

The Story Goes On

Following second round of negotiations in Rome, expert-level talks set for Wednesday in Muscat ahead of April 26 high-level meeting



Iran, India set to expand agricultural trade ties beyond \$1b

TEHRAN – Iran and India are poised to enhance their agricultural trade volume beyond the current \$1.0 billion, as announced by Iran's Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji following a meeting with India's Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan during the BRICS agriculture ministers' summit in Brazil.

The ministers reviewed previous agreements and reaffirmed their countries' long-standing cultural, historical, and economic ties. Nouri Ghezleji expressed appreciation for India's support in facilitating Iran's membership in BRICS and noted that bilateral cooperation is entering a new phase.

In addition to these developments, Iran and India have agreed to establish a joint agricultural cooperation committee within the next three months. This committee aims to facilitate exports of agricultural products and address issues such as quarantine requirements and customs barriers. The agreement was reached during a meeting between Iran's Deputy Agriculture Minister Mohammad Mehdi Borumandi and Secretary of India's Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Ministry Manoj Ahuja in New Delhi.

The officials also agreed to hold the first joint working group on agricultural cooperation between the two countries in the near future.

Furthermore, Iran's Deputy Minister of Agriculture Alireza Mohajer has voiced the country's readiness to cooperate with BRICS member countries in the agricultural sector. Speaking at the 14th meeting of the BRICS ministers of agriculture in Russia, Mohajer highlighted Iran's strategic geographical position, being situated at the intersection of the North-South and East-West transit corridors. He noted that Iran can help expand regional and international trade networks in agriculture and is an effective partner in bilateral and multilateral cooperation. ▶ Page 4

A house divided: U.S. discord strengthens Iran's hand in nuclear negotiations

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN – As Iranian and U.S. negotiators concluded the second round of indirect nuclear talks in Rome on Saturday, Washington's credibility hangs in the balance.

A cascade of contradictory statements from Trump administration officials, leaks exposing deep ideological rifts, and Tehran's calculated position have laid bare a U.S. policy in disarray—far from projecting strength and clarity, these inconsistencies suggest a government unsure of its goals, offering Iran a strategic edge at a pivotal moment.

Witkoff's mixed messages

Steve Witkoff, U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy to West Asia and the lead U.S. negotiator during the nuclear talks with Iran, exemplifies the chaos with his public remarks, which have swung like a pendulum.

During a Fox News interview on Tuesday, Witkoff suggested the U.S. might accept limited uranium enrichment by Iran for civilian purposes. "The conversation with the Iranians will focus on two critical points:

Rome negotiations: Iranian diplomacy shines amid American divisions

By Najah Mohammed Ali

LONDON – All eyes are on Rome, where the Italian capital is preparing to host a new round of negotiations between Iran and the United States, mediated by the Sultanate of Oman.

Amid the complexities of the international scene, Iran emerges as a party with a cohesive diplomatic vision, supported by internal unity and robust external engagement, while the U.S. administration grapples with divisions that hinder its ability to formulate a unified stance.

These dynamics make the Rome negotiations a critical juncture, not only for addressing the nuclear issue but also for highlighting how Iran's active diplomacy can serve as a model for navigating global challenges.

Iran enters these negotiations with confidence rooted in its wise leadership and internal cohesion. Contrary to narratives that attempt to portray the Islamic Republic's system as fragmented,

Exclusive: Democrats looking to crimp Iran-US talks before results can come through

By Mona Hojat Ansari

ROME – Under a partially sunny sky in the Italian capital, Republican U.S. Presidential envoy Steve Witkoff headed to the Omani diplomatic premises to begin indirect talks with Iranians. For his fellow Democratic Americans back in the U.S., however, April 19th couldn't have been gloomier.

For the officials who sat at the negotiating table with Iran in 2015, watching the JCPOA – the fruit of two years of their efforts – unravel under Donald Trump just three years later, it's unbearable to see this president mark the end of the tussle over Iran's nuclear program under his name. After all, Trump has already elbowed himself into the Ukraine saga, and now aims to end a war that began under a Democratic administration. Another victory for the ex-real estate giant would only bode well for Republicans in the upcoming 2028 presidential election, and become another tarnishing stain on Democratic history.

Sources have told the Tehran Times that, while the possibility of a new agreement between Iran and the U.S. under a second Trump term remains uncertain,

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Iran to compete at Asian Judo Championships after six years

TEHRAN – Iran will send five judo athletes to the Asian Judo Championships after six years.

Abolfazl Mahmoudi in (-66kg), Elyas Parhizgar (-81kg), Amir Abbas Choochan (-90kg), Hossein Namdar (-100kg) and Alireza Nikseresh (100kg) will compete in the 2025 championships.

The team will be headed by Hossein Qomi in the competition.

The 2025 Asian Judo Championships will be held from April 24 to 28 at the MCC Hall in Bangkok, Thailand as part of the IJF World Tour.

The last day of competition will feature a mixed team event.



We will fight whoever wants to disarm Hezbollah: Sheikh Qassem

TEHRAN - Sheikh Naim Qassem on Friday night reaffirmed Hezbollah's commitment to armed resistance, declaring that the Resistance movement's weapons were instrumental in liberating Lebanese territory and remain essential to national defense.

Citing Imam Sayyed Moussa al-Sadr, he stated, "Carrying weapons to defend the nation is a duty," and vowed to resist any efforts to disarm the group, invoking past confrontations with Israeli aggression as justification.

A definitive speech by the Hezbollah chief

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The world is watching: Global outcry grows over Gaza war

TEHRAN – Mass demonstrations erupted across the globe as tens of thousands of people rallied in solidarity with Gaza, demanding an end to the genocidal acts against the Palestinian people.

Morocco witnessed one of the largest coordinated protests in recent weeks, with 105 demonstrations held across 58 cities.

Protesters expressed outrage over the ongoing assault on Gaza and strongly opposed any form of normalization or cooperation with Israel, particularly criticizing the departure of ships from Moroccan ports to the occupied territories. ▶ Page 5

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Interaction, instead of confrontation, between Iran and Saudi Arabia

Arman-e-Milli examined Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman Al Saud's trip to Tehran and noted: What made this preplanned trip important more than anything else were the goals and dimensions of this Saudi official's visit, which were worth considering in their own right. This is in a situation where visits by senior Saudi officials to our country have been rare. A trip at this level and a meeting with high-ranking Iranian officials indicate an important issue. It seems that Khalid bin Salman, who is the brother of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was not simply engaging in discussions on regional issues to strengthen peace and stability. The fact that the Saudi king delivered a message to the Leader of the Revolution also indicated that he left Riyadh for Tehran for reasons beyond the immediate issues at hand. It is certain that Khalid bin Salman's trip to Tehran primarily focused on bilateral relations. In any case, the Saudis, observing the regional and international conditions, seek closer ties with Tehran across various fields to potentially address regional issues through these relations.

Kayhan: Multilateral diplomacy is Iran's meaningful message to Washington

In an analysis, Kayhan discussed Iran's multilateral diplomacy in its foreign policy and said: In a time when the United States and the West can no longer play their undisputed and hegemonic role in the world, Iran, by taking advantage of its regional and global capacities, has taken the path of "multilateral diplomacy" with strength and determination. This shows that neither Washington nor the diplomatic smiles of the West would determine the future of the country's foreign policy. The Leader of the Revolution also said that the country's issues should not be tied to these talks, and the mistake made in the JCPOA should not be repeated because the country becomes conditional and everything, including investment, will be delayed until the outcome of the negotiations becomes clear. Now, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, has chosen a new path in which negotiations to lift sanctions continue through indirect diplomacy, but not as "everything" but alongside other tools of power and paths of global engagement. In fact, the country's diplomacy is simultaneously pursuing the lifting of sanctions and actively pursuing the path of neutralizing them.

Hamshahri: Will Iran and Trump turn tensions into an agreement?

Hamshahri discussed the second round of talks in Rome and the possibility of an agreement between Iran and the United States in a note. It wrote: The second round of talks between Iran and the United States was held in Rome under conditions different from the first round. Iran has proposed a three-stage plan that may include limiting uranium enrichment, increasing access for IAEA inspectors, and suspending some nuclear activities in exchange for lifting sanctions. The most likely scenario is a limited agreement in which Iran stops 60 percent enrichment and the United States suspends some of the sanctions. Such an agreement would allow Trump to claim victory and give Iran a chance to reduce economic pressure, but distrust threatens its sustainability. The Rome talks would likely result in a temporary agreement that both sides will highlight as a victory. But behind the scenes, Israel may be preparing for limited strikes in secret coordination with the United States. Iran, too, is seeking to reduce pressure by aligning with Russia and proposing a three-stage plan. The outcome will be clear by the expiration of Resolution 2231: either a fragile agreement or new tensions.

Shargh: Diplomacy in the shadow of distrust

In a commentary, Shargh dealt with the challenging negotiations between Iran and the United States. It wrote: Although the change in the place of the negotiations does not carry a specific message in the ambiguous and complex atmosphere of these negotiations, the details can also be considered important signs. According to Araghchi, the change in tone and positions in the American team indicates the lack of seriousness of part of the United States in these negotiations and will increase distrust. On this side of the table, Iran continues to adhere to its positions in the negotiations, although what can be seen from Tehran's tone and positions indicates the continuation of serious distrust of Washington's intentions and behavior. In the current situation, trusting the diplomatic team and following the path adopted by the ruling system is essential. Now all eyes are on Rome. Diplomacy is underway amidst doubts, contradictory messages, and the desire to resolve a protracted issue. But the continuation of this path depends on whether the parties are willing to overcome the gaps, or once again, hopes will fade in the shadow of distrust.

Tehran to host intl. conference on humanity, freedom



TEHRAN – An international conference on humanity and freedom is scheduled to be held in Tehran on December 3, 2025.

The conference will discuss humanity and the issue of freedom from the perspective of Islam with a focus on the thoughts of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

The international event will center on Ayatollah Khamenei's role in upholding people's rights and protecting individual and social freedoms; Fundamental human rights and social freedoms from the viewpoint of Islam; Women's rights in Islam and the West; Minority rights in Islam and the West; A comparative analysis of fundamental rights

in Iran and other legal systems in light of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Freedom in Islam and the West: Conceptual foundations, legal frameworks, and approaches; A critical examination of Western human rights; People's rights and freedoms: A cross-national comparative study with focus on Iran; and Constitutional recognition of people's rights: A global comparative analysis with emphasis on Iran's Constitution.

Organized by Iranian institutions, universities, and academic centers, the conference will be held on December 3, 2025, in the capital Tehran.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran-Saudi ties key to regional stability: Tehran's envoy to Riyadh

TEHRAN – Iran's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ali Enayati, has described the recent visit of Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman to Tehran as a key milestone in deepening regional cooperation and advancing Iran-Saudi relations.

In an interview with Asharq Al-Awsat, Enayati said the region is in urgent need of greater solidarity and collaboration among its countries—particularly between Tehran and Riyadh. "Security and stability in the region can only be achieved through joint efforts by all regional nations. It's time they come together and shape their future with their own hands," he said.

The ambassador hailed the Saudi minister's trip as a sign of the swift progress in bilateral ties since relations resumed less than two years



ago. Prince Khalid's meetings with top Iranian officials, including Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, President Masoud Pezeshkian, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri, and the Secretary

of the Supreme National Security Council, focused on expanding cooperation and discussing pressing regional developments.

According to Enayati, the talks addressed shared regional concerns, the future of the Islamic world, and

support for Palestine—alongside a commitment to boosting ties in line with prior agreements.

He emphasized that both nations possess vast untapped potential that can be activated through sustained dialogue. "Ayatollah Khamenei stressed the strategic importance of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and their continuation is in everyone's interest," Enayati noted.

He described the visit as a clear signal of both countries' commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and building a more stable, cooperative regional order.

Prince Khalid bin Salman traveled to Tehran on April 17, 2025, leading a high-ranking military delegation at the invitation of General Bagheri.

No retreat from stance despite pressure, Iran FM tells RT

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, has asserted that the country has not wavered in its positions, despite external pressures.

In a Friday interview with RT in Moscow, Araghchi reaffirmed Iran's steadfastness, stating: "We have proven before that we do not respond to force, pressure, or threats. Instead, we resist. Perhaps the Americans tried to test our resolve again—but the outcome of that test is clear to them."

The Foreign Minister emphasized that Iran will not compromise on its principles. "We will not sacrifice our dignity, honor, or national interests under any form of pressure," he declared.

Regarding military threats, Araghchi expressed confidence in Iran's defense capabilities, saying: "It is unlikely that military threats will come to fruition. Even the Americans know that Iran is fully capable of defending itself. The diplomatic path

remains open, but if negotiations become challenging, we are fully prepared for other options."

Araghchi also addressed the ongoing sanctions, explaining that Iran's economic cooperation has been structured to withstand them. "We are not waiting for sanctions to be lifted. Instead, we are expanding our relations despite them. Politically, our consultations are close, and we align on many international issues, although there are differences in some areas."

On his visit to Russia ahead of the second round of negotiations with the U.S., Araghchi highlighted the significance of Iran's ties with Russia. "We stand by our friends in difficult times. We have done so in the past, and now it is natural to coordinate our positions," he said.

Turning to the situation in Syria, Araghchi voiced concern over Israel's growing occupation there, warning: "Israel has taken control of land larger

than the Gaza Strip, and the occupation continues to expand."

On Iran and Russia's shared stance on Syria, he noted: "For both of us, Syria's peace, stability, and territorial integrity are crucial for regional stability. While Iran has no direct relationship with the current Syrian government, we are prepared to help if called upon to support peace efforts and the creation of a legitimate, inclusive government."

Finally, Araghchi dismissed any notion that Israel could launch an attack on Iran, stating: "Israel has never had the ability to attack Iran, nor will it in the future. Even with U.S. support, they cannot carry out military operations against us. We have the capability to defend ourselves, and the U.S. and Israel are well aware of our defensive and retaliatory power. Not only does Israel lack the courage to attack, but I also doubt the U.S. would risk such a dangerous move."

Iran-Russia strategic agreement will be reviewed if ratified by parliament: Guardian Council

TEHRAN – The Guardian Council has announced that it will review the Iran-Russia strategic agreement if it passes through Parliament, in accordance with Articles 77 and 125 of the Constitution.

Hadi Tahan Nazif, jurist member and spokesperson of Iran's Guardian Council, presented a detailed account of the body's recent legal reviews and official positions on a range of legislative and strategic matters, including international agreements, legal reforms, electoral participation, and national development policies in a press conference on Saturday.

He announced that over the past month, the Guardian Council had reviewed eight parliamentary bills, seven statutes of state-owned com-

panies, and four inquiries from the Administrative Justice Court. Among the key approvals were the prisoner transfer agreement with Uzbekistan, amendments to the law on arms smuggling, and agreements involving arbitration with South Korea and customs cooperation with Japan. The Council also approved Iran's increased shares in World Bank institutions and the country's accession to the Vienna and Strasbourg classification agreements on trademarks and patents.

However, not all proposals were cleared. The prisoner transfer agreement with Venezuela was rejected on the grounds of violating Islamic principles, while the amendment to Article 87 of the Civil Service Law was turned down following objections raised by the Supreme Over-

sight Committee of the Expediency Council.

Addressing broader legal and constitutional responsibilities, Tahan Nazif reaffirmed the Council's role in reviewing legislation for consistency with both Islamic principles and the Constitution, stating that this duty extends well beyond electoral matters. He added that the Council reviews finalized legislation and will address any new laws or amendments, especially those aligned with modern technological developments and national needs.

On Iran's involvement in the CFT and Palermo conventions, Nazif clarified that the Guardian Council had only objected to the CFT. Due to Parliament's insistence on moving both conventions forward, their fi-



nal assessment now falls under the Expediency Council's Supreme Oversight Committee. While the Guardian Council's advisory presence in the Expediency Council is not formalized, its representatives participate in relevant meetings to present legal perspectives.

Regional disarmament agenda serves Israeli, U.S. interests: Iranian envoy

TEHRAN – Iran's Ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, has denounced the push to disarm Hezbollah as a "clear conspiracy against nations," warning that undermining deterrent power would jeopardize sovereignty and national independence.

In a statement posted to his account on X (formerly Twitter) on Saturday, Amani said, "The disarmament project is a blatant conspiracy against

nations. While the U.S. equips the Zionist regime with advanced weapons and missiles, it simultaneously pressures other countries to weaken or dismantle their own military capabilities under various pretexts."

Amani emphasized Iran's awareness of the broader implications of such efforts. "The Islamic Republic of Iran is fully aware of the threat this

conspiracy poses to regional security. We urge other nations not to fall into the trap set by their enemies."

He concluded by stressing the vital importance of military deterrence: "Preserving deterrence is the first line of defense for any nation's sovereignty and independence. This line must not be compromised."

Nuclear program architect Dr. Akbar Etemad laid to rest in Tehran

TEHRAN – Iran held a farewell on Saturday morning for Dr. Akbar Etemad, widely known as the "father of Iran's nuclear program."

The funeral ceremony took place with the presence of Mohammad Eslami, Vice President and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), alongside former heads of the organization, leading scientists, veterans, AEOI staff, and members of Dr. Etemad's family.

Eslami paid tribute to Etemad, calling him "a heart that beat for the dignity and strength of the

Iranian nation—one that will live on in the memory of history."

Eslami emphasized that building a nation's honor requires sincere and exceptional dedication. "In today's world, where power plays are overt and unashamed, it's critical that we stay the course—with resilience, capacity, and clarity of purpose," he said. He contrasted past diplomatic pressures with today's more blatant tactics, urging continued determination in advancing Iran's scientific and national goals.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



A joint meeting of the heads of Iran's executive, legislative, and judicial branches was hosted by President Masoud Pezeshkian at the Presidential Office in Tehran on April 19, 2025.

The Story Goes On

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has highlighted that Iran and the United States have made significant progress in their ongoing indirect nuclear negotiations.

In remarks following the second round of talks in Rome on Saturday, he emphasized that both sides had reached a “better understanding” of certain principles and objectives.

The talks, which were mediated by Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, were held in the Omani capital of Muscat on April 12 and in Rome on April 19. These discussions, which are aimed at resolving the long-standing nuclear issues between Iran and the U.S., have involved high-level engagement from both sides, with the Iranian delegation led by Araghchi and the U.S. side represented by Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump’s special envoy for West Asia affairs.

At the close of the second round of talks in Rome, which lasted for over four hours, Araghchi expressed cautious optimism. He stated, “It was a good session with negotiations moving forward,” signaling that while the discussions had yielded positive outcomes, there was still a long road ahead.

Araghchi confirmed that the delegations had agreed to continue their work and would meet again at expert level in Oman on April 23. A third round of high-level talks is scheduled for April 26 in Muscat.

The Iranian foreign minister underlined the importance of maintaining a careful approach. “We hope that after the expert-level sessions next week, we will be in a better position to assess the possibility of reaching an agreement,” Araghchi added. However, he cautioned against speculating on the outcome before the talks had concluded, stating that the results would be clear once the negotiations reached a resolution.

“Speculations and personal in-



terpretations with various agendas always exist in negotiations,” he said. “I do not confirm any of them. The outcomes will speak for themselves once we reach a result.”

He also stressed that the negotiation process should be treated with maturity and patience. “Negotiation is one of the tasks of the Foreign Ministry, and there is no need for hype or excitement. We are continuing our work with care and seriousness,” Araghchi remarked. “There is no reason for either excessive optimism or pessimism.”

A significant point of discussion during the talks was the potential involvement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In response to a question about the presence of IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi in Rome, Araghchi clarified that the agency’s role was not yet necessary. “We are not yet in a position that requires the presence of the agency,” he explained, noting that the IAEA would be essential only if and when a final agreement is reached.

Despite Grossi’s visit to Rome, which was reportedly a separate initiative to meet with Italian officials, Araghchi emphasized that the focus of the indirect talks was strictly on nuclear issues. “Nothing other than building confidence regarding Iran’s peaceful nuclear

program, in exchange for the lifting of sanctions, is under discussion,” he asserted.

Sanctions removal at the forefront

During these talks, Iran has remained firm on its demands for the removal of “unlawful” sanctions. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei reiterated on Saturday that Iran’s goal is to secure sanctions relief with strong guarantees. He emphasized that Iran is participating in the negotiations with “complete seriousness and readiness,” but made it clear that any potential agreement must include reliable guarantees regarding the lifting of sanctions.

“Iran’s nuclear program is completely peaceful,” Baghaei stated. “Iran is ready to dispel any doubts in this regard.” He also underscored that the talks would remain narrowly focused on nuclear issues, with no discussions on other topics.

The diplomatic efforts to resolve the nuclear issue come after a tumultuous period, including the United States’ withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) under President Trump in his first term.

Araghchi has stated that reaching an agreement with the United

States is possible, provided Washington refrains from making “unrealistic” demands. “If they demonstrate seriousness and make reasonable demands, an agreement is within reach,” he remarked.

The second round of talks, hosted in Rome, received praise for its constructive atmosphere. Araghchi also thanked Italy for its efforts to facilitate the negotiations, acknowledging their vital role in hosting the discussions. Ahead of the Rome talks, Araghchi held a meeting with his Italian counterpart, Antonio Tajani, to discuss mutual relations and regional developments.

Esmail Baghaei confirmed that the Iranian delegation had been fully committed to the talks. “Iran participated with complete seriousness,” he remarked, emphasizing that the negotiations are crucial for restoring trust and finding a lasting solution.

Oman’s continued mediation: Moving to the next phase

In a statement, Oman’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that both Iran and the United States have agreed to “enter the next phase of talks.”

The ministry added that the goal of this new phase is to build upon the progress made and eventually “sign a fair nuclear agreement.”

The envisioned agreement would ensure that Iran remains free from nuclear weapons while preserving its right to peaceful nuclear energy, and that all sanctions are lifted comprehensively and permanently.

The Omani Foreign Ministry stressed that dialogue and transparency are the only viable path forward. “A credible and reliable understanding will benefit all parties, regionally and internationally,” their spokesperson said.

The next round of expert-level talks is set to begin in Muscat on April 23, followed by a third high-level meeting on April 26.

Exclusive: Democrats looking to crimp Iran-US talks before results can come through

From Page 1 ▶ Democrats are already looking for ways to dim the prospects for such a deal. Rather than outright opposition, the Democrats appear to be seeking to derail the talks, which have so far been described as constructive.

In one such attempt, former U.S. Secretary of State and JCPOA negotiator during the Obama administration, John Kerry, suggested Trump should try to cross Iran’s red lines, demanding complete dismantlement of Iran’s nuclear program as well as caps on its missile and drone capabilities. In an opinion piece published by the Wall Street Journal, Kerry argued that “Tehran has backed itself into a corner,” and therefore Trump would be able to pressure Iran into making further concessions.

A source previously told the

Tehran Times that Iran only agreed to enter indirect talks with the U.S. after the American president stated in a letter delivered in March that the talks would be limited to Iran’s nuclear program. Thus far during the talks, the Americans have not mentioned the dismantlement of Iran’s nuclear program either. It is all but certain that Iran will exit the talks if any of those subjects are raised.

Democrats have also been trying to paint Iranians as dangerous and ingenuine. Kerry’s deputy, Wendy Sherman, who directly negotiated the JCPOA with Araghchi in the 2010s, attempted to portray him as a menacing opponent for Witkoff. “Araghchi is a very tough and intelligent person; he speaks English fluently and knows all the technical details, so Witkoff is facing a tough competitor,” she told



American media before the first round of indirect talks.

Before sitting down with Trump, Tehran engaged in multiple rounds of talks with the Biden administration in an attempt to revive the JCPOA. Washington, however, left the negotiation table when the parties were close

to an agreement in 2022, the year Iran became convulsed with deadly riots, according to previous remarks by Russia’s Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov speaking to the Tehran Times. Ulyanov was directly involved in the revival talks.

Rome negotiations: Iranian diplomacy shines amid American divisions

From Page 1 ▶ the decision to participate in the talks was made through institutional consensus, reflecting consultative mechanisms that prioritize the unity of the Islamic system as a strategic imperative.

This cohesion is clearly evident in the performance of the Iranian negotiating team, which operates in harmony under the leadership of Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, as the senior representative of the Islamic Republic, bolstered by the trust of state institutions. This unity is not merely a negotiating tool but an expression of a clear vision aimed at safeguarding national interests, regardless of the outcome of the dialogue.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

A house divided: U.S. discord strengthens Iran’s hand in nuclear negotiations

From Page 1 ▶ enrichment levels and verification. Iran must not enrich beyond 3.67%,” he said, echoing terms of the defunct 2015 nuclear deal.

Yet within hours, Witkoff reversed course on social media, demanding Iran “stop and eliminate its nuclear enrichment and weaponization program entirely.”

The abrupt shift stunned observers and drew sharp condemnation from Tehran. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei likened the flip-flop to “moving the goalposts in football [soccer]—a professional foul that poisons the atmosphere of talks.”

Analysts suggest Witkoff’s whip-lash reflects a tug-of-war within the administration. His initial remarks aligned with Vice President JD Vance and “America First” advocates urging diplomacy, while the hardened stance echoed Ultra Zionist neoconservatives such as National Security Adviser Michael Waltz, who have long pushed for harmful policies regarding Iran.

Thus, Witkoff’s flip-flopping can be seen not merely as a personal misstep, but as a glaring symptom of a broader U.S. policy in disarray.

Iranian boxers achieve two bronze medals at Yerevan Mayor’s Cup

TEHRAN – Iranian boxers Hossein Kordlou and Sam Esteki each earned bronze medals at the Yerevan Mayor’s Cup.

Kordlou secured his medal after losing in the semi-finals of the 80kg category to Russian boxer Dzhambulat Bizhamov. Similarly, Esteki claimed bronze in the 86kg category after being defeated by Armenian boxer Rafael Hovhannisyan in the semi-finals.

In addition to Iran, boxers from Iraq and Kazakhstan participated in this competitive event, which featured a total of 106 athletes from various Asian national federations, all aiming to enhance the experience of their emerging talents. The most active divisions at the Yerevan Mayor’s Cup were light welterweight (63.5kg), welterweight (67kg), and light middleweight (71kg).

Kamareh claims a gold in Asian U18 Athletics Championships

TEHRAN – Iranian athlete Mohammadsaleh Kamareh seized a gold medal in the 6th Asian U18 Athletics Championships on Friday.

He crossed the finish line in the Men U18 3,000 meters with a time of 08:40.00 minutes.

Mohammed Mabrook Mohammed A. of Yemen came second with 08:56.00 minutes.

The bronze medal went to Uzbekistan’s Timur Nasimov with a time of 08:57.12 minutes.

Iranian athletes Samia Shahpari and Amirreza Ahanin Maram had previously won a bronze and silver medal in the event, respectively.

Shahpari claimed a bronze in the Women’s 3000m with a time of 10:09.07, while Ahanin Maram secured a silver medal in the Men’s U18 Hammer Throw, achieving a distance of 71.05 meters.

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

Parsa Fallah joins to Oklahoma State basketball

TEHRAN – Former Oregon State forward Parsa Fallah is transferring to another Oklahoma State basketball team.

Fallah announced his transfer to Oklahoma State on Friday, marking the fourth Beavers starter to announce their transfer destination.

Fallah, currently a redshirt junior, started 30 games for OSU this past season in his second season in the program. The 6-9 big man averaged 12.8 points and four rebounds per game, emerging as a key contributor as the season progressed, oregonlive.com reported.

An Iranian national, Fallah played in the FIBA U19 World Cup for his home country, pouring in a pair of 20+ point efforts. He spent his freshman season with Southern Utah before transferring to OSU prior to the 2023-24 season.

Para shooter Javanmardi to compete in 2028 Paralympic Games

TEHRAN – Four-time Paralympic gold medalist Sareh Javanmardi has announced her intention to compete in the 2028 Paralympic Games in Los Angeles. Previously, she had indicated that she would retire from the sport after the 2024 Paralympics.

Javanmardi now expresses a desire to continue, stating, “It’s a huge honor to bring joy to

people. I see the capability to participate in the next Games, and I want to bring them happiness through our achievements.”

When asked about her participation in the upcoming Paralympics, Javanmardi said, “It’s not impossible. When I first started in sports, I never envisioned the Paralympics or competitive sports, but this 18-year journey has been successful.

“At one point, I got married, and it was suggested that this would disrupt my athletic career, but that wasn’t the case. After the birth of my child, I took a brief hiatus, but I rebounded at the Paralympics and demonstrated that women can succeed under any circumstances.”

She added, “I genuinely want to continue, and I believe I have the ability to compete in another Paralympic Games. I am unsure what challenges lie ahead, but I want to fight and strive for my country again, and I will have that opportunity.”

Women’s basketball captain Issaeian announces retirement

TEHRAN – Edna Issaeian, the captain of Iran’s women’s basketball team, has announced her retirement from national duty.

She was a key member of the team that secured a spot in the 2025 FIBA Women’s Asia Cup Division B in Jordan.

“The quality of the competition was significantly better than in previous years. After defeating Syria and Jordan, we achieved the championship title and advanced to Division B,” Issaeian said.

She added, “The level of the players was very high, and all the athletes were at their best. We made remarkable progress compared to previous years. Through teamwork, we were able to win this tournament for the first time, but we have a tough road ahead.”

Reflecting on her retirement, Issaeian shared, “I have been part of the national team for about 17 years, and I have been playing basketball since 2004. I am very happy to have been alongside the younger players and to share my experiences with them.”

“I am not sad about my retirement from the national team. The younger athletes have great potential, and I hope they find success in the paths ahead,” she added.

“I have retired from the national team, but I will continue to participate in league games,” Issaeian concluded.

Russia futsal team to play Iran in friendlies

TEHRAN – The Russia national futsal team will travel to Tehran to play two friendly matches against Iran.

The matches are scheduled for October 16 and October 18.

Iran recently faced Russia, losing 2-1 in the SAT Futsal Championship in Thailand for 2025.

These upcoming friendlies will serve as preparation for the AFC Futsal Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers, which will take place from September 16 to 24, 2025.

Vafaei to face Hawkins in World Snooker Championship 2025

TEHRAN – Hossein Vafaei of Iran will face English player Barry Hawkins in the first round of the World Snooker Championship 2025.

Vafaei, known as The Prince of Persia, will first meet Hawkins on Saturday late and then play the player on Sunday.

The World Snooker Championship gets underway on Saturday 19 April with the final played over two days starting on Sunday 4 May.

Iran announces first action plan against money laundering, financing terrorism



TEHRAN - The First Action Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran against money laundering and financing terrorism has been announced by the country's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU).

This plan was developed in compliance with Article 4 of the Executive Regulations for Article 14, Supplementary to the Money Laundering Act, for the Iranian calendar years 1403-1406 (March 2024-March 2027). It is based on the National Risk Assessment Document.

The plan was formulated by reviewing documents from credible international organizations, studying comparative experiences of leading countries, utilizing available expert resources, and incorporating feedback from relevant institutions.

Hadi Khani, the head of the Financial Intelligence Unit, emphasized the plan's significant role in improving Iran's monetary and financial system's reputation both domestically and internationally.

According to Khani, relevant institutions and individuals are required to follow the guidelines and submit reports along with nec-

essary documentation to the Financial Intelligence Unit. A dedicated "Action Plan Management and Control System" has been launched to facilitate the receipt of these reports.

The action plan consists of an implementation guideline and 16 chapters. Each chapter elaborates on the roles and responsibilities of various organizations like the judiciary, ministries, and other entities in combating money laundering and terrorism financing.

This plan highlights a comprehensive approach tailored to combat the risks associated with money laundering and terrorism financing. It outlines a variety of tasks and responsibilities aimed at: Reforming existing laws and regulations, Establishing new legal frameworks, Ensuring effective implementation of legal duties, Conducting education, outreach, and cultural initiatives, Enhancing management and resource allocation, Strengthening domestic interactions and cooperation, Expanding international collaborations, Developing system infrastructure, embracing smart technologies, and creating or enhancing statistical databases.

In the final section of this announcement, the head of the Financial Intelligence Unit stresses the importance of monitoring the progress and implementation of the action plan. He highlights that, as per Article 6 of the Executive Regulations for Article 14 of the Anti-Money Laundering Law, the level of progress and implementation will be reported to the heads of the three branches as well as the office of the Leader. Any potential negligence or failure in execution will be pursued through appropriate means to ensure proper accountability.

Oil Ministry launches electric vehicle infrastructure initiative

TEHRAN - Iran's Oil Ministry has initiated the development of electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure following a recent resolution by the Economic Council, aiming to diversify the country's fuel mix and improve energy consumption management.

According to Shana, Mohammad-Sadeh Azimifar, head of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC), announced that based on the council's directive, the establishment of any new fuel station in Iran will now require the inclusion of at least one electric vehicle charging unit.

Under this new policy, all new fuel stations must include basic EV charging infrastructure. In addition, the ministry will explore the integration of EV charging points into existing stations, subject to feasibility assessments and in collaboration with current station operators.

NIORDC is also preparing to unveil additional projects aimed at modernizing and replacing the country's aging vehicle fleet with electric alternatives. These initiatives will be financed in part through gasoline savings bonds issued to support fuel efficiency.

Iran's annual steel output reaches 30.2m tons despite energy constraints

TEHRAN - Iran produced 30.2 million tons of steel in the Iranian year 1403 (ended on March 20), according to data released by the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA).

The report highlights that approximately 2.0 million tons of semi-finished steel output—worth an estimated \$1.0 billion—were lost due to electricity and natural gas shortages.

Following two years of growth after 2021, Iran's steel production declined, returning to levels seen in 2020. The report notes that severe natural gas constraints have rendered the country's new sponge iron capacities ineffective.

Despite these challenges, the highest production growth rates within the steel value

chain were recorded in iron ore concentrate and hot-rolled coil segments.

Iran's steel industry has demonstrated resilience amid external pressures, including international sanctions and the global pandemic. The country's steel production capacity has reached 55 million tons, positioning Iran as the 10th largest steel producer globally. Projections indicate that Iran could ascend to the 7th position by the end of 2025, reflecting its strategic focus on expanding production and enhancing efficiency.

In addition to bolstering domestic production, Iran has significantly increased its steel exports. In the first 11 months of the Iranian calendar year 1403, the country exported approximately 27 million tons of steel products, generating \$7.0 billion in revenue.

Rise in Essential Goods unloading

Abotaleb Geraylou, Director General of Khuzestan Ports and Maritime Administration, stated that over 19.2 million tons of imported bulk commodities, including essential goods, minerals, and chemicals, were unloaded at the port—a 9% increase compared to the previous year. He noted that essential goods alone accounted for more than 15 million tons, also reflecting a 9% growth.

Imam Khomeini Port records 48m-ton cargo throughput

TEHRAN - Imam Khomeini Port, located in the southwest of Iran, reported a total cargo throughput of over 48 million tons in the last Iranian fiscal year (ending March 2025), marking a 1% year-on-year growth, according to port authorities, Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) published on its website.

Containerized cargo operations saw a significant 30% increase, with 87,611 TEUs handled during the 12-month period, reflecting strong growth in port efficiency and container traffic.

Iran, India set to expand agricultural trade ties beyond \$1b

TEHRAN - Iran and India are poised to enhance their agricultural trade volume beyond the current \$1.0 billion, as announced by Iran's Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleleh following a meeting with India's Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan during the BRICS agriculture ministers' summit in Brazil.

The ministers reviewed previous agreements and reaffirmed their countries' longstanding cultural, historical, and economic ties. Nouri Ghezleleh expressed appreciation for India's support in facilitating Iran's membership in BRICS and noted that bilateral cooperation is entering a new phase.

In addition to these developments, Iran and India have agreed to establish a joint agricultural cooperation committee within the next three months. This committee aims to facilitate exports of agricultural products and ad-



Iran's Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleleh (L) and India's Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

dress issues such as quarantine requirements and customs barriers. The agreement was reached during a meeting between Iran's Deputy Agriculture Minister Mohammad Mehdi Borumandi and Secretary of India's Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Ministry Manoj Ahuja in New Delhi.

The officials also agreed to hold the first joint working group on agricultural cooperation between the two countries in the near future.

Furthermore, Iran's Deputy Minister of Agriculture Alireza Mohajer has voiced the country's readiness to cooperate with

BRICS member countries in the agricultural sector. Speaking at the 14th meeting of the BRICS ministers of agriculture in Russia, Mohajer highlighted Iran's strategic geographical position, being situated at the intersection of the North-South and East-West transit corridors. He noted that Iran can help expand regional and international trade networks in agriculture and is an effective partner in bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

These initiatives are expected to streamline future collaborations through BRICS mechanisms, particularly financial instruments designed to bypass conventional barriers and facilitate smoother transactions among member states. Both ministers expressed optimism that deeper engagement between Iran and India—within the BRICS framework and bilaterally—will lead to meaningful developments in agricultural and economic relations.

IMIDRO launches mining, mineral industry projects worth \$2b in a year

TEHRAN - The Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) commissioned \$2.0 billion worth of mining and mineral industry projects in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20), according to Mohammad Aghajani, head of the organization.

Speaking to IRIB, Aghajani said the projects are valued at approximately 900 trillion rials (around \$2.0 billion). Key developments

include the Mehdiabad zinc concentrate project, titanium slag production in Kahnouj, and various initiatives in the copper industry, steel production chain, and related infrastructure.

Among the most notable projects nearing operational status are the Gadir Neyriz Steel Complex and the graphite electrode plant, both expected to be launched by the end of the current Iranian year (late March 2026).

Aghajani, who also serves as deputy minis-

ter of industry, mining, and trade, emphasized that IMIDRO played a leading role in coordinating and facilitating these projects, while the financing was largely provided through public-private partnerships.

The projects are expected to create more than 5,000 direct jobs and up to 16,000 indirect employment opportunities across the country, contributing to national industrial growth and regional economic development.

Annual non-oil export from Khorasan Razavi province up 34%



TEHRAN - The value of non-oil export from Khorasan Razavi province, in the northeast of Iran, increased by 34 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20), according to an official with the province's customs department.

Javad Jafari announced that 3.463 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$2.251 billion were exported from the province in the past year, indicating also 18 percent rise in terms of weight, year on year.

The official further stated that 2.912 million tons of non-oil goods valued at \$1.7 billion had been exported from the province in the year 1402.

The province's main exported items last year were agricultural products, pistachios and saffron, polyethylene compounds, and

metal products, Jafari said, adding that the major destination countries for Khorasan Razavi's exported goods during this period were Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Iraq.

He further announced that 321,000 tons of non-oil commodities worth \$786 million were imported to the province last year, with six percent rise in value, and seven percent growth in weight, as compared to the preceding year.

The most imported goods during this period were cotton, yarn, smartphones, gold bars, and rice, and the major sources of imported goods were the United Arab Emirates, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkey.

As previously announced by an official with the Islamic Repub-

lic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran exported over 152 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$57.8 billion in the past Iranian calendar year.

This marked a 10 percent increase in volume and a 15.62 percent rise in value compared to the previous year, Abolfazl Akbarpour, the IRICA deputy head for planning and international affairs, stated.

Imports totaled 39.3 million tons valued at \$72.4 billion, representing a 0.77 percent decline in weight but an 8.22 percent increase in value from the previous year. The result was a non-oil trade deficit of \$14.6 billion, largely due to the import of over \$8.0 billion worth of raw gold bars, which accounted for 11.12 percent of the total import value.

Iran's main non-oil exports included natural gas, liquefied propane and butane, methanol, liquefied petroleum gases and hydrocarbon gases, and gas condensates.

Natural gas was the top export item, with an average customs value of \$314 per ton.

Other leading exports were petroleum bitumen, urea, non-alloy iron and steel billets, iron or steel

bars, and polyethylene.

The top destinations for Iran's exports were China at \$14.8 billion, Iraq at \$11.9 billion, the United Arab Emirates at \$7.2 billion, Turkey at \$6.8 billion, Pakistan and Afghanistan at \$2.4 billion each, and India at \$1.9 billion. These seven countries accounted for \$47.6 billion, or 82.3 percent of Iran's total non-oil export value.

On the import side, essential goods such as corn feed, soybean meal, genetically modified soybeans, rice, and sunflower seed oil were among the top items. Other key imports included smartphones, tractors, and auto parts.

The UAE was Iran's largest source of imports at \$21.9 billion, followed by China at \$19.3 billion, Turkey at \$12.4 billion, Germany at \$2.4 billion, India at \$1.7 billion, Hong Kong at approximately \$1.4 billion, and Russia at \$1.3 billion. Together, these countries supplied goods worth \$60.7 billion, or 83.8 percent of Iran's total imports.

Akbarpour said the trade deficit could be largely attributed to the surge in gold imports, which on their own exceeded \$8.0 billion.

Loading, unloading of goods in Amir-Abad port up 7% in a year

TEHRAN - The loading and unloading of goods in Amir-Abad port, in the northern Mazandaran province, increased by seven percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20), as compared to the previous year, according to the director-general of Amir-Abad Ports and Maritime Department.

Mohammad-Ali Mousapour Gorji said that 5,040,262 tons of goods were loaded and unloaded in this port in the previous year.

He introduced Amir-Abad port as the grain hub in the northern ports and the second port for importing essential goods among the country's ports, saying that of the total operations, 3,666,103 tons were related to the unloading of these types of goods last year, a seven percent increase compared to the preceding year.

Referring to the 57 percent share of unloading and loading goods among the country's northern ports, Mousapour Gorji said: "With the aim of diversifying exported goods to CIS countries, the amount of Iranian goods ex-

ported to these countries has also grown by 20 percent to 1,511,430 tons, with the majority of products exported from this port including cement, building materials, stone and ceramics, metal products, and pipes."

He stated: "Creating product diversity in the export of domestically produced products was one of the planned goals last year, and Amir-Abad Port has been able to provide this opportunity for the export of any type of manufactured product by creating an attraction for traders and product owners and by preparing a suitable platform."

As previously announced by Saeed Rasouli, the deputy transport minister,

Iran's ports handled a total of 234.8 million tons of goods in the past Iranian year.

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

131.8 million tons.

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

Container handling also saw a notable uptick, with 3.08 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) processed in 2024—a 13 percent increase from the 2.73 million TEUs recorded in the previous year.

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

In recent months, Iran's port operations have demonstrated resilience and growth, despite facing significant challenges. The Caspian Port, located in the Anzali Free Zone of Gilan Province, has emerged as a pivotal hub in the International North-South Transport Corridor.

Ongoing Genocide: More massacres in Gaza

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The Israeli occupation regime continues its relentless airstrikes and artillery shelling across Gaza, killing more civilians.

Gaza's Health Ministry said on Saturday afternoon that at least 92 people have been killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza in the last 48 hours.

According to reporters on the ground, at least 30 people were killed in Israeli strikes carried out at dawn on Saturday.

In southern Gaza, specifically in Khan Yunis, five people were killed when an Israeli helicopter struck tents sheltering displaced families in al-Mawasi, a



zone designated by the Israeli regime as a "safe area."

Four more people, including two children and a girl, were killed when Israeli forces bombed another tent housing a displaced family in the same

area.

Elsewhere in Khan Yunis, an Israeli strike hit a family home in the western part of the refugee camp, killing two people, one of them a woman, and injuring 20 others, including 15 children.

To the east of the city, a woman and her son were also killed in an Israeli strike.

In Rafah, two women lost their lives in a drone strike targeting a village northeast of the city. Israeli forces also demolished an entire residential block in northern Rafah.

In central Gaza, one person was killed and several others were wounded when an Israeli reconnaissance drone attacked a group of people. Two more were killed in a strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp, while a third person died and several were injured in a separate attack on the al-Bureij camp.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

A definitive speech by the Hezbollah chief

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — A definitive speech by Sheikh Naeem Qasim, the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, late on Friday summed up in one phrase: Remove the idea of disarming the resistance from your dictionary!

Sheikh Naeem Qasim explained this to those who fool themselves by deliberately ignoring that the weapons of the resistance must not be innately a subject to media debate or political outbidding!

What the Secretary-General of Hezbollah emphasised is that Hezbollah's legitimate weapons are in the hands of a wise leadership that will not relinquish the sacrifices of our martyred ancestors, especially after the number of Israeli violations of the ceasefire agreement has exceeded 3,000, resulting in hundreds of martyrs and injuries.

Even when the Israeli enemy launched an



airstrike on the southern suburbs of Beirut in late March, Morgan Ortagus, the Deputy U.S. Special Envoy to West Asia, explicitly defended the brutal aggression as "legitimate self-defence"!

Further, what the Hezbollah Secretary-General highlighted was that the hostile behaviour and rhetoric of Lebanon's pro-Israel team is a clear betrayal.

Sheikh Qasim's speech came in response to an unprecedented, systematic campaign targeting the resistance's legitimate weapons, falsely portraying them as the root of Lebanon's rampant crises.

This is part of a battle for awareness aimed at weakening Lebanon and transforming it into a country under the mercy of American tutelage.

The Secretary-General insisted that Hezbollah's weapons are not a luxury, nor a means of seizing power, but rather are meant to protect all Lebanese and preserve their dignity in a time of humiliation and subjugation.

Lebanon's finest martyrs have risen to shield this righteous resistance, and immense sacrifices have been made for perpetuating it, Sheikh Qasim underscored.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

We will fight whoever wants to disarm Hezbollah: Sheikh Qassem

From page 1 ▶ Speaking on Al-Manar TV about defense strategy, the Hezbollah Secretary General

indicated that the Resistance is a reaction to the occupation, which is grabbing the land and expanding to impose a fait accompli, adding that this happens when the state is incapable of defending the citizens and territories.

Sheikh Qassem maintained that Hezbollah believes in the Resistance from the religious and national perspectives of liberating the occupied territories, Al-Manar said on its website.

He stressed that 'Israel' is an expansionist entity that is not confined to occupying Palestine, adding that the Israeli ambitions include controlling the entire Lebanon.

The Resistance in Lebanon made great achievements in the face of the Israeli occupation, the Hezbollah chief said, noting that the occupation would not have ended without the resistance.

During the recent war, the Resistance fighters legendarily managed to prevent the Israeli occupation forces, backed by the U.S. and other Western countries, from advancing into the Litani River despite suffering heavy casualties, Sheikh Qasem said.

ssem said.

He said the outcome of the war cannot be measured by the number of buildings destroyed, but through the enemy's goals frustrated by the resistance fighters.

The Zionist entity wants Hezbollah to disarm because it is planning to control entire Lebanon to build new settlements and naturalize the displaced Palestinians, Sheikh Qassem remarked.

'Israel' wants Lebanon to be weak in order to carry out its schemes, he pointed out.

Sheikh Qassem indicated that Hezbollah is giving diplomacy an opportunity that is not open-ended, noting that the Israeli enemy has violated the ceasefire 2700 times, making air raid, killing people, etc.

Sheikh Qassem also said those who think that Hezbollah is weak are delusional, adding that the Resistance is not afraid of anything because it relies on God and the most honorable people.

Hezbollah has many options which will resort to at the appropriate time to face the Israeli violations, Sheikh Qassem affirmed.

Sheikh Qassem added that the most important problem facing Lebanon is the Israeli occupa-

tion, suggesting that expelling it is a priority for the noble people in Lebanon.

He also criticized those who portray Hezbollah as the root of the problem, saying, "Some discordant voices in Lebanon portray the resistance as the main cause of the problem."

Those in Lebanon who are calling for disarming Hezbollah are serving the Israeli interests, he said, asserting that this is something that will not happen.

The Israeli enemy with its entire army failed to disarm Hezbollah, Sheikh Qassem said, warning, "We will not let anyone disarm the Resistance."

He insisted, "This weapon liberated the occupied territories and defended the country."

The secretary general underlined that Hezbollah will "fight those who plan to disarm the Resistance just as it confronted 'Israel'."

He quoted Imam Sayyed Moussa Al-Sadr as saying that holding the weapons to defend the nation is a duty.

Sheikh Naim reiterated allegiance by the martyr Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah to protect the Resistance's weaponry.

He also said the text of the ceasefire agreement between 'Israel' and Hezbollah stipulates

that its implementation is limited to south of the Litani River.

He recalled that UN Resolution 1701 obliges the enemy's enemy to withdraw from all the Lebanese territories and stop its aggressions.

The Hezbollah chief also said discussing the defense strategy requires benefiting from all sources of national power.

He also said Hezbollah may never accept talks on the defense strategy through media outlets, adding that after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese lands and halt of its aggressions, the release of the Lebanese prisoners, and the start of the reconstruction project, President Josph Aoun can call for dialogue.

He maintained that Hezbollah has fully abided by the terms of the ceasefire agreement, adding, "Let 'Israel' fulfill its part, and let the Lebanese State fulfill its part."

"The defense strategy is not about disarming the resistance, but rather it is a discussion of the diplomatic, economic, and military levels of an integrated defense policy."

Sheikh Qassem called on the government to put the issue of reconstruction on its agenda and formulate a plan for it.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

The world is watching: Global outcry grows over Gaza war

From page 1 ▶ On Friday, a massive demonstration filled the streets in Berlin, with protesters calling for an immediate halt to Israeli military actions in Gaza and denouncing the international community's inaction.

Similar scenes unfolded in South Korea, where demonstrators condemned crimes and genocide committed by the Zionist regime.

In Ireland, public art has become a form of protest. A striking mural appeared with the haunting message: "Tell your child the truth

— what did you do when the children were burning in Gaza?" The image reflects a growing sentiment across Europe demanding moral accountability and political action.

Outside The Guardian newspaper headquarters in London, anti-war activists also staged a protest over the outlet's editorial stance on the war in Gaza, accusing it of biased reporting and failure to accurately reflect the extent of Palestinian suffering.

In Spain, citizens gathered at key ports

and in major cities to demand that their government immediately stop the shipment of weapons to Israel. Demonstrators argued that Spanish complicity in arms trade fuels the violence in Gaza.

These protests are part of a rising global wave of public dissent, from college campuses in the United States to city squares across Europe and North Africa, signaling a growing disconnect between public opinion and official policy on the war in Gaza.

US open to recognizing Crimea as Russian in Ukraine deal

The U.S. is prepared to recognize Russian control of the Ukrainian region of Crimea as part of a broader peace agreement between Moscow and Kyiv, according to people familiar with the matter, Bloomberg reported.

The potential concession is the latest signal that President Donald Trump is eager to cement a ceasefire deal, and comes as he and Secretary of State Marco Rubio suggested on Friday that the administration is prepared to move on from its peace-brokering efforts unless progress is made quickly.

Crimea was taken by the Kremlin in 2014 following an invasion and subsequent

referendum held under occupation, and the international community has resisted recognizing the peninsula as Russian to avoid legitimizing the illegal annexation.

Doing so risks undermining international laws and treaties prohibiting the taking of land through use of force. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly said he will not cede territory to Moscow.

But the move would be a boon for Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has long sought international recognition of Russian sovereignty in Crimea. Putin so far has refused to agree to Trump's proposal for a broad peace deal.

Putin declares Easter ceasefire in Ukraine conflict

Russian President Vladimir Putin has announced an Easter truce in the conflict in Ukraine, according to the Kremlin, Al Jazeera reported.

The unilateral cessation of hostilities will begin on Saturday at 6pm local time (21:00

GMT) and run until midnight on Monday, April 21, the Kremlin said.

It added that Russia expected Ukraine to follow suit and cease all fire during this period over Easter.

US begins pulling hundreds of troops from Syria



The U.S. military is withdrawing hundreds of troops from Syria, a shift the Pentagon is framing as a "consolidation" that reflects the changing security environment in the country.

"Recognizing the success the United States has had against ISIS, including its 2019 territorial defeat under President Trump, today the Secretary of Defense directed the consolidation of U.S. forces in Syria under Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve to select locations in Syria," Pentagon press secretary Sean Parnell said in a statement Friday.

Parnell said the drawdown is a "deliberate and conditions-based process" that will bring the U.S. forces in Syria

down to fewer than 1,000 in the coming months.

The dip comes after the U.S. military under the Biden administration announced in December it had raised the number of troops in Syria from 900 to 2,000 to help with growing threats from ISIS and militias in the region.

The Pentagon statement Friday did not say where troops will be pulled from, but the New York Times reported Thursday that the U.S. military would shutter three of its eight small outposts in northeast Syria, withdrawing some 600 service members. Two senior U.S. officials told the outlet the bases are Mission Support Site Green Village, M.S.S. Euphrates and a third smaller facility.

Silence of church leaders amid genocide 'too loud', says Christian pastor

Al Jazeera spoke to Palestinian Christian pastor and theologian, Reverend Munther Isaac, who lamented the fact that this is the second year in which Christians in the occupied West Bank "mark Easter in the shadow of the genocide unfolding in Gaza".

"There is clearly an atmosphere of frustration and anger, even fear, that characterizes our celebrations this year," he said.

"It's really hard to fathom the idea that we're still saying the same things about the need for a ceasefire, for this geno-

cide to stop."

However, he said there is also a sense of "defiance and resilience, whether it's the faithful in Gaza insisting on holding prayers despite the risk, or the faithful here [in occupied East Jerusalem], who are celebrating in prayer, defiance and hope".

He added that it is the duty of people to speak up, adding, "I think the silence of many people of faith around the world, including many church leaders ... is too loud."

Italian firm partners with Mazandaran for handicraft training and export development



TEHRAN – The tourism chief of Mazandaran province has announced a joint plan for specialized handicraft training courses in collaboration with the Italian international company Cheche.

The initiative aims to help enhance skills and boost export opportunities for local artisans, CHTN quoted Hossein Izadi as saying on Friday.

Izadi added that a memorandum of understanding has been signed between Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, specifically the Deputy for Handicrafts, and Cheche, focusing on advanced training in design and fashion.

"Mazandaran has been selected as the leading and pilot province for the implementation of this program," Izadi said. "Specialized online training courses will be held for handicraft professionals and university graduates in coopera-

tion with Italian universities."

The courses will be conducted simultaneously in Tehran and Mazandaran through virtual classes led by Italian university professors. Upon completion and passing of final exams, participants will receive internationally recognized certificates issued by the Italian organizers.

Izadi also highlighted the upcoming participation of Iranian artisans in the world's largest handicrafts exhibition, scheduled for next month in Italy. He noted that the Cheche company has already begun marketing Mazandaran's handicraft products and, given the company's strong interest, exports to Italy are expected to commence soon. Based on available data, Iran exported \$224 million worth of handicrafts during the past Persian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2025), with an equal amount estimated to have been exported through suitcase trade, according to the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

The picture-perfect province has long been a highly popular destination for domestic travelers. Its varied nature features plains, prairies, forests, and rainforests stretching from the sandy beaches of the Caspian Sea to the rugged and snowcapped Alborz sierra, including Mount Damavand, one of the highest peaks and volcanoes in Asia.

200-gram meteorite identified in Isfahan province

TEHRAN – Local experts have confirmed the originality of a 200-gram meteorite found by farmers around Mobarakeh city, Isfahan province, said a technician of the Electron Microscope Laboratory at Isfahan University of Technology.

Raouf Rahimzadeh explained that days ago, a meteorite sample, along with several precious stones, was sent by Dr. Mohammadali Makkizadeh, one of the prominent professors of petrology, to the laboratory, adding with studies conducted on the sample, it was approved that it is a real meteorite, Fars news agency reported.

On valuing these stones, he said, contrary to popular belief, there is no evidence of expensive elements such as gold, silver, or rhodium in meteorites. The material value of these objects is to conduct scientific studies and space research on them, he added.

He pointed out that this meteorite is believed to be originated between Mars and Uranus.

Pointing to images of meteorite released by electron microscope, he said the structure of this rock consists of light elements rich in silicon and magnesium, heavy elements of iron and nickel. It is noteworthy to say that the last meteorite hit Isfahan had been identified near Gav



Contrary to popular belief, there is no evidence of expensive elements such as gold, silver, or rhodium in meteorites.

Khuni wetland.

Iran's second meteorite museum was inaugurated at Tehran's Iran Mall on November 2024, following over six years since the inception of the first branch at Azadi Tower.

The Azadi Tower branch in Tehran, inaugurated in 2019, houses more than 1,200 meteorite samples, including Iran's largest meteorite, the most beautiful celestial stone, and the oldest Iranian meteorite.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Asante Traditional Buildings

Near Ghana's Kumasi, a group of traditional buildings are the last remaining testimony of the great Asante civilization, which reached its peak in the 18th century. The buildings include ten shrines/fetish houses (Abirim, Asawase, Asenemaso, Bodwease, Ejisu Besease, Adarko Jachie, Edwenase, Kentinkrono, Patakro and Saaman). Most are to the north-east of Kumasi, and Patakro, to the south.

Arranged around courtyards, the buildings are constructed of timber, bamboo and mud plaster and originally had thatched roofs. The unique decorative bas-reliefs that adorn the walls are bold and depict a wide variety of motifs. Common forms include spiral and arabesque details with representations of animals, birds and plants, linked to traditional "Adinkra" symbols. As with other traditional art forms of the Asante, these designs are not merely ornamental, they also have symbolic meanings, associated with the ideas and beliefs of the Asante people, and have been handed down from generation to generation.

The buildings, their rich color, and the skill and diversity of their decorations are the last surviving examples of a significant traditional style of architecture that epitomized the influential, powerful and wealthy Asante Kingdom of the late 18th to late 19th centuries. Asante Traditional Buildings reflect and reinforce a complex and intricate technical, religious and spiritual

heritage.

The traditional religion, still practiced in the Asante shrines, takes the form of consulting with the deities to seek advice on specific situations, or before an important initiative. That is why the shrines have been maintained complete with all their symbolic features.

Protection and management requirements

Between 1960 and 1970 the buildings were acquired by the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) and scheduled as a National Monument under the Law of Ghana NLC Decree 387 of 1969.

Therefore, the instruments for the protection of the Asante Traditional Buildings operate on two levels. The first is a prescription of customary regulations, prohibitions and penalties that have been handed down through generations from the past. The second is the modern statutory regulations enacted by Government. The two sets of laws complement each other, and are a generally effective means of protection although the modes of enforcement are different. The long-term challenges for the management of the Asante Traditional Buildings are to ensure regular maintenance in order to mitigate the impacts of the warm humid climate and to put in place a long-term strategy to secure a sufficient supply of organic materials for their repair.

(Source: UNESCO)

Iran seeks UNESCO labels for mirrorwork art and Falak-ol-Aflak fortress

TEHRAN – Iran has formally submitted two major cultural heritage dossiers to UNESCO for potential inscription on the World Heritage List: the ancient decorative art of mirrorwork, known as Ayeneh-kari, and the historic Falak-ol-Aflak Fortress along with its surrounding cultural landscape in Lorestan province.

Ali Darabi, Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, announced the development in a press conference on Saturday, expressing hope that both files will be internationally recognized in the upcoming UNESCO evaluation round.

"We are optimistic about their successful inscription on the UNESCO lists."

If successful, these additions would further highlight Iran's diverse contributions to global heritage and reinforce efforts to preserve its centuries-old traditions



and landmarks, the deputy minister concluded.

Ayeneh-kari: a shimmering tradition

The origins of Ayeneh-kari trace back nearly 2,700 years to Iran's Achaemenid period, when artisans first transformed polished stones and metals into reflective surfaces.

The technique reached its artistic peak during the Safavid and Qajar dynasties, with mirrors intricately cut into floral and geometric patterns to decorate palaces, mosques, and mausoleums. Iconic examples of this breathtaking craft can still be seen at Chehel Sotun Palace in Isfahan and the Shams-

ol-Emareh in Tehran, where light and reflection interplay to create mesmerizing interior vistas.

Falak-ol-Aflak: a cultural and historical landmark

The Falak-ol-Aflak Fortress, located in western Iran, towers over the city of Khorramabad with its eight imposing bastions. More than just a military structure, the site represents a rich tapestry of Iran's cultural, natural, and historical legacy. Its surrounding landscape includes prehistoric caves, the Khorramabad Valley, historic bridges, and a river that meanders through the city's center. At night, when the fortress is illuminated, it offers striking views that draw both local and international tourists.

Experts believe the site's combination of historical architecture and natural beauty makes it a prime candidate for UNESCO recognition.

Dehloran, land of ancient stories of settlement and life



TEHRAN – Dehloran, as one of the significant regions in western Iran, has been settled in pre-historic times and contains signs of civilization, said Habibollah Mahmoudian, a faculty member at Islamic Azad University of Ilam.

He told ISNA that Ilam's pre-civilization era is called the Proto-Elamite era, adding that numerous artifacts have remained from this era.

Excavations conducted in the region show that the mankind lived in [and around] Dehloran 8,000 years ago and domesticated livestock such as sheep and goats.

Dehloran was considered one of the cultural and economic centers in this era, which is concurrent with Ali-Kosh era -- famous to pre-pottery era. The ruins of Ali-Kosh hill were inhabited by people before the invention of potteries.

This era was simultaneous with other ancient regions such Choghamsih, Tal Bakon Fars and Goodin Tepe.

Also, regions like Bayat in Dehloran and Meymeh in Zarrinabad were settled by people during

that time.

Agricultural and livestock breeding developments

Mahmoudian explained that archeological findings indicate that human beings achieved to cultivate vegetable seeds such as barley, lentils, mung beans, flax and wheat in Dehloran during 5,500-7,500 BC. They established the first settlement and domesticated the livestock.

These developments have been approved by evidence obtained from archeological excavations conducted by Kent Vaughn Flannery and Frank W. Hull on hills of Ali Kosh, Cheghasefid and other ancient regions in 1961, he said.

The human beings achieved to launch the first village and settlement during 5,500-7,500 BC. These villages indicate important developments in architecture and social organizations of people of that era.

Dehloran, as one key regions in pre-historic era, has played a great role in promoting agriculture, animal husbandry and preliminary architecture. Given the existence of rich monuments, he said, the region is a testament to ancient civilizations and human advancements in prehistoric times.

Earlier Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh, provincial tourism chief, said Dehloran plain is one of the most significant areas of the country where a lot of archeological excavations and surveys have been carried out so far.

However, the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and land leveling for agricultur-

al purposes over the past two decades have caused irreparable damage to the ancient sites across the plain, he explained.

The Dehloran plain is best known for the excavations conducted at several prehistoric sites, which elucidated the origins and development of sedentary agricultural villages and towns in the region, and for surveys documenting the history of settlement into the modern era.

As a relatively small and remote rural area, it has always been affected by political, economic, and technological developments in the adjacent regions of Khuzestan, the Zagros Mountains, and Mesopotamia. Beginning as early as the 3rd millennium BC and throughout its subsequent history, it was under the political control of kingdoms in one or another of these regions according to Iranica Encyclopedia.

Although no cuneiform texts have been found at any of the Dehloran sites, the most prominent mound, Tepe Musiyan, is possibly to be identified as ancient Urua, an Elamite city known from Mesopotamian texts.

Dehloran has been on a trade route linking the Zagros Mountains with Mesopotamia; in the 1st millennium, the route linking the Achaemenid capitals of Susa and Ecbatana passed through the region.

From the 18th century, Dehloran has been a winter resort for the local tribes.

Caption: Excavations conducted in the region show that the mankind lived in [and around] Dehloran 8,000 years ago.

Iran to establish national museum for traditional bread



The spaces of the museum include the silent room of dough, the passage of wheat sense, the corridor of bread taste, and the hall of the aroma of bread, which engages the auditory, touch, taste, smell, and sight senses of the clients respectively.

TEHRAN – Iran seeks to establish a special museum dedicated to various types of bread traditionally baked across the country.

Concurrent with Iran's national Bread and Wheat Day on April 20, the details of a project for the construction of the museum, which is designed by a group of young architects, were explained by Ali Jabbarizadegan, head of the group.

He told ISNA that bread has been considered a symbol of sustenance in Iranian culture since olden days. If people see a piece of bread on the sidewalk, they respectfully pick it up and place it somewhere where it won't be trampled, he added.

Jabbarizadegan, who is also a university architecture lecturer, mentioned that National Museum of Bread, which has been designed by young architectures including Sahar Riahi, Ali Hosseinzadeh, Pendar Atarod, Mohammadreza

Eftekhari, Amin Safa and Parinaz Misaqi, creates an opportunity to study the future, present and past of bread.

"We tried to design this museum as an urban sign which pertains to the daily life of citizens. The process of bread creation from wheat grain and the role of environmental elements such as soil, Earth's surface, and sky in this circulation have been depicted in design of the museum."

The spaces include the silent room of dough, the passage of wheat sense, the corridor of bread taste, and the hall of the aroma of bread, which engages the auditory, touch, taste, smell, and sight senses of the clients respectively.

Pointing to bread as the staple diet of Iranian people, he said the traditional bread baking method includes baking in

the furnace, cooking in ashes and hot coals, and baking on a teak and frying pan.

Ancient and forgotten breads have been put on display along with the current flatbreads such as lavash, sangak, taftoon, and barbari in the museum, he said.

He continued that the museum includes pavilions for showcasing industrial breads, a space to stop and listen to memories, a place for introducing different combinations with bread, and a unit for experiencing traditional bread baking.

Jabbarizadegan emphasized that bread is not just a food item, adding that it is a reflection of a lifestyle, progress and technology.

The visitors can watch the bread production process in industrial units and traditional bakeries, and compare the differences between them in a live workshop, he added.

Iranians eat bread a lot, ranking among the first two countries in the world.

The Persian word for bread is "nan" which you can find in great

works by nearly all top Iranian poets and literary men, both modern and classics such as Ferdowsi, Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, Rumi, Saadi, Ebne Yamin, Saib Tabrizi, and Sohrab Sepehri.

Among the Iranian nation, "nan" is recognized as "barakat" meaning God's blessing. Iranians treat bread with respect due to its holy place in their ancient culture.

"Nan" can also be traced in the Sasanian inscriptions of the third century CE. Also, analyzing historical documents show that the word "nan" is mentioned in the Pahlavi texts of the 9th century. A definition of sangak—one of the most popular Iranian breads—was found in the comprehensive Persian encyclopedia "Borhan-e-Ghate" in 1651.

The traditional Persian cuisine is interwoven with a wide variety of breads due to two main reasons. Firstly, bread is considered as the main food of the Iranian people and its consumption in the daily diet is very common. Secondly, Iran is an integrated country that accommodates various ethnic communities.

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National clean earth day to highlight renewables

TEHRAN – The Department of Environment (DOE) will observe the national clean earth day under the theme of 'clean energy, clean earth', highlighting the critical role of renewable energies in saving the planet.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 22 April as International Mother Earth Day in 2009. The Day recognizes the Earth and its ecosystems as humanity's common home and the need to protect them to enhance people's livelihoods, counteract climate change, and stop the collapse of biodiversity.

The DOE is planning to mark the day by holding educational programs to raise public awareness and foster public participation in addressing environmental issues, Mehr news agency reported.

Provided by the sun, wind, water, waste, and heat from the Earth, renewable energy sources are abundant and emit little to no greenhouse gases or pollutants into the air.

They also benefit communities lacking access to reliable power sources. For populations without clean energy access, the lack of reliable power hinders education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

Many of the developing regions still rely heavily on polluting fossil fuels for their daily life. If current



trends continue, by 2030, around 1.8 billion people will still use unsafe, unhealthy, and inefficient cooking systems, such as burning wood.

Sadly, the destruction of the planet has already accelerated due to climate change, man-made changes to nature, as well as crimes that disrupt biodiversity, such as deforestation, land-use change, intensified agriculture and livestock production, or the growing illegal wildlife trade.

Mother Earth is clearly urging a call to action – a need to shift to a more sustainable economy that works for both people and the planet. Protecting the planet is everyone's responsibility.

Earth Day has led the world in educating and mobilizing the public to take action to address criti-

cal important environmental issues. We are global advocates for the health of the planet, calling for the protection of our air, oceans, soil, ecosystems, wildlife, and human health.

longstanding convening power of Earth Day to bring people from all walks of life to work together for a better future.

This year's theme is 'Our power, Our planet', calling for everyone to support the tripling of renewable energy by 2030.

Renewable energy capacity in Iran

On April 17, Iran's Energy Ministry announced that 15 newly constructed solar power plants with a combined capacity of 100 megawatts are ready for operation across the country. 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—equivalent 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.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 22 April as International Mother Earth Day in 2009.

April 22, 2025, will mark the 55th anniversary of Earth Day. 192 countries and over one billion people around the globe are expected to participate, demonstrating the

UNHCR releases strategy, vision account for Iran 2025-2027

Islamic Republic of Iran Multi-year Strategy 2025 – 2027



TEHRAN –The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has released its vision for Iran by the end of 2027.

UNHCR vision is that by the end of 2027, "people in need of international protection enjoy a safe and inclusive environment where their fundamental rights are respected.

They have access to different solutions and are empowered to contribute to the host country's development.

The most vulnerable people can access social protection services while efforts are also made to reduce statelessness."

This overarching vision seeks to safeguard the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people by responding rapidly and effective-

ly to their needs, promoting their inclusion and self-reliance, empowering them to build their own futures, and pursuing sustainable solutions to displacement and statelessness-related challenges.

A key aspect of this vision is its alignment with global strategic directions for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, recognizing that lasting solutions to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation.

It also complements existing frameworks aimed at addressing the Afghanistan situation, including the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and the refugee response plan (RRP), which foster coordinated and sustainable approaches to long-term solutions.

Although the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework does not specifically refer to refugees, UNHCR's vision is compatible with its broader goals of sustainable development and inclusion.

In support of this vision and aligned with the RRP's strategic priorities, UNHCR has identified five strategic priorities based on an assessment of the most urgent issues facing forcibly displaced and stateless people, as well as an evaluation of UNHCR's capacity, opportunities, and lessons learned.

Together, these priorities will guide UNHCR's efforts in 2025 to create a more inclusive and resilient future for people forced to flee in Iran (Islamic Republic of).

The Islamic Republic of Iran has generously hosted forcibly displaced people for more than 40 years, upholding refugee-inclusive policies and largely ensuring access to essential public services, particularly healthcare and education.

According to the information available to UNHCR, Iran hosts some 773,000 refugees with

Amayesh (761,000 Afghans) and Hoviat cards (12,000 Iraqis), which grant foreign nationals temporary residence and provide holders with refugee protection.

UNHCR estimates that around 3.8 million forcibly displaced people of various documentation status reside in Iran (Islamic Republic of) in 2024, making it the largest refugee-hosting country in the world.

Looking ahead to 2025, UNHCR Iran will focus on five strategic priorities: maintaining asylum space and strengthening the protection environment; increasing support to enhance and maintain inclusive services, such as health, education and social protection; promoting the self-reliance of forcibly displaced and stateless people; expanding opportunities for creative and innovative solutions through resettlement and complementary pathways, including voluntary repatriation when the situation in Afghanistan is conducive for return; and reducing and preventing statelessness and protecting stateless people through context-specific advocacy and enhanced partnerships.

Which countries are main buyers of Iranian nanotech products?

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – Iran's investment in nanotechnology research and development has led to the rise of the country as a global leader in nanotechnology, producing and exporting products to different countries across the world.

Access to domestic resources, competitive prices compared to Western countries, and high production of raw nano-materials, nano-catalysts, and advanced equipment, as well as geographical proximity to target markets in neighboring countries, reduced transportation costs, political and trade relations have made Iran a major manufacturer of nanotechnology products in the region and even some global markets.

Iran's nanotechnology products in various industries are classified into 13 main categories including Civil engineering and construction; Optics, electronics and photonics; Petroleum and petrochemicals; Pharmaceuticals, health and well-being; home appliances; Power and energy; Raw materials; Chemicals; Textiles and clothing; Equipment; Automotive industry and transportation; Industrial machinery; Agriculture, animal husbandry, and Water, according to data published by the vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

The construction and civil engineering sector is one of the leading industries in nanotechnology exports, with Iraq and Afghanistan being the two main destinations. Central Asian countries such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan also import these products.

In the 'optics, electronics and photonics' fields, Iraq and Syria are the top importing countries, mainly due to increased insecurities and crises in these countries in recent years.

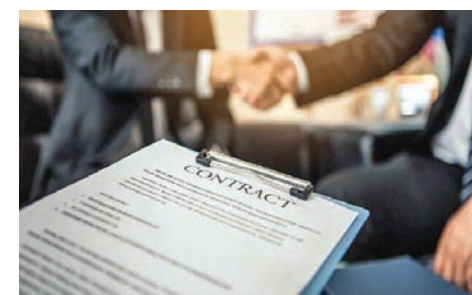
Nano-scale products include night vision systems, thermal imaging cameras, high-resolution surveillance systems, as well as optoelectronic sensors.

Russia is the only export destination for oil and petrochemical products owing to the Russian oil industry's dependence on up-to-date technologies, along with Western sanctions.

Syria, Ecuador, Afghanistan, and Turkey are among the main destinations for Iranian pharmaceutical, health, and well-being products. In addition, countries from Asia and Africa to South America also import these products. Iran's nano-based medicines for the treatment of cancers have been exported to various countries so far. The list of new products, such as nano-supplements, shows that the opportunity for exports in the pharmaceutical and health sector is increasing.

Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and countries located to the north of Iran, like Armenia and Azerbaijan, are the main importers of Iranian products in the home appliance sector, thanks to the high demand for their antimicrobial or high-resistance properties.

Iran's nanotechnology products in the power and energy sector are exported to Azerbaijan and Turkey. Given the high capabilities of nanotechnology in improving energy efficien-



cy, it is expected that exports in the field will rise with further investment.

The long-term development plan for the renewable energy project in Azerbaijan includes clear goals for the expansion of solar, wind, and thermal energy. Nanotechnology plays an important role in improving the efficiency of solar panels, anti-reflective coatings, maintaining equipment in harsh climatic conditions, and optimizing energy conversion systems. Iran has been able to meet the needs of Azerbaijan economically.

India, Pakistan, the UAE, and South Africa are interested in purchasing Iran's raw nano-materials. The export of nanoscale raw materials such as nanoparticles and nanotubes has an attractive market. India and Pakistan, with their extensive manufacturing industries, are important buyers. Due to the development of indigenous technology and access to domestic mineral resources, the cost of producing these materials in Iran is lower than in Western countries and even East Asia.

Countries like India and Pakistan have growing industries, so they need to import nano-materials for the production of industrial paints, advanced materials, cosmetics, nano-medicines, and advanced equipment.

In many industrialized countries, such as the United States and Japan, as well as the European Union, the production of some nanomaterials (particularly metal nanoparticles) is heavily regulated and expensive due to environmental implications. This has led some countries to turn to regional producers such as Iran, which, by adhering to appropriate standards, can provide a stable and quick supply, rather than importing from the West.

Neighboring countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, and Azerbaijan import a big portion of Iranian nanotechnology products because of the low cost of transportation, cultural affinity, and the need for these countries for mid-range technologies. However, some countries such as Syria, Venezuela, Ecuador, and African countries are also on the list of importers. Exports to these countries are likely carried out within the framework of enhancing cooperation.

Iran's achievements in nanotechnology are noteworthy. The increase in scientific publications and sales of nano products further proves Iran's rise as a global leader in the field.

One of the industries that has experienced good growth in Iran in recent years is the nanotechnology industry, a subject area that has brought Iran to the impressive fourth place worldwide.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Existing vaccines are effective against mutated coronavirus: Iranian expert

The COVID-19 vaccines, which have been so far produced in the world are also effective on the mutated virus, so people who receive the vaccines will be protected against the new virus strain, Massoud Mardani, a member of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, has said.

What raised concerns about the newly-produced vaccine was the ineffectiveness against the mutated virus, which fortunately studies show, the mutation of the virus and the chromosomal alteration are not enough to change its general nature, he explained.

According to Mardani, it is possible to detect the new coronavirus in Iran. All British and European passengers are tested at the airport for a quick and PCR test, while so far no case has been confirmed in the country, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

واکسن کرونا بر روی ویروس جهش یافته هم اثر می کند

مسعود مردانی عضو ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا می گوید واکسن تولید و تایید شده در دنیا بر روی ویروس جهش یافته هم اثر می کند و افرادی که واکسن تایید شده را بزنند علیه این ویروس هم مصونیت پیدا می کنند.

مردانی روز سه شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: آنچه نگران آن هستیم این است که واکسن تولید شده برای کووید ۱۹ در دنیا نسبت به ویروس جهش یافته بی اثر باشد که خوشبختانه بررسی ها نشان می دهد، جهش ویروس و تغییر کروموزومی ویروس به قدری نیست که ماهیت کلی آن تغییر کند.

به گفته او، امکان تشخیص ویروس کرونا جهش یافته در ایران وجود دارد. از همه مسافران انگلیس و اروپا در فرودگاه تست سریع و از موارد مشکوک تست دقیق تر «پی سی آر» گرفته و بررسی می شود و تاکنون موردی از این ویروس در ایران تایید نشده است.



Rice planting starts in Mazandaran

The province of Mazandaran, neighboring the Caspian Sea, is a main producer of rice in the country. Planting rice in paddy fields across the province starts each year in mid-April. Nearly 750,000 hectares of land are under rice cultivation, of which 520,000 hectares are in northern Mazandaran, Gilan, and Golestan provinces.



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APRIL 20, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

One who says unpleasant things about others, will himself quickly become a target of their scandal.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:03 Evening: 19:01 Dawn: 3:54 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:24 (tomorrow)

Audience reception brings "The Midnight Library" back on Malek Theater stage



Mona Farjad (L) and Mohammad Shabanpour in "The Midnight Library"

TEHRAN-The play "The Midnight Library," loosely adapted from the namesake fantasy novel written by Matt Haig has begun its second round of performances at Malek Theater in Tehran.

Following a highly successful first run last winter, which attracted 15,000 spectators over 70 nights and became one of the most-watched plays of the year, "The Midnight Library" started its second round of performances on April 16 at the same venue and continues to receive enthusiastic audience response, IRNA reported.

In the first round of the performance, Niki Mozaffari played the lead role; however, she has been replaced with Mona Farjad who joins Mohammad Shabanpour on stage.

The 70-minute play has been directed by Mohammad Malekshahi based on a script written by Mojtaba Golestani and Nima Nafe.

Originally published in 2020, the novel follows a 35-year-old English woman unhappy in her dead-end life who is given the opportunity to experience lives she might have had if she had made different choices.

When Nora Seed finds herself in the Mid-

night Library, she has a chance to make things right. Up until now, her life has been full of misery and regret. She feels she has let everyone down, including herself. But things are about to change.

During the night she tries to kill herself but ends up in a library managed by her school librarian. The library is between life and death with millions of books filled with stories of her life had she made some decisions differently.

The books in the Midnight Library enable Nora to live as if she had done things differently.

With the help of an old friend, she can now undo every one of her regrets as she tries to work out her perfect life.

But things aren't always what she imagined they'd be, and soon her choices place the library and herself in extreme danger.

Before time runs out, she must answer the ultimate question: what is the best way to live?

"The Midnight Library" was shortlisted for the 2021 British Book Awards "Fiction Book of the Year".

Matt Haig, 49, is an English author and journalist. He has written both fiction and non-fiction books for children and adults, often in the speculative fiction genre.

His other novels include "How to Stop Time," "The Humans," "The Radleys," and "The Life Impossible".

He has also written books for children, such as "A Boy Called Christmas" and the memoir "Reasons to Stay Alive".

The second round of "The Midnight Library" performance will remain on stage at Malek Theater, located at Malek St., Shariati St. through May 22.

Cartoon of Day



Gaza Holocaust
Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

Iran's culture minister pays tribute to Gaza photojournalist following her tragic death

TEHRAN- In a message on social media platform X, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi expressed his deep sorrow over the death of Gaza-based photojournalist Fatima Hassouna, who was killed alongside her family in an Israeli airstrike on Wednesday.

"The martyrdom of Fatima Hassouna, a poignant symbol of Gaza's suffering, is heart-wrenching," read Salehi's message.

He praised her contribution to the documentary film "Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk," which was accepted into the Cannes festival just one day prior to her tragic death, stating, "Her pure blood runs through the veins of the images she captured, and it is the imagery that endures."

Hassouna, 25, was a Palestinian photographer who had gained international recognition for documenting the effects of Israeli military operations on Gaza's civilians.

She lost her life in an Israeli airstrike that targeted her home in Gaza City. The attack claimed the lives of Hassouna and nine family members.

"If I die, I want a loud death," Hassouna shared on social media. "I don't want to be just breaking news, or a number in a group, I want a death that the world will hear, an impact that will remain through time, and a timeless image that cannot be buried by time or place."

Only days ahead of her wedding, Hassouna was killed in an Israeli airstrike that hit her house in northern Gaza. Along with her, nine family members, including her pregnant sister, were also killed.

The Israeli military claimed the strike was aimed at a Hamas member connected to attacks



against Israeli soldiers and civilians.

According to reports, Hassouna's death occurred just 24 hours after the film "Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk," directed by France-based Iranian filmmaker Sepideh Farsi, was selected for the independent ACID section of the Cannes Film Festival.

The documentary encompasses heartfelt visual dialogues between Farsi and Hassouna, beginning when Farsi sought to create a comprehensive documentation of events in Gaza.

Farsi recounted her last conversation with Hassouna, during which she invited her to Cannes and disclosed the film's selection.

"She expressed eagerness to attend, but insisted she would only go if she could return to Gaza," Farsi noted, emphasizing Hassouna's deep connection to her homeland.

Farsi also disclosed the challenges she faced in securing travel arrangements, expressing her concern over potentially separating Hassouna from her family.

Farsi expressed fears that Hassouna might have become a target due to her work, noting that until February 16, at least 157 journalists and media workers had been reported killed in Gaza amid ongoing violence.

In light of the tragedy, Farsi criticized Israeli claims that a Hamas officer was present in Hassouna's home at the time of the attack, calling it "completely false" and describing the situation as "disastrous."

The ongoing conflict has taken a devastating toll, as reported by Gaza's Health Ministry and confirmed by the United Nations, which state that at least 51,065 individuals have lost their lives since the fighting erupted 18 months ago.

However, a statistical survey published in The Lancet medical journal has suggested that the actual death toll may be 15,000 higher.

In a statement, the French Independent Cinema Association—responsible for the ACID section—expressed their horror at Hassouna's death, noting, "We had watched and programmed a

film in which this young woman's life force seemed like a miracle," they said.

"Her smile was as magical as her tenacity. Bearing witness, photographing Gaza, distributing food despite the bombs, mourning and hunger.

We heard her story, rejoiced at each of her appearances to see her alive, we feared for her."

The association concluded, "Yesterday, we learned with horror that an Israeli missile targeted her building, killing Fatima and her family. The film we chose to screen showcased her remarkable spirit, but now, we are compelled to present a different narrative."

Since Israel began its bombardment of Gaza, after the October 7, 2023, more than 51,000 people have been killed, more than half of them women and children, according to the Gaza health ministry.

Since the ceasefire, Israel has resumed its deadly airstrikes with vigor, and at least 30 people were killed in strikes on Friday.

Veteran actor Reza Babak's paintings on display at Saless Gallery

TEHRAN-An exhibition of paintings by the Iranian veteran actor Reza Babak was launched on Friday at Saless Gallery in Tehran.

The exhibition titled "Ba Babak" (literally meaning With Babak) showcases a selection of paintings created by the artist in recent years, Honaronline reported.

The exhibition description reads: "Reza Babak has been painting alongside his acting career for many years.

His paintings resonate with his acting—poetic, delicate, and charming—just like his unforgettable roles in cinema. In his artworks, he has tapped into childlike elements from his subconscious that are raw and unfiltered.

As such, the exhibition is a portrayal of the painter's inner memories and emotions."

On his paintings, Babak said: "I've been



painting for many years, though there were sometimes long gaps due to other work.

When I wasn't acting in plays or films, painting helped me release my emotions

and energy, filling the void of not performing roles."

This is Babak's second solo painting exhibition. His previous exhibition was held in 2000 at Sakoo Art School in Tehran.

Reza Babak, 79, has played in over 60 movies and TV series.

Some of his movies include "Ballad of Tara" (1979) by Bahram Beyzai, "Heritage" (1988) by Kazem Balouchi, "A Singing Cat" (1990) by Kambuzia Partovi, and "In the Color of Purple" (2004) and "Invitation" (2008) both by Ebrahim Hatamikia. "Ziba Barbershop" (1990-1991) by Marzieh Boroumand and "The Safe" (2009) by Maziar Miri are among his well-known series.

The "Ba Babak" exhibition will run until April 28 at Saless Gallery, located at No. 148, Karim Khan Zand Boulevard, between Iranshahr and Mahshahr streets.

"Odysseus and Penelope" by Mario Vargas Llosa available in Persian

TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the play "Odysseus and Penelope" written by the recently deceased Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa has been released in the Iranian bookstores.

Alireza Shafieinasab has translated it into Persian and Tehran-based Ney Publishing House has brought out the book that was originally published in 2007, IBNA reported.

Did Odysseus experience the marvelous stories he tells of the dazzled Phaeacians at the court of King Alcinoos? There's no way of knowing.

It could be that he did, and that his excellent memory and storytelling skills enriched his credentials as a man of action.

But it could also be that he was a brilliant trickster, the first of that lineage of great fabricators of literary lies, so seductive that

readers sometimes believe them to be true: the fabulists.

Mario Vargas Llosa (1936-2025) was a Peruvian novelist, journalist, essayist, and politician.

Vargas Llosa was one of the most significant Latin American novelists and essayists and one of the leading writers of his generation.

Some critics consider him to have had a more substantial international impact and worldwide audience than any other writer of the Latin American Boom.

In 2010, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature for his cartography of structures of power and his trenchant images of the individual's resistance, revolt, and defeat.

Vargas Llosa rose to international fame in the 1960s with novels such as "The Time of the Hero," "The Green House," and the monu-



mental "Conversation in the Cathedral".

He wrote prolifically across various literary genres, including literary criticism and journalism. His novels include comedies, murder mysteries, historical novels, and political thrillers.

He won the 1967 Rómulo Gallegos Prize and the 1986 Prince of Asturias Award.