



Leader Urges Full Probe into Tragic Port Inferno

Pezeshkian Convenes Crisis Management Meeting on Shahid Rajaei Incident

■ A massive explosion on Saturday left 40 dead and 900 injured

■ Global leaders offer condolences, offer solidarity

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President Masoud Pezeshkian visits the staff injured in the huge inferno at Shahid Rajaei Port on Sunday, April 27.

Women in the MEK: Trapped, tortured, and silenced



Maryam Sanjabi

By Sheida Sabzehvari

TEHRAN – Throughout history, women have often been more vulnerable than their male peers and faced higher risks of crime, sexual exploitation, and forced labor. This is a recurring theme around the world, and while each society has its own unique expressions of this, women everywhere can often share tragic stories of struggle.

One place you might not expect to find abuse against women is in an organization that so loudly proclaims itself the “defender” of women’s rights, especially one that boasts about having a female “leader” and purportedly keeps men inferior throughout its ranks.

The terrorist group Mojahe-

din-e-Khalq (MEK) may not consider its killing of over 23,000 Iranians a heinous act, nor its alliance with Saddam Hussein against Iran during the 1980s invasion. A member might even argue that these acts of terror and treason were committed in the name of a just cause. However, what the group would certainly never admit is its systematic abuse of its own members, especially the women it so desperately tries to portray as free and happy.

Yet, as time goes on, an increasing number of female ex-members are breaking their silence to expose the truth: a truth characterized by unimaginable violence and violation of human, personal, and gender rights. Maryam Sanjabi is one of these women.

Within the MEK, women are particularly subject to abuse, a stark contradiction to the terror group’s manufactured feminist image

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3rd Iran-Africa economic cooperation summit kicks off in Tehran

TEHRAN – The third Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Summit opened Sunday at Tehran’s Summit Hall, attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian, First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, senior officials from the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, and delegations from across the African continent.

Iran is hosting high-level African Union officials, ministers of economy and trade, heads of chambers of commerce, business leaders, bankers, insurance executives, and representatives of major production units and international corporations.



The summit marks a key step in systematizing Iran’s economic engagement with Africa, a continent seen as a major opportunity for emerging economies seeking new markets.

African countries, seeking to overcome historical underdevelopment, are increasingly looking to import goods, services, and skilled

labor — areas where Iran sees significant potential to assist.

More than 700 African businesspeople from 38 countries have registered to attend, with over 50 high-level officials, including ministers and heads of chambers of commerce from 29 African nations, participating.

The three-day summit includes four specialized ministerial panels focusing on petrochemicals, mining and metallurgy, agriculture and food industries, and health and pharmaceuticals. Dedicated B2B meetings tailored to these sectors are also on the agenda. Page 4

No military cargoes at site of deadly port blast in South of Iran: Defense Ministry

TEHRAN – The spokesperson for Iran’s Ministry of Defense has firmly dismissed rumors suggesting the presence of military-related cargo at Shahid Rajaei Port at the time of a powerful blast that rocked the port of Shahid Rajaei in Hormozgan Province on Saturday.

The tragic incident which happened after a fuel tanker exploded for reasons still under investigation, has so far claimed 40 lives and injured more than 900 individuals.

In a statement on Sunday, Brigadier General Reza Talei-Nik, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense, expressed condolences to the families affected by the incident and to the great Iranian nation, also conveying sympathy on behalf of Defense Ministry personnel and the Armed Forces.

He stated: “Based on investigations and available documents, there has been and is no imported or exported cargo for fuel or military purposes in the area of the Shahid Rajaei Port fire.” Page 2

100 tour operators from 33 countries to attend Tehran forum

TEHRAN – Iran is set to host an international tour operators forum from today until May 2.

Over 100 tour operators from 33 countries have been invited to attend the event, according to Moslem Shojaei, director-general for marketing and tourism development at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Speaking at a press conference on Sunday, Shojaei announced that the event would coincide with the 7th edition of the Iran Export Capabilities Exhibition (Iran Expo 2025).

The official described the forum as a significant opportunity to present the Islamic Republic as a safe and attractive destination while countering negative perceptions about the country.

Tour operators from countries including Vietnam, Thailand, India, Tajikistan, Armenia, Turkey, Uganda, Mauritius, Bosnia, Saudi Arabia, Page 6

Pezeshkian engages Indian, Pakistani leaders; proposes Iran as mediator amid rising Kashmir tensions

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian condemned the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, India, and offered Tehran’s mediation to ease escalating tensions between India and Pakistan during separate phone calls with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif on Saturday.

In his conversation with Modi, Pezeshkian expressed “deep sorrow” over the Pahalgam attack, which killed and injured dozens of civilians, emphasizing Iran’s solidarity with India.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns these inhumane terrorist acts,” he stated, adding that regional stability hinges on “collective efforts to eradicate terrorism’s roots.” Page 2

Lebanon’s upcoming elections: Will the Resistance rise or retreat?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON — Amidst the escalating tensions resulting from Operation Al Aqsa Flood, Lebanon is preparing for the municipal elections scheduled for next month, and based on their results, for next year’s parliamentary elections.

This is taking place in light of increasing American interference in every aspect of Lebanese affairs, to the point that the municipal elections have become more than just a development and service requirement for Lebanese citizens. It seems the elections have become a vital national security matter for the Americans.

Indeed, the upcoming elections represent an opportune opportunity for American diplomacy to examine the extent of change—if it actually occurs—in Lebanese society’s general perception of the effectiveness of the Resistance. Page 5

Yemeni forces target Israeli base twice

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Yemen launches second hypersonic missile strike on an Israeli airbase in 24 hours.

For the second consecutive day, Yemen’s military targeted the Nevatim airbase in the Negev desert with an advanced hypersonic ballistic missile.

The Sunday morning attack came just hours after a similar strike on Saturday demonstrated Yemen’s growing missile capabilities against Israeli air defenses.

Brigadier General Yahya Saree, spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces, confirmed in a televised statement that the precision strike had achieved its military objectives.

“This operation proves our ability to penetrate enemy air defenses at will,” Saree declared, adding that such attacks would continue until the Israeli regime ends its siege and genocidal campaign against Gaza. Page 5

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Zionist regime's position on indirect talks between Iran and US

In an analysis, Sobh-e-No addressed the Zionist regime's position on the Iran-U.S. talks and wrote: At the same time as the new round of indirect talks between Iran and the U.S. has begun, the Zionist regime has once again adopted its confrontational and provocative approach towards Tehran's active diplomacy. The recent positions of the regime's political and security officials indicate Tel Aviv's growing concern about the revival of any agreement between Tehran and Washington. Since the start of the indirect talks in Muscat, the Zionist regime's officials have openly tried to disrupt or make the talks ineffective by creating a media atmosphere, launched intensive contacts with Washington, and put pressure on European allies. The Zionist regime has traditionally opposed any reduction in tension between Iran and the West, as it considers the continuation of tensions to be part of its security strategy. In the current situation, the regime's efforts are focused on disrupting the diplomatic path and magnifying the threat from Iran. However, the success of Iranian diplomacy and the cohesion of the resistance front in the region can defeat this destructive scenario.

Farhikhtegan: Rubio's psychological warfare on the eve of technical talks

In a note, Farhikhtegan discussed the statement of Marco Rubio, the U.S. Secretary of State. Rubio said: "If Iran wants a peaceful nuclear program, it can buy and import enriched uranium from abroad instead of enrichment." Although he does not explicitly talk about shutting down Iran's nuclear program, his reference to the need to stop enrichment and import nuclear fuel is no different from the idea of shutting down Iran's nuclear program. His statements on the eve of entering the third round of negotiations were mostly aimed at manipulating public opinion in Iranian society and shifting the focus of the dispute to the need for enrichment or its import. His speech has the potential to create a new controversy in the country's political atmosphere. It seems that the U.S. seeks an Emirati plan for Iran. The United Arab Emirates has nuclear power plants, but it imports enriched uranium for its nuclear power plants and has no nuclear enrichment program. Pursuing this idea and or accepting this condition will ultimately undermine Iran's nuclear activity.

Jam-e-Jam: Why nuclear talks are welcomed by regional countries

The American propaganda campaign against Iran that there will be a war against it if it does not negotiate over its nuclear program greatly caused international and regional concern.

Therefore, with the start of the negotiations, the countries of the region, especially the Persian Gulf states, welcomed them because these negotiations could prevent the outbreak of a war. The reason for this is that these countries thought that the negotiations could bring peace to the region. It seems that this time the negotiating atmosphere is more favorable than the JCPOA talks. There is more empathy in this regard, and everyone has acknowledged that the JCPOA format failed due to the West's refusal to fulfill its commitments. Therefore, the new format is expected to lead to a successful end. The success of this process depends on the negotiation being pursued with better prospects and the other party fulfilling its obligations. Now, the atmosphere of the talks is favorable, and it is hoped that an agreement will eventually be reached to the benefit of the people's economic well-being in the Islamic Republic. At the same time, one should not take only one path to resolve the country's issues. Different paths should be active, including the current process of negotiations that is being pursued.

Siasat-e-Rooz: Interactions that must be seen

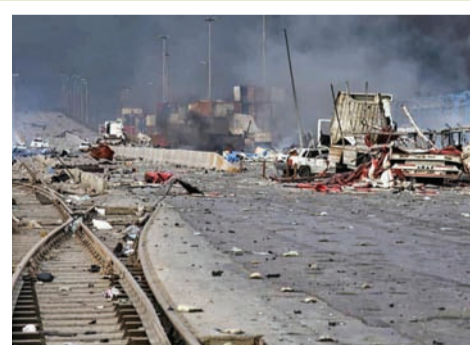
Siasat-e-Rooz devoted its editorial to the meeting between Iranian and Russian officials in Moscow before the start of the third round of negotiations. The paper said: One day before the start of the third round of negotiations, a very important economic move step was taken which can be referred to as a practical measure to neutralize the sanctions. According to published reports, the outcome of this meeting was agreements such as expanding trade between the two countries, increasing technical and scientific cooperation, building a new nuclear power plant in Iran, and transporting Russian gas overland to Iran. Iran and Russia have always emphasized that they will not give in to pressure and will strive to meet each other's needs through internal, bilateral, and regional capacity building, and adopt a unified approach against the sanctions. The aforementioned meeting was the practical dimension of this unified approach, which certainly has many implications for global multilateralism and confronting the destructive unilateralism of the West. The founders of the new world order and confronting American unilateralism, such as Iran, China, and Russia, have the necessary will to develop comprehensive relations and confront the sabotage and excesses of the hegemonic system, and they can form a new structure of the international system through interaction and convergence while securing common interests.

No military cargoes at site of deadly port blast in south of Iran: Defense Ministry

From page 1 ▶ Referring to certain media narratives, Taleai-Nik added: "Some fabricated news, promoted through coordinated media campaigns by foreign outlets as part of enemy psychological operations, is not new. The intelligent Iranian nation has always managed to neutralize such media operations."

He also emphasized that the main and contributing causes of the fire—whether related to safety or security—are being thoroughly investigated under the supervision of the National Disaster Management Organization and the Ministry of Interior, with the findings to be officially announced at the appropriate time.

Separately, outlets such as the Associated Press (AP) and The New York Times (NYT) published claims alleging that the explosion was linked to shipments of chemical materials used in missile production. AP reported that the port had received ammonium perchlorate from China in March, while the NYT quoted individuals with alleged ties to Iranian security services claiming a missile fuel component exploded. Iranian officials have categorically rejected these allegations as baseless, reassuring the public that an in-



depth investigation is underway to establish the cause of the explosion and prevent its recurrence.

Meanwhile, Iranian authorities, emergency services, health departments, and crisis management teams continue to work to ensure that victims and their families receive the necessary care and that affected facilities are secured and rehabilitated.

On Sunday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian also went to Bandar Abbas to monitor response operations a day after the deadly explosion. Speaking to reporters upon his arrival in Bandar Abbas, Pezeshkian said his administration is following up on all aspects of the deadly blast.

Pezeshkian engages Indian, Pakistani leaders; proposes Iran as mediator amid rising Kashmir tensions

From page 1 ▶ Pezeshkian lauded the enduring legacy of India's great leaders, stating that Iran recognizes the Indian nation through illustrious figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who were "champions of peace, friendship, and harmonious coexistence on the global stage."

"We hope that this guiding vision and strategic approach will continue to serve as the cornerstone of India's relations with all countries around the world," the Iranian president added.

He also highlighted the importance of economic ties, particularly the Chabahar Port project, calling it a "strategic corridor" linking Iran, India, and Russia.

Modi thanked Pezeshkian for Iran's condolences, noting, "Your empathy is deeply valued, especially given Iran's own tragic experiences with terrorism."

He echoed the need for regional unity against terror and praised Iran's role in global peace efforts, including its push for diplomatic solutions to tensions with the U.S.

Later, in talks with Sharif, Pezeshkian expressed concern over rising India-Pakistan tensions and reiterated Iran's readiness to facilitate dialogue.

"We view Pakistan as a brotherly neighbor and stand with both nations to resolve misunderstandings," he said, referencing plans to boost economic and infrastructure coop-



From left to right: Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

eration.

Emphasizing the importance of strengthening scientific, economic, and cultural cooperation among Islamic countries, Pezeshkian stated: "Economic relations, joint investments, the expansion of scientific and technological partnerships, and a coordinated fight against terrorism can serve as the cornerstone of our extensive cooperation."

Sharif welcomed Iran's mediation, stating, "Pakistan supports transparent investigations into the incident that occurred in India and values Tehran's stabilizing role."

Iran's president invited both Modi and Sharif to Tehran for talks, with Sharif proposing foreign minister-level preparatory meetings for a possible Tehran visit.

Pezeshkian's diplomatic flurry follows Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's Friday offer to mediate, where he described India and Pakistan as "brotherly neighbors" with whom Iran shares "centuries-old cultural and civilizational ties." Araghchi invoked a verse by Persian poet Saadi: "Human beings are members of a whole / In creation of one essence and soul."

Kashmir at the crossroads

The Pahalgam attack, reportedly claimed by a Lashkar-e-Taiba offshoot, has intensified long-standing hostilities between New Delhi and Islamabad.

India responded by revoking most Pakistani visas and suspending the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, a move Pakistan termed an "act of war."

Cross-border shelling has since escalated, with both nations mobilizing troops along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir.

Kashmir, a Muslim-majority region, has been a flashpoint since the 1947 partition of British India.

Both nations claim it in full but control parts, with three wars fought over the territory. India revoked Kashmir's autonomy in 2019, deepening tensions. Despite UN calls for a plebiscite, the dispute remains unresolved, compounded by cross-border militancy and allegations of state-sponsored terrorism.

The Kashmir dispute demands a nuanced and impartial approach. Iran, with its deep historical connections to both countries, is believed to be uniquely suited to this role. Unlike other regional powers, Iran has maintained balanced relations with India and Pakistan, enhancing its credibility as a mediator.

It maintains strong trade and energy links with India (e.g., Chabahar Port) while sharing a 900-km border and cultural affinity with Pakistan.

Tehran has previously mediated regional conflicts, including during the 2001 Afghan crisis and the Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, showcasing its preference for dialogue over confrontation.

Iran pays overdue membership fees to international organizations despite sanctions

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran has settled its overdue membership fees to international organizations, following sustained efforts by the Supreme Audit Court.

According to the Public Relations and International Affairs Department of the Court, in or-

der to avoid the risk of membership suspension, the outstanding fees for the year 1403 (2024), based on a Cabinet resolution, were successfully deposited into the relevant accounts by the end of Farvardin (April). The payments were made after coordinated follow-ups with the

Plan and Budget Organization and the Foreign Ministry.

Despite the challenges posed by sanctions, the payments were completed in both U.S. dollars and euros. A few remaining cases have also been funded and are currently being processed.

The Iron Lady and the Shah: How Thatcher's 1978 Iran trip fueled British interference

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – Forty-seven years ago, in April 1978, the leader of the UK opposition Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher, visited Iran almost a year before the Islamic Revolution. She held talks with Mohammad Reza Shah and cajoled him into buying more British-made weapons and military equipment in a bid to create jobs in her country amid the economic recession.

During the visit to Iran, Thatcher described Mohammad Reza as "one of the world's most far-sighted statesmen."

Perhaps, Thatcher was one of the politicians that Shah's regime could have relied on most in Europe. She played a substantial role in shaping her party's view of developments in Iran and the world.

During her visit to Tehran in spring 1978, Thatcher discussed with the Shah the sale of British weapons to Iran and the construction of a military-industrial complex near Isfahan. She said during the meeting with Shah that Iran's purchases of military equipment had created thousands of jobs in Britain, at a time when her country was grappling with a high rate of unemployment.

A look at the history of relations between Iran and Britain before the 1979 Islamic Revolution shows that the British had a hand in every internal affair during the Shah's rule, which lasted for twenty-seven years between 1941-1979.

Brits establish Pahlavi dynasty

Britain was the foreign power that played a substantial role in establishing the Pahlavi dynasty. A British Embassy report from 1932, as published by British media, admitted that the British put Mohammad Reza's father, Reza Khan, "on the throne."

The Brits were the dominant power in Iran even before the Pahlavi dynasty, namely the Qajar dynasty. They had pressured Qajar shahs to

make huge concessions in the oil and natural resources fields.

Reza Khan's ascension to power as the war minister and later prime minister during the last of the Qajar shahs, Ahmad Shah, was all done with Britain's support prior to his coronation in 1925 and the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty. During Reza Shah's 20-year reign, the British effectively took control of Iran and its resources after helping him to establish a military dictatorship in the country in line with their colonial goals.

It was the British who removed Reza Shah from power and replaced him with his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in 1941 after they detested him for his alleged inclination towards Germany during World War II.

During Mohammad Reza's reign (1941-1979), the British continued to be behind many major developments in Iran. It was them who, in cooperation with the newly arrived Americans, staged the 1953 coup against the democratically elected government of Mohammad Mosaddegh on August 19, 1953.

Mohammad Reza Shah's concession of Bahrain in 1971 was also the work of the British. Indeed, the Shah succumbed to a decade-long plot designed by the British Empire. Bahrain declared independence as the result of a sham process orchestrated by Britain.

Events like those raised popular resentment against the British presence in Iran before and after the Islamic Revolution.

Britain's desperation after the 1979 Islamic Revolution

A few months after Thatcher's April visit to Iran, the United Kingdom Labor government led by Prime Minister James Callaghan secretly agreed to the Shah's request to supply 175,000 CS gas canisters and up to 360 armored personnel carriers to the Shah's regime to help in crack-



ing down on the growing protests. The Brits also had the Shah's intelligence apparatus, SAVAK.

Ten days after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Callaghan vowed through his Foreign Secretary, David Owen, that he would recognize the interim government of Mehdi Bazargan in Iran. But two months after that, when Thatcher took office in May, she announced that her country would reconsider its recognition of the new Iranian government. That announcement was the beginning of a hostile policy that the new U.K. prime minister adopted during her 11-year tenure towards the Islamic Republic of Iran.

However, she refused to grant political asylum to fugitive Shah for fear of reprisals from the Iranian revolutionaries.

Meanwhile, the Thatcher government approved of some American officials' proposal on the necessity of a military attack on Iran in response to the takeover of the American Embassy in Tehran. Subsequently, she accepted the U.S. call to join the economic sanctions against Iran, and in 1980, she voiced the U.K.'s support for the Eagle Claw Operation by the U.S. commandos to airlift the Embassy staff held in Tehran. The operation ended in a catastrophe for the U.S. troops after a sandstorm grounded the troops and destroyed their military equipment in the Tabas Desert in northeastern Iran.

A few days after the failure of the U.S. operation, the siege of the Iranian Embassy in London began. A group of terrorists took 26 people hostage, including Embassy staff, inside the compound from 30 April to 5 May. A siege ensued by the British government while some of the anti-Iran demands from the hostage takers were met, such as the broadcasting of their demands on British television. Two Iranian diplomats were killed in the incident.

Following the death of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in 1979, the Thatcher government issued a statement expressing condolences over his demise. There were other assaults against the Iranian diplomatic premises and other interests in the U.K. in 1980. Moreover, in June 1984, the Thatcher government expelled five Iranian diplomats from the United Kingdom, which met with a backlash from Iran.

Furthermore, Thatcher's government armed Iraq throughout the 1980s during the foreign-backed war against Iran.

The UK government severed diplomatic relations with Iran on 7 March 1989 in protest over a fatwa issued by Imam Khomeini over the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in the UK. The Iron Lady government also launched a witch-hunt campaign against Iranian students in the country that year.

Women in the MEK: Trapped, tortured, and silenced

From Page 1 ▶ Maryam looked composed as she sat across from me for the interview. Her demeanor or provided a stark contrast to the chilling information I had just read online – that the MEK was looking to assassinate her. I asked her if this was true. She said yes, but what she cared about was that the group's façade would come down, especially in the European countries currently sheltering the MEK.

Maryam's introduction to the organization came through her older brother when she was just in middle school. She joined the terror outfit in the 80s, a decision she now reflects on with deep regret. "While I know I have to take responsibility for what I did, I can't help but wonder how I ended up in the Ashraf Camp in Iraq," she explained. "Of course, I didn't fully understand what I was signing up for. I was young, naïve, and easily sucked in by their lies. The MEK leaders said their aim was to make Iran free and prosperous, but all they ever cared about was murdering innocent people and enslaving us."

For 25 years, Maryam was part of the organization. In 2011, she finally fled Iraq after witnessing horrific crimes against its members, especially women.

The Tehran Times had pre-



Female members of MEK during a televised gathering by the terror organization

"A key part of their control strategy was systematically eliminating women's roles as wives and mothers," she said.

As previously reported by the Tehran Times, the MEK ended up forcing all couples within the Ashraf Camp to divorce their spouses. Then it proceeded to ban any form of romance and intimacy, with women facing harsher punishments than men for breaking the rules. "I knew a 30-year-old woman who confessed her feelings to a male member," Maryam recalled. "When the MEK leadership discovered this, they forced dozens of members to ver-

suffered major losses during a failed 1988 operation against Iran, they implemented draconian measures to prevent defections.

"Everything changed overnight," Maryam explained. "Anyone requesting to leave would be confined in isolation for two years. Upon release, they'd be given only basic provisions—a fork, spoon, bag of flour, used clothing, and minimal cash—before being abandoned at Abu Ghraib prison. Without passports (which we'd surrendered upon joining), Iraqis detained these stateless individuals for six to seven years."

tact. This was simply their way of warning unhappy members about the consequences of attempting to leave."

Eight years after joining, Maryam was taken to the "Castle" – a notorious prison complex within Ashraf Camp. "The first person I saw was Mahboubeh Jamshidi, sitting on a chair, screaming curses at me, and demanding confessions. Then others in the room began beating me."

Maryam was confined in a cell with other women prisoners. Their daily existence consisted of relentless beatings, with only three one-minute bathroom breaks outside their cells each day.

"Four jailers oversaw our torture: Heshmat Tiftakchi, Nahid Sadeghi, Kobra Hassanvand, and Fatemeh Kheradmand. Kheradmand would kick me with her military boots – head, face, everywhere. Her blows split my lips open and left permanent scars. My wounds bled profusely, but I never received any medical treatment."

"The violence escalated one day when Kheradmand attacked me like a wild animal and tried to break my hand. Though I fought back, she damaged nerves in my right hand and left it numb for years. The injury remains visible today."

Maryam endured this torture for ten days. "Then Shahin Haeri, Saeeda Shahrokhi, and other guards came. They dragged me to a room, bound my limbs, and whipped my feet and body until I passed out. They revived me with water, only to repeat the process again and again."

After this ordeal, Maryam was returned to the general population with strict orders never to speak about what had happened.

Death, the ultimate fate of the women who dared escape

But what awaited those who miraculously escaped Ashraf Camp, avoided Abu Ghraib prison, and survived the MEK's internal torture system? Almost certain death – particularly for women.

"I escaped during a period when surveillance had weakened after Saddam's fall," Maryam explained. "The regime's collapse meant the MEK lost its main ally in hunting down fugitives. Those who tried escaping earlier weren't so lucky – many were captured and executed."

Maryam recounted the tragic story of Mino Fathali, a camp guard who fled with a male colleague she loved. "The MEK deployed sixty Iraqi patrol vehicles to track them down. They were captured in Baghdad and dragged back."

While the man eventually escaped after serving two years' imprisonment, Mino suffered a far worse fate – she was executed with cyanide. "This was their standard method," Maryam noted. "Countless others chose suicide over continued torment. I knew of about 100 suicides among our 5,000 members – an unimaginable toll."

Maryam said she feels bad for some of the people left trapped in the MEK. "Before I escaped, I confided in my two closest friends," she shared. "But fear kept them from joining me. Now they're stuck in the MEK's Albanian compound—I don't think they'll ever be able to find a way out, but I pray to god that someone helps them leave that hell."



The MEK executed Mino Fathali in the early 2000s for attempting to escape. The group has been blaming Iran's government for her death ever since

viously reported on the Ashraf Camp's isolation: members were cut off from technology and the outside world, subjected to strict segregation, and forced into hours of daily brainwashing. They were even forced to divorce their spouses and send their children away. But speaking with Maryam provided deeper insight into the particular struggles women in the group endured.

The forced sterilization of women

Up until the 1990s, women in the MEK held no real status under the leadership of its early founders. At best, they were limited to working in kitchens, kindergartens, or dormitories, Maryam said. But in the 90s, when Maryam Qajar-Azdanlou rose alongside Masoud Rajavi, a new deception took shape.

"Qajar-Azdanlou is the group's most notorious female fraud—everything she says about women's rights is a lie, and her actions completely contradict her words. The group's propaganda boasts that women hold top leadership roles and portrays them as free-thinking revolutionaries. But in reality, the women there are essentially prisoners, stripped of any real agency or decision-making power."

Maryam explained that the MEK was particularly concerned about women leaving the organization. They employed extreme measures to ensure no woman could escape or think about anything beyond devotion to Rajavi.

bally abuse her during our nightly 'confession sessions' – hour-long rituals where we had to admit any 'wrongdoings' from the day."

"The constant humiliation destroyed her. She eventually committed suicide by electrocuting herself with high-voltage wiring."

The MEK's family destruction campaign progressed methodically: after separating spouses, they removed children—first shipping them to Jordan, then dispersing them across Europe.

Finally, they ensured women could never bear children again. "They moved from forced divorces to mass sterilizations," Maryam stated.

The organization actively sought opportunities to perform sterilizations. "A simple stomach ache became justification," Maryam revealed. "They'd claim your life depended on the procedure. If you resisted, they'd invent another surgical reason and sterilize you while anesthetized—without your knowledge."

Having worked in the MEK's documentation center, Maryam had unique insight: "I knew of about 150 sterilized women. Many horrific cases crossed my desk that others never saw."

Leaving made impossible

During the first few years of MEK's presence in Iraq, exiting the organization was relatively straightforward. Departing members would be held in separate quarters for about a year before release. However, after the group

Abu Ghraib had long been synonymous with systematic torture, both before and after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The prison gained global notoriety in 2004 when leaked photographs exposed its brutal torture practices: prisoners led on leashes, naked detainees stacked in human pyramids, and individuals forced into crucifixion-like positions.

"Some former members begged to rejoin the MEK after being sent to Abu Ghraib," Maryam revealed. "Many disappeared inside that prison – we never heard from them again. Others didn't survive at all."

For those who endured the Iraqi facility's horrors, survival didn't mean recovery. The Tehran Times recently learned about the case of one woman who returned to Iran after her imprisonment. The former MEK member spent her remaining years institutionalized in psychiatric care before dying earlier this year.

Punished before disobedience
The MEK conducted periodic "purification" campaigns to eliminate discontent within its ranks. Members suspected of dissatisfaction or potential desertion were rounded up and subjected to days of torture. Maryam eventually became one of these targeted "impure elements."

"They accused me and others of being Iranian government agents, which was nonsense," Maryam recounted. "They knew perfectly well we had no outside con-

Leader urges full probe into tragic port inferno

TEHRAN – Following the painful inferno at Shahid Rajaei Port, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a message on Sunday offering condolences to the bereaved families.

"The painful inferno incident at Shahid Rajaei

Port is a source of sorrow and concern," Ayatollah Khamenei stated, adding, "All officials are obliged to prevent bitter and costly incidents."

The Leader also tasked security and judicial officials to fully probe any kind of negligence or intentional act that caused the deadly incident.

On Saturday, a powerful blast rocked the port of Shahid Rajaei in Hormozgan Province after a fuel tanker exploded for reasons still under investigation.

The tragic incident has so far claimed 40 lives and injured more than 900 people.

Iran beach soccer fixtures in 2025 World Cup revealed

TEHRAN – Iran delegation arrived in Seychelles Sunday morning to participate at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup 2025.

Team Melli are drawn in Group B along with Mauritania, two-time FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup champions Portugal, and Paraguay.

Host nation Seychelles will take on Belarus, Guatemala and Japan in Group A. Group C sees Spain, Senegal, Chile and Tahiti take to the sand, as Group D will see a rematch of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup 2024 final, as Brazil and Italy will feature in the group alongside El Salvador and Oman.

The FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Seychelles 2025 kicks off on the 1st May, with the final taking place on the 11th May.

Ali Naderi's Iran will take on Mauritania in its opening match. The Persians will also meet Paraguay and Portugal on May 3 and 5, respectively.

Vafaei fails to reach World Snooker Championship QF

TEHRAN – Hossein Vafaei of Iran lost to Mark Williams and failed to book his place in the 2025 World Snooker Championship quarter-finals.

Williams and John Higgins will meet in a mouthwatering quarter-final tie at the World Championship, while fellow Class of 92 graduate Ronnie O'Sullivan is also on course for the last eight.

Williams resumed his last-16 clash with Vafaei nursing a two-frame advantage, and he continued to keep the Iranian at arms lengths until finishing the match with a sublime 115.

In a contest which started poorly but improved through the three sessions, Williams always appeared to have matters in control, even when Vafaei put together breaks of 74 and 72 to pull the score back to 11-10.

Williams, bidding to be world champion for a fourth time, remained typically unflustered and put himself within touching distance of victory by dominating frame 22, before finishing the job in style to complete a 13-10 triumph.

Japan, Iran set to rekindle Asia Cup rivalries

TEHRAN – The series between these two teams in the FIBA Asia Cup is tied, which means their Group Phase clash at Asia Cup 2025 will give one team the advantage.

In Group B of the FIBA Asia Cup 2025 Qualifiers, Japan and Iran are headed for another chapter in one of the region's most balanced and bruising rivalries.

It's a series deadlocked at 7-7 in Asia Cup history. Every win, every loss, has carried weight, FIBA.com reported.

The last time they met, Iran got the better of Japan, winning 88-76 at the Asia Cup 2022. It wasn't just the scoreline that stood out – it was the clash of generations and two of the biggest stars of the competition. Iran's Hamed Haddadi, the long-reigning king of Asian big men, stuffed the stat sheet with 21 points, 11 rebounds, 4 assists, and 3 blocks. Japan's Yuta Watanabe, a familiar name to NBA fans, countered with 17 points and 10 rebounds of his own.

Iran's Behnam Yakhchali and Mohammad Jamshidi piled on 41 points combined, showing that the generation after Haddadi and Samad is still carrying the torch proudly.

Their 2015 encounters are still a sore point for Japan. Iran crushed them 86-48 in the opening game – then came back to deny Japan a medal in the third-place game, winning 68-63 behind Samad Nikkhab Bahrami's epic 35-point outburst.

Iran grabbed their fourth Asia Cup medal. Japan were left without a podium finish once again, a drought that has now stretched since 1997.

Japan once owned this rivalry, winning the first five meetings between 1973 and 1991. But Iran turned the tide in 1993, and since then, it's been a fight for every inch.

They've spilled that battle over into World Cup Qualifiers, too. Japan swept Iran in the 2019 Asian Qualifiers during their miracle eight-game win streak to reach the World Cup.

In the 2023 cycle, the story flipped: Iran spoiled Japan's hot start with a 79-68 win behind Yakhchali's 30-point explosion, before Japan stormed back six months later with a brutal 96-61 payback, with Ren Kanechika splashing six threes in his senior team debut.

This rivalry isn't just about the past – it's about two programs pulling in opposite directions. Iran, trying to squeeze the last drops out of a golden era. Japan, banking on a new wave of shooters, speed, and swagger.

Come Group B, history says it's a toss-up. Reality says it could be one of the most intense games of the Group Phase.

Iran lose to Cambodia in IV BFA Women's Baseball Asian Cup

TEHRAN – Iran lost to Cambodia 23-13 in the IV BFA Women's Baseball Asian Cup Qualifiers Tournament on Sunday.

Team Melli Banovan had previously lost to Sri Lanka 13-0, Pakistan 17-2, and India 13-0.

The Iranian girls will play Malaysia on Monday.

The tournament is being held from April 23 to 29 in Thailand.

Persepolis to part ways with Giorgi Gvelesiani

TEHRAN – Giorgi Gvelesiani, the Georgian defender for Persepolis football team, is reportedly set to leave the club at the end of the season.

Gvelesiani joined Persepolis in 2022 and contributed significantly to the team's success, helping secure two Iranian league titles, along with a Hazfi Cup and Super Cup.

However, during the 2024-25 season, he struggled to meet expectations, leading to speculation about his departure once the season concludes.

Before joining Persepolis, the Georgia international defender played for Iranian clubs Zob Ahan, Nassaji, and Sepahan.

Iranian runner shines at Basra International Half Marathon

TEHRAN – Iranian runner Parisa Arab won fifth place and received a \$3,500 prize in the Basra International Half Marathon Competition, setting a new record for Iranian women's half marathon.

The city of Basra hosted its first international half-marathon on Friday, attracting 147 runners from 44 countries in an event hailed as the largest of its kind in the city's history.

The 21-kilometer race began at the Sports City complex and ended at the Shatt al-Arab Corniche, drawing strong public turnout and praise for its organization.

In this competition, the Iranian runner Parisa Arab won fifth place and received a \$3,500 prize, setting a new record for the country's women's half marathon.

Parisa Arab is an Iranian American runner who has competed at events ranging from 1,500-meters to half marathons and holds Iranian national records in the 3,000, 5,000, and 10,000-meter.

NDF signs €50m credit line deal with Kyrgyzstan



NDF Head Mehdi Ghazanfari (L) and Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Economy and Commerce Bakyt Sydykov

TEHRAN – Iran's National Development Fund (NDF) signed a €50 million credit line agreement with Kyrgyzstan on Sunday.

As reported, the credit line will be made available through a bank selected by the exporter, enabling Iranian exporters of technical and engineering services to finance their projects in Kyrgyzstan.

The agreement was signed by Mehdi Ghazanfari, Chairman of the NDF Executive Board, and Bakyt Sydykov, Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Economy and Commerce.

Potential doubling of the credit line

On the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Ghazanfari announced the possibility of doubling the credit line to €100 million, depending on project performance.

He recalled that nearly two years ago, the two sides signed an initial memorandum of understanding in Bishkek, under which €50 million in financing was earmarked for buyers of Iranian technical and engineering services.

He added that Kyrgyz authorities were expected to identify low-risk, high-return projects and propose them for implementation by Iranian companies.

"This investment has two main benefits; on the one hand, it contributes to Kyrgyzstan's economic growth through the implementation of construction projects, and on the other hand, it activates the production chain in Iran, as Iranian contractors will be required to use Iranian goods and equipment", the official reiterated.

Ghazanfari said that during Sunday's meeting, the two sides agreed to re-establish a joint investment committee to oversee the projects.

Referring to the need for high quality projects, he added: "The quality of project implementation is very important for the National Development Fund.

We are seeking to create a mechanism where real representatives of the Iranian private sector, who prioritize national interests, are present in the joint committee so that the interests of the two countries are properly protected."

Ghazanfari stated that the goal is to fully absorb the first 50 million euros by 2025, and if successful, the second 50 million euros will also be allocated, adding: "Exporting technical and engineering services will not only generate foreign currency for the country, but will also develop factories and create

Cargo transit, transport operations resume at Shahid Rajaei Port

TEHRAN – Iran's Customs Administration announced that customs clearance procedures for direct transport, foreign transit, exports, and imports have resumed at Shahid Rajaei Port.

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), a special meeting of the technical and support team was held on Sunday at the import exit gate of Shahid Rajaei Customs.

Following an on-site review of infrastructure and confirmation of operational readiness, the head of Iran's Customs Administration ordered the resumption of direct customs clearance for essential goods and shipments for production units.

In a separate statement, the administration noted that customs clearance procedures for foreign transit, exports, and imports at Shahid Rajaei Customs in Bandar Abbas have officially

jobs."

In response to some concerns about investing the fund's resources abroad, the official said: "These foreign currency resources return to the country along with the profits, and this process not only does not harm domestic needs, but also strengthens domestic production by developing the export of technical and engineering services."

This deal paves way for bilateral economic, technical co-op

During the ceremony, Minister Sydykov said: "Kyrgyzstan and Iran have always had strong relations, and this deal will pave the way for the development of bilateral economic and technical cooperation."

Emphasizing the importance of this deal, he said: "We in our team are adopting the best working methods to attract investment.

The demand for infrastructure projects in Kyrgyzstan is very high, and this joint cooperation with Iran will open a new chapter in the economic relations of the two countries."

He emphasized the strong and expanding economic ties between the two countries, noting that current cooperation remains far below their potential.

The minister said the new memorandum would bolster investment, highlighting Kyrgyzstan's steady economic growth over the past three years, controlled public debt, and an inflation rate between five and seven percent.

He also pointed to ongoing economic reforms and currency stability in Kyrgyzstan.

The official thanked the NDF for organizing the meeting and announced that a follow-up session to sign an additional cooperation document would be held the next day.

He noted that Kyrgyzstan already has successful infrastructure cooperation with the NDF and that development funds from countries like Russia are active in Kyrgyzstan at low interest rates. Project risks, he said, are managed under the supervision of a national committee.

Ghazanfari welcomed reports of Kyrgyzstan's strong economic growth, calling it a sign of effective policymaking, particularly in the economic sector.

He stressed the importance of informing Iranian technical and engineering companies about the business environment in Kyrgyzstan, where knowledge gaps persist among the Iranian private sector.

Regarding the terms of the memorandum, Ghazanfari explained that Iranian companies would submit their contracts to the NDF to access financing.

The funds would be disbursed through Iranian banks directly to the contractors, meaning the NDF would not operate inside Kyrgyzstan; instead, Iranian private firms would enter the Kyrgyz market with NDF backing.

He concluded by stating that if Iranian contractors perform well in Kyrgyzstan, the credit line could be doubled, reaching a total of \$100 million.

resumed.

Iran's Customs Administration is expected to formally announce the full resumption of customs clearance procedures across all operations later today.

A huge explosion occurred at around 12.30 pm local time on Saturday at Shahid Rajaei Port in southern Hormozgan Province, leaving at least 25 dead and 750 injured, according to the provincial judiciary department.

The incident caused temporary disruptions in customs and transit operations. This affected the seamless flow of goods through the port, which is a crucial gateway for both imports and exports.

Shahid Rajaei Port, located in the southern city of Bandar Abbas, plays a key role in the country's trade and is vital for regional transit, particularly for goods traveling through the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC).

3rd Iran-Africa economic cooperation summit kicks off in Tehran

From Page 1 ▶ On Monday, African traders will visit the Iran Expo exhibition, followed by a trip to Isfahan on Tuesday, where delegates will hold sector-specific meetings and tour over 10 major industrial sites. In Isfahan, discussions will also cover tourism and handicrafts.

The Tehran portion of the summit runs from April 27 to 29, with the Isfahan program continuing through April 30.

Pezeshkian: Iran ready to expand ties with Africa across all fields

Addressing the summit, President Pezeshkian highlighted Africa's vast potential and reiterated Iran's readiness to share its achievements across sectors



such as health, trade, industry, agriculture, security, and peace.

Offering condolences for the victims of the Shahid Rajaei Port incident, Pezeshkian emphasized

humanity's shared destiny, invoking Quranic verses promoting unity and justice among all people.

Condemning global acts of ag-

gression and injustice, Pezeshkian said Iran believes all nations stem from a common root, with no superiority save for those who advance humanity through service and capability.

He urged building a world founded on friendship, solidarity, and mutual respect rather than sowing seeds of hatred. "Together, we can build a future filled with love, compassion, and humanity," he said, stressing that trade and cooperation are tools to achieve lasting peace and prosperity.

Pezeshkian closed by expressing Iran's full readiness to cooperate with African nations in all fields, affirming a vision of shared progress and a more peaceful world.

Co-op with Russia, Eurasia to accelerate Iran's plans for becoming regional energy hub



TEHRAN – Iran has launched negotiations and practical steps to connect to Russia's gas resources as part of a broader strategy to transform the country into a regional energy hub, the head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) said on Thursday.

Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting in Moscow between Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad and Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, Saeed Tavakkoli stressed that aligning with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is crucial to fulfilling the goals set under Iran's Seventh Development Plan.

"According to the country's top strategic documents, the National Iranian Gas Company is tasked with creating the conditions necessary to establish Iran as a regional energy hub," Tavakkoli said. "One of the most important steps in this direction is strengthening cooperation with Russia, one of the world's largest producers and holders of natural gas reserves."

Tavakkoli emphasized that collaboration with Russia, given its pivotal role in global energy markets, would accelerate Iran's integration into regional energy networks and bolster its influence across Eurasia and beyond.

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

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

Oman eyes investment opportunities in Iran's West Azarbaijan

TEHRAN – The head of the Chamber of Commerce for Northeast Oman said Iran's West Azarbaijan province offers exceptional development potential, adding that Oman is ready to invest in the region.

Speaking to IRNA following a meeting with the governor of West Azarbaijan, Mohammad bin Nasser Al-Maskari expressed a strong willingness to expand bilateral cooperation with the province's Chamber of Commerce.

He highlighted key opportunities in tourism, mining, and agriculture

that could mark a turning point in economic relations between Iran and Oman.

Al-Maskari praised the province's historical and tourism assets, saying Oman plans to begin practical investment steps in the hospitality and tourism sectors before the end of 2025.

Referring to West Azarbaijan Governor Reza Rahmani as an internationally recognized figure in industry and economy, Al-Maskari noted that Rahmani's strong ties with Omani officials could significantly ease the investment pro-

cess.

He emphasized that Oman initially seeks to focus on partnerships in tourism, agriculture, and food industries.

Al-Maskari further remarked that during President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration, cooperation between Iran and the Persian Gulf states has been steadily growing. He announced that Oman would soon host delegations from West Azarbaijan's tourism sector to discuss expanding collaboration.

The 21st meeting of the Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee,

which was held in Muscat on January 25, was described by the Iranian minister of industry, mining, and trade as distinct from the previous 20 gatherings, focused on three key agendas.

Mohammad Atabak has highlighted the signing of the MOU and elaborated on the meeting's agenda.

The first agenda item addressed the establishment of a preferential trade agreement and the elimination of tariffs between the two countries. Atabak stated that this initiative had been approved.

By Muhammad Mehdi

KARACHI - A tragic incident of terrorism took place in Pahalgam, and after that, the world's most dangerous border, on both sides of which there are nuclear-powered states, stood staring into each other's eyes. As soon as this incident happened, an accusation method was adopted from that moment on, which the world is familiar with. Therefore, instead of repeating these accusations or declaring the opinion of any party to be correct, let us examine why this situation occurs again and again and how it can be prevented.

The subcontinent remained a British colony for decades and for this reason it was the responsibility of Britain to settle all the issues between the two new countries that were emerging on the world map when it liberated British India, but this was not done deliberately and where many wounds of the colonial system were inflicted on the society of the subcontinent, they left issues like Kashmir without any final decision.

The subcontinent was already on fire in many places and Kashmir also started burning in the same way.

When the two newly emerged countries got into trouble, India took the matter to the United Nations Security Council and there, with the consent of both countries, it was decided that the Kashmiri people would be given the right to decide whether they wanted to go with Pakistan or India. Unfortunately, this Security Council resolution was never implemented and it is still on the agenda of the UN Security Council.



cil.

Due to its non-implementation, wars broke out between Pakistan and India, and it is a fact that wars themselves are problems, not solutions to problems.

In such a situation, a state of anxiety has begun to develop in Kashmir.

Today's world is not a world of armed movements. However, it is very difficult to prevent them. But still, individuals in Kashmir, deviating from the path of the central leadership of Kashmir, established armed organizations, and due to the actions of these armed organizations, tension and war of words between Pakistan and India became a norm. India took the position that Pakistan sends these armed men to Kashmir and that they are Pakistani people.

While Pakistan maintains that India has been conducting military operations in Kashmir for the past four decades, it has not been able to produce a single Pakistani person killed or arrested in any clash in Kashmir and present them before the media. And whoever has been killed while fighting the Indian army in Kashmir, from

their graves to their rightful owners, all of them are in Kashmir.

If these people were Pakistanis, then someone from their graves to their rightful owners would have been in Pakistan.

Unfortunately, in this whole situation, the political process suffered immense damage, and it was not possible for the leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference to do politics freely. Keeping this entire background in mind, the extremely unfortunate terrorist incident in Pahalgam can be understood. At present, the situation is that Pakistan is a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and all the permanent and non-permanent members of the Council, including Pakistan, have condemned it and demanded that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

Pakistan has been insisting on the stated position since the tragic incident happened that if India has any evidence of Pakistan's involvement, it should share it with Pakistan or share it with the international community. Pakistan has also offered full cooperation

in any impartial investigation at the level of the Prime Minister. After this incident, India took the step of suspending the Indus Water Treaty, to which Pakistan reacted by saying that if the water agreement is unilaterally terminated and the water is stopped, it will be considered a declaration of war.

Water experts say it is not possible to stop the flow of water. They ask how will the water be stopped, or where will the water be stored? What canal system is there to use the stored water?

The answer to all of these is in the negative and therefore the possibility of stopping the water is unlikely. Similarly, the two countries cannot afford any major military conflict.

The reason for this is that India has more manpower than Pakistan, but it has to keep a reasonable part of it on the Line of Actual Control with China and it is not possible for India to withdraw its troops from the Line of Actual Control, while Pakistan does not need a single soldier on the border of its neighboring countries Iran and China and Afghanistan is not capable of posing any threat of military attack to Pakistan.

In the current situation, a very appropriate news has come that Iran has offered mediation to end this tension.

This offer is getting a lot of acceptance in the Pakistani media, and if India accepts it, then the end of this tension will be possible very quickly because dialogue is the only way to resolve matters. If the Security Council resolution on Kashmir had been respected, the nuclear subcontinent would not have stood face to face today.

APRIL 28, 2025

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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Lebanon's president urges US, France to pressure Israel to end violations

Joseph Aoun condemns the Israeli attack on Beirut and calls on the U.S. and France to "assume their responsibility" as the sponsors of the ceasefire in Lebanon and tell Israel to end its violations of the deal.

The president said Israel is undermining stability in Lebanon and escalating tensions, posing "real dangers to the security" of the region.

Smoke could be seen rising from the Beirut suburbs of Dahiyeh after the Israeli strike.

Hezbollah keeps saying that its patience towards Israeli violations of the ceasefire is not endless, suggesting that it may eventually respond to the attacks.

Meanwhile, the ill-equipped Lebanese



Armed Forces are incapable – if not unwilling – to take on Israeli military.

It has continued to occupy parts of the south of the country in breach of the truce. And it has been carrying out attacks across the country almost daily.

Trump demands free passage via Suez Canal

President Donald Trump has claimed that neither the Panama Canal nor the Suez Canal would "exist" without the United States, and demanded that American commercial and military vessels be allowed to pass through the crucial waterways free of charge, RT reported.

Trump has repeatedly expressed his intention to "take back" control of the Panama Canal, using economic or military means if necessary. On Saturday, the U.S. president's desire to protect American "national security" interests from Chinese competition

extended to another strategic waterway – Egypt's Suez Canal, which connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea.

"American ships, both military and commercial, should be allowed to travel, free of charge, through the Panama and Suez Canals! Those canals would not exist without the United States of America," the president said in a Truth Social post.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio was already instructed "to immediately take care of, and memorialize [sic], this situation," Trump added.

Lebanon's upcoming elections: Will the Resistance rise or retreat?

From page 1 ► and particularly in the Shiite community; this is in connection with the repercussions of both supporting the Gaza Battle and Uli al-Baas Battle.

It is worth noting that the municipal elections will be held for the first time in decades in the absence of martyr Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. The American spy den (embassy) in Beirut is betting on the absence of Nasrallah's motivational and mobilizing role on voters, the same voters that Washington is halting the reconstruction of their homes and infrastructure, which were destroyed during the Israeli aggression on Lebanon in September and November last year.

Furthermore, the American spy den is resorting to blatantly threatening tactics to disarm their Resistance forces!

In Washington's view, the elections provide a golden opportunity for its proxies in Lebanon to undermine Hezbollah, politically and socially, which would allow for unprecedented moves against the Resistance.

But who can guarantee that the election results will meet Washington's aspirations?

Observers point out that the elections may produce results contrary to American assumptions, given that the Resistance—despite suffering severe and painful blows—is rapidly and steadily revamping its organizational structure.

Furthermore, its most important reliance is its popular base, which emerged during the exceptional funeral procession for Hezbollah's two assassinated secretaries-general,

Sayyeds Nasrallah and Safi al-Din, where the slogan "We are committed to the covenant [to resist]" was raised.

This was also evident during the return of residents of the border villages to occupied Palestine and their reiterated positions of supporting the Resistance.

Besides, this was followed by the Shiite duo's active participation in the election of the President of the Republic and the formation of the government, and a positive willingness to engage in dialogue regarding a national strategy to defend Lebanon's sovereignty despite the extremist rhetoric openly voiced by the Lebanese Forces party, which relies on the Israeli enemy.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Yemeni forces target Israeli base twice

From page 1 ► Military analysts note the strategic significance of targeting Nevatim, a major Israeli airbase that houses advanced fighter squadrons and has been used to wage massacres in Gaza.

The Yemeni forces employed a different missile type in Sunday's attack compared to the Palestine-2 hypersonic model used in Saturday's strike, suggesting an evolving arsenal.

Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) spokesperson Daniel Hagari ac-

knowledged detecting "aerial threats from Yemen" on Sunday that triggered air raid sirens across southern Israeli areas and the Dead Sea region.

While the IOF claims to have intercepted them, it has not provided evidence of stopping the hypersonic missiles.

The back-to-back strikes highlight Yemen's expanding military reach despite the ongoing U.S. airstrikes against Yemen.

Under the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, American warplanes have conducted almost daily raids across Yemen, resulting in significant civilian casualties that have drawn condemnation from human rights groups.

On Sunday, the Sanaa government's Ministry of Health reported 12 casualties in an initial toll after U.S. strikes targeted civilian and residential areas in the capital, killing two and wounding sev-

eral others, including women and children.

Yemeni officials have vowed to continue their campaign against Israeli and allied targets, both in the occupied Palestinian territories and in regional waters. "Our operations in the Red Sea and against Zionist targets will persist until the aggression stops and humanitarian aid flows freely to Gaza," Saree emphasized in his statement.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

India-Pakistan conflict: The long-term impact of US strategy on South Asia

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN - Western policies, particularly those of the United States, have played a complex and influential role over recent decades in the spread of terrorism and the escalation of regional tensions, especially between India and Pakistan. These policies, ostensibly aimed at combating terrorism and ensuring regional security, have in practice fueled insecurity and intensified conflicts. The recent Pehlgam incident is a stark example of the consequences of these policies and the intricate security challenges in the region.

The roots of this crisis trace back to the Cold War era when the United States, through "Operation Cyclone," funneled billions of dollars in weapons and financial aid to Afghan mujahideen via Pakistan. This shortsighted policy, heedless of long-term consequences,

strengthened extremist networks in Pakistan, paving the way for the emergence of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Following the September 11 attacks, U.S. policies in the region failed to curb terrorism. Instead, they exacerbated anti-American and anti-Western sentiments among locals, particularly through drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas that killed civilians. These actions provided extremist groups with a fertile ground to exploit public resentment, expand their ranks, and further threaten regional security.

Meanwhile, Pakistan, portrayed as a strategic U.S. ally, became a victim of great-power rivalries. The inconsistency and duplicity of Washington's policies—supporting Pakistan's government on one hand while turning a blind eye to extremist activities within its borders—

undermined governance and fueled chaos.

Recent India-Pakistan clashes, particularly in Kashmir, cannot be analyzed without this historical context.

In an interview with RT on Saturday, Pakistan's Defense Minister, Khawaja Asif, stated that terrorism in the region is a result of Western policies, especially those of the United States, and that Pakistan has been a victim of these policies. Asif emphasized that "jihad" was created by the West and has deeply impacted Pakistan's culture and society. He added that after the September 11 attacks, Pakistan joined the anti-terrorism coalition again, but these wars were not Pakistan's own, and the country has paid a heavy price.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Russia says it has regained full control of Kursk from Ukraine

Russia's military says it has regained full control of the country's western Kursk region which was denied by Ukraine, BBC reported on Sunday.

Top Russian commander Valery Gerasimov said the last village held by Ukrainian troops had now been recaptured - eight months after Kyiv's surprise incursion.

He also praised the "heroism" of North Korean troops during a Russian counter-offensive, in what is the first time Russia has publicly acknowledged their involvement. Russian President Putin described Ukraine's

efforts in Kursk as a complete failure.

Ukrainian forces have been in retreat in Kursk in recent months, facing 70,000 Russian troops and heavy drone attacks as part of Russia's drive to regain the territory.

In its latest report on 25 April, the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW) think-tank said: "Russian forces recently advanced near the international border in Kursk Oblast [region] as part of efforts to push Ukrainian forces from their limited remaining positions in the area."

Ex-Shin Bet chief calls for nonviolent revolt at weekly anti-government rally

Thousands gathered at demonstrations across Israel on Saturday night to protest against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government and to call for a deal that would return the remaining 59 hostages and bring an end to the war in the Gaza Strip, Times of Israel reported.

The main rally against the government took place at Tel Aviv's Habima Square, where demonstrators gathered to hear from a number of senior officials including the former heads of the Shin Bet and Israel Occupation Forces, while protesters demanding a hostage deal gathered at the nearby Hostages Square. The rallies then merged on Begin Road, as they do each week.

Speaking at a press conference ahead of the evening's events, Einav Zangauker, whose son Matan is held captive in Gaza, charged that Israel could sign a deal and bring the hostages home "tomorrow morning" if it wished to.

"Soldiers are being sent to war without end, without purpose, and without concern



for the day after," she said, standing alongside a group of captives' relatives. "It is possible to sign a deal tomorrow morning. An entire nation is being deceived. We are told that military pressure will return the kidnapped — it only kills them."

The "entire nation" wants an end to the war and the return of all the hostages, Zangauker asserted, accusing Netanyahu of "doing himself a favor, by agreeing, perhaps, to another 'selection' deal" — comparing the phased hostage release deals favored by Netanyahu to the Nazi practice of sending sickly Jews to their deaths and healthy Jews to slave labor.

Car drives into Vancouver's Lapu Lapu street festival crowd

Police in Canada have ruled out "terrorism" as a motive for a deadly car ramming at a street festival in Vancouver.

At least nine people were killed and several injured on Saturday night while they attended celebrations for a major Filipino festival.

Investigations are ongoing as a 30-year-old suspect is in custody.

At 8:14pm on Saturday (03:14 GMT on Sunday), a man drove into a crowd gathered for Lapu-Lapu Day, according to the Vancouver Police Department.

ECO tourism ministers plant symbolic trees in Erzurum

TEHRAN – On Saturday, tourism ministers from the member states of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) participated in a symbolic tree-planting ceremony in Turkey's Erzurum to reaffirm their commitment to regional cooperation and sustainable tourism development.

The ceremony was held on the sidelines of the 6th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism. It also commemorated the city's designation as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2025.

In a meaningful gesture, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, planted a special tree dedicated to the Islamic Republic of Iran, in addition to joining his counterparts in the collective tree-planting ceremony. His action symbolized Iran's strong commitment to fostering cultural collaboration, environmental stewardship, and regional tourism diplomacy.

The trees planted during the ceremony are intended as enduring symbols of peace, friendship, cultural solidarity, and respect for nature.



They highlight the importance of protecting natural heritage and promoting responsible tourism across the ECO region and beyond.

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.

Consul-generals of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan visit Chenaran's Radkan Tower



Radkan Historical Tower, also known as Radkan Citadel, is a prominent historical landmark located in Chenaran county, Khorasan Razavi province.

TEHRAN— Consul-generals of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Afghanistan visited ecotourism sites and Radkan Historical Tower in Chenaran county, Khorasan Razavi province, said head of Chenaran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department.

Mohammad Taherian-Muqaddam told ISNA that Radkan Tower is considered one of the most unique historical sites of the country.

He explained that the consul-generals residing in Mashhad visited Radkan historical attractions which play a great role in boosting tourism ties and presence of foreign tourists as well as promoting tourism industry.

Chenaran has 12 accommodation sites with capacity of over 500 persons, he said.

He added that Chenaran, as one of ancient and historical cities of Khorasan Razavi province, boasts a rich history and ancient civilization.

Taherian-Muqaddam continued that Chenaran has been known as an important center during different historical eras.

Chenaran city, with its historical monuments and sites, holds a treasure trove of Iranian history and civilization.

One of the advantages of Chenaran is its proximity to Mashhad, as religious hub of Iran, he said.

Tourists can reside in Chenaran and then travel to Mashhad and visit holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam, he pointed out.

He continued that the mountains surrounding this city and green valleys, create proper opportunities for activities such as mountain climbing, hiking and ecotourism.

Given the tourism potentials of Chenaran, he said, there is a need to develop tourism infrastructure, including hotels, restaurants, and entertainment centers. Investment in this sector can help attract more tourists, he added.

Chenaran, where is home to historic Radkan tower, has witnessed a surge in terms of overseas travelers. Earlier, Taherian-Muqaddam raised the curtains on tourists' arrivals, pinpointing the notable influx in inbound travelers' visits to the region during last Iranian year, compared to the same figure of a year earlier.

"Most foreign tourists choose two routes, Akh-lamd and Radkan, for their visits," he further elaborated.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

ECO tourism ministers convene in Erzurum to advance regional cooperation



TEHRAN - The 6th Ministerial Meeting on Tourism of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) convened on Saturday in Erzurum, the designated ECO Tourism Capital for 2025.

According to organizers, the meeting brought together tourism leaders from nine ECO Member States, alongside representatives from the ECO Secretariat, the Organization of Turkic States, and the Turkish Cypriot State, to discuss strategies for enhancing regional tourism cooperation and development.

The session opened with remarks by ECO Secretary General Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan, who underscored the critical role of tourism in promoting regional integration and highlighted ECO's ongoing initiatives to strengthen tourism collaboration.

Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, also addressed the gathering, presenting Turkey's achievements and strategic outlook for its tourism sector.

During the meeting, ministers approved the designation of Lahore, Pakistan, as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027, Mary, Turkmenistan, for 2028, and Karakol for 2029, recognizing the unique cultural heritage and tourism potential of these cities.

The discussions further reviewed the progress of tourism cooperation within the ECO framework and explored the development of tourism-related components for ECO's new strategic vision for the coming decade.

A key highlight of the event was the official launch of the 1st Edition of the ECO Tourism Investment Guide, a publication aimed at attracting investment and promoting tourism opportunities across the ECO region.

The meeting concluded with the adoption of the "Erzurum Declaration," setting forth collective commitments and outlining future directions to enhance regional tourism cooperation and sustainable development.

100 tour operators from 33 countries to attend Tehran forum

From Page 1 ▶ Bahrain, the Netherlands, Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, South Africa, Pakistan, Bulgaria, Turkmenistan, Oman, Malaysia, Slovakia, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, France, and Brunei are expected to participate.

A B2B meeting is scheduled for Tuesday at the Parsian Esteghlal Hotel in Tehran.

Shojaei outlined the program for the visiting tour operators, which includes tours of major historical and cultural attractions such as the Sa'dabad Palace, the National Museum of Iran, Abbasabad Cultural and Tourism Zone, and a visit to Kish Island.

Highlighting the dual mission of his office — promoting Iran and attracting international tourists — Shojaei emphasized the crucial role international events play in



Moslem Shojaei, the director-general for marketing and tourism development at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, addresses a press conference at a ministry's conference hall, April 27, 2025.

enhancing Iran's global image.

He also stressed the importance of tourism as a tool of public diplomacy, calling it one of the smartest strategies for introducing the country to the world.

He further mentioned Iran's recent participation in the 37th East

Asia and Pacific Commission and the 60th South Asia Commission meetings of the UN Tourism (formerly known as UNWTO) held in Jakarta, as well as Iran's election to the UN Tourism's Executive Council. These developments, he noted, open new opportunities for Iran's tourism sector.

Additionally, he announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding with UN Tourism to host an international urban tourism summit in Tehran.

Shojaei also highlighted plans to make the best use of influencer marketing to build trust and promote Iran globally through interactive content, media coverage, and digital platforms.

Looking ahead, Shojaei put the spotlight on Iran's plans to participate in ten international tourism exhibitions and organize five [tourism] roadshows across cities such as Basra, Baghdad, Karbala, and Najaf, as well as in Poland, Hungary, Serbia, and Russia.

Moreover, he revealed plans for Iran to host a conference dedicated to the Silk Road countries in Semnan and the third International Health Tourism Conference for ECO member states in Hamedan in the current year.

Persian carpets used in Pope's funeral

TEHRAN--The use of Persian carpets in papal funeral proceedings may seem like a surprising choice—that is, to those unaware of the long history of carpets from the Islamic world in Christian contexts.

A field of flowers surrounded Pope Francis's simple wooden casket in St Peter's Basilica this week. The intricate pattern, woven in shades of crimson, indigo, and orange, does not belong to an Italian artistic tradition. This elaborate carpet, the second of three used in the papal funeral proceedings, comes from northwest Iran, The Art Newspaper reports, Mehr News Agency wrote.

By placing Persian carpets beneath Pope Francis's casket in his private chapel and then in St Peter's, and for his funeral in St Peter's square on April 26, the Catholic Church is following a tradition spanning over six hundred years. How, one might wonder, did the visual language of carpets, neither Italian nor from a Christian tradition, come to signify holy ground in the most sanctified of Catholic rituals?

From the late 14th century on, carpets imported from Anatolia (and later the Levant, Egypt, and Iran) were the most precious floor coverings money could buy. Their special status is attested by their depiction in religious paintings, where such carpets often appear at the feet of the Virgin Mary or other important Christian figures. One of the earliest examples is The Marriage of the

Virgin by Niccolò di Buonaccorso, painted in Siena around 1380 (and featured in the exhibition Siena: the rise of painting at the National Gallery in London). In it, a striking carpet with a design of confronted animals demarcates the exalted zone within which the wedding of Mary and Joseph takes place. A closely related carpet, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was discovered in the 1990s, likely a product of the Ilkhanid Empire's western domains.

Andrea del Verrocchio used an Anatolian carpet in a similar way for his depiction of the Virgin and Child flanked by John the Baptist and the bishop Donato de' Medici (known as the Piazza Madonna), completed in 1486. The carpet, an Ottoman design of which many examples survive, creates a privileged space in which the Madonna reposes. The relative proximity of the two other figures to the Virgin and Child is implied by their positioning within the carpet. While St John steps his entire foot onto the carpet's border, Donato de' Medici encroaches on the space with only the edge of one toe.

In the 16th century, carpets from Islamic lands reached Europe in growing numbers, arriving as trade goods, direct commissions, and sometimes, for the very finest examples, diplomatic gifts. Carpets from Ottoman lands dominated the trade in the 16th century. Safavid Iran and later Mughal India joined the market in the 17th. The use of carpets as diplomatic gifts continues to this



By placing Persian carpets beneath Pope Francis's casket in his private chapel and then in St Peter's, and for his funeral in St Peter's square on April 26, the Catholic Church is following a tradition spanning over six hundred years.

day. In 2016, when the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani met with Pope Francis at the Vatican, he brought with him a small carpet woven in Qom as a gift for the pontiff.

The three carpets seen in Francis's funeral proceedings function in much the same way as the carpets in the paintings. They signal holy ground, a sanctified space with distinct borders that separate the pontiff from attendants and visitors around him. In the more intimate space of the private chapel, two members of the Swiss Guard stood flanking the casket on the carpet's border, echoing the gesture of John the Baptist in Verrocchio's Piazza Madonna. In St Peter's, for the public viewing, the larger carpet's borders and the sanctified zone they encompass were reinforced by stanchions.

Another Persian carpet was

spread under Pope Francis's casket for his funeral mass in St Peter's Square. It was a Heriz carpet, again from northwest Iran, and appears to be the same one used for the previous two papal funerals; for Pope John Paul II in 2005 and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in 2023.

Changes enacted by Francis in late 2024 eschew much of the pomp and circumstance of previous papal funerals, like the elevated biers used by his predecessors in St Peter's Basilica and the three different coffins of cypress, lead, and oak. Considering this, the inclusion of the carpets holds particular significance. As Francis lies in a simple wooden casket placed low to the carpet, the image of holy ground comes vividly to the fore.

Kerman, Yazd can turn into important Asian tourism hubs, expert says

TEHRAN— The Iranian cities of Kerman and Yazd can turn into two important tourism axes of Asia, said the director-general of the Domestic Tourism Development Office.

Speaking at a joint gathering of Tourism Commissions of Kerman Chamber of Commerce and Yazd Chamber of Commerce, which was held in Kerman on April 26, Mostafa Fatemi added that the story of Yazd and Kerman is like Samarkand and Bukhara. These two ancient cities can work as a tourism axis together, he said.

"We are working in the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism on the Yazd-Kerman tie. One way is Spice Road which is older than Silk Road. The other axis is Marco Polo crescent route which goes to Kuhbanan and south of Kerman from Yazd, returns Kerman and goes off the other path. We are working on these two key axes as a tourism brand."

Pointing to the number of foreign tourists in Kerman, Yazd and Isfahan before coronavirus pandemic, he said some events occurred in Kerman, leading to reduction of tourist arrivals.

Fortunately, Kerman has witnessed rise in number of tourists in recent years, he said. "The provincial officials are determined to return Kerman into its brilliant status. Definitely, with public participation, the future years will be prosperous time for everybody."

He said private sector is the driving force behind mobility, dynamism, and forward movement. "We had 1,750 renovation projects during 2021. The private sector took part and the work was done."

Kerman has enough assets to return to its peak days on its own, he said.

He continued that National Ecotourism Festival would be held in Kerman in May 21, adding 700 ecotourism sites from different ethnic groups would take part in the upcoming event.

Next Iranian year will be the year to travel Kerman province in light of holding this event and measures being done in Kerman, he said.

Kerman is a vibrant testament to centuries of cultural fusion and

heritage. Nestled in the country's southeastern part, Kerman has been a cultural melting pot since antiquity, blending Persians with subcontinental tribal inhabitants. This confluence of cultures has enriched the city with diverse traditions, architectural marvels, and a unique way of life that continues to captivate visitors today.

The city is home to numerous historical sites and scenic landscapes that offer an unforgettable journey through time.

Second Announcement

ESCO

Esfahan Steel Company

Row No.	Type of Tender	Tender No.	Publication Frequency	Tender Subject	Deadline for Receiving Tender Documents and Submitting the Bids
1	International Public Tender	602450-2	2	BEICHEM Grease	May,03,2025

Notes:

- 1- Tender document must be received through ESCO's website.
- 2- For more information, please refer to ESCO's website www.esfahansteel.ir (Sourcing System).

Esfahan Steel Company

Pezeshkian convenes crisis management meeting on Shahid Rajaei incident

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian traveled to Bandar Abbas on Sunday to visit Shahid Rajaei Port, where a massive explosion caused tremendous damage and fatalities on Saturday.

He paid a visit to a hospital and met individuals who were injured during the incident.

The President attended an extraordinary meeting of the provincial crisis management headquarters, which was held in the presence of ministers and relevant officials, to expedite the handling of the situation, compensate for the damages, and restore normal conditions to Shahid Rajaei Port.

Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni, Transport and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh, and Red Crescent Society director Pirhossein Kolivand, are also present.

The explosion occurred at around 12.30 pm local time, leaving at least 40 dead and 900 injured, according to the provincial judiciary department.



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.

Fatemeh Mohajerani, the spokeswoman for the government, de-

clared Monday the day of mourning across the country.

Global leaders offer condolences, offer solidarity

Russian President Vladimir Putin, Saudi Arabia's King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, Qatari emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Palestinian resistance movements

Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Lebanon's Hezbollah, the Afghan interim government, Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim, leader of Iraq's National Wisdom Movement, the foreign ministries of Iraq, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Libya, South Korea, and Jordan expressed condolences and offered solidarity with Iranian people and government over the tragic incident.

Also, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Japanese Ambassador to Tehran Tamaki Tsukada, Kurdistan President Nechirvan Barzani, Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al Khalid Al Sabah, Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashit Meredow, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Stephane Dujarric, the spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, and the Muslim World League sent messages of sympathy and condolences.

Iranian students win medals at TIMO 2025



TEHRAN - Iranian students won two silver and two bronze medals, ranking fourth at the Turkic International Mathematics Olympiad (TIMO) held from April 17 to 22, in Antalya.

TIMO is an international event that is open to students from grades 3 to 12. The competition is held in two rounds, including the preliminary and global rounds.

In the preliminary round, over 27,350 students from 35 countries competed against each other online in December. The offline qualifying exam had 25 multiple-choice questions, administered for 60 minutes.

In the Global round, which was held paper-based, 1,500 selected participants attended the event.

Parnian Heydarian and Anusha Abdi grabbed silver medals and won the world star awards,

while Fatemeh Mazini and Ava Dejagah won bronze medals.

TIMO strives to contribute to the academic and personal development of young people at both local and international levels while also encouraging discussions on mathematical and scientific topics among youth, facilitating the exchange of new ideas, and uniting people with common interests.

With its annual Olympiads, TIMO aims to set new educational standards and provide an environment where young individuals from around the world can compete, thereby fostering understanding and respect among various cultures. These efforts will contribute to the development of education and science on an international scale, creating positive changes in the lives of young people.

TIMO is held as part of the International Junior Math Olympiad (IJMO), which is held in a different country each year, and aims to provide a platform for students to interact and compete against their worthy opponents.

Iran world's third top country in intl. Olympiads

Attending several international Olympiads in 2024, Iranian students managed to win 10 gold medals, 10 silver medals, and two bronze medals, ranking third globally.

The United States and China ranked first and second, respectively. South Korea and India both ranked fourth, ISNA reported.

Iranian students grabbed a gold medal, two silver medals, and a bronze medal at the 36th IOI, ranking 9th among 96 countries. Hosted by Alexandria, Egypt, the event was held in September 2024.

In a remarkable achievement, Iranian students won five gold medals, ranking first in the 17th IOAA which was held in August 2024 in Vassouras, state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Over 250 students from 57 countries participated in the event.

Five Iranian students who attended the 54th International Physics Olympiad managed to win a gold medal and four silver medals, improving the country's ranking from 17th in 2023 to fourth.

The 54th edition of the IPHO was held in July 2024 in the city of Isfahan.

A total of 200 elite students from 47 countries participated in the nine-day event, IRNA reported. Iran grabbed one gold medal and three silver medals at the 56th IChO which was held in Saudi Arabia in July. The IChO 2024 was held under the slogan 'Building Connections Together'. A total of 333 talented men and women from 90 countries participated in the competitions.

UNICEF helps businesses implement family-friendly policies

TEHRAN - The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has hosted an event attended by the representatives from its private sector partners who joined a global webinar introducing UNICEF's new toolkit, 'Building Family-Friendly Workplaces: A Toolkit for Businesses'.

The event, held on March 6, provided guidance to businesses regardless of size, sector or stage of their journey to implement family-friendly policies such as paid leave, flexible work

arrangements, support to childcare, and breastfeeding support effectively, UNICEF website announced in a press release on April 21.

By creating workplaces and business practices that minimize risks to child development and support families and children to thrive, companies unlock their employees' full potential while contributing to healthier societies and stronger economies.

The Toolkit outlines business benefits, a self-diagnostic assess-

ment for determining a company's maturity level in implementing family-friendly policies, and step-by-step guidance tailored to four distinct workplace archetypes with unique needs, constraints, and priorities.

Factories: Practical strategies for creating a supportive environment for factory workers, including flexible working hours and support for affordable and quality childcare.

Farms: Customized solutions for agricultural settings, focus-

ing on seasonal work patterns and the unique needs of farm workers and their families, with a focus on paid leave and childcare support.

Offices: Guidelines for office-based businesses to implement family-friendly practices such as remote working options and parental leave policies.

Service-Oriented Workplaces: Approaches for service industries to support their employees, including shift scheduling flexibility and support for breastfeeding.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Rainfall increases Lake Urmia level

Recent rainfall has increased the level of Lake Urmia to 1,271 meters, a step closer to its ecological level of 1,274 meters.

The lake is expected to reach its ecological level within 10 years by completing the restoration plans which started four years ago.

Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program's office in West Azarbaijan province, said that the Lake's level is now 58 cm higher than it was last year. According to the latest monitoring, the lake's water volume is estimated at more than 3.6 billion cubic meters.

He added that the lake surface area has reached 2,883 square kilometers, adding that the figure is increased by 538 square kilometers compared to the same period last year.

Although the ecological level of the lake is defined as 1,274 meters, the lake will also have favorable conditions at 1,272 meters and more than 90 percent of sand and dust storm hotspots will be eliminated.

افزایش سطح تراز دریاچه ارومیه بر اثر بارش

بارش های اخیر تراز فعلی دریاچه ارومیه را به یک هزار و ۲۷۱ متر و سانتی متر رسانده است که در حال رسیدن به تراز اکولوژیک یک هزار و ۲۷۴ متر است.

به گزارش ایرنا، فرهاد سرخوش رییس دفتر استانی ستاد احیای دریاچه ارومیه گفت سطح دریاچه ارومیه اکنون ۵۸ سانتی متر بیشتر از زمان مشابه سال گذشته است. طبق آخرین پایش صورت گرفته حجم آب این دریاچه بیش از سه میلیارد و ۶۷۰ میلیون مترمکعب برآورد شده است.

وی با بیان اینکه وسعت دریاچه ارومیه در حال حاضر به بیش از ۲ هزار و ۸۸۳ کیلومتر مربع رسیده، اضافه کرد: وسعت این دریاچه نیز نسبت به سال گذشته ۵۳۸ کیلومتر مربع افزایش دارد.

هرچند تراز یک هزار و ۲۷۴ متر به عنوان ارتفاع اکولوژیک دریاچه ارومیه اعلام شده ولی این دریاچه در تراز یک هزار و ۲۷۲ متر هم شرایط مطلوب خواهد داشت و بیش از ۹۵ درصد کانون های ریزگرد آن رفع خواهد شد.

Iran discusses boosting health ties with India, Uzbekistan



TEHRAN - Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi and his Indian and Uzbek counterparts have explored the potential for the expansion of health cooperation, holding separate meetings.

The officials met on the sidelines of the eighth meeting of health ministries of member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Xi'an, China, the health ministry website reported.

During the meeting with Punya Salila Srivastava, the Indian Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the two sides highlighted the enhancement of joint efforts in the health sector, particularly in manufacturing medicines, developing vaccines, traditional medicine, and medical training.

Lauding India's achievements in the health sector, Zafarqandi announced the country's readiness to foster collaboration with India in the mentioned fields, particularly supplying pharmaceutical raw materials.

Highlighting the two countries' capacities in traditional medicine thanks to their indigenous teachings, the official said, "Iran is willing to exchange knowledge, experiences with India, as well as conduct joint research in traditional medicine."

The health minister proposed promoting cooperation on primary health care, as well.

The Indian official, for her part, referred to the formerly signed agreement between the two countries, saying that India is willing to expand collaboration with Iran in different fields of the health sector.

Uzbek health minister, Asilbek Khudayarov, in a meeting with Zafarqandi stressed the friendly relationships between the two countries, voicing Uzbekistan's readiness to further collaboration with Iran in the health sector, specifically health tourism and cancer treatment. The official also asked for boosting ties through exchanging professors and postgraduate students.

Referring to the registration of Iranian medicines transported to Uzbekistan, Khudayarov proposed that Iranian companies manufacture medicines in Uzbekistan to facilitate the process of registering medicines and accessing the West Asia market.

For his turn, Zafarqandi said Iran is ready to develop ties with Uzbekistan in all fields, including liver transplantation, cancer treat-

ment, cell and gene therapy, cardiovascular surgery, and health tourism, which paves the way for the expansion of health diplomacy, too.

Health minister attending 8th SCO meeting

A delegation headed by Zafarqandi is taking part in the eighth meeting of the health ministries of member states of the SCO.

The health ministers of China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and some senior managers of the World Health Organization are attending the meeting, as well, Mehr news agency reported.

The week-long event, which kicked off on April 24, will be held under the theme 'promoting sustainable health development and sharing a healthy future'.

It will focus on topics such as enhancing the resilience of health systems through primary health care (PHC), risk management and medical emergencies, improving health services utilizing digital technologies such as telemedicine and artificial intelligence, as well as boosting cooperation on the development of traditional medicine.

In the eighth meeting of the health ministers of the member states of the SCO, two documents, including the declaration of the 8th Meeting of the SCO health ministers and the SCO medical emergency action plan, will be signed.

Zafarqandi is scheduled to deliver a speech and hold talks with health ministers of member states of SCO on ways to boost health ties.

On the very first day of the visit to China, April 24, Zafarqandi participated in a meeting titled 'health based on transformation and innovation: new opportunities for Iran-China cooperation in the field of medical technology'.

Given the advancement of the two countries in the field of pharmaceutical raw materials, medicine, and medical equipment, Zafarqandi expressed optimism that the medical partnership between Iran and China would expand, and practical and executive steps to be taken following President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to China.

During the meeting, some 18 Chinese pharmaceutical, medical, and hospital equipment manufacturing companies introduced their products and proposed collaborations in medical manufacturing, transferring technology, and meeting Iran's needs.

The seventh meeting of the health ministers of the member countries of the SCO was held in March in Kazakhstan.

Environmental health and safety of drinking water were the main topics of the three-day event. Three documents were signed for promoting cooperation on safe drinking water and sewage management, as well as adopting comprehensive policies and basic measures to improve healthcare in member states from 2025 to 2027.

AI, digitalization revolutionizing health, safety at work

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN - Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other emerging digital technologies are contributing to improving occupational health and safety (OSH), as well as fostering efficiency at workplaces by operating in hazardous environments, doing the heavy lifting, managing toxic materials, and working in extreme temperatures.

Hence, this year, the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, marked on April 28 annually, is observed under the theme of 'Revolutionizing health and safety: the role of AI and digitalization at work'.

The theme sheds light on how new technologies are transforming OSH, including through the automation of tasks, the use of smart OSH tools and monitoring systems, extended reality and virtual reality, and algorithmic management of work.

New technologies take on repetitive and monotonous tasks, while digital devices and sensors can detect hazards early on. At the same time, in the absence of adequate OSH measures, digital technologies can lead to accidents, ergonomic risks, work intensification, reduced job control, and blurred boundaries.

The digital transformation of work has led to evolving work arrangements, such as telework and digital labour platforms, which will be further examined.

The World Day for Safety and Health at Work is an awareness-raising campaign intended to focus international attention on the magnitude of the problem and on how promoting and creating a safety and health culture can help reduce the number of work-related deaths and injuries.

The day promotes the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases globally; it also calls for the prevention of the emerging risks related to digitalization.

While robots effectively take on hazardous tasks, workers who maintain, repair, or collaborate with these machines may face new dangers. Unpredictable robotic behaviours, system failures, or cyber threats can compromise safety. Ergonomic risks may arise from human-robot interaction, as well as from the use of wearables and exoskeletons that lack proper fit, usability, or comfort.

Workers' involvement is essential at every stage of technology adoption. Training and awareness-raising initiatives are key to ensuring the safe use of new technologies.



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APRIL 28, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

I wonder at a man who loses hope of salvation when the door of repentance is open for him.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:02 Evening: 19:08 Dawn: 3:42 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:15 (tomorrow)

Schmitt's "Frederick" to go on stage in Tehran



TEHRAN- An adaptation of the play "Frederick" by Belgian playwright Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt will be staged at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on May 5.

Hamidreza Naimi will direct the play, which will remain on stage until May 21.

Prominent actors Sam Derakhshani, Shabnam Moqadami and Mehdi Hoseinia are the main members of the cast for the play.

Schmitt's play "Frederick," originally titled "Frederick or the Crime Boulevard," intricately weaves the complexities of theater and life, exploring the fascinating world of performance, ambition, and human connection. At its center is Frederick Lemaitre, a flamboyant 19th-century actor whose charisma captivates Paris.

Renowned for his theatrical prowess and passionate portrayals of love on stage, Frederick revels in his eccentricities while shunning genuine emotional ties in his personal life.

The play delves into the intrigues surrounding the theater, highlighting the often-tumultuous relationships between actors, the ineptitude of an avaricious playwright, and the manipulative nature of a greedy manager.

Within this lively backdrop, themes of happiness and the burdens that accompany the acting profession emerge, ultimately emphasizing the paradox of seeking authenticity in a world driven by illusion.

Frederick's life takes a turn when he encounters Bérénice, a mysterious woman untouched

by the theatrical realm. Her presence challenges Frederick's long-held beliefs about love, prompting him to confront a pivotal choice: should he embrace the authentic feelings that Bérénice evokes, or continue the façade of fleeting romances and theatrical allure? This encounter poses profound questions about the nature of love—whether it is a constructed performance or a genuine experience—and highlights the dichotomy between the stage and reality.

As Frederick navigates these emotional complexities, the audience is invited to reflect on their own perceptions of love and the often blurry lines between truth and performance. Ultimately, "Frederick" is a poignant exploration of the intricacies of love, ambition, and the human condition within the vibrant yet precarious world of the theater.

Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt is a renowned Franco-Belgian playwright, short story writer, novelist, and film director whose works have been staged in over fifty countries.

In the 1990s, Schmitt gained rapid acclaim through plays like "Don Juan on Trial" and "The Visitor," the latter winning several prestigious awards. He has also authored notable novels, including "The Gospel According to Pilate" and "The Alternative Hypothesis."

Schmitt's diverse works explore philosophical themes and humanitarian issues, reflecting his wide-ranging literary talent.

Cartoon of Day



Gaza Now

Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

TEHRAN- On Friday, the 17th edition of Iran's Regional Music Festival kicked off in Bandar Abbas, the capital of Hormozgan province, attracting individuals adorned in colorful clothing, speaking various dialects, and gathering to experience the diverse music of different ethnic groups across the country.

The festival features 32 groups representing 22 provinces, showcasing both solo and group performances that allow attendees to connect with regional music.

During the opening ceremony, Foad Tohidi, the festival secretary, welcomed the audience and expressed gratitude for their participation.

He also provided information about the groups performing on the festival's first day. Several veteran musicians were honored during the ceremony.

In light of the tragic incident and massive explosion that occurred on Saturday at Shahid Rajaee Port in Hormozgan, which resulted in at least 25 fatalities and 750 injuries, the second day of the festival served as a gesture of sympathy for the affected families.

This night's performances featured mournful pieces and elegies from various regions across the country, allowing artists to express their sorrow and solidarity for the victims.

Following the incident, artists from the festival expressed their readiness to donate blood to

Iran's Regional Music Festival kicks off in Bandar Abbas



those injured in the tragedy.

The artists and organizers of the 17th Iran's Regional Music Festival also express their condolences for the victims of the incident, wishing eternal peace for the deceased, and health and resilience for the injured and survivors.

The 17th Iran's Regional Music Festival aims to showcase a variety of musical talent over four days, providing a platform for artists from diverse regional backgrounds.

This year's festival features performances by artists from Hormozgan, Fars, Mazandaran,

Sistan and Baluchestan, Ilam, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Zanjan, South Khorasan, Hamadan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Gilan, West Azarbaijan, Kerman, Kermanshah, North Khorasan, East Azarbaijan, Khorasan Razavi, Lorestan, Kordestan, Bushehr, Khuzestan, and Golestan provinces.

Iran's regional and folk music is a type of music transmitted through generations among the people of the country, often containing a variety of tunes.

The variety of Iranian folk music has often been emphasized, reflecting the ethnic and regional diversities of the country.

Usually, Iranian folk musicians are taught their art by their families.

There are different types of traditional musicians who specialize in folk music in Iran, some of whom ascribe to specific ethnic and regional groups.

Organized in collaboration with the Music Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Iranian Music Association, along with the cooperation of the Hormozgan Governorate and the General Directorate of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Hormozgan, the 17th Iran's Regional Music Festival will come to an end on April 28.

5 Film & Photo Awards announces photo jury team

TEHRAN-The 6th edition of the 5 Film & Photo Awards has announced the members of the jury for the photo section.

The jury team includes well-known national and international figures. The deadline for receiving the submissions is August 11. The evaluation of works will begin on August 12 and the winners will be announced in October, Honaronline reported.

Iranian photographers Touraj Aslani, Siavash Sadrazodi, and Alireza Shadizadeh, French photographers Delphine Ghosarossian and Sandrine Boyer Engel, Italian photographers Lietta Granato and Francesco Galli, and Japanese photographers Wataru Furuta and Rena Fujimoto will serve as jurors in the upcoming edition of the festival.

Chairman of the jury in the photo section is Delphine Ghosarossian. She works as a portrait photographer for various media outlets including Libération, Le Monde, France Télévisions, Les Echos week-end, Greenpeace, and many more.

Holding a Ph.D. in fine arts and art sciences, she teaches the history of contemporary photography and continues her exploration of various pictorial and photographic mediums.

Her first book, "Faces of Sound," was published in 2019 by Médiapop Editions.

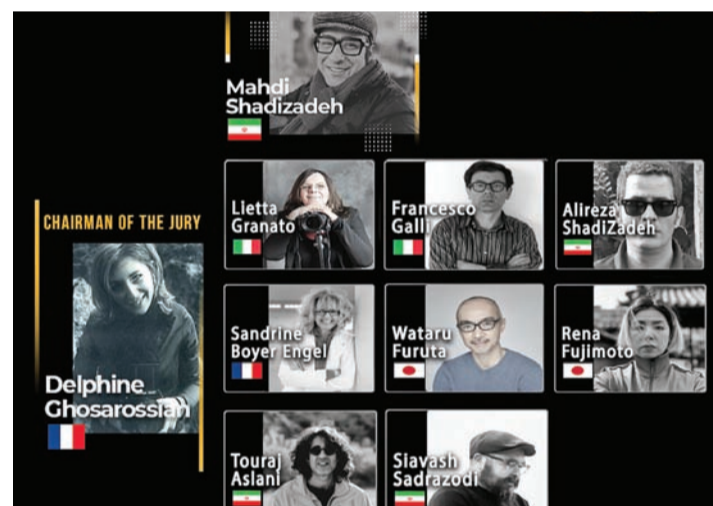
It is a collection of photographic portraits of around 50 musicians from the independent scene over the past 30 years. She has exhibited her works in France, Cambodia, China, etc.

Touraj Aslani has graduated in graphics from Kermanshah Conservatory and film directing from Tehran Sooreh University.

He began to take photographs at the age of 10, and at the age of 14 he started his activities as an experimental cinematographer with an 8mm camera. He started his professional activities at age 25.

He has been shooting more than 100 documentary, short, animation, fiction and experimental movies. In 2000, he became the youngest professional photographer in Iranian cinema.

Siavash Sadrazodi's work, which blends experimental



techniques, alternative printing methods, and plastic research, has been exhibited in both solo and group shows in Iran and abroad.

As a photographer, composer, and researcher, he has completed an essay on the phenomenology of photography and is currently working on other books focused on contemporary dance and cinema.

His approach to the image—at the intersection of senses, forms, and ideas—privileges the intensity of vision over the surface of appearances.

Alireza Shadizadeh has been the artistic director of Pishro Parsian Amrdad Institute since 2015. He has been selected as the Honorary Photographer of the Visual Arts of Iran.

Lietta Granato's images have been published on TIME OUT Magazine, The British Journal of Photography and on Italian newspapers such as il Messaggero, il Corriere di Viterbo and many online publications.

Her work has been widely exhibited in England and Italy.

She has taught photography around Europe as an EEC European trainer holding courses financed by the European Union in Italy, England, Moldova, Latvia, Serbia, and Slovenia.

She is a photography professor at Lorenzo de' Medici International Institute in Tuscania and at the University Study Abroad Consortium at Tuscia University in Viterbo, Italy.

Francesco Galli is a graduate of architecture at La Sapienza University in Rome. He has photographed in Italy and abroad in

the fields of anthropology, architecture, archaeology, landscape, and theater.

In recent years, his research has focused on urban and natural landscapes. Among others, he has worked for Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia, Università La Sapienza di Roma, Università della Tuscia, Kent University, British Columbia University, Odin Teatret, The Grotowski Institute, and Teatro di Roma.

Sandrine Boyer Engel discovered photography late, almost by chance, during a trip to Egypt. Since then, her eye has taken her from Paris to Lisbon, from Seville to Washington, from Dubai to unseen horizons, where photography reveals what words can only suggest.

Recognized in the world of high-end events, she captures the essence of meticulously orchestrated moments, from refined weddings with studied aesthetics to portraits that reveal a powerful identity.

Her artistic vision was recognized in 2010 with a Special Prize at the Planches Contact Photography Festival in Deauville, France.

Wataru Furuta started creating art works in 2014. In advertising photography, he has worked on many main visuals for entertainment works such as movies, TV programs, and plays.

Furuta, who is known for his connections with the entertainment industry, has held planned photo exhibitions in collaboration with stage plays, attracting more than 6,000 visitors.

In recent years, he has been experimenting with new photo-

graphic expressions, and will be presenting new works in collaboration with Spain's Monat Gallery at the Paris Art Fair in May 2025.

His major solo exhibitions have been held Tokyo, Kyoto, London, and Athens.

He won the Excellence Award at the 2016 Japan Professional Photographers Society JPS Exhibition and was selected for the 2016 Japan Advertising Photographers Association APA Award in the advertising photography category.

Rena Fujimoto graduated from Vantan Design Institute, Department of Photography in 2000 and began working as a photographer in 2004.

She is a professional photographer with extensive experience in the Japanese entertainment and film industry.

She has worked with numerous celebrities and contributed to various film productions.

The 5 Photo & Film Award is a prestigious and large festival for film and photography. It supports artists from all over the world, especially independent and modern artists and seeks to create a bridge between different countries and cultures.

It is inspired by a 500-year-old tree located in the village of Aro, in the suburb of Damavand, Tehran Province.

This tree has been the subject of photographs of international director and photographer Abbas Kiarostami every year in different seasons for many years.

His photographs have been exhibited under the title "Snow White" in world-renowned galleries such as the Center Pompidou in Paris and the Museum of Contemporary Art in New York.

Six years ago, documentary photographer and filmmaker Mehdi Shadizadeh photographed this tree again and founded the festival to celebrate this cultural and iconic symbol, representing Kiarostami's artistic legacy.

The number "5" is derived from the movie "5" made by Kiarostami, which was made in 2003 and contains five scenes with the average duration of 16 minutes.