



Vigilant Against Western Scheme

A look at what Iran's Leader wrote to Putin this week, and why it matters

'US cannot challenge Iran in Persian Gulf:' IRGC Navy Chief

TEHRAN – Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy, declared the United States "incapable" of challenging Iran's maritime dominance and vowed "decisive retaliation" against any aggression toward its oil tankers or territorial waters.

In an interview with Iran's national TV, which aired on Sunday, Tangsiri attributed decades of U.S. "bullying" to Tehran's unyielding resistance and noted that Iran now exercises unrivaled strategic control over the Persian Gulf's vital waterways.

This interview comes amid escalating U.S. military posturing in West Asia, marked by the deployment of additional warships to the region and renewed anti-Iran rhetoric from U.S. officials.

Referring to U.S. Navy aircraft carriers, he remarked, "Their carriers once toppled governments; today, our vessels order them out of our waters."

Tangsiri also emphasized Iran's control over critical infrastructure, such as oil and gas platforms, as both a strategic advantage and the cornerstone of a peaceful stance that avoids initiating conflicts at sea.

He further showcased the nation's defense capabilities by noting the strength of its air defenses and the quality of its missile production. ▶ Page 2

Iran signs \$750m investment deals in rail transport sector

TEHRAN – Iran on Sunday signed investment memoranda worth \$750 million in the country's rail transport sector, in the presence of the Minister of Transport and Urban Development, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI), private investors, and industry stakeholders.

Two agreements were inked between the RAI and two private firms—Avan Rail Passenger Trains Co. and Pars Ofogh Hashtgerd Agro-Industry Co.—aimed at bolstering the country's passenger and freight rail capacities.

Under the first agreement, Avan Rail will invest \$713 million to expand Iran's passenger and locomotive fleet. The project involves the purchase of 600 tank wagons, 300 diesel multiple unit (DMU) passenger cars, and 50 locomotives.

The second agreement, worth \$37 million, was signed with Pars Ofogh Hashtgerd to finance the procurement of 650 bulk freight wagons.

Nourollah Beiranvand, RAI's Deputy for Investment and Transport Economy, said that under Iran's Seventh National Development Plan, clear quantitative targets have been set for the rail sector—including raising rail's share in national transport to 30 percent and boosting annual transit capacity to 40 million metric tons. ▶ Page 4

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Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei met in Tehran on Sept. 7, 2018.

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The day Americans march against authoritarianism

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN – The nationwide "50501" protests held on April 19 represent a significant and multifaceted grassroots mobilization against the policies and governance style of President Donald Trump during his second term.

The 50501 Movement has initiated a strategic escalation by organizing demonstrations across all 50 states to turn widespread public dissent into sustained political pressure.

In the initial months of 2025, the 50501 Movement formed to counter what its organizers label an authoritarian takeover by the Trump administration through hostile means. The movement that began on Reddit forums in January quickly transformed into a nationwide protest network operating under the banner 50 Protests in 50 States One Movement.

Core complexities and motivation of the protesters

The protests characterized the broad spectrum of political grievances against the Trump administration pertaining to its policy issues and its style of governance. Some of the central issues include the following:

Ortagus's rude diplomacy reflects American policy

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — With the phrase "Crack is wack, Walid," Morgan Ortagus, the U.S. Deputy Special Envoy to West Asia, addressed Lebanon's Druze leader Walid Jumblatt on X in response to a statement he made last weekend describing the United States' conditions for Lebanon as "impossible."

This suggests that Ortagus was accusing Jumblatt of being politically unconscious and deviant from American racist supremacy!

In turn, Jumblatt responded to Ortagus, "The Ugly American: Morgan Ortagus," attaching to his post Hans LaRuin's famous painting titled "Death Directs the Bullet."

LaRuin's painting, in grim colors, depicts the specter of death commanding a sniper, crouching behind bunkers during World War I, to fire his bullet.

Besides, Jumblatt's phrase was inspired by the title of the 1958 political novel *The Ugly American* by Eugene Burdick and William Lederer, which highlights the failures of the U.S. diplomatic corps in Southeast Asia.

Israeli troops caught in deadly ambush

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Hamas executes a complex ambush against Israeli occupation forces in Gaza, causing casualties.

The armed wing of Hamas, the al-Qassam Brigades, carried out a complex ambush against Israeli occupation forces in the al-Tuffah neighborhood, east of Gaza City.

The operation targeted two infantry military vehicles and resulted in casualties.

According to a statement by al-Qassam Brigades, its fighters hit a Merkava 4 tank and a D9 military bulldozer with Yassin 105 shells, setting both vehicles on fire.

Additionally, the al-Qassam Brigades reported that an Israeli Hummer vehicle was struck by an anti-tank missile in the same area, critically wounding two soldiers.

When an Israeli rescue team arrived at the scene, it was hit by an explosive device.

One soldier was killed and two others were wounded. The Israeli military evacuated the injured via helicopter.

Israeli media reported the death of one soldier and the injury of four others, two of whom are in serious condition.

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Salehi-Amiri: Sadi's language, a means of cultural diplomacy

TEHRAN – The culture and language of great Iranian poet Sadi Shirazi stems from identity of Iranians, said Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri on Saturday. Speaking in a ceremony which was held near Sadi mausoleum in Shiraz, Fars province, to commemorate this renowned master, Salehi-Amiri added that Sadi's language includes reason, ethics, tolerance, and beauty, ISNA reported. ▶ Page 6

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Tragic death of Palestinian photojournalist Fatima Hassouna sparks outrage, calls for justice

TEHRAN- On Wednesday, the Palestinian artistic community mourned the tragic loss of Fatima Hassouna, a 25-year-old photojournalist and artist, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike in northern Gaza.

Reports indicate that she died alongside ten family members, including her pregnant sister, when their home was struck in what can only be described as a devastating attack.

This brutal incident occurred just one day after it was announced that a documentary spotlighting Hassouna's life in Gaza would premiere at a French independent film festival running parallel to Cannes. ▶ Page 8

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

The difficult path of negotiation

Donya-e-Eqtasad highlighted the difficult path of negotiations between Iran and the United States. It wrote: Although the Americans say their main concern is that Iran would not acquire nuclear weapons, in practice, they want to pave the way for imposing limitations on our country's missile capabilities by trying to establish a connection between the nuclear and missile programs. It seems that the Iranian negotiating team will face a complex and difficult path. Given the continuation of the U.S. "maximum pressure" policy, Iran's response should be a strategy of "maximum effort" with balanced expectations. An examination of the current situation indicates that the future of the negotiations fluctuates between a limited agreement and military conflict. The parties are well aware of the severe consequences of military actions and know that diplomacy is the best option to resolve some existing problems. Assuming that the negotiations are directed towards an agreement, one of Iran's demands should be cooperation by the other party to suspend FATF countermeasures against our country for a specified time, so that if the sanctions are lifted, it will be possible for Iranian banks and economic actors to conduct foreign banking transactions.

Sobh-e-No: What is the possible message of MBS?

In an analysis, Sobh-e-No dealt with the important trip of Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman to Iran and wrote: The message conveyed by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Tehran through his brother can be analyzed in two ways: first, showing Riyadh's will to overcome the era of tension with Tehran and move towards regional and security cooperation. Second, sending an indirect message to the United States and other international actors that Saudi Arabia will no longer oppose the nuclear talks and instead it is ready to help create a positive atmosphere for an agreement. The trip can be assessed more as part of the "readiness for an agreement" scenario. While the third round of indirect talks between Iran and the United States will be held in Oman, Riyadh has shown that, unlike the past, it is no longer the opponent of the agreement. This move is a sign of a new understanding among regional actors in which de-escalation can pave the way for economic and security stability.

Iran judiciary chief to attend SCO summit in China

TEHRAN – Judiciary Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei of Iran is preparing to embark on a trip to China, where he will participate in the 20th summit of the chairs of supreme courts from the nine member nations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

According to information released by the Judiciary's media center, Mohseni-Ejei will lead a high-level judicial delegation on a journey to Hangzhou, a prominent city located in southern China, on Monday.

This summit represents a significant opportunity for Iran to engage with other member states and contribute to the development of joint strategies in the legal and judicial arenas.

During the course of the summit, Mohseni-Ejei is scheduled to deliver addresses at both the opening and closing ceremonies, highlighting Iran's perspective on critical issues and potential solutions.

Furthermore, he is slated to hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from the SCO member states, offering a platform for in-depth discussions and the exploration of collaborative ventures between Iran and other nations within the SCO framework.

The central focus of this year's meeting revolves around strategic and operational approaches aimed at strengthening legal and judicial coordination and cooperation among the member nations.

These discussions will encompass a wide range of topics, including the establishment of joint initiatives to combat various forms of transnational crime and enhance legal

Iran: An important step in the negotiations in Rome

The Iran newspaper discussed the second round of negotiations in an interview with former diplomat Kourosh Ahmadi. He said: This round of talks between Iran and the United States in Italy was important, because in the first round, it was to prepare the way forward, but in this round, generalities were raised in the negotiations between the parties. As long as the talks do not fail at this stage, we can hope that the negotiations and coordination between mutual expectations will continue. The Iranian negotiating team arrived in Italy with a specific agenda, but the American side, due to differences among its influential decision-making members who are close to Trump, faced a kind of hesitation in facing negotiations with Iran. The presence of the American team in the Italian capital, after their rhetoric in the past days, shows that the Trump administration, despite the fuss it has created in setting a deadline for the negotiations, needs talks with Iran and has no cost-free alternative at the negotiating table.

Jam-e-Jam: Tehran-Riyadh relations

Jam-e-Jam discussed the Saudi defense minister's Thursday visit to Tehran. It wrote: It is clear that the powerful Saudi Crown Prince, by sending his younger brother to Tehran, is seeking to open a new page in his country's relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Of course, it should be taken into account that Riyadh has recently been the destination of successive trips by American officials and Bin Salman may be inclined to play a mediating role between Tehran and Washington, because he, like other Arab leaders in the Persian Gulf, is well aware of the serious and devastating consequences of any military confrontation between Iran and the United States in West Asia. Of course, the Islamic Republic of Iran's consistent and well-known policy of establishing friendly cooperation to protect stability and security in the Persian Gulf region has convinced the Saudi Crown Prince and other Arab leaders of Iran's sincerity and its unblemished intention to expand and deepen bilateral relations. It seems that this mutual understanding will lead to the development of relations and avert the risk of external threats.



frameworks.

The SCO member countries, representing a substantial 42% of the global population and sharing common borders, are united in their pursuit of joint initiatives spanning various domains.

Beyond the well-established cooperation in economic, political, security, and defense sectors, the organization is actively expanding its engagement into the legal and judicial sphere.

The SCO is actively working towards the establishment of a multilateral legal and judicial convergence program.

This ambitious program seeks to provide a platform for member states to discuss and implement joint mechanisms designed to effectively combat pressing challenges such as terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and the ever-evolving threat of cybercrime.

The summit in Hangzhou offers a critical opportunity to advance these goals and forge stronger partnerships among the SCO member nations.

'US cannot challenge Iran in Persian Gulf:' IRGC Navy Chief

From page 1 ▶ "We have built a vessel that is better than similar American models; when the time comes, we might unveil it," Tangsiri declared.

Stressing the importance of military strength for national dignity, he stated, "Today, if we want to preserve our dignity, we must have strong armed forces."

He explained that for the IRGC Navy, robust power is not only key to security but also a source of national pride, as evidenced by the Navy's role in safeguarding vital assets like the South Pars gas field and in countering piracy.

Turning to technological advancements, Tangsiri spotlighted the Shahid Bagheri vessel—a multi-purpose naval base capable of deploying missile launcher groups arranged to carry a total of 14 missile units.

He also celebrated the groundbreaking achievement of launching Iran's first drone carrier, equipped with a 180-meter runway—a milestone that underscores the country's engineering ingenuity.



Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, commander of the IRGC Navy, in an interview with Iran's national TV aired on April 20, 2025

Moreover, he noted that the IRGC Navy's arsenal now includes missiles with a 2,000-kilometer range, drones, and submarines, while its vessels can reach speeds of up to 110 knots.

Iran's naval shield

The IRGC Navy, established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, is Iran's vanguard maritime force, entrusted with defending national sovereignty and revolutionary

principles in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz.

Evolving from a militia into a formidable asymmetric warfare specialist, it employs swarm tactics, advanced mine warfare, and coastal defense strategies.

Equipped with radar systems capable of detecting targets up to 200 km away, robust air defense networks, and a fleet of fast-attack craft armed with anti-ship

missiles and drones, the IRGC Navy dominates maritime confrontations while deterring foreign encroachment.

Renowned for intercepting hostile warships near Iranian waters, it enforces maritime boundaries and asserts Tehran's authority.

The force has executed high-profile operations, seizing tankers involved in smuggling or sanctions evasion, reflecting Iran's commitment to combating maritime crime and upholding regional security.

Recent upgrades, including advanced warships and high-speed fleets, align with Iran's "look to the sea" doctrine, enhancing its capacity to secure critical waterways like the Strait of Hormuz.

Through indigenous technological advancements and unwavering resolve, the IRGC Navy symbolizes Iran's strategic resilience and self-reliance, countering external pressures while ensuring stability in one of the world's most vital maritime corridors.

Iran showcases defense capabilities at major Baghdad military exhibition



TEHRAN – The Iranian Ministry of Defense is showcasing its latest military advancements at the 17th Baghdad Security and Military Expo, marking a significant step in the nation's ongoing efforts to highlight its defense capabilities on the international stage.

The exhibition, which officially opened its doors on Saturday,

is hosting 155 companies from 24 countries, all eager to display their cutting-edge products and innovations in military, safety, and security sectors. Held in Iraq's capital, Baghdad, this event serves as a key platform for global defense and cybersecurity solutions.

As part of its participation, the Iranian Ministry of Defense is ex-

hibiting a wide range of its military achievements.

These include advancements in land, naval, air, and air defense technologies, as well as the latest developments in electronic warfare systems. By showcasing these innovations, Iran continues to position itself as a key player in the regional and global defense industry.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani officially inaugurated the event, emphasizing the strategic importance of the exhibition for Iraq's defense modernization and international security cooperation.

Al-Sudani, in his opening speech, highlighted the exhibition as a vital opportunity for fostering partnerships between Iraq's industrial sector and international companies, particularly in the areas of

scientific research and technological development.

The exhibition is more than just a display of military hardware; it also focuses on the evolution of cybersecurity and advanced communications technologies.

With the inclusion of surveillance systems and police equipment, the event is intended to open new avenues for collaboration and knowledge exchange among countries, strengthening the national defense industries of participating nations.

Running until April 22, the Baghdad Security and Military Expo will continue to serve as an important gathering for experts in defense technology, providing an invaluable opportunity for dialogue on enhancing security capabilities in Iraq and across the broader region.

Tehran open to initiatives that helps lift sanctions: government

TEHRAN – Iran's government spokesperson said the indirect negotiations with the U.S. have so far shown positive results, adding that Tehran remains open to any initiative that helps lift sanctions and secure the rights of the Iranian people.

Fatemeh Mojaheerani, speaking to Iranian news agency IRNA on Sunday, discussed the ongoing second round of indirect talks between Iran and the U.S. in Rome, Italy.

She stressed that the negotiations are being carried out under the mandate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and emphasized that the government will not let foreign policy distract from its core domestic priorities.

"These talks, mediated by Oman, are happening in a constructive environment," Mojaheerani said. "The aim is to explore practical steps for easing tensions and setting the stage for future technical discussions."

Mojaheerani also reiterated that the 14th government remains focused on its primary responsibilities across economic, social, cultural, and administrative sectors, with foreign policy, including the negotiations, being just one part of the broader national agenda pursued by the relevant authorities.

When asked about the government's expectations for the indirect talks, Mojaheerani replied, "As stated by the Foreign Ministry, the negotiations have been positive so far. However, as the Leader of the Islamic Revolution has said, we are



neither overly optimistic nor pessimistic."

She reaffirmed Iran's principled approach to foreign policy, saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has always acted in line with its national interests and the dignity of its people, guided by the principles of wisdom and expediency. We welcome any initiative that works toward lifting sanctions and securing the rights of the Iranian people."

Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, also weighed in on the negotiations in a post on the X platform, describing the atmosphere in Rome as relatively positive and contributing to progress on key issues.

"Many in Iran feel that the JCPOA no longer meets our needs," Araghchi wrote. "For them, what remains are merely lessons learned" from the deal. I personally share this view."

Araghchi added, "Expert-level discussions will begin soon to examine the details. Afterward, we'll be in a better position to assess the situation. For now, optimism may be justified, but with extreme caution."

Kuwait welcomes advancing Iran-U.S. indirect talks in Rome

TEHRAN – Kuwait has expressed support for the progress made in the second round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the U.S., while commending Oman and Italy for their roles in facilitating the talks.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry welcomed the announcement from Oman's Foreign Ministry about the agreement reached between the two nations in their second round of discussions, which took place in Rome, Italy. The ministry also endorsed the decision to advance to the next phase of talks, aimed at achieving a permanent and binding agreement.

"The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry appreciates this step, which reflects both parties' commitment to continuing dialogue based on the progress achieved," the statement read. "Kuwait fully supports diplomatic efforts to resolve disputes through dialogue, which contribute to regional and international stability."

Kuwait also thanked the Sultanate of Oman for hosting the talks and Italy for facilitating the second round of negotiations.

On Saturday, Oman's Foreign Ministry confirmed the agreement between Iran and the U.S. to move forward with the next phase of discussions. The goal, according to Oman's statement, is to reach a fair, permanent, and binding agreement.

The statement outlined key points of the potential agreement,



including "ensuring Iran's nuclear disarmament, fully lifting economic sanctions, and preserving Iran's right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes."

Oman's Ministry emphasized that ongoing dialogue and clear communication remain the only path to a reliable, comprehensive agreement benefiting all parties, both regionally and internationally.

The second round of indirect talks between Iran and the U.S., mediated by Oman, concluded in Rome as scheduled on Saturday. A third round of negotiations is expected to take place next week.

Ismail Baghai, spokesperson for Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also commented on the conclusion of the second round, writing on his X account: "Today's indirect talks between Iran and the U.S., mediated by the Omani Foreign Minister, were constructive."

He further announced that both sides have agreed to resume indirect talks at the technical level in the coming days, with discussions at the senior negotiator level scheduled for Saturday, May 6.

By Nayereh Heshmati Manesh

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi travelled to Moscow on Thursday to deliver the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's message to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In remarks to Iran's national TV, the country's ambassador to Moscow elaborated on what Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's message included and why it was significant.

"The message from the Leader to Putin was not just a personal communication; it also conveyed a broader message to the international community. In his message, he emphasized that Iran will maintain its relationships with friendly countries," Kazem Jalali said, adding that in response, Putin highlighted that Moscow's "ties with other nations will not affect its relationship with Iran."

Iran's foreign policy is grounded in dignity, wisdom, and practicality, Jalali stated. "The country approaches diplomacy in an independent and balanced way with all nations."

In remarks to Russian media while in Moscow, Iran's top diplomat highlighted the timing of his visit, which occurred a day before Tehran and Washington participated in indirect nuclear talks in Rome.

"My trip to Moscow today, just one day before the second round of indirect negotiations with the U.S., highlights our commitment



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) greets Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Moscow on Thursday, April 17, 2025.

to our relationship with Russia," Araghchi said. "We don't forget our friends in tough times; we've supported them when things got difficult, and it's only natural that we coordinate our positions now as well."

The foreign minister said that he believes the relationship between Iran and Russia has never been as strong and close as it is today. "We currently have a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement that elevates our ties to a strategic level. We are shaping our economic cooperation with the sanctions in mind, and we're not waiting for those sanctions to be lifted. Instead, we are actively expanding our relations under these circumstances."

Politically, the two sides' consultations are very close, Araghchi noted. "We share similar

views on many international issues. While I don't want to suggest that we agree on everything, there are definitely some differences. Overall, our positions are aligned, and we maintain ongoing communication and coordination."

West hoping to whittle down Iran-Russia ties

The relationship between Tehran and Moscow has deepened to an unprecedented degree of cordiality, mutual interest, and mutual respect, a situation that is unpleasant for some states, especially in the West, according to Ruhollah Modabber, an expert on Russia.

The analyst believes the West's main tool in its efforts to decouple the two nations is propaganda. "Fake news is rampant when it comes to Russia and its behav-

ior towards Iran. Some of these pieces are so made-up it's actually appalling," he said, adding, "the West tries to draw on historical events and portray Russia as a hostile and reliable force towards Iranians. But the reality could not be more different."

Modabber explained that Russia has taken many steps in the past few years alone that show Iranians they are genuine about their bilateral ties with Iran. "Russia is the only permanent member of the UN Security Council that has publicly called out the U.S. for its war rhetoric against Iran. Also, its parliament recently ratified a Strategic Cooperation Pact that was signed between the two countries back in January. That's while Iran's government has yet to turn in the pact for lawmakers' review, which is not necessarily a good thing."

For Russia, Iran holds an important position due to its geopolitical traits and historic role in the region, he said.

Modabber belongs to the camp of analysts and experts who believe that instead of giving the Western states more chances to redeem themselves and backtrack their past wrongdoings, Iran should focus on further strengthening its ties with friendly countries like Russia and China. "Today, we have a historic opportunity. Our ties with our friends will only grow firmer, and we should not allow Western states to derail that process."

Azmoun scores as Shabab Al-Ahli lose to Al-Jazira in Emirati League Cup

TEHRAN – In a thrilling encounter at Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al-Jazira clinched the Emirati League Cup by defeating Shabab Al-Ahli 2-1 on Saturday.

The match, marked by intense competition and high stakes, saw Al-Jazira secure its second title in the tournament's history, with Egyptian star Mohamed Elneny playing a pivotal role in the victory.

Abdullah Ramadan put Al-Jazira ahead with a powerful strike in the 18th minute.

However, Shabab Al-Ahli was quick to respond. Just five minutes into the second half, Sardar Azmoun leveled the score at 1-1, sending a wave of tension through the stadium.

The equalizer was a testament to Shabab Al-Ahli's resilience and determination to claim its sixth title in the competition.

But Al-Jazira wasn't to be outdone. In the 55th minute, Nixon Kibano struck back, regaining the lead for Al-Jazira with a well-placed shot that found the back of the net.

This goal not only restored Al-Jazira's advantage but also underscored its intent to secure the championship.

Reza Darvish quits as Persepolis general manager

TEHRAN – Reza Darvish is no longer the Persepolis general manager after more than three years.

His resignation follows a loss to Sepahan in the Iran football league.

During his tenure, Darvish led Persepolis to two league titles but also saw the team miss out on two others.

Ali Inanlou is expected to be appointed as the club's interim general manager by the board of directors.

Persepolis, headed by ?smail Kartal, are most decorated football club in Iran football.

Cosmin Olaroiu named UAE coach

TEHRAN – Cosmin Olaroiu was named the new head coach of the United Arab Emirates, the country's football federation announced on Saturday.

The 55-year-old replaces Paulo Bento after the Portuguese coach was removed following last month's matches in the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26.

Romanian Olaroiu takes over with the UAE in third in Group A, four points behind second-placed Uzbekistan with two matches remaining in the current phase of the preliminaries for the Finals in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The first two finishers in the group will qualify automatically for the 2026 FIFA World Cup with Iran having already secured one of the berths. The UAE will take on Uzbekistan in Abu Dhabi on June 5 in Olaroiu's first game in charge before facing Kyrgyzstan five days later. He has also coached Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal, Al Sadd from Qatar and Emirati side Al Ain while also led the Saudi Arabia national team at the 2015 AFC Asian Cup in Australia.

Iran's Meskini wins bronze in 2025 Karate -1Premier League

TEHRAN – Ali Meskini of Iran claimed a bronze medal in the 2025 Karate 1-Premier League on Saturday.

Hiromu Hashimoto of Japan won the gold medal after defeating Ziad Aly of Egypt in the Male Kumite -60Kg.

Meskini and Florian Haas jointly won bronze medals.

The Cairo 2025 has brought 376 athletes from 65 countries together in Egypt's capital.

The Karate1 Premier League Cairo 2025 is being held in Cairo, Egypt from April 18 to 20.

Iran come fifth in 2025 IIHF World Championship Division IV

TEHRAN – Iran lost to Kuwait 11-0 (2-0, 5-0, 4-0) in the 2025 IIHF World Championship Division IV on Saturday and finished in fifth place with just three points in the six-team tournament.

Team Melli had previously lost to Indonesia 2-1, Uzbekistan 20-0, and Armenia 8-0 and just defeated Malaysia 5-1.

The tournament took place in Yerevan, Armenia, from April 13 to 19, 2025.

In its first time ever competing at an IIHF event, Uzbekistan won the Championship Division IV in Yerevan, Armenia.

Uzbekistan took 13 of 15 possible points with four regulation wins and one shootout defeat, outscoring its opponents 79-10.

As a result of the win, Uzbekistan will be promoted to Division III Group B in 2026.

Saudi defense minister's Tehran visit marks turning point in bilateral ties, says MP

TEHRAN – The visit of Saudi Arabia's Defense Minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman, to Iran has been hailed as a pivotal step toward deepening bilateral ties, with Iranian officials emphasizing the strategic importance of cooperation between the two regional powers.

Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a senior member of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, underscored the significance of the trip, noting that Prince Khalid's role as deputy crown prince and third-highest-ranking Saudi official reflected Riyadh's commitment to resetting relations.

"The presence of Saudi Arabia's defense minister in Tehran, carrying a message from King Salman to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, demonstrates a clear resolve to open a new page," Boroujerdi told an Iranian news agency on Saturday.

During his visit, Prince Khalid met with Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, President Masoud Pezeshkian, and Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of Staff of Iran's

Armed Forces.

Boroujerdi highlighted these interactions as evidence of Saudi Arabia's "special mission" to strengthen ties, aligning with Iran's longstanding policy of fostering goodwill with neighboring states.

"The Persian Gulf belongs to all coastal nations, and enhanced Iran-Saudi cooperation can catalyze transformative regional developments," Boroujerdi added, expressing optimism that "shared ideals" would translate into tangible progress.

In his meeting with Prince Khalid, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed the mutual benefits of closer ties.

"We believe relations between the Islamic Republic and Saudi Arabia will benefit both nations, as they can complement each other's strengths," the Leader stated, according to a transcript published by his office.

He also highlighted Iran's readiness to assist Saudi Arabia in areas of mutual interest, urging regional solidarity over reliance on



external powers: "Cooperation among brotherly nations is far preferable to dependence on outsiders."

The leader also acknowledged challenges posed by "hostile forces" opposed to improved Iran-Saudi relations but reaffirmed Tehran's determination to overcome such obstacles.

A social media post by Seyyed Mehrdad Seyyed-Mehdi, public relations director of the office of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, echoed this sentiment.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Ground Force commander details AI-driven arsenal, vows decisive response to threats

TEHRAN – Brigadier General Kioumars Heidari, commander of Iran's Army (Artesh) Ground Forces, has disclosed the existence of classified, domestically developed weapons systems powered by artificial intelligence (AI), asserting that the Islamic Republic's military readiness leaves adversaries "no chance to survive" in the event of conflict.

In an interview with Iran's national TV aired on Saturday, Heidari confirmed that the Ground Force possesses "highly advanced weapons, some of which are secret or even ultra-secret," including AI-integrated systems designed to bolster Iran's defensive and offensive capabilities.

These are extremely sophisticated systems that utilize artificial intelligence. Although still classified as conventional weapons, their capabilities are exceptional," he remarked, emphasizing the importance of operational secrecy.

Eschewing technical specifi-



Brigadier General Kioumars Heidari, commander of Iran's Army (Artesh) Ground Forces, in an interview with Iran's national TV aired on April 19, 2025

cs, he further highlighted Iran's self-reliance by revealing that classified, top-secret weaponry—developed entirely by domestic experts—is now integral to the military infrastructure, a point underscored by recent drills using Iranian equipment.

Analysts suggest such systems could include AI-enhanced drones, smart munitions, or networked battlefield management tools—technologies Iran has showcased in recent exhibitions.

Heidari also delivered a stark warning, stating, "Our eyes are wide open, and our hands are on the trigger," alluding to escalating regional tensions and the confrontational stance of Western powers, adding that in the event of a conflict, Iran is capable of ensuring "enemy forces have no chance to survive."

The Iranian commander's remarks come on the heels of President Masoud Pezeshkian's recent commendation of the Army for its "strength and pre-

paredness" and its achievement of "self-sufficiency" in military production during National Army Day on Friday.

At the event, Pezeshkian stressed the Army's role in ensuring national and regional security, stating, "The security and peace of society are only possible with the presence of a strong and prepared army. Without this powerful force, security would have vanished from our society."

He also lauded the "brave" armed forces for thwarting external threats, adding, "The Iranian military has played a pivotal role in defending the nation and safeguarding its sovereignty against hostile forces."

Post-war transformation and border vigilance

Elsewhere in his interview, the commander traced the Ground Force's modernization to lessons from the 1980s Ba'athist Iraq's imposed war against Iran, known as the "Sacred Defense Era."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran exports non-oil goods worth \$2.4b to Afghanistan in a year



TEHRAN- Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$2.4 billion to Afghanistan in the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, 2025, according to an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Abolfazl Akbarpour, the deputy head of IRI-CA for planning and international affairs, said that Afghanistan was Iran's sixth top export destination in the previous year.

On February 21, the governors of Iran and Afghanistan's central banks met on the sidelines of a banking technology summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia, to discuss strengthening monetary and banking cooperation, Iran's central bank said.

Iran's central bank chief, Mohammad Reza Farzin, and his Afghan counterpart Noor Ahmad Agha, emphasized the importance of expanding financial collaboration to support growing economic and trade exchanges between the two countries, the statement added.

Also, in last October, ports and maritime officials of Iran and Afghanistan met to discuss investment opportunities for the Afghan private sector in Iran's southeastern Chabahar Port.

In the meeting attended by the director general of the Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Province, the governor-general of the province, some MPs, and officials of the Afghanistan Trade and Industry Ministry, the opportunities for cooperation and participation of the private sector of Afghanistan in Chabahar port were introduced and reviewed.

Qasem Askari-Nasab, the director general of the Ports and Maritime Department of

Sistan-Baluchestan Province, welcomed the request of the Afghan government to invest in the Iranian port while introducing the commercial facilities and capacities of Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti port to the Afghan side.

The Afghan side's investment in Chabahar port, in addition to the possibility of Afghanistan's access to open waters, will strengthen the economic relations between the two countries and develop transit in the region, Askari-Nasab said.

Introducing new economic opportunities to increase trade relations between the investors of the two countries, he further proposed that the Afghan side invest in the construction of a multi-purpose terminal for goods and containers.

Meanwhile, in a meeting with an Iranian trade delegation in Kabul in last August, Afghanistan's interim Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund said that his country is eager to attract Iranian investors in order to develop Afghan mining industry, generate solar electricity and expand railway connectivity.

The Iranian delegation also proposed to launch a joint special industrial zone with Afghanistan.

Noting that Afghanistan has turned into a good place for making investment, Mullah said that the relevant ministries and organizations there, will cooperate and work closely with the investors.

The Iranian delegation, made up of economic and trade players, also held a separate meeting with Afghanistan's acting minister of commerce Haji Nooruddin Azizi. They called for the formation of a joint economic-mining zone between the two neighboring countries.

At the time, Iran's commercial attach in Afghanistan said that in order to improve Iran's presence in Afghanistan's markets, the trade between the two countries should move towards newer models of cooperation.

Afghanistan supplies more than 80 percent of its market needs through imports, and imports from Iran constitute 25 percent of this amount, Hossein Roustaei said in a meeting on opportunities and challenges of the Afghan market, held by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

Pavilion of Iran titled best in China intl. trade service fair

TEHRAN- With the unceasing efforts of Iranian experts and capable companies, Iran's pavilion won the title of "Best Exhibition Pavilion" at the 2024 China International Fair For Trade In Service (CIFTIS).

In a ceremony, the officials of the exhibition presented the best pavilion to the Iranian ambassador.

Undoubtedly, this achievement will be an effective step in introducing the capabilities of Iran's service sector to the dynamic Chinese market and strengthening the national brand in the global arena and a model for quality presence in future events.

The China International Fair For Trade In Service is one of the most prestigious exhibi-

tions in China and the world in the field of services, which is organized annually.

The 2024 China International Fair For Trade In Service (CIFTIS) was held from September 12th to September 16th in China National Convention Center (CNCC) and Shougang Park in Beijing.

The signature comprehensive trade fair saw close to 1000 outcomes, including deals and investments, achieved across seven key categories, predominantly in the fields of construction, finance, and business services, according to the fair's organizing committee.

The five-day event saw the participation of 2,000 companies offline, and over 6,000 companies online.

Iran's annual fishery exports rise 17% to hit \$372m

TEHRAN - Iran exported 196,000 metric tons of fishery products worth \$372 million in the Iranian year 1403 (ended March 19, 2025), the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) reported.

According to Arezou Ghanion, Deputy Director of the Statistics and Data Processing Office at IRICA, fishery exports grew by 29 percent in volume and 17 percent in value compared to the previous year.

The main exported items included various types of shrimp, tuna, and carp, which together accounted for 64 percent of the total export volume and 65 percent of the export value within the fishery category.

China, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were identified as the top three buyers of Iranian fishery products during the year.

Iran's fishery industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, positioning the country as a key player in the global aquaculture sector.

The country's fishery sector has diversified its product offerings, with shrimp, tuna, and carp being the leading exports. Shrimp exports alone accounted for a substantial portion of the export value, with major markets including China, Iraq, and the UAE.

This diversification has been supported by strategic investments in aquaculture infrastructure and technology. The Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO) has implemented reforms to enhance production capabilities, including providing low-interest loans to fisheries and expanding fish farming operations.

Annual agricultural exports surge 29% to \$5.2b

TEHRAN - Iran's agricultural exports rose by 29 percent in the Iranian year 1403 (ended March 19, 2025), reaching \$5.2 billion, according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

IRICA reported that Iran exported 7.6 million metric tons of agricultural products during the year, marking an 11 percent increase in volume compared to the previous year.

Key export commodities included various types of pistachios, tomatoes, and dates. Pistachio exports led the sector, generating \$1.5 billion in revenue, followed



by \$233 million in tomatoes and \$205 million in dates.

Iran exported 214.3 metric tons

of saffron worth \$184.7 million in the year 1403, IRICA's Director General of Statistics and Data

Processing, Hamid Bayat, announced.

Saffron exports saw a four percent drop in volume and a 13 percent decline in value year-on-year.

The United Arab Emirates, Spain, and China were the top three buyers of Iranian saffron in 1403, importing \$50 million, \$40 million, and \$30 million worth respectively.

Bayat noted that these three countries accounted for 65 percent of the total value of Iran's saffron exports. He added that Iranian saffron was shipped to more than 50 countries worldwide.

Iran signs \$750m investment deals in rail transport sector

He noted that achieving these targets requires a comprehensive investment roadmap. "We are currently planning to attract \$6.4 billion—equivalent to about 4.5 quadrillion rials—from the private sector for rail development, with 77 percent allocated to rolling stock and the remaining 23 percent to infrastructure."

Foreign financing to support rail development

Speaking at the signing ceremony of the memorandums, Jabbarali Zakeri, head of RAI,

highlighted the use of foreign finance to expand the country's rail network. "With the current network, we can raise freight and transit volumes to 15 million tons," he said.

Zakeri emphasized that engaging stakeholders has been a key policy under the 14th administration, saying, "We've ensured that key players in the rail transport sector are actively involved in decision-making processes."

He also pointed to the expansion of scheduled train services, noting that currently, 500 scheduled trains are operating each week.

Zakeri said that solving current challenges—particularly in rolling stock—would enable Iran to meet its Seventh Plan targets. "This includes the addition of 950 locomotives, 300 passenger wagons, and 3,000 freight wagons to the network."

He added that the financing agreements involve international lenders, although he declined to name the countries involved, noting that the private sector has been directly engaged in the foreign financing arrangements.

Iranian private sector ready for joint investments in Uzbekistan



From Page 1 ► TEHRAN - The head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) said the country's private sector is ready to pursue joint investments in Uzbekistan and called on Tashkent to implement a reciprocal visa waiver to ease travel and boost tourism between the two countries.

Speaking in a meeting with Uzbekistan's Deputy Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Shokhrukh Gulamov, Samad Hassanzadeh said mutual visa exemption would facilitate travel for businesspeople and citizens while supporting the development of tourism.

He said the upcoming preferential trade agreement between Iran and Uzbekistan, expected to be signed next month during the joint economic commission, could raise the level of bilateral trade cooperation.

Hassanzadeh added that the current trade volume—nearly \$500 million—does not reflect the true potential of the two countries. "The Iranian Chamber, as the representative of the private sector, is ready to take all necessary steps to boost trade volume," he said.

Referring to the upcoming Iran Expo, scheduled to begin on April 28 with a trade delegation from Uzbekistan in attendance, Hassanzadeh noted Iran's significant capacities in engineering services, petrochemicals, oil, food industries, and the automotive sector, saying these offer strong prospects for cooperation.

He emphasized that Iran's government and private sector are committed to expanding relations with all countries, particularly neighbors. "Historical, religious, and cultural ties can pave the way for broader economic, cultural, and academic coopera-

tion," he said.

Hassanzadeh welcomed Uzbekistan's move to scrap a \$400 transit fee for trucks, calling it a positive step for expanding cooperation along the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC).

He reiterated the call for Uzbekistan to lift visa requirements for Iranian citizens, noting this would particularly support collaboration in medical tourism, healthcare services, and pharmaceutical production, where Iran has strong capacities.

Highlighting investment interests, he said Iran's private sector is especially keen to invest in Uzbekistan's textile and garment industries. "As the private sector's representative, the Iranian Chamber seeks the necessary support for these investments," he said.

Hassanzadeh concluded by expressing hope that closer cooperation between the two chambers of commerce would push bilateral trade volume to \$1.0 billion.

Abdollah Mohajer Darabi, a member of the Iranian Chamber's board of directors, also addressed the meeting, noting the long-standing trade ties between Iran and Uzbekistan. He said both countries are eager to expand cooperation and emphasized the need to eliminate existing gaps in the trade relationship.

He announced that Iran's trade office in Tashkent would open by late May, adding that advancing trade ties without a dedicated joint financial and banking mechanism would not be possible.

Uzbek Deputy Minister Shokhrukh Gulamov praised the history of the Iranian Chamber and its nationwide network, noting the shared roots between the two nations. He voiced readiness for cooperation across all sectors

identified by the Iranian side.

Gulamov said over 100 Uzbek companies, led by the country's chamber of commerce president, would participate in the Iran Expo — a reflection of Iran's significance for Uzbekistan.

He welcomed Iranian private sector investment and stressed the need to raise bilateral trade volume to \$5.0 billion, citing the ample capacities available for cooperation between the two countries.

In mid-February, the head of the Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Chamber of Commerce announced the establishment of a permanent sales office for Iranian food industry products in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, while citing FATF-related restrictions as the biggest obstacle to trade between the two countries.

Mousa Aghaei said that the sales office was launched in cooperation with the Mazandaran Chamber of Commerce and the Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Chamber.

He noted that the initiative would significantly enhance bilateral cooperation.

Aghaei stated that the current \$500 million trade volume between Iran and Uzbekistan is unsatisfactory.

He emphasized that while Uzbek citizens and government officials are eager to collaborate with Iranian businesses, challenges such as FATF-related restrictions, transportation issues, and high tariffs have hindered trade expansion.

Highlighting Iran's advantages in engineering services, construction materials, industrial production, agricultural equipment, and knowledge-based products, Aghaei noted that a recent meeting with Uzbekistan's ambassador to Iran included discussions on Iran's entry into Uzbekistan's knowledge-based market. He said the ambassador welcomed the proposal enthusiastically.

In early January, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Tehran Fariddin Nasriev met with Ali Akbar Safaei, the former head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), to discuss strengthening bilateral and regional transport and transit collaboration.

The meeting emphasized facilitating trade between the two nations, the PMO portal reported.

As reported, discussions focused on streamlining multimodal transportation between Iran and Uzbekistan via Iranian ports in the country's northern and southern regions.

The PMO expressed readiness to swiftly address issues faced by Uzbek traders and businesses along regional corridors passing through Iran. The two sides also discussed organizing reciprocal trade delegations, including visits by Uzbek technical representatives, traders, and transport companies to explore Iran's port capacities for enhanced transit options within the framework of the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC).

Additionally, the meeting highlighted the importance of establishing joint regional corridors to facilitate the smooth movement of Uzbek goods to Russia and India, leveraging Iran's port infrastructure to achieve the goals set by the presidents of both nations.

In a meeting with a joint delegation from the Ministries of Agriculture, Trade, and Investment of Uzbekistan in Tehran in early December, 2024, Iranian Minister of Agriculture Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji stated that Iran is prepared to enhance cooperation with Uzbekistan in sharing agricultural experiences and technology.

Referring to the 14th Iranian government's strategic vision to enhance relations with other countries, Nouri highlighted the initiative taken by the President of Uzbekistan to foster international relations, which has created significant opportunities for constructive cooperation between the two countries.

He expressed Iran's readiness to supply the agricultural machinery that Uzbekistan needs, emphasizing that cooperation could involve not only the direct export of products, but also the barter of goods such as potatoes and legumes.

Nouri also pointed out that Iran has a rich history of over a century in agricultural research and is prepared to share its valuable experiences with Uzbekistan.

Cries for Palestine echo worldwide amid Gaza war

TEHRAN - Mass demonstrations in support of Gaza and against the ongoing Israeli assault have taken place in cities across the world, including in Indonesia, France, Germany, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, and Japan.

Protesters voiced outrage over what they described as war crimes committed by Israel in the besieged Gaza Strip and demanded immediate international action.

Indonesia

Thousands gathered on the island of Java in solidarity with the people of Gaza, condemning the Israeli military's continuous attacks. Protesters reiterated their unwavering support for the Palestinian people and called for a comprehensive boycott of companies linked to the Israeli occupation.

France

In Paris, large crowds flooded the streets calling for an end to the genocide in Gaza. Protesters demanded justice for Palestinians and the prosecution of Israeli leaders at international courts.

Calls for an immediate ceasefire



Protesters carry a large Palestinian flag in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina [Samir Jordamovic/Anadolu]

and the lifting of the blockade on Gaza echoed through the capital.

Germany

Berlin witnessed hundreds protesting against the ongoing siege and bombing campaign in Gaza. Demonstrators highlighted the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians, including widespread deprivation of food and medicine.

Rallies during the Easter holidays in several German cities also called for a halt to arms exports to Israel

and urged the German government to pursue peace and uphold international law. Protesters warned Berlin against its warm reception of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Denmark

In Copenhagen, demonstrators waved Palestinian flags and marched in solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Many carried signs condemning the war in Gaza and the international community's silence on the killing of women and children.

Japan

Kyoto saw a pro-Palestine rally demanding an end to the mass killing in Gaza. Protesters chanted slogans for Palestinian liberation "from the river to the sea," beat drums, and held placards denouncing the Israeli onslaught.

United Kingdom

In Manchester, demonstrators demanded an end to Israel's war on Gaza and urged global accountability for acts of genocide. Protesters called on the international community to hold Israeli officials responsible for crimes against humanity.

Italy

A major protest in Milan drew crowds calling for a halt to the Israeli military campaign and opposing the forced displacement of Palestinians. Demonstrators demanded an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

Netherlands

In Schiedam, hundreds gathered to protest the continued attacks on Gaza. The demonstrators called for an urgent ceasefire, the opening of humanitarian corridors, and the immediate delivery of aid to the besieged territory.

Aoun says sensitive issues in Lebanon should be handled carefully

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun says he will not be rushed to disarm Hezbollah under unfavorable circumstances as the Israeli military continues to launch deadly air strikes on the country in violation of a November ceasefire, Al Jazeera reported.

In comments to reporters after a meeting with a Maronite patriarch to mark Easter on Sunday, the former army chief said he considers disarming the group a "sensitive, delicate issue" that must be handled with consideration to preserve national peace.

"Any controversial domestic issue in Lebanon can only be approached through conciliatory, nonconfrontational dialogue and communication. If not, we will lead Lebanon to ruin," Aoun said.

The Trump administration has been applying sustained pressure on Beirut to push for the disarmament of Hezbollah, leading to Aoun announcing last week that he hopes to complete the process by the end of 2025 - the first time a senior official has set any deadline.

Boeing jet returns to US from China, a victim of Trump's tariff war



A Boeing jet intended for use by a Chinese airline landed back at the planemaker's U.S. production hub on Saturday, a victim of the tit-for-tat bilateral tariffs launched by President Donald Trump in his global trade offensive.

The 737 MAX, which was meant for China's Xiamen Airlines, landed at Seattle's Boeing Field at 6:11 p.m., according to a Reuters witness. It was painted with Xiamen livery.

The jet, which made refueling stops in

Families of Israeli captives rally near Gaza fence

The families of Israeli captives in Gaza have demonstrated along the fence with the Palestinian enclave to demand a prisoner exchange that would see their relatives released.

"We will not abandon you, you are very close, but you are very far away," Haaretz newspaper quoted Sylvia Cunio, mother of captives David and Ariel Cunio, as saying during the rally near the Nir Oz settlement in southern Israel.

Ilana Gritzewsky, whose husband, Matan Zangauker, is held in Gaza, called on the government to reach a prisoner swap deal with Palestinians.

"If you are listening, Matan, don't give up. Don't lose hope. The whole nation is fighting for you to return," she said.

Attacks against Christians on the rise in West Bank: pastor

Israeli restrictions this year have been perhaps the toughest, says Mitri Raheb, Palestinian pastor and theologian, and founder and president of Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem.

"I myself, as a pastor, don't have a permit to go for the holy week, which is the most important week for Christians throughout the year because Jesus was crucified and risen in Jerusalem," he told Al Jazeera.

"The Palestinian-Christian community that has been there for 2,000 years cannot go there to celebrate and mark this where it all happened."

On the other hand, Raheb said, incitement against Palestinian Christians, especially clergy members, has been on the rise, with Israeli settlers attacking Christians and spitting at clergy even inside Jerusalem. This year alone, 43 such incidents took place, the pastor said.

"One of the first things you read about in church about Jesus is that he was like a lamb led to the slaughter. But when you hear this today as Palestinian Christians, you think it's our whole people being led to slaughter, considering what is happening in Gaza."

Ortagus's rude diplomacy reflects American policy

From page 1 ▶ Burdick and Lederer sought to demonstrate their belief that American officials and civilians could make a significant difference in Southeast Asian politics if they were willing to learn and master local languages and customs and employ regional military tactics.

Ortagus also recently responded to a speech by Hezbollah's Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem with a single word: "Yawn." This was in reaction to Qassem's reiteration of Hezbollah's refusal to disarm.

Indeed, this rude diplomat reflects nothing but the Trumpian policy, which is an ugly and crude policy. In fact, this policy is far more dangerous than the cracks!

Ortagus's discourtesy reveals an arrogant mentality that readily insults Lebanese national and religious figures. Her condescending manner goes against international principles and norms recognized in diplomatic work.



Meanwhile, informed sources reported that the reason for Ortagus's annoyance with Lebanese Army Commander General Rodolphe Heikal during their recent meeting was the commander's use of the terms "Israeli Enemy Forces" instead of "Defense Forces," and "Settlers" instead of "citizens."

This makes it difficult and even hinders Wash-

ington's relentless efforts to impose normalization between Lebanon and the Israeli occupation entity, as Ortagus, like her infamous predecessors, has become accustomed to dictating to Lebanese officials what to say!

What General Heikal has done is refuting the misleading narrative promoted by the anti-Hezbollah team in Lebanon, which holds the resistance responsible for obstructing the implementation of Resolution 1701, and attempts to pit it against the Lebanese Army.

During a cabinet session on April 17, General Heikal presented a summary of the "arrangements related to the cessation of hostilities that Lebanon and its army have committed to, unlike Israel," emphasizing that the only obstacle is the occupation of certain areas by the Israeli enemy and ceasefire violations, which have exceeded 2,740, resulting in 190 deaths and 485 injuries since the ceasefire, including martyrs from the Lebanese Army.

The day Americans march against authoritarianism



From page 1 ▶ Executive overreach and the erosion of democratic norms: Protesters condemned Trump for using executive orders to dismantle federal agencies, curtail media access, and question judicial decisions. Many perceive those actions as undermining constitutional checks and balances while imperiling the rule of law.

***Immigration and due process violations:** The wrongful deportation of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a green card holder and activist, to El Salvador without due process became the flashpoint of outrage. That individual instance thus became a symbol of the broader is-

sues of aggressive immigration enforcement, criminalization of dissent, and violations of civil liberties.

***Economic inequality and "billionaire takeover":** Protesters highlighted job cuts from the Elon Musk-led Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), increasing cost of living, and relative consolidation of power by the rich elites against the administration's economic policies. They particularly targeted individuals like Musk for exerting influence over governmental decisions and suppressing dissent.

***Civil rights and social justice:**

Demonstrators have been raising alarms against threats to voting rights, reproductive health, racial justice, and protections for marginalized communities. The protesters also expressed solidarity with other humanitarian issues, notably pro-Palestine expressions, linking U.S. foreign policy to the domestic struggle for justice.

***Historical and symbolic framing:** Many protests, such as the Philadelphia rally at Independence National Historical Park, invoked revolutionary imagery and slogans such as "No Kings", drawing parallels between the Founding Fathers' struggle against the monarchy and contemporary resistance to perceived authoritarianism.

Scale, diversity, and tactics

The Trump 50501 protests are said to be unprecedented, with over 525 protests taking place within the state and federal capitals, courthouses, city halls, and symbolic sites like outside the White House and against Tesla dealerships. The emphasis on non-violence is held across the movement and is from the per-

spective of maintaining democratic principles, although there have been small conflicts, ranging from an altercation where a pro-Trump individual disruptively confronted a Democratic representative.

In addition to street protests, many events included community support initiatives such as food drives and mutual aid, which augment the political protest with social solidarity. The double focus enhances the claim to legitimacy, further broadening the constituency that felt the effects of the consequently enacted policies.

Political and social implications

The 50501 protests are connected to, and signal, a deepening political divide and crisis of legitimacy in governance. Public opinion polls indicate that support for Trump is slipping, particularly in terms of economic issues and civil rights. The protests and the political crisis are demonstrations that amplify the real problems reflected in public opinion polls.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israeli troops caught in deadly ambush

From page 1 ▶ The Israeli military identified the slain soldier as G'haleb Sliman Alnasasra and acknowledged that the rescue team also came under attack with casualties inflicted.

Meanwhile, the al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, released footage showing mortar and 107mm rocket attacks targeting Israeli troop gatherings and vehicles in Rafah, southern Gaza.

As Israeli military operations in Gaza continue, al-Qassam Brigades announced it had recovered the body of one of its fighters assigned to protect Israeli-American captive and soldier Edan Alexander. The fate of Alexander and the other fighters remains unknown.

Al-Qassam Brigades military spokesperson Abu Obeida said efforts to protect captives are increasingly difficult due to heavy Israeli bombardment, which is putting the lives of Israeli captives at risk.

He also accused the Zionist regime of spreading false information about Hamas' treatment of captives in Gaza, claiming that Tel Aviv fabricated testimonies from former hostages to incite hatred against the Palestinian resistance fighters and to cover up the killing of some captives by Israeli forces.

Earlier this week, Abu Obeida said contact was lost with the group guarding Alexander after their location was struck in an Israeli airstrike.

He added that efforts to re-establish contact are ongoing.

According to an Israeli proposal recently shared with mediators, Hamas had planned to release Edan Alexander on the first day of a ceasefire as a goodwill gesture toward the United States.

Amid the ongoing U.S.-backed Israeli genocidal war, the Ministry of Health in Gaza reported that "44 martyrs and 145 injured persons arrived at Gaza Strip's hospitals during the past 24 hours."

Israeli Occupation Forces have killed upwards of 50,000 Palestinians since October 7, 2023, most of them women and children.

Missing Gaza toddler found after a year of search



Maryam carries Mohammed, the baby her father rescued in the aftermath of an Israeli bombing and who was eventually reunited with his birth family

Between the arms of his father and the family who cared for him during his disappearance, little Mohammed plays happily.

About 16 months ago, a 13-month-old Mohammed sat crying beside his mother's lifeless body, surrounded by the dead and wounded, after an attack on the school the

family was sheltering in.

That day, amid the chaos and fear as displaced families fled, he disappeared.

His father, Tareq Abu Jabal, spent more than a year looking for Mohammed while, unbeknownst to him, another man from the school was looking for Tareq.

Salehi-Amiri: Sadi's language, a means of cultural diplomacy



TEHRAN - The culture and language of great Iranian poet Sadi Shirazi stems from identity of Iranians, said Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri on Saturday.

Speaking in a ceremony which was held near Sadi mausoleum in Shiraz, Fars province, to commemorate this renowned master, Salehi-Amiri added that Sadi's language includes reason, ethics, tolerance, and beauty, ISNA reported.

He called Shiraz as a cultural, art lover's destination, and cradle of civilization and literature, adding: "Today, our society needs Sadi, Hafez, Molana (Rumi) and other luminaries more than any time."

Currently, youth, women and men need Sadi and his virtue, knowledge, mysticism and ethics more than ever.

"We should once again keep the largest flag of peace, reconciliation and coexistence flying in Shiraz, Fars, and Iran and tell to the world that the message of peace and coex-

istence is from Shiraz and this geography."

The region of Fars is the origin of Iranian culture and civilization, he added.

Pointing to the widespread presence of tourists in Sadi, he said Sadi mausoleum, Hafezieh, Takht-e Jamshid, Pasargadae and the shrine of Shah Cheragh were the most visited sites across the country during Nowruz 1404 holidays.

He said Iranians have always lived in land of peace and friendship, adding the existence of the discourse of Sadi and Hafez has contributed to the perpetuation of this culture.

The history of Iranian culture shines in the world of humanity, he pointed out.

Today, many [Western] media outlets spread Iranophobia, but it never comes to fruition. "We believe that as long as we have great soft powers like Sadi and Hafez, we will last."

There are few people in Iran who have not read the desirable and advising stories of Sadi as well as the attractive and delicate stories of his book Golestan or a poem from the book Boustan. From the ancient times, everyone who read the words of Sadi confessed the beauty of them and lauded this great Iranian poet.

Sadi is well-known across the globe and for this reason, UNESCO has named April 21 as Sadi's Commemoration Day. This is because of the fact that April is in spring and Sadi's work was greatly inspired by the spring season.

Tomb filled with skulls, bones of 24 battle victims discovered in Peru

Researchers carrying out excavation work in southern Peru found a tomb filled with the remains of two dozen people believed to be battle victims.

Archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Wroc?aw in Poland have been studying a settlement in the Atico River Valley, a geographical area along the Puru's southern coast, the university said in a translated post on social media, CBS NEWS reported.

The settlement existed before Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas, researchers said. Previous research has found the remains of Inca roads and some cave sites with rock paintings, researchers said, but little other work has been done in the region.

Archaeological work in a cemetery area led to the discovery of the circular tomb. The burial site had a stone inscription listing 24 names, including those of men, women and children.

The bones found inside the burial site were analyzed. The anthropological analyses confirmed that all 24 people in the tomb had "numerous damages," or battle injuries, "that are the direct cause of death."

There were also "grave gifts" found at the site, including pottery pieces identified as belonging to the Chuquibamba or Aruni people, a pre-Inca culture based around the Majes basin, south of the research site. The bodies were wrapped in textiles. Pieces of ceramic, stone and wood products were also found, as well as corn cobs.

The remains at the site were buried "in accordance with ritual," the researchers noted.

The research team said they believed the group was killed as a result of a conflict. The people who died were likely from the group that won the conflict, allowing for the elaborate burial, the researchers said.

Work at the site will continue through April.

Zavin, a cradle of Iran's silk-weaving

TEHRAN - Zavin city, located in Kalat county, Khorasan Razavi province, is known as one of the silk-weaving centers of Iran. Zavin, which was registered as a national city of silk-weaving in 2023, boasts a rich history and diverse culture.

In fact, silk-weaving art in Zavin as a cultural heritage is a sign of the art and creativity of local people. In addition, it shows the rich history and culture of clans residing in this region, ISNA wrote.

Silk-weaving, which dates back to the past centuries, has turned into an important industry within years. As a source of income for households, silk-weaving art plays an important role in local culture and customs.

A handicrafts expert said due to pleasant weather and geographical conditions, Zavin is an appropriate place for breeding silkworm and producing natural silk. "This industry was gradually considered one of the economic and cultural pillars of the region, and many households were involved in it"

Marjan Khodsetan added that silk-weaving is considered an art and industry in Zavin, helping local culture and identity.

Kalat city, and especially Zavin, is home to various ethnic groups, each known for its own

customs and traditions. This ethnic and cultural diversity is one of the unique features of this region. Each ethnic group has its own special clothing and attire that is applied in local ceremonies and celebrations.

Stating that local attire is known as a tourist attraction in Kalat and helps introduce the rich culture of this region, the handicraft expert said: "In Zavin, various ethnic groups, including Turks, Kurds and other ethnic groups, live, each of whom has added to the cultural diversity of this region with their own language, customs and traditions."

She pointed out: This cultural diversity is reflected not only in language and customs but also in arts and crafts. In addition, silk weaving in Zavin is known as a common cultural element among these ethnic groups and helps strengthen social and cultural connections between them.

Local clothing and tourist attractions

Noting that the local clothing of Kalat is very visible, especially in special ceremonies such as weddings, Khodsetan stated: "The clothes produced in this region are not only beautiful and unique, but also show the cultural identity of each ethnic group. These clothes are made from natural fibers and have diverse designs and col-

Iran launches monitoring plan to track land subsidence at historic sites

TEHRAN - Iran has launched a national plan to monitor land subsidence in and around its historical sites, according to Seyyed Hamid Pourmohammadi, Head of the Planning and Budget Organization.

Speaking at a session with senior officials from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Saturday, Pourmohammadi announced the start of a joint initiative with the National Cartographic Center to systematically track land subsidence in heritage areas, ISNA reported.

He emphasized that the Planning and Budget Organization fully supports well-structured, transparent, and actionable plans and projects aimed at safeguarding Iran's cultural assets.

"The challenge of land subsidence in historical zones is real and growing. We have now initiated a scientific and continuous monitoring plan to address this issue," Pourmohammadi said. "Our organization is ready to expand cooperation, including providing early warnings and implementing preventive strategies."

He also underscored the need



An aerial view of the UNESCO-designated Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan, central Iran.

to integrate modern technologies into heritage preservation efforts, suggesting the development of smart monitoring systems, the installation of permanent surveillance cameras, and the establishment of scientific observation networks to ensure real-time oversight of vulnerable sites.

Tourism Minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, for his part, echoed the concerns, describing land subsidence as a serious and escalating national threat to Iran's historical heritage.

Salehi-Amiri called for the formation of a national task force to coordinate strategies

for managing the crisis.

"Land subsidence is a hidden disaster, one that could cause irreparable damage to our cultural heritage in the coming decade," Salehi Amiri warned. "

Over the past few decades, many cities and regions across the country have experienced land subsidence, which is increasingly threatening cultural heritage structures and sites.

Land subsidence in Iran five times global average

Available data suggest that the average land subsidence in Iran is five times the global average.

The average global land subsidence rate per year is about 3 centimeters, while the average land subsidence in Iran is about 15 centimeters, according to the National Cartographic Center.

Experts say the most important cause of land subsidence is the excessive extraction of underground water. Once it occurs, it is considered irreversible.

Land subsidence, a gradual settling or sudden sinking of the Earth's surface due to subsurface movement of earth materials is mainly caused by aquifer-system compaction, drainage, and decomposition of organic soils, underground mining, oil and gas extraction, hydro compaction, natural compaction, sinkholes, and thawing permafrost.

In 2021, Gholam-Ali Jafarzadeh, the former head of the National Cartography Center, lamented that some 29 provinces are currently at risk of subsidence. He named two factors of climate change and human intervention as the most important factors of land subsidence in the country and noted that it is expected that we take measures to reduce the pressure on the environment.

Iran, Turkey discuss closer cultural and tourism cooperation



Iranian tourism minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri (R) talks to Turkey's ambassador to the Islamic Republic, Hicabi Kirlangic, in a meeting held in Tehran, April 19, 2025.

TEHRAN - In a meeting held on Saturday between Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, and Turkey's ambassador to the Islamic Republic, Hicabi Kirlangic, emphasized strengthening cultural ties and expanding cooperation in tourism and heritage sectors.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted the deep-rooted historical and cultural connections between the two nations, noting that Iran-Turkey relations extend beyond diplomacy and are anchored in centuries of shared heritage dating back to the Ottoman era.

Referring to the legacy of Rumi (a celebrated Persian poet of the 13th century who

is better known as Molana in Iran), the minister said the mystic figure belongs to the cultural heritage of humanity and could serve as a symbol of cultural cooperation and civilizational dialogue between Iran and Turkey.

Salehi-Amiri then referred to the strong interest among Iranians in traveling to Turkey, attributing it not only to tourism infrastructure but also to shared cultural values. He added that many Alevi citizens in Turkey are eager to visit Iran's religious and cultural sites, including Mashhad and the tomb of Haji Bektash Veli (who was a 13th-century Islamic scholar and mystic) in Neyshabur.

Describing Iran as a country rich in tourism potential, the minister stated that Iran boasts 28 UNESCO World Heritage sites, over 43,000 nationally registered sites, and thousands of cultural and historical attractions. He also pointed to the country's significant handicrafts industry, with annual exports exceeding \$500 million—parts of it informally transported in personal luggage—adding that Turkey could become a key partner in expanding this sector's global reach.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian minister extended an invitation for potential Turkish investors to contribute to Iran's tourism infrastructure, noting that Iran is planning to construct 100 new hotels annually. He proposed drafting a comprehensive bilateral agreement focused on cultural, tourism, and economic cooperation with long-term prospects.

Ambassador Kirlangic, for his part, echoed the sentiment, calling Iran-Turkey relations deeper than typical neighborly ties. He stressed the importance of strengthening cultural and social relations to create synergy in other areas and called for targeted promotion of Iranian tourist destinations within Turkey.

Senior Iranian officials also participated in the meeting, including Ali Darabi, Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage; Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey, Deputy for Tourism; Maryam Jalali-Dehkordi, Deputy for Handicrafts; and Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, Head of the Ministry's Investment Center.

Darabi proposed joint cultural weeks and museum exhibitions between the two countries, while Mohseni-Bandpey advocated for technical committees to advance collaboration in areas such as Halal food tourism and pilgrimage.

Jalali-Dehkordi announced an agreement with Istanbul's mayor to establish a dedicated venue for showcasing Iranian handicrafts—an initiative seen as key to expanding international markets.

Shalbafian highlighted interest from the Turkish private sector in entering Iran's tourism market and said the ministry is developing advisory and facilitation packages to attract Turkish investors to tourism projects in Iran.



As a source of income for households, silk-weaving art plays an important role in local culture and customs.

ors, and are used specially in ceremonies and celebrations."

She said Zavin local clothes have unique designs, adding: "These clothes attract the attention of every viewer due to the use of diverse colors and traditional patterns."

Khodsetan stated that these clothes usually include long skirts, beautiful blouses, and various accessories that further enhance their beauty, adding: "In wedding ceremonies, these clothes are used as a sign of the cultural and

social identity of the bride and groom and are considered a symbol of happiness and vitality in celebrations."

She continued that although most of the clothes produced in Zavin are used within the city, some manufacturers update their products to participate in international exhibitions and offer them to global markets. This measure not only helps increase family income, but also introduces the culture and art of Zavin to the world, she added.

Local clothing workshops

There are between 300 and 350 local clothing workshops operating in Zavin. These workshops produce a variety of local and silk clothes, and their products are noticed for their beauty and high quality. In addition, the products of these workshops are such that each has unique features and designs that reflect the art and taste of local artists.

She said each silk weaving workshop in Zavin is usually run by families, which helps preserve family traditions and pass on skills to new generations, adding: "Women play an important role in these workshops and are recognized as the main artists and producers of silk weaving."

She continued that local women produce silk fabrics decorated with beautiful designs and are

applied in various ceremonies.

Khodsetan said that silk-weaving industry creates a change for women and men to work together and share their cultural experiences.

Since production of local and silk dresses is a family business, it promotes social and cultural ties among family and community members.

Training and knowledge transfer

One of challenges facing silk-weaving industry is to transfer knowledge and skill to younger generations. Although many elder women are familiar with this art, youth are less interested in these fields. Therefore, holding training workshops and training courses for youth can help preserve and promote this ancient art.

Some local dress weavers believe that these workshops can encourage the youth to learn these skills and transfer them to the future generations.

Khodsetan noted that holding training courses can include training practical skills of silk weaving, designing local dresses and familiarizing with new production techniques.

She said it can be expected that silk weaving in Zavin is considered as a tourism attraction more than before. It can help attract domestic and foreign tourists and create more job opportunities for locals, she added.

Tashkent seeks to boost sci-tech ties with Tehran

TEHRAN – Daliv Shahrukh Khozhakbarovich, Uzbekistan's first Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, has called on Iranian universities and scientific institutions to help develop technology and innovation in Uzbekistan, saying that face-to-face interaction between scientific officials is much more effective than diplomatic communications.

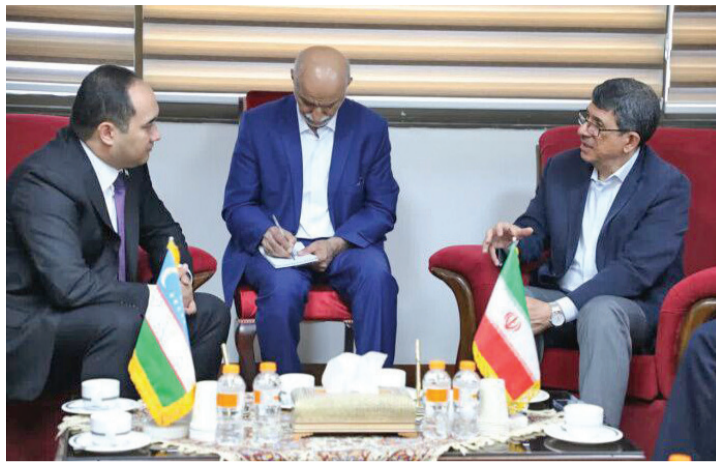
The Uzbek official made the remarks in a meeting with Farhad Yazdandoost, the head of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, on Saturday, IRNA reported.

During the meeting, the two officials discussed the potential for developing scientific and technological collaborations between the two countries.

The official said the cooperation can be centered around sharing expertise, expanding scientific collaborations among universities' chancellors, and joint funding in technological fields.

For his part, Yazdandoost elaborated on the country's scientific achievements and significant growth in the number of students after the Islamic revolution in 1979.

Over sixty science and technology parks are operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, he said, "we're also planning to attract some 300,000 foreign students in a five-year plan."



The official highlighted that cooperation between the two countries can also include conducting joint research, exchanging students and professors, and holding joint sports activities for students.

Yazdandoost also invited Uzbekistan's minister of science to participate in the second ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)-15 Dialogue Platform, which is scheduled to be hosted by Tehran.

Enhancing ties in health, education, technology

In November 2024, Uzbekistan expressed interest in enhancing cooperation with Iran in different fields, including health, education, and technology.

The country asked Iran's health sector to provide online consultation to Uzbek professionals and establish a direct link between

medical specialists of the two countries.

During a meeting held in Tehran on November 6, the head of the Organization for the Development of International Cooperation in Science and Technology, Hossein Roozbeh, and the vice president for the development of international cooperation of Uzbekistan, Fazliddin Muminov, discussed ways to expand scientific and collaborative efforts.

Expanding cooperation in the field of science, exchanging students and professors, promoting knowledge-based companies' collaborations, participating in scientific and technological events including technology exhibitions, and holding joint seminars, meetings, and symposia were among the most important focuses of the meeting.

Lauding Iran's high capacities in science and knowledge-based companies, the Uzbek official said, Iran is a powerful and prominent country in the region with high and strategic capabilities in knowledge and technology. By integrating Iran's capabilities with Uzbekistan's capacities, the two countries will benefit from remarkable progress.

"There is a potential capacity for boosting cooperation in education, interactions among professors and academics of the two countries, and exchanging test equipment, as well as technological knowledge-based products," he added.

The official further noted the interactions among officials and representatives of the two countries need to be followed up on to pave the way for effective collaborations.

Roozbeh, for his part, said there is a strong connection between the two countries in terms of history, culture, and shared identity which lays the ground for fostering education and technological cooperation.

Boosting interactions between the universities of the two countries will facilitate conducting joint activities.

Iran is willing to share its expertise in science and technology as well as education with Uzbekistan.

UN program for persons with disabilities in Iran drives meaningful progress

TEHRAN – Launched in 2023 by the United Nations Iran, the program for persons with disabilities, materialized through the joint efforts of World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has been greatly successful in improving their quality of life.

To improve inclusive service delivery, 410 professionals and frontline workers in Early Childhood Education, mental health, emergency response, and UN agencies were trained using a Disability Inclusion Training Package. This initiative strengthened their ability to provide inclusive and effective support.

For the first time in Iran, an earthquake drill was conducted in a special school for children with mobility impairments. Additionally, newly developed guidelines introduced tailored disaster preparedness strategies for children with autism, hearing impairments, and physical disabilities, setting a new standard for inclusive risk reduction.

Building on prior efforts and in 2021, the United Nations established isolation rooms in 30 facilities across 13 provinces, developed 13 risk reduction guidelines, and trained 150 caregivers—ultimately benefiting over 7,000 older persons and people with disabilities. In 2024, a study conducted by the United Nations showed that the interventions have had

significant positive impacts on outbreak preparedness, reduced infections, improved care, and lowered costs.

To promote independence and mobility, 1,099 persons with severe disabilities from low-income households in Sistan and Baluchistan—including 32 percent women and 18 percent refugees—received essential Assistive Technologies such as wheelchairs, walkers, and blind canes. Additionally, they gained access to Aids for Daily Living, including portable toilet seats and transfer boards, improving their daily functionality and quality of life.

To enhance learning opportunities, a Braille Embosser was procured for the Ministry of Education and Special Education Organization, ensuring 2,500 students with visual impairments could access inclusive educational materials. This intervention addressed 30 percent of the total national need.

Economic empowerment remained a key focus, with 135 women with disabilities in Kerman and Kohgiluyeh Boyer Ahmad receiving vocational training. Among them, 20 women participated in specialized e-commerce training through an innovative UN-led partnership with the Technical and Vocational Training Organization and the private sector, expanding their employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Impacts of sanctions on persons with disabilities

abilities

Speaking at the 17th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Ali-Mohammad Qaderi, the former head of the State Welfare Organization, said Iran will make every effort to enhance and expand the necessary services for persons with disabilities in accordance with the framework of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The conference was held from June 12 to 13, 2024 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

"This is notwithstanding the fact that the cruel sanctions imposed by the United States and many Western countries on the Islamic Republic of Iran have significantly increased the prime costs of rehabilitation items and specialized services, and affected the economic capabilities of individuals receiving such services," he said.

"Respecting persons with disabilities and striving to create equal opportunities for them has always been integral to our religious and national teachings, as well as the programs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

One of the most significant measures we have undertaken to support the rights of persons with disabilities is the enactment of the Law on Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," the official stressed.

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Over 950 earthquakes rattle Iran in a month

TEHRAN— Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran, recorded more than 950 earthquakes across the country over the past calendar month Ordibehesht (April 21-May 21).

Two earthquakes of more than 4 on the Richter scale have been recorded in the country by the National Seismological Center, the largest of which occurred on May 17, with a magnitude of 5.5 near Sankhast in northeastern North Khorasan province, which left 25 injured.

Statistically, 883 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3, and 64 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4, also, 8 quakes with magnitudes 4-5 have occurred.

Also, 3 earthquakes with magnitudes 5-6 shook the country.

ثبت بیش از ۹۵۰ زمین لرزه در اردیبهشت ماه

شبکه‌های لرزه‌نگاری مرکز لرزه‌نگاری کشوری وابسته به موسسه ژئوفیزیک دانشگاه تهران در اردیبهشت‌ماه ۱۴۰۰ تعداد ۹۵۸ زمین لرزه را ثبت کردند. این زمین لرزه‌ها در نواحی مختلف ایران و نواحی مرزی رخ داده و توسط شبکه‌های لرزه‌نگاری ثبت و تعیین محل شده‌اند. در اردیبهشت‌ماه ۱۴۰۰ تعداد ۱۱ زمین لرزه با بزرگی بیش از ۴ در داخل کشور توسط مرکز لرزه‌نگاری کشوری به ثبت رسیده است که بزرگ‌ترین آن‌ها در تاریخ ۱۴۰۰/۰۲/۲۷ با بزرگی ۵/۵ حوالی سنخواست واقع در استان خراسان شمالی، رخ داده‌است. از لحاظ آماری ۸۸۳ زمین لرزه با بزرگی کوچکتر از ۳، تعداد ۶۴ زمین لرزه با بزرگی بین ۳ و ۴، تعداد ۸ زمین لرزه با بزرگی بین ۴ و ۵ و تعداد ۳ زمین لرزه با بزرگی بین ۵ و ۶ بوده‌است.

Iranian, Italian universities ink scientific, educational MOU

TEHRAN – Shahid Beheshti University and the University of Salento, Italy, have signed a memorandum of understanding to foster scientific, research, and educational ties.

During a meeting held on Saturday in Tehran, Mahmoud-Reza Aqamiri, the chancellor of Shahid Beheshti University, and Fabio Pollice, the chancellor of the University of Salento, explored avenues for expanding scientific ties. They also become familiar with the capacities of the two universities, the ministry of science, research, and technology reported.

Based on the signed MOU, the two universities will cooperate in several areas, such as promoting educational, research, and cultural progress through holding joint educational courses for undergraduate and post-graduate students in selected fields, as well as providing sabbatical leaves for faculty members and Ph.D. students.

It also includes conducting research projects, holding workshops and seminars collaboratively, sharing academic data, publishing joint articles, exchanging post-graduate students, as well as organizing faculty members' meetings.

On April 13, Allameh Tabataba'i University of Tehran and the University of Salento, Italy, signed an MOU to enhance scientific collaborations in social and human sciences.

During the meeting held in Tehran, Shoja Ahmadvand, the chancellor of Tabataba'i University, and Pollice discussed ways to expand scientific cooperation, Mehr news agency reported.

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

For his part, Pollice suggested holding virtual Persian and Italian language courses, organizing online meetings among faculty members of the two universities and the two peer scientific groups to help them become more familiar with the existing capacities, fostering interactions between professors



of the two universities, and exchanging professors and students for short-term courses with the aim of paving the way for long-term exchanges.

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

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

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

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

Sabouri, for his part, highlighted scientific and academic achievements and capabilities of the country in various fields, including economics, management, political science, and international relations, announcing Iran's readiness to exchange professors and students with Luiss University.

AI able to cut treatment costs by 40%: official

TEHRAN – One of the main priorities of the vice-presidency for science and knowledge-based economy in the health sector is to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare to reduce treatment costs by forty percent, an official with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has said.

The country's current health care costs are very high; one of the main solutions to lower the healthcare costs (of particularly chronic diseases), and boost productivity, is using appropriate AI-based technologies, IRNA quoted Mostafa Qanei as saying.

Integrating AI into the healthcare system requires a proper roadmap and a comprehensive approach. The official went on to say that experts operating in the field will be supported in different ways to boost innovation.

Tehran will host the first symposium on artificial intelligence in health, with a focus on smart hospitals.

Tehran to host first symposium on AI in health

The first symposium on artificial intelligence in health, with a focus on smart hospitals, is planned to be held in Tehran in the summer.

AI plays a key role in the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of diseases. It also im-



proves the quality of medical services.

Organized by Amirkabir University of Technology, the event will bring experts together to discuss global solutions as well as local models to develop smart hospitals utilizing AI in hospital management, the health ministry's website reported.

The symposium will be centered around AI assistants for hospital managers, AI-optimized patient experience, automation and robotics in smart hospitals, smart healthcare monitoring of patients, Internet of Things (IoT), smart medical equipment, and AI-based decision support systems.

It will also focus on empowering doctors and staff in smart hospitals, utilizing AI in resource and supply chain management, developing brain-computer interfaces (BCIs), and discussing ethical, legal, and security issues in using AI in hospitals.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The elderly are the sources of mercy and divine blessing.
Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:03 Evening: 19:02 Dawn: 3:53 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:23 (tomorrow)

French institute to show documentary on scholar of Shi'ism Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi



Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (L) and Masoud Taheri

TEHRAN-The documentary "The Professional" directed and produced by Masoud Taheri will be screened at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) in Paris, France, on April 28.

It is a film about the life and works of professor Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, a French-Iranian scholar of Shi'ism, Honaronline reported.

The EPHE is a public higher education institution of training and research both in the humanities and social sciences and basic and applied sciences based at the Sorbonne University in Paris.

Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, 69, is an Islamologist at the EPHE. He is one of the leading academics within the study of early Twelver Shi'ism.

Several speakers are planned to deliver speeches at the session before the film screening, including French art historian and president of EPHE Michel Hochmann, director of the department of Patronage and Endowment Fund at the EPHE Marie-Pierre Lamotte, and director of studies at the EPHE Constance Arminjon.

Amir-Moezzi will also be present at the session and will speak to the audience after the film is screened along with the director of the work Masoud Taheri.

The documentary aims to educate the global community and in particular Amir-Moezzi's

homeland, Iran, on the intellectual insights of a scholar who remains largely unknown both within Iran and internationally.

As an expert on Shi'a doctrine, his views directly relate to current religious and political trends in Iran. Thus, the documentary provides this exiled academic with the opportunity to engage first-hand with his audience.

The film also aims to clarify how Amir-Moezzi's intellectual stance differs from the dominant religious studies and Islamic intellectualist discourses. The film has already achieved great success, having been featured in the national competition of the 18th edition of the Cinema Verité Festival.

Born in Tehran, Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi was the former director of studies at the Religious Sciences Section of the EPHE.

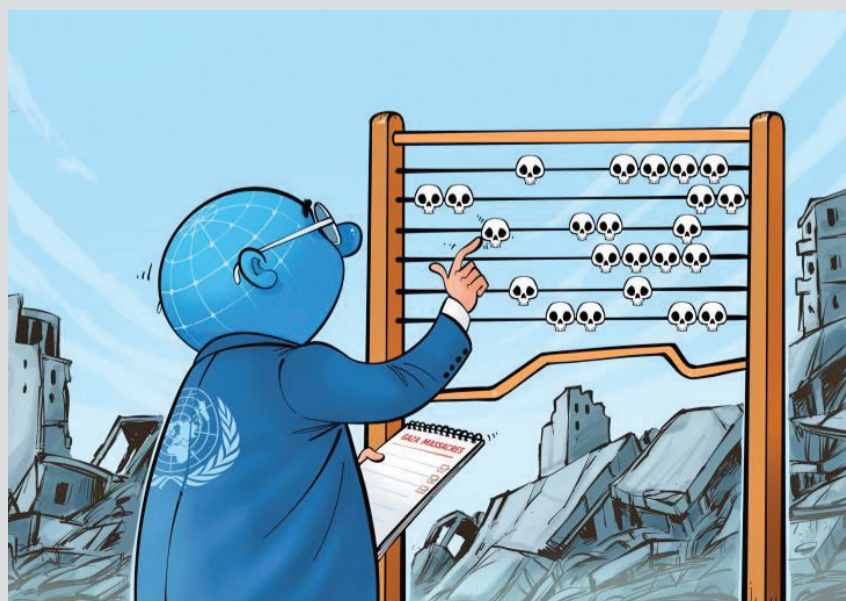
After studying in Tehran and Paris, he obtained a doctorate from the University of Paris-III and the EPHE in 1991 on the subject "Figure of the Imam and the birth of the Shia Islam, 2nd-4th century of the Hegira" with the mention "Very Honorable with unanimous congratulations". His doctoral thesis was awarded the first prize of the Mahvi Foundation in Geneva for the best doctoral thesis in Islam Studies.

Since 2015, he has been organizing monthly seminars at the University of Paris (PSL) with professors Gilles Kepel and Bernard Rougier.

Masoud Taheri is an Iranian writer, researcher, director, and film producer. He combines his technical knowledge with his background in Persian literature, history, and philosophical studies to produce philosophical, mystical, and cultural films with a scientific approach and a focus on history of philosophy, wisdom and mysticism in the World, as well as Shi'i history and theology.

His recent works include the documentaries "Al Kafi" about Shi'i hadith compiler al-Kulayni, "The Seeker of Orient" on the life and works of French philosopher and Iranologist Henry Corbin, and "The Eastern" on the legacy of Japanese scholar Toshihiko Izutsu.

Cartoon of Day



Gaza Massacre

Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

Tragic death of Palestinian photojournalist Fatima Hassouna sparks outrage, calls for justice

TEHRAN- On Wednesday, the Palestinian artistic community mourned the tragic loss of Fatima Hassouna, a 25-year-old photojournalist and artist, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike in northern Gaza.

Reports indicate that she died alongside ten family members, including her pregnant sister, when their home was struck in what can only be described as a devastating attack.

This brutal incident occurred just one day after it was announced that a documentary spotlighting Hassouna's life in Gaza would premiere at a French independent film festival running parallel to Cannes.

The timing of her death raises serious questions about whether she was specifically targeted by the Israeli military. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) claimed that the strike aimed at a Hamas operative involved in attacks on soldiers and civilians. However, many analysts and critics express skepticism towards such assertions, citing a pattern of misleading narratives from the IDF.

As reported, the military suggested that "prior to the strike, measures were taken to minimize the risk to civilians," but this is often regarded as implausible.

However, since October 7, besides journalists and media workers, numerous Palestinian artists and intellectuals—including poets, painters, and scholars—have faced deadly attacks, targeting anyone capable of depicting the harsh realities of the ongoing conflict to a broader audience.

Furthermore, the Israeli government recently confronted the uncomfortable aftermath of the Academy Awards, where the four co-directors of the documentary "No Other Land", which exposes the brutalities of Israeli ethnic cleansing in the occupied West Bank, were honored with the Best Documentary Feature award just six weeks ago.

In response, on March 24, Hamdan Ballal, one of the directors of "No Other Land", was assaulted by Israeli soldiers and



settler militants at his home in the West Bank. This incident raises concerns that discussions among Israeli officials may have taken place regarding measures to prevent future international embarrassments like the Academy Award recognition. The prospect of a pre-emptive airstrike targeting potential award nominees or festival guests aligns disturbingly with the oppressive mindset of the current Israeli ruling elite.

Fatima had hoped to attend the Cannes festival, excited yet conflicted about leaving Gaza. French-Iranian director Sepideh Farsi, who featured her in the documentary "Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk," expressed her grief and revealed her efforts to ensure Hassouna's safe movement amidst the conflict. Following the tragic news, Farsi lamented, "Now the whole family is dead," emphasizing her despair over the loss of not only Hassouna but also the future she had been dreaming of.

The atmosphere of fear surrounding journalists in Gaza cannot be overstated. As reported, several journalists have been killed since the onset of the Israeli's genocidal war in October 2023.

Colleagues such as Anas al-Shareef from Al Jazeera expressed their sorrow, stating

that Fatima had documented the atrocities of war through her powerful lens, capturing the very pain of her people. Another journalist, Miqdad Jameel, urged everyone to remember Hassouna's photographs and writings, which vividly illustrated Gaza's resilience amidst suffering.

Asma Abo, Fatima's best friend, highlighted her dedication and emotional depth in her work, describing her as "the Eye of Gaza." According to Abo, Fatima possessed an uncanny ability to connect with the individuals she photographed, treating them with genuine empathy. This sentiment was echoed in a statement from France's Association for the Distribution of Independent Cinema (ACID), which expressed horror and solidarity in light of her death, describing her life force as "miraculous."

The Israeli airstrike that claimed Hassouna's life is part of a broader pattern of violence against those reporting from conflict zones. Human rights organizations continue to document the extensive civilian casualties that often contradict claims from the Israeli military regarding their targeting of only militant infrastructure. The Center for the Protection of Palestinian Journalists stressed that approximately 212 journalists have lost their lives since the conflict

escalated, further illustrating the grave risks that those in the media face.

In her own words, Fatima once articulated a desire for a "loud death," hoping that her demise wouldn't be reduced to mere statistics. As the outpouring of grief continues, her colleagues and friends pledge to honor her legacy by continuing to document and amplify the stories of those living in strife. They demand accountability, affirming that Hassouna represented not just a talented photographer but a witness, storyteller, and symbol of resistance against obliteration.

As noted by the Gaza government media office, Hassouna's tragic fate underscores the urgent necessity of safeguarding journalists. They reiterated the call for accountability and protection for media workers, as their roles are crucial in documenting the human cost of conflict.

"Every name on our list of journalists represents a silent voice. Fatima Hassouna's name will not be forgotten, not by Gaza, and not by the world," stated the Center for the Protection of Palestinian Journalists, underscoring the imperative to remember her contribution to raising awareness about life and struggle in Gaza, even amid overwhelming adversity.

91 foreign publishers registered for Tehran Publishing Fellowship Program

TEHRAN- A total of 91 publishers from 34 countries have registered to participate in the first edition of Tehran Publishing Fellowship Program, which will be held in the Iranian capital from May 12 to 15, coinciding with the 36th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF).

The call for publishers to register for the event has attracted a diverse pool of applicants, from which 30 will be chosen based on specific criteria set by a panel of judges, IRNA reported on Sunday.

These publishers hail from countries including Albania, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Syria, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam, the report added.

Additionally, 64 Iranian publishers have registered for the fellowship, with 40 expected to be selected based on established criteria and the decisions of the judging panel.

IAF to screen "Demon Slayer: Mugen Train"

TEHRAN-The 2020 animation "Demon Slayer: Mugen Train" directed by Haruo Sotozaki will be screened at the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran on Tuesday.

A Japanese animated dark fantasy action film, it is based on the "Mugen Train" arc of the 2016-20 manga series "Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba" by Koyoharu Gotouge.

The screening, set for 6 p.m., will be followed by a review session attended by the researcher and artist Homeira Baghban Moshiri and critic Saman Bayat, Honaronline reported.

The story is about a boy raised by boars, who wears a boar's head. He boards the Infinity Train on a new mission with the Flame Pillar along with another boy who reveals his true power when he

sleeps. Their mission is to defeat a demon who has been tormenting people and killing the demon slayers who oppose it.

The film was a critical and commercial success upon its release, grossing over \$507 million worldwide and making it the highest-grossing film of 2020. It marked the first time ever that a non-American production topped the annual global

box office records, including the highest-grossing Japanese film of all time, a title previously held by "Spirited Away" (2001).

It also has received numerous awards, including Animation of the Year at the 44th Japan Academy Film Prize as well as the Best Animation Film at the 45th Hochi Film Award.



This fellowship aims to enhance Iran's presence in the global publishing arena, focusing initially on children's and young adult literature.

The term 'publishing fellowship' refers to the collaboration among publishers, authors, and literary agents for the sale of book rights. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance supports efforts in this area through initiatives like the Grant and TOP programs.

The Grant Program aims at fostering the Iranian publication industry and boosting the presence of Iranian books in global markets.

TOP or Translation of Persia is a project that promotes the translation of Persian books into other languages.

The 36th Tehran International Book Fair will be held at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosaalla from May 7 to May 17, under the motto "Let's Read for Iran".