

Saudi defense minister delivers King Salman's message to Ayatollah Khamenei

Hostile Motives Against Iran-Saudi Ties Must Be Overcome: Leader



Rubio blames Iran for JCPOA collapse, overlooks U.S. withdrawal from the deal

TEHRAN – Marco Rubio, the U.S. Secretary of State, has said European nations need to make a decision on whether to reinstate sanctions against Iran, accusing Tehran of not complying with the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Following talks with his European counterparts in Paris on Thursday, Rubio claimed, "They must make a crucial decision soon regarding the reactivation of sanctions, as Iran has clearly exited the current deal." ▶ Page 2

Iran, India seek closer agricultural ties at BRICS summit

TEHRAN – Iran and India have called for expanded cooperation in agriculture during a meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS agriculture ministers' summit in Brazil, underscoring their shared commitment to food security and sustainable development.

Iran's Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji met with his Indian counterpart, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, in Brasilia, where he stressed the need to activate the Iran-India Joint Agricultural Committee and deepen collaboration on food security, biotechnology, and agricultural research. ▶ Page 4

Iran, Saudi Arabia could serve as model for regional cooperation: Pezeshkian

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the potential of Iran and Saudi Arabia to serve as a model for regional cooperation during a meeting with Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman on Thursday evening in Tehran.

The meeting, which took place shortly after the Saudi minister's arrival, was aimed at discussing regional developments and enhancing bilateral relations.

In his address, Pezeshkian underscored the shared religious, cultural, and historical ties between Islamic countries and highlighted the need for greater unity among them. "We consider you our brothers, and since the beginning of this administration, we have worked to strengthen ties between Islamic nations," he stated. He went on to explain that a united Islamic world could work towards ending the human tragedies, such as those occurring in Gaza, by confronting external forces like the Zionist regime.

Pezeshkian reiterated that Iran is fully committed to expanding its relations with Saudi Arabia across all sectors and extending this cooperation to other Islamic nations.

Tehran-Riyadh axis against Israel's genocide

By Dr. Mahdi Khanalizadeh
Professor of International Relations

TEHRAN – "Years ago, right where you are sitting now, your uncle, King Abdullah, was seated. I told him that we see close relations with Saudi Arabia as beneficial for ourselves. If you also see it as beneficial for yourselves, these ties can grow stronger."

These words, spoken during the recent meeting between the special envoy of the Saudi Crown Prince and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution in Tehran—where a message from Mohammed bin Salman was delivered to Ayatollah Khamenei—should be considered one of the pivotal events influencing shifts in the security order of the West Asian region. This event could mark the beginning of Riyadh's "region-centric" approach to West Asian security.

Nearly two decades have passed since Ayatollah Khamenei addressed these words to the Saudi king—twenty years during which Riyadh chose to outsource its security umbrella to transregional powers, particularly the United States, rather than focusing on a strategy of "regional security by regional countries."

Saudi defense minister's Tehran visit signals strategic realignment in Persian Gulf

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – Saudi Arabia's Defense Minister, Khalid bin Salman, landed in Tehran this week on an official visit that further cements the ongoing diplomatic thaw between the two principal powers of the Persian Gulf.

The reception—marked by full military honors and led by the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Major General Mohammad Bagheri—symbolized the mutual willingness of both capitals to institutionalize a new phase of strategic dialogue.

The visit, made at the invitation of General Bagheri, includes a series of high-level meetings with senior Iranian political and security officials. According to official Iranian sources, the talks center on deepening defense cooperation, enhancing regional stability, and coordinating efforts against terrorism—fields where, after years of confrontation, Tehran and Riyadh appear increasingly aligned in their recognition of shared interests.

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Iran FM discusses bilateral cooperation, regional issues in Moscow

MOSCOW – Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi made a two-day visit to Moscow on Thursday with the primary aim of delivering a letter from Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

On the sidelines of a ceremony marking Army Day in Iran, Araghchi briefed reporters on his earlier meeting with Putin. ▶ Page 2

Scan this QR code to watch the video.



Pezeshkian praises Iran's armed forces on National Army Day

TEHRAN – Iran celebrated its National Army Day on Friday with a series of military parades across Tehran and other provinces, showcasing the country's defense capabilities and achievements.

President Masoud Pezeshkian, who attended the event in Tehran alongside senior government and military officials, praised the Iranian armed forces for their "strength and preparedness" and for achieving "self-sufficiency" in military production. ▶ Page 2

Scan this QR code to watch the video.



TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Jam-e-Jam: Disagreements in Trump's team and strategic confusion

In an explanation, Jam-e-Jam dealt with the contradictory statements by the American side in the negotiations with Iran. It wrote: These contradictions in the U.S. positions are most likely the result of disagreements within the Trump security team. Multiple reports from American media, particularly Axios, indicate that Trump's national security members are in serious disagreement over the best approach to dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue. While some members of the security team, led by Vice President J.D. Vance, are emphasizing political negotiations, some other members are pushing for maximum pressure and even military action against Iran. These disagreements have not only led to confusion in U.S. foreign policy but also damaged Washington's credibility in the international arena. Trump has consistently shown contradictions in his positions that would greatly reduce the likelihood of reaching a lasting agreement. This confusion, especially on the eve of the second round of negotiations, could lead to the loss of existing opportunities to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue.

Farhikhtegan: Witkoff's inconsistent stance is part of a plan

Farhikhtegan examined Witkoff's changing stance after the first round of negotiations with Iran and wrote: Witkoff said that Iran must stop its nuclear enrichment and weapons program in his interview with Fox News after the April 12 negotiations in Oman. He also said his statements are in complete coordination with Trump. It seems that the changing statements by Witkoff are a predetermined plan to win at the negotiating table and ultimately pursue the same goal that they emphasize in their media statements: shutting down Iran's nuclear program. The important point is that the United States wants to take these concessions from Iran step by step. Therefore, the need to be vigilant and have a clear idea and framework for negotiations with the Americans is felt more than ever before. The Americans are pursuing the carrot and stick policy this time in the style of Trump's policy. They are looking to gain more points with a series of green lights for negotiations and the threat of military attack on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Arman-e-Emrooz: Extremists' new move to undermine negotiations

In a note, Arman-e-Emrooz addressed the extremists' new plan to undermine negoti-

ations and said: With the clarification of the Islamic Republic's position on the principle of negotiations and the Leader of the Revolution's emphasis that the recent process of negotiations was a major decision by the establishment, part of the country's political equations has changed. Political analysts believe that the extremists are more concerned about the outcome of the negotiations than anything else. Because if successful, not only will the sitting government's position be strengthened, but their narratives will also be questioned. This change in tactical stance, according to observers, indicates an attempt to maintain their social and political base in the new circumstances. According to Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, an expert on political issues, we have witnessed the Americans adopting a harsh position immediately after the first round (of negotiations), including talk of a complete stop to Iran's nuclear program and even monitoring the country's conventional military programs. This set of circumstances shows that the negotiating team is facing a serious challenge, and the least thing one can expect is that domestic extremists will not create additional problems for them in this situation.

Ettelaat: Billions of dollars will flow to Iran in case of Tehran-Washington agreement

In an interview with former diplomat Feyzoun Majlesi, Ettelaat discussed the benefits of a possible nuclear agreement with the United States. He said: A possible agreement between Iran and the United States would provide economic cooperation and billions of dollars of profit for Iranian contractors and exporters. If the negotiations are successful, better relations will be established with China without fear of sanctions. Now, Turkey is an industrial country, Saudi Arabia has taken a step towards advanced industrialization and is the world leader in petrochemicals, and we need imports from Saudi Arabia, while in the current situation, our trade with Saudi Arabia is very low due to sanctions. Even now we have abundant trade with the UAE, let alone if the sanctions are lifted. Qatar, Kuwait, and Iraq are also developing, and the agreement between Iran and the United States will provide economic cooperation and billions of dollars of profit for Iranian contractors and exporters. The sanctions have only benefited dealers, who are using Iran's problems to their advantage and generally withdrawing their money from Iran.

U.S. airstrikes on Yemen fueling regional instability: Tehran

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, has strongly condemned U.S. airstrikes in Yemen that targeted a key fuel port, resulting in the deaths of at least 58 people and injuring 126 others.

Baghaei called the attack a "blatant violation" of international law and the United Nations Charter.

On Friday, Baghaei described the airstrikes as a clear example of U.S. aggression and linked them to broader regional dynamics, accusing the U.S. of supporting Israel's actions in Palestine. «These U.S. attacks, which align with America's backing of the Zionist regime's occupation and genocide in Palestine, make the U.S. complicit in Israel's crimes across Palestine and the broader region,» he stated.

Baghaei warned that such actions not only embolden Israel to continue its operations in Gaza and the West Bank, but they also contribute to growing instability in West Asia. «The ongoing U.S. strikes on Yemen, which target vital infrastructure and harm civilians in an already impoverished country, further exacerbate regional insecurity and pose a serious threat to international peace,» he added.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman also expressed solidarity with the Yemeni people and urged the global community to speak out against U.S. violations of international law



A fuel tank burns following a U.S. strike on the Ras Isa fuel port, Yemen.

and human rights. His statement followed a deadly U.S. airstrike on Yemen's Ras Isa fuel port on Thursday, one of the most lethal in recent months.

The U.S. has been conducting airstrikes in Yemen since 2023, supporting Israel's interests in the region, while Yemeni forces have retaliated by targeting Israeli and U.S. assets. In response to the strikes, Yemeni forces have ramped up attacks on U.S. and Israeli targets, including ships bound for Israeli-occupied territories.

The situation in Gaza and the broader conflict remains tense, with Yemeni forces halting their retaliatory strikes in January as part of a ceasefire agreement, which was ultimately broken by Israel in March.

Iran FM discusses bilateral cooperation, regional issues in Moscow

From page 1 ▶ The diplomat emphasized the importance of the Leader's letter, which covered various topics including ongoing cooperation between the two nations and pressing regional issues. He noted that after reading the letter to President Putin, he provided further explanations and engaged in a detailed discussion about both countries' collaborative efforts.

The Iranian Foreign Minister highlighted the significance of addressing international developments, particularly the indirect negotiations currently taking place between Iran and the United States. He stated, "We are receiving contradictory and conflicting messages from the United States. From our perspective, what is expressed at the negotiation table is what matters."

Araghchi reiterated Iran's commitment to serious negotiations, asserting that the country's positions remain clear and unchanged. "We are completely serious in these negotiations," he said.

Araghchi also confirmed that he would participate in the second round of indirect negotiations scheduled for Saturday. He clarified that while Rome will serve as the location for these talks, Oman continues to be the host country facilitating communication between Iran and the United States.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov attend a joint press conference following their talks in Moscow on April 18, 2025.

He said multiple countries, including Russia, had offered to mediate the talks, but Iran will go on with Oman as go-between for the foreseeable future.

In a Friday meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Araghchi hailed the Strategic Cooperation Agreement signed by the two countries in January, and recently ratified by the Russian parliament, as game-changing.

"Recently, we signed a comprehensive strategic agreement in Moscow that has expanded the dimensions of our relations to much higher levels," he said, adding, "This agreement forms the foundations of our new relations, but most importantly, it provides a long-term perspective for these relations."

The Iranian official also noted that ties between Tehran and Moscow have never been "as close and strong in history as they are now."

Lavrov, for his part, said, "The speed of political discussions between the two countries is unprecedented." He added that the strategic agreement between Iran and Russia will further lead to a "qualitative increase in interactions."

In a press conference held after the two foreign ministers' meeting, Araghchi said part of the discussions had also focused on the content of indirect Iran-U.S. talks.

"We had detailed discussions regarding the nuclear issue and negotiations with the United

States. We are very satisfied with Russia's role in the JCPOA agreement, and they played a very useful and important role in the past. We hope that in any new agreement, Russia will continue its supportive role.

"We will continuously keep our friends in Russia and, of course, China informed about developments, and I am confident that constructive opinions will help continue this path," he explained.

Lavrov affirmed Araghchi's statements, saying that the two sides had also talked about the North-South Corridor, the Ukraine war, the war in Gaza, and bilateral cooperation in multilateral settings like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Putin delivers response through diplomatic exchange: Kremlin

Kremlin spokesperson Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov revealed on Thursday that Russian President Putin has conveyed a significant message to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei, through a meeting with Foreign Minister Araghchi.

According to the spokesperson, the message was not only a gesture of goodwill but also a principled response to recent developments in bilateral relations.

Rubio blames Iran for JCPOA collapse, overlooks U.S. withdrawal from the deal

From page 1 ▶ However, this narrative overlooks critical historical context. The JCPOA, initially signed in 2015, saw Iran agree to curb its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. The deal was a multilateral effort involving the U.S., Iran, and five other world powers. Yet, in 2018, the Trump administration unilaterally withdrew from the agreement, significantly undermining the JCPOA and prompting Iran's subsequent scaling back of its commitments under the deal. Since the U.S. exit, Iran has repeatedly called out Washington for failing to uphold its side of the agreement, and for instigating further regional instability with its "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) claimed that Iran is now closer than ever to developing nuclear weapons. This comes amid rising claims from the West about Iran's nuclear program. U.S. President Donald Trump has also reiterated that Iran must not acquire nuclear weapons, framing it as a red line for the U.S. and its allies.

However, Iran has maintained that it is not responsible for the collapse of the nuclear deal. Tehran has argued that the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, combined with the subsequent re-imposition of harsh sanctions, forced Iran to reduce its com-

pliance with the agreement's stipulations. Iran has also consistently stated that the "snapback" mechanism, which would allow a re-imposition of UN sanctions, is not their responsibility, as the U.S. is the party that walked away from the deal.

"Iran has exited the agreement and is not honoring its commitments, so the return of sanctions is entirely logical and necessary," Rubio continued. His call for European nations to make a "swift decision" on the activation of the snapback mechanism reflects a divide within the U.S. administration and European partners about how to approach the Iran nuclear issue.

Pezeshkian praises Iran's armed forces on National Army Day

From page 1 ▶ During his address at the event, Pezeshkian emphasized the critical role the army plays in ensuring the nation's security and regional stability. He stated, "The security and peace of society are only possible with the presence of a strong and prepared army. Without this powerful force, security would have vanished from our society." The president went on to highlight that Iran's military strength has enabled the country to effectively promote peace and stability across the region, adding, "The existence of a strong and capable army has allowed Iran to assert its vision of fostering communication, peace, and tranquility in the region."

Pezeshkian also reaffirmed that Iran has become an "undisputed power" in the region, largely due to the dedication and capabilities of its military forces. He praised the "brave" Iranian armed forces for successfully thwarting external threats and preventing attempts to destabilize the country. "The Iranian military has played a pivotal role in defending the nation and safeguarding its sovereignty against hostile forces," he said.

In his remarks, Pezeshkian highlighted one of the Iranian Army's most significant achievements: its self-sufficiency in defense technology. "Today, we are proud to say that our powerful army has made remark-

able progress in producing all necessary military equipment—from air, land, and sea defense systems to precision-guided technologies," the president noted. He also pointed out that the army's technological advancements have extended beyond military applications, benefiting the country's industry, trade, and academic institutions.

"The army is an invaluable ally to the government and the Iranian people," Pezeshkian continued, acknowledging the military's constant presence in times of national crisis. "It has always been at the forefront during times of adversity."

The day's celebrations included large-scale military parades, where various army units displayed an array of domestically manufactured military equipment, including drones, missiles, and other defense systems. The military also showcased its naval strength with a parade in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, featuring Iranian destroyers and indigenous submarines.

National Army Day, celebrated on Farvardin 29 (April 18 this year), was established in 1979 by the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, just months after the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime. The day honors the Iranian Army's role in the success of the Islamic Revolution



Iranian Army divisions hold a military parade in Tehran on April 18, 2025, to commemorate National Army Day.

and its subsequent contributions to safeguarding the Islamic Republic. The commemoration also serves as a reminder of the army's loyalty to the ideals set forth by Imam Khomeini.

Iranian army ready to respond to any threat: senior commander

In a separate speech, Brigadier General Kioumars Heidari, the Commander of the Iranian Army's Ground Forces, reaffirmed the army's readiness to respond to any threat swiftly and effectively.

Heidari emphasized that the Army is operating at peak defensive readiness and that its capabilities have reached their highest levels of combat preparedness. He also underlined that the Iranian Army and the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) have distinct but comple-

mentary missions, with the army primarily responsible for safeguarding the country's independence and territorial integrity as outlined in the Iranian Constitution.

"Farvardin 29 is a celebration of our Islamic and Revolutionary Army," said Heidari, stressing that the Iranian military does not rely on foreign assistance. "We are fully capable of defending our country and its values without any external support." The Ground Forces Commander also mentioned that the army had planned a series of events to display its power, self-sufficiency, and capabilities.

As National Army Day draws attention to the Iranian military's growing capabilities, it also reflects the nation's ongoing commitment to maintaining independence and regional influence.

Saudi defense minister delivers King Salman's message to Ayatollah Khamenei

Hostile motives against Iran-Saudi ties must be overcome: Leader

TEHRAN – On Thursday, Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman met with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in Tehran.

The purpose of the meeting was to convey a message from Saudi Arabia's King, as well as to explore avenues for enhancing bilateral relations between the two nations.

The meeting, which also saw the participation of Iranian military chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri, was marked by a spirit of cooperation. Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that Iran views stronger ties with Saudi Arabia as mutually beneficial. "We believe that relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia can serve both nations well. The two countries can complement each other," he stated.

Highlighting Iran's growing advancements in various tech-



nological sectors, the Leader conveyed Tehran's willingness to share its knowledge know-how with Riyadh. "We are ready to offer assistance in technology to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is far better for regional brothers to collaborate and support one another rather

than relying on external powers," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

Ayatollah Khamenei also acknowledged the challenges posed by external forces opposed to the deepening of Iran-Saudi ties, noting that these adversarial influences must be overcome. "There are

certain countries that are adamantly against the expansion of relations between our two nations, but we are ready to counter these hostile motives," he asserted.

Prince Khalid bin Salman, for his part, expressed his satisfaction with the outcome of the discussions. Reflecting on his visit, he said, "I have come to Tehran with the intention of expanding relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and fostering cooperation in all areas. I sincerely hope that the constructive dialogue we have had will pave the way for stronger ties between our countries than ever before."

The Saudi Defense Minister underscored the importance of building a foundation for a robust future partnership. He further conveyed that the discussions would continue to focus on creating positive, lasting outcomes for both nations.

Iran, Saudi Arabia could serve as model for regional cooperation: Pezeshkian

From Page 1 ▶ He particularly welcomed the idea of establishing joint working groups in political, economic, and security matters. "Iran and Saudi Arabia, relying on their shared capabilities and without external interference, can solve many regional issues," Pezeshkian stated, hoping that the recent goodwill between the two countries would strengthen the Islamic world's unity and prevent foreign powers from sowing discord.

The president also expressed Iran's readiness to welcome Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Tehran. Prince Khalid bin Salman, for his part, expressed his satisfaction with the visit, conveying greetings from his father and brother to Pezeshkian. He also emphasized that the two nations' shared positions on key regional issues, including Gaza and Palestine, demonstrated the strength of their cooperation.

"Iran and Saudi Arabia are two main pillars of the region, and strong relations between the two can serve as an effective model for convergence in the Islamic world," the Saudi defense minister said, referring to the China-mediated Beijing Agreement signed in March 2023 to restore diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Prince Khalid also stressed the importance of continuing bilateral talks, and, on behalf of the

Saudi leadership, invited President Pezeshkian to visit Saudi Arabia to further enhance bilateral ties.

Iran-Saudi cooperation on regional security discussed by national security chief

In a separate meeting on Thursday, Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary General Ali Akbar Ahmadian met with Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman to discuss bilateral cooperation and regional security.

Ahmadian emphasized that Iran and Saudi Arabia could play a crucial role in ensuring security and progress in the sensitive region. "Iran and Saudi Arabia are two important and influential countries, and through strategic cooperation, we can ensure security and advancement in this vital region," he said.

Ahmadian also stressed the importance of boosting economic relations between the two countries to strengthen other aspects of their partnership. He called the Saudi defense minister's visit an essential step toward enhancing cooperation and expressed readiness to expand ties in areas such as joint investment.

The two officials also addressed the continued Israeli aggression in Gaza and its broader implications for regional stability. Ahmadian reaffirmed Iran's condemnation of Israel's actions and



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) shakes hands with Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman in Tehran, Iran, on April 17, 2025.

emphasized that unity among Islamic countries was essential in confronting the regime's destabilizing activities in the region.

Iran, Saudi military chiefs discuss enhanced cooperation

Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman also met with Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri during his visit.

The two discussed furthering military cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia, particularly in the areas of defense and regional security. Major General Bagheri expressed Iran's readiness to strengthen defense ties with Saudi Arabia, highlighting the importance of regional solutions to regional problems.

He also reiterated Iran's long-standing policy that regional security should be man-

aged by regional countries, and the collaboration between Iran and Saudi Arabia could contribute to a more stable and peaceful Middle East. Bagheri emphasized that the recent improvements in military relations, including joint participation in maritime security exercises, would help deter any external interference in the region.

Prince Khalid bin Salman praised Iran's hospitality and reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's commitment to enhancing bilateral relations. "The relations between our two countries are of immense importance for the security of both nations and the wider region," he stated. He also invited Major General Bagheri to visit Saudi Arabia in the near future to continue discussions on strengthening defense cooperation.

Tehran-Riyadh axis against Israel's genocide

Saudi defense minister's Tehran visit signals strategic realignment in Persian Gulf

From Page 1 ▶ Since the restoration of diplomatic ties in 2023—facilitated by Chinese mediation and months of quiet backchannel diplomacy—Iran and Saudi Arabia have engaged in a careful but deliberate rapprochement. Bin Salman's trip marks the second high-level military exchange since relations resumed, following the visit of the Saudi Chief of Staff to Tehran last year. The timing of this latest visit, amid escalating tensions across the region, underscores the urgency of a pragmatic reconfiguration of alliances.

In a geopolitical environment marked by persistent volatility—from Yemen to the Levant—and the entrenched presence of external powers like the United States, the Tehran-Riyadh dialogue is increas-

ingly seen as a necessary stabilizing force. From Iran's perspective, regional security can only be achieved through indigenous frameworks of cooperation, free from the interventions and shifting priorities of outside actors. Tehran continues to advocate for regional solutions anchored in sovereignty, mutual respect, and the rejection of foreign military entanglements.

One of the central points on the visit's agenda has been the conflict in Yemen. According to sources close to the talks, Saudi Arabia has conveyed its intention not to participate in any renewed ground offensive against the Ansarollah Resistance movement and has requested Tehran's assistance in relaying this message to Yemeni leaders.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

West Asia is Washington's fundamental strategy against all regional states. Thus, in his special message to Iran's Supreme Leader, he called for establishing bilateral relations at the highest levels.

According to reliable sources speaking to the Tehran Times, the Saudi government seeks to shift its engagement with Iran from a security-political framework to cultural, social, and economic approaches—a move that could herald a new security order in West Asia. Iran, too, by extending an "extra-protocol" welcome to Saudi Arabia's defense minister, has signaled its readiness to embrace this path and strengthen bilateral ties to influence regional security.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tractor one step closer to title, Sepahan beat Persepolis: PGPL

TEHRAN – Tractor football team defeated Malavan 3-0 to move a step closer to winning the title of the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Friday.

In the match held at the Yadegar-e Emam's packed stadium in Tabriz, Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh was on target just before the half-time.

Domagoj Drožek made it 2-0 five minutes into the second half and the Croatian completed his brace in the 66th minute.

In Tehran, Persepolis lost to Sepahan 2-0 at the Azadi Stadium.

Mohammadmehdi Mohebbi opened the scoring just two minutes into the match and Giorgi Gvelesiani scored an own goal in 24th minute.

With three weeks remaining, Tractor lead the table with 58 points and one game in hand, followed by Sepahan with 56 points.

Iranian athletes win medals in 2025 Asian U18 Athletics Championships

TEHRAN – Samia Shahpari and Amirreza Ahanin Maram of Iran won medals at the 6th Asian U18 Athletics Championships.

Shahpari claimed third place in the Women's 3000m with a time of 10:09.07. The gold medal went to Uzbekistan's Anastasiya Silchenkova, who finished in 9:45.17, while China's Suolang Zhuoma took silver with a time of 10:00.44.

Earlier, Ahanin Maram secured a silver medal in the Men's U18 Hammer Throw, achieving a distance of 71.05 meters. The gold medal was won by Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Siraj Alzayer, who threw 72.91 meters, and the bronze went to China's Wang Ankang with a throw of 70.72 meters.

The 2025 Asian U18 Athletics Championships are being held at Prince Nayef Sports City in Qatif, Saudi Arabia, from April 15 to 18.

Saket Elhami resigns as Nassaji coach

TEHRAN – Saket Elhami has stepped down as head coach of the Nassaji football team after just one match in charge.

The 54-year-old coach had previously parted ways with Nassaji in January following a five-month ban by the Disciplinary Committee of Iran's Football Federation. He was reappointed as head coach on Sunday, taking over from Serbian coach Savo Milošević for the remainder of the season.

However, after a loss to Kheybar, Elhami resigned from his position.

Nassaji currently sit in 15th place in the Iran football league and is at risk of relegation.

Iran book berth in 2025 FIBA Women's Asia Cup Div. B

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Jordan 88-70 on Thursday to book their berth in the 2025 FIBA Women's Asia Cup Div. B – WABA Qualification Tournament.

Eleni Kapogianni's girls had defeated Syria 65-55 Tuesday night in their first match.

Top-performing team Iran booked their place in the 2025 FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B.

The competition was held in Amman, Jordan.

The qualification process typically involved a round-robin format, where teams competed in a series of games.

Foolad Sirjan eye Clévenot, N'Gapeth

TEHRAN – French outside hitters Trévor Clévenot and Earvin N'Gapeth have caught eye of the Iranian volleyball club Foolad Sirjan.

Foolad Sirjan will have to compete at the 2025 AVC Men's Volleyball Champions League, which will be held in Japanese cities Hirakata and Kyoto from May 11 to 18.

Foolad were going to sign Wilfredo León but the player has joined a Chinese team.

Foolad have recently claimed the title of the Iran league, beating Shahdab Yazd.

Iran to host 2025 CAFA Men's Futsal Championship

TEHRAN – Ehsan Osouli, a member of the football federation's board of directors, said that Iran will host the 2025 CAFA Men's Futsal Championship.

The competition is set to be held from July 9 to 19.

Tehran and Kish Island are candidates to host the event.

According to him, Armenia and Russia will be invited as guests.

The CAFA Futsal Cup is an international futsal competition in Central Asia for the member nations of the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA).

Iran to compete at Karate1 Premier League Cairo 2025

TEHRAN – Iran sent three karate athletes to Egypt for the Karate1 Premier League – Cairo 2025.

Ali Meskini, Bahman Asgari Ghoncheh, and Amir Reza Borzouei will represent Iran in the event.

The Cairo 2025 will bring 376 athletes from 65 countries together in Egypt's capital.

Karate1 Premier League Cairo 2025 will be held in Cairo, Egypt from April 18 to 20.

Taremi named Iran's Athlete of the Year

TEHRAN – Inter Milan and Iran national football team striker Mehdi Taremi was crowned Iran's top athlete for 2023-24 at Wednesday night's "Iran's Champion" awards ceremony, attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian, Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali and officials from the national Olympic and Paralympic committees.

Taremi won "Best Goal" for his Inter Milan strike in addition to his Iran's Athlete of the Year honors.

Taremi, who was absent in the ceremony due to club commitments, in a video address expressed gratitude and enthusiasm for his goal being chosen in a popular vote as the best.

The 31-year-old forward said, "I'm honored my goal was chosen. We're united in chasing every club and international trophy – I'll keep scoring for Iran's pride."

Known for his exceptional goal-scoring ability, Taremi has had a remarkable career trajectory.

His international career took off when he joined Al-Gharafa in Qatar and later moved to Portugal's Rio Ave, where he was the Primeira Liga joint-top scorer in the 2019-20 season.

Taremi's success continued at FC Porto, where he won multiple domestic titles and established himself as one of the league's top players.

In 2024, he transferred to Italy's Inter Milan, further solidifying his status as a global football talent.

Khaf-Herat railway to be fully operational by Mar. 2026, official says

TEHRAN – Iran plans to complete the remaining deficiencies of the Khaf-Herat railway by August and finalize the fourth segment of the cross-border project by the end of the Iranian year in March 2026, the project manager said.

Hafez Sadatnejad told ISNA that while the railway became operational in 2020, it was designed as a four-segment route between Khaf in northeastern Iran and Herat in western Afghanistan. Two segments lie within Iran, and two within Afghanistan, with Iran responsible for building three of them.

Segment Three, which runs 62 kilometers from Shamtigh in Iran to Rozanak in Afghanistan, was constructed with Iranian financial support. However, following political changes in Afghanistan in 2021, the line suffered damages and thefts, prompting an Iranian technical team to assess the losses later that year.

“Afghanistan was tasked with restoring the line to its 2020 condition,” Sadatnejad said. “While the railway had some initial shortcomings, these had to be addressed after repairing the war-related damages.”

By 2023, Afghan authorities had largely resolved the issues. Iran then signed a 1.17 trillion rials (\$23.4 million) contract with a domestic contractor to fix the remaining deficiencies. “By late last year, we had purchased and transported the necessary materials for connecting segments three and four, as well as a spur line. The contractor is already on site, and work will be completed by August,” he said.

Transit wagons have also been purchased, and Iranian officials expect the fourth segment to be completed by March 2026.

Currently a freight line, the route is expected to be upgraded for passenger service based on ongoing talks with Afghan authorities.

Sadatnejad said the route has already facilitated the export of steel and related products to Afghanistan and the import of Afghan minerals into Iran. Initial freight capacity is projected at one million tons in the first year, rising to four million tons by year 20. Once complete, the line’s operational speed will rise from 60 km/h to between 100 and 120 km/h.

Iran’s monthly PMI posts another drop amid falling demand and supply

TEHRAN – Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has released the country’s new PMI data for the fiscal month of Esfand (February 19 – March 20, 2025) which has posted a fourth drop in a row.

The decline in the PMI reading takes place despite expectations for an uptick in demand ahead of the country’s New Year holidays, with the index remaining below the 50 mark that separates growth from contraction.

The seasonally adjusted PMI (48.7) is indicative of continued fall in production, new orders and raw material inventory although it fell less sharply compared to 46.4 reported in the preceding month.

Seasonal adjustment, or depersonalization, is a statistical method used to remove the seasonal component from a time series, allowing for the independent analysis of trends and cyclical deviations.

After preparing dozens of PMI (Purchasing Managers’ Index) reports, the Research Center of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries,

Mines, and Agriculture has now identified the seasonal components of these time series and prioritized seasonal adjustment in its monthly PMI reports.

The Statistics and Economic Analysis Center of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, the sponsor and coordinator of the survey, announces the whole economy PMI data in a report every month.

The headline PMI is a number from 0 to 100, such that over 50 shows an expansion of the economy when compared with the previous month. A PMI reading under 50 indicates contraction and a reading of 50 implies no change.

PMI is an index of the prevailing direction of economic trends, aiming to provide information about business conditions to company directors, analysts and purchasing managers.

In the month under review, main sub-indices such as business activities, new orders, raw material inventory, and unemployment were declining, while suppliers’ delivery time had increased.

Medicinal plants worth over \$30m exported from Isfahan province in a year

TEHRAN- Isfahan province exported medicinal plants, rose water, and plant essences worth more than \$30 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20, 2025), according to a provincial official.

Ahmadreza Raiszadeh, the director for horticulture affairs in the Agriculture Department of the province, announced that over 24,000 tons of the mentioned products were exported to 40 countries including Germany, Sweden, Pakistan, and some Arab countries in the previous year.

He also stated that more than 2,500 traditional and modern units are active in the field of processing, packaging, and export of these products in the province.

“Cultivation of medicinal plants on 12,500 hectares with a production of 73,000 tons per year in Isfahan Province holds a special place in the country, and in most cases, we rank first to fifth”, the official highlighted.

The expansion of lands for the cultivation of medicinal plants by 300,000 hectares is one of the set goals in the seventh five-year national development plan (2023 – 2027).

“In the sixth national development plan, the medicinal plants expanded by 491 thousand hectares which exceeded the set goal of 250 thousand hectares,” IRIB quoted Tarahom Behzad, an official with the natural resource and watershed management organization, as saying.

The expansion of lands for the cultivation of medicinal plants through implementing multi-purpose pasture management plans using biological and biomechanical methods



and preventing any change in the use of pastures is also considered in the seventh national plan, the official added.

Over 1,500 tons of medicinal plants were harvested, and more than 961 tons were exported in the Iranian year 1402 (which ended on March 19, 2024), Behzad further noted.

According to the official, 14 natural climates are known in the world, Iran encompasses about 11 of these climate types and the country is the breeding ground of all kinds of medicinal plants.

So far, about 8,600 plant species have been identified in Iran, of which 2,300 species are medicinal and are directly used in the field of medicine, health, and food supplements, he added.

He said benefitting from a special climate and the area of about six million hectares of medicinal plant habitats is a very suitable opportunity for proper utilization, serious investment in processing, creation, and employment opportunities as well as more specialized exports in the field of processed products, and earning foreign currency.

Iran, India seek closer agricultural ties at BRICS summit

TEHRAN – Iran and India have called for expanded cooperation in agriculture during a meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS agriculture ministers’ summit in Brazil, underscoring their shared commitment to food security and sustainable development.

Iran’s Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleh met with his Indian counterpart, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, in Brasilia, where he stressed the need to activate the Iran-India Joint Agricultural Committee and deepen collaboration on food security, biotechnology, and agricultural research.

Nouri highlighted the long-standing trade relations between Tehran and New Delhi, calling for updated trade protocols and enhanced scientific ex-



changes in agriculture and food systems.

India’s agriculture minister, for his part, reaffirmed New Delhi’s readiness to expand bilateral and multilateral agricultural cooperation within the BRICS framework. Referring to the agreements

reached during last year’s meeting between the Indian prime minister and Iran’s president, Chouhan said India is committed to strengthening agricultural ties across all areas.

He also noted the historical and cultural bonds between the two

countries, citing extensive past exchanges in the arts, crafts, and other cultural domains.

Chouhan emphasized that both governments are actively working to broaden their cooperation, especially in agriculture, through continuous engagement and strategic partnerships.

Iran officially became a full BRICS member in January 2024, joining founding members Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates also joined the group last year.

The 15th BRICS Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting in Brazil is focused on three key themes: food and nutrition security and sustainability, innovation and agricultural finance, and international agricultural trade.

100 MW of new solar plants ready for inauguration across Iran

TEHRAN – Iran’s Energy Ministry announced on Thursday that 15 newly constructed solar power plants with a combined capacity of 100 megawatts are ready for operation across the country, despite a delay in the official inauguration ceremony originally planned for this week.

In a statement, the ministry said the plants were scheduled to be inaugurated simultaneously on Thursday, April 17, during a visit by the Energy Minister to Alborz Province. However, the visit was postponed due to a scheduling

conflict, pushing the official launch of the facilities to a later date.

The 15 completed solar units are located across multiple provinces, including Isfahan (Naein, Kuhpayeh), Yazd (Khezrabad, Abarkuh), Razavi Khorasan (Chenaran 2 and 3, Kashmar, Bahariyeh), South Khorasan (Khusf), Kerman (Jiroft, Shahrbabak 2 and 3), Markazi (Mahallat), and Alborz (Hashtgerd, Eshtehard).

According to the ministry, 400 megawatts of new renewable energy capacity—equiv-

alent to one-third of all capacity installed in previous years—have been added to the national grid during the first seven months of President Masoud Pezeshkian’s administration. With the upcoming launch of these new units, Iran’s total renewable energy capacity will rise to 500 megawatts.

Earlier, some media outlets reported the cancellation of the inauguration events in various provinces, prompting the ministry to clarify that the projects are fully completed and will be officially launched soon.

Russian experts working on Rasht-Astara rail project in Iran, Deputy PM confirms

TEHRAN – Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk said on Wednesday that Russian specialists are currently in Iran working on the Rasht-Astara railway project, a key segment of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

In an interview with Russia’s state-run TASS news agency, Overchuk declined to give a specific timeline for completion but confirmed that “our experts are already in Iran and engaged in the project.”

The outlet also quoted Iran’s ambassador to Moscow, Kazem Jalali, as saying that the rail line is expected to be completed within three to four years.

Russia’s Minister of Transport, Roman Vladimirovich Starovoi, had earlier announced that preliminary studies for the Rasht-Astara railway would begin within one to two months, under the framework of an agreement between Moscow

and Tehran.

Speaking in February, Starovoi said the final implementation agreement is expected to be signed by the end of March 2025.

He also noted that an addendum was signed on February 19, allowing Russian teams to begin surveys and technical assessments even before Iran completes land acquisition along the route.

While the final construction cost will be determined after route design and feasibility studies are completed, current estimates remain close to the previously cited figure of €1.6 billion.

Iran and Russia signed a bilateral agreement on May 7, 2023, to jointly construct the Rasht-Astara railway. Under the deal, Moscow will provide a state loan of €1.3 billion to finance the project.

According to Russian sources, the



Rasht-Astara line will be developed with Iran-Russia cooperation, while the Astara (Iran) to Astara (Azerbaijan) segment is planned as a trilateral project involving Tehran, Moscow, and Baku.

Iran’s land transit surpasses annual target by 25%, sets new record

TEHRAN – Iran’s combined road and rail transit volume in the past Iranian year (ended in March 2025) exceeded the first-year target of the country’s 7th National Development Plan by 25 percent, reaching a record 17.5 million metric tons, a senior official said on Thursday.

Hamid Mohammadi, Deputy Head of the Road Maintenance

and Transportation Organization’s Office of International Transport and Transit, said this marks the second consecutive year that Iran has broken its land transit record. In the year ending March 2024, the country recorded 14.75 million tons in transit, he added.

The Seventh National Development Plan had projected 16 million tons of combined road

and rail transit for the first year, a figure now surpassed by a significant margin.

Mohammadi credited the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development’s regional transport diplomacy, highlighting recent agreements to lower road tolls with Turkmenistan, a one-year exemption of Iranian trucks from fees in Uzbekistan, and increased

exchange of transport permits with neighboring countries.

He also pointed to both technical and administrative upgrades, including the activation of a comprehensive international logistics system and implementation of digital queue management for freight trucks at border terminals, which have helped improve conditions for the private sector.

EDBI to expand support for global competitiveness of exporters

TEHRAN – Iran’s Export Development Bank plans to step up support for exporters, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in a bid to boost their competitiveness in international markets, a senior bank official said.

Hadi Heidari, Deputy Head of the Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI), said the bank is working to enhance infrastructure for production financing and strengthen investment in the manufacturing sector, in line with the Supreme Leader’s designation of the new Iranian year as the “Year of Investment for Production.”

“In the past decade, Iran’s economy has faced turbulence due to simultaneous inflation and recession,” Heidari said in an interview with IRNA.

“These shocks, both in the real and nominal sectors, have led to a decline in the share of

manufacturing in GDP—from about 19 percent in the late 2000s to around 12 percent in the late 2010s.”

He added that various domestic and international reports point to underutilized potential in the economy, which calls for increased capital accumulation.

“In the absence of coherent strategies across policy and operational layers, investment in production has remained largely stagnant over the past two decades,” Heidari noted.

Heidari said the Export Development Bank, as a specialized financial institution, can serve as a key player in strengthening the country’s financial governance and mobilizing investment to support production.

“Development banks worldwide are recognized as key engines of sustainable development and investment,” he stated.

“If policymakers offer more support, the EDBI can focus its structure on becoming a leader in sustainable financing for productive investment.”

He outlined the bank’s 2025 agenda, emphasizing the delivery of trade finance solutions to producers needing imports or export financing.

“This becomes especially crucial given Iran’s limited access to global financial markets,” he said.

Heidari stressed that continued support for exporters is a top priority this year, with a focus on pre-shipment and post-shipment financing tailored to SMEs.

“The bank will continue to develop integrated banking products to support production and export activity, based on market conditions and customer needs,” he said.

Global protests in solidarity with Gaza gain momentum



Paris
TEHRAN – In a growing wave of global condemnation against Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza, demonstrators across multiple cities rallied over the weekend, voicing unwavering support for the Palestinian people and calling for an immediate end to the war and siege.

In Yemen, crowds flooded the streets of Saada in the north, where demonstrators reiterated their full solidarity with the people of Gaza. According to Yemen's Al-Masirah TV, the rally followed statements by senior Yemeni officials who emphasized that U.S. airstrikes on their country would not deter Yemenis from standing with Palestine.

In Pakistan, mass protests erupted in the southern port city of Karachi, while local acts of defiance also made headlines. In one symbolic gesture, a shop owner removed the PepsiCo sign from his storefront, protesting the company's alleged complicity in what many demonstrators called "genocide" in Gaza.



Spain
In Europe, anti-war demonstrators marched in several major cities. In London, one protester told reporters: "We cannot remain silent in the face of the injustice and crimes being committed against the people of Gaza."

In Leeds, northern England, activists called for an end to both the "genocide" in Gaza and the ongoing "blockade" that has choked off humanitarian aid.

In Germany, police reportedly clashed with anti-war activists during a protest in Berlin. Students at Berlin's Humboldt University demanded a ceasefire in Gaza and urged their university to cut ties with war-profiteering companies.

Healthcare workers in Spain held a symbolic protest, highlighting the suffering of their medical counterparts in Gaza, many of whom have worked under bombardment with dwindling supplies and collapsing hospitals.

In France, demonstrators gathered at Place



Berlin
de la Bastille in Paris, waving Palestinian flags in support of journalists targeted in Gaza. Media outlets captured the moment as protesters condemned Israel's attacks on press freedom and the killing of Palestinian reporters. Elsewhere in the city, crowds called for an immediate halt to what they described as the "genocidal campaign" by the Israeli military.

As the humanitarian crisis deepens in Gaza, international pressure on Israel continues to intensify, with growing demands from human rights organizations, world leaders, and civil society groups for accountability, an end to the violence, and an independent investigation into alleged war crimes. The persistence of global protests underscores a rising frustration with what many see as the international community's failure to prevent further bloodshed or enforce meaningful consequences for the ongoing siege and military actions in the Palestinian enclave.

US wages deadliest attack on Yemen

Pentagon declines to comment on civilian death toll

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – American warplanes raid the Yemeni port city of Hodeidah, killing scores of civilians.

U.S. fighter jets launched airstrikes on Hodeidah's Ras Isa oil port, followed by a second wave of attacks that struck as emergency crews battled fires and recovered victims.

A preliminary report from the Health Office in Hodeidah governorate said at least 58 civilians, including truck drivers, workers, and paramedics, were killed, while at least 126 others were injured in the strikes on the port in northwest Yemen.

It added that a second wave of airstrikes killed emergency workers who were attending to the casualties from the initial attack.

In response, the Sanaa government reaffirmed "Yemen's legal right to defend itself" and held the U.S. administration fully responsible for the consequences of its military escalation in the Red Sea.

The government said its support operations for Gaza would continue, stating they have been "100% successful in preventing Israeli vessels from navigating the Red Sea."

It also denounced U.S. statements justifying the attack, calling them "false and misleading."



The Sanaa government said the strikes proved once again that "the American enemy deliberately targets civilian areas and vital national infrastructure."

Officials in Sanaa labeled the bombing of Ras Isa "a full-fledged war crime" and warned that it would not go unpunished.

Shortly after the attack, missile sirens sounded in Tel Aviv and parts of central Israeli regions amid warnings of an incoming projectile from Yemen.

Also in the aftermath, large rallies took place across several Yemeni governorates on Friday afternoon in support of Gaza, under the slogan "Steadfast with Gaza in the face of U.S.-Israeli escalation."

On Thursday night, Ansarallah leader Sayyed Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said, "Our people, despite their suffering, have not clung to weak excuses or shallow justifications. Instead, they've risen to fulfill their duty of faith and resistance, enraging both the American and Israeli enemies."

In a televised speech, Sayyed al-Houthi highlighted "Yemen's front is strong, inspiring, and stands as a powerful example for others to follow."

Speaking on the impact of Yemeni operations, he pointed to "clear results acknowledged even by American and Israeli officials."

Addressing the U.S. directly, Sayyed al-Houthi declared, "Your attacks only make us stronger, sharpen our military capabilities, and increase our effectiveness."

Experts believe the strikes on Hodeidah's oil facilities were aimed at shifting media focus toward the huge fires, but say they are unlikely to weaken Yemen's ability to maintain its military support front in solidarity with Gaza.

Other analysts noted that this isn't the first time U.S. and Israeli forces have targeted Hodeidah's oil infrastructure, an apparent attempt to project strength amid growing frustration over their inability to stop Yemen's operations.

Germany, Israel, and the struggle for diplomatic recognition

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN – The Luxembourg Agreement in 1952 was a critical moment in the relationship between Germany and Israel, by which they began a complex and multi-faceted partnership.

There were many contextual dimensions to this partnership. There would again be a second critical turning point in 1965, after over a decade of consideration when formal diplomatic relations were established between the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the Israeli regime. This decision was fraught with political, moral, and emotional complexities, reflecting the lingering shadows of the Holocaust and the geopolitical realities of the Cold War.

Establishing diplomatic relations in 1965 was a bold step in moving toward normalization in the face of threats and incitement. It also exposed the unresolved complexities of the relationship between the two nations.

A delicate and controversial process

The path to formal diplomatic relations between West Germany and Israel was lengthy and difficult. In the years after the Luxembourg Agreement, Germany had made reparations payments to Holocaust survivors and provided aid to Israel that assisted its economic establishment. Yet the establishment of official diplomatic relations remained a sensitive topic. This was especially true for many Israelis, some of

whom were heavily opposed to the idea of formal relations with Germany. The trauma of the Holocaust was still fresh in most Israelis' memories. The reality of Nazi atrocities was very close. Political and public opinion was heavily divided in Israel, even former prime minister Menachem Begin was outspokenly opposed to the notion of formalizing relations with a country that had been responsible for one of history's largest genocides, killing about six million people. Begin and those who supported him viewed the formal recognition of Germany as a betrayal of the victims of the Holocaust.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Aoun's statements cause diplomatic crisis with Baghdad

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — During an interview with the Qatari Al-Araby Al-Jadeed (New Arab), Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said, "We will not replicate the experience of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in absorbing Hezbollah into the [Lebanese] army, nor will it be an independent unit within this army," stressing that "the decision was made to restrict arms to the state."

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry immediately summoned Ali al-Habhab, the Lebanese ambassador to Baghdad, to express its "displeasure" with Aoun's statements.

Iraqi Assistant Foreign Minister for Bilat-

eral Relations Mohammed Bahr al-Ulum, noted that "the PMF is an important part of the military security system in Iraq, and it is a governmental and legal institution and part of the Iraqi state system."

Bahr al-Ulum added that what the Lebanese president said was "not appropriate." It would have been more appropriate not to make a comparison in this regard or "use an official Iraqi institution as an example in this context," he noted.

However, sources revealed that contacts are underway between Baghdad and Beirut in reconstructing Lebanon following the September-November U.S.-led Israeli aggression



on Lebanon under the management of the Lebanese government.

It was also reported that Baghdad is considering requesting Lebanon to deposit the debt it owes for purchasing Iraqi fuel to operate Lebanese power plants in the Banque du Liban, and later announce the donation to the reconstruction fund.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

ICC opens inquiry into Hungary for failing to arrest Netanyahu

Judges at the International Criminal Court want Hungary to explain why it failed to arrest Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he visited Budapest earlier this month, Euro News reported.

In a filing released late on Wednesday, The Hague-based court initiated non-compliance proceedings against Hungary after the country gave Netanyahu a red carpet welcome despite an ICC arrest warrant for crimes against humanity in connection with the war in Gaza.

During the visit, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced his country would quit the court, claiming on local radio that the ICC was "no longer an impartial court, not a court of law, but a political court."

The Hungarian leader, regarded by critics as an autocrat and the EU's most intransigent spoiler in the bloc's decision-making, defended his decision to not arrest Netanyahu.

"We signed an international treaty, but we never took all the steps that would otherwise have made it enforceable in Hungary," Orbán said, referring to the fact that Hungary's parliament never promulgated the court's statute into Hungarian law.

Judges at the ICC have previously dismissed similar arguments.

The ICC and other international organizations have criticized Hungary's defiance of the warrant against Netanyahu.

Rubio says US will abandon Ukraine peace push if no progress 'within a matter of days'

U.S. President Donald Trump will walk away from efforts to broker a Russia-Ukraine peace deal within days unless there are clear signs that a deal can be done, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Friday.

"We're not going to continue with this endeavour for weeks and months on end. So we need to determine very quickly now, and I'm talking about a matter of days, whether or not this is doable in the next few weeks," Rubio said in Paris after meeting European and Ukrainian leaders.

"If it's not possible, if we're so far apart that this is not going to happen, then I think the president is probably at a point where he's going to say, 'well, we're done'."

Three European diplomatic sources told Reuters Rubio's comments, which coincided with signs of some progress in U.S. talks with Ukraine, reflected growing frustration in the White House over Russian intransigence to end the war.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said

some progress on a peace settlement had already been made but that contacts with Washington were difficult. He said Russia was striving to resolve the conflict while ensuring its own interests. Moscow remained open to dialogue with the United States, he added.

Trump said on Thursday he expected to sign a minerals deal with Kyiv next week after an attempt in February fell apart following Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Oval Office clash with Vice President JD Vance and Trump.

Vance, speaking in Rome as he met Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, said he was optimistic the United States could help end this "very brutal war."

The talks in Paris on Thursday were the first substantive, high level and in-person talks on Trump's peace push that have included European powers. Rubio said a U.S. peace framework he presented received an "encouraging reception". Zelenskyy's office called the talks constructive and positive.

California sues to stop Trump from imposing sweeping tariffs

California Gov. Gavin Newsom sued the Trump administration on Wednesday, challenging the president's authority to impose sweeping tariffs that have set off a global trade war, AP reported.

The lawsuit argues that President Donald Trump's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to impose tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China or a 10% tariff on all imports is unlawful. The act enables a president to freeze and block transactions in response to foreign threats but doesn't allow the president to adopt tariffs, the suit says.

The lawsuit, which was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, also argues that enacting such tariffs

requires approval from Congress.

California has filed more than a dozen lawsuits challenging Trump's policies this year. But the tariffs lawsuit marks the first time this year that Newsom, who is already considered a top 2028 presidential prospect, has been a plaintiff. The Democratic governor scaled back his anti-Trump rhetoric after January's deadly Los Angeles fires as the state sought federal support.

Newsom discussed the lawsuit at an orchard in the farm-rich Central Valley, highlighting California's status as a farming powerhouse. Many of the nuts, fruits and vegetables grown in the state are destined for other countries.

Ukraine, US sign deal for access to critical minerals

Ukraine and the United States have signed a "memorandum of intent" to move forward with a fraught deal for U.S. access to Kyiv's natural resources and critical minerals, Kyiv said, according to AFP.

"We are happy to announce the signing, with our American partners, of a memorandum of intent, which paves the way for an economic partnership agreement and the establishment of the Investment Fund for the Reconstruction of Ukraine," Ukraine's first Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said on X.

Kyiv and Washington had planned to sign

a deal on extracting Ukraine's strategic minerals weeks ago, but a clash between Presidents Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskyy in February derailed work on the agreement.

Trump wants the deal – designed to give the U.S. royalty payments on profits from Ukrainian mining of resources and rare minerals – as compensation for aid given to Ukraine by his predecessor, Joe Biden.

Svyrydenko did not publish details of the memorandum, but said work continued towards securing a final agreement.

Iran celebrates Intl. Day for Monuments and Sites amid rich cultural legacy



By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN - Each year on April 18, many countries across the globe celebrate the International Day for Monuments and Sites (IDMS) — a date dedicated to recognizing and protecting the cultural treasures that connect us to the past.

For Iran, a nation with a millennia-old civilization and an exceptional wealth of historic landmarks, this occasion holds special meaning.

The ancient land, often referred to as the cradle of civilization, is home to an extraordinary variety of cultural and architectural gems — from ancient bazaars and majestic mosques to historical bathhouses, bridges, madrasas, churches, mausoleums, towers, and royal mansions. This architectural diversity reflects the layers of history and civilizations that have shaped the country over millennia.

With 28 sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, Iran ranks among the top nations in the world in terms of recognized heritage sites. These include iconic places like Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire; Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan, a masterpiece of Islamic architecture; and the Historical City of Yazd, a living testimony to desert urban planning and Zoroastrian culture.

Like previous years, Iran's Ministry of Cultural

Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts has declared that entry to cultural heritage museums and historical sites would be free of charge to make the day.

While each year's IDMS comes with a different theme, the International Council on Monuments and Sites encourages countries to highlight topics most relevant to their own cultural context. In Iran, where heritage preservation often faces challenges such as urban development, climate change, and insufficient public awareness, this day serves as a valuable occasion to raise attention and promote conservation efforts.

Beyond celebration, April 18 is a call to action — a day not only to admire the beauty of Iran's monuments and sites but also to ensure they endure for future generations. Events held across the country often include guided tours, exhibitions, lectures, and student activities — both physical and virtual — inviting people of all ages to engage with their cultural roots.

As cultural heritage becomes increasingly threatened in many parts of the world, the International Day for Monuments and Sites reminds us of the importance of international solidarity. For Iranians, it is a proud reflection of a vast and vibrant heritage — one that has long contributed to the world's cultural tapestry and continues to inspire awe and admiration today.

Iran sets goal of €6 billion annual revenue from medical tourism

TEHRAN - Iran has set a target to generate €6 billion in annual revenue from medical tourism, according to a new policy document approved and announced by the government.

The clear goal underscores the country's intention to become a regional hub for healthcare services by making the best use of its advanced medical capacities and skilled professionals.

Alireza Jahangiri, president of the Iranian health tourism services association, on Thursday confirmed the development in a recent interview with YJC news agency. He said that the official roadmap highlights medical tourism as a strategic opportunity to showcase Iran's healthcare sector on a global scale.

"Iran has a high standing in the field of medicine and healthcare "Iran has a high standing in the field of medicine and healthcare, with well-trained physicians and accessible treatment services for international patients," Jahangiri said. "The €6 billion target has been approved by the government as an annual revenue goal and has been formally

communicated as a national objective."

Jahangiri emphasized that international patients not only benefit from Iran's advanced treatments but also bring much-needed foreign currency into the country. "On average, each medical tourist contributes at least \$2,500 to the Iranian economy," he noted.

Iran is particularly known for offering high-quality services in fields such as stem cell therapy and organ transplants, which have drawn growing interest from patients abroad. However, Jahangiri acknowledged that despite these strengths, investment in medical tourism infrastructure and facilitation remains insufficient.

"We need better planning and more streamlined services to attract a larger share of international health seekers," he said, calling on the government to step up efforts to develop and promote the industry.

Medical tourism is viewed as a major potential source of employment, income generation, and foreign exchange.

Russian tourists arrive in Ilam province with campers amid growing tourism ties



TEHRAN - A group of 18 Russian campers and SUVs has arrived in Iran's Ilam province as part of a broader tour across the country, marking a new chapter in expanding tourism ties between Iran and Russia. The visitors explored several cultural and natural attractions in the green and mountainous province in western Iran before continuing their journey toward Iraq via the Ilam-Mehran

international border.

According to the provincial tourism chief Farzad Sharifi, in addition to the Russian group, 17 camper vehicles from various parts of Iran also entered Ilam to explore the province's diverse attractions.

During their stay, the visitors toured key historical and cultural sites, including the Vali Castle and the Anthropology Museum in Ilam city, as well as the picturesque Kafarin Gorge in Badreh county.

"These rally tours are a valuable opportunity to introduce Iran's historical, natural, and cultural attractions to the global tourism market," Sharifi said.

The arrival of Russian tourists comes in the wake of a bilateral visa-free agreement for group travelers signed in recent years between Tehran and Moscow, aimed at fostering deeper tourism cooperation. Iran now hopes to attract more Russian visitors, many of whom remain unfamiliar with the ancient nation and its wealth of historical and ecological treasures.

Tehran, Moscow working toward full visa waiver, Lavrov says

TEHRAN - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced that Iran and Russia are actively working toward abolishing visa requirements between the two countries, marking a significant step in strengthening bilateral ties and boosting tourism.

Speaking at a joint press conference in Moscow on Friday with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Lavrov emphasized that relations between Tehran and Moscow have reached a level fitting for their strategic partnership.

"Despite challenging regional conditions, cooperation between our two nations remains strong and continues to progress," Lav-



rov said.

"We are currently finalizing a tourism agreement aimed at removing visa requirements be-

tween Russia and Iran."

In September 2023, the two nations implemented an agreement that allowed visa-free

group travel for Iranian and Russian tourists. That deal permitted groups of five to fifty travelers from either country to visit for up to 15 days without the need for a visa.

The proposed new arrangement would expand this cooperation and could potentially lead to individual visa-free travel, further facilitating cultural exchange and economic ties.

Officials from both countries have voiced interest in deepening tourism cooperation, with Iran recently aiming to attract more Russian travelers, many of whom are still unfamiliar with Iran's vast array of cultural and historical attractions.

Digital diplomacy, a new approach to be embraced by diplomats and ambassadors

TEHRAN - Mohsen Sohani, a tourism researcher, in a recent note, has put the spotlight on "soft power" as a robust tool to attract or persuade potential travelers to visit a host country.

In an interview with ISNA, he said that practicing public diplomacy via popular digital platforms is one of the manifestations of the realization of this goal.

For instance, he said, the ambassadors of foreign countries in Iran can create a cultural bridge between the nations through eating a traditional Persian dish like Abgoosht or Kebab.

"South Korea's Ambassador to Tehran Kim Jun-pyo sang an old Iranian song with his sweet accent."

Once upon a time, an ambassador was only an official representative and political diplomat of a country.

"Usually, they used to be just serious diplomats in elegant suits who attended official sessions and made official statements."

But nowadays, just take a look at virtual media and social networks, watch one of short and funny videos uploaded by foreign diplomats who reside in Iran and understand that the game has changed!

You see that the UK ambassador talks about Iranian tea and his memories in the old embassy building in a friendly tone. Or German ambassador eats doner kebab in Ferdowsi square and talks about his daily life in Tehran.

Japanese ambassador practices in Zoorkhane, a revered dome-shaped building with seats for spectators and an octagonal, submerged arena.

These sweet events are part of calculated strategies based on digital diplomacy.

Being active in social media

Based on a report released by Brookings Institution, over 85 percent of countries asked their ambassadors to be active in social media in 2023.

The reason is clear: "Sometimes, an Instagram post has influence of over hundreds of times of official negotiations."

According to Joseph Nye's definition, "soft power" is ability to attract and convince without resorting to force or money. It is a tool that is implemented through culture, values, and legitimizing policies.

Public diplomacy, as a subset and the most important foundation of soft power, focuses on direct interaction with people of other countries.

In the present era, these concepts have been linked to the emergence of social media and the phenomenon of soft war.

A war that is waged not with weapons, but with narrative creation, national branding, and manipulation of public opinion, and can be interpreted as a "global war of identity" as the most important piece in today's hybrid wars.

Ambassador-influencers

Any country which creates the most engaging and humane nar-



rative wins the field of influence. This is where the role of "ambassador-influencers" comes into play.

By personalizing diplomacy, they break down rigid state boundaries and change mindsets by building trust and empathy.

But in the meantime, there is room for a big question: So, what about us?! Why doesn't any Iranian ambassador or even cultural counselor abroad create such narratives?!

Why doesn't any Iranian diplomat in London, Paris, or Seoul show a vivid, humane, and intimate picture of Iran today? Why is our narrative still either official, censored, or delayed?

Power of communication sciences

The answer must be sought in a combination of fear, distrust, lack of specialized knowledge and skills, and structural weakness. The mechanism of our cultural diplomacy has not believed in the power of "communication sciences". We are still captive to traditional thinking.

We think our representative

should confine himself/herself to rigid frameworks.

We are still afraid of the presence of a diplomat in cyberspace. We distrust the power of imagery, humor, nostalgia, and direct communication with public opinion.

This is while Iran, as an ancient nation and civilization, has attractive stories to tell and has upper hand to conquer the minds and hearts of people around the world.

In a world where even a foundation of hard-fought wars is shaped by the media narrative, inaction in such fateful arenas is tantamount to being removed from the map of geopolitics.

Iran needs a fundamental transformation in its diplomatic apparatus and redefinition of the concept of public diplomacy, particularly in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Islamic Culture and Communication Organization. A transformation in which every ambassador or advisor is a media activist and every action, especially in cyberspace, is a cultural bridge and a tool for acquiring soft power.

\$100,000 miniature rams, Lar's ecotourism attraction



Miniature ram is known as one of the smallest and rarest wild sheep across Iran and the world due to its smallness.

TEHRAN -- For the first time, a Russian zoologist Nikolai Viktorovich Nasonov understood the uniqueness of the miniature rams in 1906 and introduced them to the world of science.

It weighs between 35 and 40 kg, while the female one weighs between 25 and 30 kg.

Miniature ram is known as one of the smallest and rarest wild sheep across Iran and the world due to its smallness, Mehr News Agency reported.

It is accustomed to water shortage. Its lifespan is between 10 and 12 years.

Khalil Hazhbari, who is the manager of the

miniature ram breeding site, said that south of Iran, including Larestan, is very famous in terms of diversity of animal species particularly Larestan ram.

One of the reasons why Larestan ram is so miniature is its evolutionary history. Lar has temperatures above 40 degrees for six months of the year, and this ram is accustomed to this climate.

Hormod Protected Area, extended over 210 hectares, was designated for protecting miniature rams in Larestan in 1973.

Hazhbari said the hunting license for miniature ram is expensive because it is rare in terms of race, size, and color.

He put the price for hunting a mature miniature ram at the age of above nine years at 80,000 euros, which is popularly called a \$100,000 hunt.

The hunting license used to be given to foreigners. Many foreign hunters who traveled to Iran only wanted the ram's head and skin and took them to collections and museums.

Currently, those who travel to Larestan, can visit miniature ram from behind fences extending all around the protected area.

Hazhbari and his colleagues are careful to ensure that the habitat of these rams and ewes is not damaged while at the same time making the public more familiar with this protected species.

Hormod Protected Zone doesn't have tourism facilities and infrastructure. If a good planning is made through promoting the infrastructure and proper investment, this site can be used for promoting ecotourism.

The Hormod Protected Area encompasses a region of semi-desertic plains and volcanic hills (peaking at 1,630 m) in the south-east Zagros mountains 50-100 km east of Lar.

The reserve is bounded to the north by the Rud-e Shur river and in the south-west by the Lar to Bandar Abbas Road.

Habitats include: dissected stony outwash plains with scattered trees and bushes of Ziziphus, Berberis, Euphorbia and Acacia, and patches of grass Poa in the gullies; sandy areas with Zygothymus steppe; small springs with Phoenix and Tamarix scrub; barren, rocky volcanic hills; and the rocky river bed of the Rud-e Shur, with little surface flow but many deep pools.

There is some livestock grazing, also a small area of wheat cultivation on a plain in the center of the reserve. The village of Hormod lies at the southern extremity of the reserve.

This site qualifies as a Key Biodiversity Area of international significance because it meets one or more previously established criteria and thresholds for identifying sites of biodiversity importance (including Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas, Alliance for Zero Extinction sites, and Key Biodiversity Areas).

IRCS, IFRC discuss ways to address regional challenges

TEHRAN – The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) have explored the potential to foster joint activities for dealing with regional challenges.

The secretary general of the IRCS, Meysam Afshar, the IRCS director for international affairs, Razieh Alishvandi, in a meeting with Hossam Elsharkawi, the regional director at IFRC in Middle East and North Africa, highlighted the need for enhancing ties, the IRCS website reported.

During the meeting, which was held in Lebanon on Thursday, Elsharkawi lauded the IRCS humanitarian actions in recent years, particularly in regions impacted by crises and conflicts such as Gaza, Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, saying that the IRCS efforts will never be forgotten.

Referring to the challenges ahead of the humanitarian organizations and national societies in carrying out their missions, the official said, "Here, we are facing problems that prevent us from carrying out our responsibilities properly. In Gaza and many other areas, the situation is very difficult."

For his part, Afshar highlighted the violation of human rights by the Zionists over the past two years, and condemned the attacks on the Palestinian Red Crescent forces resulted in the killing of eight medics in Gaza.

Despite the high capacity of the



IRCS in providing humanitarian consignments to be delivered to war-affected areas, restrictions and obstacles have prevented the entry of the aid, Afshar noted. He asked the IFRC to facilitate the dispatching of humanitarian aid to these areas.

Referring to the fragile situation in the region, Afshar stressed the need to strengthen collaborations among the IFRC and other national societies like the IRCS.

The official also announced the country's readiness to hold humanitarian workshops in cooperation with the IFRC.

Alishvandi, for her part, referred to a joint project between the IRCS and the IFRC in partnership with Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), saying that the infrastructure for the implementation of the three-year project with an allocated

budget of \$2.7 million, in three provinces of Iran, has been provided. She suggested the IFRC kick off the project in the second month of spring, beginning on April 21.

Highlighting the scientific and operational capacities of the IRCS, the official went on to propose turning the country into a regional hub for specialized relief and rescue training.

The IRCS is committed to developing regional and international collaborations in different fields, including relief and rescue training, and enhancement of humanitarian capacities, she added.

The proposals were well-received by Elsharkawi. He stressed the need to develop the regional hub structure precisely and suggested holding specialized meetings to review and finalize the plan.

IFRC interested in boosting ties with IRCS

In November 2024, the IFRC undersecretary general for national society development and operations coordination, Xavier Castellanos Mosquera, held a meeting with Afshar and Alishvandi.

Acknowledging the IRCS capacities, Castellanos Mosquera highlighted that the IRCS is well-known all over the world for its high capabilities.

The IFRC is interested in enhancing cooperation with the IRCS on conducting joint specialized training courses, and organizing different teams, like logistics teams, the IRCS website reported.

"The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has different specialized groups and teams active in various sectors. Considering the capacity, knowledge, and valuable experiences of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, we are eager for the society to join these groups and teams to further support their peers as well as the federation," the IFRC official went on to say.

Afshar, for his part, elaborated on logistic capacities and the capabilities of the IRCS in rescue and relief services, pharmaceutical and medical equipment productions, Helal textile products, medical and rehabilitation centers in the country, and 14 other countries.

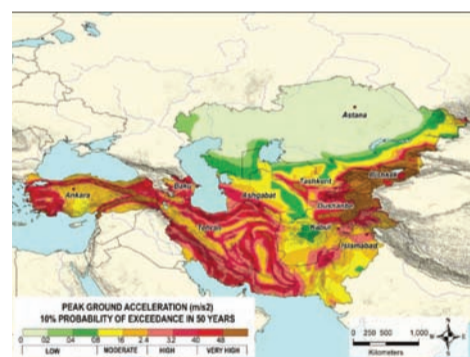
Caspian Sea, Central Asian seismicity and seismic hazard

By Mehdi Zare

TEHRAN - The collision of the Eurasian and Arabian tectonic plates causes tectonic interaction with significant seismic activity along fault systems in the Alborz Mountains and the Caspian Sea region.

The Alborz Mountain belt is a major seismogenic zone with active faults like the North Alborz Fault and Moshā Fault. These faults extend from Jajarm (east) to the Aras River (northwest), affecting cities such as Damghan, Semnan, Tehran (Rey), Qazvin, and Ardabil.

In the Caspian southern coast, the high-risk areas like Ramsar and Rasht lie near the Talesh-Mughan Fault. The Alborz-Caspian boundary is prone to great earthquakes due to a compressional tectonic regime.



Major historical earthquakes

Damghan (856 AD) is the greatest historical event to be known as the deadliest earthquake (M-7.9), killing some 200,000 people. It devastated the Silk Road city of Qumis (near modern Damghan), highlighting seismic risks along ancient trade routes.

743 Caspian Gates Earthquake: Recorded in Byz-

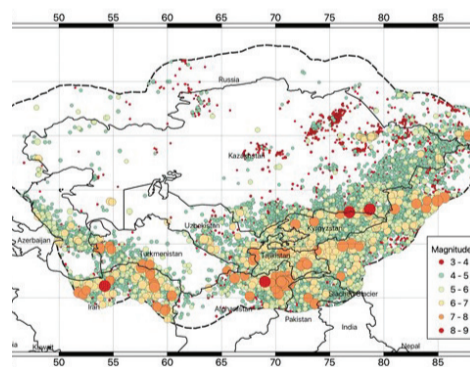
antine sources, this event occurred near Derbent (Russia) or Talesh (Iran). Its magnitude remains debated, but its documentation highlights long-standing seismic activity in the Caspian region 4.

Jorjan/Gonbad Kavus (958 AD): A destructive earthquake damaged the iconic Gonbad Kavus tower, underscoring long-term seismic activity in north-eastern Iran.

Manjil (20 June 1990): M7.3 earthquake near Rasht and Rudbar killed some 16,000, collapsing infrastructure and underscoring vulnerability in the Alborz-Caspian transition zone.

Ardabil (28 Feb 1997): M6.1 quake near Meshkinshahr killed some 1,500, linked to the Sabalan volcanic region and the Alborz-Azerbaijan seismic zone.

Talesh and Caspian Region: Recurrent activity, including a 2012, M6.4 Varzeghan earthquake near the Azerbaijan-Iran border, tied Ahar Fault.



Ancient roads and seismic zones

Silk Road Corridors passing through cities like Damghan, Semnan, Rey (Tehran), and Qazvin were

critical seismic zones along or near active faults.

The 856 Qumis (Damghan) earthquake exemplifies seismic threats to these routes. Eastern Alborz to the Caspian region, traversing fault zones where the historical earthquakes in Jajarm and Gonbad reflected their seismic activity.

The Ardabil area seismic zones are recently represented by 28 February 1997 Golestan Ardabil M6.1 earthquake.

Rapid urbanization in the Caspian coasts from Astara to Rasht, Ramsar, Chalus, Nur, and Behshahr, developed along the northern foothills of the Alborz Belt, has increased earthquake risk due to higher exposure relating to a larger accumulation of populations. Poor construction practices exacerbate risks.

Moshā and North Alborz faults in the southern Alborz belt are seismically active due to the Alborz-Caspian tectonic regime, with historical earthquakes impacting ancient and modern settlements alike.

Ancient roads (Silk Road) align with fault systems, exposing historic cities to repeated seismic events. Ongoing monitoring and retrofitting of infrastructure are vital for mitigating risks in culturally and economically significant zones.

The ancient trade networks and modern seismic hazards emphasize the interplay between natural forces and human settlement in Iran's volatile northern regions.

The southern Caspian Sea coast lies within the Alborz seismic zone, where active faults like the Mazandaran, Alborz, Lahijan, and Astara generate frequent earthquakes. These faults are part of the broader collision between the Eurasian and Arabian plates.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tehran, Islamabad to boost scientific ties

TEHRAN – Iran's deputy science minister, Abolfazl Vahedi, and Pakistan's Science Minister, Khalid Hussain Magsi, have discussed ways to develop collaborations between universities of the two countries. The officials met on Thursday on the sidelines of the first International Conference on Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI): Catalysts for Regional Connectivity and Sustainable Development in the ECO Region (ECONEX 2025), on April 17-18, held in Islamabad, Pakistan, IRNA reported.

The meeting centered around benefiting from the academic engagement of the two countries to further scientific and research interactions among students and professors. Vahedi also invited the Pakistani official to participate in the second ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)-15 Dialogue Platform, which is scheduled to be hosted by Tehran. The first International Conference on STI was jointly organized by the ECO Science Foundation, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, and the ECO Secretariat.

The two-day event provided a high-level platform for the exchange of ideas, fostering regional cooperation, and promoting cross-border collaboration aimed at driving economic growth and sustainable development within the ECO region. It brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including policymakers, scientists, industry leaders, and academics, to explore STI-driven solutions to shared regional challenges.

In 2024, a delegation of Pakistani academic members headed by Mukhtar Ahmed, the chairman of Pakistan's higher education commission, visited Iran's House of Innovation and Technology (HiT) on January 15, IRNA reported.



"The main challenges in the development of Islamabad-Tehran relations have been overcome, and the two countries are ready to further boost ties in higher education, science, and technology," the Pakistani official said.

Mukhtar Ahmed, in a meeting with Amir-Hossein Mir-Abadi, the former head of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology's center for international affairs, said Iran and Pakistan are confronting similar problems and challenges; these common issues can lay the basis for boosting mutual relations and cooperation. "Pakistan is interested in cooperating and interacting with Iran in scientific and technological fields," he added.

Exchanging academic staff, including professors and students, and conducting joint projects were among the main options to expand cooperation between Iran and Pakistan.

Talking about setting up national pavilions in different countries, Ahmed said Pakistan is ready to hold Iranian pavilions, too. He hoped that the bilateral cooperation would be extended into regional cooperation, including other countries such as India and Bangladesh.

Health ministry, UNICEF join hands to equip 13 PHC centres in deprived areas

TEHRAN – Supported by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME) has staffed and equipped 13 Primary Health Care (PHC) centres in highly refugee-populated regions in Sistan-Baluchestan and Khorasan Razavi provinces.

The joint effort aims at strengthening healthcare services for vulnerable children and their families. The health services cover more than 100,000 people, including both refugees and host community members, UNICEF website announced in a press release on April 17. Furthermore, UNICEF's response to the devastating floods in 2024 that struck Chabahar County in Sistan-Baluchestan province included rapidly deploying two prefabricated mobile PHC units. The floods caused widespread damage to buildings and infrastructure, leaving communities, particularly children and women, in urgent need of healthcare support.

These units, deployed in collaboration with the MoHME, were designed to ensure the continuity of PHC services for flood-affected populations, particularly in districts where healthcare access was severely disrupted. To date, this intervention has reached 5,310 beneficiaries, including 500 children, reinforcing UNICEF's dedication to enhancing healthcare access for the most vulnerable populations across the country.

The PHC centres provide an inclusive package of health and nutrition interventions, catering to

all age groups, with a particular emphasis on children and women of reproductive age. These facilities serve as the first point of contact within the healthcare system, playing a pivotal role in delivering comprehensive and accessible care. Recognizing the importance of equitable access, UNICEF has ensured that these services are inclusive and do not exclude individuals with special needs.

In February, the two organizations cooperated to provide medical care to children under the age of five who are suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in Zabol, south-eastern Sistan-Baluchestan province.

Funded by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), UNICEF has been providing free treatment to these children since September 2024.

At Amir Almomenin Hospital, more than 54 children with SAM have already received critical medical care, ensuring they get the life-saving treatment they need. The initiative not only enhances access to curative services but also focuses on children with disabilities and those most in need, ensuring no child is left behind.

Recognizing the deeper issues of food insecurity, this project will continue throughout 2025. In just three months, a complementary social protection programme will provide households with SAM cases cash cards, helping families purchase nutritious food and improve overall well-being.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

SDSs mitigation plan to take effect next year

Sand and dust storm (SDS) mitigation plan will be implemented in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan as of the next Iranian calendar year (beginning March 21), Department of Environment (DOE) chief has announced.

A total fund of \$150 million from the National Development Fund has been proposed to counter dust storms in Sistan-Baluchestan province, IRNA quoted Issa Kalantari as saying on Tuesday.

Referring to the SDSs hitting southeastern part of the country causing the residents severe health problems, he noted that the president is pursuing the issue and as long as the fund is provided the plan will go into effect.

طرح مهار گرد و غبارهای سیستان از اول سال آینده اجرایی می شود

رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: طرح مهار گرد و غبارهای منطقه سیستان و بلوچستان از ابتدای سال آینده اجرایی می شود.

عیسی کلانتری روز سه شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا اظهار داشت: برای مبارزه با گرد و غبار این منطقه رئیس جمهوری تقاضای ۱۵۰ میلیون دلار اعتبار از صندوق توسعه ملی کرده است.

وی بیان کرد: توفان ها و گرد و غبار مساله جدی در منطقه سیستان است و مردم سالها با این مشکل مواجه و از آن رنج می برند و رئیس جمهوری به شدت پیگیر حل این مساله هستند. طرح مهار گرد و غبارهای منطقه سیستان به محض تایید منابع مورد نیاز اجرایی می شود.



Winter returns to Ardabil in April

Snowfall in the middle of April covered some mountainous areas of Ardabil province, northwest of the country, in white.

Snow is not unusual, even in the low-lying areas of the province, at this time of the year.



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APRIL 19, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Poverty often disables an intelligent man from arguing his case; a poor man is a stranger in his own town.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:06 Evening: 18:52 Dawn: 4:10 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:37 (tomorrow)

What's in Tehran art galleries



Painting

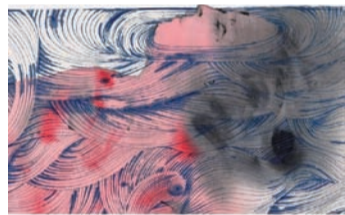
* Paintings by Vahid Beikverdi are on display in an exhibition at Doost Gallery.

Entitled "Lonely Bodies", the exhibit will be running until May 6 at the gallery, which can be found at No. 4, 4th St. off Eshqyar St., Khorramshahr Ave.

VAHID BEIKVERDI
SOLO EXHIBITION
LONELY BODIES

* Paintings by Mojtaba Hejazi are on display in an exhibition at Baam Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until April 29 at the gallery, which can be found at No.16, 19th Alley, Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.



* Ahou Hamedei is putting her latest paintings on view in an exhibition at Bavan Gallery.

Entitled "Floating", the exhibit will run until May 5 at the gallery located at 7 Abdo off Lareztan St. off Motahhari Ave.

April 18 - May 5, 2025
Ahou Hamedei Bavan

* Paintings by Savalan Jama'ati are currently on view in an exhibition at Atbin Gallery.

The exhibit titled "The Wind Catcher" will continue until May 6 at the gallery located at 42 Khakzad Alley, Vali-e Asr Ave. near the Parkway Intersection.



* A collection of paintings by Shadi Salimi is on view in an exhibition at Soo Gallery.

The exhibit named "Against the Light" will continue until May 9 at the gallery located at 30 Purmusa St. off Somayyeh St.

* Paintings by Mosafer are being shown in an exhibition now underway at E1 Gallery.

The exhibit named "Seeds of Imagination" will run until May 2 at the gallery located at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebbeh St., off Mahdiah St. in the Elahieh neighborhood.



* Bashgah Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by a number of artists including Mahsa Arabzadeh, Majid Faal, Mehdi Hosseini, Sasan Nasiri and Abdi Asbaqi.

Entitled "Continuing Daylight", the exhibition will be running until May 2 at the gallery located at No.13, Hosseini St., Karim Khan Ave.

* 009821 Projects Gallery is showcasing a collection of paintings by Ahmad Rafi.

The exhibition named "A Lost Vision" will run until April 29 at the gallery located at No. 25, 18th Alley, Kheradmand St., Karim Khan Ave.



* Paintings by Negar Qiamat are currently on view in an exhibition at Etemad Gallery 1.

The exhibition will be running until May 13 at the gallery located at 25 Shirudi Alley, Mofatteh St., near Haft-e Tir Square.

* Arthibition Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Ali Chitsaz.

The exhibition will be running until May 11 at the gallery that can be found at Qandi Alley, Sasanipur St., Golnabi St., off Shariati Ave.

APRIL 18 - MAY 13, 2025
Negar Qiamat

APRIL 18 - MAY 11, 2025
Ali Chitsaz

APRIL 18 - MAY 13, 2025
Negar Qiamat

APRIL 18 - MAY 11, 2025
Ali Chitsaz

Hormozgan to host Iran's Regional Music Festival

TEHRAN- The 17th edition of the Iran's Regional Music Festival will take place in the southern province of Hormozgan, with participation from 32 groups representing 22 provinces across the country.

The festival will be held from April 25 to 28 in Bandar Abbas, a port city bounded by the Persian Gulf, ISNA reported on Friday.

This festival aims to showcase a variety of musical talent over four days, providing a platform for artists from diverse regional backgrounds, the report added.

Foad Tohidi, the secretary of the festival, emphasized the importance of featuring new faces among the selected groups and individuals, stating that efforts have been made to include many who have not participated in recent years.



Tohidi further noted that performances will not only be held in the main venue but also in two additional locations within the city of Bandar Abbas, ensuring a wider audience can enjoy the artists' performances.

Artists from Hormozgan, Fars, Mazandaran, Sistan and Baluchestan, Ilam, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Zanjan, South Khorasan, Hamadan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Gilan, West Azarbaijan, Kerman,

Kermanshah, North Khorasan, East Azarbaijan, Khorasan Razavi, Lorestan, Kordestan, Bushehr, Khuzestan, and Golestan provinces will showcase their talents during this year's festival.

Iran's regional and folk music is a type of music transmitted through generations among the people of the country, often containing a variety of tunes. The variety of Iranian folk music has often been emphasized, reflecting the ethnic and regional diversities of the country.

Usually, Iranian folk musicians are taught their art by their families. There are different types of traditional musicians who specialize in folk music in Iran, some of whom ascribe to specific ethnic and regional groups.

Iranian short animation "Bug" competing in Rhode Island's Ivy Film Festival

TEHRAN-The Iranian short animation "Bug" written and directed by Ali Masoumi is participating in the 24th Ivy Film Festival, underway in Rhode Island, the U.S., the largest student-run film festival in the world.

Made by the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), "Bug" examines the enduring influence of parents' behaviors and responses on their children's development, tracing the long-term effects of these interactions from early childhood to adulthood, Mehr reported.

A production of 2024, the six-minute animation depicts a family of three that has recently moved in and the little girl inspects the new home with curiosity, when a small cricket finds its way into their home as a surprise visitor.

But with the father's unexpected reaction, the child's perspective begins to shift, turning a simple encounter into something far more unsettling.



The technique used in creating the animation is multi-plane camera. It involves stacking three to six layers of glass with overlapping surfaces, while the camera is positioned at the top to create depth and a sense of perspective.

For character animation, replacement faces

are used, with multiple face designs crafted in different sizes to accommodate long shot, close-up, and medium shot. All materials are natural, including wood, fabric, and soil.

Held annually since 2001 in a week-long April event, Ivy Film Festival features advanced screenings of feature films, panels, keynotes, workshops, and masterclasses with some of the most highly regarded professionals in the industry, culminating with the official selection of short student films, screenplays, and virtual reality experiences.

In 2016, Ivy Film Festival expanded its reach to partner with dozens of universities across the world through its Satellite Film Festival, bringing its world-renowned official selection to audiences throughout the globe.

Having been launched on April 14, this year's edition of the festival will conclude on April 20, awarding the winners in various categories.

Palestinian photojournalist wins world press photo of the year 2025

The World Press Photo Awards announced its overall winner on Thursday and Samar Abu Elouf, a Palestinian photojournalist, has won Photo of the Year for her portraits of a young boy named Mahmoud Ajjour who was severely injured while fleeing an Israeli attack in Gaza.

The haunting image of Ajjour was taken by Elouf while she was on assignment for The New York Times. The portrait was done in Doha, Qatar, where Ajjour was evacuated from Gaza and where Elouf lives as well, PetaPixel reported.

Ajjour was severely injured while fleeing an Israeli attack in Gaza City in March 2024. After he turned back to urge his family onward, an explosion severed one of his arms and mutilated the other. The family was evacuated to Qatar where, after medical treatment, Mahmoud is learning to play games on his phone, write, and open doors with his feet. Ajjour now wants prosthetics and to live his life the same as most children.

"This is a quiet photo that speaks loudly. It tells the story of one boy, but also of a wider war that will have an impact for generations. Looking at our archive, in the 70th year of World Press Photo, I am confronted by too many images like this one," says Executive Director of World Press Photo Joumana El Zein



Samar Abu Elouf (R) and her winning photo.

Khoury.

The death toll in Gaza from Israel's genocidal war since October 2023 has reached 51,000 and the number of injuries has surpassed 116,000 in the Israeli onslaught, the Health Ministry said.

"Many victims are still trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

The Israeli army resumed its assaults on the Gaza Strip on March 18 and has since killed 1,630 people and injured over 4,300 others despite a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement that took hold in January.

Last November, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its war on the enclave.

Two photos were chosen as runner-ups alongside Photo of the Year at the World Press Photo Awards. One of them is "Night Crossing" by John Moore, which shows Chinese migrants attempting to stay warm after they cross the US-Mexico border.

The other runner-up depicts droughts in the Amazon and shows

a young man bringing food to his mother who lives in the village of Manacapuru. Taken by Musuk Nolte, the village was once accessible by boat but drought means the man must now walk two kilometers (over a mile) along a dry riverbed.

Regional winners were announced last month. A total of 42 winners were selected from Africa, Asia-Pacific and Oceania, Europe, North and Central America, South America, and West, Central, and South Asia.

The World Press Photo Exhibition 2025 will take place at the MPB Gallery in London, the UK, from May 23 to August 25.

Peter Dear's "Revolutionizing the Sciences" published in Persian

TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the book "Revolutionizing the Sciences" written by Peter Dear has been released in the Iranian bookstores.

Abdolhossein Azarang and Negar Naderi have translated the book and Morvarid Publication has brought it out, ILNA reported.

This award-winning book offers a keen insight into how the Scientific Revolution happened and why. From Copernicus, who put the earth in orbit around the sun, to Isaac Newton, who gave the world universal gravitation, the Scientific Revolution of the 17th centuries transformed the way Europeans understood their world.

In this book, Peter Dear offers an accessible introduction to the origins of modern science for students and general readers. It further explores the practice and influence of alchemy, the social standing of early scientists, and the role of medicine and medical practitioners.

The book provides a comprehensive overview of principal themes and topics; discusses central figures, including Copernicus, Kepler,

Galileo, and Newton, and describes the world in which they lived, and the new world they helped create; and features a rich variety of illustrations, a glossary of terms, and a list of further reading. It was the winner of the Watson Davis and Helen Miles Davis Prize of the History of Science Society.

Peter Dear, 67, is a professor of science and technology studies and history at Cornell University. He has written and edited a number of books on these topics.

APRIL 18 - MAY 13, 2025
Negar Qiamat

APRIL 18 - MAY 11, 2025
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