

Iran Neither Overly Optimistic Nor Overly Pessimistic About Oman Talks



BRICS: An environmental cooperation opportunity for half the world's population

By Dr. Shina Ansari

Vice President and Head of the Department of Environment of Iran

TEHRAN - The modern world is grappling with a series of profound environmental and social challenges. Although these issues are frequently mentioned in diplomatic meetings, negotiations, and media coverage, they remain largely unaddressed on the ground. Problems such as global warming, biodiversity loss, drought, soil erosion, water scarcity, and pollution are not only unresolved by political bias, misconduct, and human conflicts—they are in fact exacerbated by them.

These environmental crises trigger a cascade of further consequences: rising food prices, emerging diseases, forced migration, poverty, economic decline, and more. Crucially, these challenges no longer distinguish between the Global South and North. Their impacts are evident across all nations. They transcend political borders and now threaten the future of humanity as a whole. ▶ Page 7

Shared heritage drives enhanced defense cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan

TEHRAN - The defense ministers of Iran and Tajikistan convened in Tehran on Tuesday to reaffirm their commitment to expanding defense cooperation and strengthening joint efforts to combat terrorism, building upon the long-standing historical and cultural ties between the two nations.

During the meeting, Iran's Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh underscored the strategic significance of Tajikistan to Iran, citing the shared linguistic, religious, and civilizational heritage that binds the two countries. He emphasized that Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has consistently advocated for enhanced relations with Tajikistan in all spheres, reflecting Iran's strategic vision for the region.

Tajik Defense Minister Emomali Sobirzoda reciprocated these sentiments, noting the ample social, cultural, historical, and religious commonalities that provide a fertile ground for enhanced cooperation.

Iranian citizen Mahdieh Esfandiari arrested in France over support for Palestine

Xavier Villar

MADRID - The French Government has once again detained an Iranian citizen residing in the country, accusing her of publicly expressing support for Palestine and condemning what rights bodies have described as the genocide perpetrated by the Israeli regime in the Gaza Strip.

Mahdieh Esfandiari, 39, had been living in France for the past eight years and worked as a translator. Alongside her, another individual — whose identity has not been disclosed — was arrested on similar charges. Authorities have not clarified whether the two jointly managed the social media accounts under investigation or operated independently.

According to the Paris Prosecutor's Office, the investigation was launched in November 2024 and focused on several active accounts on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. Prosecutors deemed the content published on these platforms as incitement to terrorism and the dissemination of hate speech based on religious or ethnic grounds. ▶ Page 3

Saudi-UAE plan for ground invasion in Yemen

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Saudi and Emirati-backed forces reportedly plan a ground offensive in Yemen amid U.S. strikes on the country.

Reports indicate a militia force of nearly 80,000, backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, is preparing to advance on the Yemeni port city of Hodeidah from multiple fronts.

The mobilization of these forces for a large-scale attack against the Sanaa-based government comes amid a month of sustained U.S. airstrikes that have failed to weaken the Yemeni Armed Forces.

Since mid-March, the intensified bombing campaign targeting Ansarullah-held cities, including the capital Sanaa, Hodeidah, and Saada, has killed scores of civilians.

Sources cited by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) say the UAE-backed separatist factions in southern Yemen aim to exploit the U.S. bombing campaign by pushing Sanaa's forces out of key coastal territories, particularly the strategic port of Hodeidah.

Saudi team in Beirut to continue external pressure on Hezbollah

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT - In conjunction with the relentless pressure by Deputy U.S. Special Envoy to West Asia, Morgan Ortagus, on Hezbollah, Saudi Foreign Minister Yazid bin Farhan visited Beirut.

Observers described Bin Farhan's visit as a follow-up mission to reassure the international community about the progress of the "reforms" imposed on the new Lebanese authorities, most notably the disarmament of Hezbollah, and that the timeframe is not open-ended.

Bin Farhan's visit focused on the measures being taken by the Lebanese Army in the south and north of the Litani River.

Sources claimed that Washington and Riyadh do not object to the planned dialogue between President Aoun and Hezbollah regarding the resistance's weapons, provided that this dialogue does not serve Hezbollah's interests.

Crushing free speech against Israeli genocide

By Martin Love

NORTH CAROLINA - If a U.S. President can screw up both stupid and also some vaguely well-meaning initiatives given U.S. problems, Donald Trump three months into his time in office (and his last) is doing a pretty good job of it. His shallowness of thought and lack of real thought-out strategies to MAGA are becoming apparent by the week.

The U.S. war Trump unleashed on steadfast Yemen is a case in point and representative of other moves he has so far made. He seems to have imagined that he could bomb the Hell out of Yemenis, whose SOLE aim has been to halt ships to Israel so that Israel might at least consider a halt to pulverizing Gaza. He is not apparently aware of how deep Yemen's resolve has been, and frankly, the entire world outside of even some Arab governments wants to see the genocide ended by any means. Yes, bombs are terrifying but they only ever compound anger and distress and hatred.

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China envoy talks divorce with US, Iran's nuclear fate in Tehran press conference

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN - China's ambassador to Tehran, Cong Peiwu, rolled out Beijing's plans on its trade war with the United States, which has yet to show signs of shriveling, and shared his country's stance on the indirect Iran-US nuclear talks during a Tuesday press conference attended by a number of journalists from major Iranian media outlets.

Cong looked calm and collected as he told reporters that his country is not just playing a game of chicken. "We will simply not back down against a bullying entity. That's the mindset China has." ▶ Page 2



"Year Zero" exhibition opens in Tehran, highlighting atrocities of Zionist regime

TEHRAN - The international cartoon and caricature exhibition "Year Zero," focusing on a year marked by the crimes of the Zionist regime in Gaza and Lebanon, officially opened on Monday at the Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran.

The opening ceremony was attended by a number of cultural officials and Iranian artists.

Organized in collaboration with the North Khorasan province's Art Bureau, the exhibition features 700 cartoons by 65 artists from 42 countries, with 60 selected works displayed at the museum. ▶ Page 8

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

There should be no rush for negotiations

In a commentary, Hamshahri dealt with the process of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the United States. It wrote: On Saturday (April 12), after three years, Iran and the United States met in Muscat and exchanged serious views on resolving the nuclear issue. These negotiations are taking place while the parties to the JCPOA and the United States agree that the 2015 nuclear agreement cannot be implemented in its current form. Ali Akbar Salehi, the former chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, says the global situation has become more complex, and we have an unpredictable person like Netanyahu who does not adhere to any international and global regulations and may disrupt the work at any moment. Therefore, we should neither rush nor postpone the negotiations. In other words, we should not think that we have a lot of time and delay the work. We should take a middle ground and, in addition, consider the issue in an integrated manner along with regional and global issues.

Ettelaat: Conditions are ripe for agreement between Iran and the U.S.

In an interview with Abdolreza Faraji Rad, an international relations expert, Ettelaat discussed the form of Iran-U.S. negotiations. He said: Iran's reason for indirect negotiations with the United States is rooted in its distrust of the Americans' commitment to their promises. In fact, the Islamic Republic is seeking to know what the Americans are looking for in the negotiations. Now that the atmosphere of the first round of negotiations has been positive, it is likely that the negotiations would change from "indirect to direct".

Current observations and the behavior of Iran and the U.S. indicate that the conditions are ripe for an agreement, for which two reasons can be mentioned. The first reason is that Iran must be active to prevent the activation of the snapback mechanism. The second reason is that both Iran and the U.S., as much as they need to understand and reach a common understanding, avoid a war. Negotiations are so important in the current situation that Iran is even prepared to make some concessions to the American side. The current situation between Iran and the United States has been unprecedented in the past half a century. Therefore, it can be said that the probability of a possible agreement is very high.

FM engages counterparts in regional countries over muscat talks with U.S.

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a series of high-level phone calls with his counterparts in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Iraq on Tuesday, discussing bilateral ties, regional developments, and the latest round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States in Muscat.

In a phone conversation with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Tuesday, the two sides reviewed the state of bilateral relations and ongoing regional shifts.

They also exchanged views on the Muscat talks, which mark a renewed diplomatic track between Tehran and Washington.

Araghchi welcomed Turkey's "constructive and supportive position" regarding the negotiations, while Fidan expressed Ankara's readiness to offer comprehensive assistance and voiced support for the continuation of the Muscat dialogue. The ministers also addressed consular issues and matters concerning Iranian nationals residing in Turkey.

The first round of the indirect Iran-U.S. negotiations was held on April 12 in the Omani capital. Iran's Foreign Ministry has announced that the second round is scheduled for April 19, again hosted by Oman, but to take place in a European country. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei stated Monday, "Following consultations, it was agreed that the second round of talks will be held this Saturday, April 19, in the same format."

Meanwhile, Araghchi also spoke with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan. During their exchange, Araghchi elaborated on the Islamic Republic's views on recent regional and international developments and briefed his Saudi counterpart on the course of the Iran-U.S. negotiations. He noted that the second round of talks would be held in Europe, with Oman's foreign minister con-

Donya-e-Eqtesad: In search of constructive perceptions

In a note, Donya-e-Eqtesad addressed the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council's welcome to the Iran-U.S. talks and said: The widespread welcome of the Persian Gulf Arab states for the Iran-U.S. talks is a reflection of the change in the major priorities of these countries from tension and conflict to the development of economic projects. The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council has been trying to place its relations with both sides of the conflict in a state of cooperation and convergence. The Persian Gulf Arab states have been regional allies of the United States for decades. Aware of the structural conflicts between Iran and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab bloc has been trying to change its outlook and priorities towards political economy by unveiling economic visions and to end long-running conflict with Iran. From this perspective, they do not want to be part of the maximum pressure project against Iran and are trying not to be part of this campaign. Instead, they move towards mediation between Iran and Trump's America.

Etemad: Achievements before the agreement

Etemad spoke with Mashallah Shams al-Waezin, a senior political analyst, about the outcome of Saturday's negotiations between Iran and the U.S. He said: Since Iran is not seeking nuclear weapons and the highlight of America's demands is nuclear weapons, the agreement has already been reached. He believes that in the circumstances that Trump announced in his letter, not having access to nuclear weapons is enough for him, and in Iran's defense doctrine, according to the Leadership strategy, access to nuclear weapons has no place, therefore, an agreement is available and both sides should think about the post-agreement era. Trump needs a major victory in the field of diplomacy. Trump needs an agreement more than Iran because it can make his basket of achievements heavier. Russia's involvement in the war with Ukraine is an opportunity for Iran through which it can face fewer obstacles in negotiations. An agreement between Tehran and Washington is not only in the interest of Iran but also in the interest of other countries in the region, especially the people of Palestine, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, etc.



tinuing in his mediating role.

Bin Farhan thanked Araghchi for the update and expressed hope that the negotiations would yield favorable outcomes for both Iran and the wider region. In a separate call with Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Araghchi shared Iran's perspectives on regional developments and outlined the details of the Muscat negotiations.

Al Zayani underscored the importance of diplomacy in promoting peace, stability, and security across the region and the world. He welcomed the continuation of the talks and voiced optimism about their potential to deliver constructive results.

Additionally, Araghchi held a phone call with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, where he reiterated Iran's positions on key regional and international issues and updated him on the latest diplomatic efforts with the U.S. Hussein praised Iran's commitment to diplomacy and dialogue, welcomed Oman's facilitative role, and expressed hope that the process would generate region-wide benefits through the constructive participation of all parties involved.

Military power 'non-negotiable', IRGC says no compromise on defense

TEHRAN – A senior spokesperson for the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has firmly rejected any possibility of negotiations over Iran's national defense capabilities, calling them a core component of the country's sovereignty and a non-negotiable red line.

Brigadier General Ali Mohammad Naeini made the remarks on Tuesday during a press conference marking the first anniversary of Iran's unprecedented drone and missile retaliatory strike on Israeli military positions in the occupied territories—a mission officially titled True Promise I.

"National security, along with our defense and military power, constitutes the red lines of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Naeini stated. "These are issues that will never be open to negotiations or compromise under any circumstances."

His remarks came just ahead of the second round of indirect talks between Iran and the United States in Oman, where diplomatic efforts



continue amid ongoing regional tensions.

Reflecting on the April 2024 operation, Naeini described True Promise I as a "historic and strategic milestone" that demonstrated Iran's offensive reach and resolve. The operation, which involved over 300 drones and missiles launched toward Israeli military sites, was carried out in retaliation for a deadly Israeli airstrike on Iran's consulate in Damascus that killed seven IRGC members.

"This was the largest drone op-

eration in global military history, with unmanned aerial vehicles flying over 1,000 kilometers to reach their targets," Naeini said. "It was the first direct, overt military confrontation between Iran and the Zionist regime, showcasing Iran's asymmetric warfare capabilities and strategic initiative."

Naeini underlined that the strike was conducted within the framework of international law, invoking Article 51 of the UN Charter, which recognizes a nation's inherent right to self-defense.

The IRGC official noted that the operation shattered Israel's image of invincibility, exposed its fragile security infrastructure, and highlighted Iran's emergence as a regional power in missile and drone warfare. "This decisive act sent a clear message to the Zionist entity and gave hope to the oppressed Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza," he added.

In a continuation of Iran's policy of "measured retaliation," the country carried out a second major anti-Israel operation in October 2024, following the assassination of Resistance commanders by Israeli forces. Later that month, Israeli warplanes—reportedly using airspace and logistical support from the United States' military presence in Iraq—launched missiles at Iranian military targets, causing little damages.

Tehran noted the Israeli move as a blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter. According to Naeini, the attack was successfully thwarted by Iran's advanced air defense systems.

China envoy talks divorce with US, Iran's nuclear fate in Tehran press conference

From page 1 ▶ The envoy said that Washington is violating the rights and interests of other countries, breaching international trade rules, harming the global trade system, and negatively impacting global economic stability.

"The trade and economic relationship between China and the U.S. should be based on mutual benefit and win-win outcomes, but using tariffs as a weapon undermines China's economic development and the rights of its people," Cong stated.

The diplomat also asserted that China's development relies on its own efforts and cannot be suppressed. "We are confident, and we focus on our own initiatives."

Earlier this month, U.S. President Donald Trump announced tariffs targeting 90 countries, including the EU and China.

He argued that the U.S. has been taken advantage of by "cheaters" and "pillaged" by foreigners and that the move would prod Americans into buying more domestic goods, eventually leading to larger investments in manufacturing.

Although he later declared a three-month suspension on these tariffs, China was excluded from the pause, with its rates eventually being raised to 14.5%. In response, China's countermeasures have remained measured and reciprocal, imposing tariffs of 125% on American goods.

When he first came into office, Trump said he wants to lower the temperature on a range of issues dividing the U.S. and China, however, his tariff policy has unprecedentedly strained bilateral ties.

The president's domestic supporters say they are willing to endure a period of never-seen-before price hikes if that means American production can gain fresh life.

"Standing against U.S. bullying not only protects China's legitimate interests but also safeguards the interests of the international community," Cong said to reporters.

China supports dialogue, but Iran must be careful

Cong sounded leery when answering questions about the indirect Iran-US talks that took place in the Omani capital on Saturday. The



talks, which centered on Iran's nuclear program, aim to bring about the removal of anti-Iran sanctions in exchange for limitations on Tehran's nuclear activities, similar to what the original international accord (JCPOA) Trump left in 2018 did.

"We believe dialogue is always constructive. In our view, Iran and the U.S. should pursue a diplomatic and political resolution to their differences. However, considering Washington's history of dishonesty and unreliability, a cautious approach remains essential."

On European threats to activate the 'snapback', a mechanism that

would bring back pre-JCPOA UN sanctions against Iran, the diplomat said getting the UN Security Council involved in the saga would only have negative impacts.

"This is certainly a move that will only erode the remaining trust between the parties," he noted, adding, "During the trilateral meeting that took place between Iran, China, and Russia in Beijing last month, we introduced initiatives we believe will help find an appropriate political and diplomatic solution."

Cong said any new agreement on Iran's nuclear program must be based on the JCPOA, which was two years in the making.

Iran calls for UN reform amid rising unilateral actions

TEHRAN – Senior Iranian diplomat Kazem Gharibabadi has issued a strong call for the revitalization of multilateralism and the upholding of principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, arguing that the rise of unilateral actions by certain powerful states has led to a dangerous erosion of international norms.

Gharibabadi, the Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, made these remarks at the third meeting of national coordinators of the Group of Friends in Defense of the UN Charter, held in Moscow. The gathering, which brought together senior officials and deputy foreign ministers from 20 countries, focused on addressing the growing challenges to the UN system and exploring ways to strengthen collective action in the face of unilateralism.

Addressing the high-level session, Gharibabadi warned that the "excessive unilateralism" exhibited by some international actors has severely undermined the very foundation of the UN Charter, pushing multilateral diplomacy to what he described as "its most fragile state since World War II." He lamented that, nearly eight decades after the United Nations was founded with the core mission of protecting future generations from the scourge of war and upholding international peace and security, that

mission had been compromised by the selective actions of a few powerful states.

Gharibabadi argued that the United Nations and its institutions, "which were supposed to serve international peace and security, have turned into instruments of pressure in the hands of a few countries to impose their political will on others." He pointed to the ongoing US-backed Israeli war on the Gaza Strip as a particularly glaring example of the UN Security Council's failure to act, highlighting the devastating consequences of this inaction for the civilian population. He stated that the collective punishment of Gaza's civilians, including the deliberate targeting of vital infrastructure, constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. "As we are witnessing in the genocide committed by the Zionist regime and its allies in Gaza, the Security Council has been effectively prevented from fulfilling its inherent responsibilities."

The Iranian diplomat argued that this inaction was the direct result of deliberate obstruction by states that are acting in defiance of international law and the UN Charter, thereby severely weakening the credibility and effectiveness of global governance structures.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tehran condemns escalation of Israeli attacks in occupied Palestine

TEHRAN – Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei has strongly condemned the escalating Israeli military assaults on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, calling them brutal and systematic massacres targeting innocent civilians, particularly women and children.

Baghaei referenced a series of recent and credible reports from international bodies—including the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNICEF, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)—which collectively document the widespread killing of Palestinians, destruction of critical infrastructure, targeting of healthcare facilities, obstruction of humanitarian aid, and the complete blockade of Gaza, including the cutoff of water, electricity, and fuel.

"These acts represent clear instances of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity," Baghaei stated on Tuesday, stressing that the political and military leaders of the Israeli regime must be held accountable and face prosecution for these crimes.

Citing the UN Secretary-General's recent remarks on the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, Baghaei warned that the civilian population—particularly women and children—are enduring daily bombardments, widespread famine, disease outbreaks, and forced displacement. He echoed the concerns of UNRWA's Commissioner-General, noting that these conditions reflect a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing and the systematic erasure of the Palestinian people.

Baghaei further accused Israel of deliberately targeting humanitarian workers and journalists in a coordinated attempt to silence voices exposing the suffering in Gaza. Despite these efforts, he highlighted the courage of Palestinian reporters and the growing involvement of independent international media and activists participating in the global campaign "Stop the Genocide." He said this movement has helped generate widespread global demonstrations condemning Israeli actions.

The Foreign Ministry spokesperson expressed gratitude to organizations, media outlets, and activists working to support the Palestinian people and raise global awareness.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran neither overly optimistic nor overly pessimistic about Oman talks: Leader

TEHRAN – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei met with senior officials from the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of the government on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei referred to the ongoing talks in Oman as one of the numerous tasks of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He emphasized that the nation's affairs should not be dependent on those talks. He warned against repeating the mistake made during the JCPOA talks, where the country's progress was tied to the outcome of negotiations, leading to a conditional state that hindered investment and development.

Iran and the United States engaged in indirect talks on sanctions and Tehran's nuclear program on Saturday. The two sides are to converse indirectly for a second round this upcoming Saturday. The negotiations have been characterized as "positive" and "constructive" so far, but analysts as well as officials in Iran believe it is too soon to rule a verdict on what the discussions could lead to. Iranians have deep mistrust towards the U.S., as in 2018, it left an accord Tehran brokered with several countries for over two years.

Stressing the importance of continuing activities across various sectors, including industry, economy, construction, culture, and major national projects, Ayatollah Khamenei asserted that



"None of these matters have any connection with the Oman talks."

The Leader cautioned against both overly optimism and overly pessimism regarding the negotiations. He noted that the initial decision to engage in talks was well-executed and that future steps should be taken with precision, keeping in mind that the red lines for both Iran and the opposing parties are clearly defined.

Ayatollah Khamenei stated that while these talks may or may not yield results, Iran maintains a cautious stance. He expressed distrust toward the opposing parties but affirmed confidence in the nation's own capabilities.

After years of debilitating sanctions, Iran has honed the art of neutralizing or circumventing them, but it still has hard work

ahead of it.

Addressing the atrocities committed by the Zionist regime, Ayatollah Khamenei condemned the deliberate attacks on patients, journalists, ambulances, hospitals, and innocent women and children in Gaza. He described these actions as unprecedented crimes requiring extraordinary cruelty, which the occupying regime possesses.

Ayatollah Khamenei called for a coordinated movement from the Islamic world in economic, political, and, if necessary, operational domains. He emphasized that while divine justice will prevail against the oppressors, this does not absolve governments and nations from their heavy responsibilities.

In another part of his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted domestic investment in produc-

tion as the most effective strategy to counteract sanctions. He stated that while lifting sanctions is beyond Iran's control, neutralizing their impact is within reach through various ways and internal capacities. Achieving this would render the country invulnerable to sanctions.

Ayatollah Khamenei also underscored the importance of expanding relations with neighboring countries, economic hubs in Asia and Africa, and other nations, urging continued efforts in pursuing this direction.

At the end of the meeting, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution commended the President's engagements with other heads of state and the effective activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, describing them as very good and impactful.

Iranian citizen Mahdieh Esfandiari arrested in France over support for Palestine



Mahdieh Esfandiari has lived in Lyon for eight years

From Page 1 ▶ Radio France Internationale reported that the activity on these accounts drew the attention of the Interior Ministry roughly three weeks after the Hamas attack on the occupied territories on October 7, 2023.

For several weeks, there was no official information regarding Esfandiari's whereabouts. With no news forthcoming, Esfandiari's family alerted Iranian authorities, prompting the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to begin following the case through diplomatic channels.

Esfandiari disappeared in early March 2025 without a trace. The institutional silence from the French side heightened concern in Tehran. Eventually, through diplomatic efforts, the Iranian government was able to confirm that she was in the custody of French police, although the specifics of her case remained vague and limited.

On April 12, the French weekly *Le Point* revealed that, after nearly a month of silence, French authorities had finally released information regarding Esfandiari's legal situation.

Esmail Baghaei, spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, publicly addressed the case for the first time on March 10. "Unfortunately, we have been informed that an Iranian citizen disappeared a few days ago on French territory. So far, we have not received any precise information from the relevant authorities in that country regarding her situation," he said during a press conference.

Baghaei added that a conversation had taken place the previous day with the French embassy in Tehran, and that the consular department of the ministry had been following the case "continuously." "We hope to receive concrete information as soon as possible to alleviate her family's concerns," he stated.

A week later, on March 17, the spokesperson offered an update: "Regarding the disappearance of this Iranian citizen, whose family had no news of her for some 12 or 13 days, our efforts unfortunately did not yield immediate results. At the very least, we now know she is being held by French police."

Baghaei further emphasized that the reasons behind her arrest were still unclear. "We understand that this respected lady was an activist in support of the Palestinian people and had apparently published content expressing solidarity with the oppressed population of Gaza," he concluded.

This is not an isolated incident. In the name of a secularism presented as a guarantee of neutrality between religion and politics, many European democracies have increasingly hardened their stance against public expressions of empathy with the Palestinian cause — particularly when such expressions come from Muslim citizens. As anthropologist Saba Mahmood warned, secularism is far from impartial: rather than ensuring equality of voices in the public sphere, it operates as a disciplining apparatus that defines which

forms of suffering are deemed legible and which ethical commitments are considered acceptable.

Within this framework, pro-Palestinian activism is not read as a legitimate political stance, but rather as a potential threat to the liberal democratic order. The logic at play in Mahdieh Esfandiari's case is telling: while freedom of expression is protected when causes align with Western geopolitical priorities, the language of national security is invoked when voices denounce the Israeli regime or express solidarity with the victims in Gaza.

Yet what is most troubling about Esfandiari's case is not merely the glaring asymmetry in how democratic principles are applied, but what it reveals about a deeper, structural mechanism of exclusion.

For several weeks, there was no official information regarding Esfandiari's whereabouts

The French theologian Gil Anidjar has termed this phenomenon "the politics of blood," a concept that describes how Western modernity has organized systems of belonging and exclusion. For Anidjar, blood — beyond its biological dimension — functions as an epistemic and political category, shaping religious, racial, and national hierarchies that determine who may be part of the political community and who must remain outside its boundaries.

Rather than truly separating religion and politics, secularism reproduces and reinforces this distinction as a mechanism of control. Those who do not conform to the mold of the "ideal citizen" — like Mahdieh Esfandiari, marked by her origin, her Muslim identity, and her political views — are systematically relegated to the margins of the democratic space.

In this context, secularism becomes an instrument of biopolitical management: it regulates who may appear and be visible in the public sphere, determining which forms of speech deserve protection and which must be silenced. Solidarity with Palestine — especially when voiced by those identified as Muslim — is thus perceived as a form of radical dissent, a challenge to the dominant narrative that threatens to destabilize the religious and geopolitical hierarchies underpinning the liberal order.

This apparatus of exclusion is not merely a theoretical abstraction. It has concrete effects. Esfandiari's detention, her initial disappearance, and the prolonged silence from French authorities reveal how, under the rhetoric of counterterrorism, secularism can operate as a punitive apparatus — one that systematically marginalizes those who challenge the state narrative, particularly when their ethical and political demands contradict the strategic interests of Western powers.

Ultimately, what is at stake here is not simply freedom of expression, but the very possibility of articulating an alternative political subjectivity — a way of inhabiting the world outside the identity logics imposed by the modern nation-state, grounded in property, cultural homogeneity, and symbolic control. It is in this terrain that Anidjar's critique reaches its full significance: the politics of blood is not merely a metaphor, but a structure of power that links violence, exclusion, and sovereignty.

Far from being an anomaly, Mahdieh Esfandiari's case lays bare the limits of liberal democracies to uphold their own principles when confronted with discourses that challenge their moral and political hegemony. What is revealed is not the strength of secularism as a principle of inclusion, but its fragility as a framework for coexistence. And with that, the liberal project itself emerges as a failed universalist promise — unable to accommodate the multiplicity of voices and experiences that define our contemporary world.

Lackluster U17 football team stun Iran football society

TEHRAN – In a stunning and deeply concerning turn of events, Iran's U17 national football team have been eliminated from the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2025 at the group stage, managing to secure a mere single point from their three matches.

This abysmal showing comes at a particularly painful time, as FIFA's decision to expand the World Cup to 48 teams, granting Asia eight direct slots plus hosts nation Qatar, means Iran will be conspicuously absent in the FIFA U17 World Cup Qatar 2025.

This failure starkly highlights the precarious state of talent identification and preparation within the Football Federation of Iran (FFIRI).

This edition of the Asian U17 Championship marks the second-worst performance for Iran's youth team in their 13 appearances, surpassed only by their scoreless exit in 1998.

Conceding seven goals in just three matches against opponents not typically considered Asian football powerhouses has set alarm bells ringing for the future of Iranian football and their foundational youth structures.

Paradoxically, the U17 national team have undergone more training camps and mini-camps than any other national team under the FFIRI umbrella. Yet, the team that materialized in Saudi Arabia appeared disjointed and lacking the fundamental quality and tactical coherence displayed by teams like Tajikistan and North Korea.

The inability of the U17 squad to achieve even a basic level of coordination and quality despite extensive preparation over the past eight months begs serious questions that the coaching staff and the FFIRI's technical committee must address.

Furthermore, doubts surround the composition of the U17 national team and the players selected for the tournament.

While the inherent talent of the participating players is not in question, informed sources within grassroots football suggest that numerous promising and high-quality players from Tehran and the nation's youth leagues were overlooked.

Adding to the intrigue, three players included in the Asian Cup squad list are reportedly not affiliated with any club!

Ministry of Sports and Youth intervention amidst national disappointment

The U17 team's disastrous group stage exit, has prompted intervention from Iran's Ministry of Sports and Youth. Minister Ahmad Donyamali has ordered an urgent meeting with FFIRI President Mehdi Taj and relevant officials to thoroughly investigate the reasons behind this significant setback.

In response, FFIRI Secretary General Hedayat Mombeini has formally requested Majid Jalali, Head of the Technical and Development Committee, to submit a comprehensive report detailing the causes of this disappointing outcome.

The early and ignominious exit of the Iran U17 team from the 2025 AFC Asian Cup serves as a stark reminder of the challenges facing youth football development in the nation and underscores the urgent need for a critical and comprehensive reassessment of talent identification, preparation strategies, and team selection processes to avoid similar failures in the future.

Iran vs. North Korea match to be played in Mashhad: official

TEHRAN – Mehdi Taj, head of the Iran Football Federation, announced that the match against North Korea in the third round of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualification (AFC) will take place in Mashhad.

Team Melli are scheduled to host North Korea on June 10. Before that, Amir Ghalenoei's Iran will face Qatar at Lusail Stadium in Doha on June 5.

The match was originally set to be held at Tehran's Azadi Stadium, but Taj confirmed that the venue has been changed to Mashhad.

Iran have already secured their place in the 2026 World Cup.

Iran defeat Malaysia in 2025 IIHF World Championship Division IV

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Malaysia (3-0, 0-1, 2-0) in the 2025 IIHF World Championship Division IV Monday night.

Iran had lost to Indonesia 2-1 in their opening match. Team Melli will play Uzbekistan on Thursday. In addition to Uzbekistan, Iran's next opponents in the tournament include 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.

Iranian Messi Zadalasghar comes out retirement

TEHRAN – Behzad Zadalasghar, a blind Iranian football player, has come out retirement after two years. He emulated the likes of Maradona and Messi in one of the best goals ever scored at the Paralympics.

Zadalasghar's sensational solo effort helped his country Iran beat Morocco 2-0 in the five-a-side competition in Rio.

Iran eventually won a silver medal in the 2016 Paralympic Games, losing to hosts Brazil 1-0 in the final. Zadalasghar has joined Iran's training camp currently underway in Sari, Mazandaran.

Persepolis eye Fenerbahçe midfielder Yandas

TEHRAN – Persepolis football club are reportedly interested in Fenerbahçe midfielder Mert Hakan Yandas.

The 31-year-old player has been with the Turkish giant since 2020.

Under the leadership of ?smail Kartal, Persepolis have previously signed Turkish-German forward Serdar Dursun. The Reds have almost missed the title in the Iran football league current season and are going to strengthen for the next season.

Iran learn fate in 2025 World Aquatics U20 Water Polo Championships

TEHRAN – Iran discovered their fate in the World Aquatics Men's U20 Water Polo Championships 2025. The Persians are drawn with New Zealand and Kazakhstan in Group D.

Three hundred water polo players from the 20 qualified countries will compete in the premier global age-group water polo tournament.

Hungary come into this biennial tournament as the defending champions, having downed the previous U20 Men's titlists, 12-7, in the gold medal match. The United States completed the U20 Men's Water Polo Championship 2023 podium with the country's first trip to the dais, eclipsing Greece, 11-6, in the Bronze Medal Match.

The competition will be held in Zagreb, Croatia from June 14 to 21.

Draw Results

Group A: United States, Hungary, Croatia, Montenegro

Group B: Greece, Serbia, Italy, Spain

Group C: Brazil, Germany, South Africa

Group D: Kazakhstan, Iran, New Zealand

Group E: Colombia, Argentina, Australia

Group F: Canada, China, Singapore

Iran, Belarus set to enhance air transport ties with direct Tehran-Minsk flights

TEHRAN – Iran and Belarus are moving to boost bilateral air transport cooperation, including plans to launch direct flights between Tehran and Minsk, the head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization said on Monday.

Hossein Pourfarzaneh made the remarks during a meeting in Tehran with Alireza Sanai, Iran's ambassador to Belarus, where the two discussed the resumption of flights between the two countries.

Pourfarzaneh expressed appreciation for the ambassador's efforts in organizing bilateral technical meetings with Belarusian officials, including the country's deputy transport minister and the head of its civil aviation authority.

Referring to recent agreements reached in Belarus, Pourfarzaneh said the two countries had identified the promotion of tourism



Head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization Hossein Pourfarzaneh (R) and Alireza Sanai, Iran's ambassador to Belarus

and cargo transport services as key areas for mutual cooperation in the aviation sector. He added that direct flights from Tehran to Minsk are now a top priority within that framework.

Tehran, Moscow to deepen oil cooperation through joint field development projects

TEHRAN – Senior Iranian and Russian energy officials have stressed the need to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the oil sector, focusing on joint development of key oilfields.

According to the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company of Iran (PEDEC), a high-level meeting was held on Monday between PEDEC and Russia's ZN Vostok (ZNV) to discuss technical collaboration and strategies for accelerating oilfield development projects.

The meeting, hosted at PEDEC headquarters, was attended by Nasrollah Zarei, the company's managing director, board members, and project managers responsible for the development and enhanced production of the Aban and Paydar Gharb fields, as well as Cheshmeh Khosh, Dalpari, and Paydar Sharq.

Top executives from ZNV also participated in the talks. Both sides reviewed current



challenges and emphasized the importance of boosting bilateral engagement and fast-tracking the implementation of joint projects.

As the main contractor, ZNV is tasked with developing several of Iran's oilfields. The meeting was described as a constructive step toward advancing cooperation and expediting the progress of these strategic projects.

Iran-Saudi Arabia annual non-oil trade stands at \$25m

TEHRAN- The value of non-oil trade between Iran and Saudi Arabia stood at \$25 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20), the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) reported.

The IRICA put the volume of annual no-oil trade between the two countries at 61,000 tons.

IRICA reported that Saudi Arabia recorded the highest growth rate in trade with Iran among its neighbors during the previous year.

According to Ruhollah Latifi, spokesperson for the Trade Development Committee of the House of Industry, Mining, and Trade, with the increase in political interactions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, commercial relations have also been accompanied by changes.

Speaking at a celebration held on the occasion of the Saudi National Day in last September, Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad expressed hope that the Joint Economic Committee meeting of Iran and Saudi Arabia would be held in the near future.

Paknejad said: "As the head of the joint economic committee of the two countries, I am very pleased to congratulate National Day to the government and the dear people of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"The 14th government, headed by Masoud Pezeshkian, pays special attention to the development of relations with Saudi Arabia, and believes that the cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia as two important countries in the Persian Gulf region and West Asia, can bring stability and security to the countries in



the region, and ensure the development and improvement of the welfare of the people of these countries," he stressed.

In last May, Iran's former Economy Minister Ehsan Khandouzi said he had held favorable talks with his Saudi Arabian counterpart during his visit to the Arab country.

In a post on his social media, Khandouzi said he had constructive talks with the Minister of Economy and Planning of Saudi Arabia Faisal F. Alibrahim.

"Faisal F. Alibrahim agreed with Iran's all five proposals," the Iranian minister underlined.

He said that the Saudi minister also emphasized the need for developing a roadmap for economic cooperation in the public-private sector.

An Iranian delegation headed by Khandouzi visited Riyadh to participate in an annual Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) meeting.

Iran and Saudi Arabia signed a China-brokered deal in March 2023 to resume their diplomatic relations after they cut them in 2016.

The two sides reopened their respective embassies a few months later.

Iran, Iraq sign MOUs to expand energy cooperation, explore joint gas projects

TEHRAN – Iran and Iraq signed multiple memoranda of understanding to expand cooperation in the oil and energy sectors, as the two sides explored new avenues for joint development and technical collaboration.

According to a statement by Iraq's Oil Ministry, Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad and his Iraqi counterpart Hayan Abdulghani met in Baghdad to discuss bilateral energy ties. The two officials signed agreements aimed at enhancing cooperation across various segments of the oil and gas industry, including experience-sharing, technical collaboration, and joint project development.

Abdulghani highlighted Iraq's promising gas investment projects and the country's goal of achieving self-sufficiency in petroleum product production. He expressed Iraq's readiness to deepen technical and investment ties with Iran.



Paknejad, in turn, praised Iraq's warm reception and emphasized the cultural and historical connections between the two nations. He stressed the importance of continuing cooperation, particularly in the energy domain.

In a separate statement from Iran's Oil Ministry, Paknejad elaborated on the signed MoUs, noting they include agreements

on offshore exploration and the transfer of associated gas from joint oilfields in Iraq to Iran, where it will be used as feedstock for natural gas liquids (NGL) plants. The initiative is to be carried out with private sector participation.

He said some of the agreements include non-disclosure provisions and preliminary operational commitments, moving

beyond general understandings toward implementation.

The Iranian oil minister explained that certain offshore exploration projects will be launched using Iranian expertise, with technical details to be reviewed by a joint working group. He also pointed out that Iran faces feedstock shortages in NGL plants in its western region, while Iraq currently flares significant volumes of associated gas from fields near the Iranian border. The agreements aim to recover this gas and transport it into Iran.

Paknejad arrived in Baghdad on a two-day official visit at the invitation of Iraq's oil minister. In addition to meetings with energy officials, he is also expected to meet Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani. Upon arrival, Paknejad visited the memorial site honoring the late Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Iran aims to move 54m tons of freight by rail in 2025: rail chief

TEHRAN – Iran is on track to achieve its 2025 target of transporting 54 million tons of domestic and international freight by rail, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) said, citing improved locomotive readiness across the network.

Jabarali Zakeri, head of RAI, told a meeting of the national railway transport commission that close coordination among all departments—especially deputies and mid-level managers—will be key to achieving the rail system's freight targets for the Iranian year 1404, which ends in March 2026.

Zakeri, who also serves as deputy transport and urban development minister, said that more than 570 freight locomotives were operational at the beginning of the current Iranian year, and that the target of 54 million tons

is "fully achievable" based on the operational plans of regional departments.

He stressed that performance assessments for both headquarters and regional managers would be based on their ability to meet freight goals, and warned that no excuse would be accepted for any shortfalls given the current locomotive capacity.

Zakeri praised the northeastern Khorasan region for its strong growth in international rail freight over the past year and highlighted the strategic roles of both Khorasan and Hormozgan in expanding Iran's transit capacity. He said growth in these regions would be central to achieving the goal of moving 8 million tons of international transit freight by rail.

To boost both domestic and international

freight volumes, Zakeri urged regional directors to engage more actively with freight forwarding companies and support their operations.

Zakeri also announced that additional high-speed trains with a maximum speed of 160 km/h will be added to the Tehran-Mashhad line starting this summer. The route is considered a flagship passenger service for the national railway system.

He called for a thorough review of unnecessary delays at railway stations and urged an acceleration of the replacement of old rail switches with modern concrete ones.

Zakeri reiterated the ministry's goal of increasing average speeds on the Tehran-Mashhad passenger line to 160 km/h and cutting the travel time to between 6 and 8 hours.

Iran's oil output rises by 12,000 bpd in March: OPEC

TEHRAN – Iran increased its oil production by 12,000 barrels per day (bpd) in March, bringing total output to 3.335 million bpd, according to the latest monthly report from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

The report, released by OPEC's secretariat, shows that the group's 12 member states collectively produced 26.776 million bpd in March,

a decline of 78,000 bpd from February.

Iran maintained its position as OPEC's third-largest oil producer after Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Saudi Arabia produced 8.964 million bpd in March, followed by Iraq at 3.981 million bpd.

Iran's average oil production for 2024 stands at 3.257 million bpd, up from 2.884 million bpd in 2023.

OPEC—which includes Russia and other non-OPEC allies—produced 14.244 million bpd in March, an increase of 41,000 bpd from the previous month. Combined production from OPEC and its allies reached 41.020 million bpd in March, slightly down from 41.057 million bpd in February.

Iran's heavy crude averaged \$74.76 per barrel in March 2025, down \$2.65 or 3.4 percent from

February's \$77.41. The average price for Iran's heavy crude so far in 2024 has been \$80.24 per barrel.

OPEC's reference basket also fell, averaging \$74 per barrel in March—a drop of \$2.81 or 3.7 percent from the previous month.

According to the same report, global oil demand is projected to grow by 1.45 million bpd in 2025, reaching an estimated 105.2 million bpd by year-end.

Russian businesses invited to actively participate in Iran Expo 2025

TEHRAN – Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali, on Monday invited Russian companies to actively take part in Iran Expo 2025, the country's largest trade and export showcase, during a meeting with Sergey Katyrin, president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation.

According to a statement from the Iranian Embassy in Moscow, the two sides emphasized the importance of expanding trade cooperation and exchanging business delegations under the framework of the Iran-Eurasian Economic Union Free Trade Agreement.

Jalali described trade ties between Tehran and Moscow as growing and urged the full implementation of the free trade deal, which was signed in January 2024 in St. Petersburg and will come into effect on May 15, 2025, following ratification by all member states. The agreement covers 87 percent of traded goods between Iran and the five member states of



Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali, met with Sergey Katyrin, president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation in Moscow on Monday.

the Eurasian Economic Union, granting them customs exemptions.

Highlighting Iran Expo 2025, scheduled

for April 28 to May 2 in Tehran, Jalali called for strong participation from Russian companies and economic stakeholders. He also announced an upcoming visit to Moscow by a high-level Iranian trade delegation, led by the head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture.

Katyrin welcomed the Iranian delegation's upcoming visit and said Russia's Chamber of Commerce was ready to host its Iranian counterpart. He noted that while current trade volumes are positive, they fall short of the full potential of bilateral economic ties and should be expanded. He also encouraged greater participation by companies from both countries in each other's trade exhibitions.

The meeting concluded with agreements on the schedule and details of the upcoming visit by Samad Hassanzadeh, head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, and his accompanying delegation of Iranian business leaders.

Tanker traffic up at Shahid Rajaei port

TEHRAN – The first large bitumen bulk oil tanker of the new Iranian year berthed at Shahid Rajaei Port in southern Iran in early April while the Port of the Persian Gulf marked a 3.9% increase in tanker operation compared to the previous year, according to port officials.

Hossein Abbasnejad, Director General of Ports and Maritime Affairs of Hormozgan Province, said the vessel is set to load 44,000 tons

of bitumen from one of the oil terminals at the Port of the Persian Gulf.

The tanker, measuring 183 meters in length with a draft of 12.5 meters, is the first major oil vessel to dock at Shahid Rajaei Port this year.

Abbasnejad noted that, during the last Iranian year (ended March 2024), a total of 1,444 oil tankers conducted loading and unloading operations at Shahid Rajaei Port and the Port of

the Persian Gulf, marking a 3.9 percent increase compared to the previous year.

Located within the Shahid Rajaei Special Economic Zone, the Persian Gulf Oil Port serves as Iran's largest oil terminal operated by the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO). Its strategic position along the North-South transit corridor and proximity to industrial and refinery complexes enhance its importance.

The port features 12 berths and handles a variety of petroleum products, including gasoline, gas oil, fuel oil, bitumen, kerosene, furfural, and various oils.

Since the beginning of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2025), two vessels carrying essential commodities—edible oil and barley—have also berthed at Shahid Rajaei Port.

The cultural frontline: Israeli authors call out the human cost of endless war

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN - The recent petition from hundreds of prominent Israeli literary figures demanding an end to the Gaza war represents a rare public display of dissent by Israel's cultural elite and a gap in Israeli society over the current conflict and its human costs.

This, combined with parallel movements by dissident military reservists, academics, and the international literary community, is part of a rich, complex, and often difficult challenge to the Israeli regime's war policies, posing far-reaching questions about culture, politics, and ethics in wartime.

A cultural elite breaks ranks

The signers—authors, poets, publishers, illustrators, literary editors, and academics—are blunt. They say Netanyahu has deliberately squashed a step-by-step deal to end the war for fear that peace would be the death of his political career and personal freedom, as legal accusations continue to pile up. The charge that the prime minister is prepared to extend a calamitous



war so that he will not go to prison targets the very center of Israel's political crisis and provokes fundamental questions concerning the conjunction of politics, justice, and war.

Among the honored list of signers are Israel Prize recipient Nitza Ben-Dov, playwright Yehoshua Sobol, Sapir Prize winner Ofra Ofer Oren, and journalist Daniella London Dekel, bringing significant cultural weight to the petition. Their appeal is not only to Netanyahu but also to the defense minis-

ter, government officials, Knesset members, and senior IDF officers, representing a broad-based call for accountability and policy reform.

Wider social and military discontent

The appeal of the writers was one of the many diverse forms of expression of dissatisfaction, alongside letters and declarations signed by thousands of military reservists, doctors, and academics who are calling for the end of the war. These groups are warn-

ing that the prolongation of the fighting is jeopardizing the lives of the hostages and soldiers, but the politicians are using the conflict to strengthen their power, rather than to establish real security. The participation of the military in such appeals is especially striking, as such steps weaken the government's position by those who are supposed to execute its orders. Internal resistance reflects a wider public debate on the cost and price of the conflict. The breakdown of the January 2025 ceasefire and subsequent continuation of Israeli bombardments of Gaza have spawned unprecedented levels of killing and destruction, causing anger and despair among the Israeli people. Many of them are wondering whether the government's policy is wise or just. The call from military and academic circles gives more weight to the cultural elite's demand, implying that resistance is not limited to fringe elements of society but has spread throughout Israeli society.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Saudi-UAE plan for ground invasion in Yemen

From page 1 ▶ The sources believe capturing the port could disrupt Ansarullah's ability to target Israeli ships and U.S. warships in the Red Sea.

The plan has reportedly been discussed with U.S. officials, with private American security contractors providing advisory support.

According to the WSJ, the U.S. has expressed openness to supporting the operation but has not yet committed to direct involvement.

Despite the U.S. air campaign, Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a senior member of Yemen's Supreme Political Council, dismissed the threats, asserting that neither airstrikes nor a ground assault would deter the Arab country's military support front for Gaza.

"The options for aggression in Yemen are failing. Neither the American bombardment and aggression will succeed in stopping the support for Gaza, nor will any ground military move achieve

success," al-Houthi said in a social media post.

"Instead, it will be met with the fire and might of the truthful, and trying what has already been tried will fail, with the inevitable outcome being victory, God willing.

America must know that continuing its aggression means continuing to erode its deterrence and exhaust its resources, ensuring its loss in any upcoming battle," he added.

Meanwhile, U.S. officials have reportedly indicated that Washington is considering scaling back its air operations in Yemen, signaling a potential shift in strategy.

Experts note that Yemen's popular revolution withstood nearly daily airstrikes during an eight-year war led by a Saudi and U.S.-backed coalition, which began in March 2015.

Whether the latest plans will succeed where past efforts failed remains uncertain, as the

U.S. and the Israeli regime are believed to lack sufficient intelligence on Ansarullah's military capabilities.

The Yemeni Armed Forces recently stated: "Amid the failure of the evil trio (America, Britain, and the Israeli entity) to stop the Yemeni operations in support of Gaza, the intelligence agencies of the evil trio and their allies sought to intensify their hostile activities in an attempt to establish a target bank."

They added, "Within this framework, British intelligence, in cooperation and coordination with Saudi intelligence, worked to recruit and train spy elements to carry out intelligence activities targeting the country's strategic assets.

Most notably, these activities included monitoring and surveilling sites and facilities belonging to the missile force, drone units, and certain military and security locations, as well as tracking the residences and movements of some state leaders."

Crushing free speech against Israeli genocide

Trump unaware of Yemen's resolve to end the genocide in Gaza

From page 1 ▶ Writing as an average American, and on behalf of many smarter friends with the same basic sensibilities, it is difficult to be a citizen of a country that appears to be all chaos and warmongering and death and threats, and one that also allies with the Zionist genocide. What is most concerning is the absence of a hook or clear movement at this time that Americans might hang trust upon, as one might a coat, that somehow things will improve and wisdom will dawn in Washington. Currently, there is little to nothing to suggest a corrupted government almost across the board, including most of the U.S. Congress, will wake up and at last condemn this in your face genocide underway in Gaza, which is the shame of the century.

Trump and his administration are a full-blown tantrum of an empire in decline. His wild and sudden impositions of economic tariffs on trading partners (and then often retractions) are signs of desperation, efforts to MAGA amidst a tide of decline that in truth cannot be reversed except through radically different policies that enshrine at the top of its initiative one simple concept: morality or a moral posture. This is a universal

concept which ALL humanity recognizes when it is extant. It is something that could in fact make the U.S. reputation truly "great" again even though the U.S. IS more or less bankrupt economically, a failing former giant, a bully with nukes. If the U.S. were clearly respected, it would not need to deploy threats whether economic or military.

What can be more important but a widely admired reputation both for individuals anywhere but also for nations? No country or even individual can forever manage to thrive without a secure, positive reputation. The Israeli regime is one instance of a country that has pushed a criminal agenda up front for all humanity to witness with the genocide, but this agenda has existed as a criminal enterprise for decades, too, but covered up until recently. U.S. imperialism has stripped away its mask, too, by supporting Zionism and is therefore also at risk, too.

As for Iran, it has apparently flipped the negotiation table in Oman and smartly called for a completely nuclear-free West Asia. What could be more sensible and rational? Does this not more or less solve by elimination the drift towards wider

war in West Asia if not the world? So-called "leaders", primarily Western, have been pointing fingers at Iran for decades. But Iranians have not built nuclear bombs, and Iran has not attacked anyone for centuries except very occasionally in efforts to discourage direct attacks on Iran and Iranians.

Trump in any event claims he is trying to stamp out "antisemitism". On its face "antisemitism" is not kosher or a good anywhere in any form. But he is crushing free speech against the Israeli genocide, and free speech is the cornerstone of the U.S. Constitution. He is thus wrecking the U.S. pat of what had made the U.S. "great". The fact seems to be that real "antisemitism" is NOT a serious problem in the U.S. and never has been, just as it is NOT in Iran with many thousands of its own Jewish citizens who have no interest in moving to Israel, and rightly so. But equating valid opposition to what Zionists have been doing — ethnic cleansing and genocide — with "antisemitism" is a core problem and a horrific lie foisted by current Washington on Americans, too many of whom remain vastly ignorant of history and facts, no thanks the U.S. mainstream media too often.

Saudi team in Beirut to continue external pressure on Hezbollah

From page 1 ▶ This is in contrast to the approach by some domestic groups, such as the Lebanese Forces party under the leadership of Samir Geagea, who insist on forcibly disarming Hezbollah.

In Doha, President Aoun declared after meeting with the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, that "the decision to restrict arms to the [Lebanese] state has been made, and its implementation will be through dialogue and away from force."

President Aoun further emphasized "the need for a national security strategy that fortifies Lebanon and from which a defense strategy emerges."

He said, "The issue of normalization [with Israel] was not raised before us," stressing "Lebanon's commitment to the decisions of the Beirut summit and the Riyadh conference regarding relations with Israel."

For his part, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, at Riyadh's behest, visited Damascus, where he met

with the head of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham regime, Abu Muhammad al-Julani (aka Ahmad al-Sharaa). He was accompanied by Defense Minister Michel Menassa, Interior Minister Ahmad Hajjar, and Foreign Minister Youssef Raji.

Last month, the Lebanese defense minister met with his Syrian counterpart in Jeddah to discuss mechanisms for border control and crossings; prevent smuggling; demarcate land and sea borders; strengthen security coordination; and the issue of Syrian terrorists detained in Lebanese prisons and implicated in a series of terrorist attacks against the Lebanese people (See Tehran Times' report: Julani seeking bargain with Aoun to get his terrorists freed from Lebanese prisons on Feb10th).

Despite a sharp shortage of essentials in Lebanon, the flood of Syrians fleeing into Lebanon has not stopped. "Since the beginning of April, 30,000 Syrians have entered the Akkar and North gover-



norates," according to a recent World Food Program report.

Most of the newly displaced are residing in collective shelters such as mosques, community halls in villages, and private homes, either on loan or shared with other families. The new displacement has led to the opening of 25 new shelters, all of which are expected to close in the next two months due to the suspension of external funding.

Upon his return from Syria, Salam held a meeting with bin Farhan to brief him on the details and outcomes of the visit, saying that he had extended an invitation to Julani to visit Beirut!

International protests erupt over Gaza war



Protests in Dakar

TEHRAN - Widespread protests erupted across various cities across the world on April 14 and 15 in solidarity with Gaza.

Demonstrators denounced the unstoppable Israeli crimes in the besieged enclave and condemned the United States for providing support for the occupation regime.

bassy, condemning the ongoing genocide in Gaza and the U.S. complicity in the Israeli actions. Organizers urged civil society to join in large numbers to send a message of solidarity with Palestinians and protest the U.S. backing of Israel.

In Europe, Dutch riot police intervened violently at the University of Amsterdam, where protesters renamed a university building in memory of a Palestinian doctor killed by Israel and demanded severing ties with Israeli universities. Several arrests were made during the demonstration.

In Tunisia, people held protests condemning the silence of the international community regarding the Gaza genocide and called for an end to the food blockade on Gaza. Similarly, Palestinian supporters in Seoul demanded an end to the genocide and called for lifting the food and medical blockade.

In Senegal's capital Dakar, hundreds marched in a 2.5-kilometer protest organized by the Senegal Alliance for the Palestinian Cause. The march included politicians, religious leaders, and activists carrying Palestinian and other flags, chanting slogans such as "Down with Israel" and "Down with the United States".



Protest in Ankara

In the United States, Mohsen Mahdawi, a Palestinian student activist at Columbia University and a green card holder since 2015, was arrested by immigration agents during a citizenship interview in Vermont. His lawyers say the detention is a retaliatory move by the Trump administration against pro-Palestinian student protesters. Mahdawi's legal team has filed a petition to prevent his deportation, arguing that his arrest violates constitutional rights and aims to silence advocacy for Palestinians.

In Turkey, thousands rallied in multiple cities, including Istanbul and Ankara. In Istanbul, protesters marched from Beyazıt Square, chanting slogans against Israel and waving Turkish and Palestinian flags. In Ankara, members of the Ankara Palestine Solidarity Platform held a sit-in and performed the Maghrib prayer in front of the U.S. em-



Protest in New York

These global demonstrations reflect growing international outrage over the conflict in Gaza and the perceived complicity of the United States in supporting Israeli military operations. Protesters worldwide are calling for an end to violence, the lifting of blockades, and justice for the Palestinian people.

Putin open to Ukraine peace deal: US envoy

Russian President Vladimir Putin is open to a "permanent peace" deal with Ukraine, United States special envoy Steve Witkoff has said.

President Donald Trump's envoy made the claim in a TV interview late on Monday, following "compelling" talks with Putin in Saint Petersburg last week. However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned that agreeing terms on a deal is "not easy", while Ukraine and its European allies have called on Washington not to be deceived by Moscow's delay tactics regarding a ceasefire.

"I think we might be on the verge of something that would be very, very important for the world at large," Witkoff told Fox News in an interview following his meeting with the Russian leader on Friday, acknowledging that "it took a while for us to get to this place" but that he saw a deal "emerging" after five hours of talks.

He also noted a potential to "reshape" the Russian-United States relationship through "commercial opportunities" that would bring stability to the region.

Jordan says it thwarts plot that threatened national security

Jordan says it has arrested 16 people, thwarting a plot that threatened national security and that involved manufacturing and importing rockets illegally, explosives and a drone production site.

In a statement on Tuesday, the General Intelligence Department said it uncovered plans to recruit and train "operatives" in Jordan and neighboring Lebanon.

A drone factory was also found, according to the statement that was released on state media.

The suspects were referred to the state security court for trial, it added.

Authorities later said at least one rocket was ready to be launched as part of an operation that had been under surveillance by security forces since 2021.

A security source cited by the Reuters news agency said the suspects were connected to the Muslim Brotherhood, the country's largest opposition group, while the head of the cell who trained some of its members was based in Lebanon.

Sotheby's to put collection of Islamic arms and armour on auction

TEHRAN -- Sotheby's, a British-founded American multinational corporation headquartered in New York City, has announced highlights of arts from the Islamic world, which will go under the hammer in its upcoming auction on April 29 in London.

The objects include 100 masterpieces that dates back to 500 years.

The collection has been collected by French collector Philippe Gilles René Missillier (1949-2022) for over 50 years. He visited every museum and attended auctions. He prepared all catalogs and sources.

A high portion of his collection was put on display in Paris in a fair-themed "Splendeur des Armes Orientales" in 1988.

This collection will be put on display on April 29 this year again.

Also, Iranian relics have been presented at this auction. They include a steel axe dating back to the Safavid era and a cuirass of the Qajar era. The axe head has been inlaid.

Some of them are as follows:

A Qajar cuirass, Persia, late 18th or early 19th century

Originally consisting of five steel plates connected by pairs of hinges, the front two plates now missing, each plate made using five sheets of steel, the central sheet of watered steel, attached with rivets and hammer welded, the field of each plate overlaid with gold overlaid spiral grapevine motif including birds, with inscriptions including surah 61 (al-Saff), part of verse 13, in a cartouche at the top of the central plate, and around the borders are selections from surah 48 (al-Fath), starting with verses 1-5 on the central plate, verses 4-7 on the left hand plate, and the end of verse 7-verse 9 and verse 15-17 on the right-hand plate.

A rare Safavid watered steel axe, Persia, second quarter of the 17th century

The watered steel head finely inlaid with rumi arabesques, the cheeks outlined, set on a later wooden haft with ivory pommel cap and modern red cord 60.3cm.

An Aqqoyunlu Turban Helmet from The Saint Irene Arsenal, Eastern Anatolia or Northwest Persia, Late 15th Century

The base of cylindrical form rising to a swollen band of vertical flutes narrowing to a pointed apex, with indents for eyes and eight suspension loops for mail, engraved and sil-



A Qajar Cuirass, Persia, late 18th or early 19th Century

ver overlaid with inscriptions in a loose thuluth against a spiral vine ground, with Saint Irene arsenal mark above the right eye, the nose guard plain 33cm.

A rare Ottoman wicker shield (Kalkan), Turkey, 17th century

The wicker body of domed circular form, mounted with heavily corroded metal umbo in center, the wicker wrapped in fine red and yellow silk and silver-thread featuring stylized foliate and geometric motifs and inscribed 'God' four times along the border, with ten heavily corroded bosses and corresponding loops to reverse, reverse lined with red velvet 58.5cm.

A four-plate cuirass (Chahar Ayina) from the Warwick Castle Collection, north India, 18th century

Consisting of four convex steel plates, each decorated in the same fashion with a field of neatly arranged chiseled irises surrounded by a gold overlaid border replicating the iris motif, the front and back plate with six clasps, the side plates with four clasps, the reverse of each plate padded and lined with contemporary silver-thread silk embroidered with a repeating pattern of polychrome silk flowers, with Warwick Castle inventory tags.

Sotheby's has been uniting collectors with world-class works of art since 1744. Sotheby's became the first international auction house when it expanded from London to New York (1955), the first to conduct sales in Hong Kong (1973), India (1992) and France (2001), and the first international fine art auction house in China (2012). Today, Sotheby's presents auctions in ten different salesrooms, including New York, London, Hong Kong and Paris, and Sotheby's Bid Now program allows visitors to view all auctions live online and place bids from anywhere in the world.

Strawberry festival to be held in Mazandaran

TEHRAN -- A strawberry festival will be held in Bahnemir, Babolsar, Mazandaran province, said the deputy head of Mazandaran Cultural Heritage Department.

Mehdi Es'haghi added that the festival is a tourism event that can be an opportunity for the private sector, CHTN reported.

All tourism facilities particularly tourist service offices should have programs to draw tourists, he said.

He explained that the tourism sector is an economic, social and cultural phenomenon that can be expanded through innovation, adding that it can thrive by rendering appropriate services and continuous supervision.

The week-long strawberry festival will begin on April 17.

Mazandaran ranks second after Kordestan province in the production of strawberries. The annual strawberry harvest festival has the potential to promote tourism in the province.

Iran is set to increase its strawberry production to 70,300 metric tons by 2026, a growth of 1.8 percent each year. Since 1985, the country has seen an average annual increase of 2.1 percent. In 2021, Iran ranked twentieth, with Ukraine ahead of it at 63,060 metric tons. The United States, Mexico, and Egypt ranked second, third, and fourth respectively.

Asia and Pacific returning to full tourism strength

According to UN Tourism's data, after an initial slow recovery from the impacts of the pandemic, Asia and the Pacific has been rapidly returning to full strength. In 2024.

Destinations in the region welcomed 316 million international arrivals between them, equivalent to 87% of pre-pandemic numbers, and up from 66% at the end of 2023. South Asia saw the best results by sub-region, with a 92% recovery, and Maldives posted the highest growth in the region, welcoming 20% more tourists than in 2019, followed by Japan, with 16%, Fiji with 10% and Sri Lanka 7% more compared to 2019. The Commis-

sion's host this year, Indonesia welcomed 13.9 million tourists in 2024, recovering 86% of 2019 levels.

In Jakarta, Member States were brought up-to-date of the progress being made guiding the sector's development in the region. The Report of the Secretary-General outlined progress made over the past year, most notably in the priority areas of Tourism Insights, Knowhow, Investments and Innovation, Education, and UN Tourism's support on the ground for its Members.

(Source: UN Tourism)

Iran re-elected to executive council of UN Tourism

TEHRAN -- Iran has been re-elected as a member of the Executive Council of UN Tourism, the primary international decision-making body in the field of tourism, according to Deputy Minister of Tourism Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey.

The election took place during the 60th meeting of the UN Tourism Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific, attended by Mohseni-Bandpey and Moslem Shojaei, Director General of Marketing and Tourism Development at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili chaired the meeting, which was held from April 15 to 16 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Speaking to the Tehran Times on Tuesday, Shojaei confirmed that Iran's request to renew its membership in the Executive Council was officially approved, emphasizing the significance of Iran's continued presence in the Council.

The deputy tourism minister noted that the country, alongside India, will benefit from this membership for the next four years as



a representative of South Asia.

"This renewed opportunity, the result of extensive efforts and negotiations, allows Iran to remain actively engaged in shaping global tourism strategies," he said. "It also opens access to a range of benefits that can support the growth and modernization of Iran's tourism industry."

The official also highlighted the importance of international cooperation and timely access to global tourism data, asserting that tourism development is deeply connected to positive diplomatic

relations and global engagement.

UN Tourism—formerly known as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)—is the world's leading tourism agency. Iran's active role in the Executive Council over the past decade has enabled the country to receive sustained support and access to global expertise.

Among the key benefits of this membership are access to expert consultancy in developing and updating Iran's national tourism strategy, implementation of modern tourism statistics

models such as Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA), participation in specialized training programs, continued involvement in the UN's Silk Road Project, and official recognition of Iran's potential as a global tourist destination.

Additionally, Iran has secured approval to establish an International Center for Tourism Development, Promotion, and Applied Research in collaboration with UN Tourism—an initiative aimed at further strengthening ties between Iran and the international tourism community.

National Museum session explores visible and invisible forces in exhibition spaces

TEHRAN -- A specialized session titled "Presenting Visible and Invisible Forces within the Museums" was held on Monday at the National Museum of Iran, focusing on the evolving role of museums in contemporary society.

Dr. Elham Pouria Mehr, the keynote speaker, delivered a lecture examining how museums contribute to knowledge production, foster participatory environments for audiences, and reveal both visible and hidden forces that shape the museum experience.

In her address, Pouria Mehr offered a historical overview of the concepts of the curator and curatorial practice, tracing their evolution and structural shifts within the museum field. She emphasized the role of curators not only as custodians of culture and art but also as active agents in healing and interpreting cultural narratives.

The session, which was held at the Iran Bastan Museum within the prestigious museum in downtown Tehran, was part of ongoing efforts to engage professionals and academics in critical discussions on the transformative functions of museums in the modern era.

Drawing on contemporary museological theories, the speaker critiqued representation policies and exhibition methods in shaping museum-based knowledge, examining their impact on audience perception.

The visible and invisible forces within the museum and their role in shaping the future



were another key focus of the lecture. Pouria Mehr analyzed the significance of events as dynamic tools in museums, seeking to elucidate the forces at work in museum objects, exhibition policies, spatial design, and the transmission of meaning to audiences.

In conclusion, by referencing successful examples of modern museums, the session emphasized the need to redefine the role of historical museums in envisioning the future. The event provided an opportunity to reconsider the cultural, educational, and social functions of museums.

At the end of the session, Dr. Jebrael Nokandeh, Director-general of the National Museum of Iran, commended Pouria Mehr's lecture and stressed the importance of integrating new perspectives into museology.

Expressing hope for more specialized sessions on fundamental museum concepts and the role of museums in the contemporary world, Nokandeh remarked:

"Museums are not merely repositories of

historical artifacts but dynamic institutions capable of playing a pivotal role in shaping future cultural and social discourses."

The National Museum of Iran, established in 1937 in downtown Tehran, serves as the country's principal museum and a vital institution for preserving and showcasing Iran's archaeological and cultural heritage. The museum houses a diverse collection of artifacts that span from prehistory to the Islamic era, including invaluable pieces such as ancient pottery, textiles, and coins. As a center for research and education, the National Museum plays a crucial role in fostering an understanding of Iran's rich history and its connections to other cultures, particularly through significant collections like the Chinese ceramics that highlight the interactions along the Silk Road.

Its collections range from the Palaeolithic to the late Islamic period and represent more than a million years of human settlement and cultural achievements in Iran. The personal jewellery from the Palaeolithic, clay and human figurines from early village communities, the earliest evidence of administrative technology and writing from the 4th millennium BC, Stone reliefs and capitals from Persepolis, the Parthian life-size bronze statue of "Shami Man", the natural mummy of a man called "Salt Man", the Ilkhanid mihrab (prayer niche) of Dar-e Behesht, and the pen and ink paintings (Siah Qalam) of Reza Abbasi from the Safavid period are among the important objects in the museum.

Entry to museums, historical sites free of charge on April 18

TEHRAN -- Cultural Heritage Department affiliated with Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ministry declared that it will hold extensive programs to mark World Heritage Day, aka International Monuments and Sites Day on April 18, said Fatemeh Davari, who presides over the department for preservation and restoration of historical buildings at tourism ministry.

She also said a program titled "Historical Unseen" will be held across the country, in which historical monuments that cannot be seen in general conditions, can be visited along with specialized tours for visiting the historical monuments and sites, ISNA reported.

This year's slogan of International Monuments and Sites Day has been titled "Heritage at Risk (Threatened) from Disasters and Conflicts Preparedness and Learning" and declared by ICOS [the International Council on Monuments and Sites], she said.

She added that the Cultural Heritage Department has considered "Resilience of Historical Monuments to Crises" as the main approach of programs marking this day.

The Cultural Heritage Department seeks to consider and warn the risk and resilience of historical monuments to natural disasters and how to deal with them through holding 30 specialized gatherings across province and heritage sites which are at highest risk of flood, quake and landslide with participation of experts, she pointed out.

Davari continued that crisis management exercise will be held across 10 provinces with a focus on rescuers of historical monuments in April 19 with participation of relief agencies including Red Crescent Society, Fire Department, Police Force, and Protection Unit.

She named introducing and appreciating the masters, activists, and those in field of renovation of historical monuments at national

and province levels as the programs for marking International Monuments and Sites Day.

World Heritage Day, aka International Monuments and Sites Day, commemorates the efforts of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in safeguarding cultural treasures worldwide. Its primary focus is to raise awareness about the significance of cultural diversity and the imperative of preserving it for future generations. Ancient monuments and edifices stand as invaluable assets universally. Yet, their preservation is essential to ensure their enduring value over time. Hence, this day symbolizes a global endeavor involving communities worldwide.

On this occasion, numerous events unfold across the globe, ranging from conferences to site visits, all aimed at celebrating our rich heritage. For the uninitiated, heritage sites are essentially locales of cultural importance, safeguarding both tangible and intangible legacies passed down



A view of museum of anthropology in Kalat-e Naderi, Kalat county, Khorasan Razavi province

through generations.

The world boasts an array of breathtaking heritage sites and monuments. Among them is Machu Picchu, nestled amidst lush, mountainous terrain overlooking the Urubamba River in Peru. Egypt boasts a plethora of remarkable sights, including the iconic Pyramids of Giza. Other notable destinations encompass Bagan in Myanmar, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, and the majestic Great Wall of China.

Iran, Japan, UNESCO join hands to address natural hazards, boost climate change resilience

TEHRAN – The international project of managing natural disasters and enhancing resilience to climate change impacts was inaugurated officially by representatives from the Department of Environment (DOE), the Embassy of Japan, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Funded by Japan, the project's document was signed on Monday by Ieng Srong, the head of the UNESCO Tehran Office, and Arman Khorsand, the head of the international affairs and conventions office of the DOE.

The main objectives of the project include developing flood hazard maps, establishing early warning systems, assessing and managing agricultural drought risk, and empowering local communities, particularly women and youth, to effectively prepare them to respond to disasters and crises, DOE website reported.

The project also aims to develop scientific and technical infrastructure in crisis management with the prospect of becoming a regional model for combating climate change effects.

Referring to the challenges of climate change, Shina Ansari, head of DOE, highlighted the significance of public participation, indigenous knowledge, and modern technologies in disaster risk reduction.

The head of the UNESCO Tehran Office, Ieng Srong, for his part, lauded environmental cooperation between the two organizations and underscored the importance of prioritizing science and raising awareness in the fight against climate change.



The Embassy of Japan considered the project a milestone in the environmental relations between the two countries and stressed sharing Japan's successful experiences in disaster management.

Climate change impacts

By affecting rainfall patterns, pollination, flowering, and even harvest time, climate change has greatly affected the agriculture sector and food security in many countries, most significantly in Iran, according to the country's former permanent representative and ambassador to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

In some parts of the country the air temperature has increased by 2 degrees while the highest temperature set in the world amounts to 1.5 degrees, IRNA quoted Mohammad-Hossein Emadi as saying.

Studies have shown that for a degree increase in temperature on the planet, the amount of evaporation rises by 23 percent which

negatively affects agriculture and animal husbandry sectors.

Climate change also alters plant growth patterns, disturbing the nutritional values of crops, he stressed.

In addition, unexpected effects of climate change like drought, flood, and landslides have all affected food security.

Reinforcing co-op can improve crisis management

In September 2024, the former head of the crisis management organization said reinforcing cooperation among the ECO member states in prediction, prevention, preparation, response, reconstruction, and rehabilitation fields can greatly boost the efficiency of crisis management.

"Currently, the world is facing severe challenges, the most important of which include climate change, water scarcity (particularly fresh and safe water), lack of green spaces, and desertification,

IRNA quoted Mohammad-Hassan Nami as saying.

Regarding the availability of valuable technologies in crisis management, Nami proposed the appropriate use of intelligent systems for correct data analysis to be put on the agenda to further advance the goals of the countries.

The official noted that access to authentic and reliable information related to risks is the basis for making quick, accurate, effective, and timely decisions in handling emergency situations and reducing financial and life losses. However, a substantial part of the risks is not limited to geographical borders.

It is essential for ministries and emergency organizations of the ECO member countries to act in the form of coherent information systems and intelligent systems to timely analyze and evaluate data, and issue warnings to responsible organizations.

Tehran crisis management team attends INSARAG intl. training course

TEHRAN – Tehran Disaster Mitigation and Management Organization team has represented Iran in the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) training course, conducted in cooperation with the Emergency Situations and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters of the Russian Federation (EMERCOM), and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The specialized training course aimed at improving coordination and command in international search and rescue operations, focusing on Incident Command Management System (ICMS). It was held at the Academy of GPS of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia, ILNA reported on Tuesday.

Instructors from Armenia, Brazil, and Turkey taught participants about coordinating and managing international search and rescue operations with the help of specialized software. They also got acquainted with the principles of the data collection and process-

ing system over the course of a week.

Moreover, operation teams were taught how to quickly send information from the emergency site to international search and rescue coordination centers via smartphone or similar devices.

In the ICMS, information is processed, summarized and used to collaborate with the authorities of the affected country on deciding priority areas to relief and rescue services.

Designed based on INSARAG standards, ICMS is currently used by internationally certified teams and has been deployed in relief missions in various countries, including Lebanon, Libya, Turkey, Morocco, Thailand, and Myanmar.

INSARAG, Russian EMERCOM assess Iranian crisis management teams

In March 2024, The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and Tehran Fire Department were assessed by the INSARAG and EMERCOM.

The initial assessment mission was held

from March 9 to 14 to achieve international classification according to the INSARAG standards.

Capacity building is at the heart of INSARAG and the EMERCOM of the Russian Federation, as a member of the INSARAG network, agreed to provide its technical expertise to support this initiative, UN Website announced in a press release on March 19.

Throughout the week-long mission, INSARAG and EMERCOM representatives met with Iranian officials and visited the Relief and Rescue Center of IRCS and Training Center of Tehran Fire Department.

The mission was initiated in response to a request from Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was facilitated by the Tehran Disaster Mitigation and Management Organization on behalf of the National Disaster Management Organization (NDMO).

This mission established a roadmap for the remaining steps ahead of the completion of the classification process.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Ministries ink MOU on out-of-school children

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare have signed a memorandum of understanding aiming to bring out-of-school children back to school.

The memorandum of understanding will pave the way for future steps, ISNA news agency quoted Education Minister Mohammad Bat'haei as saying on Sunday.

He made the remarks over the 8th session of council meeting for improving educational standards in underprivileged and underdeveloped areas at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. "The meeting is aiming to live up to educational standards, however, the current conditions are unjustifiable, and we should move faster," he added.

تفاهم وزراء برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل به مدارس

وزارت آموزش و پرورش تفاهم نامه مشترکی با وزارت رفاه برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل امضا کردند.

به گزارش روز یکشنبه ایسنا، محمد بطحایی وزیر آموزش و پرورش گفت: امروز تفاهم نامه‌ای امضا می‌شود که نقشه کار برای ادامه مسیر کاملاً مشخص شود.

بطحایی در هشتمین جلسه شورای هماهنگی بهبود و ارتقای شاخص‌های آموزشی و پرورشی مناطق محروم و کمتر توسعه یافته که در وزارت رفاه برگزار شد گفت: هدف اصلی این برنامه و شورای هماهنگی ارتقای شاخص‌ها بود، هر چند این روند قابل قبول نیست و باید با سرعت بیشتری حرکت کنیم.

BRICS: An environmental cooperation opportunity for half the world's population

From page 1 ▶ This is the point at which collective, convergent action becomes not just important—but essential. Addressing these global threats requires coordinated international efforts, not isolated national responses. Decisive actions—such as the mobilization of financial resources, the transfer of technologies, capacity building, and enhanced global cooperation aimed at achieving sustainable social and economic development alongside environmental protection—are of paramount importance. Conversely, unilateral, unfair, and unbalanced trade restrictions in international markets obstruct the ability of developing countries to fulfill their environmental commitments, creating new layers of complexity and difficulty.



energy overconsumption, with energy intensity standing at 2.5 times the global average.

A transition toward a low-carbon green economy is a vital pillar of the global response to climate change. This transformation requires a fundamental shift toward clean energy sources, improved energy efficiency, and greater support for sustainable urban development and transport systems. Embracing such strategies can significantly mitigate climate-related risks while unlocking new economic opportunities and improving the quality of life for communities around the world.

The 11th Meeting of BRICS Environment Ministers provided the Islamic Republic of Iran with a unique opportunity to engage with ten other countries that collectively represent half of the world's population and around 40% of global GDP. Iran's primary proposal centered on strengthening South-South cooperation in the environmental domain. This includes technical, financial, and advisory collaboration—particularly through knowledge and experience exchange, joint project implementation, and expert delegation among BRICS nations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, whose Constitution explicitly emphasizes environmental protection, considers the principles of sustainability a binding national commitment. Environmental conservation has consistently been a cornerstone of Iran's policy agenda. Even under the burden of unjust and unilateral economic and political sanctions, Iranian experts and environmental advocates have continued their efforts to uphold the values enshrined in the Constitution.

Under the new administration of President Masoud Pezeshkian, international engagement and constructive global partnerships are central priorities. One of the government's most urgent areas of focus is deepening international cooperation in the environmental sector. Iran is among the countries with relatively high greenhouse gas emissions, and its geographical location makes it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The country faces persistent and worsening droughts, severe dust and sandstorms, major biodiversity loss, sharp declines in surface runoff, and overextraction of groundwater to compensate for diminishing water resources. These effects have led to falling agricultural productivity and increased vulnerability of critical infrastructure and industrial facilities. The approximately 50% decline in surface runoff in most of Iran's watersheds—despite an overall decrease in average precipitation—reflects the depth and severity of climate change impacts in the region. In addition, Iran suffers from alarming levels of air pollution and en-

Effective cooperation requires the creation of robust financial mechanisms and incentives for investment. The establishment of a BRICS Green Fund, expanded financial contributions from member states, and the development of clean and renewable energy infrastructure, smart grids, and sustainable public transportation systems are among the first critical steps the group can pursue.

We remain hopeful that environmental collaboration will become a meaningful bridge between nations—fostering solidarity under the banner of friendship. Through this spirit of unity, we can support one another in our greatest shared cause: the protection and preservation of Earth's ecosystem.

Some \$100 million allocated to develop AI

TEHRAN –The Vice Presidency for Science, Technology and Knowledge-Based Economy and the National Development Fund (NDF) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to create a 100-million-dollar fund for the development of the artificial intelligence (AI) sector in the country.

Signed by Hossein Afshin, an official with the vice-presidency of science and technology, and Mehdi Qazanfari, the head of the NDF, the MOU aims to establish a framework for the development and implementation of AI in line with the seventh national development plan (2023-2027) and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's emphasis on investing in emerging fields, ISNA reported.

According to the MOU, the projects introduced by the vice-presidency for science and technology will be funded through loans, partnerships, and other ways of financing. To further boost cooperation between universities and the private sector, the NDF will grant specific loans to those companies that financially support AI-based projects in universities and scientific centers.

In return, the vice-presidency for science and technology will use financing tools for emerging technologies.

Iran's ranking improves in Government AI Readiness 2024

According to the latest report by Oxford Insights index, which measures government readiness for implementing artificial intelligence (AI) in public services, Iran ranks 91 among 188 countries, moving up three positions compared to 94 in 2023.

AI has a key role to play –not just in governing the technology, but in helping governments perform better.



The Government AI Readiness Index has become a trusted resource for policymakers, adopted as an official benchmark by national governments.

In this year's edition, the AI readiness of 188 countries at a time of growing complexity, where governments face evolving citizen needs and challenges like economic uncertainty, climate risks, and rising inequalities.

The 2024 index examines 40 indicators across three pillars: Government, Technology Sector, and Data & Infrastructure. It highlights progress, identifies gaps, and provides actionable insights for policymakers working to integrate AI into public service delivery.

At its core, the index asks 'how ready are governments to implement AI in the delivery of public services?' By answering this question, it aims to offer a practical tool that supports evidence-based decision-making and helps policymakers unlock AI's potential to serve citizens better worldwide.

According to the index, the country's best ranking is in the Data and Infrastructure pillar, 66.29 which has improved compared to 55.88 last year. It includes infrastructure (70), data availability (43), and data representativeness (121) indicators.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The most worthless knowledge is one which comes only on the tongue, and the loftiest is one that manifests itself in the significant parts of the body, such as the head and heart.

Imam Ali (AS)

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

5 Iranian films to vie at 47th Moscow International Film Festival

TEHRAN-Five films from Iran will participate in the 47th Moscow International Film Festival (MIFF), set to be held in Moscow, Russia, from April 17 to 24.

The feature film "For Rana" directed by Iman Yazdi, short film "After Father" by Noushin Meraji, documentary "Trick" by Jafar Sadeghi, and short animated films "Glory" by Mahdi Barzadegan and "Holy Heaviness" directed by Farnoosh Abedi and Negah Fardiar are the works from Iran selected to be screened in the event, Honaronline reported.

Made in 2025, "Holy Heaviness," nine minutes, deals with the unbearable lightness of the death of loved ones. There are wounds in life that eat away at you like leprosy. The weight of the death of loved ones sometimes becomes so overwhelming that to get rid of this weight is inevitable.

"Glory" is a production of 2024. The 12-minute flick depicts a man who emerges from a ruined and sandy civilization. Captivated by the beauty of the stars, he creates a new civilization in the heart of the mountain. In the process, he discovers art.

"Trick" was produced in 2024. The 103-minute documentary is about yesterday's impossible dreams of children in a poor region of Iran, which have become their goals today, after 10 years, thanks to the efforts of a wrestling coach.

"For Rana" is a 2024 drama, running for 87 minutes. In the movie, hearing that the heart of an old man, who would die if taken off the respirator, would be good for a transplant to Rana, the parents meet the old man's new wife and son to plead. The son, who is in a dispute over the old man's inheritance, demands money for the heart transplant.

"After Father" was made in 2024. The 19-minute film revolves around a young girl whose grief over her father's death runs so deep that she's ready to blame those closest to her.

Moscow International Film Festival is one of the oldest world film forums (the second after the Venice Film Festival).

The MIFF has been leading its history since 1935. Then the chairman of the jury was Sergey Eisenstein, however, in subsequent years the festival was not held regularly. Therefore, it has officially counted down since 1959, when it was renewed and turned into a regular event - it was carried out over odd years, alternating with the Karlovy Vary Film Festival. In 1999, the MIFF became an annual event.

The festival's top prize is the statue of Saint George slaying the dragon, as represented on the Coat of Arms of Moscow. Nikita Mikhalkov has been the festival's president since 2000.

Cartoon of Day



The Mask of The Past

Cartoonist: Vasco Gargalo from Portugal

"Year Zero" exhibition opens in Tehran, highlighting atrocities of Zionist regime

From Page 1 > Speaking at the ceremony, Akram Sediqi, head of North Khorasan province's Art Bureau, addressed the ongoing tragic events following October 7 and the Zionist regime's attacks on civilian centers in Gaza, referring to this exhibition as the second artistic event on the theme of Palestine organized by the North Khorasan Art Bureau.

She noted that a previous exhibition titled "The Hospital is Not a War Zone," centered on the bombing of hospitals in Gaza, had been held earlier.

Sediqi emphasized that the current exhibition is driven by the concerns of artists around the world and aims to depict deeper aspects of this humanitarian catastrophe.

Referring to the latest statistics on casualties of the attacks in Gaza, which reveal 600,000 injured individuals, she stated that this figure reflects the depth of the ongoing tragedy, which is unfortunately overlooked in the silence of international media regarding many of these crimes.

She considered the creation of this exhibition an opportunity to reflect the global concerns of artists regarding the Palestinian people.

Over 60 pieces are on public display, showcasing a diverse array of beliefs and nationalities, including Muslim, Christian, and other religious artists motivated by humanitarian and ethical principles, she concluded.

For his part, Abbas Naseri, the artistic secretary and curator of "Year Zero," pointed out the role of art in confronting harsh realities.

He stated that the works presented are not merely reflections



of hearsay, but rather based on real images and direct experiences of the tragedy, noting that some scenes can only be represented through the bitter humor of caricature.

Naseri highlighted that this artistic event is the result of months of effort and collaboration among artists from around the world, stressing that the "Year Zero" exhibition is a culmination of various works collected within a short timeframe, largely sourced from virtual platforms through direct cooperation with international artists.

Given the enthusiastic response to this event, Naseri expressed hope that the "Year Zero" exhibition could be held in other cities across Iran and also gain international presence. He emphasized the hope that showcasing these works in various countries could convey a clear message regarding the current realities in the occupied territories to the world.

Additionally, the ceremony

also saw the unveiling of the book "Year Zero," which comprises a collection of the pieces presented and explanations about the context of their creation. This book aims to preserve the artistic documentation of this event and to continue the narrative of artistic resistance.

The "Year Zero" exhibition stands as a display of committed art during a time of crisis; art created not merely for beauty but for the sake of truth. This exhibition serves as both an artistic event and a living record of global sympathy for the oppressed Palestinian people and an effort to document historical atrocities that must not be forgotten.

The "Year Zero" exhibition will run until May 5.

Israel occupied Gaza in 1967 and in 2005 they dismantled their settlement. However, since 2007, Israel has placed Gaza under a land, sea, and air blockade making it the largest open-air prison.

On October 7, 2023 Palestinian

resistance fighters initiated Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, launching a coordinated assault against the positions of the Israeli regime from the Gaza Strip. This operation marked a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict, characterized by a series of attacks targeting military installations and settlements within the occupied territories.

The operation was described by its organizers as a response to the escalating violence against Palestinians and the dire conditions in Gaza, exacerbated by ongoing blockades and restrictions.

The Israeli regime swiftly retaliated with airstrikes, resulting in the deaths of over 45,000 individuals, including more than 17,000 children so far. Additionally, over 109,000 Palestinians have sustained injuries, and nearly two million have been displaced from their homes. The ongoing violence has led to a humanitarian crisis, exacerbating the suffering of civilians in the region.

Documentary "Pajareh" screens at Allameh Tabataba'i University during intl. conference on terrorism

TEHRAN- The three-part documentary "Pajareh," directed by Iranian filmmaker Yazdan Parvande, went on screen at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran on Tuesday, as a part of the International Conference on the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

In anticipation of the 25th anniversary of the submission of the draft of this convention to the United Nations General Assembly, the conference aimed to revisit, critique, and analyze this important legal document.

International law professors from Iran and several other countries participated in the event.

As one of the primary victims of terrorism on both regional and international levels, Iran has faced a wide spectrum of terrorist and militant groups over the past decades. Their destructive activities, often supported by certain foreign powers, have contributed to the securitization of the social and political landscape in the country.

In this context, the documentary "Pajareh," which delves into the activities of terrorist

groups against Iranian children and girls, was presented at the conference. The series consists of three parts of "Against Life," "From Kurdistan to Geneva," and "Tired."

It unveils the hidden face of terrorist groups that deceive and lure children and adolescents into their ranks with false promises of work in the Kurdistan region and migration to Europe. This documentary series was produced by the media arts center of Nehzat.

The conference was organized by the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Allameh Tabataba'i University in collaboration with the Kurdistan Human Rights Watch, the Organization for the Defense of Victims of Violence, the Research Center for Intelligent Commercial Law, the International Lawyers Group Jipad, the Association for the Defense of Victims of Terrorism, and the Association Supporting Victims of Terrorism.



IAF to screen Fritz Lang's "Metropolis"

TEHRAN-The restored version of the 1927 German science fiction film "Metropolis" directed by Fritz Lang will be screened at the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran on Friday.

The 153-minute movie will be shown with Persian subtitle at the Nasser Hall of the IAF at 6 p.m., Honaronline reported.

A black-and-white silent film, it oscillates between expressionism and new objectivity. Adapted from the original novel by Thea von Harbou, the screenplay was co-written by her and Fritz Lang, who were married at the time. Brigitte Helm, Gustav Fröhlich, Alfred Abel and Rudolf Klein-Rogge are among the leading roles.

In a futuristic city sharply divid-

ed between the working class and the city planners, the son of the city's mastermind falls in love with a working-class prophet who predicts the coming of a savior to mediate their differences.

A critical and commercial failure upon its release, despite being, at the time, the most expensive film in the history of cinema, it was quickly cut.

It was gradually rehabilitated

during the second half of the 20th century, to the point of achieving the status of a major masterpiece in the history of cinema, as evidenced by its multiple influences up to the present day, particularly in popular culture.

Restored several times, in 2001 it became the first film to be included in the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register.

Fritz Lang (1890-1976) is an

Austro-Hungarian director, German dual national by marriage from 1919 and naturalized American in 1935.

Inventor of a large number of innovative techniques that have become standards and earned him the title of "Master of Darkness," he introduced in 1919 into cinematography an expressionist aesthetic that would become a school and inspire in particular film noir.

His work is crossed by recurring themes: revenge, the death drive that undermines the individual and society, the manipulation of crowds by a Superman, the struggle for power, the violence of man for man, freedom for evil. That of the double, an image of a disturbing strangeness, is present in almost all of his films.

