

Talks Still Breathing

Despite conflicting positions of Washington, nuclear negotiations avert collapse in 4th round



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Trump's delivery of advanced arms to Israel without scrutiny

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN - During Donald Trump's second presidency, the U.S.-Israel relationship has entered a new phase marked by intensified military, political, and diplomatic support.

Building on his administration's close ties with Israel, Trump has reversed many of the Biden-era restrictions on arms transfers and aid, accelerating the flow of advanced weaponry and munitions to bolster Israel's military capabilities amid the regime's genocidal acts in Gaza.

This renewed support extends beyond military assistance, encompassing robust diplomatic backing at the United Nations and strategic cooperation aimed at maintaining Israel's military edge in the region.

To restore Israel's military preparedness in the face of its war in Gaza, the Trump administration has expanded on its strong ties with Israel and reversed many of the Biden administration's restrictions on aid and arms transfers to Israel.

What is Washington's interest in drying up Lebanon's cash economy?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Ahead of May 2026 parliamentary elections, Washington is counting on the impact of a series of punitive measures against the Shiite duo, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement.

Washington believes that the loss of the Shiite duo's sources of money and the collapse of its banking institutions will push its supporters to boycott their candidates or elect their opponents, thus stripping them of their political share within the state institutions.

The U.S. scheme to dry up the Resistance's funding and strangle it financially is part of the ongoing aggression against Lebanon. This also facilitates the undermining of Hezbollah's efforts to rebuild its military arsenal and structure, as well as obstructing the reconstruction of what was brutally destroyed by the US-backed Israeli aggression.

The implementation of these measures is facilitated by the de facto HTS-led regime in Syria.

Gaza blast injures 9 Israeli troops

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - An explosive device planted by the Palestinian resistance leaves Israeli occupation forces injured.

The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) have confirmed that nine of its soldiers were wounded during an incident in the Shujaia area in the northern Gaza Strip.

Among the injured are two high-ranking officers: a division commander and a battalion commander.

Israeli media reported that the injuries occurred after an explosive device was detonated "during sweeping operations in the area," citing official IOF statements.

The reports specified that the wounded included the deputy commander of the 252nd Division and the commander of the 6310th Battalion, both serving within the IOF.

On Friday, the occupation regime announced the deaths of two IOF soldiers and the wounding of seven others, including some in critical condition, during separate battles in the southern Gaza Strip.

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Isfahan named Asian Capital of Tourism for 2025

TEHRAN - The historic city of Isfahan has been officially designated as the Asian Capital of Tourism for 2025 by the Asian Mayors Forum (AMF), in recognition of its rich cultural heritage, vibrant tourism offerings, and active engagement in international urban cooperation.

The announcement was made during a formal ceremony held on Sunday at the historic Bagh-e Zereskh mansion in Isfahan. The event was attended by a number of local officials, international guests, and members of the Asian Mayors Forum. During the ceremony, a commemorative statue marking Isfahan's new title was presented to the city's mayor.

Ali Qasemzadeh, Mayor of Isfahan, emphasized the city's unique historical and urban fabric in his remarks. "Out of Isfahan's 24,000-hectare area, 1,600 hectares consist of historical texture dating back to the Buyid, Seljuk, and Safavid periods," he said. ► Page 6



© ISNA / Erfan Khoshkhoo

Iran, Uzbekistan deepen strategic ties as high-level talks spur broad cooperation

TEHRAN - Iran and Uzbekistan have significantly ramped up bilateral cooperation under Iran's 14th administration, with senior officials from both sides pledging to deepen ties across political, economic, cultural, and logistical sectors.

Speaking at a high-level meeting with the Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Nigmatovich Aripov in Tehran on Sunday, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said strong political will from the presidents of both countries has led to a "remarkable expansion" in relations. ► Page 2

Iran dismisses Reuters' 'baseless allegations' on missile launcher transfers to Russia as 'utterly absurd'

TEHRAN - Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations has vehemently rejected a Reuters report alleging Tehran's plans to supply Russia with launchers for short-range ballistic missiles, calling the claims "utterly absurd" and part of a pattern of "baseless allegations" against the Islamic Republic.

"This allegation is utterly ridiculous. Reuters' persistence in circulating baseless accusations against Iran is disappointing," the mission stated in an emailed response to the news agency.

Emphasizing Iran's principled stance on the Ukraine conflict, the mission added, "So long as conflict persists between the parties, Iran will abstain from rendering any form of military assistance to either side."

The Reuters article, published on Friday, cited unnamed "Western security officials and a regional source" claiming that Iran is preparing to deliver "Fath-360 missile launchers" to Russia "imminently." ► Page 2



'Minds must not stray from the Palestinian cause..'

By Najah Mohammed Ali

LONDON - It goes without saying that the Palestinian cause is not merely a regional conflict or a transient political struggle; it is a symbol of historical injustice spanning decades of occupation, displacement, and oppression.

This cause, to which Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei referred when he said, "Minds must not stray from the Palestinian cause," embodies the essence of the fight for justice and freedom in a world suffering under the dominance of colonial powers and attempts to obscure the truth. When Ayatollah Khamenei speaks of the necessity of keeping this issue at the forefront of attention, he calls for a collective consciousness that transcends geographical and political boundaries, emphasizing that Palestine is not solely the concern of Palestinians but the concern of every human being who believes in justice and abhors oppression. ► Page 3

Mashhad conference highlights cultural diplomacy's role in promoting Islamic heritage worldwide

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

MASHHAD- The second specialized conference on the significance of cultural diplomacy, particularly in the domains of pilgrimage and Ahl al-Bayt culture, was held in Mashhad on Friday morning on the sidelines of the 21st Imam Reza (AS) International Festival.

The conference was successfully held with the participation of key officials and experts, including representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO).

Building upon last year's session, this event aimed to foster synergy among initiatives to elevate the global presence of Ahl al-Bayt and Razavi culture.

The conference featured 13 speeches that underscored the importance of expanding Iran's soft power through cultural diplomacy. A prominent theme was the strategic role of the Razavi diplomatic sphere, emphasizing the global mission of promoting Islamic civilization and the teachings of Imam Reza (AS). ► Page 8

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Opponents resort to every possible ploy to undermine nuclear talks

In an analysis, Arman-e-Melli discussed the publication of images of a site in Iran by the spy services of the terrorist MEK group amid negotiations. It wrote: According to certain foreign media outlets, these are images of a secret nuclear facility in Iran.

All of these acts, which are in tune with the plots of Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu against Iran, show that opponents of the Iran-U.S. nuclear talks are trying to take every step possible so that Tehran and Washington cannot resolve their issues through negotiations. Iran emphasizes that it supports the continuation of negotiations, and the Americans also insist that the Iranian nuclear issue can be resolved diplomatically. The fourth round of negotiations between Iran and the U.S. began in Oman on Sunday (May 11), and if the Americans do not demand a dismantling of nuclear facilities in Iran, the nuclear issue and the Iran sanctions should be considered closed.

Jam-e-Jam: Failure of oil sanction

In a note, Jam-e-Jam discussed the failure of the West's oil sanctions on Iran and the 29th International Oil Exhibition in Tehran. The paper said: While Western sanctions are still in place, Iran once again demonstrated itself as a stable and technological player in the energy field of the region. This is the first time this event has been held in the current government; an event that was not only a place to introduce companies but also a sign of redefining Iran's role in energy diplomacy and consolidating its self-reliance approach during the years of sanctions. In a situation in which sanctions and external pressures were intended to impair Iran's oil industry, this year's exhibition showed that not only is this industry alive and dynamic, but it has also paved its way toward self-sufficiency and development by relying on domestic and knowledge-based capabilities. This year's exhibition showed that Iran's oil industry has not stopped working and is moving towards transformation and innovation with a rising speed. Domestic companies are filling the gaps caused by international limitations by relying on local knowledge, the government's support, a clear vision for growth, and self-sufficiency.

‘Renaming’ the Persian Gulf: A colonial gesture in modern disguise



By Xavier Villar

MADRID – In a provocation steeped in historical amnesia and political calculation, U.S. President Donald Trump has once again fanned the flames of controversy by suggesting the renaming of the Persian Gulf to the “Arabian Gulf.”

What may seem to some as a semantic tweak or a diplomatic faux pas is, in fact, a deliberate geopolitical gesture—part of a broader effort to overwrite historical narratives and assert cultural dominance over a region long at the heart of global power struggles.

The politics of naming is neither accidental nor trivial. Renaming a geographic entity is an assertion of influence, an attempt to reshape perceptions and, by extension, rewrite history. In the case of the Persian Gulf—a body of water whose name is rooted in over two millennia of documented cartographic and historical tradition—the implications run deep. The move is not about nomenclature; it is about sovereignty, historical legitimacy, and geopolitical power. And once again, language

is being wielded not as a means of communication, but as an instrument of dominance.

Names as geopolitical assets

As Shakespeare famously asked, “What’s in a name?” In geopolitical terms, the answer is everything. Names codify identity, establish territorial legitimacy, and are often the first line of defence against erasure.

The name “Persian Gulf” is more than a geographical label—it is a symbol of a civilisation’s enduring presence in a volatile region. From the maps of ancient Greek mariners and Islamic geographers to European imperial archives, the waters south of Iran have consistently borne the name “Persian Gulf.” Attempts to rename it—particularly by actors far removed from the region’s historical and cultural context—represent not just diplomatic belligerence, but a willful effort to erase Iran’s longstanding regional identity.

For Iran, the name embodies a living archive of cultural, political and strategic presence.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Sobh-e-No: Israel is architect of Iranophobic deception in Washington

For decades, the Zionist regime, using its heavy influence on the media, Congress, and the U.S. security agencies, has been able to present Iran as the source of all crises in the Middle East. This process has continued since the early 1990s with repeated false narratives about Iran’s nuclear program, claims of interference in Arab countries, and threats against Israel. Israel’s goal was to characterize Iran, which is an important regional player, as a global threat to justify America’s unwavering support for Tel Aviv, and also to prevent Iran from returning to the global economy and diplomacy. Despite positive changes, the Zionist regime is still trying to derail the negotiation process from its natural course. These actions include spreading false information, inciting American public opinion, pressuring senators, and even launching psychological operations against Iranian and Western diplomats. But the difference now is that even within the U.S. government, these malicious acts have been realized.

Iran: Tehran’s smart diplomatic package

The Iran newspaper discussed the issue of nuclear enrichment in an interview with former Iranian diplomat Kourosh Ahmadi. He said: According to Article 4 of the NPT, all signatories to the treaty, including Iran, have an undeniable right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Iran has always emphasized that its nuclear program is solely for civilian purposes. The West’s pessimistic policy towards the nature of Iran’s nuclear program and the lack of trust have presented the nuclear enrichment program in Iran as a potential political threat. Amidst such circumstances, Iran’s negotiating team must defend the country’s interests in having peaceful nuclear activities under Safeguards agreements, and on the other, it cannot turn a blind eye to the hard and unchangeable realities of the political arena. In other words, if Iran wants to consolidate its enrichment rights in a sustainable agreement acceptable to the international community, it must use international law not as the only tool, but as part of a smart diplomatic package that has both the power of political persuasion and the capacity to build trust.

Israel is region’s greatest threat, says Iranian FM in Doha

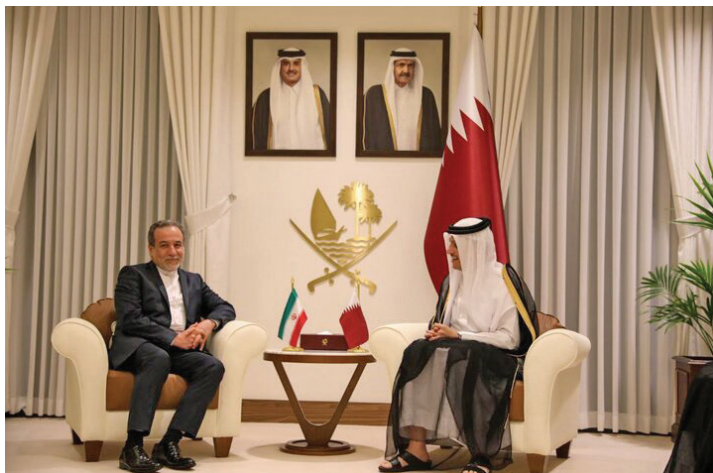
TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has called Israel the “single greatest threat to peace in the region,” citing its nuclear arsenal and aggressive regional policies as the root causes of instability in West Asia.

Speaking at the Fourth Round of Iranian-Arab Dialogues in Doha on Saturday, Araghchi condemned the Israeli regime’s ongoing military operations in Gaza and its expansionist agenda, accusing it of pursuing a policy of genocidal erasure against the Palestinian people.

“The existence of the Zionist regime remains the most serious threat to regional peace,” he said. “Its policies of occupation, apartheid, and undeclared nuclear weapons endanger the entire region, while its American backers remain complicit in these crimes.”

He dismissed the two-state solution as a “myth” used to delay justice, pointing out that even Israeli officials no longer pretend to support the framework.

In the same address, Araghchi criticized Western powers for what he described as “unacceptable double standards” regarding nuclear proliferation. He said while Iran’s peaceful nuclear energy program faces constant pressure and accusations, Israel’s nuclear arsenal



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) meets with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha on May 10, 2025.

is ignored.

“Iran is committed to the international non-proliferation regime and has never sought weapons of mass destruction,” Araghchi said. “Yet the West continues to target Iran with sanctions and political pressure while remaining silent on Israel’s nuclear stockpile.”

He reaffirmed that Iran’s nuclear program is fully peaceful and verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), calling the country “the most-inspected member” of the UN’s nuclear watchdog.

Iran, Uzbekistan deepen strategic ties as high-level talks spur broad cooperation

From page 1 ▶ “The 14th administration is committed to broadening cooperation with Uzbekistan in all areas,” Aref stated, adding that deep-rooted historical and cultural ties between the two nations provide a strong foundation for partnership.

“Uzbekistan is a brotherly nation to Iran, and we see vast potential for collaboration in energy, tourism, science, trade, and private sector engagement,” he said.

The 16th meeting of the Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Cooperation Commission, held alongside the official visit of Uzbek Prime Minister Aripov, marks a milestone in accelerating joint projects and transit linkages. Aref highlighted Iran’s role as the shortest and most efficient route for Central Asian countries to access open waters via the Persian Gulf, noting that logistical infrastructure at Iranian ports is fully operational and ready to support Uzbek trade.

He also stressed the importance of enhancing transport and transit corridors, increasing expert-level exchanges, and unlocking new

opportunities for private sector stakeholders on both sides.

“With mutual understanding of each other’s economic capabilities, Iran and Uzbekistan can act as complementary partners in advancing regional economic integration,” Aref said.

Areas highlighted for future collaboration include technical and engineering services, agricultural exports, mining, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, and the restoration of historical sites.

Uzbekistan: Iran is a trusted regional partner

Prime Minister Aripov, marking the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, described Iran as “a close friend and reliable partner” in the region. He credited high-level political dialogue for fostering steady growth in trade and economic cooperation.

“Joint planning between the presidents of Iran and Uzbekistan has laid out a clear roadmap for expanding ties across the board,” Aripov noted.

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Iran's national flag at the United Nations headquarters in New York, the U.S.

In September 2024, U.S. officials accused Iran of sending Fath-360 missiles to Russia without presenting any evidence, a claim Iran denied at the time.

Iran and Russia have consistently denied any arms transfers linked to the Ukraine war.

Tehran has repeatedly criticized Western nations for prolonging the conflict by supplying advanced weaponry to Kyiv, while Moscow has dismissed similar allegations as disinformation.

On the sidelines of the conference, Araghchi met with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. The two discussed bilateral relations, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and ongoing regional developments.

Both ministers expressed grave concern over the Israeli regime’s two-year-long assault on Gaza and its continued blockade, which has prevented the delivery of essential food and medical supplies. They called for urgent regional cooperation to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Araghchi also updated his Qatari counterpart on the latest developments in Iran-U.S. negotiations, reaffirming Iran’s commitment to diplomacy and regional engagement.

“Prosperity in our region,” Araghchi said, “will come not from dominance, but from cooperation, mutual respect, and the success of the region as a whole.”

Iran and the United States held their fourth round of nuclear talks on Sunday in Muscat, mediated by Oman.

Both parties have so far expressed satisfaction with the way the negotiations are moving on, commending the talks as “positive” and “moving forward.”



Trade between the two countries currently stands at \$500 million, but both sides stressed the need for long-term strategies to ensure sustainable, forward-looking growth. Aripov encouraged greater engagement from private enterprises to fully leverage available opportunities.

Earlier in the day, Aref hosted Aripov at Tehran’s historic Sa’dabad Cultural and Historical Complex, where the two leaders reviewed an honor guard and introduced their accompanying delegations before beginning official talks.

Aripov’s visit also includes participation in a joint business forum

and the signing of multiple cooperation agreements. A key event during the trip is the formal signing of the 16th Joint Commission document by Iran’s Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade, Seyed Mohammad Atabak, and Uzbekistan’s Minister of Trade and Investment.

On the sidelines of the commission meeting, an Uzbekistan Trade Center is set to open in Tehran, signaling a new chapter in commercial relations.

On Saturday night, Atabak and his Uzbek counterpart Kudratov finalized the terms of several bilateral agreements slated for implementation.

‘Iran ready to respond decisively to any threat,’ military chief vows while inspecting Persian Gulf base

TEHRAN – Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of Staff of Iran’s Armed Forces, conducted a high-profile inspection of naval units in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz on Sunday, declaring: “The Armed Forces are ready to respond decisively to any threat.”

Accompanied by senior military leaders, including Army Commander Major General Seyyed Abdollah Mousavi and Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani, Bagheri emphasized Iran’s operational readiness to defend territorial waters and national interests against escalating regional tensions. The Iranian top general described the visit as critical to evaluating “contingency plans for safeguarding sovereignty” in the Persian Gulf, a region pivotal to global energy security.

Situated on the shores of the Persian Gulf with key maritime routes, Hormozgan Province has emerged as a vital stronghold in Iran’s defensive strategy.

In his remarks, Bagheri also high-



General Mohammad Bagheri (center), Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces, leads a formal military parade in Hormozgan on May 11, 2025

lighted coordination between the naval forces of the Army (Artesh) and the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), stressing their role in “comprehensive deterrence.”

His remarks come amid the U.S. and the Israeli regime’s escalating military and diplomatic threats against Iran, including calls for dismantling its civilian nuclear program, unilateral sanctions, and warnings of military strikes.

Talks still breathing

Despite conflicting positions of Washington, nuclear negotiations avert collapse in 4th round

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – Iran and the United States appeared to avoid an impasse on Sunday as they wrapped up a fourth round of indirect nuclear talks, which has been characterized as the most difficult round of discussions so far.

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baqaei, part of Iran's negotiating team in Oman alongside technical, legal, and nuclear experts, said the talks were difficult, but were also "useful". He said the discussions helped the two sides "understand each other's positions" and "find reasonable and realistic ways to address the differences."

Tehran and Washington agreed to hold a fifth round of negotiations, with the timing and location to be announced by the mediator, Oman. The Arab state has been coordinating the discussions and also acting as a go-between.

The relative success of the latest round comes as observers had expected a potential collapse in the diplomatic process, after Washington's lead negotiator, special presidential envoy Steve Witkoff, said during an interview earlier in the week that the U.S. wants concessions on Iran's red-



lines or it will withdraw from the talks.

It appears that Witkoff avoided raising the demands he referenced in the interview—the dismantling of Iran's nuclear facilities and an end to uranium enrichment—since Tehran had previously stated it would never accept such conditions. The Tehran Times understands that Iran's stance remains unchanged, and the agreement to hold a new round of talks indicates the U.S. continues to acknowledge that position.

Witkoff's remarks, however, were condemned by Iran's Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi on Sunday. "If the U.S.

contradictory stances are repeated, Iran will have to act accordingly," he told Iran's national television after stating that such moves not useful in any shape or form. The top diplomat has been leading his country's negotiating team in the indirect talks with Washington.

Araghchi added that the two sides now understand each other better. "Compared to the previous three rounds, this session was much more direct and serious. We moved away from generalities and focused on details, which naturally made the negotiations more difficult."

This is the second time in the past two decades that Iran is

negotiating a deal on its nuclear program. It signed one named the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, after two years of intense discussions with the U.S., UK, France, Germany, China, and Russia. The deal limited Tehran's nuclear activities in exchange for the removal of sanctions.

U.S. President Donald Trump, however, threw the JCPOA into disarray during his first term in office, after he unilaterally left the pact and re-instated sanctions against Iran. He was hoping to also ensure caps on Tehran's military capabilities and foreign policy, demands he now seems to understand are non-starters.

Araghchi and other Iranian officials are still not fully counting on what they hear from the American side at the negotiating table, the Tehran Times has learned. Beyond Washington's own fickleness, attempts by other actors to sabotage the talks have further fuelled doubts about the feasibility of a deal. Among these disruptive forces are Israel—which has pushed for U.S. military action against Iran—Europe, frustrated over its exclusion from the negotiations, and American Democrats who previously supported the JCPOA.

‘Minds must not stray from the Palestinian cause...’

Ayatollah Khamenei and his unwavering emphasis on supporting Palestine

From Page 1 ► In today's world, where events accelerate and crises multiply, it is easy for minds to become distracted and stray from the Palestinian cause. Regional wars, economic conflicts, environmental crises, and the repercussions of technological advancement all contribute to shaping media agendas aimed at diverting attention from fundamental issues. Yet Palestine, with its profound symbolism and significance, remains the cause that exposes the double standards of the international community and unveils the falsehood of Western slogans about human rights. With his wise voice and penetrating insight, Ayatollah Khamenei reminds the Islamic nation and all free people of the world that forgetting Palestine means relinquishing the principles of justice and humanity.

Historically, the Palestinian tragedy began with the ominous Balfour Declaration of 1917, which paved the way for the establishment of the Zionist entity in Palestine, disregarding the rights of the indigenous Palestinian people. Since then, Palestine has witnessed waves of forced displacement, the most notable being the Nakba of 1948, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes and turned into refugees in camps across the diaspora. These events were not mere fleeting incidents but part of a systematic colonial project aimed at erasing Palestinian identity and replacing it with an artificial entity serving the interests of Western powers. In this context, Ayatollah Khamenei views the Palestinian cause as an existential struggle, not merely a dispute over land; it is about preserving a people's identity, history, and right to a dignified life.

In his numerous speeches, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes that the Zionist entity is not just an enemy of the Palestinians but a tool in the hands of colonial powers seeking to dominate the region and its resources. Supported by the United States and other Western countries, this entity relies on military force and political backing to impose its existence while perpetrating the most egregious forms of oppression against Palestinians.

From the siege of Gaza to settlement expansion in the West Bank, from home demolitions to arbitrary arrests, the Zionist entity continues its daily violations, classified under international law as war crimes. However, as Ayatollah Khamenei points out, these violations are not a sign of strength but of weakness, for a regime dependent on injustice cannot endure indefinitely.

Ayatollah Khamenei's call to keep minds focused on the Palestinian cause comes as a warning against the normalization efforts led by some Arab regimes with the Zionist entity. These steps, promoted under the guise of false peace, do not aim to achieve justice but to legitimize the occupation and weaken Palestinian resistance. Ayatollah Khamenei considers normalization a betrayal of the Palestinian cause, as it signifies acceptance of injustice and abandonment of the rights of a people who have suffered for decades.

Ayatollah Khamenei views the Palestinian cause as an existential struggle, not merely a dispute over land

Within this framework, he calls for supporting the Palestinian Resistance, which has proven over the years its ability to stand firm against one of the world's most powerful military machines.

The Palestinian resistance, whether in Gaza, the West Bank, or the territories occupied in 1948, is the practical response to the occupation. From the Stone Intifada to the rockets of resistance, Palestinians have shown that their will cannot be broken and their dream of returning to their homeland remains alive. Ayatollah Khamenei affirms that this resistance is not merely a military act but an expression of deep faith in justice and rejection of oppression. In a 2020 speech, he stated, "Palestine will be liberated, and this is a



divine promise," indicating that patience and steadfastness are the weapons of the Palestinian people against the occupation. This belief in ultimate victory reflects Ayatollah Khamenei's vision, which blends spiritual and political dimensions, viewing the Palestinian cause not just as a territorial battle but as part of a larger struggle between truth and falsehood.

At the same time, Ayatollah Khamenei warns of the Western role in bolstering the Zionist entity and distorting the image of Palestinian resistance. Western media, controlled by pro-Zionist currents, seeks to portray Palestinians as aggressors while justifying the occupation's crimes under the pretext of "self-defense." This false narrative aims to erase the truth and distance global public opinion from Palestinian suffering. Yet, as the Leader stresses, the truth cannot be hidden forever, and global awareness of the Palestinian cause grows day by day. The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, protests in Western cities, and academic and artistic voices supporting Palestine are all evidence that the cause has not been forgotten but has become a symbol of the struggle against oppression worldwide.

Ayatollah Khamenei's call to remain focused on the Palestinian cause is not just a slogan but a practical program requiring commitment from individuals, communities, and states. On an individual level, every person can contribute to raising awareness, whether through social media or supporting initiatives backing Palestine. On a collective level, the Islamic nation must unite against challenges aimed at

weakening it, such as sectarian division and internal conflicts. Ayatollah Khamenei sees Islamic unity as the strongest weapon against the Zionist project, as it brings the nation together under the banner of justice and resistance.

On the international level, Ayatollah Khamenei calls for an economic and political boycott of the Zionist entity and the rejection of all forms of normalization. This boycott is not merely symbolic but an effective tool to pressure the Zionist entity and its supporters. The experience of South Africa against the apartheid regime proves that boycotts can yield tangible results if implemented with seriousness and coordination. In this context, Ayatollah Khamenei praises the role of countries and peoples resisting Western hegemony and supporting Palestine, such as Iran, Syria, and Lebanon, which have formed the axis of resistance against Zionism.

Notably, Ayatollah Khamenei does not view the Palestinian cause solely from an emotional perspective but offers a strategic vision for its liberation. In his view, the Zionist entity is an illegitimate entity whose survival depends on external support. If this support—whether through economic, political, or military pressure—is cut off, the entity will collapse under the weight of Palestinian resistance. This vision is grounded in a realistic analysis of regional and international balances, with the Leader believing that time works in favor of the resistance while the Zionist entity suffers from internal crises and declining global public support.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



IRAN IN FOCUS

MAY 12, 2025

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Alexis Guendouz: I'm pleasantly surprised by Iran

TEHRAN — Trained at Saint-Étienne, then moved to Algeria, and now at 29 years old, Alexis Guendouz is in Iran, defending the colors of Persepolis in Tehran.

Since last October, he has gradually established himself as a regular starter with the Algerian national team.

"The first time I was contacted by Iranian team Persepolis I thought, "Wow, Iran indeed!" I immediately called Bryan Dabo, whom I knew from Saint-Étienne. I knew he had signed with Sepahan in 2023. He told me, 'If the contract suits you, forget everything you've heard in the media or what you've been told about this country. Come—you're going to live something incredible, especially at Persepolis.' So, I signed, and honestly, I am pleasantly surprised by Iran," Guendouz said in an interview with *lequipe.fr*.

"Persepolis are Iran's most successful club, the most supported in the country and even among the diaspora abroad. They have excellent facilities and invest heavily to attract players to this league. I'm in Tehran, and there's a fierce rivalry with Esteghlal—trust me, the derby is something else. It's similar to Algeria, with incredible fervor," the goalie said.

"Personally, things are going very well (14 clean sheets in 35 matches across all competitions). We hope to finish second and qualify again for the Asian Champions League. This season, we narrowly missed out on the second phase. The competition was disrupted due to geopolitical issues—playing in Qatar or Dubai without our passionate fans. When we host a team from Qatar in Qatar, it's definitely not the same atmosphere," Guendouz stated.

Foolad Sirjan struggle to beat Nakhon Ratchasima Qmin C in AVC Champions League

TEHRAN – Foolad Sirjan Iranian struggled to beat Thailand's Nakhon Ratchasima Qmin C VC in dramatic five-setter 25-17, 22-25, 25-17, 19-25, 15-11 for first victory in Pool C in the inaugural AVC Men's Champions League at Panasonic Arena here on Sunday.

Amirhossein Esfandiar scored a match-high 25 points including 21 kills, one block and 3 aces for Foolad Sirjan Iranian, while Ali Hijpour added another 24 points for the team.

Tamiraa Khangal led Nakhon Ratchasima Qmin C VC with 21 points from 19 attacks, one block and one ace.

Though scoring only 10 points including 6 points for Foolad Sirjan Iranian, Earvin Ngapeth became the center of attention as he steered France to consecutive two-time Summer Olympic gold medal as well as MVP and Best Outside Spiker awards for both occasions.

"It was the first game of the competition, so, very important to win. It was not easy due to the timing. Playing at 10am is not easy for us, but although we won in five sets, it's still important. Our next match remains the same as we have to play at 10am again. However, we have to win," Ngapeth said after the match.

Nakhon Ratchasima Qmin CVC will next face Chinese Taipei's Taichung Bank on Monday at 10:05 a.m. local time, while Foolad Sirjan will wrap up their pool play campaign against the same opponent on Tuesday at 10:05 a.m.

Shabab Al Ahli's Azmoun, Ezatolah crowned President's Cup champions

TEHRAN – Shabab Al Ahli defeated Sharjah 2-1 in the final of the 48th edition of the UAE

President's Cup, held at Mohammed bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi.

The victory marks Shabab Al Ahli's fourth trophy this season, adding to its wins in the ADNOC Pro League, UAE Super Cup (against Al Wasl), and UAE/Qatar Super Cup (against Al Rayyan).

Sharjah took an early lead with a goal from Marcos Meloni in the 14th minute. Shabab Al Ahli responded with two goals from Yuri Cesar in the 45th and 64th minutes to secure the win.

The referee added eight minutes of stoppage time, but Shabab Al Ahli maintained their lead to clinch the prestigious title.

Iranian international players Sardar Azmoun and Saïd Ezatollahi played key role in winning the trophy.

Persepolis eye Bright Osayi-Samuel: report

TEHRAN – Persepolis football club have reportedly set their sight on signing Nigerian defender Bright Osayi-Samuel.

The 27-year-old player currently plays at Turkish side Fenerbahçe.

Persepolis were first linked with Swiss right back Florent Hadergjonaj, but the defender is going to extend his deal with Alanyaspor.

Persepolis have a chance to finish 2024-25 Iran Professional League (IPL) as runners-up and in this case the team will represent Iran at the 2025-26 AFC Champions League Elite play-off.

Iran, Vietnam share spoils in 2025 AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup

TEHRAN – Iran and Vietnam shared the spoils in a goalless draw on Sunday evening in the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup China 2025 at the Hohhot Sports Centre.

With both sides having confirmed progress to the last eight prior to this encounter, the result meant that Vietnam finished top of Group B.

It also ended Iran's remarkable winning streak in the tournament, having won every one of their 12 games prior to this encounter.

The only team to have won this tournament, two-time champions Iran saw plenty of the ball in the first half but never really troubled Tran Thi Hai Yen's goal, apart from a Sara Shirbeigi effort that was well saved, the-afc.com reported.

Meanwhile, Vietnam were content to let their opponents do the probing as they sat back and waited for opportunities to break, though these never materialized.

Vietnam will next face the Group C runners-up in the quarter-finals on Tuesday, while Iran take on Chinese Taipei in the final last-eight tie on the same day.

Yousefi's throw-ins among AFC U17 Asian Cup extraordinary actions

TEHRAN – Mohammadreza Yousefi's throw-ins in the AFC U17 Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2025 has been introduced among the extraordinary actions in the event by the-AFC.com.

Iranian fans have seen it before. Nader Mohammadi and Milad Mohammadi have both previously captured the imagination with somersault throw-ins, and Yousefi is following in their footsteps.

The defender thrilled with a series of acrobatic throw-ins that gave a fresh dimension to his side's game as he not only turned routine throw-ins into serious threats but also made it a spectacle to watch.

Petchem projects worth \$6b to be inaugurated by next March



TEHRAN – As announced by the head of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC), 15 petrochemical projects worth \$6 billion will be put into operation in the country by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2026).

Speaking in a press conference on Sunday, on the sidelines of the 29th Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition, Hassan Abbaszadeh said that these projects being operational, three first-produced products will be added to the basket of the country's petrochemical products.

Pointing out that the current capacity of the petrochemical industry is around 97 million tons, he stated: "Last year, around 42 million tons of final petrochemical products, excluding inter-complex feedstock, worth \$24 billion, were produced in the industry, of which 29 million tons worth \$13 billion were exported and 13 million tons worth about \$11 billion were sold domestically."

As previously announced by the official, Iran's annual export of the petrochemicals is anticipated to reach about 34.8 million tons in the current Iranian year.

Abbaszadeh also said that the country's nominal production capacity of petrochemicals is expected to hit 105 million tons in this year.

He has emphasized the importance of institutionalizing unity and synergy across the sector to achieve sustainable development, noting that agile, dynamic organizations require efficient and skilled human resources to enhance productivity.

The deputy oil minister added that one of the key roles of development-oriented firms

is to facilitate private sector investment in petrochemicals. He said the National Petrochemical Company stands ready to support investors in this regard.

He called on company managers to actively back the industry during the Year of "Investment for Production" by taking practical steps to address the challenges faced by petrochemical firms.

Highlighting the need to accelerate development projects through enhanced financing, Abbaszadeh said that collaboration with petrochemical holding companies could drive production growth this year.

He acknowledged last year's challenges in securing feedstock due to energy imbalances but expressed confidence that proper planning and measures could improve the sector's performance in 2025.

Abbaszadeh also credited parliamentary and government support for motivating industry players to pursue expansion strategies and focus on completing the value chain as a key priority.

Production in the petrochemical sector increased in the last Iranian year, compared to the year before, despite energy imbalances and feedstock shortages, he said, noting that most petrochemical plants achieved their production targets.

The National Petrochemical Company's head underscored the need to attract new investments and boost production in line with this year's national motto.

Abbaszadeh reiterated the company's readiness to facilitate private investment and stressed the importance of management's support for the industry in tackling structural challenges.

He said the completion and operation of development projects could be accelerated through improved financial flows, and added that despite last year's feedstock-related difficulties, coordinated efforts this year could drive better results in the high-value petrochemical sector.

The official concluded that strong backing from the Iranian parliament and government has empowered the industry to move forward with determination, focusing on value chain completion as a strategic imperative.

Iran's 1st biorefinery to be inaugurated in Kermanshah this week

TEHRAN – Iran will inaugurate its first biorefinery this week in the western province of Kermanshah, with President Masoud Pezeshkian expected to attend the opening ceremony, according to a senior official from the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade.

Farshad Moqimi, head of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO), said on Sunday that the project received an investment of 40 trillion rials (approximately \$80 million). The facility will produce 200,000 liters of bioethanol per day and 66,000 tons of livestock feed annually.

He explained that the plant uses corn starch to produce bioethanol, while other starch by-products are processed into animal feed and supplied to livestock farms.

The project was financed in two phases, and a second site is now in the procurement phase for equipment and machinery, Moqimi said. The biorefinery's two main outputs—bioethanol and animal feed—have already received regulatory approval, and a delivery agreement has been signed with one domestic oil refinery. Negotiations with other refineries are ongoing.

Moqimi noted that similar biorefinery projects are planned for seven other provinces, with IDRO open to partnerships with private investors. He emphasized that the Kermanshah project marks the first fully state-funded biorefinery initiative in Iran, relying on innovative financing methods and attracting over 90,000 small-scale shareholders.

Describing bioethanol as a strategic national need, especially under sanctions, he said that many foreign companies refused



to cooperate with Iran on technology transfer. However, the country managed to localize the technology with help from domestic manufacturers and knowledge-based firms. A total of 48 industrial units were involved in the refinement of this biorefinery model.

Moqimi added that 90 countries currently use ethanol in gasoline blends. Iran's second bioethanol project is underway in Kohgiluyeh-Boyer Ahmad Province and has reached 60 percent physical completion.

He said the initiative is aimed at reducing fossil fuel consumption and fills a gap that the private sector may not be willing or able to address due to financial risk.

Also in Kermanshah, IDRO is overseeing the launch of a separate project to produce bio-implants. Moqimi said the initiative, which is 60 percent funded by the private sector, will prevent the outflow of \$12 million to \$15 million in foreign currency each year.

With an investment of \$7.0 million, the bio-implant project has received regulatory approval from Iran's Food and Drug Administration and is expected to create 1,000 local jobs.

Tehran, Tashkent aim for \$2b in bilateral trade



TEHRAN – Senior officials from Iran and Uzbekistan convened in Tehran for the 16th session of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee, aiming to expand bilateral ties and boost trade to \$2 billion annually.

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mohammad Atabak opened the meeting by acknowledging that the current trade volume between the two countries falls short of their true potential.

He called for a "fundamental transformation" and proposed drafting a practical roadmap to achieve the \$2.0 billion trade target.

Atabak emphasized the need to enhance transport and transit infrastructure, noting Iran's strategic location as a key corridor connecting Uzbekistan to international waters.

He also stressed the importance of improving banking ties, establishing direct flights, reducing customs tariffs, and developing tools to support economic relations.

Beyond trade, the committee also discussed cooperation in tourism, science, culture, and healthcare.

Atabak pointed to the countries' deep cultural ties and expressed Iran's readiness to play a greater role in tourism, stating that the meeting serves as a platform for comprehensive collaboration.

He voiced hope that operational planning would lead to a "significant leap" in bilateral relations.

In response, Uzbekistan's minister of industry highlighted the favorable conditions for expanding trade between Tehran and Tashkent.

He said the two sides had signed a list of preferential trade goods, calling it a "practical step" toward boosting commercial exchange.

He also announced the official opening of Uzbekistan's Trade House in Tehran, which he said would facilitate trade. The number of joint Iranian-Uzbek companies has grown 2.5 times in the past five years, reaching 261. These companies are active in sectors such as construction, petrochemicals, food, agriculture, and building materials.

The Uzbek minister concluded by reaffirming his country's commitment to broadening economic and trade cooperation with Iran across multiple sectors.

On April 23, Iranian industry,

mining and trade minister said that the cooperation between the private sectors of Iran and Uzbekistan will continue at an accelerated pace.

Mohammad Atabak made the remarks in a meeting, at the place of the ministry in Tehran, with an Uzbek trade delegation led by the head of Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan (CCI).

During the meeting, the minister emphasized that the perspectives of the private sectors and entrepreneurs of both countries are being reviewed in expert working groups.

He added that several agreed-upon goods with Uzbekistan have been supplied and dispatched by Iran.

The minister further stated that these exchanges and interactions at the level of the private sector in both countries will continue at an accelerated pace. The economic and production capacities of Iran and Uzbekistan fully enable increasing the current level of trade exchanges between the two nations to higher levels.

Also, in a meeting with Uzbekistan's Deputy Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment Shokhrukh Gulamov, at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) in Tehran on April 20, ICCIMA Head Samad Hassanzadeh said his country's private sector is ready to pursue joint investments in Uzbekistan and called on Tashkent to implement a reciprocal visa waiver to ease travel and boost tourism between the two countries.

He said that the mutual visa exemption would facilitate travel for businesspeople and citizens while supporting the development of tourism.

Hassanzadeh further stated that the upcoming preferential trade agreement between Iran and Uzbekistan, expected to be signed next month during the joint economic committee meeting, could raise the level of bilat-

eral trade cooperation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

need to eliminate existing gaps in the trade relationship.

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

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

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

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

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

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

He noted that the initiative would significantly enhance bilateral cooperation.

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

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

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

Over 427km of gas pipelines launched in a year

TEHRAN – Iran has brought 427 kilometers of gas pipelines online in the previous Iranian year 1403 (ended on March 20), with a total investment of €360 million, significantly boosting the country's gas transmission capacity and infrastructure, according to Behnam Mirzaei, acting head of the Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company.

Speaking on the third day of the 29th Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition, Mirzaei noted that last year, three gas compressor stations—with a combined investment of €200 million—were also inaugurated. The Khormuj, Ab Pakhsh, and Dorahan stations, equipped with a total of nine turbines, have enhanced gas extraction from the South Pars fields and stabilized the national gas network.

Among the key projects completed last year was the Dorahi Dashtak-Nehbandan gas pipeline, which Mirzaei described as a major achievement for the company's engineer-

ing and implementation arm. This pipeline contributes to completing the eastern gas supply ring and increases supply security in eastern and northeastern Iran.

Mirzaei also highlighted the inauguration of the 77-kilometer, 24-inch Ardebil-Garmi pipeline last year, calling it one of the province's most strategic projects. The pipeline has laid the foundation for reliable gas supply, job creation, and improved livelihoods in the northern part of Ardebil Province.

The official announced the completion of the 121-kilometer, 42-inch Minab-Sirik pipeline, which provides the infrastructure for delivering gas to the Kuh-e Mobarak region and facilitating exports to neighboring countries.

He added that 37 kilometers of the Laft-Gourzin-Bandar Abbas pipeline were also commissioned, with further expansion planned this year. This project is expected to supply gas to industries in the Persian Gulf

industrial park, Qeshm Island, local power plants, and surrounding industries.

Another major milestone was the completion of the second segment of the Rasht-Chelvand pipeline, spanning 80 kilometers with a 42-inch diameter. Mirzaei said this project strengthens the resilience and flexibility of the regional gas network.

Mirzaei said the company also completed eight new operational and civil infrastructure projects in the previous year. These include operational centers in Ilam, Sari, Yazd, and Arsanjan; a support center in Kiasar; a condensate export jetty in Siraf port; flood control infrastructure in Iranshahr; and a telecommunications building in Kahrizsang.

He also pointed to the commissioning of the Semnan pressure control station last year as a critical achievement. The station ensures automated and safe pressure regulation for gas transmission along the 16-inch Rey-Semnan pipeline.

Iran's annual date export stands at \$205m

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's date export stood at \$205 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20), the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) reported.

According to the IRICA report, Iran's agricultural exports rose by 29 percent in the previous year, reaching \$5.2 billion.

IRICA reported that Iran exported 7.6 million tons of agricul-

tural products during the year, marking an 11 percent increase in weight compared to the previous year.

Key export commodities included various types of pis-

tachios, tomatoes, and dates. Pistachio exports led the sector, generating \$1.5 billion in revenue, followed by \$233 million in tomatoes and \$205 million in dates.

Trump’s delivery of advanced arms to Israel without scrutiny

From page 1 ► In addition to providing weapons and financial aid, this renewed support entails significant diplomatic backing at the UN and other international organizations, as well as other strategic initiatives to uphold Israel’s military supremacy in the region.

The Trump administration’s current approach reflects a larger geopolitical strategy focused on countering resistance groups while galvanizing Israel’s military edge.

However, such ongoing support is generating heated debate and protest internationally regarding humanitarian issues, as well as discussion about the longer-term ramifications

Expanded military aid

In March 2025, the Trump administration used emergency authorities to accelerate approximately \$4 billion in military assistance to Israel, avoiding the standard congressional notification period and signaling a clear break from the Biden administration failures to manage arms transfers. The \$4 billion in assistance was part of a broader pattern in which Trump had authorized nearly \$12 billion in Foreign Military Sales to Israel since taking office, indicating a significant commitment to protect and strengthen Israel’s military.

The administration was also able to reverse Biden’s policies when it cancelled National Security Memorandum 20, which required assurances that U.S.-supplied weapons



would be used in adherence to international law.

Alongside financial aid, the U.S. supplied Israel with a vast array of munitions critical to its military operations in Gaza. These shipments included tens of thousands of bombs and artillery shells—such as the MK 84 and BLU-117 bombs—4,000 Predator warheads, and components for the Iron Dome missile defense system. Emergency sales of tank shells and artillery munitions worth hundreds of millions of dollars were also authorized to replenish Israeli stockpiles depleted during its relentless war in Gaza, which started in October 2023 and is still continuing. The arsenal provided included precision-guided munitions and large “bunker buster” bombs, which have been used in some of the deadliest Israeli strikes in Gaza. This accelerated and expansive military aid package reflects the Trump administration’s prioritization of Israel’s

military edge in the region, even as it bypassed traditional legislative oversight mechanisms.

Political and diplomatic backing

The Trump administration has demonstrated a strong political commitment to Israel through both symbolic and practical measures. Trump made Israel a top priority in his foreign policy by welcoming Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as his first official guest. In an effort to show support for Israel’s government and policies, the administration has retaliated against the International Criminal Court for indicting Israeli officials and lifted sanctions on some Israeli settlers in the West Bank.

In a controversial proposal, Trump suggested that the “United States take over Gaza,” to redevelop it, and he imagined Gaza transformed into a resort area under U.S. control, which would essen-

tially remove the Palestinian population. Arab states rejected this idea, but Trump clearly illustrates the administration’s willingness to arrange the geopolitics in Israel’s favor.

The administration has also taken actions against student activists protesting Israel’s cruel war on the Gazans by announcing the denial of federal funding to educational institutions that enable what it calls “illegal protests,” and that it will deport foreign students engaged in these actions.

Strategic and regional implications

Israel sees a rare chance to solidify its regional dominance during Trump’s second term. Because of the magnitude and apparent unconditionality of U.S. aid, as well as the close ties between Washington and Tel Aviv, Israel has never had more autonomy over the political and security landscape of the Middle East. This includes actions in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, where the U.S. government has essentially given Israel the all-clear.

But even with a lot of support, the relationship is complex. A transactional dimension that strikes a balance between unrestricted aid and larger U.S. strategic interests is demonstrated by the Trump administration’s pragmatic approach, which includes engagement with Iran and Hamas as well as the maintenance of trade tariffs on Israeli imports.

1,400 pairs of shoes displayed to honor healthcare workers killed in Gaza



Hundreds of protesters gathered in Rotterdam on Saturday, May 10, for a poignant memorial in which 1,400 pairs of white shoes were displayed in a public square to honour healthcare workers killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza.

The event, organised by the Doctors for Gaza Foundation, brought together doctors, nurses, medical students and human rights activists from across the Netherlands and beyond, TRT World reported.

Participants commemorated the fallen healthcare workers by reading aloud their names, paying tribute to those who lost their lives in the ongoing Israeli assault.

65,000 children facing death from Israeli starvation policy

The Gaza government warned Friday that more than 65,000 children are at immediate risk from famine because of Israel’s siege and two-month blockade of essential supplies to the Gaza Strip as part of its genocidal campaign on the Palestinian enclave, Anadolu Agency reported.

“The Israeli occupation is engineering a famine that kills civilians and continues a systematic crime against 2.4 million people through closing crossings and blocking 39,000 aid trucks carrying food, fuel and medicine, in a flagrant violation of international law,” the Gaza Media Office said in a statement.

It said all bakeries have been non-operational for 40 days, depriving civilians of bread.

“Over 65,000 children now face starvation deaths from malnutrition as Israel weaponizes hunger against civilians,” it added.

The statement noted that 70 days of Israel’s

total closure of crossings have aggravated the collapse of humanitarian and health systems in Gaza.

It urged the international community and the UN to urgently intervene to stop the blockade, reopen crossings and allow the flow of aid and essentials into Gaza.

Putin proposes direct Russia-Ukraine talks in Istanbul on May 15

Russian President Vladimir Putin has proposed direct talks with Ukraine in Istanbul on May 15, “without preconditions” to achieve “lasting peace” and “eliminate the root causes” of the three-year conflict, Al Jazeera reported.

The offer, delivered early on Sunday, came hours after the leaders of Ukraine, France, Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom called for an unconditional 30-day ceasefire.

The leaders, who were meeting in Kyiv, said their call is backed by United States President Donald Trump and threatened “massive” new sanctions on Moscow if it did not agree with their plan.

Putin, however, rejected that proposal, slamming European “ultimatums” and “anti-Russian rhetoric,” before outlining the counter-proposal for renewed Russia-Ukraine negotiations.

“We are proposing that Kyiv resume direct negotiations without any preconditions,” the Russian president told reporters. “We offer the Kyiv authorities to resume negotiations already on Thursday, in Istanbul.”

Pope Leo XIV calls for Gaza ceasefire in first Sunday message

Pope Leo XIV has called for genuine peace in Ukraine and an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip in his first Sunday noon blessing as pontiff, Al Jazeera reported.

“No more war,” Leo said on Sunday, adding, “the dramatic scenario of a third world war being fought piecemeal.”

“I too address the world’s great powers by repeating the ever-present call ‘never again war,’” he said from the loggia of Saint Peter’s Basilica to an estimated 100,000 people below.

The new pope, who was elected on May 8 after the death of Pope Francis, evoked some of his predecessor’s favoured phrases that called for peace.

Pope Leo said he carries in his heart the “suffering of the beloved people of Ukraine” and appealed for negotiations to reach an “authentic, just and lasting peace”.

Red Sea truce and Israel’s dilemma between Sanaa’s calculations and Trump’s priorities

By Najah Mohammed Ali

LONDON – On May 7, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a ceasefire agreement with the Sanaa government, mediated by the Sultanate of Oman, aimed at securing navigation in the Red Sea. While the agreement halts U.S. strikes on targets in Yemen in exchange for the non-targeting of American ships, Sanaa explicitly stated, and Trump confirmed, that the agreement does not include the occupying regime, meaning operations against ships linked to it will continue.

This development reveals the contours of a new regional scene in which U.S. priorities under Donald Trump’s leadership are being redefined, confirming that control over the Bab al-Mandab Strait today lies not with Washington or its allies, but with a resistance that imposes its conditions from a position of strength.

The agreement between Sanaa and Washington does not signify a U.S. withdrawal from supporting the occupying regime, but rather reflects the Trump administration’s desire to reduce its military involvement in Yemen and achieve relative stability in a vital maritime corridor that has faced repeated disruptions since the start of Operation “AL-Aqsa Flood.” The decision to halt direct confrontation with Sanaa reflects a pragmatic approach driven primarily by U.S. interests, independent of absolute commitments to its regional allies, even if that ally is the occupying regime.

What is Washington’s interest in drying up Lebanon’s cash economy?

From page 1 ► In response to Israeli orders, the de facto HTS-led regime recently launched systematic attacks on Lebanon’s Qusayr countryside (south of Homs) to impose a ground siege on Hezbollah, while Israeli drones monitor the rest of the border crossings to obstruct any possible transfer of weapons or funds.

The Lebanese government’s decision, following Israeli threats to bomb Beirut airport if any Iranian aircraft landed, is one of the most significant steps in the air blockade.

This coincided with tightened inspection and monitoring procedures, as well as the dismissal and replacement of dozens of employees based on sectarian backgrounds by excluding Shiites exclusively.

These measures are primarily aimed at prohibiting the transfer of any cash shipments to Hezbollah.

The same measures have been implemented at Beirut Port, which has undergone a series of changes from inspection mechanisms and screening rooms; a number of Shiite employees were also fired after numerous accusations

were raised by anti-Hezbollah media and political figures.

In parallel, the U.S. spy den in Beirut (the embassy) is closely monitoring financial transfers and commercial transactions to and from Lebanon to ensure that Hezbollah is not benefiting from them.

The appointment of Karim Said as Banque centrale du Liban’s new governor has strengthened Washington’s control over the banking sector, including stricter controls on account opening, control of foreign transfers, the voluntary freezing of certain accounts, and the scrutiny of any commercial transactions with Hezbollah or transfer of any funds in its account.

This applies to exchange companies, which are subject to heavy fines from Banque centrale du Liban if they deal with individuals or entities that Washington considers close to Hezbollah, or merely on the basis of suspicion in a bid to pressure Hezbollah’s popular base to rise up against it.

The same applies to controlling the purchase of cryptocurrencies, as these transactions are

difficult to monitor due to the nature of the blockchain system.

What is more important for Washington is to complete what its Israeli arm did during the September-November U.S.-led Israeli war by bombing several centers of Hezbollah’s banking institution, AL-Qard al-Hassan, as it is a source of funding for Hezbollah’s popular base and its service institutions.

Obviously, the U.S. spy den in Beirut (the embassy) is pressing for the closure of this institution.

It is worth noting that during the financial crisis that erupted in 2019, AL-Qard al-Hassan did not plunder depositors’ money, as did the banks owned by the political oligarchy protected by Washington, as it is a non-profit cooperative that provides soft loans to a wide segment of the Lebanese population.

Therefore, during the recent aggression, the anti-Resistance media launched a campaign to demonize AL-Qard AL-Hassan, threatening those who deal with it with severe hostile penalties.

Gaza blast injures 9 Israeli troops

From page 1 ► In a statement, the IOF clarified that the two incidents occurred during ongoing military operations across the Gaza Strip. In the first incident, soldier Isay Alekhm Urbach was killed, while another soldier from the 605th Engineering Battalion, part of the Barak Division, was seriously injured.

Last Thursday, the al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, announced responsibility

for targeting an Israeli engineering unit of 12 soldiers. The unit was reportedly preparing for a demolition mission inside a house near the al-Fadayeih intersection in the al-Tanour neighborhood, east of Rafah in southern Gaza.

In an editorial, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz argued that the IOF’s plans to escalate military operations in Gaza were doomed from the start. The article emphasized that the campaign “will not

achieve its objectives” and “lacks any legitimacy,” both among segments of the Israeli public and internationally.

This follows a unanimous decision by the Ministerial Committee on Security (the Cabinet) to “expand the scope of military operations in the Gaza Strip.” Israeli media described this move as “dramatic.”

According to figures released by the occupation regime’s mili-

tary, at least 856 Israeli soldiers have been killed since the onset of what many describe as the regime’s genocidal war on Gaza, which began on October 7, 2023. The IOF also reported that approximately 12,000 soldiers have been injured.

Analysts argue that the IOF’s policy is to censor casualty figures. This approach suggests that actual figures may be significantly higher.

not be his patsy. It clearly has him in a panic.

I have no doubt that, generally speaking, the Israeli people continue to see themselves as steadfast allies of the American people — and vice versa. But this ultranationalist, messianic Israeli government is not America’s ally. Because this is the first government in Israel’s history whose priority is not peace with more of its Arab neighbors and the benefits that greater security and coexistence would bring. Its priority is the annexation of the West Bank, the expulsion of the Palestinians of Gaza and the re-establishment there of Israeli settlements.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Netanyahu’s messianic government’s priority is to annex West Bank, expel Gazans: Thomas Friedman

NY Times columnist says Netanyahu is not a US friend

TEHRAN – The famous New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman says Benjamin Netanyahu’s “ultranationalist” and “messianic” government is not America’s ally.

In his article published on May 9, Freedman says the priority of the Netanyahu government is to annex the West Bank and expel the Palestinians from Gaza.

The following is major part of his article titled “This Israeli government is not our ally”:

Dear President Trump,

There are very few initiatives that you’ve undertaken since coming to office that I agree with

— except in the Middle East. The fact that you are traveling there next week and meeting the leaders of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar — and that you have no plans to see Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel — suggests to me that you are starting to understand a vital truth: that this Israeli government is behaving in ways that threaten hard-core U.S. interests in the region. Netanyahu is not our friend.

He did think he could make you his chump, though. Which is why I am impressed by how you have signaled to him through your independent negotiations with Hamas, Iran and the Houthis that he has no purchase on you — that you will

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Armenian churches in Abadan and Ahvaz seen as potential tourism attractions



TEHRAN - Armenian churches and cemeteries in the Iranian cities of Abadan and Ahvaz hold significant potential to boost cultural tourism, according to an Iranian lawmaker representing the Armenian community.

Geghard Mansoorian, the representative of Armenians of Isfahan and the south of Iran in the Iranian Parliament, recently visited Armenian religious and historical sites in both cities. He emphasized the important role these sites could play in enhancing the local tourism economy.

"Given the historical presence of Armenians in Abadan and Ahvaz, these cities are among the most prominent Armenian-populated areas in the country," Mansoorian said. "There are two churches in each city, as well as Armenian cemeteries and properties, all of which have notable tourism potential."

During his inspection tour, Mansoorian noted that Abadan's church has already been restored, while the church in Ahvaz is in need of renovation, along with its adjacent cemeteries.

He stressed the importance of preparing these sites for visitors in a structured and respectful manner, saying, "The organization of the cemeteries must be improved to accommodate tourism. The local Armenian community is planning to further assess the tourism potential of these churches and cemeteries in the coming months."

Iran's Yazd, Romania discuss ways to broaden cultural ties

TEHRAN--A session was held with Romanian Ambassador to Iran Mirela Carmen Greco in the Yazd Chamber of Commerce on May 11 to promote cooperation in the tourism sector and enhance cultural ties.

The Romanian ambassador appreciated the unique cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts potential of Yazd province, CHTN reported.

She talked about cultural and historical similarities between Yazd and some Romanian cities.

Yazd special features can draw the attention of European countries particularly Romania, she said.

Also, Director General of Yazd Cultural Heritage Department Mohammad Rostegari introduced the provincial capacities in cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts sectors.

Iran to hold gastronomy conference under Silk Road banner

TEHRAN—Iran plans to hold a gastronomy conference concerning the ancient Silk Road, for which it served a significant role for centuries, said Director General of UNESCO's Food and Gastronomy Club Mohammad Babareza.

He also said that Iran ranks first in terms of food diversity worldwide, ISNA reported.

"We plan to hold Florida Atlantic University (FAU) courses with an approach to study Iranian restaurants and cafes. In addition, launching the Caravan of Food and Gastronomy Club, and preparing the grounds for holding a Silk Road gastronomy conference are the other upcoming plans."

He called defining the goals of UNESCO's Food and Gastronomy Club in Iran, appreciating the documentary themed "Saffron" and directed by Ebrahim Mokhtari, inking Memoranda of Understanding with Kish Institute of Science and Technology, Iranian Food Science and Technology Association and Mashhad University of Medical Sciences as the other measures conducted in recent years.

Unveiling Iran Culinary Tourism Atlas, holding joint gatherings with Friendship associations of Iran with Germany, Croatia, Hungary, Greece, South Korea, India, Malaysia, Uganda, Uruguay,

Mansoorian concluded by highlighting the need to consider all available heritage assets when planning tourism development, noting that making the best use of these underutilized sites could contribute meaningfully to funding and sustaining local tourism initiatives.

Located in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, the cities of Abadan and Ahvaz offer a compelling blend of history, culture, and industrial heritage, making them unique and lesser-known destinations for tourism in the ancient country.

Ahvaz, the provincial capital, sits on the banks of the Karun River and has long been a center of industry, culture, and ethnic diversity. The city is home to a mix of Persian, Arab, Lur, and Armenian communities, each contributing to its vibrant cultural tapestry. Ahvaz boasts several historical bridges, bustling traditional markets, and a dynamic riverfront atmosphere. Among its lesser-known yet significant cultural sites are Armenian churches and cemeteries, which reflect the long-standing presence of the Armenian community in the region. While some of these heritage sites are in need of restoration, they represent valuable assets for cultural and religious tourism.

Abadan, once one of the world's most important oil refining centers, has a distinctive urban character shaped by its modern industrial history and multicultural population. The city is best known for its Abadan Refinery, a historic symbol of Iran's oil industry. In recent years, attention has turned to preserving and showcasing Abadan's architectural and religious heritage, including the renovated Armenian church, which stands as a testament to the city's diverse past. With a legacy of coexistence and strategic significance during both the oil boom and the Iran-Iraq War, Abadan is emerging as a site of interest for industrial heritage tourism, war tourism, and cultural exploration.

In addition, active presence of Iranian Embassy in 51th Edition of Romanian Tourism Fair was appreciated.

With its winding lanes, forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referring as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region.

The province has an interesting mix of people as well, some 10 percent of whom follow the ancient religion of Zoroastrianism.

The oasis city of Yazd is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains. Its historical structure enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

and Mexico.

He said correspondence with Federation of UNESCO Clubs for cooperation of gastronomy clubs particularly Silk Road, International Training Centers such as Michelin and Kordon bleu, formation of Architecture Department, Department of Science and New Technologies as the other activities.

Babareza continued that UNESCO's Food and Gastronomy Club plans to hold the first expo of Iranian products such as pomegranate, pistachio, caviar, barberry and saffron, award the culinary tourism destination title, hold competitions on diplomacy of flavors, and hold food events for Iranian and ethnic groups.

Unfortunately, Iranian cuisine doesn't have remarkable status worldwide due to poor publicity and wrong introduction, he mentioned.

He said a project themed UNESCO culinary and gastronomy caravan, the recipes of cooking Iranian cuisines and making traditional drinks will be implemented lively.

The culinary caravan moves from Rasht as the Eighth UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy with 188 cuisine and dessert recipes and ends in Chabahar with 114 cuisine and dessert recipes, he concluded.

Isfahan named Asian Capital of Tourism for 2025

From Page 1 ► "In addition to its monuments, Isfahan possesses a living historical environment that sets it apart as a prime destination for urban tourism."

Qasemzadeh also noted that contemporary tourism extends beyond visits to monuments. "Tourism today includes diverse sectors, and we must adapt to play an active role across all of them," he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the mayor highlighted several international events hosted by Isfahan, such as international film and painting festivals dedicated to children and young adults, describing them as key assets in expanding the city's global tourism profile.

Hamidreza Gholamzadeh, Secretary of the Asian Mayors Forum, also spoke at the event, noting that the forum now includes more than 120 member cities. He praised the active cooperation between the AMF and Isfahan's municipality over the past three years, which has led



to significant progress in various fields.

The ancient city of Isfahan, which serves as the provincial capital as well, is situated at the crossroads of Iran's north-south and east-west trade routes. It reached its zenith between the 9th and 18th centuries. During the Safavid era, it became Iran's

capital under Shah Abbas the Great.

Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran and now it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. It is filled with many architectural wonders, such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums,

Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

The Persian proverb "Isfahan nesf-e-jahan ast" (Isfahan is half the world) reflects the city's cultural and historical prominence.

Indians fond of Yazd's architecture, Iranian dishes



TEHRAN--Indians are fond of Yazd's traditional architecture, and Iranian cuisine, such as traditional dishes of Qormeh Sabzi and Qeymeh Nesar, said an Indian tour operator who works with several travel agencies.

The Indian tour operator, who has traveled to Iran many times, says Indians are interested in Iran's culture, which has appeared in Isfahan and Shiraz cities, ILNA reported.

Given their rich culture and ancient civilization, Iran and India have had a very good relationship.

Some experts believe that people of both civilizations boast a long history in race and culture. They have a common origin: Aryans.

There are joint commonalities which can be found in language, customs, and other behavioral characteristics of the peoples of both nations.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the late Prime Minister of India, wrote in his book "Discovery of India": Out of nations and races that have connections

with India, none of them have affected on Indian life and culture in a constant and sustainable way like Iranians.

Indian tour operator Syed Ghulam Asghar, who has traveled to Iran to have tourism exchanges with Iranian travel agencies, says: "International tourism gathering is an opportunity that the private sectors of countries negotiate with each other, resulting in tourism prosperity."

"My various travel agencies are eager to dispatch tours to Iran. Fortunately, there isn't any problem for entrance of tourists to Iran given the political and cultural ties between India and Iran. Iran is considered a safe nation for us."

"Currently, we are preparing a traveling package to Iran," he said. "Iran and India are two nations which have rich cultural commonalities. They can have tourist exchange. As Iranians have deep understanding of culture, customs and cuisines, Indians know Iranian culture."

Restoration project launched in historical core of Tabriz

TEHRAN - A new project aimed at restoring and reorganizing parts of the historic core of Tabriz, once the capital of Persia during the early Safavid period, has officially begun.

The initiative is focused on the architectural and visual rehabilitation of Imam Khomeini Street, one of the city's key historical zones.

According to Hossein Monirifar, the mayor of Tabriz's District 8, restoration work has commenced along the stretch of Imam Khomeini Street between Sa'at Square and Tarbiat Pedestrian Walkway. This area is considered a significant historical corridor within the city and will undergo traditional-style refurbishments in collaboration with the East Azarbaijan Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

"The current state of the facades along this street does not align with the desired shape of the historical fabric of Tabriz," said Monirifar. "We are implementing a

traditional restoration approach to harmonize the visual identity of this important axis. Plans also include traditional lighting and signage design for local businesses."

In addition, Vahid Navadad, Deputy Head of Cultural Heritage in East Azarbaijan province, praised the municipality's initiative and confirmed the department's full readiness to cooperate on the project. "Preserving the historical core of Tabriz is a pillar of sustainable urban tourism development," he stated.

Highlighting the cultural significance of Imam Khomeini Street in Tabriz's urban structure, Navadad emphasized that the project not only contributes to the city's historical identity but also paves the way for enhanced tourism and urban regeneration.

The city of Tabriz, known for its rich history, warm hospitality, and the UNESCO-listed Grand Bazaar, remains a key gateway for visitors, particularly those entering Iran



from Armenia and Turkey.

Tabriz has a long and rich history, but saw many of its historic buildings destroyed by invaders or earthquakes. Tabriz became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295-1304) and his successor. Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in the an-

cient city.

The city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548, when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin. During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and the Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.

FAO intl. expert visits Iran to help boost pistachio competitiveness in global market

By Faranak Bakhtiari

KERMAN - As part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen Iranian pistachio export standards, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has dispatched a technical delegation to Kerman Province to assess and improve sampling and laboratory testing procedures for detecting contaminants in pistachios — one of Iran's most valuable export commodities.

The three-day mission was conducted under the joint Technical Cooperation Project of FAO and Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, titled "Improving Pistachio Production and Export through Establishment of Integrated Product Management," and accompanied by Benoit Glaud, FAO International Consultant for Laboratory Development and Improvement.

The mission aimed to evaluate sampling and analysis methods used in controlling mycotoxin (aflatoxin) levels in pistachios, in line with the EU Regulation 2023/2782, which sets maximum levels for contaminants in food.

The FAO delegation visited Iranian Food and Drug Administration (IFDA) laboratories under the Ministry of Health, private-sector facilities including pistachio processing terminals, and pilot orchards across Kerman and Rafsanjan, as well as the Iranian Pistachio Research



Institute (IPRI). During these visits, the team observed and assessed sampling procedures, testing protocols, and quality management systems for pistachios intended for both domestic and international markets.

In addition to assessments, two training workshops were delivered by FAO, one of which was by Benoit Glaud for laboratory staff and traders focusing on the best international practices in sampling, aflatoxin detection, testing result quality controls, and regulatory compliance.

Another event, co-organized with the Pistachio Research Institute, was held for pistachio growers and farmers, extension officers, and experts from Kerman, Rafsanjan, Nough Rafsanjan, and Sirjan. The focus was on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) covering advanced irri-

gation techniques, soil and nutrition management, integrated pest management strategies and improved horticultural practices. The aim was to enhance the practical skills and technical knowledge of stakeholders to support the production of high-quality and safe pistachios.

Through field visits and consultations, the experts evaluated current sampling and analysis methods used by Iranian FDA laboratories, and with Ministry of Agriculture Jihad identifying potentials gaps and recommending continuous improvements to keep up with international standards and practices.

The delegation also focused on strengthening regulatory alignment, enhancing laboratory capabilities for mycotoxin detection, and developing a technical action plan.

IFDA have expertise to provide reliable results for aflatoxins

"At all stages in the pistachio production, processing, packaging, and testing before export, I have met people with a very high level of expertise and understanding of the key points to ensure good pistachio quality for export. I express confidence that IFDA laboratories have the technical capacities and expertise to provide reliable results for aflatoxins and support the export sector. International food safety regulations are always evolving, and it is important to keep updated with the latest quality control procedure to deliver good results. This FAO project is supporting the Islamic Republic of Iran in this aspect," Glaud said.

By engaging with both public and private stakeholders, FAO sought to transfer the best global practices, build national capacity, and support sustainable improvements across the pistachio value chain.

Launched in 2023, the pistachio project aims to promote sustainable and integrated pistachio supply chain management, improve productivity, support compliance with food safety regulations, and enhance market access. By addressing key quality and safety challenges, the project contributes to economic resilience, food and nutrition security, and Iran's competitiveness in global markets.

World Migratory Bird Day highlights 'creating bird-friendly communities'

TEHRAN - Celebrated biannually - on May 10 and October 11 - World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) aims to raise awareness about the many challenges migratory birds face due to human activities, including urban development.

Each year, WMBD selects a central theme to inspire action and concentrate global efforts towards preserving the habitats and well-being of migratory birds.

This year's theme, 'Shared spaces: Creating bird-friendly cities and communities', underscores the urgent need for bird-friendly cities, combining scientific insights with practical steps for individuals and communities to support these remarkable creatures.

It focuses on creating and adapting environments that support migratory bird populations across all communities, from bustling cities to smaller towns and communities. The day encourages action from all sectors, including national and local governments, businesses, community groups, and individuals worldwide.

WMBD 2025 emphasizes that every community, urban to rural, can play a significant role in supporting migratory birds. Through good city planning and by adopting bird-friendly practices like creating healthy habitats, reducing pollution, and preventing collisions with glass windows and other built objects, communities can significantly contribute to the well-being of migratory birds.

Urban expansion and man-made environments,

if not managed properly, pose significant threats to these birds, leading to habitat loss and increasing the risks of fatal collisions with buildings and glass.

Through good upstream planning for sustainable urban development that avoids sprawl and destruction of habitat as well as collaborative efforts with neighbors, schools, and local organizations, everyone can protect birds and raise awareness about their importance to the health of the planet and its ecosystems.

By bringing nature back into our cities and working together, citizens and elected officials alike can help natural environments and lessen the negative effects of urbanization on biodiversity.

Iran important stopover for migratory birds

Iran is the most important country in West Asia in terms of housing migratory birds in winter, as around two million birds fly each year to spend winter in the country's wetlands, according to an official with the Department of Environment.

Encompassing numerous wetlands, reservoirs, and diverse water bodies, Iran welcomes millions of migratory birds every year. The country has also emerged as the most important stopover for migratory birds in their flight route from Siberia to the Nile as sixteen percent of them select to spend the winter in the country, ISNA quoted Hassan Akbari as saying.



A diverse array of migratory birds fly to the country, with more than 160 species of aquatic and waterside birds identified in Iran, which is a significant number.

Despite limited water resources in the domestic habitats of the country, the study of the migratory bird population trend shows that the abundance and diversity of the birds that enter the country have not decreased. The majority of them have flown to the coastal areas of the Caspian and the Persian Gulf, though.

Iran hosts more than five percent of the world's migratory birds in 450 sites in winter, Akbari said.

"Every year, some 30 to 40 million birds are counted all over the world and the related statistics are recorded in the International Waterfowl Census (IWC) database," he added.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iran reopens schools under strict health protocols

Over 15 million students attended schools nationwide on Saturday for the new school year under strict health protocols to protect teachers, staff, and students against the coronavirus pandemic.

The opening bell of the new academic year was rung symbolically by President Hassan Rouhani at a girls' high school in downtown Tehran. Mohsen Haji Mirzaei, Education Minister, symbolically attended the virtual festival.

More than 15 million students started the new school year in 116,000 schools across the country, Haji Mirzaei stated.

بازگشایی مدارس با پروتکل های سختگیرانه بهداشتی

بیش از ۱۵ میلیون دانش آموز سال تحصیلی جدید را با رعایت پروتکل های سختگیرانه بهداشتی آغاز کردند. زنگ آغاز سال تحصیلی به صورت ارتباط تصویری در مراسمی به دستور رئیس جمهور در دبیرستانی در تهران نواخته شد. محسن حاجی میرزایی وزیر آموزش و پرورش در این مراسم گفت: بیش از ۱۵ میلیون دانش آموز سال تحصیلی جدید را در ۱۱۶ هزار مدرسه آغاز کردند.

Strengthening co-op on AI essential for future: Chinese envoy

TEHRAN - The Chinese ambassador to Iran, Cong Peiwu, has underlined the need to boost cooperation in advanced technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, calling it essential for the future.

Lauding Iran's advancement in the information and communication technology sector, Peiwu highlighted the expansion of collaborations despite challenges and external forces, IRNA reported.

The official made the remarks on Monday in Tehran, during a meeting with Information and Communication Technology Minister, Sattar Hashemi.

For his part, Hashemi said the two countries have high capacities in the AI field, which can lay the ground for future collaborations. He also stressed the importance of fully utilizing joint capabilities to accomplish the set goals of the strategic partnership.

The implementation of previously reached agreements in the ICT sector, as well as the development of ties in the digital economy, communication infrastructure, processing infrastructure, space systems, and data transit, were among other discussed issues.

The ICT minister said he would follow up on the joint programs on his visit to China in the near future.

Iran and China officially signed the document for 25-year comprehensive cooperation in March 2021.

The document was signed between Iran's then Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Back in December 2022, Iran and China

finalized 16 memoranda of understanding under the framework of the two countries' strategic 25-year agreement.

Iran's ranking improves in Government AI Readiness

According to the latest report by Oxford Insights index, which measures government readiness for implementing AI in public services, Iran ranks 91st among 188 countries, moving up three positions compared to 94th in 2023.

AI has a key role to play —not just in governing the technology, but in helping governments perform better.

The Government AI Readiness Index has become a trusted resource for policymakers, adopted as an official benchmark by national governments.

In this year's edition, the AI readiness of 188 countries at a time of growing complexity, where governments face evolving citizen needs and challenges like economic uncertainty, climate risks, and rising inequalities.

The 2024 index examines 40 indicators across three pillars: Government, Technology Sector, and Data & Infrastructure. It highlights progress, identifies gaps, and provides actionable insights for policymakers working to integrate AI into public service delivery.

At its core, the index asks 'how ready are governments to implement AI in the delivery of public services?' By answering this question, it aims to offer a practical tool that supports evidence-based decision-making and helps policymakers unlock AI's potential to serve citizens better worldwide.

St. Petersburg University to open branch in Tehran

TEHRAN - St. Petersburg State University of Russia will open a branch in the International Innovation Zone, northeast of Tehran.

The measure will be taken in line with an initiative by the cabinet of ministers to establish a branch of a foreign university in the International Innovation Zone in cooperation with Iran University of Science and Technology.

To this end, a memorandum of understanding was signed on Monday by the representatives of Pardis Technology Park, Iran University of Science and Technology, and St. Petersburg University, Mehr news agency reported.

Based on the comprehensive agreements between the top universities of Iran and Russia, the two sides are committed to furthering long-term and constructive relations in higher education, technology, and innovation.

The establishment of the secretariat for communication between the universities of the two countries is one of the major measures taken.

On May 2, the head of the Organization for the Development of International Cooperation in Science and Technology, Mehdi Safarinia, in a meeting with Russian Presidential Aide Andrei Fursenko, said Iran is committed to promoting international scientific cooperation, highlighting that Russia is among the first countries Iran is willing to expand ties with.

The official went on to say that Russian companies can have offices in Pardis Technology Park. The establishment of Russian universities' branches in the country was the second point mentioned by Safarinia. "We have already reached agreements with St. Petersburg University and Moscow State University. We are following up on the issue in cooperation with the University of Science and Technology.

This will be the first foreign university to have a branch in Iran. Both Iranian and regional students will be able to study at this university, spending part of their studies in Iran and the rest in Russia," Safarinia further noted.



Tehran hosting flower and plant exhibition

The 20th Tehran flower and plant exhibition opened its doors to visitors on Saturday. The annual exhibition will run at Goftegou Park until May 16.



MAY 12, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

There are many educated people who have ruined their future on account of their ignorance of religion. Their knowledge did not prove of any avail to them.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 19:19 Dawn: 3:25 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:02 (tomorrow)

Patrick Hamilton's "Rope" on stage at Tehran Theater Complex

TEHRAN-Tehran Theater Complex is hosting the 1929 play "Rope" written by Patrick Hamilton in its Medea Hall.

Seyyed Amirali Mirzad has directed the play that has Behnam Amoukhalili, Ali Abdolrahimzadeh, Mohammadali Aghaei, Sajjad Jafari, Fatemeh Shoghi, Shakiba Motazedi, and Ardalan Razmi in the cast, Honaronline reported.

The play was said to be inspired by the real-life murder of 14-year-old Bobby Franks in 1924 by University of Chicago students Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb.

The play is set on the first floor of a house in Mayfair, London in 1929. The story concerns two young university students, Wyndham Brandon and Charles Granillo, who do something horrible to express their supposed intellectual superiority.

For the mere sake of adventure, danger, and the fun of the thing, Wyndham Brandon persuades his weak-minded friend, Charles Granillo, to assist him in the murder of a fellow undergraduate, a perfectly harmless man named Ronald Raglan. They place the body in a wooden chest, and to add spice to their handiwork, invite a few acquaintances, including the dead youth's father, to a party, the chest with its gruesome contents serving as a supper table.

Suspicion arises among the guests as to the



content of the chest. After the party, one guest, a former professor of the murderers named Rupert Cadell, returns and contrives to open the chest. He is shocked and ashamed that they have acted in response to his own declarations of amorality. The play ends with this quandary unresolved.

In 1948, Alfred Hitchcock made a film of the same name based on the play, though with some changes. The setting is relocated to the 1940s New York City and the names of all of the characters, with the exception of Rupert Cadell, are altered. In the film, Cadell is played by James Stewart. Hitchcock's is the only feature film version of the play to-date.

In 1983, Rope was dramatized as a BBC Radio 4 Drama for Saturday Night Theater, starring Alan Rickman as Cadell.

Patrick Hamilton (1904-1962) was an English playwright and novelist. He was well regarded by Graham Greene and J. B. Priestley, and study of his novels has been revived because of their distinctive style, deploying a Dickensian narrative voice to convey aspects of inter-war London Street culture. They display a strong sympathy for the poor, as well as an acerbic black humor.

"Rope" will remain on stage through May 23 at the Tehran Theater Complex located at No. 3, Farhangi Alley, Vesal Shirazi St., Enghelab Ave.

Mashhad conference highlights cultural diplomacy's role in promoting Islamic heritage worldwide

From Page 1 ▶From Lebanon, Sheikh Jafar Al-Mohajer, a distinguished scholar, author, and researcher and the founder of the Baalbek-based Center for Baha-uddin shared a comprehensive report on recent scholarly efforts.

"Our center has published 52 titles that provide a new, historically accurate narrative of Shia Islam, countering exaggerated and distant accounts. We aim to highlight the efforts and sacrifices of the Ahl al-Bayt, rewriting history to reflect their jihadist approach and strategic management, which transformed the course of Islamic history" he noted.

"Amidst ongoing hardships and destruction in Lebanon, we seek international support to sustain our activities, as Hezbollah remains our primary supporter, and our center faces closure without external aid," he explained.

For his part, Sheikh Zaid Alsalam from Australia, a member of the Ahl Al-Bayt World Assembly, addressed the challenges faced by Muslim communities in the West, particularly in Australia, where second and third-generation migrants struggle to preserve their Islamic identity amid cultural assimilation.

"Many young Muslims in Western countries are unaware of the significance of pilgrimage and the cultural heritage of Imam Reza (AS)," he explained.

"Despite numerous Islamic centers, Westernization and cultural invasion make it difficult to maintain our identity. I actively encourage youth to visit the holy sites and promote awareness through social media and translations into English," he mentioned.

The quality of translations and the dissemination of accurate information are crucial, especially since reading habits have declined and social media dominates communication, he added.

In his remarks, Hamidreza Arbab Soleimani, Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance highlighted Imam Reza's wisdom,



stating, "Meeting with fellow believers fosters growth and vitality, even if long intervals separate these encounters."

"This conference serves as a valuable opportunity to develop cultural diplomacy, reminding us that our cultural mission extends beyond national borders. Islam, as a universal religion, mandates that our message benefits all humanity," he added.

"Today, many people around the world are unfamiliar with the Quran and the Ahl al-Bayt. If Mashhad can fulfill its mission accurately and communicate this message effectively, it will serve humanity and help expand the Islamic civilization worldwide. Such gatherings play a vital role in this endeavor."

Hassan-Ali Akhlaghi, a member of the Iranian Parliament, emphasized the spiritual importance of the Ahl al-Bayt.

Today, Iran's Islamic Republic stands as a powerful entity on the international stage, embodying the Resistance Axis, he mentioned.

Mashhad, with the presence of Imam Reza (AS), has become a hub of social and spiritual vitality, capable of uniting the Islamic world, he said.

"We should transform Mashhad into the country's first free scientific zone, leveraging its universities and research centers. Such academic and scientific development will bolster resistance against arrogance and imperialism."

Also speaking at the event, Hossein Yekta, a well-known veteran of the Iran-Iraq War and public figure, underscored the centrality of martyrdom and sacrifice in the ongoing struggle between good and evil. "The international language is not just English, but the language of sacrifice and martyrdom," he said.

"To communicate effectively with the new generation, we must adapt our methods, incorporating artificial intelligence and innovative storytelling to counter hostile narratives and promote our cause globally."

For his part, Hamidreza Mahdavi Arfa, a Nahj al-Balagha expert discussed the nuances of cultural diplomacy, contrasting Iran's approach with Western practices.

"In the West, cultural tools are often used for political purposes, whereas in Iran, culture itself is the goal," he explained and added: "Imam Reza's teachings should be recognized, particularly through pilgrimage, to be acknowledged

as a civilization-builder worldwide."

Hossein Divsalar, an official with ICRO emphasized that cultural diplomacy serves as a bridge among nations, advocating for a soft power approach rooted in peaceful coexistence. "The message of the Islamic Republic is one of civilization, peace, and intercultural dialogue," he noted.

The conference concluded with a shared consensus on the necessity of innovative, language-sensitive outreach strategies and the importance of promoting Iran's cultural and spiritual values on the global stage to foster unity, peace, and mutual understanding among nations.

The Imam Reza (AS) International Festival is held annually in various provinces of the country as well as in several other countries.

This festival encompasses various fields such as articles, plays or screenplays, produced shows, stories, visual arts, books, literary texts, poetry, press and digital works, and radio and television productions.

It aims at promoting artistic excellence rooted in spiritual and cultural values, inspiring artists and audiences alike.

Iranian twin duo unveils new music on National Twins Day

TEHRAN – The Saeidi Brothers, a traditional Iranian twin duo comprising Ali and Mohammad Saeidi, have recently released a new musical piece to celebrate National Twins Day, observed annually in Iran on May 12.

Titled "Sobhe Omid" (Morning of Hope), the song features lyrics written by Jamshid Barazandeh, with composition by Abdolhossein and Jamshid Bazandeh.

Known for their unique interpretation of

Isfahani folk music, the twin brothers often incorporate traditional Iranian instruments into their performances. They have collaborated with renowned musicians like maestro Farhad Fakhreddini, solidifying their place in Iran's vibrant music scene.

Charitable disposable camera project raising funds for Gaza

"The camera serves as one of the most compelling tools for highlighting the everyday realities of Gazans," the creators of "Permit to See," a new art-led charity initiative, launched on Friday, said

Rooted in both fashion and fine art, the project brings together disposable cameras, undeveloped film, and one powerful question: what happens when you give people the power to tell their own story?

Conceived by two freelance creatives—Jared Witherspoon and Chanel Ghazi Alorsan (who is Palestinian-American)—the project seeks to merge their passions for photography and social justice into a format that is both intimate and urgent. As the war on Gaza continues, with at least 50,000 Palestinians killed, "Permit to See" is a quiet act of resistance—artful, intentional, and deeply human, Mille World reported.

The initiative invites six artists, from fashion editors to photographers, to document their realities using a disposable camera. The twist? None of the images will be seen until the cameras are won in an online raffle from May 9–16. The winner of each camera will decide

whether to develop and share the photos, or to keep them private.

This, the founders explain, is a way of reclaiming both visibility and ownership in the context of Palestine. "In Gaza and the West Bank, people are constantly being documented by Israeli drones, surveillance, and checkpoints—but rarely do they get to control that documentation or the narrative around it. This project reclaims that," they said.

The title itself is a double entendre; "Permit to See" evokes both the idea of allowing oneself to witness, and the grim reality that in places like Gaza, even the act of seeing often requires permission.

The timing couldn't be more significant. Gaza has been under blockade since 2007, a situation that intensified dramatically in October 2023, when the Israeli government launched a full-scale military assault, devastating neighborhoods, hospitals, schools, and entire communities.

More than a humanitarian crisis, Gaza today is a symbol of global complicity, media erasure, and the exhaustion of empathy. In the words of the founders, "The conflict is also one of the most cen-

sored crises in the world. Western media usually shows what's going on through a detached, dehumanized perspective."

That's where the artists come in. Among the contributors are model Lotta Lavanti, fashion editor Bobbi Menuez, and celebrated artists like Polina Osipova, among others. They weren't given a theme or brief—just a camera and a call to create. "Contributors were simply asked to capture anything that resonated with them: personal moments, reflections, their surroundings, or even more experimental concepts," the team notes. The result is a patchwork of unseen realities, suspended in time until a buyer chooses whether or not the world gets to see them.

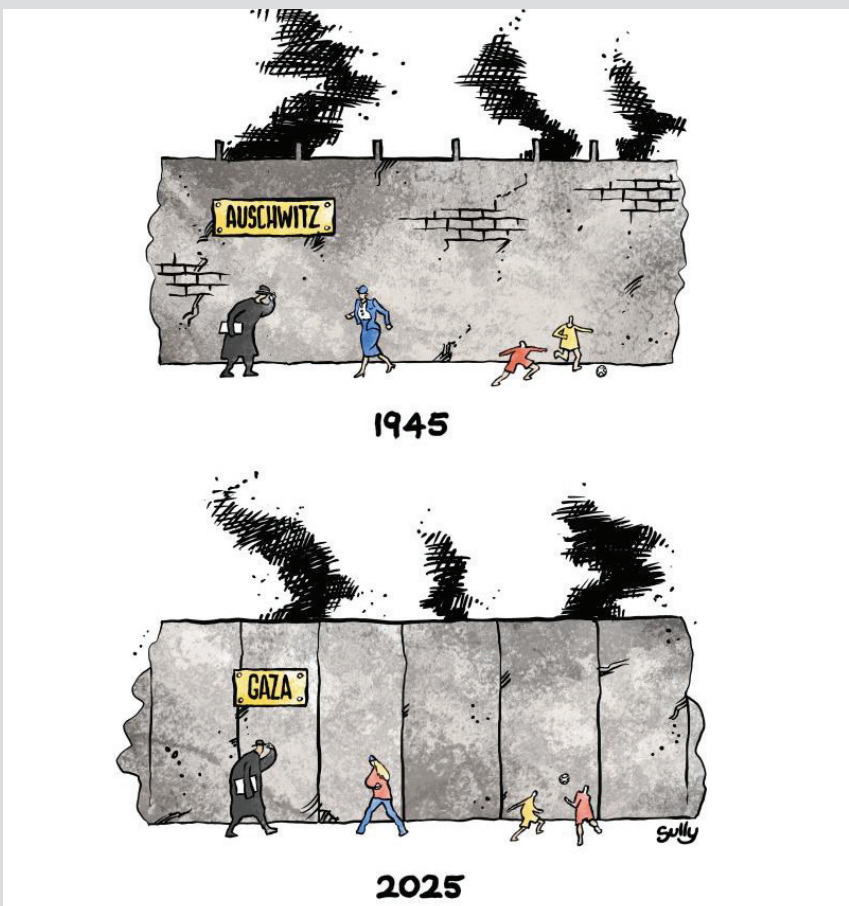
But not all contributors had access to disposable film. Gaza-based photojournalist Majdi Fathi—known for his raw and heartbreaking work documenting the daily horrors in his hometown—was included in the project with digital images as prints for sale instead. "It's nearly impossible to get anything into Gaza right now—even something as simple as a disposable camera," the founders explain. "People are not just cut off from food and water, but also from

the tools to express themselves."

Despite unimaginable loss—including the death of 27 of his family members—Fathi continued to shoot. His images form the emotional spine of "Permit to See." "His images are different from the analog ones in the project since they also feel like a grounding force. They're raw, urgent, and immediate in a way that balances out the more reflective, undemanding process of film. Together, the digital and analog components create a fuller picture—one that captures both the day-to-day resilience and the deeper emotional landscape of what people are living through."

All proceeds will be donated to several nonprofit organizations providing humanitarian aid, education, and healthcare to children impacted by the crisis in Gaza. But beyond raising money, "Permit to See" aims to interrogate how care and community function in a moment when global attention spans are dangerously short. "In the face of so many obstacles—censorship, burnout, and this overwhelming sense of fatigue—we've had to constantly adapt. It's like: how do you keep people engaged when the world feels so heavy all the time?"

Cartoon of Day



Concentration Camps

Cartoonist: Peter Sully from Australia