

The Israeli public was divided, with fierce debates erupting over the moral implications of accepting "blood money." Menachem Begin, head of the Herut party, was one opponent of the idea, arguing passionately that it would absolve Germans of their moral responsibility.

However, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and his government took a pragmatic approach. Ben-Gurion did not see reparations as forgiveness, but as justice and restitution. He argued that Germany had a moral obligation to compensate the Jewish people for the immense suffering and loss inflicted upon them.

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

## Yemen targets Israeli sites, downs US drone

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Yemen has announced the execution of two military operations targeting Israeli sites, including Ben Gurion Airport.

According to Brigadier General Yahya Saree, spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces, the first operation targeted the Israeli Sodeh Micha military base east of Ashdod with a hypersonic Palestine 2 missile.

Additionally, Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv was struck with a Zulfiqar missile. Israeli media reported that air traffic was disrupted, with takeoffs and landings halted for at least one hour.

In a separate operation, a vital Israeli target in the city of Ashkelon was hit by a drone.

Sirens were activated across several areas, causing many settlers to seek shelter following

the launch of missiles from Yemen.

Shortly after these attacks, the Yemeni Armed Forces announced they had shot down a U.S.-made MQ-9 drone over the city of Hajjah.

The drone was brought down by a domestically made surface-to-air missile.

Saree confirmed that this was the 19th drone downed by Yemeni air defenses as part of the ongoing operation "The Promised Victory and Sacred War," which Yemen says is in support of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

It also marked the fourth drone shot down in just two weeks.

He stated that this latest action was in direct response to continued U.S. airstrikes on Yemen, which recently resulted in casualties and damage to civilian property.

The Armed Forces reaffirmed that their mili-

tary capabilities remain intact and that ongoing U.S. aggression will only lead to more failure.

Saree stressed that operations will continue until the aggression on Gaza stops and the siege is lifted.

U.S. warplanes launched three airstrikes south of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, on Monday, bombing a ceramics factory in the Bani Matar District.

The Yemeni Ministry of Health has reported that at least six people have been killed and 20 others have sustained injuries in the aggression.

Yemen has repeatedly declared its intention to continue missile strikes on U.S. targets in the Red Sea and Israeli targets in occupied Palestine as part of its support for the people of Gaza and efforts to end the blockade and U.S.-backed genocidal war on the enclave.

## Jolani's trial in France: A long-awaited justice and opportunity to restore Syrians' dignity

From page 1 ► In this context, the role of civil opponents of the former Syrian regime should be appreciated for initiating this legal step, as it represents a necessary foundation for building a comprehensive justice process that targets all those whose hands are stained with the blood of Syrians—without exception or selectivity.

1. From militia leader to genocide accused: What does this trial mean?

Jolani was not merely a controversial figure in the Syrian war—he remains a symbol of an armed project that exploited revolutionary slogans and transformed them into tools for violence and sectarian cleansing, particularly in Syria's coastal areas and among communities known as "minorities," who are, in fact, Syrian citizens.

• A documented bloody record: Human rights organizations—including bodies affiliated with the Syria for All movement led by Mohammad Izzat Khatab—have documented horrific crimes commit-

ted by factions led by Jolani. These crimes include identity-based killings, summary executions, and the forced displacement of civilians from religious minority groups.

• International justice: A necessity, not a choice: When local justice is absent or paralyzed due to polarization, international judiciary becomes a moral and political necessity. Although late, Jolani's trial is a step in the right direction.

2. Syria for all: A vision of justice beyond vengeance

Today, the need for the "Syria for All" project becomes more evident, along with its just call to prosecute all those involved in crimes against the Syrian people—whether from the regime or armed groups—while rejecting suspicious foreign funding and striving to build a national socio-economic project that ensures justice and reconciliation.

• Protecting minorities in practice, not just in words: Violations against Alawite, Christian, and Druze minorities must be confronted. Citizenship should be the



cornerstone of Syrian identity, far from the sectarianism exploited by all actors, from the new regime to foreign-backed militants.

• A national reconstruction plan: Syria needs a comprehensive development strategy that prioritizes devastated and marginalized areas, based on transparency and accountability, not quota-sharing.

3. The French trial: Justice or political Tool?

While the legal process in France is significant, it is vital to understand its context:

• Why now?: The timing raises questions, especially since the West—including some of its security circles—once supported extremist groups. The trial could be an attempt to correct past flawed policies.

• Selective justice threatens stability: Limiting prosecution to Jolani while ignoring crimes by the regime or other factions could undermine Syrians' trust in international justice. Justice must be comprehensive—or it is not justice at all.

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

## Anti-Hezbollah team openly doesn't oppose Israel!

From page 1 ► This is in contrast to what happened in 2016, when the Boycott Israel Campaign in Lebanon succeeded in banning the screening of *Batman v Superman*, in which Gadot starred.

Also, in 2017, the Boycott Israel Campaign in Lebanon successfully banned the screening of *Wonder Woman*, starring the same actress, i.e. Gal Gadot.

The anti-resistance team deliberately ignores the fact that there is an illegitimate imperialist fabricated entity—in the view of the overwhelming majority of Arabs and Muslims—called "Israel," which occupies 78% of the land of historic Palestine and has committed, and continues to commit, blatant genocidal ethnic cleansing against the peoples of West Asia, particularly the Palestinian people.

The matter does not end there as the an-

ti-resistance team also no longer sees anything wrong with consuming Israeli products; during the summer of 2024 (prior to the aggression) after a pregnant woman asked the Campaign to Boycott Israel in Lebanon to verify whether the DOONA company, which produces baby strollers labeled "Made in Romania," supported Israel.

After investigations, the answer was a resounding yes!

The campaign to Boycott Israel in Lebanon also discovered that the ALKA company—which sells products such as Elephant Snacks—is owned by the Israeli Krenzia family.

At that time, the Campaign to Boycott Israel in Lebanon notified the Boycott Department at Lebanon's Ministry of Economy.

This department, in coordination with the

General Directorate of General Security (the official body responsible for such investigation), in turn verifies any violations of Lebanon's Israel-Boycott Law and takes action accordingly.

Following the ceasefire last November, the Campaign to Boycott Israel in Lebanon once again requested that the department follow up on the case.

Director General Mohammad Abu Haidar ordered the Ministry of Economy to withdraw the Romanian company's products from Lebanese markets.

The General Directorate of General Security ignored the matter despite repeated communications from the Ministry of Economy, and the products were not confiscated from Lebanese markets in violation of the applicable Lebanese laws.

## Hamas offers 'serious prisoner swap'

A senior Hamas official said on Monday that the Palestinian group was prepared to release all Israeli hostages in exchange for a "serious prisoner swap" and guarantees that Israel will end the war in Gaza, AFP reported.

Hamas is engaged in negotiations in Cairo with mediators from Egypt and Qatar – two nations working alongside the United States to broker a ceasefire in the besieged territory.

"We are ready to release all Israeli captives in exchange for a serious prisoner swap deal, an end to the war, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the entry of humanitarian aid," senior Hamas official Taher al-Nunu said.

However, he accused Israel of obstructing progress towards a ceasefire.

"The issue is not the number of captives," Nunu said, "but rather that the occupation is reneging on its commitments, blocking the implementation of the ceasefire agreement



and continuing the war".

"Hamas has therefore stressed the need for guarantees to compel the occupation [Israel] to uphold the agreement," he added.

Israeli news website Ynet reported on Monday that a new proposal had been put to Hamas.

Under the deal, the group would release 10 living hostages in exchange for US guarantees that Israel would enter negotiations for a second phase of the ceasefire.

## Germany wants to deport four pro-Palestine activists

Germany is being accused of silencing pro-Palestinian voices, having ordered the deportations of three European nationals and a United States citizen over their alleged actions at demonstrations.

None has been convicted of any crime.

Critics said the decision is another chap-

ter of German unease with the pro-Palestine movement. Since the war in Gaza began in October 2023, tensions have flared as officials have moved to ban protests and cancel events while cultural institutes have distanced themselves from artists who raise awareness about the Palestinian cause.

## Algeria orders 12 French embassy staff to leave within 48 hours

Algeria has ordered 12 French embassy officials to leave the country within 48 hours, France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot confirmed on Monday, Euro News reported.

The decision to expel the officials comes just days after prosecutors in France indicted three Algerians, including a consular official, on suspicion of kidnapping the Algerian influencer Amir Boukhors last year.

Boukhors, who has a large TikTok following, is a critic of the Algerian government, which wants him to return to face trial for alleged fraud and terror offences.

Amir DZ — as he better known online — was abducted last April in a suburb of Paris, before being released the following day, according to his lawyer.

Barrot said the expulsion of diplomats was directly linked to the case of Boukhors, who has lived in France since 2016 and was granted political asylum there in 2023.

The French foreign minister has urged Algerians to reconsider the expulsions, saying that Paris would be forced to retaliate if it does not.

Although relations between France and its former colony have long been challenging, tensions worsened dramatically last July when French President Emmanuel Macron recognized the autonomy of Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty.

Since then, the countries have clashed over other events, including the detention of the French-Algerian author Boualem Sansal in Algiers in November.

## Turkey to host Black Sea security meeting

A high-level meeting focused on Black Sea security will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday at the Naval Forces Command headquarters in Ankara, the Turkish Defense Ministry said on Sunday, Xinhua reported.

The meeting aims to discuss military planning measures to preserve peace in the region, particularly in the event of a potential ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, the ministry said in a statement.

Military representatives from various countries are expected to attend, with discussions centered on the maritime dimension of maintaining stability in the Black Sea. The list of

participating countries was not disclosed.

The meeting builds on earlier cooperation efforts, including the establishment of the Mine Countermeasures Black Sea Task Group in July 2024. The initiative, led by Turkey in coordination with Romania and Bulgaria, was launched to address the threat of drifting sea mines that emerged following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

On Saturday, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, and discussed a range of issues, including the Ukraine conflict and the safety of navigation in the Black Sea.

## Harvard faculty sue Trump administration over funding cuts threat

Harvard University faculty sued the Trump administration on Friday over a federal assessment of the school's spending amid allegations of their "failure" to protect students from antisemitism, *The Hill* reported.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and its campus chapter are both plaintiffs in the lawsuit which said failures were "unspecified" according to legal documents.

In the filing they noted that Harvard received policy demands from the administration in a letter outlining steps to keep \$9 billion in federal funding.

"Harvard, like all American universities,

depends on federal funding to conduct its academic research. Threats like these are an existential 'gun to the head' for a university," the lawsuit reads.

"They also hold hostage billions of dollars in congressional appropriations that are crucial to ensuring the American university system remains a global leader in scientific, medical, and technological research," it continues.

The move comes weeks after the Trump administration cut \$400 million in federal grants to Columbia University amid its antisemitism probe of the New York campus.

Education Secretary Linda McMahon warned that cuts to Harvard would be similar.

## Ardabil to hold meeting on Intl. Day for Historic Monuments and Sites

TEHRAN—A specialized meeting on the International Day for Historic Monuments and Sites with the topic of the resilience of historical monuments to crises will be held at Mohagheh Ardebili University on April 20, the deputy head of Ardabil Cultural Heritage Department said.

Alireza Dabbagh Abdollahi added that specialized lectures on the risk to historical monuments of Moghan Plain from floods and water flows, the necessity of practical and preventive management of the Cultural Heritage Department in relation to the protection of immovable historical monuments in times of crisis, and the impact of natural disasters on Ardabil Jameh (Jameh) Mosque will be given at this meeting.

He said April 18 is the International Day for Historic Buildings and Sites, adding that Seyyed Rouhollah Mohammadi, head of the Archaeology and Registration Department of

Ardabil province, Behrouz Afkhami, a member of the faculty of Mohagheh Ardebili University, and Mehdi Heydarivand, director of the National Database of the Ardabil Jameh (Jameh) Mosque, will deliver specialized lectures at this meeting.

Ardabil, known for its natural and historical attractions, including the Meshginshahr suspension bridge, Sabalan Mountain, Alvares ski resort, and Sareyn's renowned mineral springs, remains a major destination for both domestic and international tourists.

In recent years, Ardabil has gained prominence as a tourism destination, particularly after being named the 2023 Capital of Tourism for ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) member countries. This designation has helped boost its visibility on the international stage, showcasing its diverse attractions ranging from natural landscapes to cultural landmarks.

## 80 tourism projects underway in Kordestan province

TEHRAN - Director General of Kordestan Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department Mansour Mehrzad said 80 tourism projects are currently underway in Kordestan province, western Iran.

He told ISNA that some 30,000 billion rials (\$30 million) is required for the completion of the projects.

Fortunately, a large portion of these projects are carried out by the private sector, he said.

Pointing to the high tourism potential of the province, Mehrzad said that the tourism sector is one of the most suitable investment areas in all countries because the private sector bears 80 percent of the costs.

He said Parsian Hotel of Mostazafan Foundation is one of the projects which has appropriate financial resources. But it faced problem of water resources which was solved with the follow-ups, he added.

He said other projects are underway across the province, adding, "We hope they will be completed in coming years."

Pointing to the province's need for accommodation services and tourism infrastructures, he said that even if the 33 under-construction hotels are inaugurated, there is a need for more investment in this regard.

Close to 85 investment packages have been prepared across the province to draw the investors, many of which are ready to be delivered to investors at the level of a map, he said.

He said banking facilities are limited across the province. Given the rise in the arrival of tourists to the province, he said tourism infrastructures need development.

Situated in northwest Iran, Kordestan is known for its vibrant culture and strong



Some 30,000 billion rials (\$30 million) is required for the completion of the projects in Kordestan province.

sense of identity. Kordestan boasts high, cold mountains and historical terraced villages that provide a diverse array of landscapes to explore.

The capital city of Sanandaj is situated 458 km from Tehran and serves as a key tourist destination with numerous attractions. Marivan, another highlight of the province, lies on the border with Iraq and offers its own unique appeal.

From Marivan, you can visit Zarivar Lake and the untouched villages around it, which offer spectacular natural views. The lake is also a hotspot for birdwatching. Another must-visit is Palangan, a picturesque village known for its terraced houses perched on mountain slopes, where each house's roof serves as another's yard.

The journey to Palangan, a two-hour drive from Marivan through the Kurdish mountains, is beautiful and worth the trip on its own. After exploring Palangan, you may head to Uraman Takht, the most renowned terraced village in Kordestan. Spending one or two nights in Uraman allows you to explore the village and its surrounding mountains, where locals maintain summer gardens.

## European tourists shun U.S. following Trump election

The number of European tourists to the United States has fallen in the wake of Donald Trump's return to the White House.

Travelers from Western Europe who stayed at least one night in the U.S. fell by 17 percent in March from a year ago, according to the International Trade Administration (ITA).

U.S. tourism from countries such as Ireland, Norway and Germany fell by more than a fifth in the same period.

This decline could pose a threat to the U.S. tourism industry, which drives nearly \$2.9 trillion (£2.2 trillion) in economic activity each year.

The U.S. travel sector faces a mix of headwinds as the president's tariffs fuel concerns of an economic slowdown.

Tariffs are likely to reduce the U.S. economy's competitiveness at a time when the dollar remains strong.

A strong dollar makes the U.S. more expensive for Europeans and inflation remains stubbornly above the target rate of 2 percent across the continent, further squeezing traveler's budgets.

Negative shifts in sentiment toward the U.S. among travelers are expected to adversely impact its global market share, resulting in a 1.5 percentage point loss by 2026.

This trend follows the tightening of immigration rules by the Trump administration, which has prompted Britain to update its advice for citizens travelling to the US, warning them they "should comply with all entry, visa and other conditions of entry" or face "arrest or detention".

It comes as Geoff Freeman, the president and chief executive of the U.S. Travel Association, this week called for urgent action to upgrade the American travel system.

(Source: The Telegraph)

# Iran advances cultural diplomacy at UAE investment forum

TEHRAN - Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, has emphasized the strategic significance of Iran's participation in the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) Congress 2025, held last week in the United Arab Emirates.

In a recent statement, the minister described the event as a vital platform for advancing Iran's cultural diplomacy and promoting the country's rich civilizational identity on the global stage.

Salehi-Amiri noted that the event provided a considerable opportunity to discuss the country's capacities in cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts. He underscored that Iran's active presence helped project "a new and realistic image of cultural and civilizational Iran" to an international audience.

In his remarks, the minister highlighted the growing importance of cultural diplomacy in a rapidly changing and complex global landscape. He described Iran's approach as one rooted in civilizational depth and aimed at fostering sustainable peace, cultural convergence, and multi-layered international cooperation.

During the congress, Salehi-Amiri held bilateral and multilateral meetings with ministers of culture, economy, and tourism from various



countries. These engagements, he said, helped lay the groundwork for expanding scientific, cultural, and economic collaborations, particularly in areas such as heritage preservation, handicrafts, and sustainable tourism.

The minister identified key themes of the 2025 AIM Congress — including digital transformation, tourism infrastructure investment, emerging technologies, and sustainable development — as critical to shaping future-oriented strategies. He asserted that Iran, with its unique geopolitical position, cultural diversity, and natural resources, is well-positioned to attract forward-looking investment in technology-driven and sustainable tourism projects.

Salehi-Amiri also stressed the importance of developing elite-level academic and cultural partnerships with other nations. Such initiatives, he argued, would not only support national economic goals but also enhance Iran's role as a soft power and civilizational reference point in global cultural and economic dynamics.

In conclusion, the minister underlined that Iran's participation in the AIM 2025 Congress contributed to a more accurate and constructive international understanding of the country. "With its rich heritage, strategic advantages, and vision for sustainable development, Iran can offer a model of balanced and future-oriented diplomacy," Salehi-Amiri added.

"This path will not only serve Iran's national interests but also elevate its status as an active and influential player on the global stage."

Salehi-Amiri traveled to Abu Dhabi at the official invitation of UAE's chairman of the tourism council and Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the UN Tourism, formerly known as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). He was welcomed upon arrival by Iran's ambassador to the UAE.

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.

## Memoir writings will be removed from Si-o-Se Pol face in Isfahan

TEHRAN - Si-o-Se Pol cleanup has been started by Isfahan Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, said Hadi Allahyari, an official responsible for monitoring Isfahan's historical bridges.

He told IRNA that cleaning memoir writings from the walls of Si-o-Se Pol began after the Nowruz 1404 holidays. Large spots are being removed from the bridge's walls.

"For completing the cleanups, we seek to attract budget from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism to do the work in wider dimensions."

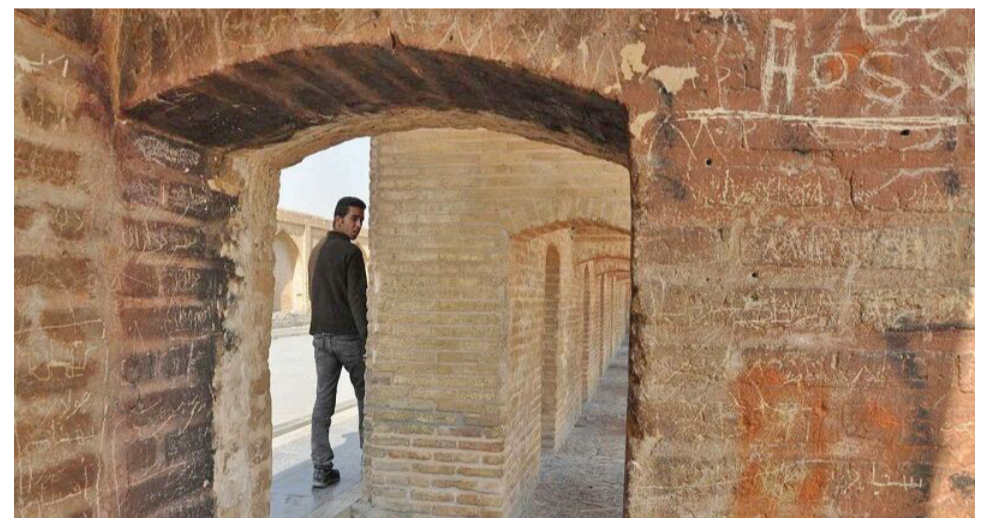
"We need a great taskforce to do the project, once the required credit is met, the cleanup measures will be started in phases."

He explained that cleanup of Si-o-Se Pol bridge deck would be implemented in the first phase, the lower floor of the bridge would be cleaned in the second phase and Khaju Bridge would be cleaned later.

Memoir writing and slogan writing are cleaned from historical bridges of Si-o-Se Pol and Khaju annually, he added.

He said cleanup of memoir writings is a sensitive job that takes time. Instruments for memoir writing and slogan writing such as spray and eraser have turned the job harder, he added.

Allahyari highlighted the high foot traffic of passersby on Si-o-Se Pol, which connects historical sites on both sides of the Zayandeh River, making it more susceptible to damage compared



Memoir writing and slogan writing are cleaned from historical bridges of Si-o-Se Pol and Khaju annually.

to other historical bridges in the city.

Si-o-Se Pol, renowned as the longest historical bridge in Isfahan and the largest structure on water in Iran, is celebrated for its 33 arches forming the first level. The second level features a pedestrian walkway flanked by walls and arcades, some of which open to the surrounding scenery.

Isfahan is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges but also for its 'life-giving river', the Zayandeh-Rood, which has long bestowed the city an original beauty and fertility.

Soaked in a rich history, it was once a cross-

road of international trade and diplomacy in Iran, and now it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons.

The ancient city embraces many architectural wonders, such as unmatched Islamic buildings, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards.

Interestingly, Isfahan is nicknamed Nef-e-Jahan, which is translated into "half the world", meaning seeing it is relevant to see half the world. In its heyday, it was also one of the largest cities in the region, with a population of nearly one million.

## Fahraj recognized as Iran's first accessible tourism village

TEHRAN - The historic village of Fahraj in Yazd province has been officially recognized as Iran's first accessible tourism village.

The national certificate was awarded to the village authorities on Sunday during a formal ceremony attended by a number of officials and travel enthusiasts.

According to the provincial tourism chief, Seyyed Mohammad Rastegari, the recognition highlights Fahraj's commitment to achieving accessible tourism for all.

"Accessibility has become a central pillar in the development of this cultural and historical village, enabling visits by tourists with special needs," Rostami said.

The upgrades include accessible paths from the entrance of Fahraj's historical Jameh Mosque to the village's traditional accommodations, enabling full access for all visitors.

Infrastructure improvements in the village include the restoration of historic buildings, resurfacing alleyways with traditional mud plaster,

installation of international signage, and construction of accessible public restrooms. These enhancements have made the village more navigable for visitors with disabilities and senior tourists.

Fahraj was selected as one of Iran's eight nominees for the UN Tourism's Best Tourism Villages initiative for 2024. This selection has spurred local stakeholders and officials to invest in sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

Rostami expressed hope that with continued efforts, Fahraj will finally join the list of Best Tourism Villages.

Fahraj is home to 102 historical landmarks, spanning the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanian periods, making it one of the world's notable historic towns. A key attraction in Fahraj is the Jameh Mosque, dating back to the first century of Islam and known for its remarkably preserved structure. Also called the Imam Hasan (A.S.) Mosque, it remains the only mosque in the Islamic world to have retained its original architectural form since its



inception.

Fahraj's historical castle, adorned with intricate facades and embellishments dating back to the 10th and 11th centuries AH, bears testament to the village's rich heritage. The fortress, boasting a quadrilateral layout, features remnants of four cylindrical towers, each equipped with guard posts, preserving the stronghold's legacy.

Situated approximately 30 kilometers east of Yazd in central Iran, Fahraj boasts a rich cultural and his-

torical heritage, making it a destination for travelers seeking authentic rural experiences.

Accessible tourism refers to the practice of making travel experiences enjoyable and inclusive for everyone, regardless of their physical, sensory, or cognitive abilities. This means creating environments and services that are accessible to people with disabilities, allowing them to participate fully in tourism activities. It is a growing trend in the travel industry.

# FAO workshop on pistachio safety, trade underway

TEHRAN – A specialized workshop titled “Pistachio Safety and Trade: Navigating Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Codex Standards”, is currently being held in Tehran and will run until April 16.

Organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Ministry of Agriculture, the FAO International Food Safety Specialist, Sanjay Dave, a globally recognized expert in food safety and trade, is leading the workshop.

The event has brought together 65 key stakeholders from across the pistachio sector to deepen their knowledge of international food safety and trade frameworks, including Codex Alimentarius standards and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures. Discussions also focused on aflatoxin risk management, pesticide residue control, and traceability systems.

On behalf of FAO, Nazi Tavakoli, Assistant FAO Representative, emphasized the need to meet evolving international food safety standards to maintain and grow Iran's pistachio exports. She pointed to mycotoxin contamination, particularly aflatoxins, as one of the primary challenges, influenced by climate conditions, agricultural practices, and post-harvest handling and storage methods.

“Iran has made notable progress through promoting good agricultural practices, enhancing post-harvest management, and strengthening mycotoxin testing infrastructure,” said Tavakoli.



“Capacity building and education along the pistachio value chain are crucial to sustaining these improvements.”

The workshop is conducted under FAO's Technical Cooperation Project entitled “Improving Pistachio Production and Export through Establishment of Integrated Product Management,” FAO in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture has organized a series of workshops to strengthen the pistachio safety and export potential.

Launched in 2024, the Project is designed to enhance integrated pistachio supply chain management, focusing on productivity, harvesting, processing, and compliance with food safety regulations. By fostering efficient and inclusive supply chain practices, the project aims to ensure sustainable pistachio production and consumption, ultimately contributing to food and nutrition security, economic growth, and strength-

ened global competitiveness.

## Workshops to enhance pistachio safety, export potential

Under a project entitled “Improving Pistachio Production and Export through Establishment of Integrated Product Management,” FAO in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture has organized a series of workshops to strengthen the pistachio safety and export potential.

The FAO-led workshops provide a platform for knowledge exchange and technical capacity building, equipping industry stakeholders across the Pistachio value chain with the latest scientific insights and risk mitigation strategies.

The first workshop in 2025, led by Paola Battilani, FAO's International Pistachio Value Chain and Processing Consultant, was held

from January 26 to February 5.

It mainly focused on developing and implementing comprehensive mycotoxin management plans tailored to ensure safer crop production, reinforcing best practices for pistachio safety and quality, the UN website announced in a press release on March 24.

FAO brought together 60 national key stakeholders from the government, private sector including pistachio growers, processors and traders as well as academia to strengthen capacity in mycotoxin prevention, detection, and control across the pistachio supply chain. The workshop equipped participants with the necessary tools and strategies to enhance pistachio quality and competitiveness in the global pistachio market.

As one of the world's top producers and exporters of high-quality pistachios, Iran's pistachio industry plays a crucial role in the country's economy and the global nut trade.

Globally, aflatoxins, produced by *Aspergillus* fungi, can develop at various stages of the pistachio supply chain, influenced by environmental conditions, agricultural practices, and post-harvest handling.

To address these challenges, Iran has been implementing good agricultural practices (GAPs), applying strict quality control mechanisms, improved drying and storage methods, enhanced mycotoxin testing capabilities, and biological control solutions.

## The event has brought together 65 key stakeholders from across the pistachio sector.

## National astronomy week to be marked

TEHRAN – The national astronomy week is scheduled to be overserved from April 28 to May 5 under the theme ‘The Night Sky, Education and Promotion of Science’.

The International Astronomy Day is celebrated on March 3. However, in Iran, the astronomy day will be celebrated on May 2 concurrent with national teacher's day to highlight the key role of education in promoting astronomy, and astronomical activities, Mehr news agency reported.

This year, the days of the week have not been assigned any particular theme to encourage creativity among participants in observing the week and planning the events.

The week aims to promote interest in astronomy and to offer people a chance to experience the beauty of the sky at night. The event also provides those interested in as-



tronomy, as well as various amateur and professional astronomy groups the opportunity to attend observation sessions, speeches, exhibitions, educational workshops, and other activities related to astronomy.

Astronomy Day was started in 1973 by Doug Berger, the then-president of the Astronomi-

cal Association of Northern California.

The event was designed to inspire curiosity about the stars and sky, increase public awareness about astronomy, and bring enthusiasts and professionals together to share their knowledge and passion.

Initially held in the autumn, the celebration was so successful that it was expanded to include a spring event as well. Therefore, International Astronomy Day is now celebrated twice a year – once in the spring and again in the autumn. The spring event is scheduled to occur on a Saturday closest to the first quarter Moon between mid-April and mid-May, and the fall event occurs on a Saturday closest to the quarter Moon from September to October.

This year, the autumn's Astronomy Day will be held on September 27th.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Iranian-made COVID-19 diagnostic kits to be released next month

Iran will commercialize domestically-made COVID-19 diagnostic kits by the Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 22), secretary of biotechnology development of Vice Presidency for Science and Technology announced.

Following a call by the headquarters for the production of COVID-19 diagnostic kits, a contract was signed with five knowledge-based companies and manufacturing process began, ISNA quoted Mostafa Qane'ei as saying on Monday.

Diagnosis is the most important part of coronavirus treatment, he highlighted.

Patients suspected to coronavirus are currently being identified by diagnostic kits that have entered Iran in the form of assistance and purchases by the World Health Organization, China and UNICEF, he said.

So, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology decided to manufacture the kits domestically, he noted.

Existing imported kits are sufficient for the next two months but after this period we will be faced with shortages of kits, however, the domestic ones will enter the market, he concluded.

## کیت‌های ایرانی تشخیص کووید ۱۹ ماه آینده روانه بازار می‌شوند

دبیر ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری گفت: کیت‌های تشخیصی کووید ۱۹، فروردین ماه وارد بازار می‌شوند.

مصطفی قانع، اظهار داشت: به دنبال فراخوان این ستاد برای ساخت کیت‌های آزمایشگاهی تشخیص کووید ۱۹، با پنج شرکت دانش‌بنیان برای ساخت این کیت‌ها قرارداد منعقد شده است. به گفته او، تشخیص، مهم‌ترین راه ورود به درمان بیماری کرونا است.

در حال حاضر بیماران مبتلا به کرونا به وسیله کیت‌های تشخیصی که در قالب مساعدت و خرید از طریق سازمان بهداشت جهانی، کشور چین و یونیسف وارد ایران شده‌اند شناسایی می‌شوند؛ اما ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری با انتشار فراخوانی از دانش‌بنیان‌های توانمند دعوت کرد تا به حوزه ساخت این کیت‌ها ورود کنند.

قانع افزود: کیت‌های وارد شده تا دو ماه آینده کافی هستند اما بعد از این مدت با کمبود کیت‌های تشخیصی کرونا مواجه خواهیم شد. به همین دلیل با کمک توانمندی‌های داخلی این نیاز را مرتفع می‌کنیم.

## Iranian, Italian universities ink MOU to broaden scientific ties

TEHRAN – Allameh Tabatabaee University of Tehran and the University of Salento, Italy, have signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance scientific collaborations in social and human sciences.

During a meeting held on Sunday in Tehran, Shoja Ahmadvand, the chancellor of Tabatabaee University, and Fabio Pollice, the chancellor of the University of Salento, discussed ways to expand scientific cooperation, Mehr news agency reported.

Teaching Persian and Italian languages, holding short-term courses, exchanging students and professors, launching an archaeology major and a Persian-Italian journal, conducting Erasmus+ projects in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, and donating books to the libraries of the two universities were among the points proposed by Ahmadvand, which was well-received by the Italian side.

For his part, Pollice suggested holding virtual Persian and Italian language courses, organizing online meetings among faculty members of the two universities and the two peer scientific groups to help them become more familiar with the existing capacities, fostering interactions between professors of the two universities, and exchanging professors and students for short-term courses with the aim of paving the way for long-term exchanges.

The signed MOU centers around exchanging scientific data, books, journals, and scientific and research documents in educational, research, and technical fields of interest to both parties, exchanging articles to be published in relevant journals, and offering mutual facilities for sabbatical leaves.

It also highlights collaboration on the establishment of joint educational courses and educational programs with mutually recognized degrees, attending international events in various educational fields being held at each of the universities, and collaborative supervising of postgraduate students.

In February 2024, Luiss University of Italy announced readiness to reinforce scientific and academic cooperation with Iranian universities, IRNA reported.

During the meeting held between Andrea Prencipe, the chancellor of the Rome-based university, and Mohammad-Reza Sabouri, the Iranian ambassador to Rome, the Italian official said that a number of Iranian students are studying at Luiss University. He expressed the university's readiness to attract more Iranian students.

Sabouri, for his part, highlighted scientific and academic achievements and capabilities of the country in various fields, including economics, management, political science, and international relations, announcing Iran's readiness to ex-



change professors and students with Luiss University.

### Global ranking

The 15th edition of the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by Subject 2025 has included 17 Iranian universities in 21 subject entries, compared to 17 Iranian universities in 17 subject entries in 2024.

Iranian universities are ranked among the top institutions in three faculty areas, including Engineering and Technology; Life sciences and Medicine; and Natural sciences, Mehr news agency reported.

University of Tehran, with a global ranking of 280, is placed first in the country; it ranked 346 globally in 2024.

Sharif University of Technology ranks second in the country, and its global ranking has risen from 410-450 in 2024 to 292 this year.

The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings (WUR) by International Outlook 2025 has ranked 85 Iranian universities among the top universities in the world.

Sharif University of Technology (with a global ranking of 301- 350) tops the universities in the country.

Amirkabir University of Technology and Iran University of Science and Technology, both with a global ranking of 351-400, are placed second.

Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, and the University of Tehran, with a global ranking of 401-500, rank third.

THE World University Rankings 2025 has placed 81 Iranian universities among the top universities in the world in 10 out of 11 subject areas, compared to 73 universities in 2024.

Iran's best rankings are in Computer Science and Engineering.

University of Tehran (401-500), Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Shahid Beheshti University (501-600), Allameh Tabatabaee University, and University of Isfahan (601), are ranked first to third in Art and Humanities.

## Some 300,000 kids getting vaccinated against polio in spring

TEHRAN –In line with the polio eradication campaign that kicked off in winter, around 300,000 more children under five years of age are getting vaccinated in two phases in high-risk areas in the country's northern half in spring, according to the health ministry.

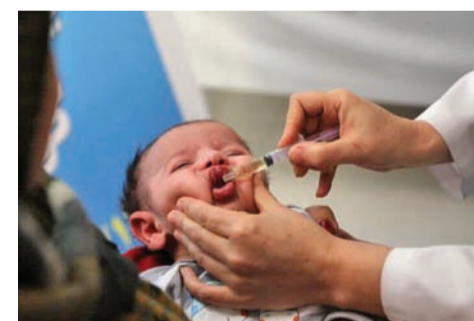
Polio is a highly infectious viral disease that largely affects children under 5 years of age. The virus is transmitted by person-to-person spread mainly through the fecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (for example contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and cause paralysis.

It can be prevented through immunization. The development of effective vaccines to prevent paralytic polio was one of the major medical breakthroughs of the 20th century. The Polio vaccine, given multiple times, almost always protects a child for life.

In the current Iranian year (started on March 20), the first phase conducted from April 12 to 14, and the second phase is planned to be implemented from June 17 to 19, health ministry website reported.

Polio eradication camping is among the remarkable achievements of the health ministry. The supplementary immunization campaign to eradicate polio in Iran started in 1994. Thanks to the campaign, the country has been polio-free since 2000.

However, in Iran's two neighboring countries, namely Afghanistan and Pakistan, endemic



transmission of wild poliovirus is still prevalent. In 2024, the number of wild poliovirus positives in Afghanistan and Pakistan increased by four and twelve times, respectively, compared to 2023.

To prevent the outbreak of the disease in the country, in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), the annual door-to-door polio vaccination campaign was implemented in two phases, with a month interval between them, targeting children under the age of five in high-risk regions in southern part of the country.

The first phase was conducted from January 4 to 6, the second phase started on February 15 and concluded on February 17. During the campaign, some 840,000 Iranian and foreign national children under the age of 5 were immunized against polio by medical universities in Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman, Fars, Hormozgan, Bushehr, Khuzestan, South Khorasan, and Yazd provinces.



APRIL 15, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Being well-off in exile is like home, and poverty at home is like being in exile.*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:04 Evening: 18:56 Dawn: 4:02 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:30 (tomorrow)

## IAF cinematheque reviews "I'm Still Here"

TEHRAN- "I'm Still Here," a 2024 political biographical drama film by Brazilian filmmaker Walter Salles, was reviewed during a session at the Cinematheque of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) on Sunday.

Iranian film critic Esmail Mihandoost attended a screening of the film followed by a review session.

"I'm Still Here" tells the story of Rubens Paiva, a Brazilian civil servant and political activist, set against the backdrop of the oppressive military regime following the 1964 coup d'état.

Living in a beautiful house near Leblon beach with his wife Eunice and their five children, Rubens quietly supports political exiles while trying to maintain a semblance of normalcy in his family life. However, the political climate grows increasingly volatile after the kidnapping of the Swiss ambassador, prompting their friends Fernando and Dalva to flee to London, taking their eldest daughter Vera with them.

The family's world shatters when a military raid leads to Rubens's arrest in January 1971, after which he disappears without a trace. Eunice's desperate public inquiries about her husband's fate result in her own arrest and 12 days of torture, while their teenage daughter Eliana is briefly imprisoned.

As Eunice faces relentless questioning about Rubens's political activities, she remains steadfast in her denial of his involvement with pro-democracy movements. Despite false reports suggesting that Rubens has fled Brazil, Eunice and her allies suspect the truth is far more sinister.

With the assistance of lawyer Lino Machado, Eunice files a habeas corpus petition and discovers that Rubens had been secretly aiding political exiles. A former inmate, Martha,

confirms Rubens's imprisonment but fears for her safety if she speaks out.

Eventually, journalist Felix informs Eunice that Rubens has been killed, although the military refuses to acknowledge this officially. Left to raise her children alone, Eunice sells their home and relocates to São Paulo, seeking a fresh start.

Fast forward to 1996, Eunice receives Rubens's official death certificate from the now-democratic Brazilian state and calls for reparations and accountability for the dictatorship's crimes. By 2014, at 85 years old and suffering from Alzheimer's disease, she is surrounded by family when news of the National Truth Commission prompts a flicker of memory regarding her past.

The film concludes with stark revelations about Rubens's murder at the DOI-CODI headquarters and highlights Eunice's remarkable journey as she becomes a respected expert on indigenous rights before her passing in 2018 at age 89. "I'm Still Here" powerfully encapsulates themes of resilience, loss, and the enduring quest for justice in the face of political oppression.

"I'm Still Here" achieved remarkable financial success, grossing \$35.7 million and becoming the highest-grossing Brazilian film since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The film debuted at the Venice International Film Festival in 2024, where it received widespread acclaim and won the Best Screenplay award. It was named one of the Top five International Films of 2024 by the National Board of Review. At the Golden Globe Awards, its star Fernanda Torres took home the Best Actress award. The film was also nominated for Best Picture at the Oscars, where it won Best International Feature Film, marking a historic win for Brazilian cinema.

# Iranian short film "Winner" to compete in 3 international festivals

TEHRAN-The Iranian short film "Winner" written and directed by Mahsa Akbarabadi has been selected to participate in three international film festivals.

A production of 2024, the eight-minute fiction film will first take part in the 12th Showreel, Effat International Student Film Festival in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from April 15 to 17.

Next month, it will attend the 10th PLANET LENS - Nature and Sustainability International Photo and Film Festival in Veszprém, Hungary, from May 15 to 18.

From June 5 to 7, the Iranian film will vie at the 3rd Vegan Çiftlik Short Film Festival in Izmir, Turkey, ILNA reported.

Based on the short story "Camera" written by well-known Iranian author Houshang Moradi Kermani, the flick is about a schoolgirl who visits a zoo to participate in a photography competition, but her camera is stolen, leading to an unexpected turn of events for her.

Yasna Ghellari, Mostafa Fazeli, Rambod Motallebi, Sanaz



Almasi, Hossein Kalhor, Amirabbas Ghazizadeh, and Iman Mahmoudyaz are in the cast among others.

Showreel is the first international film festival in Saudi Arabia that exclusively celebrates student films and media projects in live-action, animation, and documentary formats. Its mission is to empower emerging filmmakers to share their captivating stories with a global audience.

PLANET LENS is a filmmaking

competition that offers filmmakers from all over the world a platform and an opportunity to showcase their latest work. The festival has been a showcase for filmmaking that explores climate change and the negative and positive impacts of human activities on nature. It welcomes all such films in 2025, in addition to this year's featured (and specially awarded) category on biodiversity.

The third of the Vegan Çiftlik Short Film Festival is themed

"Animal Freedom". The purpose of the festival is to encourage the production of and provide a space for sharing short films and video artworks that draw attention to the violations of rights in farms, slaughterhouses, laboratories, zoos, circuses, natural habitats and many other areas in line with human desires, and the fact that even the most basic rights of animals are not recognized in the legal plane by being seen as property.

## Works of Iranian photographers on display in Budapest

TEHRAN-An exhibition of photos by Iranian independent photographers has been held at the FUGA Gallery in Budapest, Hungary.

Titled "Ordinary Moment," the exhibition was launched on April 10. It is curated by Iranian photographer Mansour Forouzesh and supported by Hungarian University of Fine Arts, ILNA reported.

The exhibition is the result of two years of continuous research and exploration around a common theme. Just as Iran's diverse climates reflect its multifaceted society, the exhibition captures this richness through a curated set of photographs. It offers a glimpse into the everyday stories and ordinary events that shape life in Iran.



By showcasing the work of emerging independent Iranian artists, the exhibition presents authentic and meaningful depictions of daily life, revealing intimate moments from the heart of Iranian society.

The participating artists include Amir Masoud Arabshahi, Arash Tawakoli, Bitakahnemou, Fatemeh Salehi, Golnaz Zibandekhou, Hojatolah Ataie, Majid Halvaei, Mahnaz Minavand, Morteza Beiglou, Meysam Pourjafari, Mohsen Tavangar, Nikoo Alidoosti, Parham Raoufi, Reyhaneh Malek Shoar, Samira Saramad, Sajede Erfani, Shervin Shirkoubi, and Saeedeh Mirzadeh.

The exhibition is held as part of the Budapest Photo Festival and will run until May 5.

## 2,000 artists, art historians join boycott of Columbia University, supporting pro-Palestine students, staff

An open letter published last month calling for a boycott of Columbia University has since gained nearly 2,000 signatories, including many prominent artists and art historians.

The letter is the latest response to the ongoing situation on the university's campus in Manhattan stemming from student protests related to the war in Gaza, The Art Newspaper reported.

The university's leaders have faced criticisms from both liberal and conservative corners over their handling of these protests, which have led to the resignations of the Ivy League school's president, Minouche Shafik, and her interim successor Katrina Armstrong.

The letter's release followed Armstrong's resignation and the university's decision to comply with demands made by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration in hopes of having \$400m in federal funding restored.

The administration had threatened to withhold the funding over what it described as Columbia's failure to protect students and faculty from "antisemitic violence and harassment".

The letter condemns what it describes as an "authoritarian assault on universities" designed to "destroy their role as sites of teaching, research, learning and activism essential to building a free and fair world".

As part of the boycott, signa-

tories have pledged not to participate in academic or cultural events at Columbia or its affiliate Barnard College, including lectures, conferences and collaborations with faculty or administrators.

"I signed onto the Columbia boycott in solidarity with students, faculty and staff at Columbia who—as elsewhere in this country—have been unjustly targeted for protesting or otherwise speaking out against the genocide in Gaza," says Sarah Gilbert, an associate professor of sculpture at Pitzer College in Claremont, California.

"We cannot normalize our students being stalked and abducted by [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] on their walk home to university housing, or our students being forced to flee the country after the university summarily disenrolls them in collusion with our increasingly fascist federal government."

Signatories of the letter represent around 30 institutions around the U.S. and abroad, and include artists and art historians at institutions such as California College of the Arts, the University of California campuses in Los

Angeles and Santa Cruz, Rutgers University in New Jersey, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Rochester, Bard College, Pratt Institute, the School of Visual Arts, The New School, New York University, Columbia itself and the University of Illinois in Chicago.

"If there were any meaningful instances of antisemitism on any campus, we would all know about them," says Blake Stimson, an art history professor at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

"Instead, all we hear about is antisemitism in the abstract. In the meantime, very particular children, students,

women, professors, doctors, reporters, hospitals, churches, mosques and universities are being annihilated in the name of our bureaucrats' new [diversity, equity and inclusion] protecting the Israeli state. Boycotting Columbia is the least we can do."

In March, Mahmoud Khalil, a recent Columbia graduate and pro-Palestinian activist, was unlawfully detained by ICE agents, sparking further controversy over the circumstances of his arrest and federal authorities' attempts to deport him. Less than a week later, another stu-

dent was detained on campus. Columbia has become the first target in what many view as a coordinated campaign against higher education institutions and campus freedom of expression, efforts that have since expanded to schools including the Rhode Island School of Design, Brown University and the University of Pennsylvania.

"I signed the letter boycotting Columbia University in solidarity with the students, faculty and staff who are being punished, arrested and deported for speaking out against US-backed Israel's genocide in Gaza, Zionist settler colonialism and apartheid, and for supporting Palestinian liberation," says T.J. Demos, an art history professor at UC Santa Cruz and the founding director of the Center for Creative Ecologies. "Their courage deserves protection, not repression."

Demos, who received his PhD from Columbia, adds: "While student and faculty protests have occurred throughout Columbia's history, what sets this moment apart is the scale and urgency of the ongoing genocide in Gaza—and the unprecedented repression deployed to silence opposition."

The administration, in league with the right-wing U.S. government and extremist pro-Zionist orgs, has weaponized antisemitism, falsely conflating criticism of Israel with racism and equating anti-Zionism with antisemitism, to smear and target dissenting voices."

## Cartoon of Day



GAZA GENOCIDE

Cartoonist: Kamal Sharaf from Yemen