

Leader's message marks 100th anniversary of Islamic seminaries' reestablishment

## 'A Pioneering and Outstanding Hawza'



Ayatollah Araf, Head of the Islamic Seminaries, reads a message from the Leader at the International Conference on the Centenary of the Reestablishment of the Qom Seminary on May 7, 2025.

## Next round of Iran-U.S. talks pending Omani coordination, says Tehran

TEHRAN – Iran says the date and venue of the next round of indirect negotiations with the United States will be announced by Oman once finalized.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei said on Tuesday that no final date has yet been confirmed for the fourth round of talks, but noted that Oman has proposed hosting the session early next week. "This proposal is under review," he said in response to a question from IRNA. ▶ Page 2

## Europe's hidden human rights crisis: The MEK's forbidden family bonds

By Sheida Sabzehvari

TEHRAN – The human heart craves family. It's crucial for our well-being, providing warmth, security, and a sense of belonging. But for a terrorist group that has isolated over 2000 people in a cloistered community at the heart of Europe, familial bonds are not a source of strength, but a threat to obedience.

Within the Ashraf camp in Albania, all that matters is how members serve the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK) leadership. Family is considered a distraction from the directives of the leaders. The group ensured this belief was engraved in the hearts and minds of its members during the 1990s and 2000s ▶ Page 3

## Why the Persian Gulf's identity is non-negotiable

*Trump's alleged decision to 'change' Persian Gulf's name draws condemnation, ridicule*

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN – The Associated Press sent shockwaves across Iran on Wednesday with a report alleging that U.S. President Donald Trump, during an upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia, plans to declare the Persian Gulf by the fabricated term "Arabian Gulf."

The move, described by Iranian officials as a "hostile act," has united Iranians worldwide in defiance.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi swiftly dismissed politically motivated attempts to alter the name of the Persian Gulf.

He emphasized that the name is "deeply rooted in human history" and that while Iran accepts

alternative geographical names like the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean, any effort to change the Persian Gulf's name is "an affront to all Iranians" and will "bring the wrath of all Iranians."

The Iranian top diplomat also pointed out that leaders and cartographers have recognized the term for centuries, even until the 1960s, and attached a historical image from the U.S. Library of Congress clearly marked "Persian Gulf" to underscore his point.

Araghchi's predecessor, Javad Zarif, warned that reports of using a fabricated name for the Persian Gulf outrage every patri-

otic Iranian, irrespective of political affiliation.

He asserted that Iran would demonstrate to the world—and specifically to the occupants of the White House—that united Iranians would not stand for "shortsighted profiteering."

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Parliament, took a pragmatic stance by releasing historical maps of the Persian Gulf from the parliamentary archives.

He remarked that there are so many of these maps that they could be freely distributed to every "delusional politician."

Ghalibaf pointed out that while

money can buy material goods like shoes and clothes, it cannot purchase history or geography, dismissing the attempt to alter established historical facts as both futile and a needless disturbance.

Sattar Hashemi, Minister of Information and Communications Technology of Iran, wrote, "The enduring name of the Persian Gulf will forever remain alive in the hearts and souls in this corner of the world," adding that "history and authenticity cannot be changed through bullying and political deals."

Abdulkarim Hosseinzadeh, another Iranian official, added, "Any

attempt to distort this reality is a disregard for historical rationality and the principles of international law. The Persian Gulf is not just a name; it is a part of the shared memory of human civilization."

The backlash transcended political divides. Social media erupted with hashtags like #PersianGulf and #PersianGulf4ever, while users flooded platforms with ancient maps and historical records.

Reza Nasri, an international law expert, predicted: "This would provoke protests from millions of Iranians in the diaspora. Nothing unites Iranians more than defending the Persian Gulf's true name." ▶ Page 2

## Yemen warns Israelis to stay in shelters

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Yemen has warned the Israeli regime of a painful response while revealing that America had called for a ceasefire.

Yemen's Supreme Political Council Chairman, Mahdi al-Mashat, has issued a stern warning of a crushing response to the Israeli aggression on Yemen.

"Sanaa's response will be devastating, painful, and beyond what the Israeli enemy can endure," he declared.

Addressing the occupation forces directly, al-Mashat added, "From this moment onward, stay in your shelters or leave for your homelands immediately. Your failed government will no longer be able to protect you."

He emphasized, "The Israeli aggression confirms to our people the righteousness of their resistance and reassures them further as they face the filthiest enemy known to humanity." ▶ Page 5



Soldiers stand guard at a mosque that was hit by an Indian missile attack near Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, on Wednesday, May 17, 2025.

## South Asia's nuclear neighbors nearing a dangerous threshold

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN – The sporadic military clashes between India and Pakistan may lead to a full-fledged war between the two nuclear-armed neighbors with profound global and economic implications.

The clashes were triggered by a deadly attack in Pahalgam in the Indian-administered Kashmir on April 22. In the terrorist attack, 26 people, mostly Hindu tourists, were killed. India accused Pakistan of involvement, which Islamabad denied, calling for a neutral investigation. ▶ Page 5



## 36th Tehran International Book Fair opens at Imam Khomeini Mosalla

TEHRAN—The 36th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) opened at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla in Tehran on Wednesday in the presence of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

"If we want development, a bright future, and progress for Iran, and if we want to thwart the enemies, we must think more and more about books and strive to expand this great culture of Iranian power," the minister said at the opening ceremony.

According to him, books have played a crucial role in ancient Iran and Islamic civilization. "Islamic civilization was formed and progressed on the wings of mosques and libraries," he added. ▶ Page 8



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

## Negotiations will continue

In a note, Sobh-e-No discussed the resumption of nuclear talks in the next few days after a week-long postponement. It wrote: America is under the influence of the Zionist lobby and the neocons. Moreover, the Democrats are also waiting, as Newsweek puts it, for Trump to make a deal and say, "Well, that was the JCPOA." As a result, Trump is under pressure from this point. Even within his working group, some extremists believe that Iran may secretly raise the level of enrichment again at any moment after reaching an agreement. These issues have caused the negotiations to enter a new phase. But the reality is that perhaps the most fundamental reason is the change in the negotiating team, because the urgency and haste that Trump and his diplomatic system have are evident. Otherwise, we would definitely see in the media why Iran has closed the door to negotiations, or we would have witnessed more noise and threats. But one thing is quite clear: the negotiations will continue.

### Siasat-e-Rooz: Diplomatic mediation

In an explanation, Siasat-e-Rooz dealt with Araghchi's visit to Pakistan and wrote: Tensions between Pakistan and India have pushed the region toward a dangerous situation. On the one side, these tensions have intensified the risk of war between the two nuclear powers, and on the other, terrorist groups' abuse of this situation can further aggravate regional security. Although the West claims that these movements are intended to confront China, the truth is that they are fomenting a fire against the entire region. Mr. Araghchi's visit to Pakistan and then to India is a practical step for Iran to reduce tensions in the region, to unite its neighbors against terrorism, and address the roots of crises and foreign intervention in the region. An approach that reveals to everyone Iran's comprehensive and security-building diplomacy and the falsehood of Iran's claim of isolation. It should not be forgotten that Iran and the Indian subcontinent enjoy historical relations and the Persian language and culture have been a common ground between the parties for countless years. Today, this historical background can serve as a strong point for Iran's mediation and reduce tensions in the subcontinent. Tehran is key to regional stability and security and resolving tensions among its neighbors.

### Farhikhtegan: Yemeni attack has nothing to do with Iran-US talks

In an analysis, Farhikhtegan said Yemen's attack on Israel's Ben Gurion Airport has nothing to do with the Iran-U.S. talks. The paper said: Israel is experiencing successive defeats in confronting the Yemenis these days. Meanwhile, there were reactions within the country to this attack and its effects. They believe that this attack and its effects are tied to the Iran-U.S. talks and that this attack could have a negative impact on Iran's talks with the United States. In a media statement about the possibility of an attack on Iran, the U.S. president says if Netanyahu enters a war with Iran, he will not stop him, and then Netanyahu explicitly threatens to target Iran's nuclear facilities. In this situation, when the U.S. president is facing Iran with all tools, it would be a big mistake to imagine that events like the (missile) attack on Ben Gurion Airport could disrupt the talks. Any balancing act in the region that prevents the weakening of the Axis of Resistance and Iran as its chief supporter cannot be considered a threat to the negotiations.

### Iran: A message of stability from Tehran to South Asia

Iran's recent diplomatic initiative amid rising tensions between Pakistan and India can be assessed as a purposeful effort to reduce the crisis between the two nuclear powers in South Asia. The initiative not only demonstrates Tehran's awareness of peripheral developments but also reflects Iran's efforts to play an active role in managing regional crises through diplomacy. With balanced relations with both countries, Iran is in a unique position to play a mediatory role. Iran is trying to prevent a widespread crisis and strengthen its regional role through preventive diplomacy. Iran's experience in managing regional crises, from complex consultations on Syria to brokering dialogue between Iraqi factions, has shown that Tehran's regional diplomacy can help reduce tensions and establish effective channels of communication. Tehran is trying to keep the path of diplomacy open by maintaining a neutral stance and utilizing its capabilities, an effort in line with Iran's security, geopolitical, and strategic interests.

## Regional integration and security cooperation: Is Iran reshaping the balance of power in Caucasus?



### By Mostafa Kamal

CAIRO – Amid rapid shifts in the global and regional order, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's recent visit to Baku—marked by strategic agreements and assertive political statements—signals a recalibrated Iranian strategy aimed at redefining its geopolitical and economic role in its immediate neighborhood.

The visit also aimed to mend previously strained ties with Azerbaijan. Described by presidential advisor Mehdi Sanaei as having achieved "significant accomplishments," particularly in fostering political trust, the visit is far more than a ceremonial gesture. It reflects Iran's shift from tactical engagement to the formation of long-term strategic alli-

ances rooted in solid economic and security foundations—alliances that could redraw Iran's regional influence during a delicate and transitional period.

A centerpiece of the visit was the preliminary agreement to draft a "Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Document" between Iran and Azerbaijan. This step, typically reserved for nations with deep-rooted or strategic alliances, signals Iran's serious intent to build a robust regional axis with Baku. This drive is fueled by the shared need for stability, mutual economic interests, and the alignment of political perspectives to counter international and regional pressures.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

# Why the Persian Gulf's identity is non-negotiable

## Trump's alleged decision to 'change' Persian Gulf's name draws condemnation, ridicule



A satellite view of the Persian Gulf

From page 1 ▶ Ali Ghamisari, a renowned musician, posted: "Iran isn't Canada or Greenland. Our people stand like mountains behind their history."

"Persian Gulf is not a matter of debate — it's a historical fact. For over 2,500 years, since the rise of the Achaemenid Empire in 550 BC, this body of water south of the Iranian Plateau has been known as the Persian Gulf," wrote the account Iranian Plateau.

An Iranian user tweeted: "If truth could be altered, [Gamal Abdel] Nasser and Saddam [Husseini] would've imposed their lies decades ago."

"This place is called the Persian Gulf. Long before a country named the USA even existed, it was already known as the Persian Gulf. Changing its name is a historical forgery," wrote another user.

### Trump's motives: Commerce, chaos, and colonial echoes

Assuming the AP report is correct, one must ask why Trump would choose to defy centuries of historical and geographical consensus by promoting a spurious denomination to replace the Persian Gulf.

Analysts point to a confluence of factors that together may reveal a calculated strategy. First, there is economic opportunism.

The alignment between

Trump's financial interests and Persian Gulf Arab monarchies is further underscored by his family and allies' monetary incentives.

His son-in-law Jared Kushner's private equity firm, Affinity Partners, has secured substantial funding from West Asia, including a \$2 billion investment from the Arab monarchies' wealth funds.

Additionally, Trump's sons have expanded business ventures across the region, raising concerns about how these dealings might influence presidential priorities.

This web of interests aligns with Saudi, UAE, and Qatari investments seeking to leverage U.S. political influence, particularly as Trump advocates for infrastructure initiatives mirroring Arab monarchies.

Equally significant is the element of regional polarization. By stirring up long-standing tensions between Iran and Arab nations, Trump seems intent on diverting attention from the setbacks experienced in advancing possible normalization between the Israeli regime and Saudi Arabia.

This maneuver not only shifts the focus away from these diplomatic challenges but also provides a convenient pretext for justifying increased arms sales,



The map of the Persian Empire in 1747 at the time of Afsharid Dynasty by Emanuel Bowen

further entrenching his geopolitical stance.

Lastly, a legacy of colonial meddling plays a crucial role. The fabricated term for the Persian Gulf dates back to 1958, when British diplomat Roderick Owen, despite acknowledging the long-standing historical usage of the term, suggested that adopting a new, more "polite" designation would appease Arab allies.

Later, during the 1960s oil nationalization crisis, British advisor Charles Belgrave deftly deployed the term as a tool to fracture Iran-Arab relations.

This historical maneuver highlights how remnants of colonial influence continue to shape modern geopolitical narratives, particularly as Trump has demonstrated a penchant for historical revisionism concerning the Gulf of Mexico, Canada, the Panama Canal, and Greenland.

"This isn't about geography—it's about erasing Persia's legacy to serve modern agendas," wrote an Iranian historian.

Amongst regional countries, the myth of a fake name for the Persian Gulf gained traction in the 1960s as "pan-Arabism" surged.

The so-called "Arab nationalists," backed by British colonial remnants, sought to diminish

Iran's cultural sway. The Arab League and UAE amplified the term, despite lacking a historical basis.

### The indisputable historical record

The Persian Gulf's name is etched into humanity's collective memory, with its roots stretching deep into antiquity.

In the fifth century BCE, Greek historian Herodotus called it "Sinus Persicus," and Roman geographer Ptolemy's maps recorded it as "Persicus Sinus."

During the Islamic Golden Age, influential Arab scholars such as Al-Idrisi in the twelfth century and Ibn Khaldun in the fourteenth century consistently used the term "Persian Gulf" in their writings, reinforcing its historical significance.

In modern times, the enduring legacy of the name has been further solidified. Since 2006, the United Nations has mandated "Persian Gulf" as the sole official term, firmly rejecting any politicized alternatives.

Even the U.S. military has paid homage to this tradition; veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War have their tombstones engraved with "Persian Gulf," a testament to its lasting cultural and historical importance.

## Next round of Iran-U.S. talks pending Omani coordination, says Tehran

Baghaei added that any formal announcement regarding the meeting will come from the Omani mediators once the logistics are agreed upon.

He reiterated that Iran remains committed to diplomacy as a tool to achieve its lawful and legitimate national interests, especially the lifting of what he described as "unlawful economic sanctions that have targeted the human rights and welfare of every single Iranian."

The proposed fourth round of negotiations follows a series of indirect discussions between Tehran and Washington, mediated by Oman, which began in Muscat and later continued in Rome. The previous session took place on April 25, led by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and U.S. President Donald Trump's Special Envoy for Middle East Affairs, Steve Witkoff.

Originally, the fourth round was scheduled for Saturday, May 3, in Rome. However, Baghaei

confirmed on April 30 that the meeting had been postponed following a proposal by Oman's foreign minister. A new date is expected to be announced in due course.

In Washington, Witkoff struck an optimistic tone, describing the process as "making some progress." Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, he said, "I hope it is moving in the right direction. The president wants to see this solved diplomatically if possible, so we're doing everything we can to get it going." He cited U.S. President Trump's upcoming tour of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar as a possible reason for the delay, but did not rule out the talks resuming over the weekend.

However, Witkoff also reiterated Washington's stance: "Iran will not have a nuclear weapon"—a claim Tehran has repeatedly dismissed as baseless. The Islamic Republic insists it has never pursued, and does not intend to pursue,

nuclear weapons, citing both religious edicts and international law. Its nuclear program has consistently been monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has found no evidence of weaponization.

Iranian officials, including Baghaei, have maintained that any resolution must center on the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the unconditional removal of U.S. sanctions. Tehran has firmly rejected attempts to expand the scope of the negotiations to include issues such as its missile program or regional presence, calling such demands unacceptable.

"Iran entered these negotiations with goodwill," Baghaei emphasized. "We have defined a clear framework based on our principled positions under international law, especially regarding peaceful nuclear energy. Our team has demonstrated seriousness and resolve to reach a fair, rational, and sustainable understanding."

## Iran urges UK to uphold rights of detained nationals

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has urged British authorities to safeguard the rights of Iranian nationals arrested in recent counter-terrorism raids, while expressing Tehran's willingness to assist with any credible investigations.

In a post on his official X account Tuesday, Araghchi said he was "disturbed" by reports that several Iranians had been apprehended by UK security forces.

"If credible allegations of misconduct are established, Iran stands ready to assist investigations," he stated. "We call on the UK to ensure respect for our citizens' rights and afford them due

process."

His comments follow British media reports that seven Iranian nationals were detained in two separate counter-terrorism operations over the weekend.

According to the Metropolitan Police, five men—four of them Iranian—were arrested on Saturday in Swindon, west London, Stockport, Rochdale, and Manchester. They remain in custody as part of a pre-planned investigation into a suspected plot to target a specific location. Authorities have not released the names of the individuals, and the fifth suspect's identity is still being confirmed.

In a separate operation, three other Iranian men aged 39, 44, and 55 were detained at various addresses in north-west and west London under Section 27 of the National Security Act. The Met confirmed that searches of the premises are ongoing.

Commander Dominic Murphy, head of the Met's Counter Terrorism Command, emphasized that the two cases are being treated as separate incidents, with no confirmed links at this stage. "The investigation is still in its early stages and we are exploring various lines of inquiry," he said, noting that "several hundred officers and staff" are involved in the op-

erations.

Iran's Foreign Ministry has previously pushed back against British allegations of links between Tehran and criminal networks in Europe. In April, Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei dismissed such claims as "baseless and unjust," accusing the UK of scapegoating Iran to deflect from its own destabilizing activities in West Asia.

"Despite Iran's repeated calls for evidence, London continues to make unfounded allegations without presenting any proof," Baghaei said at the time.



# ‘A pioneering and outstanding Hawza’

Leader’s message marks 100th anniversary of Islamic seminaries’ reestablishment

**By Soheila Zarfam**

TEHRAN – In a message marking the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Hawza Ilmiyya of Qom, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, paid tribute to the seminary’s founder, Grand Ayatollah Haj Sheikh Abdulkarim Haeri Yazdi (ra), while outlining a forward-looking vision for Islamic seminaries in confronting contemporary challenges.

The message, issued on April 28, 2025, and published on Wednesday, highlighted the historical significance of the Qom Seminary, which emerged during a turbulent period of colonial domination in West Asia.

Ayatollah Khamenei described how foreign powers, particularly after World War I, sought to control the region through political manipulation, military force, and cultural subversion. Amid this oppression, he noted, Ayatollah Haeri’s establishment of the Qom Seminary became a beacon of resistance, nurturing scholars who would later lead Iran’s Islamic Revolution.

The Leader emphasized that



the Qom Seminary was not merely an academic institution but a dynamic force in shaping Iran’s religious and political identity. He credited its scholars with resisting colonial influence, confronting oppressive regimes, and ultimately paving the way for the Islamic Republic.

“The Hawza Ilmiyya is not just a place of teaching and learning,” he stated. “It is a center of knowledge, training, and socio-political engagement—a frontline against the intellectual and cultural threats posed by enemies of Islam.”

The Leader outlined five essential functions of the seminary in the modern era: academic excellence, training pious scholars, confronting enemy threats, developing Islamic social systems, and civilizational leadership.

While praising the Qom Seminary’s growth, including its expansion into women’s education and international outreach, Ayatollah Khamenei acknowledged gaps between its current state and its potential. He urged modernization in curriculum, stronger public engagement, and a focus on training dynamic scholars

who can address contemporary issues.

“The Hawza must remain ahead of its time,” he stressed. “Our young seminarians must be optimistic, connected to the people, and prepared to defend Islam with wisdom and courage.”

The Leader concluded by invoking divine blessings for the seminary’s continued success and reaffirmed its role in safeguarding Iran’s Islamic identity. He expressed confidence that, with faith and perseverance, the Hawza would overcome future challenges just as it had in the past.

“I will conclude my remarks here and beseech Almighty God for the ever-increasing honor and glory of Islam, the growing strength and steadfastness of the Islamic Ummah, the continuous progress and prosperity of the Iranian nation, the ever-growing dignity and effectiveness of the seminaries, and for victory over enemies, ill-wishers and adversaries.”

(See the full text of the Leader’s message at [tehrantimes.com](https://tehrantimes.com))

## Europe’s hidden human rights crisis: The MEK’s forbidden family bonds

### Iranian families beg Red Cross for answers on missing relatives recruited by terror organization

**By Sheida Sabzehvari**

TEHRAN – The human heart craves family. It’s crucial for our well-being, providing warmth, security, and a sense of belonging. But for a terrorist group that has isolated over 2000 people in a cloistered community at the heart of Europe, familial bonds are not a source of strength, but a threat to obedience.

Within the Ashraf camp in Albania, all that matters is how members serve the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK) leadership. Family is considered a distraction from the directives of the leaders. The group ensured this belief was engraved in the hearts and minds of its members during the 1990s and 2000s by forcing all couples in the original Ashraf camp in Iraq to divorce and then sending their children away. At least 800 children were separated from their parents and relocated to Europe, without any subsequent reunification.

The MEK has also actively worked to prevent its members’ remaining family members in Iran from contacting those inside the camp. Inside the camp, MEK individuals do not have access to phones, internet, or anything

assists families seeking contact with loved ones in the MEK.

“As a former member of the terror group, I know it’s impossible for those in the Ashraf camp to contact their loved ones,” he explained. “That’s assuming they’ve even overcome the organization’s brainwashing, which tells them their families despise them and would readily hand them over to Iranian forces.” He added, “But that couldn’t be further from the truth. Families across Iran desperately seek to connect with their loved ones in the Ashraf camp. For the past two decades, I’ve received calls every day from people crying and begging me to help them find a sister, brother, father, mother, son, or daughter they haven’t heard from in years.”

Khodabandeh explained that the hopes of these families were often simple; most wanted nothing more than to know if the person who left them years ago was still alive. “The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) should be the organization making this possible,” he declared. “It is with great regret that I must say they have failed to provide adequate assistance



Photo shows the Ashraf camp in Albania, where the MEK keeps over 2000 individuals

the Red Cross delivered letters from Al-Qaeda members to their families in Saudi Arabia, which made their failure in assisting the families of MEK members all the more shocking.

“I’ve lost count of the times I’ve spoken to ICRC officials in Iran, Albania, and Geneva, where their headquarters are,” he stated. “I also write to them every year on World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, May 8. Yet, I’ve never received a satisfactory explanation as to why we haven’t been able to connect these people with their family members in the Ashraf camp. They have stopped responding to me altogether in recent years.”

The Ashraf camp in Albania functions as a state within a state. Previously, aid workers attempting to deliver letters from family members in Iran or other countries were turned away at the gate and denied any contact with MEK members. “The ICRC said the organization told them the people we were trying to reach didn’t want the letters,” Khodabandeh recounted. “When I pressed them, asking how they could possibly justify that flimsy excuse, they had nothing to tell me.”

The MEK’s treatment of its members not only violates international legal standards, including UN and humanitarian laws, but also runs afoul of the Constitution of Albania. Specifically, the group’s practices within Camp Ashraf violate Articles 16, 17, 18, 19, and 21, which guarantee rights such as personal freedom and security, inviolability of domicile, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and access to information.

in this regard.”

The Red Cross has a mandate and a long history of helping family members find their loved ones, especially in situations of armed conflict, other situations of violence, natural disasters, and migration. This work is a core part of their humanitarian mission and is known as Restoring Family Links (RFL).

In his remarks to the Tehran Times, Khodabandeh noted that he was aware of cases where

## Taremi assists winner against Barcelona in UCL

TEHRAN – Inter secured a dramatic 4-3 victory over Barcelona in the second leg of the UEFA Champions League clash, earning a spot in the final.

Three-time European champion Inter, which lost the 2023 final to Manchester City, will face either Paris Saint-Germain or Arsenal in Munich on May 31. PSG beat Arsenal 1-0 in London last week in its first match. The second leg is Wednesday in Paris.

There was little sign of the drama to come at halftime, with Inter comfortably leading 2-0 after Lautaro Martinez scored and earned a penalty, which was converted by Hakan Calhanoglu.

But Barcelona had been in that position before, having gone 2-0 down early in the first leg last week before securing a thrilling 3-3 draw.

However, 37-year-old Francesco Acerbi stunned the visitors by scoring in stoppage time — his first-ever goal in European competition — forcing extra time.

Frattesi then delivered the final blow, skillfully controlling a pass from Mehdi Taremi and evading young defender Pau Cubarsi before slotting the ball into the net. Barcelona nearly equalized once more, but Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer made a critical fingertip save to deny Lamine Yamal and preserve the win.

## Iran beat Philippines in AFC Women’s Futsal Asian Cup 2025

TEHRAN – A late goal from Iran secured a 1-0 victory in their opening match of the AFC Women’s Futsal Asian Cup China 2025 as they saw off the Philippines Wednesday morning.

Making their tournament debut, the Philippines came within a whisker of pulling off one of the biggest upsets in the competition’s history against the defending champions, who won every one of its 10 matches en-route to claiming the title in both previous editions in 2015 and 2018.

In the end, Iran found a way through in the dying stages as Maral Torkaman broke Philippines’ hearts to take all three points in the Group B encounter at the Hohhot Sports Centre.

Team Melli are scheduled to meet Hong Kong and Vietnam on Friday and Sunday, respectively.

“The game against the Philippines was not easy at all, and I’m glad I could score the only goal of this match. We had several opportunities in both halves but couldn’t convert them into goals. However, in the final minutes, we finally broke through the Philippine defense and secured the victory,” Torkaman said.

“The competition has resumed after seven years, and undoubtedly, this edition was marked by special circumstances. But with the strategies set by our coaching staff, we managed to emerge

victorious and want to win the title for the third time,” she added.

“We need to take it step by step to reach our goal of making it to the final and winning the championship. Additionally, we aim to qualify for the FIFA World Cup, which will be held in the Philippines,” Torkaman concluded.

## Women’s kabaddi aim for second Asian Games gold: coach

TEHRAN – Iran’s women’s kabaddi coach Mahrokh Danesh expressed hope that they can repeat their gold medal achievement from the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya.

Iran won their first-ever gold at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, and Danesh is optimistic about securing a second gold at the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya.

“The national team are preparing for the World Championships in India and will depart on June 1st. Alongside the senior team, the youth team are also preparing for the 2025 Asian Youth Games in Bahrain. We have held two training camps for youth so far, and we are waiting for the domestic youth championship to organize another camp,” Danesh told Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

“In the upcoming competition in India, we will have a mix of young and experienced players. The World Championships will serve as a valuable test for our players. We recently achieved runners-up at the Asian Championship held in Tehran, and I can confidently say that approximately 80% of the previous players have been replaced by motivated young talents. Our goal is to rejuvenate the women’s kabaddi team,” she added.

“The World Championship in India presents an excellent opportunity to develop a strong and capable team for the 2026 Asian Games. Currently, I am in charge of the youth team, while Ms. Torbatinejad will oversee the senior team. Coaching the youth team is definitely more challenging because the players are still beginners and require professional training. Building a competitive youth team for the major event in Bahrain demands effort, skill, and energy, and I hope to succeed in this mission,” Danesh concluded.

## Fajr Sepasi win promotion to 2025/26 PGPL

TEHRAN – Fajr Sepasi football club secured promotion to the 2025/26 Iran Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Tuesday.

With only two matches remaining in the 2024/25 Azadegan League, the Shiraz-based club have guaranteed their promotion. Meanwhile, Paykan, Sanat Naft, Ario Eslamshahr, and Saipa still have a chance to claim the remaining spot.

Founded in 1988, Fajr Sepasi are currently led by former Esteghlal defender Pirouz Ghorbani.

Havadar have been relegated from the PGPL, and either Nassaji or Mes Rafsanjan will also face relegation from the league.



## Footshal in north of Iran

TEHRAN – Footshal, played in paddy fields or Shalizar (rice fields), offers northern Iranian people with a fun opportunity to enjoy themselves before starting rice cultivation.

The game also aims to encourage younger generations to work on the farms. The field measures 50 meters in length and 25 meters in width.

Footshal is a combination of “football” and “Shalizar,” and it is popular in Gilan and Mazandaran. It is widely enjoyed and holds significant cultural importance in northern Iran.



Ebrahim Khodabandeh, the CEO of Nejat Association

else that could help them connect to their loved ones back in Iran. When they do use phones or any other device that could act as a means of communication, they are never unfettered; their every move is monitored by a higher-ranking member of the organization, according to Ebrahim Khodabandeh, a former MEK member and current CEO of the Nejat Association, a Tehran-based entity with offices across Iran and Europe that



## Iran, Tajikistan to expand cooperation on standards



TEHRAN – Iran and Tajikistan signed a roadmap to implement a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on standardization, aiming to deepen bilateral cooperation in technical and quality assessment fields.

According to the National Standards Organization of Iran, the agreement was signed on the sidelines of the 17th meeting of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee by Mahmoud Reza Taheri, Deputy for Quality Assessment at Iran's National Standards Organization, and Deputy Head of the Tajikistan Standards Agency.

The roadmap outlines measures to implement the MOU, focusing on technical collaboration, removing trade barriers, holding expert training courses, enhancing metrology cooperation, and issuing joint certifications. It is expected to boost trade facilitation and strengthen institutional ties between the two countries.

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mohammad Atabak met with Tajikistan's minister of industry and new technologies, on May 1, on the sidelines of Expo 2025 to discuss expanding industrial cooperation between the two countries.

According to a statement from Iran's Ministry of Industry, Atabak reaffirmed Iran's readiness to supply Tajikistan with billets, rebar, and steel products as previously discussed.

He added that Iran is fully prepared to meet Tajikistan's needs in the chemical and food industries, offering to establish a mutually agreed mechanism for cooperation.

Atabak emphasized that Tajikistan's requests—whether for factory construction or product supply—can be carried out through bilateral agreements. He noted that plans for the construction and equipping of pharmaceutical manufacturing plants will proceed once the two countries harmonize their standards.

The minister also said that Tajikistan's mining development program, including the creation of mining infrastructure and downstream industries, is entering preliminary stages of talks with Iran's state-owned mining holding company, IMIDRO.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian concluded his two-day official visit to Tajikistan in mid-January, marking a significant milestone in bilateral relations with the signing of 23 agreements across various fields.

The agreements, aimed at strengthening diplomatic ties, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges, highlight the commitment of both nations to overcoming obstacles and expanding collaboration. During the visit, Pezeshkian emphasized the potential for trade to exceed \$500 million and announced plans for a joint economic commission meeting in the near future.

Key moments of the visit included bilateral talks with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, focusing on fast-tracking joint projects and removing trade barriers. The presidents

hailed the agreements as a foundation for further cooperation in science, education, transportation, and agriculture.

Pezeshkian addressed Tajik academic circles, stressing Iran's commitment to global health and rejecting violence and conflict. The visit also featured discussions with top Tajik officials, including the prime minister and parliamentary leaders, to facilitate trade agreements, including a preferential trade pact.

The visit culminated in a shared vision for deepened partnerships, with both countries expressing readiness to remove remaining barriers to trade and investment.

Also, a high-ranking Iranian trade delegation, comprising members of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) and led by Chamber Head Samad Hassanzadeh, departed Tehran for Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, on January 14.

The delegation was accompanied by Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, underscoring the multi-faceted nature of the visit, the ICCIMA portal reported.

Upon arrival in Dushanbe, Iranian and Tajik economic leaders convened for a joint forum aimed at enhancing bilateral trade relations. In this gathering, Hassanzadeh emphasized the extensive cultural and historical ties between Iran and Tajikistan as a foundation for deepening economic cooperation. He highlighted key sectors such as petrochemicals, oil and gas, medical equipment, and tourism as areas ripe for collaboration.

"Beyond economic discussions, we can leverage our shared heritage in literature, science, and the arts to expand mutual ties. Tajikistan offers a strategic platform for Iranian investors and businesses seeking to access Central Asian and Eurasian markets," Hassanzadeh stated.

The forum witnessed the signing of several memoranda of understanding between Iranian and Tajik companies, paving the way for increased joint ventures. Attendees also participated in one-on-one discussions to explore potential partnerships. Hassanzadeh noted that Iranian businesses have the expertise to contribute to Tajikistan's industrial development, including projects in steel production, refineries, and advanced technologies.

Highlighting Iran's capabilities, the ICCIMA head remarked, "We possess competitive pricing and innovative solutions, making us a strong partner for Tajikistan in sectors like engineering services and exports of building materials, agricultural products, and pharmaceuticals."

Ahead of the trip, Hassanzadeh described Tajikistan as a strategic destination for Iranian investors. "The stable political and social relations between our nations, combined with the trust shared by our presidents, provide a solid framework for expanding bilateral trade," he told Iranian media. He highlighted Tajikistan's reliance on Iranian expertise and competitive exports as a key opportunity for growth in sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and industrial development.

With the Iranian delegation's visit marking a new chapter in economic diplomacy, both nations have reaffirmed their commitment to leveraging cultural affinities for stronger economic ties. Tajikistan remains a vital partner in Iran's efforts to enhance its presence in Central Asia and beyond.

circular issued on Oct 31, 2023.

According to the circular, the FTZ, composed of parts of Urumqi, Kashgar, and Khorgos, covers an area of 179.66 square kilometers and focus on emerging industries, labor-intensive industries, and modern service industry.

The FTZ also builds comprehensive logistics hubs between Asia and Europe, strengthen cooperation with neighboring countries, promote communication in culture and education, and enhance international medical service capacities.

# Iran's monthly non-oil trade reaches \$5.8b

TEHRAN – Iran's non-oil foreign trade reached \$5.8 billion in the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 21, 2025), with raw gold topping the list of imports at \$583 million, according to data from the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Iran traded 10.76 million tons of non-oil goods in the mentioned month, generating \$5.798 billion in total value. This marked a 12 percent decline in weight and a 3.0 percent drop in value compared to the same period last year.

According to IRICA, exports accounted for 8.96 million tons worth \$2.942 billion, while imports stood at 1.80 million tons valued at \$2.856 billion.

Exports saw an 8.3 percent decline in volume and an 8.0 percent drop in value. In contrast, imports decreased by 26.4 percent in volume but rose by 2.3 percent in



value, year on year.

The average customs value of exported goods stood at \$328 per ton, a 0.47 percent increase from a year earlier. The average import value was \$1,587 per ton, up 39 percent year on year.

Petrochemical products accounted for 15 percent of the total export volume and 20.6 percent of the export value.

Top exported goods in Farvardin included liquefied propane (\$189 million), petroleum bitumen (\$182 million), liquefied butane (\$154 million), iron and steel billets (\$120 million), and methanol (\$110 million).

China was the leading destination for Iranian goods, importing \$997 million worth of products, followed by Iraq (\$401 million), the United Arab Emirates (\$395

million), Turkey (\$189 million), Afghanistan (\$143 million), Oman (\$140 million), and Pakistan (\$124 million).

These seven countries received 80 percent of Iran's non-oil export volume and accounted for 81 percent of its value.

Raw gold was the largest import item in the mentioned month at \$583 million, followed by animal feed corn (\$175 million), rice (\$91 million), soybean meal (\$75 million), and soybeans (\$66 million).

The UAE remained Iran's largest import partner with \$859 million in goods, followed by China (\$768 million), Turkey (\$538 million), Germany (\$87 million), the Netherlands (\$75 million), India (\$69 million), and Pakistan (\$43 million).

These seven countries supplied 83 percent of Iran's total import volume and 85 percent of its import value during the period.

## Iran, Pakistan seek stronger trade ties via Chabahar-Gwadar link



TEHRAN – In a meeting held at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), senior representatives from Pakistan's Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Tehran officials discussed expanding bilateral trade through deeper port cooperation between Gwadar and Chabahar.

During the talks, which included Peyman Sanandaji, head of the Tehran Chamber's Transportation Commission, and Hessamodin Hallaj, Deputy for International Affairs and Trade Development, both sides explored the potential for boosting goods exchange between the two strategic ports. The meeting also brought together members of Tehran's transport commission and Iranian business leaders.

According to the TCCIMA portal, the Gwadar delegation expressed readiness to collaborate in introducing reputable companies from both countries, improving port-based trade, establishing a financial corridor, and developing customs infrastructure.

Sanandaji stressed the need to modernize overland and maritime transit infrastructure between Chabahar and Gwadar, saying the Tehran chamber is ready to engage with Gwadar counterparts to identify and develop transport opportunities.

Hallaj highlighted the growing strategic role of both ports in bilateral commerce and noted that Gwadar, which has so far operated mainly within the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, could evolve into a multilateral regional hub. He also announced Tehran's willingness to assist in introducing reliable companies and facilitating business visa requests for Pakistani and Iranian traders.

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

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

Speakers at a seminar on the future of Iran-Pakistan relations and regional connectivity emphasized the need for constructive dialogue between officials from both countries to navigate administrative and logistical complexities. They stressed that securing mutual

benefits and improving the well-being of the Iranian and Pakistani people require strong political will and reciprocal practical measures.

The seminar, titled "Iran-Pakistan Relations: Trade Outlook and Strengthening Connectivity," was held on March 1 with the participation of the Iranian Embassy and hosted by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI).

The event brought together prominent experts from Pakistan's diplomatic, media, economic, and political spheres, along with several foreign diplomats.

Among the keynote speakers were Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam, Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, ISSI Chairman Sohail Mahmood, and former Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Riffat Masood.

They underscored the \$10 billion trade target and key energy projects as crucial steps toward strengthening bilateral relations.

Acknowledging the challenges hindering smooth trade between the two nations stemming from administrative complexities, logistical barriers, and regional and global developments speakers emphasized that structured engagement, fostering trust, and mutual respect form the foundation for a resilient and adaptable partnership between Tehran and Islamabad.

Pakistani experts highlighted the importance of enhancing border security, building mutual trust, and advancing projects such as linking the Gwadar and Chabahar ports and collaborating on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to unlock greater trade potential.

Addressing the seminar, Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam stated that trade and connectivity are two fundamental pillars of both global and domestic economies, significantly influencing each other. Reliable and secure transportation, he noted, is a facilitator of sustainable trade, making investment in transit corridors both essential and highly beneficial for investors.

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, the international community faces two new concepts: tariff wars and corridor wars, both targeting key economic pillars, he said. "Tariff wars, aimed at disrupting supply chains and obstructing trade among Global South nations, threaten international trade and the livelihoods of millions. Meanwhile, corridor wars through the creation of competing routes, destructive rivalries, economic terrorism, insecurity, and instability are designed to sustain unilateralism and hinder sustainable development goals".

Amiri Moghadam highlighted the strategic geographic position of Iran and Pakistan, which play a vital role in connecting the vast networks of Asian and European countries. He stressed that developing transportation infrastructure and strengthening bilateral

connectivity would facilitate broader regional interactions.

"With their transit capacities, diverse production sectors, and complementary economies, Iran and Pakistan can enhance their bilateral supply chains as well as those with other countries," he added. Iran serves as the gateway to Eurasia and the Caucasus, while Pakistan is the entry point to South and Southeast Asia. This unique positioning distinguishes the two countries from their other neighbors."

The Iranian envoy further noted that the two nations share a 1,000-kilometer land and maritime border, with markets and border crossings fostering interdependence. The Rimdan-Gabd and Pishin-Mand border crossings have been activated to ease trade and facilitate smoother movement, while plans for additional border terminals and marketplaces are underway. However, he pointed out that bureaucratic and logistical hurdles remain, requiring joint efforts to address.

"Iran's Chabahar Port and Pakistan's Gwadar and Karachi ports hold immense potential for strengthening economic linkages between the two nations and the broader region", Amiri Moghadam said. "Strategic and geopolitical concerns from certain external actors have led to misleading narratives portraying these ports as rivals, whereas, in reality, they are complementary according to all economic, geological, and strategic indicators".

He reaffirmed Iran's support for any initiative that fosters regional integration, strengthens bonds of peace and friendship among nations, and promotes economic prosperity. "Iran has consistently welcomed China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and related projects in line with this policy and is prepared to actively participate," he added.

Amiri Moghadam highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance transit routes, including the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) freight train, as well as port cooperation and infrastructure development for East-West and North-South corridors. "These initiatives hold immense strategic and economic significance for both countries," he said.

Under the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) framework, the ITI freight train is currently operational, offering significant opportunities for Iran and Pakistan to expand transit and transport collaboration through these corridors. He also pointed to the near-term completion of Iran's railway link to Herat in Afghanistan and the Rasht-Astara railway connection, which are expected to transform transit in the region.

Despite a post-pandemic recovery in bilateral trade volume, Amiri Moghadam noted that current trade levels remain below potential. "Senior officials from both countries have set a \$10 billion trade target, and achieving this goal requires intensified efforts," he stated.

## Chinese FTZ council, Iranian customs delegation meet to facilitate trade

TEHRAN- During a meeting between the members of Chinese council for development of trade in Khorgos and Urumqi free trade zone and a delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, the two sides explored the ways to facilitate trade and expand customs cooperation.

Participants in the meeting explained the commercial capabilities of this zone, with an emphasis on e-commerce and mail-order trade with Iranian customs.

China approved setting up the China (Xinjiang) Pilot Free Trade Zone in a State Council

## Annual iron ore concentrate export stands at \$548m

TEHRAN- Iran's value of iron ore concentrate export stood at \$548 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20), the Iranian Steel Producers Association

(ISPA) reported.

As ISPA announced, the figure shows a 10-percent annual drop, as the country had exported

\$609 million of iron ore concentrate in the year 1402.

Iron ore concentrate is an output product from processed

iron ores that have been milled (crush, grind, magnetic separation, flotation) to separate deleterious elements and produce a high-quality product.



# South Asia’s nuclear neighbors nearing a dangerous threshold

From page 1 ► The flare-up, which endangers regional security, has caused international concern.

In the early hours of Wednesday, India launched “Operation Sindoor”, a series of targeted missile strikes on what it described as “terrorist infrastructure” in Pakistan’s Punjab province and Pakistani-administered Kashmir. The strikes led to 26 deaths in Pakistan. India emphasized that the strikes were “focused, measured, and non-escalatory,” deliberately avoiding Pakistani military installations to restrain escalation.

Pakistan claimed to have shot down five Indian Air Force jets during the exchanges and reported civilian casualties, including women and children, condemning the strikes as “an act of war.”

Both sides have engaged in cross-border shelling since the initial strikes, with residents seeking shelter amid explosions. Srinagar airport in Indian-administered Kashmir has been closed to civilian flights, and commercial airlines are avoiding Pakistani airspace, reflecting heightened regional alertness.

**Global diplomatic reactions**

International response to the incident has been immediate. The UN Security Council met urgently to call for maximum restraint from both sides. The United States and China—which have



their own special connections to India and Pakistan—are calling for urgent dialogue. Russia has offered to mediate in light of its historic defense ties to India. The European Union has stated that it is worried about the humanitarian consequences.

Iran has also called for de-escalation and expressed worry about the consequences of conflict in a region where tensions are already high. Iran has even sent its foreign minister to Pakistan and India to de-escalate the situation.

However, Israel is fanning the flames by publicly supporting India, saying India has the right to defend itself.

Even on top of this humanitarian concern, global security analysts warn that rising tensions, if they lead to a prolonged conflict between India and Pakistan, could reignite other problematic

flashpoints i.e., Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula or the Eastern Mediterranean because they highlight how quickly regional flashpoints can escalate into an international disaster without any substantive response from the global community.

**Immediate economic disruptions**

Significant economic volatility has been brought on by the conflict, particularly for Pakistan. The Karachi Stock Exchange fell 2,000 points in a matter of hours after India launched strikes, indicating investor panic. India’s markets were resilient at first, but a protracted conflict could undo recent gains. Even minor military conflicts cost India and Pakistan about \$1.8 billion and \$1.2 billion, respectively, in capital flight and currency depreciation, according to historical precedents from the 2001–2002 standoff.

## Broader regional and global implications

The India-Pakistan clash threatens to destabilize South Asia, a region of over 1.8 billion people and critical global economic corridors. The conflict risks disrupting international trade routes and energy supplies, potentially impacting global commodity prices, especially oil.

Increased military tensions also increase the possibility of a disastrous misunderstanding between two nuclear-armed states.

To avoid a wider conflict, international stakeholders—including the UN and major powers—are urging de-escalation and communication. Due to supply chain disruptions, refugee flows, and investor uncertainty, the conflict’s economic effects may extend beyond the region and impact international markets.

Operation Sindoor is a stark reminder of how fast conflict can escalate between two historic rivals.

The conflict disrupts civilian life, threatens regional peace, and imposes heavy fiscal burdens on both nations, particularly Pakistan. Global calls for restraint underscore the urgent need for diplomatic engagement to prevent further deterioration and to safeguard economic and security interests in South Asia.

## US loses another warplane off Yemen



The US Navy has lost another fighter jet in the Red Sea, marking the second incident involving an F/A-18 Super Hornet from the USS Harry S. Truman in just over a week, and the third such loss since Washington intensified operations against Ansarallah in Yemen.

The aircraft reportedly plunged into the sea after experiencing an arrestment failure while attempting to land on the carrier, forcing both the pilot and weapons systems officer to eject. CNN first reported the incident on Tuesday, citing multiple sources familiar with the matter.

The incident reportedly occurred the same day Ansarallah “took a shot” at the Truman, though it remains unclear whether the two events are connected. A formal investigation is underway, while the US Navy has yet to officially confirm the details.

Just last week, another F/A-18 fell off the Truman during evasive maneuvers to avoid incoming Yemeni missile fire. In a separate incident last December, an F/A-18 was mistakenly shot down by the guided-missile cruiser USS Gettysburg shortly after launching from the Truman for bombing raids against Anasarallah targets in Yemen.

## European foreign ministers ‘firmly reject any territorial change in Gaza’

The foreign ministers of Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia, and Spain on Wednesday expressed deep alarm over Israel’s reported plans to expand military operations in Gaza and establish a prolonged presence in the territory, Anadolu Agency reported.

In a joint statement, the six European countries warned that such actions would significantly escalate the conflict and further jeopardize any hopes for a peaceful resolution based on a two-state solution.

“We, the Foreign Ministers of Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia and Spain express our grave concern about the reported Israeli plans to expand its military operations in Gaza and to establish a prolonged Israeli presence in the Strip. This would mean crossing yet another line, marking a dangerous new escalation and jeopardizing any prospects of a viable Two-State solution,” they said.

The group emphasized that further military escalation would only deepen the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and endanger the remaining hostages.

## Israeli attacks kill more than 60 as Gaza blockade accelerates starvation

Israel’s attacks on Gaza have killed at least 61 people since dawn, targeting civilians in crowded places, as its more than two-month blockade of the besieged and bombarded enclave has caused acute food shortages, accelerating the starvation of the Palestinian population, Al Jazeera reported.

A reconnaissance drone strike targeted an area near the Thai and Palmyra restaurants in al-Wehda Street, in Gaza City. Two missiles were fired at two locations at the same time, 100 metres apart, one inside a restaurant and another at the intersection, killing at least 17 people.

Reporting from Gaza City, Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud said the Israeli air strike targeted

one of the few places where Palestinians are able to get a meal.

## US, China to hold ice-breaker trade talks in Geneva on Saturday

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and chief trade negotiator Jamieson Greer will meet China’s economic tsar He Lifeng in Switzerland this weekend for talks that could be the first step toward resolving a trade war disrupting the global economy, Reuters reported.

News of the planned Geneva meeting, first announced by Washington late Tuesday, sent U.S. equity index futures higher. Stock markets in China and Hong Kong followed suit during Asian trading on Wednesday.

The talks come after weeks of escalating tensions that have seen duties on goods imports between the world’s two largest economies soar well beyond 100%, amounting to what Bessent on Tuesday described as the equivalent of a trade embargo.

The impasse, alongside U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision last month to slap sweeping duties on dozens of other countries, has upended supply chains, roiled financial markets and stoked fears of a sharp downturn in global growth.

The negotiating teams convening in Switzerland, known for its neutrality, are expected to discuss reductions to the broader tariffs, two sources familiar with the planning said. The talks should also cover duties on specific products, export controls and Trump’s decision to end de minimis exemptions on low-value imports, one of the sources added.

## Xi in Moscow to attend celebrations marking the Soviet defeat of Germany 80 years ago



BEIJING— Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Russia on Wednesday night for a state visit and participation in the celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union’s Great Patriotic War in Moscow, at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin.

Ahead of his arrival, Xi emphasized the importance of the strategic partnership between Russia and China, highlighting its significance in enhancing global governance.

President Xi made the remarks in a signed article titled “Learning from History to Build Together a Brighter Future,” which was published in the Russian Gazette.

“China and Russia are both major countries with significant influence in the world. The two nations are constructive forces for maintaining global strategic stability and for improving global governance. Our bilateral relationship is founded upon a clear historical logic, sustained by strong internal drive, and rooted in profound cultural heritage,” he said.

Xi emphasized that the partnership between the two countries will remain unaffected by external influences.

“Our relationship is neither directed against nor swayed by any third party. Together we must foil all schemes to disrupt or undermine our bonds of amity and trust, and we must not be baffled by transient matters or unsettled by formidable challenges,” he said.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

## As usual, Yemen turns the tables on the magician

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — It seems clear that the upcoming days will be witnessing accelerating developments as West Asia is on a political hotbed following the hypersonic ballistic missile launched at Ben Gurion Airport in an unprecedented strategic development.

The Palestine 2 missile (with a range of 2,150 kilometers that can maneuver, mislead, and bypass air defense systems) has once again proved that the Yemeni Armed Forces enjoy advanced military technology in missile manufacturing and misleading Israeli and American radars.

The hypersonic ballistic missile, with its large, explosive warhead, carried a resounding message to the Zionist occupiers that they are no longer safe under the skies of occupied Palestine.

To Netanyahu and his extreme right, Yemen’s message is that the war of starvation, displacement, and genocide in Palestine will not go unpunished.

As for America, Yemen’s message is that your unlimited and unconditional support for “Israel” has a regional price, and that your maritime and air interests are threatened.

Obviously, just as Yemen imposed a naval blockade in the Red Sea, it can also impose an air blockade as part of the comprehensive deterrence equation pursued by the Sanaa government!

By targeting a vital facility that serves as the temporary occupation entity’s gateway to the world, Yemen has dealt a severe blow to Washington and a clear failure of both American and Israeli air defense systems.

There is no room for the illusions of “ab-

solute victory” boasted by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and behind him, U.S. President Donald Trump, after they announced the elimination of 90% of Yemen’s missiles, claiming they were close to subjugating it.

Likewise, Yemen’s message to the peoples of the region is that the Axis of Resistance has not and will not be defeated, as the American media empire claims. The Axis of Resistance possesses advanced deterrence capabilities, enabling it to shift the balance of power in its favor, and the Yemeni front continues to support the Palestinian people.

The message to the West, which supports Israel, is that your citizens throughout West Asia are at risk at any moment, and you will pay and incur further economic losses due to the Yemeni blockade.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

## Yemen warns Israelis to stay in shelters

From page 1 ► TEHRAN – Yemen has warned the Israeli regime of a painful response while revealing that America had called for a ceasefire.

Yemen’s Supreme Political Council Chairman, Mahdi al-Mashat, has issued a stern warning of a crushing response to the Israeli aggression on Yemen.

“Sanaa’s response will be devastating, painful, and beyond

what the Israeli enemy can endure,” he declared.

Addressing the occupation forces directly, al-Mashat added, “From this moment onward, stay in your shelters or leave for your homelands immediately. Your failed government will no longer be able to protect you.”

He emphasized, “The Israeli aggression confirms to our people the righteousness of their

resistance and reassures them further as they face the filthiest enemy known to humanity.”

Al-Mashat continued, “What has happened proves that our strikes are painful, and they will continue.”

The Supreme Political Council chairman reaffirmed Yemen’s stance that “No aggression will deter us from our rightful decision to support our brothers in



Helmut Kohl visits the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem in January 1984

licly hit out at Schmidt, referring to his Wehrmacht past and accusing him of failing to grasp Jewish suffering. This confrontation exposed the fragility of the so-called “special relationship,” and raised questions as to whether Germany would stay on the fence between its historical guilt and

its growing geopolitical ambitions in the Arab world.

### The Venice Declaration and the Europeanization of German policy

The 1980 Venice Declaration, supported by West Germany and the European Economic Community (EEC), heightened Israeli worries. It endorsed Palestinian self-determination and indirectly acknowledged the PLO, a change that Israel viewed as a betrayal. But for Germany, this was the “Europeanization” of its Mideast policy, an attempt to join forces with European partners while not appearing to exclusively side with Israel. This move towards multilateralism would develop to become a signature of German foreign policy.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

The Israeli-German relationship during the 1980s and 1990s was one of the most sensitive and dynamically evolving friendships in post-war international relations. Based on the trauma of the Holocaust, the German-Israeli relationship had changed over the years, from moral responsibility to pragmatic cooperation, depending on internal political reasons but also changing international circumstances.

The early 1980s were a time of high tension, especially since the election of the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1977. Begin, a Holocaust survivor and unrepentant nationalist, distrusted Germany deeply. He argued fiercely with West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, and relations reached a nadir in 1981, when Germany announced that it would sell tanks to Saudi Arabia, against the wishes of Begin. He pub-



## Italian ambassador visits National Museum of Iran



TEHRAN--On Tuesday, Paola Amadei, the Ambassador of Italy to Iran, visited the National Museum of Iran and held a meeting with Jebrael Nokandeh, the museum's director-general.

The meeting, attended by the cultural attaché of the Italian Embassy and a representative from the Italy Desk at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized the need to enhance cultural cooperation, particularly in the fields of museology, restoration, and archaeology.

The ambassador highlighted the long-standing and outstanding collaboration between the two countries in terms of cultural heritage, expressing Italy's full readiness to expand these partnerships at various levels

## Hashtrud's Zahhak castle, a testament to Iranian history, mythology, and identity

TEHRAN--Zahhak castle in Hashtrud, East Azarbaijan province, is one of the prominent examples of rock and military architecture. It is today at the center of the restoration, research, and development-oriented programs of East Azarbaijan Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department.

Zahhak castle is intended not only to be on the path of cultural revival, but also to become one of the country's cultural tourism hubs, CHTN reported.

Vahid Navadad, the deputy head of East Azarbaijan Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, said, "We intend to introduce and promote the infrastructures pertaining to this historical castle."

Based on stratigraphic studies and historical documents, renovations are underway in the main entrance and eastern wing of the castle, he said.

He added that preserving Zahhak castle means preserving part of the historical memory of the region and cultural identity of Azarbaijan.

"Our approach is to have minimum restoration with respect to originality of materials and historical form of the monument," he mentioned.

The unique tourism potentials of Zahhak castle can turn into one of the pillars of sustainable development in the region, he said.

Also, Alireza Bairamzadeh, the deputy head of East Azarbaijan Tourism Department, said Zahhak castle is not just a place to visit, but a lived experience: a combination of history, nature, mythology, and architecture. "Our plan is to prepare the ground for attracting cultural tourists by improving access routes, installing multilingual information boards, and developing basic infrastructure."

"We are compiling ecotourism plans with participation of local community so that tourism in this region not only leads to economic prosperity but also lays the groundwork for the transfer of cultural values.

We plan specialized tours with focus on mythological and historical studies to draw elite tourists to the region."

Also, Ahmad Hamzehzadeh, the director general of East Azarbaijan Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, said, "We view Zahhak Castle not just as a historical monument, but also as a living asset for recreating the region's identity."

"Negotiations are underway for attracting cultural investors with the aim of launching a museum site, implementing night tourism programs, and even developing access routes to the area. Apart from preserving the historical originality of the castle, these measures can turn into a driving force for economic growth of Hashtrud and its surrounding areas," he concluded.

Zahhak Castle, named after the mythical

further. She also praised past joint achievements in research and exhibition projects and called for the continuation of this fruitful cooperation.

For his part, the Director-General of the National Museum of Iran reviewed the history of joint initiatives with Italian scientific and cultural institutions, citing successful exhibitions such as "Iran and Italy: 60 Years of Collaboration on Cultural Heritage" as well as collaborations with prestigious museums like the Aquileia Museum and the Vatican Museums.

Nokandeh expressed hope that, given the deep-rooted ties between the two nations, such cultural exchanges would continue to thrive in the future

Following the meeting, the Italian delegation toured various sections of the Museum of Ancient Iran, where they observed notable artifacts from Iran's ancient civilizations, including relics from Shahr-e Sukhteh (Burnt City) and Persepolis.

The visit served as an opportunity for the Italian side to reaffirm Iran's rich historical heritage and explore new avenues for future collaborations in research, exhibitions, and cultural heritage preservation between the two countries.



figure Zahhak from ancient Iranian mythology, dates back to the second millennium BC, with continued occupation through the Timurid era.

The fortress, which features intricate brickwork, archways, and staircases, offers insights into ancient defensive architecture and societal structures.

The castle's strategic importance during the Parthian period is underscored by historical accounts, including its role in the defeat of Roman general Marc Antony in 37 BC. The Median infantry, allied with the Parthian cavalry, played a crucial part in this victory, providing a rare glimpse into the military strategies of the era.

Archaeological excavations, initiated by British researchers decades ago, have revealed artifacts such as stucco remnants with traces of coloring, shedding light on the site's artistic and cultural heritage.

### Glimpses of Parthian era

The Parthian Empire, also known as the Arsacid Empire, was a major Iranian political and cultural power centered in ancient Iran from 247 BC to 224 CE. Its name derives from its founder, Arsaces I, who led the Parni tribe in conquering Parthia, a northeastern region of Iran. At the time, Parthia was a satrapy (province) under Andragoras, a rebel against the Seleucid Empire.

At its zenith, the Parthian Empire extended from the northern Euphrates River (modern central-eastern Turkey) to present-day Afghanistan and western Pakistan. Positioned along the Silk Road, the empire thrived as a hub for trade and commerce, connecting the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean to the Han dynasty in China.

The Parthians assimilated various elements of the diverse cultures within their empire, which included Persian, Hellenistic, and regional influences. Initially, the Arsacid court adopted many aspects of Greek culture but gradually saw a revival of Iranian traditions. Parthian rulers adopted the title "King of Kings", asserting their heritage from the Achaemenid Empire.

Unlike the Achaemenids, who governed through centrally appointed satraps, the Parthians often allowed local kings to serve as vassals. As the empire expanded, its central government shifted from Nisa to Ctesiphon, near modern Baghdad, though other cities also served as capitals.

# Iran, Pakistan to draft MoU in tourism field: minister

TEHRAN--Iran and Pakistan will formulate a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of tourism, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri announced on Tuesday.

Speaking in his meeting with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Heritage and Culture Huzaifa Rehman in Pakistan on the sidelines of the meeting of tourism ministers of member states of D-8 in Cairo, Salehi-Amiri stated that Iran is the second home of the Pakistani people, Mehr News Agency reported.

"We have mobilized our borders to facilitate the movement of Pakistani pilgrims, and facilities



including accommodations and restaurants have been set up at the Mirjaveh and Rimdan border crossings," he added.

Emphasizing the deep cultural,

religious, and historical commonalities between the two nations, Amiri added, "The more relations between the two countries are strengthened in the religious,

## Hamedan, old land of civilization, pristine nature

TEHRAN--Hamedan Province, as one of the oldest centers of Iranian civilization, is home to many poets, cultural celebrities, historical places, and natural attractions.

Hamedan is one of the oldest cities in Iran and is the first capital of the first empire of Iran, the Medes.

Hamedan is home to many poets and cultural celebrities, apart from this, dozens of sights and historical places in this city confront us with one of the most historic cities in Iran and in the world, Mehr news agency reported.

Hamedan has special and famous sights and tourist attractions that are suitable for a pleasant trip in spring.

The geographical conditions of Hamedan have made this city have a pristine and unique nature.

The province is also well known for handicrafts such as leather, ceramics, and carpets.

A site not to be missed during a stay in Hamedan is the excavations of Hegmataneh (Ecbatana) and its museum.

This ancient city was the first capital of the Aryans and, along with Athens in Greece, Rome in Italy, and Susa in Khuzestan, is one of the few ancient cities in the world that still survives and is important. The Median kingdom was founded in the 8th century BC by Deioces or Dia-oku and Hegmataneh was built as a Capital.

Hegmataneh is the largest archaeological site in Iran, a treasure laid bare at the end of the 20th century which allows you to discover the ancient and almost perfectly geometric city.

One can admire their houses built back-to-back and similar to each other and perpendicular streets.

In the museum dedicated to the excavations, many Achaemenid, Sassanian, and Median objects are exhibited and offer a real plunge into the past, to the time when Ecbatana was still the capital of the Median kingdom and one of the most influential cities in the world.

Geographically located south-

west of Hamedan, Ganjnameh inscriptions are the historical monuments dating back to the Achaemenid era.

They were inscribed on Alvand Mountain at the end of Abbas Abad Valley.

These inscriptions are in three columns of 20 lines and are written in three languages of Old Persian, Neo- Elamite, and Neo- Babylonian.

By looking at the inscriptions, you would definitely feel the magnificence of the history.

Next to the Ganjnameh inscription, there is a waterfall that is full of water in every season. This really adds to the beauty of the environment.

### World's largest water cave

As one of the biggest attractions of Hamedan province and the world's largest water cave, Alisadr is ranked among the most popular sites of Iran with thousands of visitors year-round, especially in spring and summer.

This cave is located in Kabudarahang, a city 60 Km from Hamedan. The distance from Kabudarahang to Alisadr Village is 50 Km. This cave is located on the elevated lands of Sari Qieh, meaning the yellow rock.

Alisadr cave has too many water halls and a wide variety of beautiful features such as stalactites, stalagmites, and karst deposits with various forms.

This with about 2,400 meters in cave boating is the biggest cave in the world in this respect. This cave has a lasting exploitation and protection management system.

### Tomb of Baba Taher

The tomb of Baba Taher Oryan is a memorial building of the contemporary era. It is located on a raised ground in the northwest of Hamedan city in Baba Taher Square.

Baba Taher lived in the 11th century. He was one of the great poets and mystics of his time.

### Avicenna Mausoleum

Avicenna mausoleum is the memorial monument of a famous Iranian philosopher, scientist, and



physician. This monument is located in Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna in Persian) square in Hamedan.

The convenient location of this historic square and also easy access to it, attract many people who pass through the city of Hamedan to visit this mausoleum.

Avicenna's fame in medicine and philosophy has made him a global figure. Therefore, the number of tourists who travel to visit the mausoleum of this great philosopher is significant.

### Shir Sangi, Median stone lion

The stone lion of Hamedan (Shir-e Sangi) is a historical monument in Hamedan, west of Iran.

The stone lion, one part of the 'Lion's Gate', sits on a hill where a Parthian-era cemetery is said to have been located.

When first built, this statue had a twin counterpart for which they both constituted the old gate of the city. The gates were demolished in 931 CE as the Daylamids took over the city.

Currently, this statue is located in the park and square of Sang Shir and is held in great respect by the people.

It is 2.5 meters long, 1.15 meters wide, and 2.2 meters high in its front part and its present form

natural, sea-based, and desert tourism fields, the better it will be for the benefit of both nations."

Referring to Iran's ample potential in the field of tourism, he said that Iran is the only country in the world that has all 20 known types of tourism; ranging from cultural heritage with more than one million registered historical works to the nature tourism, marine, desert, forest tourism, and even spiritual tourism.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Heritage and Culture Huzaifa Rehman, for his part, emphasized that his country attaches great importance to enhancing its relations with Iran in all fields, especially in the field of tourism.

represents the battered image of a legless, couchant lion carved out of yellow sandstone.

There are various theories as to the history of this statue. While some accounts denote the statue to the first Iranian dynasty, the Medes, others attribute it to the Parthian dynasty since it was found over a mound that consisted of a Parthian cemetery.

Iran's Cultural Heritage Organization reports that the lions were first thought to have been built by the orders of Alexander the Great to commemorate the death of his close companion Hephæstion.

### Lalejin; the pottery capital of world

Lalejin, a city in the northwest of Iran's Hamedan province, is known as the world's capital of pottery, one of the first human artefacts and the objective representation of handicrafts in the minds of all people.

The small town of Lalejin celebrated its designation as the World Pottery Capital by the World Crafts Council in 2016.

Around 80 percent of Lalejin's population are potters, ceramists and involved in related jobs. Undoubtedly Lalejin is one of the important centers of pottery and ceramic production in Iran.

## Turkey lauded as major tourism hub bridging Asia, Europe

Turkey is a major tourism destination with a "rich history and culture," said Noor Ahmad Hamid, CEO of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), highlighting the country's strategic value as a global travel hub.

Speaking to Anadolu Agency (AA), Hamid said that while as an Asian, he once considered Turkey part of Asia, but he now sees it as something broader.

"Turkey is like the world, because it is the bridge between Asia and Europe," he said.

He emphasized the country's appeal for both leisure and business travelers, pointing to Istanbul as its top destination.

"It is the gateway where you have access – there are thousands of hotels in the city, attractions from modern and new culture, the cuisine, the people," he said.

Hamid noted that while Istanbul dominates tourist arrivals, many other cities across Turkey

also attract visitors, depending on their interests.

"If somebody likes to fly, then they will go to Cappadocia. I like golf and want to go to Antalya," he said.

Turkey's connectivity remains one of its most significant tourism advantages, particularly with growing Asian demand.

"The Indian market is definitely the closest to Turkey, (and) the Middle East as well, but also the bigger market is from the Asian side, I mean, Southeast Asia and North Asia, (such as) Japan, China, Korea, Hong Kong and so forth," he said.

Istanbul's rise as a global aviation hub plays a central role in this dynamic.

"Istanbul in particular is really becoming one of the major hubs in the world," he said. "Everyone who is flying from different parts of Asia says that all the flights on Turkish Airlines are full."

"Of course, a big number of them are coming

to Turkey for a holiday, but also a lot of them are expanding their trip to Europe and other destinations, because of Turkey being a hub."

Hamid said accessibility is crucial for sustainable tourism growth and praised Turkey's unique blend of offerings. "The key is to have accessibility," he said.

He also spoke about his personal admiration for the country.

"I love many of the architecture, the malls, from the Blue Mosque, the Hagia Sophia. Turkey is very rich in history and culture, not only from what I see every time I come here, but also from the stories that you get."

He reflected on how his perception of the country changed after visiting.

Hamid said PATA will continue working with the Turkey Tourism and Development Agency (TGA) on joint initiatives. TGA has been a member of the association for several years.



# Iran’s Shahid Soleimani Tech Park in the spotlight at Expo 2025

TEHRAN – Held on Seoul Street, Tehran Expo 2025 – Iran’s largest export exhibition – welcomed over 4,000 international visitors from 110 countries, serving as an exceptional platform to showcase the nation’s industrial and commercial capabilities.

The event provided foreign traders and economic stakeholders with a clear perspective on Iran’s potential, paving the way for enhanced foreign investment opportunities.

Among the participants, Shahid Soleimani Science and Technology Park, one of the youngest, stood out as the only knowledge-based pavilion, emerging as one of the most remarkable highlights of this edition.

The pavilion featured 75 innovative products from 16 companies under the park’s umbrella, along with incubators, making it a hub for international business negotiations.

### Africa’s heart captivated by fabric concrete

One of the most sought-after products at the exhibition was cement-based flexible fabrics, which drew significant attention from African and other international delegates. Foreign traders were briefed on the production process and technical details, leading to numerous export agreements for this



cutting-edge, knowledge-based product.

Cement-based flexible fabrics, also known as Concrete Canvas, are an innovative, pre-fabricated construction material made by combining a layer of fibrous fabric with a dry cement mixture. These fabrics are flexible before hydration and can conform to various surfaces.

Once hydrated, they harden into a durable concrete layer. Due to their ease of transport, quick installation, and no need for heavy machinery, concrete canvas is ideal for civil projects in remote or hard-to-access areas.

It is commonly used for channel lining, erosion control, rapid infrastructure repair, temporary shelters, and semi-permanent

structures. This technology is recognized as a sustainable and innovative solution in civil engineering and disaster management, significantly reducing water, energy, time, and labor compared to traditional concrete methods.

The high-tech concrete fabric, developed at Shahid Soleimani Science and Technology Park, represents one of the most advanced technologies in the world.

The fabric concrete was also well-received by the Omani delegation, which visited the pavilion during the early hours of the exhibition.

The quality of this product is nearly equivalent to that of the UK, while its price is approximately one quarter of the UK

product’s price. Furthermore, we are willing to transfer our technology to other countries in Africa or Asia, whereas the UK does not offer such opportunities

### Chinese investors eager to collaborate

David, a Chinese entrepreneur, visited the pavilion and explored various products, including water purification systems, concrete fabric, and quadcopters. During discussions with park officials, he expressed strong interest in partnering with knowledge-based companies at Shahid Soleimani Park.

He particularly highlighted potential cooperation in telecommunications technologies, praising the products as “innovative and highly practical.

### Czech diplomat visits knowledge-based pavilion

Jan Chomsky, a diplomat from the Czech Republic, toured the pavilion on the third day of Expo 2025. He described the showcased products as “highly functional” and noted that there is a ready market for them in his country.

The Shahid Soleimani Science and Technology Park continues to demonstrate Iran’s growing potential in advanced technologies, fostering international partnerships and boosting non-oil exports.

## Iran recognized ‘pioneer’ in assistive technology at GATE Summit

TEHRAN – The model of assistive technology introduced by Iran at the Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology (GATE) summit 2025 has been recognized as a successful model for developing countries.

Hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) under the GATE Initiative and in collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Summit brings together key stakeholders to highlight and prioritize global, regional, and national actions needed to accelerate equitable access to assistive technology.

Addressing the summit, Mostafa Qanei, secretary of the biotechnology development office of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, elaborated on Iran’s activities in assistive technology sector and enumerated the vice presidency’s measures in policy making, and manufacturing assistive technologies based on WHO-GATE 5P (people, policy, products, provision, and personnel) framework, IRNA reported.

Referring to the cooperation between Iran’s vice presidency for science and UNICEF, the official highlighted the significance of emerging technologies, particularly digital technologies.

Fernando Botelho, the assistive technology program specialist, for his part, lauded Iran’s efforts and introduced the model presented

by Iran as a role model for other developing countries. The two organizations have been collaborating since 2019, and so far, they have held two innovation challenges focusing on children and adolescents with the children’s participation.

Improving children and adolescents’ access to assistive technologies is one of the most important axes of cooperation between Iran and UNICEF.

Participation in international meetings and programs and introducing Iran’s achievements and measures in technology development, policy-making to international communities, and supporting businesses operating in assistive technology are among the main objectives of the cooperation.

The two sides have also collaborated to establish an innovation ecosystem in the field of children and adolescents, attracting stakeholder participation and investment in the field, improving access, and supporting active companies.

### GATE-Summit

The GATE Summit will build on progress in the sector with the overall goal of collaboration within and between sectors and partners to achieve a consensus-driven Global roadmap for priority investment and action to accelerate equitable access to assistive technology.

The WHO and UNICEF Global report on assistive technology identifies that 2.5 billion people globally need assistive technology, growing to 3.5 billion by 2050. Equitable access to assistive technology enables better health outcomes, and realization of human rights, and facilitates collective and inclusive achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

GATE-Summit main objectives are as follows. Heighten awareness of the need for assistive technology and build shared knowledge of strategies to improve access considering the themes of who, where, and how, through presenting evidence-based information and best practice examples of national, regional, and global initiatives.

Broaden the network of stakeholders across sectors and levels that are actively engaged in taking action to increase access to assistive technology, through using a hybrid approach and ensuring at least 40 percent of in-person participants are attending a GATE Summit for the first time.

Strengthen partnership and collaboration on assistive technology between Member States, UN, civil society and other key stakeholders, by providing an open forum for sharing ideas and opportunities.

Reach consensus on a Global road map for accelerating access to assistive technology.

## Habitat loss main cause of decline in species population: DOE official

TEHRAN – Habitat loss, exacerbated by climate change, is the leading cause of population decline in species, the head of the wildlife protection office has said.

Climate change is one of the contributing factors to severe destruction of habitats, particularly aquatic ecosystems, which are under serious threat due to drought and decline in water resources,” IRNA quoted Gholamreza Ebdali as saying.

The department of environment (DOE) is taking different measure to protect endangered species to address these challenges and protect endangered species, Ebdali noted.

These measures mainly focused on addressing illegal hunting, boosting international collaborations, as well as developing actions plans to conserve species, the official added.

### Conservation efforts

Apart from habitat destruction, fragmentation, and modification caused by human-led activities such as industrial and residential development, logging, crop farming, livestock grazing, mining, road and dam building, and pesticide use have taken an extreme toll on threatened and endangered wildlife populations at an alarming rate.

The DOE has already developed action plans for the conservation of 25 endangered species and the plans are being implemented

in the country. It is also planning to organize a committee for the preservation of critically endangered species including cheetahs, black bears, and great bustards.

Currently, about 128 species of animals and vertebrates in the country are at risk of extinction, some of which are not in good condition, and amphibians are the most vulnerable in this area. Persian zebra, Asiatic cheetah, black bear, and yellow deer are in danger of extinction.

Penalties for offenses, like the illegal killing of wildlife, fishing, or hunting without permits have increased to provide a significant deterrent effect on wildlife crime.

In the last few years, protecting animal species in their original habitat, and increasing the number of rangers in the protected areas have been considered one of the main tasks of the DOE.

Several meetings and consultations have been held with some other countries to benefit from their scientific and experimental capacities in the preservation of species such as the Asiatic cheetah, the great bustard, the leopard, and houbara bustard.

Holding several workshops and training courses on getting to know reptiles and amphibians, leopards, aquatic animals, and existing challenges, as well as diagnosing their diseases and ways to prevent them, are among other important measures that have been taken.

## UNFPA lauds Iran’s efforts in reducing maternal mortality



TEHRAN – The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) representative in Iran has commended the country’s health system measures in lowering the mortality rate ratio by 63 percent, from 43 deaths per 1000 live births in 2000 to 16 deaths in 2023.

“For sure, this great achievement is mainly due to Iran’s primary health care network, incorporating prenatal and postnatal care into its systems as well as services offered by nurse aides, health experts, and midwives,” IRNA quoted Ayna Seyitliyeva as saying.

The official made the remarks on Tuesday on the occasion of the International Day of Midwife, which is observed annually on May 5.

Midwives play a vital role in realizing women’s access to quality health services as a human right. They play a key role in promoting maternal and newborn well-being and contribute to the substantial reduction in deaths from preventable causes during pregnancy and postpartum, Seyitliyeva noted.

“Despite progress made, the situation remains critical in some regions due to inequalities where women are twice or even more in danger of losing their lives because of complications from pregnancy and childbirth. The same thing applies to Iran, as the highest mortality rate is observed in less developed regions in provinces like Sistan-Baluchestan,” she added.

Highlighting that inadequate care accounts for half of maternal deaths, Seyitliyeva said UNPDA will continue to support Iran in implementing policies aimed at improving maternal health, obstetric services and reducing maternal mortality.

## Ali Teymouri appointed as Iran’s representative in UNCCD

TEHRAN – Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljah has appointed the head of the Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization, Ali Teymouri, as the country’s representative in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Desertification is a phenomenon that ranks among the greatest environmental challenges the world is facing.

Currently, drought and desertification, as a part of a prevalent phenomenon called climate change, are imposed on the world, including Iran.

Iran is home to about 3.8 percent of the world’s total desert areas. Some 61 percent of the country’s area is covered by arid and semi-arid lands, which is 3.1 times the global average.

Sand and dust storms (SDSs) are among the contributing factors to desertification. The country has adopted different measures to mitigate the impacts of SDSs. Enhancing collaborations among different organizations to manage dust storms produced by internal dust zones effectively; holding bilateral and multi-lateral meetings with the officials of Syria, Iraq,

Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Qatar, and Kuwait, and implementing the agreements concluded with these countries to address the SDSs are among the actions taken by the country.

### Desertification

Although desertification can include the encroachment of sand dunes on land, it doesn’t refer to the advance of deserts. Rather, it is the persistent degradation of dryland ecosystems by climate change and mainly human activities: unsustainable farming that depletes the nutrients in the soil, mining, overgrazing (animals eat away grasses and erode topsoil with their hooves) and clear-cutting of land, when the tree and plant cover that binds the soil is removed. It occurs when trees and bushes are stripped away for fuelwood and timber, or to clear land for cultivation.

Wind and water erosion aggravate the damage, carrying away topsoil and leaving behind a highly infertile mix of dust and sand. It is the combination of these factors that transforms degraded land into desert. It poses a serious challenge to sustainable development and humanity’s ability to survive in many areas of the world.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Iran exports medical equipment to 55 countries

Some 105 medical equipment produced by 23 Iranian companies are exported to 55 countries across the world, Reza Masaeli, an advisor to the health minister said on Sunday.

“Currently, a total of 280,000 medical equipment is produced in the country,” Fars quoted Masaeli as saying.

“In recent years, the production of medical equipment in Iran has increased by 9 percent,” he added.

One of the main strategies of the Health Ministry is to boost exports, he said, adding that Iran exports medical equipment to 55 countries including Russia, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Croatia.

## تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی به ۵۵ کشور صادر می‌شود

مشاور وزیر بهداشت گفت: در حال حاضر ۱۰۵ محصول تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی که توسط ۲۳ شرکت ایرانی تولید می‌شود، به ۵۵ کشور جهان صادر می‌شود.

به گزارش خبرگزاری فارس، رضا مسائلی، اظهار داشت: در کشور بیش از ۲۸۰ هزار قلم تجهیزات پزشکی در کشور وجود دارد و در سال‌های اخیر، تولیدات تجهیزات پزشکی در جمهوری اسلامی ایران، ۹ درصد افزایش داشته است.

وی توجه به صادرات را یکی از مهمترین راهبردهای اساسی وزارت بهداشت در راستای حمایت از تولیدات داخلی دانست و افزود: در حال حاضر محصولات تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی به ۵۵ کشور جهان از جمله کشورهای روسیه، آلمان، ایتالیا، بلژیک، هلند و کرواسی صادر می‌شود.





MAY 8, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*He who is negligent, is deprived of rights, and he who listen to a tell-tale, loses a friend.*  
**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 19:17 Dawn: 3:28 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:04 (tomorrow)

## Guy Pearce calls on entertainment industry to speak up on Gaza

Australian actor Guy Pearce has publicly called on peers in the entertainment industry to speak out about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

In a post to X (formerly Twitter) on Tuesday, Pearce urged fellow creatives to use their platforms, Variety reported.

"I call upon everyone in my industry to PLEASE SPEAK UP," he wrote. "This is not a call to politics, but a call to conscience."

By staying silent we 'normalize' this genocide and condemn the people of Palestine and Israel to forever suffering. Every day in Palestine, children are being slaughtered, maimed, and starved to death."

Pearce continued: "We are witnessing the relentless targeting of a people already trapped, and the primary victims are children."

It is with utter shame that I admit we are failing our brothers and sisters in Palestine by allowing this atrocity to continue. We must voice our disdain vehemently and do all we can to stop it. It is our duty and honor as conscientious artists.

As human beings. Please – let us stand together."

The actor has consistently used public appearances to express support for Palestinians. At the 2024 Oscars and other red-carpet events including the BAFTAs, Pearce wore a white enamel pin that read "Free Palestine." Speaking to media, he said, "Showing my support for the oppressed in Gaza is the least I can do."

Pearce, a Best Supporting Actor nominee for "The Brutalist," also wore a Palestinian flag pin at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival.

A photo of him published by Vanity Fair France reportedly had the pin digitally removed, prompting Pearce to respond via email to CNN: "It is most unfortunate that a reputable publication like VF attempts to eliminate support that I or anyone chooses to offer."

He has previously posted on X: "History. Humanity. It's not hard to know how to find your moral center. #FreePalestine".

At least 52,615 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war since October 2023, the Health Ministry said on Tuesday.

"The number of injuries has reached 118,752 in the Israeli onslaught."

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

The Israeli army resumed its deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip on March 18 and has since killed more than 2,500 people and injured over 6,700 others despite a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement that took hold in January.

For two months now, Israel has been blocking the entry of food and humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, deliberately starving over two million people, including more than one million children.

On April 25, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced that its food warehouses in Gaza were now empty.

This deadly siege is enabled by the international community in an abdication of its responsibility to protect human lives.

The Israeli government and other decision-makers continue to deliberately and openly order the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity that exacerbate the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. They must be held accountable for their actions and face justice.

Last November, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its war on the enclave.

# 36th Tehran International Book Fair opens at Imam Khomeini Mosalla

TEHRAN-The 36th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) opened at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla in Tehran on Wednesday in the presence of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

"If we want development, a bright future, and progress for Iran, and if we want to thwart the enemies, we must think more and more about books and strive to expand this great culture of Iranian power," the minister said at the opening ceremony.

According to him, books have played a crucial role in ancient Iran and Islamic civilization. "Islamic civilization was formed and progressed on the wings of mosques and libraries," he added.

Salehi stressed that if "Shahnameh" had not been created after Islam in Iran, the Persian language would not have remained intact. "If a civilization wants to emerge and endure, it needs books. Books, regardless of their form, represent a coherent thought. If a country or society desires lasting endurance and wishes not to be absorbed by the thoughts of its rivals and invaders, it must rely on books for that lasting power."

"The concern for books must be a concern for all those who think about the social development of Iran. This should not just be the concern of the Ministry of Culture, authors, or the publishing community. If we want proper social development, we need to produce and consume good books," Salehi added.

After the opening ceremony, Salehi visited the pavilion of Iraq, which is the special guest of this edition of the



Seyyed Abbas Salehi (R) and Ahmed Fakak Al-Badrani (2nd L) meet during the 36th Tehran International Book Fair at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla on May 7, 2025.

fair, and met Ahmed Fakak Al-Badrani, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities of the Republic of Iraq.

During the visit, Salehi delivered a speech, stating: "This exhibition, which annually provides a unique opportunity to get acquainted with the latest domestic and international publishing achievements, has a special guest this year—Dr. Al-Badrani. His presence at this event symbolizes the cultural solidarity and long-standing connections between the two nations of Iran and Iraq."

"Books and culture have always been bridges between nations, and today, here at this exhibition, we are witnessing the close bond between the Iranian and Iraqi people," he added.

"From the rich Persian literature to the exquisite Arabic literature, and

from ancient historical works to modern thoughts, we witness a remarkable diversity of human intellect here, all speaking a universal language. This diversity showcases the cultural synchronization and synergy between the two great nations of Iran and Iraq," the minister noted.

"As cultural authorities in Iran, we have always strived to provide the necessary groundwork for the development of cultural cooperation and international publishing. We hope that this exhibition can help strengthen these cultural relations and take a big step toward the expansion of science and culture," Salehi asserted.

Iraq has participated in the event with 15 publishers. Among them, one publisher is affiliated with the Iraqi

Council of Ministers, and the other 14 are members of the Iraqi Publishers Association.

More than 2,600 Iranian publishers are present at the fair. Moreover, 50 applicants from other countries have registered. Their books will be displayed in the Arabic and Latin sections of the exhibition, mostly published between 2023 and 2025.

The foreign publishers hail from countries including Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Algeria, Brazil, China, Egypt, Hungary, India, Iraq, Italy, Malaysia, Russia, Spain, Syria, and Turkey among others.

The 36th TIBF will run until May 17 at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla. "Let's Read for Iran" has been chosen as the slogan for the upcoming edition of the book fair.

## Iran, Qatar officials discuss expansion of cultural ties



Seyyed Abbas Salehi (L) and Saad Abdullah Saad Al Mahmoud Al Sharif meet in Tehran on May 5, 2025.

TEHRAN- The Qatari Ambassador to Iran Saad Abdullah Saad Al Mahmoud Al Sharif met with the Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi at the Ministry of Culture in Tehran on Monday.

"Fortunately, the people of Iran and Qatar have always enjoyed good and historical relations. The governments have also benefited from excellent relations over different decades, which continue to this day. Moreover, we have had consistent and strong cultural relations," Salehi was quoted as saying by Mehr.

"Recently, we witnessed the successful holding of Iran's Cultural Week in Qatar. It was a well-organized program that demonstrated

how cultural events can strengthen relations between nations and improve governmental ties," he added.

Salehi went on to say that cultural weeks can be a point of interest for both countries. "We are waiting for Qatar's Cultural Week to be held in Iran soon. But a cultural week is just one event; broader actions can be defined for our relations," he noted.

Referring to the media capabilities of Iran and Qatar, Salehi said: "Another area that needs more attention is media, which can help better portray the two nations. Both traditional and electronic media, including news agencies, news websites, and social media platforms can contribute to better imagery of the capabilities of both countries."

"Mutual visits by media delegations and digital influencers from Qatar to Iran and vice versa will help improve the already good image that the two nations have of each other," he added.

Salehi also mentioned Iran's artistic and cinematic potential as a strategic area, stating: "Another significant capacity in Iranian culture is its art and cinema. As you are well aware, Iranian art and cinema are successful not only in the region but also globally."

"Numerous film festivals are held in Iran and there are significant capacities in the field of cinema that can be shared with the government and people of Qatar," the minister stated.

Salehi expressed readiness to collaborate with Qatari artistic events, and said: "In our recent meeting with the Qatari Minister of Culture, we discussed the participation of Iranian artists in Qatari events. We announced that Iranian artists are ready to participate."

In conclusion, the minister emphasized that neighborly ties and good political and historical relations provide an opportunity to take culture and art more seriously.

For his part, Saad Abdullah Saad

Al Mahmoud Al Sharif said: "The purpose of today's meeting is to strengthen the cultural and artistic relations between the two nations of Iran and Qatar. Given that we are neighboring countries, we can have even broader relations. As you know, the southern regions of Iran have close connections with Qatar."

"We have many shared cultural heritages between the two nations. The cultural and artistic collaborations between our two countries have been so effective that we were able to sign an agreement during the Iranian President's visit to Qatar last year," he added.

"One of the results of this agreement was the holding of Iran's Cultural Week in Qatar, which attracted significant attention and was well received by both Qataris and Iranians residing in Qatar," the Qatari ambassador noted.

Referring to his eagerness to hold Qatar's Cultural Week in Iran to further strengthen the relations between our two nations, the Qatari diplomat stressed: "I will refer all the proposals raised to the Ministry of Culture and the relevant authorities in Qatar so that they are considered and implemented."

## Cartoon of Day



Stop the Massacre in Gaza!  
**Cartoonist:** Marilena Nardi from Italy

## Award-winning novel "Call Me Ziba" republished

TEHRAN- The 11th edition of the Children's book writer Farhad Hassanzadeh's novel "Call Me Ziba" has recently been published.

Published by Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), the book reached its 11th printings just as the 36th Tehran International Book Fair is underway and its highly anticipated film adaptation is set to hit screens.

"Call Me Ziba" follows a teenage girl living in a girls' care home dormitory, who dreams of celebrating her birthday with her father. Determined to make this happen, she plans to help him escape from a mental hospital.

A pivotal encounter with her sick father sparks an unexpected and adventurous journey through Tehran. This urban odyssey becomes a path to self-discovery for Ziba and provides an opportunity to heal the broken emotional ties between father and daughter, transforming their relationship amidst the city's hustle.

Since its initial publication in 2015, "Call Me Ziba" has garnered widespread recognition and numerous accolades. These include being a winner at the IIDCYA



and Children's Book Council Festival in 2016, a nominee for the prestigious Islamic Republic of Iran Book of the Year Award, and selection for the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany in 2016.

The novel was also featured on the IBBY Honor List in 2018, saw its English version presented at the Bologna Book Fair, and had its publication rights officially acquired by some of the foreign publications.

Further recognition includes a nomination in the fiction category of the 9th Best Children and

Young Adult Book Festival, and its presence on the Flying Turtle list for its positive impact on parent-child emotional well-being.

Translation and publication rights have also been granted to a publisher in Armenia, resulting in a translation by Gevorg Asaturyan. The book was also a bestseller at the 35th Tehran International Book Fair. The 192-page novel, part of the "Today's Young Adult Novel" series, has now reached a total circulation of 27,500 copies.

Moreover, the cinematic adaptation of "Call Me Ziba," directed by Rasoul Sadrameli, is scheduled for release in cinemas nationwide starting May 8.

This film, a collaborative production by the IIDCYA, the Farabi Cinema Foundation, H.I.B. Film Company, and Milad Film, enjoyed a successful run at the 43rd Fajr Film Festival, where it was awarded the Crystal Simorgh for Best Film.

The 36th Tehran International Book Fair is currently underway at Imam Khomeini Mosalla. The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults is participating with a display of 1200 titles from its extensive catalog.