



Iran's delegation in Oman, April 26, 2025, preparing for a third round of indirect negotiations with the United States

## Iran, US Schedule 4th Round of Talks as 'Differences' Remain

### Culture Minister attends Pope Francis' funeral

TEHRAN-The Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi participated in the funeral of Pope Francis at St. Peter's Square in Vatican City on Saturday, appearing alongside global dignitaries.

Representing President Masoud Pezeshkian, Salehi was accompanied by Mohammad Hossein Mokhtari, Iran's ambassador to the Vatican, to pay respects to the late pontiff, who died Monday at the age of 88 after years of declining health, IRNA reported.

Separately, Ali Bahreini, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations office in Geneva, signed a book of condolences at the Vatican's permanent mission on Thursday, expressing Tehran's sympathy, IRNA reported. ▶ Page 8

### Iran offers itself as mediator amid rising tensions between India and Pakistan

By Xavier Villar

MADRID - The relations between India and Pakistan are experiencing one of their most delicate moments in years. A terrorist attack on Monday in the Kashmir region administered by India, which resulted in 26 deaths, has significantly increased tensions in one of the world's most volatile areas. ▶ Page 3

### The myth of Iran's 'collapse': How Western media misreads Tehran's strategic resolve in Oman talks

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN - In the last days of April, as Oman prepared to host the third round of indirect nuclear talks between Iran and the United States, the Washington Post published an article titled "Iranian Elite Grows Supportive of Nuclear Talks as Economic Fears Spike," which disingenuously insists that Tehran entered the nuclear talks "because it faces the prospect of economic collapse."

Authored by Susannah George and Nilo Tabrizy, the piece recycles a tired narrative: a "sanctions-crippled" Iran, trembling under economic strain, is forced to negotiate with Washington out of desperation. ▶ Page 2

### The legacy of colonialism: The Kashmir wound reopened after the Pahalgam attack

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN - The most recent conflict between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir region has once again brought the area to the brink of a deep crisis, especially since both nations are armed with nuclear weapons.

The modern history of Kashmir's conflict dates back to 1947, when British India was partitioned into Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Today, India controls the most populous portion of the region, which includes the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh. Pakistan holds parts of northern Kashmir, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam in the Indian-administered Kashmir, which resulted in the tragic demise of numerous tourists, has not only intensified India's animosity towards Pakistan but has also garnered global scrutiny regarding the prospects of an extensive military conflict.

### Geagea's relentless effort to wrest parliamentary seats from the Shiite duo

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT - The Lebanese Forces and its leader, Samir Geagea, are preoccupied with monitoring the potential repercussions of the success or failure of the negotiations between Washington and Tehran, fearing that any positive outcome will hinder an "achievement" against the resistance movement. This is reflected in the organized campaigns waged by the Lebanese Forces against President Joseph Aoun.

Samir Geagea believes that the success of the agreement will benefit Iran's regional allies, specifically Hezbollah. Above all, they fear an unprecedented activity by Hezbollah to rebuild its structure and capabilities, which they believed had been destroyed by the recent US-led Israeli aggression.

### Syria vows "no threat to Israel" for sanctions relief

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Syria has reportedly provided a written response to the U.S. conditions for lifting sanctions.

Reuters noted that Syria stated in the letter that it is working to form a committee to monitor the activities of Palestinian resistance groups within its territory, adding that it seeks further discussions on the matter.

Reports have surfaced over the past week of a Syrian government crackdown on Palestinian resistance figures and groups.

Critics accuse the Syrian government of abandoning the Palestinian cause and the ongoing genocide in Gaza in a bid to gain relief from Western sanctions.

Experts have pointed out that the former Syrian government paid a heavy price for supporting anti-Israeli resistance movements in Lebanon and Palestine, even rejecting offers of sanctions relief.

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## Explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port leaves 8 dead, 750 injured



■ The incident occurred at around 12.30 pm local time on Saturday.

■ Some containers carrying chemicals had probably exploded.

■ Twenty rapid response teams were dispatched to the incident site.

■ First Vice-President Mohammad-Reza Aref has ordered immediate and comprehensive investigations. ▶ Page 7



## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## Araghchi's warning to the Israelis

In a note, Hamshahri addressed Araghchi's warning to the Israelis amid the negotiations and wrote: On Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on his X account about possible Israeli sabotage acts or assassinations during the Iran-U.S. nuclear talks.

Israel has a long history of sabotage acts during the nuclear talks; Araghchi's warning came at a time when the Iran-U.S. nuclear talks in Rome and Muscat have made progress.

The negotiations, which may reach a new stage with the start of expert talks, seem to have raised concerns in Israel.

Israel, which suffers from the illusion that Iran's nuclear program poses an existential threat, has a long history of trying to disrupt such talks.

Araghchi's warning came due to the history of Israeli sabotage acts, intelligence from Iranian security agencies, and media speculation about possible moves by Tel Aviv.

## Arman-e-Emrooz: A fateful Saturday for Iranian diplomacy

Arman-e-Emrooz devoted its headline to the start of the third round of talks on April 26. The paper said: Iranian negotiators arrived in Muscat on Saturday to hold the third round of talks with U.S. representatives in the capital of Oman.

So far, Iranian and U.S. leaders have expressed satisfaction with the talks, but the U.S. secretary of state recently said that Iran must stop enriching uranium and import nuclear fuel from abroad.

Iran has declared that its right to enrich uranium is non-negotiable and insisted it will not back down.

While Donald Trump has repeatedly said that "Iran must not obtain a nuclear weapon" and has introduced this as his red line, officials in his administration still differ on the details of this policy.

According to Esmail Baghaei, the spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran is determined to protect the legal and legitimate rights of its people to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and at the same time, it is ready to take reasonable steps to fully assure the peaceful nature of its nuclear program.

## Ettelaat: Purpose of Araghchi's trips to Russia and China during the negotiations

Ettelaat discussed Araghchi's trips to Russia and China by interviewing political expert and former legislator Heshmatollah Falahat-

pisheh. He said: The primary purpose of these trips is to show how difficult the negotiations between Iran and the United States are.

Unfortunately, due to a mistake that was made in the past, Iran had linked a large part of its nuclear negotiations to Western and Eastern mediators, and now we see that by the will of the Americans, the Eastern mediators, namely China and Russia, have been removed from the negotiations, but the Western mediators, namely Europe, are playing the role of a "stick" in the negotiations between Iran and the United States with a weapon called the "snapback mechanism."

During his visit to France, the U.S. Secretary of State asked the country's officials to keep this stick active.

Therefore, the Americans want Iran to be in a tight spot in order to gain maximum points.

Therefore, Iran is trying to keep the Eastern parties as its supporters in the negotiations by making such trips. In the current situation, an action that involves a political or economic action can strengthen Iran's position.

## Shargh: Another step forward

In an analysis, Shargh addressed Araghchi's proposal to resume diplomacy with the European troika and wrote: The proposal to negotiate with the European troika can be analyzed from two points of view. First, this proposal could be a sign of Tehran's concern about the European troika activating the snapback mechanism.

In any case, the snapback mechanism, which can automatically restore international sanctions, is a serious threat to Iran. Araghchi's proposal to negotiate and travel to European capitals may be a strategic attempt to open the door to dialogue to dissuade London, Berlin, and Paris from taking action against Iran at this meeting.

Second, Araghchi's proposal could be interpreted as a continuation of Iran's policy of de-escalation with the West, which has recently been observed in its interactions with the United States and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

After making progress in negotiations with Washington and cooperating with the Agency, Iran may now want to extend this approach to relations with the European troika.

Araghchi's reference to successful consultations in Moscow and Beijing and his readiness to travel to Europe indicate an attempt to create a broader diplomatic framework.

## Neighborly ties a priority for Iranian admin, MP says ahead of Pezeshkian's Baku visit

TEHRAN – Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said on Saturday that the 14th administration has made regional diplomacy a priority, with a special focus on enhancing cooperation with neighbors.

"Expanding political, economic, and cultural relations with neighboring states is a cornerstone of Iran's foreign policy," Boroujerdi told IRNA as Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is reported to pay a visit to Azerbaijan on Monday.

The lawmaker emphasized that Azerbaijan, with its historical, religious, and cultural ties to Iran, as well as its potential for economic and trade collaboration, remains a key focus for Tehran.

"The President's visit to Baku is highly significant and will play an influential role in strengthening bilateral relations," Boroujerdi said.

"Neighboring countries are important partners, particularly in times of crisis, and Iran has always sought to build closer ties across all sectors."

He added that the upcoming trip marks the continuation of efforts over recent years to revitalize Iran-Azerbaijan relations and expressed hope for "a new and comprehensive



phase of cooperation" between the two nations.

Boroujerdi stressed that Iran has consistently pursued its neighborhood policy based on shared interests, and said the visit could open fresh opportunities for expanded engagement.

Mehdi Sanaei, the Deputy for Political Affairs in the President's Office, confirmed in a post on his X account that President Pezeshkian will travel to Baku on April 28 at the invitation of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

"Several programs have been scheduled, and we hope this visit will mark the beginning of a new era in cooperation between the two brotherly nations, especially in areas such as trade and border province partnerships," Sanaei wrote.

## Restoring Syria's sovereignty is key to lasting peace: Iran UN envoy

TEHRAN – Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, has reiterated Tehran's unwavering support for a sovereign, stable, and united Syria—free from terrorism, foreign occupation, and external interference.

Speaking at a UN meeting, Iravani underscored the urgent need to combat terrorism in Syria, particularly the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), whom he labeled a "serious danger" to both Syria and the wider region. He called for the repatriation and prosecution of these fighters in accordance with international law, stressing Iran's readiness to cooperate with all responsible partners in counterterrorism efforts.

The Iranian envoy also expressed deep concern over the March 6 attacks in Latakia and Tartus, which resulted in significant civilian casualties, notably among the Alawite community. He voiced Iran's support for the UN Security Council's call for an independent and transparent investigation into the incidents, emphasizing the need for accountability and protection of all communities within Syria under



international law.

Iravani reaffirmed Iran's steadfast commitment to Syria's sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity, urging the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign forces unlawfully present in the country. Ending foreign occupation, he stressed, is crucial for restoring Syria's sovereignty and achieving lasting peace.

Turning to Israeli actions, Iravani condemned the Israeli regime's ongoing violations of Syria's sovereignty, labeling them a "blatant breach" of international law, the UN Charter, Security Council res-

olutions, and the 1974 Disengagement Agreement. He cited a recent UNDOF report detailing Israeli incursions into the buffer zone and the establishment of military outposts, warning that such actions threaten international peace and security.

The Iranian ambassador called on the UN Security Council to take immediate action, warning that continued inaction only fuels further aggression and impunity, drawing a parallel with the escalating crisis in Gaza.

Highlighting Syria's dire humanitarian situation, Iravani pointed

out that more than 70% of the Syrian population—around 16.7 million people—currently require humanitarian assistance, the highest figure since the conflict began in 2011. He noted that over seven million Syrians remain internally displaced, while millions more live as refugees in neighboring countries, with aid efforts severely underfunded.

Addressing the impact of US sanctions, Iravani condemned the measures as "unjustified," arguing they block reconstruction efforts, cripple the economy, and hinder refugee returns. He called for the immediate and unconditional lifting of all sanctions on Syria.

Rejecting accusations of destabilizing Syria or the broader region, Iravani insisted such claims are politically motivated distortions of Iran's position. He reaffirmed Tehran's support for a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, advocating for free and fair elections, national dialogue, and the formation of an inclusive government as the foundation for a peaceful settlement.

## The myth of Iran's 'collapse': How Western media misreads Tehran's strategic resolve in Oman talks

## Iranian elite grows supportive of nuclear talks as economic fears spike

As negotiations resume this weekend, analysts cite an emerging consensus among Iranian officials that engagement with the Trump administration should be a priority.



From page 1 ▶ But peel back the layers of this Western media trope and you'll see how the article spins a yarn of desperation, leaning on shadowy "analysts" and a curated slice of Iranian media, only to collapse like a house of cards.

Far from a frail supplicant, Iran approached these talks with the poise of a chess grandmaster—and it was the U.S., not Iran, that retreated from its failed "maximum pressure" campaign to seek dialogue, with Iran's conditions.

## The flawed premise: Who blinked first?

The Post's central claim—that Iran's elite are spooked into talks—collapses under scrutiny. Far from pleading for relief, it was the United States that initiated dialogue.

In March, U.S. President Donald Trump sent a letter to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, via Emirati diplomat Anwar Gargash, seeking to de-escalate tensions.

Tehran's response was characteristically measured—rather than groveling for this opening, it engaged in indirect talks mediated by Oman that were strictly limited to nuclear issues.

"Let me be clear: under no circumstances will we negotiate on any other matter but the nuclear program," declared Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi after concluding the third round of talks on Saturday, underscoring a red line etched into Iran's diplomatic DNA.

This is not the behavior of a desperate state. It is the calculated maneuvering of a nation that has weathered four decades of sanctions and hybrid warfare.

Ayatollah Khamenei has repeatedly dismissed negotiations with "bully states" that seek to "dominate and impose their own expectations."

His skepticism is rooted in his-

tory: The U.S. issued direct and indirect threats against Iran about "all the options" it has on the table. It then became part of the negotiations that produced the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Later, Washington unilaterally abandoned the pact despite Iran's commitment to its implementation, as confirmed by international organizations. Finally, under Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign in 2018, it reimposed crushing sanctions, inflicting "unnecessary suffering" on ordinary Iranians.

Once again flip-flopping in his second term, Trump shifted the focus of his letter to the Iranian leadership solely to the nuclear issue, reportedly adopting a respectful tone.

This marked a stark contrast to his earlier "maximum pressure" directive, which disregarded Iran's red lines and targeted multiple areas, including its defensive capabilities.

While Iran rejected Washington's "maximum pressure" approach, Tehran's calculated response to Trump's letter ultimately paved the way for the current indirect nuclear talks mediated by Oman.

Tehran's willingness to engage reflects a shift in U.S. posture, not Iranian weakness. After months of "maximum pressure" and "bomb Iran" rhetoric, Washington's overture signals the failure of its previous policy.

Iran, meanwhile, has chosen to negotiate as a tactical move while maintaining the upper hand—an advantage evident in three key areas: the strict limitation of talks to the nuclear issue, the choice of venue, and the indirect nature of the negotiations.

**Hardening under economic pressure**

The Post's portrayal of Iran's

economy as a house of cards ignores a critical reality: sanctions have not broken Tehran—they have hardened it.

While inflation and currency fluctuations are real challenges, Iran's resistance economy has spurred innovation in sectors from drone technology to pharmaceuticals.

Domestic manufacturing now supplies 85% of medical needs, and tech startups flourish despite financial blockades.

Tehran has turned adversity into innovation: defense products that rival global standards, a pharmaceutical sector defying isolation, and a nuclear program that humbles its foes. Internationally, Iran is anchoring itself within a rising multipolar order.

Trade with China hit \$18 billion in 2023, while membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS opens alternative economic corridors.

"The nation's affairs should not be dependent on talks," the Leader of the Islamic Revolution recently asserted, emphasizing ongoing national projects in infrastructure, energy, and defense.

## Leadership continuity: The myth of division

The Post's claim of an "emerging consensus" among Iranian "elites" misreads Tehran's power structure.

Strategic decisions in Iran flow from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), and other institutions, not just the presidency or "elites."

In a 2021 speech, Ayatollah Khamenei explained the country's decision-making process: "Foreign policy is not determined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but shaped by higher-level bodies and senior officials of the country."

He emphasized that while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs participates in the process, it is not the final decision-maker.

Instead, he described the ministry as an executor of foreign policy decisions, which are made in forums like the SNSC, where all key officials are present.

## The authors' blind spots: Expertise matters

The Post's analysis suffers from another critical flaw: its authors and the "experts" they cite lack genuine expertise on Iran.

Nilo Tabrizy, a video journalist specializing in "visual forensics," has no background in Iranian geo-

politics.

An "analyst" such as Gregory Brew of Ian Bremmer's Eurasia Group, a consultancy with ties to Western corporate interests, recycles stale narratives of elite discord.

Their sources—anonymous analysts and cherry-picked Iranian media quotes—fail to provide meaningful insight.

They introduce an "expert," Khasha Sefat, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Tehran, as being "close to Iran's conservative leadership," offering no evidence for the claim.

While Sefat may offer useful analysis on sociology, he clearly lacks knowledge of what is happening "behind the scenes" between Iran's leader and the president, the way the Post has cited him.

Additionally, by framing Iran's pragmatism as weakness, the Post absolves Washington of its role in destabilizing West Asia.

A masterclass in selective amnesia, the article overlooks Iran's resilience: it not only outlasted Saddam Hussein's U.S.-backed invasion and withstood hybrid warfare by the Israeli regime, but also transformed sanctions into a catalyst for technological autonomy.

Moreover, it fails to mention key strategic alliances, including the 2021 China-Iran 25-year cooperation pact and Iran-Russia's 20-year strategic pact.

This is not journalism—it's narrative warfare. George and Tabrizy's depiction of a desperate Iran echoes the fading unipolar mindset of the past.

The West, clinging to outdated tropes, risks losing sight of the bigger picture.

Tehran engages the world not from a place of weakness, but with hard-earned strength. While the U.S. may have drafted the letter, Iran firmly holds the pen that writes its future.

To truly understand Tehran, Western media must cast aside outdated Orientalist clichés and appreciate Iran for what it genuinely is—a nation defined by enduring strength and innovation, deeply rooted in one of the world's oldest civilizations.

# Iran, US schedule 4th round of talks as 'differences' remain

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says major differences between Iran and the United States remain unresolved following the third round of indirect negotiations, which concluded on Saturday, April 26, in Muscat, Oman.

Speaking after the talks, Araghchi noted that although the two sides had moved beyond general discussions and engaged seriously on detailed matters, key disagreements still persist. "During the recent round of negotiations, we provided answers to the other side's questions, and the atmosphere was completely serious and work-focused," he told the reporters. "It was agreed that further reviews would be conducted in the capitals ahead of the next meeting to identify ways to narrow the gaps."

Araghchi emphasized that while the seriousness of both delegations was a promising sign, optimism must remain cautious. He also confirmed that the next round of negotiations is expected to take place next Saturday in Muscat, with the participation of expert teams that will be reinforced in accordance with the technical needs of the discussions.

In a separate statement, Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr al-Bu-



saidi said the talks had identified "a shared aspiration to reach agreement based on mutual respect and enduring commitments," adding that core principles, objectives, and technical concerns were addressed. He announced that a further high-level meeting is provisionally scheduled for May 3.

Throughout the negotiations, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei described the atmosphere as "serious," noting that the parties were exchanging views via Omani mediators on two principal areas: securing the effective termination of U.S. sanctions and building trust regarding the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

Baghaei stressed that safeguarding Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy remains central to the discussions.

Earlier on Friday, Baghaei reiterated that progress would depend on the demonstration of goodwill, seriousness, and realism by the U.S. side.

Araghchi and U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, led two previous rounds of indirect talks on Iran's nuclear program and sanctions relief in Muscat and Rome on April 12 and 19, respectively.

Technical talks aimed at working through the finer details of a potential replacement for the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

(JCPOA) had initially been scheduled for April 23 but were postponed until April 26, aligning with the third round of indirect negotiations.

The Iranian technical delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi and Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi. On the U.S. side, Michael Anton, the State Department's head of policy planning, led the technical discussions.

Trump withdrew the United States from the JCPOA in 2018 during his first term in office and reimposed sweeping sanctions on Iran under a "maximum pressure" campaign. After returning to the White House for a second term in January, Trump reinstated that policy but has recently signaled a willingness to negotiate a new deal.

On March 12, Trump sent a letter to Iran's leadership proposing negotiations for a new agreement. Iran, however, has ruled out direct talks under conditions of pressure and threats.

On a separate note, Araghchi also attended the 29th Muscat International Book Fair on Friday, where he signed copies of his book "The Power of Negotiation" at the Dar Luban pavilion.

## Iran offers itself as mediator amid rising tensions between India and Pakistan

From Page 1 ▶ The attack, targeting a group of tourists in the mountainous town of Pahalgam, has been described by authorities as the deadliest assault on civilians in the region in the past two decades. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised that all those involved, including those who collaborated with the attackers, would be punished. New Delhi has accused Pakistan of backing what it calls "cross-border terrorism." India, which views itself as a victim of terrorism originating from its neighbor, has intensified its diplomatic and security measures.

In response, Islamabad has denied any involvement in the attack and condemned what it sees as a political exploitation of the incident. At the same time, Pakistan has expressed its rejection of the Indian government's decision to unilaterally suspend a key water-sharing treaty, the Indus Waters Treaty, which regulates the use of this vital resource between the two countries. This action has been interpreted by Pakistani authorities as an "act of war," further escalating tensions.

Both countries, which possess nuclear weapons, have taken diplomatic steps to confront the situation. India has closed its main border crossing with Pakistan and withdrawn its military attaches from its diplomatic mission in Islamabad. Additionally, both governments have suspended visa issuance for citizens of the neighboring country, creating a new atmosphere of hostility.

The Kashmir conflict, a region with a Muslim-majority population whose sovereignty has been disputed since the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, remains a constant source of friction between the two countries. The latest escalation raises the fear that a new open crisis could once again endanger the stability of South Asia, a region that, in addition to its strategic resources, is home to over 1.6 billion people.

### Drastic Measures and Regional Consequences

On Wednesday, under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India's Cabinet Security Committee implemented a series of drastic measures. Among them, the number of diplomats at both countries' embassies was reduced from 55 to 30, and the Indus Waters Treaty was suspended. This treaty, which

governs the shared use of water resources between India and Pakistan, has been considered fundamental for cooperation and stability in the region, and its suspension has heightened tensions.

Additionally, India closed the only active border crossing between the two countries and ordered all Pakistani citizens who entered India through this crossing to leave by May 1. Those who entered under the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) visa exemption must depart within 48 hours.

These measures, taken by India in response to the attack and accusations from Pakistan, have not been well received in Islamabad. In response, Pakistan's National Security Committee warned that any attempt by India to alter the course of the Indus River would be considered a hostile act and equivalent to a declaration of war. Pakistan, for its part, also immediately suspended all trade with India, including transactions through third countries that use its territory, and closed its airspace to all Indian flights.

Iran's role, with its capacity for dialogue and commitment to regional stability, can provide a pathway to de-escalating tensions

### Iran's role: a mediator and bridge between two neighbors

Amid this growing climate of tension, Iran, which maintains good relations with both countries, has offered itself as a mediator to prevent the situation from spiraling into open conflict. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi expressed Tehran's willingness to facilitate understanding between India and Pakistan. In a message published on social media, Araghchi emphasized that Iran considers both countries "brothers and neighbors," with deep-rooted relations dating back centuries.

"India and Pakistan are brothers and neighbors of Iran, and their relations have deep roots in cultural and civilizational ties that date back hundreds of years. We



consider them, as we do with other neighbors, our top priority," Araghchi stated, highlighting the importance of good-neighborly relations and regional cooperation.

This approach underscores Iran's view that a conflict between India and Pakistan must be avoided at all costs. The Iranian government, which has cultivated relationships with both India and Pakistan over the years, has offered its mediation as a pragmatic alternative to the escalation of tensions. From Iran's perspective, an open conflict would not only be detrimental to regional stability but could also have global repercussions, given the nuclear capabilities of both countries.

### Iran: a mediator with deep ties to India and Pakistan

In the past, Iran has offered its mediation as an alternative to proposals from other international actors, such as Saudi Arabia, which has also shown interest in influencing the dynamics of the subcontinent. Iran's proposal stands out for its pragmatic approach, based on the historic positive relations Iran maintains with both India and Pakistan. Unlike other nations, Iran has sought to remain neutral, not directly engaging in the internal disputes of its neighbors, but providing a space for dialogue.

Tehran believes that its role as a mediator could be more effective and acceptable to both sides due to its geographic location, cultural proximity, and the historical relationships it has cultivated with both countries.

For example, Pakistan is one of Iran's main trading partners in the region, while relations with India have significantly improved in recent years, particularly with the strengthening of ties in areas such as cooperation at the Chabahar port in southeastern Iran.

### A shared interest: preventing escalation

The concern that the situation could spiral into a broader conflict

is not without merit. Both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons, and any confrontation between them could have catastrophic consequences—not only for the region but for global stability. In this context, Iran's mediation emerges as a crucial and viable option, aiming to avert a large-scale conflict. Despite the historical and political tensions between India and Pakistan, Iran is uniquely positioned to serve as a bridge between the two, thanks to its longstanding, amicable relations with both countries. Iran has demonstrated its commitment to peaceful dispute resolution in the past, mediating successfully in other regional conflicts. Its approach, grounded in mutual respect and diplomacy, makes it an attractive and trusted mediator.

Tehran has reiterated its readiness to offer its "good offices" to foster a deeper, more productive dialogue between India and Pakistan. This commitment underscores Iran's belief that diplomacy and negotiation are the only effective means of resolving long-standing disputes, ensuring peace and stability in the South Asian region.

The tension between India and Pakistan remains one of the main threats to peace and stability in South Asia. Given the severity of the situation, Iran's mediation presents an opportunity to avoid a catastrophic conflict. Iran's role, with its capacity for dialogue and commitment to regional stability, can provide a pathway to de-escalating tensions and fostering a peace process that benefits both countries.

In this critical moment, the parties involved must recognize the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding. Iran, as an impartial mediator, could play a key role in preventing the situation from turning into an open conflict that would not only jeopardize peace in the region but also the well-being of its populations and global balance.

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Straight Truth  
TEHRAN TIMES

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## SPORTS

### Esteghlal, Malavan book place in 2024/25 Hazfi Cup semifinals



TEHRAN – Esteghlal and Malavan football teams booked their place in the 2024/25 Iran's Hazfi Cup semifinals on Saturday.

In Tehran's Azadi Stadium, Esteghlal edged past first tier Paykan courtesy of a goal from Ramin Rezaei in the 74th minute from the penalty spot.

Earlier in the day, defending champions Sepahan lost to Malavan 4-2 on penalty shootout after a goalless draw.

On Friday, Gol Gohar had advanced to the semifinals, beating Nassaji 3-1 in Ghaemshahr.

Esteghlal and Persepolis are the most successful clubs with seven titles each in Hazfi Cup, which founded in 1976.

### Hosseinnejad scores for Dynamo Makhachkala against Krasnodar

TEHRAN – Krasnodar football team defeated Dynamo Makhachkala 3-2 in the match of the 26th round of the Russian Premier League at the Anzhi Arena stadium in Kaspiysk.

Krasnodar's goals were scored by forwards Kobnan David (6th minute), Joao Batchi (45th) and midfielder Eduard Spertsyan (65th).

Midfielders Mohammad Hosseinnejad (25th) and Kirill Zinovich (86th) scored for the visiting team.

Following the results of the match, Krasnodar retained the lead in the championship, while Dynamo remained in the middle of the table.

In the next round, Krasnodar will meet Rubin Kazan at its home stadium on May 3, while Dynamo host a match against Akron Togliatti a day earlier on May 2.

### Bottlegate in Iran football

TEHRAN – On Friday night, during a heated match between Foolad and Tractor in the Iranian football league, an incident occurred that marred the excitement of the game.

Foolad fans displayed disruptive behavior by throwing bottles onto the field, prompting concerns about crowd control and safety measures in Iranian football.

#### \*Incident overview

As tensions rose in the match, which was closely contested, some Foolad supporters resorted to throwing plastic bottles onto the pitch, disrupting the flow of the game and endangering players and officials. The incident occurred late in the second half when the match was still in a precarious balance, intensifying the frustration felt by the fans as their team struggled to secure a favorable outcome.

#### \*Impact on the match

The match had to be temporarily halted as officials worked to clear the field of debris. Players from both teams expressed their unease, and coaches raised concerns about the influence of such behavior on the atmosphere of the match. This incident not only affected the players' focus but also put additional stress on the referees and match officials tasked with maintaining order.

#### \*Football is for unity not disruption

The bottle-throwing incident during the

Foolad and Tractor match serves as a reminder of the ongoing challenges in managing fan behavior in sports. It calls attention to the need for better education on sportsmanship and stricter enforcement of regulations to ensure that football matches can be enjoyed as they should be—passionately but peacefully. The hope is that through collective effort, future matches can be a source of unity and celebration rather than disruption and conflict.

### Iranian table tennis players win two golds in Sarajevo Youth Contender

TEHRAN – Benyamin Faraj and Nikan Shirvani of Iran won two gold medals in the 2025 WTT Youth Contender Sarajevo on Friday.

Faraj defeated Slovenian player Miha Podobnik 3-1 in the U17 Boys Singles final match.

He had defeated rivals from Slovakia, Italy, Czech Republic and Croatia on his way to the final.

Shirvani also won a gold medal in the U11 Boys Singles.

He had defeated Serbian, and two Bosnians on his way to the final.

The 2025 WTT Youth Contender was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina from April 22 to 25.

### Iran in pot 2 of U20 WAC Qualifiers

TEHRAN – The quest towards Continental glory will begin for the future stars of Asian football when the official draw ceremony for the AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers takes place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Monday.

The competition, which transitioned from its erstwhile identity of a U19 competition to a U20 contest in 2022, will see 33 teams compete from August 2 to 10 for the 11 available spots to join host Thailand in the Finals next year.

The participating teams, divided into eight groups – seven groups of four teams and one group of five – will battle in a Group Stage format across eight centralized venues in Bhutan, China, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

The group winners will be joined by the three best runners-up, alongside the host, to complete the cast of 12 teams for the 12th edition of the AFC Women's U-20 Asian Cup, which will take place from April 1 to 18, 2026.

The Qualifiers will see two-time champion DPR Korea return to defend its crown while three other former champions, China, Japan and Korea Republic will also vie to reclaim the coveted title.

Joining them will be 16 teams – Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Mongolia, Northern Mariana Islands, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Timor Leste and Turkmenistan – who are seeking to make their maiden appearance in the Finals.

With the seedings based on a points system derived from their final rankings across the previous three editions of the Finals, the teams will have their names drawn from five pots, while an additional Hosts Pot will be used to separate the group hosts from the rest of the participants.

The pot allocations for the draw, with teams arranged according to rankings and group hosts placed in the Hosts Pot, are as below:

**Pot 1:** DPR Korea, Japan, Australia, Korea Republic

**Pot 2:** Chinese Taipei, Iran, Lebanon, Nepal, India, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Bangladesh

**Pot 3:** Hong Kong, China, Cambodia, Palestine, Northern Mariana Islands, Indonesia

**Pot 4:** Guam, Turkmenistan, Mongolia, Singapore

**Pot 5:** Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Timor-Leste

Hosts Pot: China (Seeding: 1), Vietnam (1), Uzbekistan (1), Myanmar (1), Malaysia (3), Bhutan (3), Laos (3), Tajikistan (4)

## South Pars gas platforms undergo major overhaul ahead of winter demand



TEHRAN — Iran has launched its annual overhaul of gas platforms at the South Pars field to ensure stable output during the high-demand winter months, a senior official said.

Sepehdar Abbaszadeh, acting deputy for operations and support at Pars Oil and Gas Company, said maintenance work has begun on 33 offshore platforms as part of a scheduled program.

“The main goal is to guarantee uninterrupted gas production during the cold season,” he said, highlighting the importance of executing the overhaul precisely to maintain operational readiness.

In addition to routine tasks, this year’s overhaul will include high-priority operations such as repairing flare tips located 80 meters above sea level, replacing the pig launcher outlet elbow, installing 32-inch valves, and inspecting, repairing, and cleaning high-pressure storage tanks.

South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf water, is divided into 24 standard phases of development in the first stage. Most of the phases are fully operational at the moment.

The huge offshore field covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which are in Iran’s territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar’s territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world’s reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

In mid-March, the managing director of Iran’s South Pars Gas Complex announced that the company has localized the production of 11,589 equipment items.

## TEDPIX gains 14,000 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 14,149 points to 3.151 million on Saturday, which is the first day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

In late March, the head of Iran Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) outlined the five major plans for enhancing efficiency and transparency in the capital market in the new Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21.

Hojatollah Seyedi outlined five initiatives for the capital market this year, which include expanding the market through initial public offerings (IPOs), especially company-project listings, and increasing the capital of listed companies.

He expressed hope that the number of companies in the capital market would exceed 1,000 this year (currently there are over 700 companies).

Entrepreneurs and private companies are encouraged to take advantage of capital market opportunities, he emphasized.

He continued by explaining the second initiative: enhancing transparency, efficiency, and timely information dissemination in the capital market.

The third program focuses on improving corporate governance systems to ensure listed companies are better managed, achieving higher performance and increased profitability, all aligned with supporting pro-

duction, the official added.

According to a statement from the complex, Gholamabbas Hosseini highlighted the extensive support provided to domestic manufacturers and knowledge-based companies, leading to cost savings of 4.0 trillion rials (\$8.0 million) through the local production of strategic parts and equipment.

Among the key achievements, Hosseini pointed to the successful domestic manufacturing of a gas transmission turbine by an Iranian company, which has reduced reliance on foreign suppliers.

In recent months, the complex has procured domestically produced goods and equipment worth 24 trillion rials (\$480 million) for South Pars refineries, preventing significant foreign currency outflows. This initiative has resulted in foreign exchange savings of 4.8 million euros (\$5.2 million).

As the country’s and the West Asia’s largest gas producer, South Pars Gas Complex has prioritized the rapid localization of high-tech and high-consumption components, Hosseini said. To accelerate this process, the company has identified critical parts and proposed their production to knowledge-based firms.

Iran has increasingly focused on domestic production of oil and gas equipment in recent years, particularly in response to international sanctions that have restricted access to foreign technology and components. The government has encouraged local manufacturers to step in and meet the industry’s demands, reducing dependence on imports and enhancing self-sufficiency in the energy sector.

The localization drive has led to the successful production of key equipment such as compressors, turbines, drilling rigs, and control systems. Several Iranian companies, in collaboration with research institutes and universities, have been able to reverse-engineer and manufacture complex machinery that was previously sourced from foreign suppliers.

Despite facing challenges such as limited access to advanced raw materials and specialized machinery, Iran’s oil and gas sector continues to expand its domestic capabilities. The push for local production not only strengthens the industry’s resilience but also contributes to job creation and technological advancement within the country.



duction, the official added.

Seyedi announced two other plans: one to strengthen structures and the other to upgrade and rebuild the capital market’s information technology system.

Regarding the capital market’s value this year, he clarified that it will ultimately depend on market participants and remains unpredictable. However, efforts will focus on increasing transparency, liquidity, and efficiency to grow and improve the market compared to last year.

He emphasized the importance of shareholder rights, stating, “Shareholders must feel their rights are respected and supported”, adding that safeguarding shareholders’ rights depends on enhancing the efficiency of listed companies.

The SEO head further stressed fair transactions, preventing asymmetry in the dissemination of company information, and ensuring shareholders have access to company performance data to make informed decisions, such as whether to hold or sell their shares.

# Iran, Russia ink MOU at end of Joint Economic Committee meeting

TEHRAN- Iran and Russia signed the MOU of their 18th joint economic committee meeting at the end of the meeting in Moscow on Friday.

The document, signed by Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad and Russian Energy Minister Sergey Tsivilev, as the chairmen of the committee, lays the ground for development of strategic cooperation between the two countries in different economic areas.

In a press conference on Friday, after the 18th meeting of Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee, Iranian oil minister explaining the most important achievements of the meeting, and said: “The agreements reached have outlined the framework for long-term cooperation between the two countries, and the Ministry of Oil will seriously pursue the practical implementation of these agreements.”

He said that the meeting was held with the participation of specialized committees in the fields of trade, economy, finance, banking, transportation, customs, industry, mining, energy, health, agriculture, tourism, and technology, and the final memorandum of understanding of this meeting was signed by both sides.

Thanking the Russian side for hosting, he stated: “The decisions of the past months within the framework of specialized committees and the documents signed at this meeting have provided a suitable platform for the development of bilateral economic cooperation, especially in the new international conditions.”

Referring to the areas of focus for both parties, the minister of oil stated: “Developing cooperation in the upstream oil and gas sector and pursuing memorandums of understanding with Gazprom, establishing a gas hub in Iran, gas trade, cooperation in the petrochemical value chain, and oil product swaps were among the key issues discussed at the meeting.”

Paknejad referred to strategic cooperation in the field of nuclear energy and said that joint projects in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy were also among the agreed issues.

He added that the activation of the North-South International Corridor, with emphasis on completing the Rasht-Astara railway as the missing link of this transit route, has been put on the agenda.

The official also emphasized the



expansion of banking cooperation and said: “Creating sustainable banking platforms to facilitate trade and investment, harmonizing standards with the aim of developing bilateral trade, strengthening trade centers, and developing cooperation in the fields of agriculture, health, and customs were among other topics discussed at the summit.”

According to the Iranian Oil Ministry, Kazem Jalali, Iran’s ambassador to Russia, told Iranian delegates at the 18th Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee meeting in Moscow that relations between the two countries are expanding and entering what he described as a “golden era” of cooperation.

He said Tehran and Moscow are determined to deepen bilateral ties across several sectors, including the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC), transit projects, and gas transfers. He stressed the need to strengthen trade and complete joint initiatives to enhance Iran’s international standing and security.

Jalali highlighted the recent approval of the Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty by Russia’s Federation Council and State Duma, noting that both countries need each other in different areas. “We must take concrete steps based on a clear understanding of these mutual needs,” he said.

He added that Russia is actively seeking new routes for exports beyond the Black Sea and has allocated \$10 billion to develop the INSTC—a clear sign of its commitment to activating northern transit routes. According to Jalali, around 3.7 million tons of cargo moved through this corridor in 2022, increasing to approximately 33 million tons in 2023.

Referring to a statement by President Vladimir Putin that opening new transit routes is a strategic imperative beyond cost-benefit

considerations, Jalali said Russia is determined to operationalize the INSTC—and Iran should seize the opportunity.

He explained that the corridor includes three branches, of which the eastern route is already operational. In 2023, 600,000 tons of cargo were transported via this route, rising to 1.8 million tons in 2024, just shy of the two-million-ton target. For early 2025, the goal is three million tons, while the route’s total capacity is 15 million tons.

Jalali emphasized that while the INSTC is a strategic necessity for Russia, it is a valuable opportunity for Iran. “With trial operations already underway, and once the route is connected to Europe, Iran could emerge as the world’s second Suez Canal—or even its most vital transit route,” he said. “Completing the corridor through Iranian territory will also enhance our national security on the global stage.”

Also, Ali Mohammad Mousavi, Deputy Oil Minister for International and Commercial Affairs, described the Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee as a clear reflection of both governments’ political will to expand collaboration and achieve shared success.

He noted that the Iranian delegation’s strong presence at the Moscow summit signals Tehran’s serious commitment to strengthening ties, especially after the signing and ratification of the strategic partnership agreement.

Mousavi referenced coordination meetings held in Tehran with Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad and said that during his recent talks in Moscow with his Russian counterpart, both sides reached consensus on key issues and emphasized the importance of positive outcomes from the commission.

“This committee is an important platform to record achievements and negotiate year-round,” Mousavi said. “Iran and Russia must remain

strategic partners, and this joint body symbolizes our shared determination to expand cooperation.”

Expert-level talks at the 18th Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee meeting began on Wednesday, April 23, at Russia’s Energy Agency in Moscow. On Thursday, delegations prepared multiple cooperation documents for signature by Minister Paknejad and Russian Energy Minister Sergey Tsivilev.

Meanwhile, on the sidelines of the visit to Moscow, Paknejad met with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak on Thursday evening.

The meeting was also attended by Ambassador Jalali, Russian Ambassador to Tehran Alexey Dedov, and senior members of both countries’ economic teams. The two sides discussed implementation of the long-term strategic treaty, as well as joint energy, transport, and trade projects.

Paknejad noted that the treaty, signed by the presidents of both nations, has already been approved by both chambers of Russia’s parliament and is currently under review by Iran’s parliament.

He described the agreement as a foundation for more constructive engagement and said it adds significant weight to bilateral economic cooperation. “There is vast potential for collaboration between Iran and Russia, and we have only activated a small part of it,” he said.

Paknejad stressed that the 18th joint commission meeting in Moscow is crucial for opening new pathways of cooperation. “This summit is a chance to overcome challenges and implement structural reforms so our ties can reach a level that both sides desire.”

Deputy Prime Minister Novak, at the beginning of the meeting, highlighted Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian’s recent visit to Moscow, calling the January 17, 2025 trip a “historic milestone” marked by the signing of the comprehensive strategic partnership agreement.

Novak said Iran and Russia’s economic exchanges are on a strong upward trajectory, particularly in infrastructure projects related to energy and transport.

He noted that trade between the two countries grew by approximately 13 percent in 2024, signaling strong momentum. “This demonstrates the high potential of Iran-Russia trade, and we aim to further accelerate this growth,” he said.

## National Housing Movement Plan enjoys 49.7% progress

TEHRAN- As announced by an official with Iran’s Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, the National Housing Movement Plan enjoys 49.7 percent progress at the moment.

Moein Abdolmohammadi said that the plan has progress about eight percent during the 14th government.

On April 16, a senior official announced that Iran has mobilized 220 trillion rials (around \$440 million) through bank loans and applicant contributions in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2025) to finance the construction of housing units in new towns under the National Housing Movement Plan.

According to the New Towns Development Company, Mehdi Mirjavadi, Director General of Housing Development Affairs, said the funding supports ongoing work on approximate-

ly 140,000 active housing units in new towns across the country, 91,000 of which have already received bank financing.

Speaking in a virtual meeting with subsidiary companies, Mirjavadi stated that efforts are underway to secure additional 65-billion-rial (\$130,000) loans for remaining units, in accordance with the country’s housing leap legislation.

He also noted that, in addition to the 220 trillion rials raised this year, a cumulative total of 310 trillion rials (over \$620 million) has been contributed by applicants since the program’s launch, with 130 trillion rials of that amount collected during the previous year.

Mirjavadi emphasized the importance of maintaining transparent communication with applicants throughout the construction process, suggesting this could include text message updates

and in-person project site visits. “Transparency in financial planning and implementation is critical,” he said.

He urged applicants to make timely payments to prevent delays, noting that nearly 20,000 housing units are nearing completion and will be gradually handed over once essential infrastructure is in place.

Iran’s National Housing Movement is a pivotal initiative by the 13th government, aiming to address the housing needs of the nation’s growing population by constructing four million residential units over four years. This ambitious plan seeks to provide affordable housing solutions, particularly for low-income citizens, with 3.2 million units designated for urban areas and 800,000 for rural regions.

## SCI put monthly inflation rate at 33.2%

TEHRAN - The Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on April 20, which marks the end of the first Iranian calendar month Farvardin, at 33.2 percent, noting that it rose 0.7 percent from the previous month.

The center put the country’s point-to-point inflation rate at

38.9 percent in the first month, which means families have paid an average of 38.9 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the preceding year.

The point-to-point inflation rate rose 1.8 percent in the mentioned month from the previous month.

The Statistical Center of Iran has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on March 20, 2025, which marks the end of the past Iranian calendar year 1403, at 32.5 percent.

The center put the country’s point-to-point inflation rate at 37.1 percent in the last month of the previous year, rising 1.8 percent

from the previous month.

Experts say Iran’s rising inflation in April was mainly the result of a major increase in hard currency prices that came after U.S. President Donald Trump signed a presidential memorandum in early February ordering a campaign of maximum pressure on Tehran.

# The legacy of colonialism: The Kashmir wound reopened after the Pahalgam attack

From page 1 ▶ Since gaining independence in 1947, Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan, with each country asserting ownership over the entire region while controlling distinct areas. This division has resulted in ongoing tensions that have escalated into conflict over time.

On Tuesday, at least 26 people were killed by suspected rebels at a resort in Pahalgam, making this the deadliest such attack in a quarter-century in Kashmir. A statement issued in the name of The Resistance Front (TRF), which is thought to be part of the Lashkar-e-Taiba armed group, based in Pakistan, claimed responsibility.

The aftermath has prompted notable diplomatic pushback. India has declared its exit from the Indus Waters Treaty, an important water-sharing pact established by the World Bank in 1960, while Pakistan countered by suspending a significant canal irrigation initiative and prohibiting Indian flights from its airspace.

Pakistani officials have dismissed India's allegations, with Defense Minister Khawaja Asif asserting that "blaming Pakistan won't address" the issue of Kashmir's disputed status.

He noted that infiltration was "impossible" due to the stringent security measures along the heavily militarized Line of Control. The



Pakistani citizens sit in a rickshaw as they prepare to leave India after it revoked all visas issued to Pakistani citizens, at the Attari-Wagah border crossing near Amritsar, India, April 26, 2025 [Anushree Fadnavis/Reuters]

situation has raised global alarm, as observers worry that any misstep could lead to outright conflict.

The Indian government has admitted failing to protect tourists at Pahalgam, Mallikarjuna Kharge, president of the All India Congress Committee, said during a speech.

He added that the government confirmed during an all-party meeting on Thursday that a security lapse allowed the attack to happen, according to a report by The Hindu news outlet.

Kharge, who heads the opposition in the upper house of India's parliament, said a three-phase security plan was in place but ultimately failed.

Amid this volatile situation, Iran has taken on the role of a mediator, understanding the complex geopolitics of the subcontinent and choosing not to take sides.

Iran's diplomatic initiative is underscored by its historical balancing act between India and Pakistan, maintaining strong ties with both while advocating for regional stability.

On Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote on his X social account, "India and Pakistan are brotherly neighbors of Iran, enjoying relations rooted in centuries-old cultural and civilizational ties," adding that "Tehran stands ready to use its good offices in Is-

lamabad and New Delhi to forge greater understanding at this difficult time."

Given the nuclear-armed status of both India and Pakistan, Iran's mediation effort represents a crucial attempt to de-escalate tensions and prevent further destabilization in South Asia. Tehran's stance reflects its broader regional strategy to promote peace through dialogue and resist external powers' divisive influences in the Kashmir dispute.

Pakistan said on Saturday its is "fully prepared to cooperate with any neutral investigators" following the Pahalgam attack.

Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged gunfire for a second straight day over the deadly attack.

In an editorial published on Saturday, Pakistan's Dawn news outlet said, "It is time again to give diplomacy a chance as neither Pakistan nor India can afford war."

The editorial added that "these are dangerous times in the subcontinent, and there is a need for both Pakistan and India to show restraint, and handle the post-Pahalgam developments with sense.

"Sadly, India has upped the ante by blaming Pakistan for the tragedy, without providing credible evidence of this country's alleged involvement in the brutal slaying of tourists."

## Syria vows "no threat to Israel" for sanctions relief

From Page 1 ▶ The previous government refused to comply with U.S. demands, and as a result, the sanctions remained in place.

According to a letter from the new Syrian government, disclosed by Reuters, "Syria will not pose a threat to any party, including Israel," even as Israeli occupation forces continue expanding into three southern Syrian provinces and inch closer to Damascus.

The letter further stated, "Syria confirms it has met most of the conditions for easing U.S. sanctions" and "seeks mutual understandings regarding outstanding issues."

On the matter of foreign fighters in the Syrian army, the new government explained that it requires "a broader consultative session," but confirmed that "the issuance of military ranks has been suspended."

The U.S. State Department had previously outlined a list of conditions to partially lift U.S. sanctions against Syria.

These sanctions include those enacted under the Caesar Act of 2019, as well as measures tied to General License 24, which allows limited transactions with the new Syrian government.

According to reports, additional American demands include:

- Appointment of a liaison officer to aid in locating American journalist Austin Tice, detained by the former Syrian government over a decade ago.
- Complete dismantlement of scientific research laboratories.
- A commitment to sever all ties with Palestinian groups, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.
- An assurance that no foreign fighters will hold senior government positions.
- Official designation of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.
- Public support for the U.S. military mission in Syria and recognition of Washington's right to target designated individuals within Syrian territory.
- Taking responsibility for the detainees at al-Hol camp, which holds more than 15,000 people, including families of Daesh members, currently under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Meanwhile, Ahmad al-Sharaa, the self-proclaimed President of Syria, has called on the U.S. to lift sanctions.

In an interview with The New York Times, al-Sharaa warned that continued instability in Syria could threaten not only neighboring countries but also the wider international community.

During the 45-minute conversation, he urged Washington to reconsider the sanctions, arguing that they were originally imposed because of crimes committed by the former regime, which has now fallen.

"The sanctions were a response to the former regime's crimes against the Syrian people," he claimed, pledging that under his leadership, Syrian territory will not be used to threaten any other nation.

Al-Sharaa also revealed ongoing negotiations with Turkey and Russia, suggesting the possibility of future military support from both countries.

The New York Times noted that one of al-Sharaa's biggest challenges will be forming a unified national army to consolidate the government's control across Syria.

## Complex ties between West Germany and Israel in the 1970s



West Germany and Israel went through a transformative relationship during the 1970s that was primarily related to the Holocaust legacy, security issues, and changing global destinies.

Though West Germany and Israel established bilateral diplomatic relations in 1965, West Germany's relationship with Israel during the next decade was characterized by

serious challenges and closely monitored political shifts.

Events of significance such as the attack on Israeli athletes in Munich in 1972, the Yom Kippur War in 1973, and the rippling effects of the oil crisis, were critical turning points in bilateral relations.

### A changing global and regional landscape

The 1970s were marked by global upheaval and fairly monumental shifts in geopolitical relations.

The Cold War was present as a significant political factor, and the USA and USSR wrestled for unique positions of leverage in the Middle East.

The Yom Kippur War of 1973 (shorthand for October War), as well as the oil crisis of 1974 provided lessons that had significant consequences for Israel, but also for Israel-Germany relations.

While major shifts developed in foreign relations for Germany and Germany-Israel relations based on the active relations with the West, some roots for inter-German relations also developed.

Additionally, there were continuing events relating as well to the roots of left-wing insurgency begun in Germany in the late 1960s and also related to the continuing process of Vergangenheitsbewältigung.

For Israel, it was arguably a decade of success and failures.

In many ways, the Yom Kippur War revealed Israel's vulnerabilities and problems in its security strategy and plans. The peace process with Egypt, culminating, at least formally, with the Camp David Accords (1978) was promising for regional stability, but it also reflected the difficulty of Middle Eastern diplomacy.

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

## Geagea's relentless effort to wrest parliamentary seats from the Shiite duo

From Page 1 ▶ Indeed, the Lebanese Forces party suffers from its tense relationship with local political factions, which are closely awaiting the results of the new round of negotiations between Washington and Tehran, and are also dismayed by the Lebanese Forces' rhetoric, which suggests Lebanon is returning to the era of civil war.

The Lebanese Forces Party views the American-Israeli project in West Asia as fully consistent with its unsovereign vision, which advo-

cates dividing the undivided, i.e., promoting a neo-Sykes-Picot project, and seeking revenge, retroactively, for the resistance's thwarting of its pro-Israel project in the early 1980s.

Geagea's role, obviously, is to fuel sectarian strife in Lebanon not only by openly calling for the disarmament of the resistance movement, but also by isolating the Shiites in Lebanon.

Therefore, the upcoming parliamentary elections (scheduled for May 2026) represent an opportunity for the Lebanese Forces to forge alli-

ances that would probably lead to the seizure of at least one of the 27 Shiite parliamentary seats, in a bid to ensure the parliamentary speakership taken from the Shiite duo—that is, from the pro-resistance team.

Informed sources reveal that Riyadh is supporting the next government by supporting Geagea's candidate, MP Fouad Makhzoumi, after Nawaf al-Salam failed due to his lack of diplomatic experience.

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

## April 25: A historic global siege on U.S. embassies for Gaza



TEHRAN - On Friday, April 25, 2025, an unprecedented global day of action took place as thousands of activists and supporters gathered to surround U.S. embassies around the world, demonstrating powerful solidarity with Gaza.

This historic mobilization was initiated from Gaza, where the population has endured more than 18 months of unyielding assault characterized by organizers as a genocide executed with the support of U.S. weaponry and political endorsement that has severely impacted the community.

The "Global Day to Besiege U.S. Embassies" was aimed directly at the heart of international decision-making, targeting the United States as the principal enabler of the ongoing violence.

Protesters demanded an immediate end to U.S. military and political support for Israel's assault, accountability for war crimes, and a halt to arms shipments fueling the conflict.

Demonstrations took place across multiple continents, reflecting broad international solidarity with Gaza.

In North America, major cities including Washington, D.C., New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Dallas, Chicago, Montreal, and Ottawa witnessed large protests outside U.S. embassies and consulates. Organized by groups such as the Palestinian

Youth Movement, US Palestine Community Network, and other solidarity organizations, these gatherings called for an arms embargo and an end to the U.S.-backed genocide.

Europe also saw significant mobilizations, notably a large protest outside the U.S. embassy in London, where activists highlighted the complicity of Western powers in the Gaza crisis.

Latin America joined the global chorus with demonstrations in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, and Panama.

Diverse groups, including indigenous organizations, teachers' unions, and social rights networks, participated, staging protests in front of U.S. diplomatic missions throughout the region.

In the Middle East, Yemen held nationwide rallies in Sanaa's main square, condemning U.S. aggression and expressing solidarity with Palestinians.

As the world witnessed these widespread protests, the besieging of U.S. embassies symbolized a direct confrontation with the source of military and political support for the Gaza siege.

The global solidarity movement aims to keep international attention focused on the humanitarian catastrophe and to demand urgent policy changes to end the suffering of millions in Gaza.

## Crimea will stay with Russia: Trump

The Crimean Peninsula will remain a part of Russia under a final settlement of the Ukraine conflict, U.S. President Donald Trump has said in an interview with Time Magazine published on Friday.

In an interview to mark his first 100 days in office, Trump said Crimea "went to the Russians" long ago and suggested that "everyone understands" that Ukraine will not be able to get it back.

"Crimea will stay with Russia" under a final settlement of the Ukraine conflict, Trump went on to say, adding that even Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky understands this.

"It's been with them for a long time," the U.S. president stated, noting that Russia had its submarines there "long before any period that we're talking about" and that the majority of Crimeans speak Russian.

## WFP says its food stocks in Gaza are fully 'depleted'

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that its food stocks in Gaza are completely "depleted", saying it has delivered its "last remaining food stocks" to local kitchens.

The WFP cautioned that Gaza would run out of food "in the coming days", with more than 400,000 people in the besieged enclave relying on its aid.

Israel's ongoing humanitarian blockade of Gaza, which began on 2 March, has forced residents to survive on food supplies stored during the ceasefire earlier this year.

12 major aid organizations have urged Israel to open border crossings into Gaza for flow of humanitarian supplies.

## Hamas says open to releasing all hostages for 5-year truce

A Hamas delegation led by senior leader Khalil al-Hayya agreed on Saturday in Cairo to release all Israeli hostages in exchange for a five-year truce, according to an Egyptian security source.

The source described talks on Saturday as "very important" for advancing efforts to end the war in Gaza, noting that the Hamas delegation accepted the five-year truce proposal after reviewing various offers.

So far, Israel has not formally responded to any of the proposals, but has given the green light for negotiations to continue regarding the release of hostages, the source added.

Egypt's Al-Qahera News TV channel reported the Hamas delegation would also discuss a comprehensive deal that ensures the full withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Gaza, and securing the delivery of humanitarian aid to the enclave. Talks are expected to include the formation of a committee to manage Gaza's administration.

## Putin says Russia ready for Ukraine talks 'without preconditions'

Russia is ready to hold peace talks with Ukraine "without preconditions", President Vladimir Putin told U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff at a meeting on Friday, the Kremlin said Saturday.

The news came after U.S. President Donald Trump met briefly with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky to discuss ceasefire efforts at Pope Francis's funeral in Rome.

### Iran calls for balanced tourism exchange with Turkey



TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, has highlighted a significant imbalance in tourism exchanges between Iran and Turkey, calling for a strategic review of policies to achieve a more equitable flow of tourists between the two nations.

Speaking during his visit to Erzurum, Turkey, for the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, Salehi-Amiri noted that over 3.5 million Iranians traveled to Turkey last year, compared to only about 580,000 Turkish tourists visiting Iran. "This meaningful difference calls for a revision in the tourism interaction policies of both countries and the realization of a strategic balance within the framework of cultural diplomacy," he said.

The minister emphasized the shared cultural heritage between Iran and Turkey, noting that these commonalities offer strong potential for expanded cooperation in the fields of cultural heritage, handicrafts, and joint cultural programming, ISNA reported.

Salehi-Amiri announced plans to organize two major cultural events, one in Tehran and another in a Turkish city, as part of initiatives under the "joint cultural year" declared by both countries.

"Through the instruments of culture and art, we aim to deepen the bonds between our nations. Every tourist visiting Iran becomes a cultural am-

bassador who can present a true image of the country to the world," he stated.

Ahead of the ministerial meeting, Salehi-Amiri, in various interviews with the media representatives, outlined Iran's strategic goals for the gathering, stressing the importance of showcasing Iran's vast tourism assets to member countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

"Iran, as one of the founding members of ECO and the host of its permanent secretariat in Tehran, must take an active role in strengthening this organization and achieving its regional objectives," he said.

Moreover, the Iranian minister underlined Iran's commitment to enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation within ECO and proposed initiatives to activate the region's shared tourism capacities.

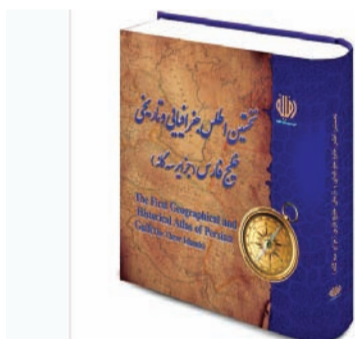
Elsewhere in his remarks, Salehi-Amiri stressed that active tourism diplomacy can pave the way for attracting foreign investment, particularly from ECO member states.

Among the key topics Iran will pursue at the meeting are the mutual designation of tourism destinations among ECO countries and the strengthening of cultural ties, he added.

"In the current sensitive regional situation, tourism and culture can serve as vital tools for fostering sustainable economic, cultural, and social convergence among the nations," Salehi-Amiri concluded.

ECO is an intergovernmental regional organization encompassing countries from Europe, Caucasus and Central and West Asia, and South Asia with more than 460 million inhabitants and over 8 million square kilometers connecting Russia to the Persian Gulf and China to Europe. According to the organization, its overall objective is to materialize the sustainable economic development of its member states and the region as a whole.

### Geographical atlas of Persian Gulf to be unveiled



TEHRAN - In celebration of Persian Gulf National Day, a new geographical atlas dedicated to the strategic body of water and three of its islands (Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb) is set to be unveiled during a special ceremony on April 30.

According to Hamidreza Soleymani, CEO of the Daffineh museum group, the atlas is a unique geographical collection featuring 27 historical maps gathered from the group's rich archives.

"The maps, created by prominent European cartographers over several centuries, provide a rare glimpse into historical perspectives of the Persian Gulf region. The oldest map in the collection dates back to the 17th century," Soleymani said.

Soleymani added that the atlas is published in both Persian and English. He emphasized that beyond its artistic and historical value, the work holds significant scientific and research importance.

"These maps serve as credible visual documents reflecting European views of the Persian Gulf across different periods, offering valuable

insights into the region's place names, geographic features, and historical trade and political interactions," he said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Soleymani highlighted three key aspects of the atlas's significance:

**Historical documentation:** The maps provide an unparalleled record of the region's geographic and political developments over time.

**Preservation of identity:** The publication reinforces the historic name and identity of the Persian Gulf, demonstrating its consistent recognition in renowned global maps through the centuries.

**Public awareness:** By making these historical documents accessible, the atlas aims to deepen public understanding of the Persian Gulf's historical and cultural importance.

He described the atlas as a rich resource for researchers and a reliable reference for those seeking to better discover the history and geography of the Persian Gulf.

Persian Gulf National Day, observed annually on the 10th day of Ordibehesht in the Iranian calendar (April 30 this year), commemorates the region's history, name, and significance. It marks the historic 1622 victory when combined forces of the Safavid Empire and the British East India Company expelled Portuguese forces from the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

The Persian Gulf, an extension of the Indian Ocean, is located between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia.

### Gol-Ghaltan: preserving an intangible cultural heritage

TEHRAN - The 16th edition of the national festival of Gol-Ghaltan (literally meaning rolling in flowers) will be held in the city of Amirieh, north-central province of Semnan, from May 7 to 9, said the secretary of the festival.

Mostafi Foadian told IRNA that the social festival, which dates back hundreds of years, is usually performed in May when roses are in full bloom.

He called implementing the tradition of Gol-Chinan (flower pickers), holding a traditional culinary festival, celebrating and awarding prizes, holding a scientific conference regarding Mohammadi roses and Gol-Ghaltan, holding a folk song festival, and implementing Gol-Ghaltan tradition as programs of the festival.

Gol-Ghaltan festival was inscribed under the

number 177 as the first intangible heritage of Semnan province and the second national intangible heritage following the Nowruz festival in 2010.

Amirieh, with a population of over 3,000, is located 20 kilometers from Damghan and 90 kilometers from Semnan in Semnan province. Amirieh is where the Gol-Ghaltan festival originates from.

Organizing an exhibition of handicrafts and souvenirs of the region, performing local games and music, as well as touring the historical sites of the city, are among the programs of the festival.

Gol-Ghaltan has roots in an old Iranian myth called 'The Smiling Flower', in which pure and holy humans promised the birth of a child.

## Security, kindness, and ancient history: what Western media don't tell about Iran

TEHRAN--Iran, a country whose vivid image is mainly tarnished by mainstream Western media, offers a different world to its visitors. It is a country with rich history, hospitable people as well as unique natural and cultural attractions.

The most important question that occupies the mind is the security and easiness when entering Iran, CHTN wrote.

Western media have always introduced Iran as a country full of insecurity, political instability and internal conflicts.

This is while many foreign tourists who have had the experience of traveling to Iran, say about different experiences.

Areia, a Greek tourist who has travelled with his family to Iran, says: "Before traveling, I was warned by many of my friends that Iran is an insecure country. But when I arrived Tehran, the first thing I saw was a decent discipline and order at the airport. The visa application process was very quick."

Lara, an Italian tourist who has visited Iran along with his husband, says: "When I arrived in Tehran, I was greeted with good cheer and kindness. Iran is a secure country with lots of kind people."

The change of attitude and the friendly behavior of Iranians with foreign tourists inspire the wonder of those who had negative prejudices regarding Iran.

Iran, a country with thousands of years of history and culture, has people who are hospitable and kind.

Sofia, a Swedish tourist, said, "I never expected Iranians to be so hospitable and kind. When I asked a seller about purchasing souvenirs in Isfahan Bazaar, he not only helped me, but also invited me to



drink tea. He also told me interesting stories about Iranian culture."

This hospitality which is seen across all Iranian cities and districts, is a point emphasized by many tourists when they return to their countries.

Michelle, a Canadian who has visited several Iranian cities, says: "When I came Iran, I never expected to encounter this level of kindness. The people of Iran treated me with sincerity."

Even in remote areas and villages, foreign tourists are surprised by hospitality and kindness of people.

One of the main concerns of foreign tourists before traveling to Iran is security matters.

Although Western media talk about insecurity in Iran frequently, the experience of many people who have traveled to Iran, presents a completely different picture.

Carlos, a Spanish tourist who has toured several Iranian cities, says, "I had always heard that Iran had many problems. But when I arrived Tehran and Shiraz, I saw the streets are very safe and people are extremely respectful. I didn't have any worries about security."

This issue is very true not only for European tourists, but also for Asians and even American tourists.

American tourist Lisa says: "When I traveled to Iran, I was very worried. But I didn't feel any threat to my security. I felt that I was in a secure and calm place."

#### Historical and cultural attractions

Iran is a nation full of historical, cultural, and natural wonders. From Takht-e Jamshid and Pasargadae to Iranian gardens and historical mosques in Isfahan, Iran is one of the best tourist destinations worldwide. Julie, a German tourist who has visited historical sites in Iran, says: "Wherever you go in Iran, you will see amazing artifacts from ancient civilizations. In Takht-e Jamshid, I felt that I had travelled to the heart of history."

Liu, a Chinese tourist who has visited Shiraz and Isfahan, says Iranian architecture is something beyond what we see in media. The beauty and complexity of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque or Eram Gardens are amazing.

Iran is a country where every corner illustrates a history. This

history is sometimes so beautiful and spectacular that every foreign tourist is amazed to see it.

One of the most interesting points of what report is the paradox between what Western media show about Iran and what foreign tourists experience during their visit to Iran.

Catherine, a French tourist, says: Before visiting Iran, I had heard from my friends that Iran is a dangerous place for tourists. But when I arrived Iran, all those misconceptions collapsed."

Paul, a tourist from the Netherlands, says: "After visiting Iran, I understood that Western media always show a one-sided image from this country. I came to Iran and encountered kind people, a secure destination and rich culture."

Iran is a country which should be experienced firsthand, not what the media says. The media show only a small portion of Iran. But to see its entirety, you must travel to Iran yourself.

One of the lesser-known aspects of traveling to Iran is the impact it leaves on tourists. Many of those who have traveled to Iran, have been influenced by its rich culture.

Andre, a Belgian tourist who has visited Iran, says: "This travel helped me to become more acquainted with Iran's history and culture. It also changed my attitude toward the world."

These trips are very valuable particularly for tourists who are involved in media stereotypes. After visiting Iran, foreign tourists act as real ambassadors of Iran in their countries.

Iran's reality can be understood only through traveling.

### Iran, Uzbekistan discuss extended co-op in tourism sector

TEHRAN - Senior officials from Iran and Uzbekistan have held talks aimed at boosting bilateral cooperation in the tourism sector, emphasizing their shared civilizational and cultural heritage as a foundation for closer collaboration.

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, met with Umid Shadiev, Chairman of the Tourism Committee under Uzbekistan's Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The officials discussed plans for joint investment, cultural events, and enhanced promotional efforts to increase tourism exchanges.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted the deep historical ties between the two nations, stating that relations between the two nations go beyond traditional diplomacy and should be redefined in the context of their shared civilizational values. He noted that despite millions of Iranians traveling abroad each year, Uzbekistan remains an underexplored destination—an issue he attributed to mutual neglect in promoting tangible and intangible heritage.

Referring to his previous visits to Samarkand and Bukhara, the Iranian minister spoke of the cultural affinity Iranians feel toward Uzbekistan's architecture and visual culture. He stressed the need to foster cultural tourism as a means of reviving shared historical memory.

Salehi-Amiri proposed three key strategies for strengthening tourism ties: signing a comprehensive memorandum of understanding—drafted and already submitted to the Uzbek side; promoting tourism through media, tour operators, and cultural influencers; and organizing joint



events and exhibitions in historic cities such as Tehran, Samarkand, Bukhara, Isfahan, and Shiraz.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian minister expressed Iran's readiness to convene a joint investment forum in the tourism sector. He emphasized that Iran has already prepared the necessary infrastructure to double its tourism capacity and called for elevating cooperation to a strategic level.

Umid Shadiev, for his part, welcomed Iran's cooperative approach and expressed support for a broad tourism agreement, calling it the beginning of a new chapter in bilateral cultural relations. Reflecting on his own visit to Iran, he remarked that he felt a sense of rediscovering part of his own [cultural] identity, pointing to the deep and authentic cultural links between the two nations.

Shadiev praised the Tehran International Tourism Exhibition as an exceptional event in terms of professionalism and public engagement. Though unable to attend this year due to scheduling conflicts, he affirmed Uzbekistan's commitment to participating actively in future editions.

He also proposed scientific collaboration between Uzbekistan's Silk Road University and Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, suggesting joint work in restoration, archaeology, and specialized training.

Iran seeks to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots, such as centuries-old bazaars, museums, mosques, gardens, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, tomb-towers, and mansions, of which 28 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.



People in this region believe that rolling babies among the roses brings them joy and refreshment while keeping them untainted and free from diseases. The freshness of the petals preserves the baby's skin, promoting happiness.

Babies are gently rolled in the petals of fragrant flowers, particularly renowned as Mohammadi roses, during the first spring of their lives.

During spring, as pink roses blossom in the area and preparations for the rosewater distillation festival, known as "Golab-giri," are underway, female family members, primarily the baby's mother, grandmothers, and aunts, perform the Gol-Ghaltan ceremony.

Days before the ceremony, women visit rose gardens early in the morning to pick and gather flowers, reciting poems and verses from the Quran. The petals are then carefully separated and placed into a light, white cloth.

On the day of the ceremony, one of the grandmothers takes the baby for a bath. Sometimes,

the baby's hands are adorned with henna in certain regions. After drying, the baby is placed among the flowers on the cloth, and petals are gently poured over them, wishing them health and a long life.

Women then grasp the four corners of the sheet and roll the baby among the petals, reciting religious songs and waving the sheet back and forth, believing the soul will be cleansed, and the child will remain healthy and fresh.

Guests place their gifts near the cloth once the baby is set on the floor. As the ceremony concludes, sweets and tea are served.

After the ceremony, mothers dry the petals in the shade to preserve them for the future, often placing the dried petals in their prayer rugs.

# Explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port leaves 8 dead, 750 injured



TEHRAN - A huge explosion occurred at around 12.30 pm local time on Saturday at Shahid Rajaei Port in southern Hormozgan Province, leaving at least 8 dead and 750 injured, according to the Red Crescent Society.

The strategically important port lies around 15 kilometers southwest of the port of Bandar Abbas on the northern shore of the Strait of Hormuz.

The exact cause of the explosion has yet to be known. However, Fatemeh Mohajerani, the government spokeswoman, said some containers that had been stored at the port and contained chemicals had probably exploded.

The wounded were transferred to Hormozgan hospitals. Eskandar Momeni, the interior minister, and Pirhossein Kolivand, the head of the Red Crescent Society, have gone to Bandar Abbas.

Twenty rapid response teams and five helicopters were dispatched to the scene after the explosion.

The Emergency Operations Center has been put on alert, and the process of providing relief to victims and the actions of the operational teams will be monitored in real time.

Medical centers in Hormozgan, Fars, and Kerman provinces are fully prepared to receive the in-



jured. Some medical centers in Tehran have also announced their readiness to accept the injured if needed.

Initial reports indicate that the blast originated in an administrative building within the port complex. The blast was so intense that it completely destroyed the building and severely damaged many vehicles, Press TV reported.

Following the incident, all port operations were suspended as security and emergency teams worked to secure the area. Authorities immediately declared a state of emergency at hospitals across Bandar Abbas in preparation for possible mass casualties.

The National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company also announced that the explosion had nothing to do with refineries, fuel tanks, distribution centers, or oil pipelines associated with this company in that area, and that the facilities located in Bandar Abbas were currently operating without interruption.

President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed deep sorrow over the incident and offered sympathy to the families of the victims.

First Vice-President Mohammad-Reza Aref has ordered immediate and comprehensive investigations to determine the exact cause of the incident and the extent of the damage.

## 85 Iranian universities in THE Asia university rankings 2025

TEHRAN-The Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings 2025 has placed 85 Iranian universities among the top Asian institutions compared to 75 universities in 2024.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2025 judge research-intensive universities across all their core missions: teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and international outlook.

The methodology behind the Asia University Rankings is based on the same framework as the global table, but the weightings are recalibrated to reflect the priorities of Asian institutions.

Sharif University of Technology is ranked first in the country, with a global ranking of 69.

Amirkabir university of Technology (70), Iran University of Science and Technology (77), University of Tehran (97), Tehran University of Medical Science (109), Isfahan University of Technology (115), Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences (121), Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences (154), and Shiraz University of Technology (155) are placed second to tenth in the country.

The performance indicators are grouped into five areas: Teaching, 24.5 percent, (the learning environment); Research environment, 28 percent, (volume, income and reputation); Research quality, 30 percent, (citation impact, research strength, research excellence and research influence); International outlook, 7.5 percent, (staff, students and research); and Industry, 10 percent, (income and patents).

The 2025 ranking includes 853 universities from 35 territories. China leads the rankings, retaining first and second place and holding five of the top 10 spots; four countries, includ-

ing Uzbekistan, Bahrain, Mongolia, and Syria, are ranked for the first time.

### Ranked rankings

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

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

In Engineering and Technology subject area, University of Tehran, with a global ranking of 280, is placed first in the country. In Petroleum Engineering, University of Tehran ranks 22 globally, progressing from 32 in 2024 to 22 this year. In Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Sharif University of Technology and University of Tehran rank 151-200 and 201-250, respectively.

In the Life Sciences and Medicine broad subject, Tehran University of Medical Sciences is ranked first nationally; its ranking elevated from 358 in 2024 to 309 this year. In Agricultural and Forestry, University of Tehran ranks 101-150, and University of Tabriz ranks 251-300.

In Anatomy and Physiology, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, and Tehran University of Medical Sciences rank 51-100 and 101-170, respectively.

In Nursing, Iran University of Medical Sciences and Tehran University of Medical Sciences rank 151-225, jointly. In Pharmacy and Pharmacology, Tehran University of Medical Sciences is ranked 201-250.

## Iran, Russia ink MOU on cell, gene therapy

TEHRAN - The Pediatric Cell and Gene Therapy Research Center of Tehran University of Medical Sciences and the Federal State Budgetary Institution "Hematological Research Center" of the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation have signed a memorandum of understanding to promote scientific cooperation.

The MOU was signed by Maryam Behfar, an official with Tehran University of Medical Sciences, and Elena Nikolaevna Parovichnikova, an official with Russian National Research Center for Hematology, on Friday in Russia, in the presence of Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad and Russian Energy Minister Sergey Tsivilev, IRNA reported.

The officials met on the sidelines of the 18th Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee meeting held from April 22 to 24, aimed at expanding bilateral cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation.

The signed MOU aims to expand joint research on cell-gene therapy, improve medi-

cal knowledge in the two countries, expand science diplomacy, and lay the basis for benefiting from each country's scientific capacities.

According to the Iranian Oil Ministry, Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, told Iranian delegates at the 18th Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee meeting in Moscow that relations between the two countries are expanding and entering what he described as a "golden era" of cooperation.

Jalali highlighted the recent approval of the Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty by Russia's Federation Council and State Duma, noting that both countries need each other in different areas. "We must take concrete steps based on a clear understanding of these mutual needs," he said.

Following the signing of the Treaty on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation, the two countries will boost their cooperation in the health sector.

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

## Maternal health literacy secures family health

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN - Maternal health literacy is one of the main key factors in ensuring the health of the family and society. It involves engaging in preventive behaviors, adopting healthy nutrition and lifestyle, as well as promoting mental, sexual, and reproductive health.

'Maternal health literacy, youth population, empowered generation' is the theme of the third day of the National Health Week, being observed from April 21 to 27.

Women's Health Literacy refers to women's ability to access, understand, evaluate, and use health information to make appropriate health decisions about their families and their own health. It also includes health knowledge, disease prevention, medical care, and the ability to interact effectively with the health system.

Mothers with a high level of health literacy can properly provide prenatal care and proper nutrition, their behavior affects their own and their children's health. They use care services to identify signs of risk factors timely.

Also, maternal health literacy contributes to playing an active role in preventing communicable and non-communicable diseases, and promoting the health of families as well as the society.

Maternal health literacy, along with intelligent management of the youth population, and investment in youth will lead to the creation of a dynamic and healthy society. The fulfillment of this strategic triangle requires long-term planning and participation from all sectors of society.

### National health week

The national health week aims to raise public awareness of critical health challenges and unite forces to promote public health.



The days of the week focus on the following topics.

Monday, April 21, 'Health equity with the family physician and referral system'

Tuesday, April 22, 'Healthy environment, healthy society with public participation'

Wednesday, April 23, 'Maternal health literacy, youth population, empowered generation'

Thursday, April 24, 'Culture, art, media, and health'

Friday, April 25, 'Public exercise, public health'

Saturday, April 26, 'Fetal care, new-born health, a promising future'

Sunday, April 27, 'Say no to accidents, yes to life'

World Health Day is celebrated on April 7 annually to mark the establishment of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948.

World Health Day 2025 themed 'Healthy beginnings, hopeful futures' seeks to encourage governments and health communities to minimize preventable deaths of mothers and newborns by adopting initiatives that focus on mothers' and babies' survival, and

prioritize women's longer-term health and well-being.

Helping every woman and baby survive and thrive is a critical task. Tragically, based on currently published estimates, close to 300,000 women lose their lives due to pregnancy or childbirth each year, while over 2 million babies die in their first month of life, and around 2 million more are stillborn. That's roughly 1 preventable death every 7 seconds.

Based on current trends, a staggering 4 out of 5 countries are off track to meet targets for improving maternal survival by 2030. 1 in 3 will fail to meet targets for reducing newborn deaths.

Women and families everywhere need high-quality care that supports them physically and emotionally, before, during, and after birth.

Health systems must evolve to manage the many health issues that impact maternal and newborn health. These not only include direct obstetric complications but also mental health conditions, noncommunicable diseases, and family planning.

Additionally, women and families should be supported by laws and policies that safeguard their health and rights. The main objectives of this year's campaign are as follows.

To raise awareness about gaps in maternal and newborn survival and the need to prioritize women's longer-term well-being.

To advocate for effective investments that improve the health of women and babies.

To encourage collective action to support parents as well as health professionals who provide critical care.

To provide useful health information relating to pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Shiraz University, Chinese Academy of Sciences sign MOU

Shiraz University and Chinese Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences (RCEES) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand cooperation in scientific and research projects, IRNA news agency reported on Tuesday.

Joint research activities through the Silk Road Research Program, joint publication of articles and books, study opportunities for faculty and doctoral students, use of laboratory facilities, experience exchange workshops especially in the field of natural disasters, droughts, floods, medicinal plants, biodiversity, land degradation and international joint research projects were among the mutually agreed programs.

## دانشگاه شیراز و موسسه تحقیقات منابع طبیعی چین تفاهم نامه امضا کردند

دانشکده کشاورزی به نمایندگی از دانشگاه شیراز با موسسه تحقیقات منابع طبیعی آکادمی علوم چین سند تفاهم نامه همکاری های علمی - پژوهشی مشترک امضا کرد.

به گزارش ایرنا، زمینه بهره برداری عملیاتی از ظرفیت های تفاهم نامه حاضر به ویژه در زمینه فعالیت های پژوهشی مشترک از طریق برنامه پژوهشی راه ابریشم، نشر مشترک مقالات و کتب، فرصت های مطالعاتی اعضای هیات علمی و دانشجویان دکتری، استفاده از امکانات آزمایشگاهی، برگزاری کارگاه های تبادل تجربه به ویژه در حوزه حوادث غیرمترقبه طبیعی، خشکسالی، سیل، گیاهان دارویی، تنوع زیستی، تخریب سرزمین و طرح های پژوهشی مشترک بین المللی در قالب برنامه های مشترک مورد توافق طرفین مورد بحث و بررسی قرار گرفت.



## Strawberry harvest begins in Mazandaran

Bahnamin County in the northern province of Mazandaran is one of the main producers of strawberry in the country, with more than 22,000 tons of output.

Iran is set to increase its strawberry production to 70,300 tons by 2026, a growth of 1.8 percent year on year.



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APRIL 27, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*The one who gets married has completed half of his/her religion.*  
**Prophet Muhammad (S)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:02 Evening: 19:07 Dawn: 3:44 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:16 (tomorrow)

## Asghar Farhadi to make 10th film in France

TEHRAN-The celebrated Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi is set to return to Paris for his next film "Parallel Tales," 12 years after making his French-language directorial debut with "The Past" (2013).

The film brings together a powerful French cast, including Isabelle Huppert ("Elle"), Virginie Efira ("Benedetta"), Vincent Cassel ("Black Swan"), Pierre Niney ("The Count of Monte Cristo"), and Adam Bessa ("Ghost Trail"). Iconic French actor Catherine Deneuve will also make an appearance in the film, Honaronline reported.

The cast of "Parallel Tales" is particularly exciting as it mixes some of the biggest names in French cinema from different generations and cinematic horizons, notably Huppert and Efira, and Cassel and Niney, whose recent epic film "The Count of Monte-Cristo" was France's second biggest box office hit in 2024 with 10 million admissions sold. Bessa, meanwhile, is a rising French talent who was nominated for a Cesar Award for his performance in "Ghost Trail" earlier this year.

The story was written by Farhadi and adapted by Massoumeh Lahidji, but is being kept under wraps for the time being.

"Parallel Tales" is set to begin shooting in Paris this fall. The film is being set up as a French-Italian-Belgian coproduction.

Produced by long-time collaborator Alexandre Mallet-Guy alongside with Farhadi and David Levine, the prestige project will be launched by Charades and UTA Independent Film Group at the upcoming Cannes Film Market. Charades will handle international sales, while UTA Independent Film Group will rep U.S. rights. Memento will handle distribution in France, releasing in Spring 2026.

Farhadi, who is attached to France through his friendship and collaboration with Mallet-Guy, previously struck a chord with "The Past" which starred Tahar Rahim and Bernice Bejo. The movie competed at Cannes in



2013 and won best actress for Bejo, and received five César nominations and a Golden Globe nomination in 2014.

This will be the 10th feature-length movie by Farhadi who was first revealed in competition in Locarno in 2006 with his third feature film "Fireworks Wednesday."

One of Iran's most prominent cinematic voices, Farhadi, 52, is known for his thought-provoking films that explore social issues. He earned a bachelor's degree in dramatic arts from the University of Tehran in 1988 and later a master's degree in theater direction.

Farhadi won the Best Foreign Film Oscar in 2012 for "A Separation" (which was also nominated for Best Screenplay) and once again in 2017 for "The Salesman"

He has been selected four times in competition in Cannes with "The Past," "The Salesman," "Everybody Knows," and "A Hero."

"The Salesman" won Best Screenplay and Best Actor awards at Cannes in 2016 and "A Hero" scooped the Grand Prize in 2021 festival.

"Everybody Knows," Farhadi's Spanish-language debut starring Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem, opened and competed at Cannes in 2018.

Farhadi was also selected twice in Berlin. He was awarded the Silver Bear for Best Director in 2009 for "About Elly" and the 2011 Golden Bear for "A Separation."

# Iran, Russia to expand cultural, cinematic cooperation

TEHRAN-On the second day of the Iranian cultural delegation's visit to Moscow, the Russian Minister of Culture Olga Lyubimova met and held talks with the Deputy Minister of Culture and Head of the Iranian Cinema Organization Raed Faridzadeh, Ambassador of Iran to Russia Kazem Jalali, and the accompanying delegation in Moscow.

At the beginning of the meeting, which aimed to explore ways to expand cultural, artistic, and cinematic cooperation between the two countries, Lyubimova expressed her pleasure at Faridzadeh's participation in the Eurasian Film Academy program, Honaronline reported.

Emphasizing the longstanding and successful collaboration between Iranian and Russian filmmakers, she said: "Over the past decades, Iranian filmmakers have had a prominent presence at Russian festivals and have won numerous awards."

She also referred to the upcoming Russian Cultural Week in Iran, set to be held in June in Tehran and Isfahan, where she will lead the Russian cultural delegation during the program.

The Russian Minister of Cul-



ture welcomed the revival of the cultural committee under the Iran-Russia Joint Cooperation Committee and expressed appreciation for Iran's support of Russia in the BRICS group. Iran was also invited to participate at in the cultural summit in Kazan, set to be held on May 15 and 16.

For his part, Faridzadeh conveyed greetings from the Iranian Minister of Culture and highlighted the influence of Russian

culture and literature, particularly the works and adaptations of figures like Dostoevsky and Chekhov, in Iranian cinema and theater, as a sign of the cultural closeness between the two countries.

He announced Iran's readiness to cooperate in establishing a BRICS Film, Media, and Education Union and proposed holding its meeting alongside the International Film Festival for Children

and Youth in Isfahan.

Also speaking at the meeting, Kazem Jalali emphasized the foundational role of cultural relations in strengthening political ties between nations and mentioned the cultural provisions in the 20-year strategic agreement between Iran and Russia. He proposed the establishment of a Russian cultural center in Iran.

## Culture Minister attends Pope Francis' funeral



Seyyed Abbas Salehi (2nd L) and Mohammad Hossein Mokhtari (L) attended the funeral of Pope Francis in Vatican City on April 26.

TEHRAN-The Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi participated in the funeral of Pope Francis at St. Peter's Square in Vatican City on Saturday, appearing alongside global dignitaries.

Representing President Masoud Pezeshkian, Salehi was accompanied by Mohammad Hossein Mokhtari, Iran's ambassador to the Vatican, to pay respects to the late pontiff, who died Monday at the age of 88 after years of declining health, IRNA reported.

Separately, Ali Bahreini, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations office in Geneva, signed a book of condolences at the Vatican's permanent mission on Thursday, expressing

Tehran's sympathy, IRNA reported.

On Friday, Salehi, shared a post regarding the funeral ceremony of Pope Francis, writing: "Simplicity, humility, compassion for the poor, and solidarity with the oppressed, especially the suffering people of Gaza, made him beloved."

"He lived differently, remained distinguished, and found a place in people's hearts. May his memory be honored," he wrote.

Pope Francis, the leader of the world's Catholics, who in recent years had played a prominent role in promoting interfaith dialogue, passed away at the age of 88 on April 21 at the Vatican.

## Iran participating in 29th Muscat International Book Fair

TEHRAN-The 29th Muscat International Book Fair officially is underway in the capital of Oman with Iran attending the event.

Iran's pavilion at the exhibition has been organized by the Iran Book and Literature House, in collaboration with the Cultural Attaché Office in Oman.

A wide range of works in scientific, religious, cultural, and literary fields are being showcased at Iran's pavilion, ILNA reported.

Considered one of the largest cultural events in the region, the Muscat International Book Fair annually attracts thousands of book and publishing enthusiasts.

This year's exhibition features 674 publishers from 35 countries, with more than 681,000 book titles on display in various pavilions. Among these, 52,205 titles are newly released by publishers in 2024 and 2025. Additionally, 467,413 titles are presented in Arabic and 213,610 in other languages.

The fair's program includes 366 cultural events and 155 special activities for children held in the dedicated children's section, which plays a key role in attracting families and promoting reading among younger generations.

It offers a rich program of events including author signings,



literary discussions, workshops, and cultural activities aimed at engaging readers of all ages. The Muscat Book Fair remains a cornerstone of Oman's cultural calendar, reaffirming the country's

role as a regional hub for literature, learning, and the arts.

Launched on April 24, the fair will run for 10 days and conclude on May 3.

## Cartoon of Day



Israel  
 Cartoonist: Mohammad Sabaaneh from Palestine

## Cultural center in Pakistan to launch week-long artists camp for Gaza

In a poignant expression of solidarity through creativity, the Silk Road Culture Center (SRCC) officially unveiled its upcoming humanitarian initiative, "Art for Life - Art for Gaza," during a curtain-raising ceremony and media briefing in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The week-long artists camp, scheduled from April 30 to May 7, will transform the SRCC into a hub of reflection, artistic collaboration, and peaceful expression, gathering a diverse group of local and international artists, intellectuals, and cultural voices to stand in support of Gaza, Images Dawn reported.

Speaking at the event, Jamal Shah, Chairman of the SRCC and visionary behind the initiative, described the project as "a poetic act of remembrance," adding: "Art for Gaza is not a protest; it is an artist's homage to the spirit of Gaza -- dignified, resilient, and steeped in history."

Framed against the haunting resonance of 'Nakba Remain' and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the camp invites global participation across multiple disciplines -- including painting, sculpture, calligraphy, poetry, short films, music, theater, and installations.

"In a world often deafened by protest and conflict, this initiative speaks in the quiet, yet powerful language of art," said Zeejah Fazli, another speaker at the event.

All creative works emerging from the camp will center on themes of human dignity, cultural memory, and hope, consciously steering away from depictions of violence or overt political commentary.

Samina Shah, one of the participating artists, eloquently expressed the camp's ethos: "Through art, we do not look away—we look deeper."

The week will culminate in a Public Art Festival and Charity Auction, with 100 percent of the proceeds pledged to humanitarian relief efforts for children and vulnerable communities in Gaza. Several activities will also be livestreamed to ensure international engagement and access.

The curtain-raiser was attended by the Deputy Ambassador of Palestine, foreign dignitaries, cultural envoys, participating artists, and diplomatic, development, and student community members, signaling the broad coalition supporting this initiative.

Jamal Shah concluded with a heartfelt appeal to the media: "We invite the media not just to report this story, but to become part of it. Help broadcast a message that transcends conflict -- a message that heals."

More than 51,000 people have been killed in Gaza since the war began in October 2023, according to the Hamas-run Ministry of Health, with nearly a third of the dead aged under 18. The number of injuries has surpassed 116,000 in the Israeli onslaught. Many victims are still trapped under the rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them.

The Israeli army resumed its assaults on the Gaza Strip on March 18 despite a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement that took hold in January.

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