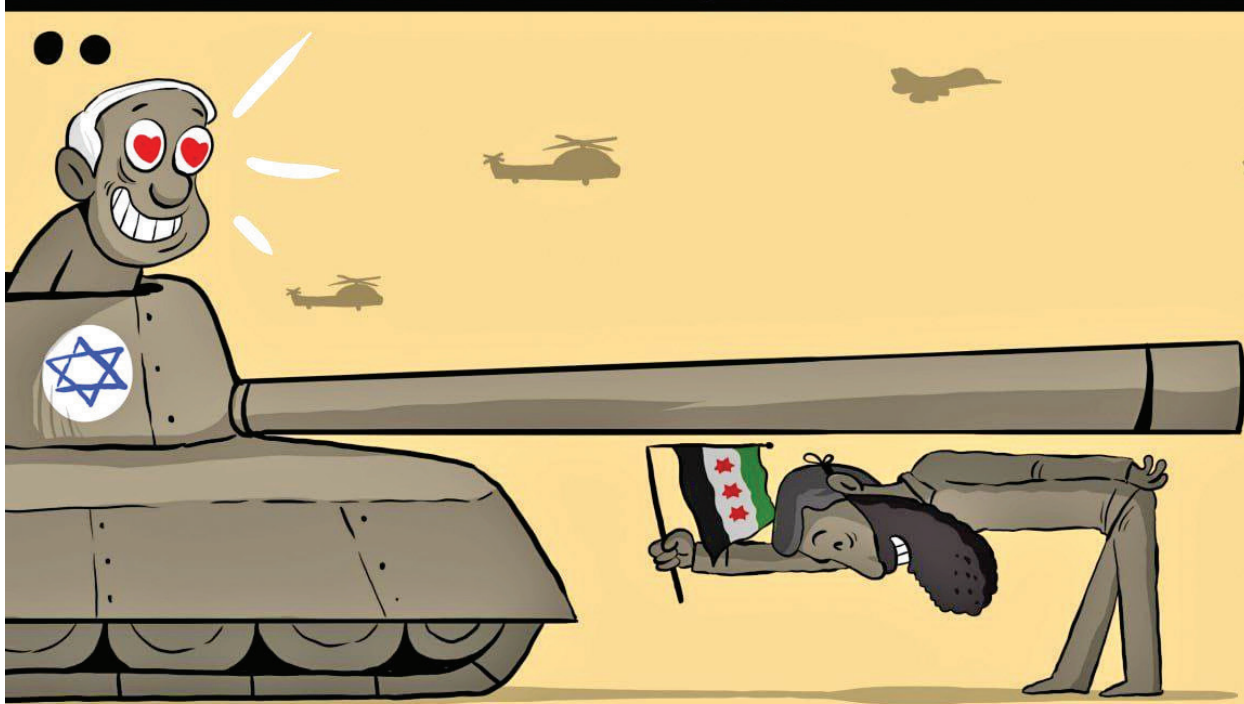


Jolani's Gamble: Surrendering Fragmented Syria to US and Israel



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Putin's Tehran visit in works, says govt. spokesperson

TEHRAN – Iranian government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani announced on Monday that Tehran is finalizing preparations to host Russian President Vladimir Putin, signaling another milestone in the deepening alliance between the two nations.

According to Mohajerani, preparations for "Putin's trip to Tehran are underway," with formal confirmation from the Kremlin presumably forthcoming.

If realized, this would mark Putin's second visit to Iran since 2022, underscoring the accelerating strategic partnership between Moscow and Tehran.

The relationship, rooted in shared geopolitical interests and mutual resistance to Western pressure, has flourished across defense, energy, trade, and diplomatic fronts.

Earlier this year, the two nations solidified their collaboration with a landmark 20-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty, designed to expand economic, technological, and security cooperation. ▶ Page 2

Manama's official stance: We will not allow attacks on Iran from our soil

By Dr. Mehdi Khanali-Zadeh
Professor of International Relations

TEHRAN – Following the developments related to Operation AL-Aqsa Storm, which led to a significant shift in the security dynamics of West Asia, the approach and behavior of some Arab countries along the Persian Gulf have taken on a more "realist" tone.

This strategy began with Saudi Arabia's official efforts to strengthen security relations with Tehran and has now entered a new phase with Manama's direct request to restore ties with Iran.

This issue gains added significance when we examine the media narrative about the region over the past few months. Since several months ago, precisely when the formal transition of power began in the White House, the claim that "Iran has been weakened" and that "Tehran is at its weakest point" has been heavily propagated in mainstream U.S. media and by politicians from both parties. Concurrently, at the European level, a narrative about "Iran's efforts to obtain an atomic bomb" has been pushed by the media. One Western journalist even cited European officials claiming that, in the latest talks between Iran and European countries, Iranian officials had raised this issue—an allegation that was false and promptly denied by Iranian authorities. ▶ Page 2

Uzbek PM promises tax, customs exemptions for Iranian investors amid growing economic ties

TEHRAN – Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov announced on Sunday that Iranian investors operating in Uzbekistan will be exempt from taxes and customs duties, as he highlighted the presence of over 210 joint Iranian-Uzbek factories currently operating in the country.

Speaking at the Iran-Uzbekistan Business Forum held in Tehran, Aripov emphasized the importance of closer economic cooperation between the two nations, citing strong cultural and historical ties and the evolving global landscape as key drivers for deeper engagement.

He said forums like this help both sides identify investment opportunities and expand areas of cooperation, adding that entrepreneurship and private sector collaboration are vital to advancing shared industrial and technological goals. ▶ Page 4

UK veterans accuse colleagues of war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan

Former UK special forces personnel have accused colleagues of committing war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, including alleging that they executed civilians and a child.

Graphic accounts of routine executions of handcuffed prisoners and the killings of people in their sleep were handed to the BBC, which reported that weapons were planted during cover-ups.

The new allegations of war crimes span more than a decade, much longer than the three years currently being examined by a British public inquiry.

Members of the Special Boat Service (SBS), the Royal Navy's elite special forces regiment, are accused for the first time, along with soldiers from the SAS – who have been in the spotlight of the inquiry.

Veterans who spoke to the BBC spoke of a "mob mentality" among some former colleagues who were described as "lawless" and exhibiting "serious psychopathic traits".

Hamas thwarts Mahmoud Abbas's goal ahead of his ill-intentioned visit to Beirut

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Lebanese and Palestinian factions in Lebanon are anticipating the repercussions of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's planned visit to Beirut on Lebanon and the situation of displaced Palestinians, especially since the issue of Palestinian resistance weapons has come under scrutiny.

These factions express deep concern that the anti-Resistance Lebanese team would definitely exploit Abbas' anti-Resistance positions—which have become exposed as clear as day since Al-Aqsa Flood Op.—to liquidate the Resistance and the Palestinian cause.

Following the statement issued by Lebanon's Supreme Defense Council, the Lebanese authorities escalated their attacks against Hamas under the pretext of preserving "Lebanese national security".

This move is an integral part of pressure from the embassies of Washington and Riyadh without taking into account Lebanon's unique situation.

Israeli troops fall in deadly Gaza ambush

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – In a complex operation, the Palestinian resistance forces in Gaza target a group of occupation officers and soldiers.

The armed wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the al-Quds Brigades, carried out a high-quality operation east of Shejaiya in the northern Gaza Strip, targeting a group of occupation officers and soldiers. The operation resulted in casualties among their ranks.

A field commander with the al-Quds Brigades stated that the complex operation precisely targeted Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) officers and soldiers.

According to the commander, the operation began by luring enemy forces through the shelling of an armored vehicle, causing casualties among its crew of officers and soldiers.

Earlier, the al-Quds Brigades announced that its fighters had downed an Israeli occupation drone conducting reconnaissance missions in combat zones east of Gaza City and had seized control of it.

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From Tehran to Guangzhou: Iranian relics on show at 'Land of Kindness'

TEHRAN – The Guangdong Museum in Guangzhou is currently hosting the Iranian cultural relics exhibition "Land of Kindness", offering visitors a rare glimpse into five millennia of Persian art, culture, and craftsmanship.

The loan exhibition, which first opened at the Sichuan University Museum in Chengdu months ago, has been met with wide public interest and enthusiastic media coverage in China.

Organized under the auspices of Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, the exhibition is conducted in full compliance with international museum standards and legal frameworks. ▶ Page 6



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Pezeshkian hails deep Iran-Uzbekistan ties as inseparable

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian highlighted the strong cultural and historical bonds between Iran and Uzbekistan during a meeting with Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Nigmatovich Aripov on Monday, calling the two nations "parts of the same body" and emphasizing the potential for expanded cooperation.

Pezeshkian described the people of Uzbekistan as "kindred" to Iranians and reiterated Tehran's commitment to deepening bilateral ties. "The government and people of Iran warmly welcome our Uzbek brothers and sisters," he said. "By strengthening relations and sharing capabilities and achievements, we can bring greater prosperity to our nations and foster peace and stability across the region." ▶ Page 3

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Effective lifting of sanctions is Tehran's main demand

In an analysis, Shargh addressed the fourth round of negotiations between the Iranian and U.S. negotiators and said: The fourth round of the talks were held as Iran's main demand, which has been heard many times by the Foreign Minister and the Ministry spokesperson, is the effective lifting of sanctions and the stop of any action that would restrict and sanction the Iranian economy and affect Iran's economic dividends. According to many experts, America's strong addition to sanctions and the Zionist regime's strong influence on its decision-making structures have raised very serious questions about America's will and ability to adhere to any possible commitment to removing sanctions. These negotiations have begun while the Middle East is witnessing sensitive diplomatic moves. The timing of these talks with U.S. President Donald Trump's upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE has added to the importance and sensitivity of this round of talks. Experts believe that the results of these talks could have a significant impact on the future of Iran-U.S. relations as well as regional stability.

Jam-e Jam: A game of getting points or end of diplomacy?

In a note, Jam-e-Jam addressed Steve Witkoff's controversial remarks regarding Iran's nuclear enrichment: Witkoff called for "zero enrichment, dismantling of the Natanz, Isfahan and Fordow facilities, and the destruction of centrifuges." Witkoff's harsh statements can be analyzed from several points of view. On the one side, Benjamin Netanyahu calls for zero enrichment and the complete dismantling of Iran's nuclear program in the style of the Libyan model. On the other side, the Trump administration is trying to weaken Iran's position in the negotiations with new sanctions against Iran's oil network and military threats. These harsh statements can be interpreted as part of the U.S. negotiation strategy to get points or prepare public opinion for the possible failure of the negotiations.

Iran has always shown its good intentions by maintaining cooperation with the Agency (IAEA) and considering proposals such as exporting some of its enriched uranium to Russia or stricter monitoring by the Agency, but Witkoff's statements, especially on the eve of the (fourth round of) negotiations, could be a sign of an attempt to find an excuse for military action or new sanctions.

Iran, Egypt discuss nuclear talks and Gaza ceasefire efforts



Iran's Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi (R) and his Egyptian counterpart Badr Abdelatty held a phone conversation on Monday

TEHRAN – A high-level conversation took place Monday between Iranian and Egyptian diplomats, focusing on the indirect negotiations between Tehran and Washington as well as the situation in Gaza.

Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, Iran's Foreign Minister, spoke by phone with his Egyptian counterpart, Badr Abdelatty, for a discussion that spanned regional developments, with a particular emphasis on the progress of nuclear talks.

Araghchi briefed Abdelatty on the recent fourth round of indirect nuclear negotiations held in Muscat. This ongoing dialogue with Washington has been a subject of keen interest

for Iran's allies and friends, who are regularly updated on the nuances and potential outcomes.

Abdelatty, on Egypt's side, voiced support for the discussions, underscoring Cairo's commitment to diplomatic solutions. He then shared vital updates on Egypt's active mediation efforts aimed at securing a lasting ceasefire in Gaza.

Both ministers agreed on the pressing need to immediately halt the Israeli strikes on Gaza and further addressed the broader issues of the regime's aggression and occupation in Lebanon and Syria, signaling a unified stance on regional stability.

Sazandegi: Travel to the region on eve of the fourth round of talks

Sazandegi commented on Araghchi's visit to Saudi Arabia and Qatar prior to the fourth round of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States in Oman. It wrote: Iran's continuous diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia clearly show that relations between Tehran and Riyadh are being strengthened and redefined, especially with the coming to power of the Pezeshkian government, and one of the reasons for this is the need for regional convergence and continuous consultations with neighbors. Israel's moves in creating crises in the region and geopolitical changes in the Middle East have gained more speed because regional and trans-regional actors are also adopting policies in the region based on their own interests, which can sometimes lead to a conflict of interests. An important point that should be considered in this regard is that Araghchi's visits to Saudi Arabia and Qatar took place at a time when two important developments were the focus of attention. The first one is the fourth round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States in Muscat. The second one is U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, which will begin on Tuesday. The coincidence of these developments can undoubtedly have an important outcome that we should wait for.

Etemad: Suspension neither in Iran's nor America's interest

In an interview with Saeed Shariati, a reformist political activist, Etemad examined the fourth round of negotiations and some new demands raised by U.S. officials regarding Iran's nuclear enrichment. He said: It is highly important to realize that Iran's national interests lie in reaching a stable situation. Continuing to suspend the talks is problematic and increases expectations in various areas. On one hand, negotiations can lead to the right decision and a prudent choice by both countries. On the other hand, it can lead to a critical and tense situation for both countries. Negotiations will either succeed or fail, but Iran's economy and market should not be overshadowed by negotiations. This atmosphere of suspense should give way to a dynamic atmosphere that ultimately works in the favor of the negotiators. Ultimately, we should all be optimistic about future developments and hope that our national interests will be realized through the talks.

Tehran condemns EU's 'abuse' of JCPOA snapback, offers path to revive nuclear diplomacy

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi issued a warning to European powers on Sunday, stating that any misuse of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)'s snapback mechanism would lead to the "end of Europe's role in the agreement" and "irreversible tensions."

In an X post originally posted in French as part of a broader op-ed for Le Point, Araghchi emphasized Tehran's readiness to "turn the page" on strained relations but stressed that European partners must reciprocate.

"We have officially warned all JCPOA signatories that any abuse of the snapback mechanism would lead to consequences—not only ending Europe's role in the deal, but potentially escalating tensions to a point of no return," Araghchi wrote, criticizing the E3 (France, Germany, and the UK) for contributing to the diplomatic impasse.

He also stated that Iran had initiated preliminary talks with European deputy foreign ministers following consultations with Russia and China, calling it a "fragile yet promising" step. However, he cautioned, "Time is running fast," urging Europe to act decisively to avoid further deterioration. The warning comes against a backdrop of friction with France, whose Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot recently accused Iran of being "on the cusp of developing a nuclear weapon" during a closed-door UN Security Council meeting on non-proliferation.

While Barrot "ruled out military action" and endorsed U.S.-led diplomatic efforts, he threatened that



UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer (L), French President Emmanuel Macron (C), and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (R) travel together on a train from Poland to Ukraine as part of a diplomatic visit aimed at strengthening European support for Kyiv on May 11, 2025.

Europe would "not hesitate for a second" to trigger the snapback mechanism and reimpose sanctions if the JCPOA expires without guarantees for European security.

The mechanism, embedded in UN Resolution 2231, allows JCPOA signatories to automatically reinstate all pre-2015 UN sanctions on Iran if it breaches nuclear commitments.

From Tehran's perspective, invoking the snapback mechanism is not only unjustified and illegal but a reckless political gambit that would entrench the E3 in direct opposition to Iran, extinguishing any remaining chances for diplomatic reconciliation.

Iran contends that Europe's readiness to trigger snapback—despite the U.S.'s withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018—demonstrates bad faith and blatant disregard for Tehran's compliance efforts.

Europe's hostile acts: MEK, repression, and complicity in genocide

Europe's recent policies toward Iran have drawn sharp condemnation for their glaring double standards, ranging from tacit support for anti-Iranian terrorist groups to the suppression of pro-Palestinian activism and enabling the Israeli regime's genocidal war on Gaza.

These actions, framed under the pretext of counterterrorism or upholding international law, suggest a systematic agenda against Tehran.

France's open endorsement of Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) rallies lays bare a brazen display of state-sponsored hypocrisy. By giving a platform to a group with a violent legacy of brutal assassinations and collusion with Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War, France not only legitimizes extremist agendas but also

undermines its claimed commitment to human rights.

Despite its violent history, the MEK has been permitted to operate freely in France, holding high-profile events advocating "regime change" in Iran. Tehran has repeatedly condemned Paris for harboring terrorists while simultaneously prosecuting Iranian activists under draconian counterterrorism laws.

This double standard is further exemplified by France's crackdown on Iranian dissidents advocating Palestinian rights.

Shahin Hazamy, a French-Iranian journalist, became the third Iranian citizen detained in 18 months after documenting Israeli atrocities in Gaza. His arrest in April involved a violent raid by masked security forces who ransacked his home and seized him without explanation.

Hazamy had faced judicial harassment since his viral video of a Palestinian mother holding her bloodied child at a Paris rally drew 50 million views, exposing France's complicity in silencing Gaza solidarity.

Europe's complicity in the Israeli regime's war crimes extends to its continued arms sales to Tel Aviv. Despite Germany's pause in approving "war weapons" exports to Israel in 2024 due to legal challenges, prior approvals totaling €326.5 million in military equipment, including components for tanks and ammunition, have fueled Israel's devastation of Gaza. According to SIPRI, German arms exports to Israel, including frigates and torpedoes, accounted for 30% of Israel's major arms imports between 2019 and 2023.

Manama's official stance: We will not allow attacks on Iran from our soil

From page 1 ► In reality, the new anti-Iran puzzle to provoke Trump into action against Tehran has two main pillars: first, portraying Iran as weak, and second, suggesting that Iran is compensating for this weakness by pursuing nuclear weapons. This scenario has been carefully staged over the past two months to place "military action against Iran" as a credible option on the desk of the new U.S. president, allowing Trump, given his unpredictable and impulsive nature, to potentially act on it.

The remarks made months ago by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution support this claim, highlighting that the Western side is laying the groundwork for such a scenario, regardless of its success or failure. He explicitly addressed the U.S. president, saying: "That delusional fantasist claimed Iran has been weakened; the future will show who has been weakened. Saddam, too, attacked Iran, thinking it was weak. Reagan, imagining Iran's weakness, provided extensive support to Saddam's regime.

Arab states now understand that the security landscape in West Asia is intertwined with Iran's security

They—and dozens of other deluded figures—met their fate, while the Islamic Republic grew stronger day by day."

In this context, Bahraini officials, with a correct understanding of the actual developments in West Asia and aiming to leverage regional capacities for collective security, are striving to normalize bilateral relations with Tehran while preventing any foreign military adventurism against Iran in the region. Given that Bahrain hosts the largest U.S. military base in the region, Manama's declaration can be seen as a highly positive step toward stabilizing security in West Asia.

Indeed, Bahrain—with an accurate grasp of Iran's power and an understanding of the behind-the-scenes portrayal of Iran's weakness engagement with Tehran, much like what happened weeks ago with the visit of a senior Saudi official to Iran.

This model, which previously succeeded in



de-escalating tensions between Tehran and Riyadh during the Saudi-led coalition war in Yemen, could now also facilitate dialogue between Tehran and Washington.

The private conversation between Mohammed bin Salman and Seyed Abbas Araghchi—technically managed by Iran's foreign minister—about the potential consequences of the U.S. using military bases in certain Arab countries has sent a clear message to other regional states: the security equation in West Asia is a function of Iran's security, and disrupting this balance benefits no country—especially the Arab states along the Persian Gulf.

No threat will go unanswered as Iran armed forces stand on full alert: top commander

TEHRAN – Iran's senior military official has reiterated the country's unwavering readiness to defend its national interests, territorial waters, and regional influence.

Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, made the remarks on Monday as he visited southern Hormozgan Province on Sunday to assess operational preparedness in the strategic Persian Gulf region. Accompanied by Army Commander-in-Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi and Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani, Bagheri toured naval and combat units in Bandar Abbas and the surrounding coastal zones.

"This visit to the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Sea of Oman is aimed at evaluating the operational status of the region and ensuring the full preparedness of our forces—especially the Army's Strategic Naval Force and the IRGC Navy—to defend both our territorial and international waters," Bagheri said while addressing commanders at the Army's First Naval Zone.

He emphasized that the Iranian Armed Forces are capable of responding to any potential threat: "No scenario will catch us off guard, and no threat will go unanswered."

Path to strength lies in resistance: former IRGC chief

In a separate development, Major General



Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri, along with Army Commander-in-Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi and Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani visits the southern Hormozgan Province

Mohsen Rezaei, a former commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) and current member of the Expediency Council, echoed similar sentiments during a ceremony in Tehran.

Speaking on Monday, Rezaei praised the sacrifices of security forces who protect key national figures, highlighting the strategic significance of their role.

Turning to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Rezaei condemned Israel's "unprecedented crimes," accusing Tel Aviv of violating international human rights.

"What's even more shameful is the silence of certain Western and regional governments in the face of these atrocities," he added, warning that Israel has now turned its attention to Syria and Iraq with plans to fragment both countries.

"In such conditions, our only path to progress and dignity is through resistance. It was in the field of jihad and martyrdom that we found our identity—and that is where we must continue to stand," Rezaei concluded.

Meanwhile, amid renewed calls by some Western officials to expand the scope of diplomatic negotiations with Iran, Tehran has once again underlined its red lines: peaceful uranium enrichment and sanctions relief are non-negotiable.

The Islamic Republic has consistently insisted that its nuclear program remains peaceful. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has repeatedly verified that Iran's nuclear activities, which are subject to the most intrusive inspections in the world, show no signs of weaponization.

Nonetheless, voices in Washington—including U.S. President Donald Trump—have demanded the complete dismantlement of Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Iran has firmly rejected such calls, emphasizing that its defense capabilities and regional influence are also off the table in any talks.

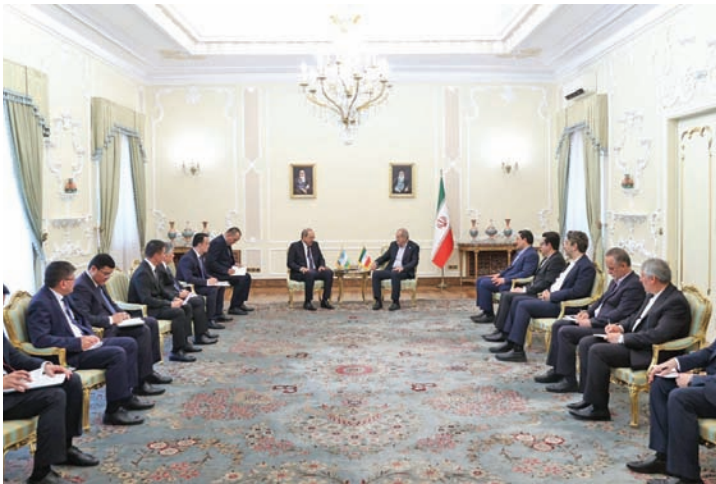
Pezeshkian hails deep Iran-Uzbekistan ties as inseparable

From Page 1 ▶ The president pointed to centuries of shared history, culture, language, and religious heritage, stating that “geographic borders have never—and will never—divide our peoples.”

He emphasized that frequent exchanges between officials and citizens would help elevate relations to a new level. “There is vast untapped potential in Iran-Uzbekistan cooperation, and we can deepen ties in all fields by building on our extensive common ground.”

President Pezeshkian also expressed interest in hosting President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tehran, calling for the swift implementation of previously signed agreements.

Prime Minister Aripov conveyed Mirziyoyev's greetings and



praised the ongoing efforts by both governments to strengthen ties. During his visit, Aripov toured an exhibition of Iran's scientific, industrial, and technological advancements, voicing admiration for the country's progress and expressing optimism about the

future of bilateral trade.

On Sunday, Uzbek Prime Minister Aripov met with Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref. During the meeting, Aref said strong political will from the presidents of both countries has

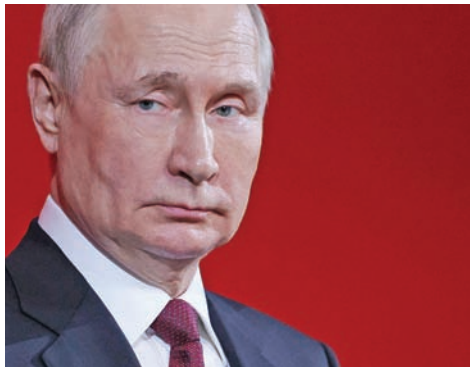
led to a “remarkable expansion” in relations between Iran and Uzbekistan.

“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.

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.

Putin's Tehran visit in works, says govt. spokesperson



Russian President Vladimir Putin

From Page 1 ▶

A legacy of strengthened ties

Putin's last visit to Iran in July 2022, his first outside the former Soviet Union fol-

lowing the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict, included high-level talks with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Since then, bilateral coordination has intensified, with both nations navigating overlapping sanctions regimes and advancing joint initiatives in Syria, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

In a pivotal April meeting, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi delivered a written message from Ayatollah Khamenei to President Putin in Moscow.

The communication outlined Tehran's stance on critical regional and global matters and reaffirmed Iran's “unwavering commitment to deepening ties with Russia as a trusted partner.”

Araghchi hailed the strategic treaty as a “cornerstone for long-term cooperation,” while Putin praised the alliance as a “stabilizing force in the region and a shield for our shared interests.”

During their April discussions, the two sides addressed pressing issues, including the Ukraine conflict, nuclear negotiations, and multilateral efforts to counteract Western sanctions.

Putin's potential trip to Tehran is viewed as an opportunity to advance collaboration on regional security architectures, sanctions mitigation, and joint economic projects, particularly in energy and transit corridors.

Analysts suggest the visit could also pave the way for expanded Russo-Iranian technological exchanges and defense coordination.

Iran into 2025 Asian Beach Handball Championship quarters

TEHRAN – Iran booked their place in the quarterfinals round of the 2025 Asian Beach Handball Championship, beating the Philippines 2-0 (22-14, 18-6) on Sunday.

Team Melli had previously defeated Pakistan, India, and Jordan earlier in Group B.

The Persians will face the Maldives in quarterfinals on Monday.

The tournament is being held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat, Oman, from May 6 to 15.

Additionally, the competition serves as a qualification tournament for the Beach Handball World Championship.

Group A consists of Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Maldives and Hong Kong.

Confident Iran to lock horns with Chinese Taipei

TEHRAN – Chinese Taipei's defenses will be tested to the fullest when the team meet defending champions Iran in the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup China 2025 quarter-finals at the Hohhot Sports Centre on Tuesday.

Head coach Hsieh Li-Chua will need to bring out the best from her players with focus on defensive organization and looking for opportunities on the counter against an experienced Iran side.

It has been a mixed bag of results for Chinese Taipei, who started off with a sparkling 6-1 win over Uzbekistan before China rattled them with a 5-3 defeat on Matchday Two.

Chinese Taipei was pushed to the limits in its final group game against Australia, with Liu Chinling sealing the three points with four minutes left.

“It is hard for us in the first place to play strong opposition (in women's futsal), so this is a very good opportunity for us to grow. If we don't take the first step, there won't be any future for Chinese Taipei futsal so this first step is what we need to do,” said Hsieh.

Iran is chasing a third title - having won both previous editions - but has not shown its best form across the group stage.

Foruzan Solymani's side was pushed to the limits in its opening match against the Philippines before sealing the win with three minutes left. A 3-1 defeat of Hong Kong, China followed before the Central Asian side played out a 0-0 stalemate against Vietnam on Sunday.

Solymani, however, will be confident Iran will find its groove in the knockout stage but the 55-year-old is keeping her tactics close to her chest.

Tabiat power past Qadsia in FIBA WASL Final 8

TEHRAN – Stedmon Lemon rewrote the FIBA WASL Final 8 history books in leading Tabiat past Qadsia, 112-85, for a stupendous start to their campaign Sunday night at the Stade Nouhad Nafal.

The American winger erupted for 45 points, resetting the competition's record for most points in a game which was previously held by Markell Johnson when he had 42 to lead Astana past Manama, 122-117, last year.

All in all, the 32-year-old shot an excellent 17-of-22 from the floor, including a 4-of-6 clip from three, and also collected 6 rebounds, 8 assists, and 4 steals to finish with an efficiency of 52 - a record in itself.

The team also drew a stellar showing from lead playmaker Sina Vahedi, who registered 31 points on 11-of-17 shooting from the floor, 5 rebounds, and 10 assists, plus a steal to net an efficiency of 40.

Ivan Buva was the only other double-digit scorer with 14 points in the triumph.

Tabiat will look to finish the group stage un-

beaten - and more importantly reach the Semi-Finals - when they take on WASL-Persian Gulf League champions Shabab Al Ahli on Thursday.

Sek Henry, meanwhile, had 24 points to lead Qadsia, who lost big man Chinemelu Elonu at the 7:12-mark of the third after suffering an apparent leg injury, never to return. He exited with 21 points to his name.

Ali Yazdani becomes first Iranian to win an ITF singles title

TEHRAN – Ali Yazdani made history, becoming the first Iranian to win an ITF singles title at M15 Tehran and inspiring a new generation of tennis players in his country on a bright Sunday afternoon at Tehran's Enghelab Sports Complex.

Yazdani, 21, the world No. 1507, defeated top-seeded Indian Karan Singh - ranked over 1000 spots above him at No. 475, 6-4 6-3 for a historic triumph.

His win ended a years-long drought for Iranian tennis on the international stage. Until now, no Iranian had managed to win a singles title on the ITF World Tennis Tour despite several near misses. Veterans like Anoosha Shahgholi and Hamidreza Nadaf had reached the semi-finals, while Shahin Khaledan came closest in 2018, finishing runner-up in an ITF final in Georgia.

The atmosphere at Enghelab was electric. An unusually large crowd had gathered for a tournament at this level, underscoring the emotional weight of the moment and the significance of Yazdani's run for Iranian tennis.

Despite the weight of expectation on his shoulders, Yazdani remained composed throughout the final and credited the home crowd for playing a vital role in his performance, itftennis.com reported.

“I have to sincerely thank the wonderful people of my country,” he said. “Without their presence and support, this victory would not have been possible. I dedicate this win to the kind people of Iran. The energy I received from the crowd was incredible – I can only say thank you.”

He also credited his father, who introduced him to sport and stood by him throughout the ups and downs.

Gholizadeh scores as Lech Poznan beat Legia Warsaw

TEHRAN – Lech Poznan defeated Legia Warsaw 1-0 in the 32nd round match of the PKO Bank Polski Ekstraklasa on Sunday.

In the 78th minute, Iranian winger Ali Gholizadeh scored from distance - the ball flew over the heads of the players in the penalty area and entered the goal in the upper left corner, near the far post.

Lech Poznan remained top of the standing with 66 points, one point above Raków Cz?stochowa.

Legia Warsaw sit fifth with 50 points.

Veisi wins silver at 2025 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships

TEHRAN – Dorsa Veisi of Iran claimed a silver medal at the 2025 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships on Sunday.

She lost to Shao Yen Wu of Chinese Taipei in the women -55kg final. Both rounds finished 3-2 in favor of Wu.

Day three of the World Taekwondo Cadet Championships will feature competition in the M -45kg, M +65kg, W -47kg and W -51kg.

The World Taekwondo Cadet Championships will run until Wednesday in Fujairah, the UAE.

Washington's self-sabotage: Why US media tactics threaten Iran deal prospects

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – The fourth round of nuclear negotiations between the United States and Iran, held in Muscat on Sunday, May 11, concluded on a surprisingly constructive note. According to Esmail Baqaei, spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry, the discussions were “difficult but useful,” allowing both sides to better understand each other's positions and explore practical pathways toward resolving long-standing disputes.

However, this modest diplomatic progress has been overshadowed by a media-driven pressure campaign emanating from Washington. A series of statements from key American negotiators—most notably Steve Witkoff, representing President Donald Trump—threatened to derail the fragile momentum. In an interview with the conservative outlet Breitbart News, Witkoff reiterated hardline U.S. demands and dismissed the potential for compromise. The timing and tone of his remarks suggest a deliberate effort to use the media as a tool of political coercion, rather than pursuing genuine diplomacy.

A Familiar impasse

At the heart of the discord remains the issue of uranium enrichment. The United States has insisted that Iran must dismantle its enrichment infrastructure to “prevent” the development of nuclear weapons. Witkoff went further, demanding that Iran not only halt enrichment but also decommission its centrifuges, export its nuclear fuel, and transform its entire nuclear program into a model akin to the Bushehr power plant, which lacks enrichment capabilities.

Tehran, for its part, views such conditions as both unrealistic and deeply insulting. Iran maintains that its nuclear program is exclusively peaceful and that

its rights under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) include the ability to enrich uranium for civilian purposes. The Islamic Republic has consistently pointed out that several other nations operate enrichment facilities without being accused of militarization.

The insistence on dismantling Iran's nuclear infrastructure is perceived in Tehran not merely as a security concern but as a direct challenge to its sovereignty. Iranian officials have repeatedly warned that any agreement requiring the renunciation of domestic enrichment would be unacceptable and tantamount to national capitulation.

The legacy of the JCPOA

The debate is further complicated by the ghost of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the landmark 2015 nuclear deal from which the United States unilaterally withdrew in 2018 under President Trump. The JCPOA was a carefully negotiated compromise that offered Iran sanctions relief in exchange for verifiable limits on its nuclear activities. By abandoning the deal, Washington not only undermined years of multilateral diplomacy but also eroded trust in future American commitments.

In his interview, Witkoff signaled that any new agreement must avoid the so-called “sunset clauses” of the JCPOA—provisions that allowed certain restrictions on Iran to expire after a number of years. Yet his critique conveniently omits that the U.S. exit from the deal occurred before those clauses could even take effect. For Iranian policymakers, this selective memory reflects a broader pattern of American unreliability.

A media campaign as pressure tactic

What distinguishes the current phase of talks is not only the content of U.S. demands but



also the means by which they are communicated. The choice of Breitbart News as the platform for outlining hardline positions was no accident. It plays into a broader American strategy of using media appearances to apply external pressure on Tehran, possibly to score domestic political points as much as to influence negotiations.

Rather than conducting talks in the discreet channels typically favored by diplomats, certain factions in Washington appear to be waging a parallel negotiation through the press. This media blitz complicates the work of negotiators on the ground and undermines trust between the two parties. It also signals to Tehran that future agreements may once again be at the mercy of U.S. electoral cycles and media narratives.

From Iran's viewpoint, this strategy is both destabilizing and disingenuous. Iranian negotiators have long complained of “moving goalposts” and media leaks designed to weaken Tehran's position ahead of critical meetings. The recent statements by Witkoff, and their amplification in conservative U.S. media, are likely to be viewed in this light.

Iran's diplomatic track record

Despite decades of sanctions and hostility, Iran has consistently demonstrated a willingness to engage in dialogue.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

‘Comprehensive planning required for maritime-oriented economy development’



TEHRAN- The head of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) emphasized that a comprehensive planning is required for the development of maritime-oriented economy in the country.

Emphasizing the importance of aggregating demand and creating a systematic plan for the development of the maritime industry, Farshad Moqimi said: “Interaction with various sectors and cooperation with foreign business partners are requirements for the development of this industry.”

Earlier this month, Transport and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh elaborated on the most important programs and macro policies of her ministry, including maritime-oriented development.

She said that the main part of the maritime-oriented economy policies is related to the southern coasts, including Bandar Abbas, Chabahar, and all the provinces located on the southern borders of the country.

“With the planning and comprehensive plan that we are preparing, we will take action to develop the southern coasts with a maritime-oriented economy approach”, the minister further emphasized.

In late December, President Masoud Pezeshkian said that a detailed strategy and private sector’s contribution is necessary for transformation in the maritime-oriented economy.

Making the remarks in a session on the development of maritime-oriented economy, the president, while emphasizing the development of a detailed strategy in this field, addressed the necessity of the presence of the private sector in the industries related to the sea and stated: “For the presence of the private sector, it is necessary to prepare and compile the economic frameworks and com-

mercial annexes of the development plans of the sea economy.”

He further put emphasis on the high importance of sea-oriented industries, especially the shipbuilding industry, and said the 14th government pays special attention to sea-related industries and is doing its best to comprehensively examine the issues, problems and opportunities facing the country in this field.

President Pezeshkian has referred to the government’s prioritization of the maritime-oriented economy and the importance of the prosperity of this sector on the country’s growth, development and prosperity, and stated that the government is determined to implement maritime-oriented development plans.

Meanwhile, Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), in its December report, underlined the importance of the country’s maritime capacities and the role that the sector can play in developing the country’s economy.

According to the report, maritime sector in Iran has very high capacity in various fields including trade, ports and shipping due to the country’s strategic location, long coastal strip in the north and south and access to open waters, and can bring economic prosperity to the country.

“About a third of the country’s borders are water borders, so we cannot ignore port and shipping activities because for a country that has long water borders and access to open waters, the prosperity of shipping and maritime trade is essential. Therefore, the government should pay full attention to the strengths and weaknesses of this sector and make the best use of the current capacities with proper planning,” the report read.

Increasing the share of the maritime sector in the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) under the framework of the newly proposed maritime-oriented policy should be one of the most important concerns of the government, which can be achieved with proper planning, the PMO said.

The share of the sea in the gross domestic product in advanced coastal countries such as the European Union is 50 percent, but the figure is not significant in Iran despite having more than 5,800 kilometers of coastal strip, and this is despite the fact that there are huge capacities for the transit of goods from Central Asian countries.

Niger welcomes imports of Iranian mineral products: envoy

TEHRAN – Niger’s Ambassador to Iran Seydou Zetou Ali said his country welcomes imports of mineral and mining industry products from Iran and is keen for the Islamic Republic to play a concrete role in Niger’s mining sector.

In a meeting on Monday with Mohammad Aghajani, Iran’s deputy industry minister and head of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), Ali expressed hope that a cooperation agreement between the two countries would be finalized swiftly, avoiding bureaucratic delays.

He invited the IMIDRO chief to visit Niger to explore mining opportunities firsthand and said he hoped a memorandum of understanding would be signed during an upcoming visit to Iran by Niger’s minister of mines. The ambassador also highlighted the importance of developing trade logistics, including shipping and transportation links.

Aghajani said Iran views Africa as a strategic partner in mining and emphasized Iran’s readiness to export mineral chain products and engineering know-how to Niger. He noted that Iran’s Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade and IMIDRO are focused on unlocking Iran’s full potential in this sector through international cooperation.

He added that in the first phase of cooperation, IMIDRO plans to expand exports of mineral products and engineering expertise to Niger, subject to legal and procedural requirements.

Several IMIDRO officials, including Somayeh Kholousi, head of planning and capac-

ity-building for mines, Omid Emami, head of mining development projects, and Amir-Nojan Younesian, director of investment and economic development, also presented Iran’s capabilities during the session.

Iran exported around \$14 billion worth of mineral and mining industry products last year. However, African countries currently represent a small share of that market. Iran has around 7,000 active mines, producing 600 million tons of minerals annually, which are a backbone of domestic production and employment.

In late April, Iran and Niger signed a joint cooperation agreement during the third meeting of their Joint Economic Committee, held on the sidelines of the Iran Expo 2025.

According to Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), the event took place at the Persian Gulf Pearl Hall in Tehran and was attended by Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Trade Promotion Organization chief Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, and Nigerian Petroleum Minister Sahabi Oumarou.

“This committee has resumed after a 13-year hiatus, and we hope the joint cooperation agreement will help elevate the level of economic relations between the two countries,” Atabak said at the opening of the meeting.

He pointed to the currently low volume of trade between Iran and Niger, stressing that the Trade Promotion Organization is responsible for following up on and implementing the provisions of the agreement. He also called on Niger to assign a designated organization to oversee the execution of the accord.

Uzbek PM promises tax, customs exemptions for Iranian investors amid growing economic ties

From Page 1 ▶ Although trade between Iran and Uzbekistan has reached a relatively stable level, Aripov noted that the current \$500 million annual trade volume does not reflect the full potential of bilateral ties. He projected that Uzbekistan’s GDP will grow to \$160 billion within five years and pointed to the \$70 billion in foreign investment attracted last year as evidence of a secure investment climate.

Aripov underscored the government’s commitment to promoting a free-market economy, enhancing production incentives, and expanding foreign trade.

He said Uzbekistan exported over \$2.5 billion in agricultural food products last year and has preferential or free trade agreements with many countries, offering significant opportunities for Iranian businesses.

“We assure Iranian economic actors that if they invest in our industrial zones, they will be exempt from taxes and customs duties. The government will also provide necessary infrastructure and guarantee the repatriation of profits,” he said.

ICCIMA calls for \$1b trade target, visa waiver



Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov (L) and Iran’s Vice President Mohammad-Reza Aref

During the same forum, held concurrently with the Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Economic Committee meetings at Tehran’s Sa’dabad Palace, the head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Samad Hassanzadeh, stressed the need to raise bilateral trade to \$1.0 billion and called on Uzbekistan to waive visa requirements for Iranian nationals to facilitate travel and business.

Hassanzadeh described the event as a meaningful step toward strengthening ties, noting that the past year witnessed close and serious cooperation be-

tween public and private sectors of both countries.

He highlighted the cultural affinity and historical friendship between the two nations and called for swift implementation of a visa waiver, improved flight connectivity, and reduced airfare.

Referring to Iran’s advancements despite sanctions—especially in machinery production, food processing, and construction materials—Hassanzadeh said these achievements present unique opportunities for Uzbekistan.

He emphasized the strategic importance of Iran’s geographical

location through its North-South and East-West transit corridors and invited Uzbek investors to participate in the International North–South Transit Corridor (IN-STC) and Makran coastal development projects.

Hassanzadeh also called for expanded cooperation in transport infrastructure and logistics, suggesting the formation of a joint committee to pursue these goals. He highlighted Iran’s readiness to export technical and engineering services and collaborate on Uzbekistan’s major infrastructure projects.

He further noted that significant progress had been made in talks over a preferential trade agreement between the two countries, expressing hope that the accord would soon be implemented to remove discriminatory tariffs and boost trade.

Finally, Hassanzadeh stressed the importance of removing financial barriers and banking restrictions through stronger collaboration between the private sectors. He encouraged joint investment in industrial ventures and the organization of regular trade missions, exhibitions, and seminars to help realize the full potential of bilateral ties.

Iron ore pellet export reaches \$918m in a year

TEHRAN- Iran’s value of iron ore pellet export stood at \$918 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20), the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) reported.

As ISPA announced, the figure shows a 16-percent annual drop, as the country had exported \$1,096 billion of iron ore pellet in the year 1402.

Pellets are a processed form of iron ore

utilized in the steel industry, specifically designed for direct application in blast furnaces or direct reduction plants. These pellets are spherical in shape, with diameters ranging from 8 to 18 millimeters.

Annual tomato export stands at \$233m

TEHRAN – The value of Iran’s tomato export stood at \$233 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 agricultural products during the year, marking an 11 percent increase in weight compared to the previous year.

Key export commodities included various types of pistachios, tomatoes, and dates. Pistachio exports led the sector, generating \$1.5 billion in revenue, followed by \$233 million in tomatoes and \$205 million in dates.



Iran, Qatar customs officials agree to boost cooperation

TEHRAN – The head of Qatar’s General Authority of Customs met with the head of Iran’s Customs Administration and other senior Iranian customs officials in Tehran on Sunday to discuss ways to expand bilateral cooperation and share experiences aimed at facilitating and developing trade.

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the two sides explored strategies to enhance customs cooperation between the neighboring countries.

Foroud Asgari, Iran’s deputy economy minister and head of the Customs Administration, described the visit of Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Jamal and his accompanying delegation as highly significant, citing the friendly ties between Iran and Qatar.

During the meeting, Asgari briefed the Qatari delegation on Iran’s customs operations, emphasizing that all procedural formalities in the country are now handled through electronic systems.

Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Jamal praised Iran’s digital customs processes and expressed Qatar’s interest in expanding cooperation with Iran. He noted that the broader political and diplomatic alignment between the two nations offers a valuable opportunity to deepen customs collaboration.

Al-Jamal also took particular interest in Iran’s risk management system, which Asgari further elaborated on during the talks.

Asgari called on the Qatari side to expedite the clearance of Iranian shipments—especially perishable goods—at Al-Ruwais Port, and voiced Iran’s readiness to help resolve any related challenges.

The meeting aimed to promote mutual cooperation in areas such as trade facilitation, combating smuggling and customs violations, the secure exchange of electronic customs data, and the organization of joint training programs.

The two sides also agreed to conduct regular joint inspections of ports and customs facilities and to hold periodic meetings between their customs officials to ensure close coordination.

The 10th Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee meeting concluded on December 12, 2024, in Doha, with officials from both nations pledging to enhance bilateral economic ties and increase trade to \$1.0 billion annually.

The meeting, co-chaired by Iran’s Minister of Energy Abbas Ali-Abadi and Qatar’s Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal Al Thani, focused on expanding cooperation across multiple sectors, including energy, infrastructure, and trade.

The event featured four specialized committees: Trade (covering commerce, banking, and insurance), Infrastructure (transport, agriculture, and ICT), Social and Cultural (tourism, health, and research), and Energy (water, electricity, oil, and gas). Over 60 representatives from public and private

sectors of both countries participated in the discussions.

Ali-Abadi emphasized the strategic importance of the partnership, saying, “Today’s economic relations between Iran and Qatar require a strategic outlook.” He noted that current trade between the two countries stands at approximately \$200 million annually, with plans to increase it fivefold to \$1 billion in the near future.

The official further highlighted a significant energy project involving a 200-kilometer undersea power line to connect Iran and Qatar’s electricity networks. Initiated in March 2023, the feasibility study is in its final stages, with implementation set to follow approval.

“This project will revolutionize power transfer between the two nations during peak demand periods and enable electricity transit to third countries,” Ali-Abadi stated.

He also expressed Iran’s readiness to welcome Qatari investors, envisioning mutual investments of at least \$1 billion annually. Key focus areas include energy, transport, free trade zones, tourism, healthcare, and agriculture.

The Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee, established in 1995, has facilitated significant achievements, particularly in water and electricity sectors. The 10th session underlined both nations’ commitment to translating agreements into tangible outcomes and fostering regional cooperation.

At the end of the meeting, the

two sides signed a comprehensive cooperation document to determine the framework of cooperation in the coming year.

Speaking in an online meeting with Saleh Alkhulaifi, the deputy Industry and Commerce minister of Qatar, in late November 2024, Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, the head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), said that Iran seeks to reach one billion dollars in annual trade with Qatar.

Referring to the extensive political and cultural relations between the two countries, Dehghan Dehnavi said: “Despite the efforts of both sides, economic relations between Tehran and Doha have not reached the desired level.”

“Fruits and food products are Iran’s top exported items to Qatar, and it cannot be expected that the trade between the two countries will exceed one billion dollars with the export of such products, the official said.

According to the TPO head, the challenges in developing trade with Qatar are clear, and Iran is trying to increase the volume of trade with Qatar by developing a well-considered and coherent work plan.

Alkhulaifi for his part stated that the strict customs regulations in Qatar affect all countries, saying: “We will work to expedite the clearance of Iranian goods from Qatari ports and issue visas to Iranian businessmen, and we hope that the prospect of a billion-dollar trade between the two countries will be realized in the near future.”

Jolani's gamble: Surrendering fragmented Syria to US and Israel

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN - Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa (also known as Abu Mohammad al-Julani) has embarked on a controversial diplomatic campaign to secure U.S. sanctions relief, proposing a Trump Tower in Damascus and détente with Israel.

After nearly 14 years of civil war, this strategy shows a desperate attempt to stabilize Syria's collapsing economy and shattered society. However, Sharaa's actions reveal his leadership's weakness and represent a humiliating capitulation, especially his willingness to engage with Israel and court U.S. President Donald Trump in the face of ongoing Israeli airstrikes.

The severe economic situation in Syria, which is made worse by American sanctions that cut off Damascus from international financial systems, is the basis of Sharaa's approaches to Trump. In keeping with Trump's business-minded image, his plan for a Trump Tower in Damascus is a symbolic act that shows Syria is receptive to American influence and investment.

Jonathan Bass, a pro-Trump American activist who met with al-Sharaa in Damascus on April 30, described the campaign as a bid for a "business deal for the future of his country," which could encompass energy exploitation, cooperation against Iran, and engagement with Israel. Bass emphasized that al-Sharaa wants peace with his neighbors and sees a personal con-



nection with Trump, noting both leaders have survived "assassination attempts".

The idea of a lavish Trump-branded building in the war-torn Damascus, where millions of people live in poverty and basic infrastructure is in disarray, highlights the gap between Sharaa's goals and Syrians' needs.

Contentious engagement with Israel amid ongoing airstrikes

Sharaa's efforts to defuse the tension with Israel are still very contentious, particularly in light of Israel's ongoing airstrikes inside Syria, including near the presidential palace.

These attacks expose the weakness of Sharaa's position, even though Israel presents them as steps to defend the Druze community and combat extremist threats.

Sharaa acknowledged indirect de-escalation talks with Israel mediated through the United Arab Emirates. Bass claimed that Sharaa facilitated conversations that

might have led to face-to-face discussions. However, Israel's ongoing airstrikes imply that these diplomatic attempts were unsuccessful. By holding talks while being bombarded, Sharaa runs the risk of coming across as weak, which would allow Israel to set the terms and show how vulnerable Syria is to outside pressure.

Crucially, by putting external approval ahead of internal unity, Sharaa's policies have degraded Syria. His legitimacy is complicated by his history as an al-Qaeda-affiliated U.S.-designated terrorist, and his shift to Western and Israeli engagement alienates some Syrians, especially those who have penalized, pillaged, and occupied parts of their land and continue to attack their country.

Sharaa's credibility has been further damaged by the U.S.'s assessment that Damascus has not gone far enough in meeting sanctions relief requirements, such as expelling foreign fighters and destroying chemical weapons.

Skepticism of Sharaa's intentions is demonstrated by Washington's emphasis on counterterrorism, which is demonstrated by the participation of a top counterterrorism official in recent discussions with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani. Therefore, Sharaa is forced to make a series of compromises that reduce Syria's negotiating leverage.

Security challenges and risks of fragmentation

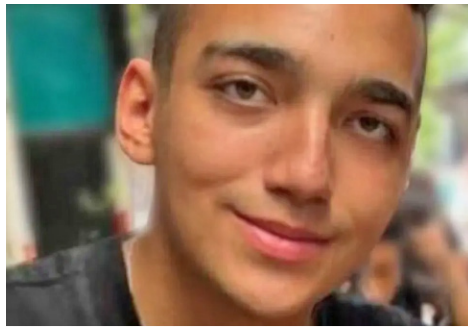
Furthermore, the context of Sharaa's overtures is Israeli incursions and sectarian violence, neither of which he has adequately addressed.

Israel's unilateral strikes and the Druze's opposition to disarmament demands in Jaramana and Sweida demonstrate his incapacity to protect or unite Syria's diverse communities. Sharaa risks further fragmentation by entrusting Syria's security to a U.S. administration that lacks a cohesive Syria policy by requesting Trump's intervention to "sort this relationship out" with Israel.

Sharaa's suggestions to Israel and Trump represent a practical but demeaning survival tactic.

Despite being intended to provide economic relief, the Trump Tower pitch and détente initiatives convey desperation and encourage foreign domination. In the face of Israeli airstrikes and internal turmoil, Sharaa's policies actively undermine Syria's sovereignty in addition to failing to restore its dignity.

Hamas transfers American captive Edan Alexander to Red Cross



Prisoner soldier Edan Alexander is expected to be released by Hamas at around 6:30 p.m., though there may be delays, an Israeli war official says.

Hamas will hand over Alexander to the Red Cross in southern Gaza's Khan Younis, the official says. No release ceremony is expected to be held by Hamas.

After being handed over to Red Cross representatives, Alexander will be brought to Israeli army special forces inside the Gaza Strip, and from there taken to a facility at the Re'im base.

At the Israeli Army facility near Re'im, Alexander will receive an initial physical and mental checkup, and meet with members of his family who will be waiting there. He will then be airlifted to Sourasky Hospital in Tel Aviv.

Children among 27 killed as Israel strikes Gaza before release of Israeli-American captive

The Israeli army killed at least 27 Palestinians, including children, and injured several others in strikes across the war-torn Gaza on Monday ahead of the scheduled release of Israeli-American captive Edan Alexander.

A medical source said that 16 Palestinians were killed and others injured in airstrikes targeting a school sheltering displaced people in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip.

According to an Anadolu reporter, fighter jets struck the Fatima Bint Asad School twice, resulting in the fatalities, including women and children.

Famine imminent in Gaza if Israel doesn't lift blockade, hunger monitor warns

Famine is imminent in Gaza, with half a million people at risk of starvation unless Israel lifts its siege, according to a grim new report released on Monday by a global hunger monitor, marking a major deterioration since its last report in October, Middle East Eye reported.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a global network of UN agencies and humanitarian groups, reported Monday that 477,000 people in Gaza, or 22 percent of the population, are facing "catastrophic" hunger from May to September, the highest classification level.

Over one million more are at "emergency" levels, marked by severe food gaps and high acute malnutrition.

"The current level of human suffering, destitution and harm is extreme and requires urgent action from all parties," the IPC said in its report.

The IPC warned that famine is imminent if the current conditions persist. The ongoing Israeli blockade, in place since 2 March, has severely restricted the entry of essential food and medical supplies into Gaza.

China and US agree to ease tariffs for 90 days as trade war talks extended

China and the United States have agreed to suspend some of the heavy trade tariffs imposed against one another as they prepare to extend negotiations aimed at lowering trade war tensions, Al Jazeera reported.

The two countries issued a joint statement on Monday, following two days of trade talks in Geneva, Switzerland.

They described the negotiations, which came after U.S. President Donald Trump's nationalist agenda prompted a spiral of increasingly heavy duties, as positive.

Global markets reacted positively to the news, with stock markets in Hong Kong, the U.S. and Europe rising.

In the statement, Beijing and Washington said they recognize the importance of their bilateral economic and trade relationship to both countries and the global economy.

(Source: The Guardian)

Israeli troops fall in deadly Gaza ambush



From page 1 ► The Palestinian resistance fighters in the Gaza Strip continue to confront Israeli occupation forces, inflicting losses on both personnel and equipment.

Among its latest announcements, the armed wing of Hamas, the al-Qassam Brigades, stated they had successfully lured an occupation force

into a minefield east of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian official told Reuters that Hamas is engaged in talks with the U.S. administration concerning a potential ceasefire in Gaza and the entry of humanitarian aid into the besieged enclave.

These diplomatic efforts come amid reports of rising tension between U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, particularly over the handling of the genocidal war on Gaza.

In an official statement, Hamas confirmed it "has held communications with the U.S. administration in recent days, during which the movement expressed a high level of positivity.

The 'Israeli' soldier with dual American citizenship, Edan Alexander, will be released as part of the steps taken toward a ceasefire, the opening

of crossings, and the entry of aid and relief to our people in the Gaza Strip."

The statement further emphasized that the Palestinian resistance movement "affirms its readiness to immediately begin intensive negotiations and exert serious efforts to reach a final agreement to end the war, implement a mutually agreed-upon captive exchange, and ensure that the Gaza Strip is managed by an independent professional body."

The Red Cross will facilitate the handover. Al-Qassam military spokesman Abu Ubaida also confirmed that a decision has been made to release "the Zionist soldier holding American citizenship, captive Edan Alexander."

The move has sparked outrage in Israeli media, highlighting frustration over the regime's failure to secure the release of Israeli captives held in Gaza despite its ongoing military campaign.

Hamas thwarts Mahmoud Abbas's goal ahead of his ill-intentioned visit to Beirut

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Lebanese and Palestinian factions in Lebanon are anticipating the repercussions of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's planned visit to Beirut on Lebanon and the situation of displaced Palestinians, especially since the issue of Palestinian resistance weapons has come under scrutiny.

These factions express deep concern that the anti-Resistance Lebanese team would definitely exploit Abbas' anti-Resistance positions—which have become exposed as clear as day since Al-Aqsa Flood Op.—to liquidate the Resistance and the Palestinian cause.

Following the statement issued by Lebanon's Supreme Defense Council, the Lebanese authorities escalated their attacks against Hamas under the pretext of preserving "Lebanese national security".

This move is an integral part of pressure from the embassies of Washington and Riyadh without taking into account Lebanon's unique situation.

ation.

President Joseph Aoun has repeatedly claimed that Lebanon supports the Palestinian cause, but—in his own words—"it has paid a heavy price and cannot continue to pay the price."

Reportedly, Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji is moving toward closing Hamas's offices in Lebanon and imposing strict measures in line with disarming the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon, under the flimsy pretext that this is what the Palestinian Authority wants.

Ahead of the start of the tourist season in Lebanon, observers have warned of the impact of any clash between Lebanese security forces and Hamas, as Beirut seems inclined to designate Hamas as a "terrorist" organization, like Jund al-Sham and Usbat al-Ansar.

Sources close to Hamas told Tehran Times that they understand the U.S.-led Israeli major plot against them and all Resistance forces in Lebanon, warning that the anti-Resistance team is facilitating a forceful resettlement of



displaced Palestinians in Lebanon.

The Palestinian Authority's blatant concessions are consistent with those of the HTS-led de facto regime in Damascus, i.e., encircling Palestinian resistance factions and preventing them from engaging in any activity, even political or social.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

UK veterans accuse colleagues of war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan

"They handcuffed a young boy and shot him"

From page 1 ► "They handcuffed a young boy and shot him," said one veteran of the SAS in Afghanistan. "He was clearly a child, not even close to fighting age."

The government has said that anyone with any evidence should contact the public inquiry.

Mike Martin, a Liberal Democrat MP and member of the defense select committee, said the accounts echoed those of Afghan families.

"This is the latest in a long series of evidence that we have heard relating to war crimes committed by British special forces

in Afghanistan," he told the BBC Today program on Monday. "When we all joined the army and went overseas to serve, we did it because we were exercising legal judgment and exercising force in a legal way. And often when we did that we put ourselves in danger."

He added: "To hear now that the elite soldiers were casting aside those rules deliberately lets us down."

Panorama also claimed that David Cameron was repeatedly warned during his tenure as prime minister that British special forces were killing civilians in Afghanistan.

His spokesperson said it was "right that we await the official findings of the inquiry". They added that "any suggestion that Lord Cameron colluded in covering up allegations of serious criminal wrongdoing is total nonsense".

The allegations are based on interviews conducted by investigators from the BBC's Panorama program, from more than 30 veterans who served with or alongside UK special forces in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Richard Bennett, the UN-appointed special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, said the allegations

highlighted "the need for comprehensive accountability and justice for victims and their families".

A Ministry of Defense spokesperson said: "We are fully committed to supporting the independent inquiry relating to Afghanistan as its work continues.

"It is not appropriate for the MOD to comment on allegations which may be within the scope of the statutory inquiry, or to speculate on outcomes.

Tehran, Tashkent explore museum exhibitions and heritage cooperation



TEHRAN – Iran has expressed readiness to expand cultural cooperation with Uzbekistan, particularly in the areas of joint museum exhibitions, world heritage registrations, and historical restoration projects.

Those areas of cooperation were highlighted on Sunday during a meeting between Ali Darabi, Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, and Tursunali Kuziev, the first deputy director of the Cultural Heritage Agency of Uzbekistan, Mehr reported.

Darabi emphasized the deep cultural and civilizational ties between the two countries, stating that Iran is prepared to collaborate on drafting joint files for UNESCO World Heritage registration, organizing museum exhibitions, and engaging in restoration projects.

"Iran and Uzbekistan share profound historical and cultural connections. These commonalities offer an excellent foundation for strengthening bilateral cooperation in cultural heritage," Darabi said.

Archaeological survey reveals evidence of Paleolithic human presence in Kerman plain

TEHRAN – An archaeological team has uncovered evidence of continuous human presence in the central plains of Kerman, southern Iran, stretching from the Paleolithic period to modern times.

Amin Mahani, head of the archaeological team and director of the Goharriz Qanat World Heritage Site, announced that the first season of archaeological surveys in the Mahan district of Kerman has revealed significant findings, including traces of prehistoric human occupation.

The project, conducted under the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, focused on identifying archaeological sites, historical areas, and ancient settlements in the Mahan region. The findings demonstrate a sequential timeline of human settlement from the Paleolithic era through to the present, offering valuable insights into the evolution of human habitation in the area.

In addition to mapping ancient sites, the survey also examined the influence of underground water resources, particularly qanats, on the patterns of human settlement. Special attention was given to the development of qanats and other water management structures, which have played a critical role in the region's historical habitation and agriculture.

Iranian artisans to show off skills at Sulaymaniyah Expo

TEHRAN—Artisans from Iran's South Khorasan province will take part in Iraq's Sulaymaniyah Expo during May 20-26, said the director general of provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department.

Seyyed Ahmad Barabadi added that the event will be supported by Handicrafts Department and Kermanshah Cultural Heritage Department, CHTN reported.

South Khorasan artisans will put on display their products including woven and non-woven fabrics at a special pavilion, he said.

He also said that the measure is part of programs arranged by Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts to introduce and preserve Iranian handicrafts in global markets.

It indicates the country's continuous effort in promoting cultural exports, he added.

South Khorasan is famed for its exquisite rugs and carpets woven in various villages of the eastern Iranian province according to know-now inherited from generation to generation.

South Khorasan was a bustling hub for carpet weaving during the Timurid era (1370–1507). The Timurid dynasty also governed the city of Herat

Citing the successful "The Glory of Ancient Persia" exhibition in China, which showcased 216 prominent Iranian artifacts and attracted over 50 million visitors, Darabi suggested holding similar exhibitions in Uzbek cities such as Tashkent or Samarkand. He also expressed Iran's willingness to share its expertise in historical restoration and offer joint training programs.

Highlighting the role of the Persian language as a historical and cultural link, Darabi noted, "Persian was once the administrative language in Uzbekistan. This shared linguistic heritage is a valuable cultural asset that can help further our relations."

He also referred to the symbolic importance of Samarkand and Bukhara in Iranian literature and identity, underscoring their lasting presence in Persian poetry as symbols of love, culture, and history.

For his part, Kuziev welcomed prospects of an extended collaboration, pointing out the artistic and spiritual similarities between Iranian and Uzbek museum artifacts. He cited examples of Iranian influence in Uzbek historical architecture, including Persian inscriptions and verses by Hafez on centuries-old mosques and minarets.

Kuziev expressed a strong interest in utilizing Iranian expertise in the restoration and conservation of historical sites, stating a scientific and practical cooperation with Iran can play a crucial role in preserving the cultural heritage that both countries have in common.

cal habitation and agriculture.

Situated between the towering peaks of Polvar and Jopar, both exceeding 4,000 meters, the Mahan plain lies about 35 kilometers southeast of Kerman city. Historically, Mahan served as a cultural crossroads connecting the civilizations of Lut Shahdad, the Bardasir plain, northern Kerman, Bam, and Jiroft. Archaeological evidence from the region reflects the rise and fall of several ancient civilizations in southeastern Iran.

Mahani also highlighted the region's dual historical settlement patterns, with both nomadic and sedentary populations exploiting its favorable climate and abundant water resources. This strategic location fostered the growth of local cultures while exposing them to external influences over the centuries.

Among the key findings of the survey were Paleolithic-era sites, evidence of Chalcolithic (Copper Age) metallurgical activities, including metal smelting and casting technologies, as well as a variety of water management structures. The team also identified nomadic encampments and ancient rock-cut dwellings, shedding light on the diverse settlement strategies employed by past populations.

that was quite famous for its floral carpets.

The motifs and designs of Herat carpets gradually grew smaller and regular and turned into their design of today, which are still considered popular and interesting designs of South Khorasan carpets.

Some of the famous centers of carpets of this province are villages of Doraksh, Mood, Gask, Nowzad, Sarbisheh, Behelgard, Nowghab, Dastgerd, and most of the villages of Ghaenat region and also the city of Birjand.

The most common motifs of South Khorasan carpets are: "Rizeh Mahi", Paisley, "Robee Sa'di", "Kaleh Asbi" or horse head, "Kheshti" or four seasons, and "Moharamat".

"Rizeh Mahi" or small fishes, also known as "Mahi" or "Mahi e Dar Ham" in other cities. Their difference is that a diamond accompanies the flowers in the Khorasan carpets. "Robee Sa'di" that is one of the original motifs of this province and is known for its delicate paisleys.

In all of these designs, the motif of the sun represents itself in different forms which is a characteristic we find only in the carpets of South Khorasan.

From Tehran to Guangzhou: Iranian relics on show at ‘Land of Kindness’

From Page 1 ► The event is a collaborative effort by the ministry's Cultural Heritage Deputy, the General Directorate of Museums, the Tehran Provincial Office, the University of Tehran, and their Chinese counterparts.

Land of Kindness presents 151 selected cultural and historical artifacts loaned from several of Tehran's prestigious museums, including the Moghadam Museum of the University of Tehran, the Reza Abbasi Museum, the Carpet Museum of Iran, as well as the Glassware and Ceramic Museum of Iran.

Spanning from the third millennium BC to the later Islamic periods, the displayed items include intricately crafted metalworks, ceramics, glassware, textiles, and Persian carpets. These objects not only demonstrate Iran's artistic evolution but also narrate key stages in its cultural history—from the era of Mithraic rituals to the advent of Islam.

A key feature of the exhibition is its immersive design, inspired by iconic elements of Iranian art and architecture. Visitors enter through an area reminiscent of the Quranic tilework of Tehran's Golestan Palace, while the main exhibition hall features stained glass and geometric patterns evocative of the Nasir al-Mulk Mosque in Shiraz. This carefully curated ambiance invites visitors into the spiritual and artistic heart of Iranian heritage.

In a special collaborative section, the Guangdong Museum has creatively juxtaposed selected



Photo depicts a scene from the "Land of Kindness", a loan exhibition of Iranian relics on show at the Guangdong Museum in Guangzhou, China, May 11, 2025.

Iranian and Chinese artifacts from its own collection. This artistic dialogue focuses on shared motifs, such as glazed ceramics and floral and bird imagery, highlighting historical connections and mutual aesthetic sensibilities along the ancient Silk Road.

The exhibition, which runs in Guangzhou from March 30 to June 16, has been warmly received by Chinese visitors, many of whom have expressed admiration for Iran's rich cultural legacy and hope to learn more about it in the future.

Beyond presenting the artistic wealth of Iran, Land of Kindness underscores the strengthening of cultural ties between Iran and China, fostering greater understand-

ing and appreciation through cross-cultural exchanges.

Last December, another loan exhibition from Iran, named "The Glory of Ancient Persia", was held in Xinjiang, following successful showcases in Beijing and Shanghai. Organized by Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in cooperation with the Chinese government, the exhibition showcased over 280 artifacts spanning more than 3,000 years of Persian history. The collection includes treasures from prominent archaeological sites across Iran, such as the National Museum of Iran, the Persepolis Museum, and regional museums in Rasht and Gorgan.

Iran, an ancient land steeped in

history, boasts one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, with settlements dating back to 4000 BC. It is adorned with a wealth of cultural treasures, including bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, gardens, and diverse natural landscapes, complemented by 28 UNESCO labels.

Viewed through a broader lens, Iranian history unfolds in two distinct eras: pre-Islamic and Islamic. The rise of the Medes in 625 BC marked the unification of Iran into a nation and empire. However, it was the Islamic conquest of Persia (633–656) that signaled a pivotal moment, bringing an end to the powerful Sassanid Empire (224–651) and reshaping the course of the nation's history.

Tajik ambassador: Sympathy between Tehran and Dushanbe at highest level

TEHRAN — The bond of affection and sympathy between Iran and Tajikistan is currently at its highest level, Tajikistan's Ambassador to Iran, Zohidi Nizomiddin Shamsiddinzoda, has said.

He told CHTN that following the visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Dushanbe, a new season has begun in mutual ties.

Emphasizing on historical and cultural depth of ties between two nations, the ambassador said Tehran-Dushanbe ties is rooted in a shared history and cultural heritage.

From the distant past to the present, these relations have continued, he said, adding, "Currently, "We take steps in line of development of cultural, economic and social cooperation."

He recalled that Iran was among the first countries that recognized the independence of Tajikistan. "It is a matter of pride for us that the first foreign ambassador to present his credentials in Dushanbe was the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

The ambassador also said the relations between the presidents of both nations has increased and rise in official trips of high-ranking officials of both countries indicates a political will for promoting cultural and economic ties.



Tajikistan Ambassador in Iran Zohidi Nizomiddin Shamsiddinzoda

He said holding cultural weeks of Iran in Tajikistan and vice versa is a valuable event in deepening cultural relations.

The ambassador called waiving 30-day visa requirements between two nations as the other important achievement which played a great role in easing tourism and people's interactions.

Pointing to Iranian people's enthusiasm for travelling to Tajikistan in Nowruz 1404 holidays, he said, "This year, a huge number of Iranian

tourists were our guests. This is a bright sign of cultural and historical solidarity of two nations."

A multinational Nowruz remembrance was held at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Persepolis last March, bringing together ambassadors from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan to celebrate the ancient Persian New Year.

Nowruz, a centuries-old tradition marking the arrival of spring, is recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage jointly registered by Iran, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and several other countries. The festival symbolizes renewal, unity, and cultural exchange among nations that share this rich heritage.

During the event, diplomats and cultural representatives highlighted the significance of Nowruz in fostering regional ties and preserving shared traditions. The celebration featured traditional music and performances, and cultural exhibits that showcased the diverse customs of the participating nations.

The annual Nowruz celebrations continue to serve as a bridge between nations, emphasizing the importance of cultural heritage in promoting peace and mutual understanding.

Kerman is to host major eco-tourism gathering

TEHRAN—Kerman, as a land full of natural and historical attractions in the south of Iran, is to host a major eco-tourism gathering on May 21 (Ordibehesht 31 in the Persian calendar), bringing together hundreds of eco-lodge managers, government officials, and international representatives to celebrate and promote sustainable tourism.

Kerman province, which boasts 10 global heritages, over 800 nationally registered heritages and thousands of historical and natural attractions, pristine regions and rich culture, has great potential for the eco-tourism field.

Currently, 350 eco-tourism residences are active across the province.

The highest number of the province's eco-lodges are located in Shahdad, Baft, Shahr-e Babak, Zarand, and Jiroft.

Kerman Governor-General Mohammadali Talebi said the festival can be a turning point in the eco-tourism field, not only in Kerman but also at a national level.

He also said Kerman province is considered one of the major eco-tourism destinations across the country, adding that this southern province has unique capacities for

promoting the eco-tourism field.

National eco-tourism festival is an important step in introducing tourism and indigenous attractions of the province, he added.

He said holding this festival with appropriate information dissemination will lead to improving public awareness and participation in promoting tourism.

Talebi emphasized that the event would be used to exchange experiences between eco-tourism resorts across the country.

He said a slogan themed "The World's Smile to Kerman 1405" will be unveiled during the festival. "This is the first measure in materializing Vision 1405. All of us are duty-bound to support such events to turn Kerman into a city with international tourism standards."

Highlighting that the media is the connecting link between people and policymakers, Talebi emphasized: "We must take advertising campaigns, appropriate content for cyberspace, and cooperation with national media seriously, because my personal experience on one of the social networks showed how much people from all

over the country are interested in Kerman and that high-quality and targeted content is effective."

"I invite all agencies, public institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and tourism activists to get to work. We can introduce a new image of Kerman through precise planning and introduction of provincial capacities in handicrafts, traditional music, local cuisines and eco-tourism sectors."

Also, Head of Kerman Chamber of Commerce Seyyed Mahdi Tabibzadeh said over 350 eco-lodges have registered for taking part in the event. The festival will be inaugurated at Kerman's Arg Square, he added.

Yavar Abiri, who presides over the Iranian association for eco-lodge operators, announced that the event is scheduled for Ordibehesht 31 in Kerman province. This initiative follows the recent designation of May 21 as Iran's National Eco-Tourism Day. Despite the official recognition, no celebratory event was held in 2024, prompting organizers to plan a large-scale gathering next year.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

Children with disabilities benefit from earthquake, safety drills

TEHRAN –The 26th national “Earthquake and Safety” drill, marked by the earthquake bell, has been simultaneously held in schools across the country with a distinctive focus on the safety and readiness of students with disabilities and special needs.

The objectives of earthquake drills in schools are to increase students’ awareness of earthquakes, prepare them to respond correctly and quickly, and familiarize them with natural disasters, empowering them to face such events, the UNICEF website announced in a press release on May 8.

Additionally, these drills aim to enhance the community’s safety culture, secure schools, and reduce earthquake casualties and damage. The drill at the special school, specifically aimed at promoting earthquake preparedness for children with disabilities, also gathered valuable feedback on the training materials.

Held on November 27th, 2024, the drill was conducted by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in partnership with The International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIIES) in line with the ongoing project ‘Comprehensive Earthquake Preparedness Education Plan for



Children with Special Needs and Disabilities’.

This initiative underscores the critical importance of preparing children with disabilities to face natural disasters and mitigate their impacts, representing a significant step towards inclusive disaster preparedness and fostering a safer and more resilient future for Iran’s young generations.

Enhancing emergency preparedness for children with disabilities

Under a globally unique program called ‘Earthquake Preparedness Education for Children with Disabilities’, the UNICEF and its partners have developed three books each targeting different stakeholders, including

parents/caregivers of children with disabilities, teachers, and policymakers.

Throughout the books, UNICEF and the UNESCO, in collaboration with the IIIES, offer guidelines on disaster management, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery, focusing on children with hearing impairments, mobility impairments, and autism spectrum disorder so far, UNICEF website announced in a press release on January 19.

The development process of these books involved consultations with children with disabilities and their families, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), teachers from the Special Education Organization, social workers from the State Welfare Organization, and aid workers

from the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS).

Furthermore, four consultative training workshops were held, where teachers, social workers, and aid workers learned and provided feedback on strategies for supporting children with disabilities before, during, and after earthquakes.

Looking ahead, UNICEF Iran plans to work with its partners to mainstream these resources in the annual earthquake and safety drill organized each year in schools and develop an inclusive guideline for the drill.

As a first step, and for the first time, an earthquake and safety drill was planned to be organised at a special school for children with mobility disabilities, aiming to advocate for an inclusive drill, strengthen earthquake preparedness for children and gather feedback on the developed guidelines.

The program’s journey does not stop here. Plans are already underway to update the guidebooks to include guidelines for children with vision impairments and to expand the resources to address all types of disabilities. This initiative represents a significant leap towards inclusive earthquake preparedness, ensuring a safer and more resilient future for every child in Iran, regardless of their disabilities.

Some 38,500 multiple births registered in a year

TEHRAN – Over the past Iranian year (March 2024 – March 2025), a total of 38,463 multiple births were registered in the country, according to the Civil Registration Organization.

Out of the 979,923 registered births, 18,196 were twins, 651 were triplets, 27 were quadruplets, and 2 were higher-order multiple births, Mehr news agency reported.

Tehran province, with 120,562 births, and Ilam province, with 6,534 births, had the highest and lowest number of births.

In the past Iranian calendar year that ended on March 20, the average age of women in Iran giving birth to their first child stood at 27.5 years, according to a report by the National Organization for Civil Registration.

The average age at which men became fathers was 32.3, the report added. The average age of first-time mothers in urban areas was 28.2, and in rural areas it was 24.4. The average age of first-time fathers in urban areas was 32.8, and in rural areas it was 30, IRNA reported.

The average age of first-time fathers and mothers was highest in Tehran (34.8 and 30.6), and lowest in Sistan-Baluchestan (27.2 and 22.6).

Iran’s transition into an aging country ‘inevitable’

Considering the fact that the fertility rate in Iran is stabilized at around 1.6 children per woman, which is much lower than the rate

required to replace its aging population, the transition of society from young to middle-aged has become inevitable.

According to the first five-year national development plan (1989-1993), the policies focused on lowering the total fertility rate from 6.4 children in the Iranian year 1365 (1986) to 4 children in 1390 (2011) and reducing the population growth rate from 3.2 to 2.3 percent in the same period, IRNA quoted Mohammad-Javad Mahmoudi, an official with the National Institute for Population Research, as saying.

However, the measures taken back then led to a wide transformation and change in population indicators and a noticeable decrease in population growth and fertility rate far beyond the set goals of the first development plan in the country, the official noted.

According to the latest census, the number of aged citizens in the country is growing by 3.62 percent, five times faster than the total population growth rate, which is 1.24 percent.

In the Iranian year 1385 (2006-2007), there were 5,121,043 men and women aged above



60. In 2015, 10 percent of the country’s population was older than 60, ISNA quoted Mohammad-Javad Mahmoudi, an official with the National Institute for Population Research.

In the next 30 years, the population aged 60 years or older is projected to hold a 32 percent share of the whole population; that is, the elderly will account for one-third of Iran’s population by 2050, the official noted.

Currently, men and women aged above 60 constitute some 11.5 percent of Iran’s population, an official with the health ministry has said.

For the time being, elderly women account for 52.3 percent of the total population, outnumbering men (47.7 percent), ISNA quoted Saber Jabbari as saying.

Japanese envoy underscores ongoing co-op on fight against narcotics

TEHRAN – Japanese Ambassador to Iran, Tamaki Tsukada, has highlighted the significance of constant cooperating as well as fostering ties in combating drugs and drug-related crimes.

The collaborative fight against narcotics is a significant part of cooperation between Iran and Japan, IRNA reported Tsukada as saying.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with Brigadier General Hossein Zolfaqari, the Secretary General of Iranian Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), on Monday in Tehran.

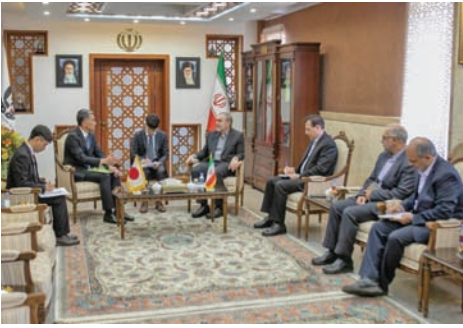
Referring to Japan’s efforts in providing support to Iran by enhancing the country’s drug-detection capacities through different ways, such as handing over some trained drug-detecting dogs, the official said cooperation between the two countries is beyond political relations.

Tsukada went on to announce Japan’s readiness to further provide training in the counter-narcotics area and equipment.

Referring to medical centers offering treatment services to individuals, he proposed conducting joint research.

For his part, Zafarqandi lauded Japan’s efforts and support. Highlighting that drug trafficking is a transnational crime, he said we expect Japan to assist Iran even more.

The official welcomed the development of cooperation between Iran and Japan, particularly in health-related and drug detection



equipment, as the West refrains from supporting the country in these fields.

Unfortunately, there is no unity of action in addressing narcotics challenges. The West considers all issues from a political perspective, even a global and humanitarian issue such as the fight against drugs, he stressed.

Referring to the growth in Afghanistan’s methamphetamine production as a national and international threat, Zolfaqari said over 40 tons of different sorts of narcotics were discovered over the past Iranian year that ended on March 20, which is expected to grow this year.

In addition to counter-narcotics actions, other preventive measures need to be adopted, Zolfaqari added.

Tsukada said that the joint efforts to address drug-related crimes in Afghanistan will be followed in accordance with the Doha framework.

Protect plants, protect lives

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – Plants are life, the primary producers of biomass providing animals and humankind with food, medicine, and an enjoyable landscape; when we protect plants, we protect lives.

Humans depend on them for 80 percent of the food they consume and 98 percent of the oxygen they breathe. Protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity and the environment, and boost economic development.

Plant health is the foundation of food security and is interconnected with human, animal, and environmental health. Healthy plants provide nutrient-rich diets for humans and animals and help promote a balanced ecosystem.

Despite the fact that plants are important for the survival of humans and animals, they have been neglected in recent decades, and many of them are on the verge of extinction.

Humans lose as much as 40 percent of crops to pests, setting back global efforts to ensure food security, harming precious biodiversity, and impacting economies and livelihoods.

Pest-infected plants can trigger a cascade of negative effects on food supplies and induce outbreaks of zoonotic diseases transmitted through harmful pathogens. Pesticides play a role in pest management, but their overuse and poor management cause biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, ecosystem dysfunction, food safety concerns, and pesticide resistance.

The United Nations designated May 12 the International Day of Plant Health (IDPH) to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health. This year, the IDPH calls on everyone to take action to keep plants, animals, humans, and the environment healthy.

Plants are not just a backdrop to human and animal life – they are central to the health of our entire planet. In the One Health approach, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of people, animals, plants, and ecosystems, plant health is a vital but often under-recognized pillar.

Plants support livelihoods, boost economies, and global trade. Investing in plant health strengthens rural economies and helps build resilience to economic shocks.

They also contribute to climate change mitigation. Plants, especially forests, grasslands, and peatlands, act as carbon sinks. Forests absorb approximately 2.6 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, helping to fight climate change and improve air quality. Maintaining plant health is critical to mitigating and adapting to climate threats.

Plants help ensure clean water. Over 80 percent of wastewater is discharged untreated into the environment. Healthy vegetation acts as a natural filter, improving water quality, reducing contamination, and the risk of waterborne diseases.

Plants regulate Earth’s critical environmental systems by stabilizing soils, filtering air and water, regulating the water cycle, and supporting biodiversity. They prevent soil erosion, protect beneficial insects like bees and microbes, and help reduce chemical use. Loss of biodiversity diminishes ecosystem resilience, making both the environment and human communities more vulnerable to climate extremes, pests, and disease outbreaks.

The diversity of plants in Iran is unique in West Asia to the extent that the country ranks second following Turkey. In addition to native plants, there are also some other species in the country known as endemic species, which are much more limited than native species. Out of 8,000 native species, some 1,800 are endemic. These species are found only in a certain geographical area.

The plant species identified in the country equals 80 percent of the plant species of the European continent in terms of their diversity and number.

Indiscriminate harvesting of plant species and climate change, particularly drought, have led to the destruction of many of them.

Plants, depending on their species, genetic and physiological structure, and the type of geographical region, show different resilience to drought.

Among the effects of drought on plants, the reduction of plants’ resistance to environmental stresses such as pests, high temperatures, and biological competitors can be named.

While certain species can tolerate extreme climatic and drought conditions or fluctuations, rare endemic species (native or species that are specific to a geographical area) are more sensitive and vulnerable. The loss of these plants is one of the biggest damages caused by drought.

Several measures can be taken to mitigate the impacts of climate change, particularly drought, on the destruction of plants, such as managing the exploitation of natural resources and preventing the destruction of ecosystems, to prevent severe conditions and lessen pressures on plants.

In addition, it is essential for all countries to reduce greenhouse gases by making comprehensive, decisive, and coordinated decisions.

Raising public awareness to protect nature is also a very important step that helps governments to preserve nature.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

World’s first ‘subway library’ to open in Tehran

For the first time in the underground transportation system worldwide, a public library will be opened in Tehran subway.

According to the memorandum signed between the Tehran Metro and the Tehran public libraries foundation, libraries will be launched in seven selected stations, first of which will be inaugurated on August 12, ISNA reported.

The library, called “Metro Book”, is in line with the cultural programs to promote the culture of reading and increase per capita reading among subway passengers during intra-city trips.

With a capacity of more than 5,000 books, it provides services from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

افتتاح کتابخانه عمومی در متروی تهران برای اولین بار در جهان

برای اولین بار در سامانه حمل و نقل متروهای جهان، کتابخانه عمومی در متروی تهران افتتاح می شود.

به گزارش ایسنا، قرار است طبق تفاهم نامه منعقد شده بین شرکت بهره برداری متروی تهران و حومه و نهاد کتابخانه های عمومی استان تهران در هفت ایستگاه منتخب «مترو کتاب» راه اندازی شود.

این کتابخانه در راستای برنامه های فرهنگی متروی تهران مبنی بر ترویج فرهنگ کتابخوانی و افزایش سرانه مطالعه در میان مسافران مترو هنگام سفرهای درون شهری این کتابخانه با ظرفیت بیش از ۵۰۰۰ عنوان کتاب به صورت فیزیکی از ساعت ۸ صبح تا ۲۰ به طور مستمر به ارائه خدمات می دهد.



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MAY 13, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Heaven lies beneath the feet of mothers.
Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 19:21 Dawn: 3:22 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:00 (tomorrow)

“The Magnificent Ambersons” available in Persian

TEHRAN—The Persian translation of the 1918 novel “The Magnificent Ambersons” by Booth Tarkington has been released in the Iranian bookstores.

Sirous Nourabadi has translated the book and Afkar-e Jadid Publication has brought it out in 380 pages, ILNA reported.

The novel is the second in Tarkington’s “Growth” trilogy after “The Turmoil” (1915) and before “The Midlander” (1923, retitled “National Avenue” in 1927). It won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

It explores themes of wealth, family dynamics, and the impact of societal change in America. Set in the Midwest, the story chronicles the rise and fall of the Amberson family, led by Major Amberson, who builds their fortune in the late 19th century. Central to the narrative is George Amberson Minafer, the arrogant and spoiled only child of Isabel, whose upbringing fosters contempt for others and a sense of entitlement.

As George navigates his relationships, particularly with his mother’s former suitor, Eugene Morgan, and Lucy, Eugene’s daughter, the novel illustrates the conflict between old wealth and emerging modernity, symbolized through the advent of automobiles. The decline of the Amberson family parallels George’s personal failures, as he confronts the consequences of his actions and the changing world around him.



The story ultimately serves as a poignant commentary on the fragility of social status and the inevitability of change, reflecting broader themes relevant to American society. Tarkington’s work captures the complexities of family life and the undercurrents of aspiration and regret.

In 1942, the novel was made into a film, written and directed by Orson Welles. Much later in 2002, came a same-titled TV adaptation based on Welles’ screenplay.

Newton Booth Tarkington (1869-1946) was an American novelist. He is one of only four novelists to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction more than once, along with William Faulkner, John Updike, and Colson Whitehead. In the 1910s and 1920s, he was considered the United States’ greatest living author. Several of his stories were adapted to film.

Guardian Council member tours Tehran Times anniversary exhibition



TEHRAN – Hadi Tahan Nazif, jurist member and spokesperson of Iran’s Guardian Council, paid a visit to the “Tehran Times Reports...” exhibition on Monday, accompanied by Tehran Times Editor-in-Chief Mohammad Sarfi.

Last week, on the occasion of Tehran Times’ anniversary celebrations, the exhibit was inaugurated, showcasing historical front pages and rare archival materials from the past four decades.

During his visit, Tahan Nazif expressed his appreciation, saying that it was an honor to visit the exhibition. He mentioned that they could see Tehran Times’ presence throughout history, noting that the newspaper has been reporting on the events affecting the country and its people with professionalism and interest. He emphasized that the persistence in reporting important and compelling news is evident.

“We could just see a small piece of Tehran Times’ innovation and efforts, but it still shows the passion behind this media group,” he added.

“I wish Tehran Times and its team continued success. May it persist in its vital role, delivering enduring and impactful content as it has throughout the years, and continue to report important news to audiences around the globe,”

Tahan Nazif concluded.



Scan this QR code to watch the video.

International Hanzala Prize focuses on children’s literature, resistance narrative

TEHRAN – The International Hanzala Prize, a prestigious literary and cultural award, is set to prioritize children’s and adolescent literature exploring themes of resistance, the organizers have announced.

The prize, aiming to foster cultural production for young audiences, will assess submissions across diverse media, IRNA quoted Sadeq Zufan, the Scientific Secretary of the event as saying in a press conference held in Tehran on Monday.

He detailed the scope and procedures of the competition and outlined the five key categories for submission: books, toys, computer games, activity packages, and creative educational media.

“Our primary focus is on works specifically designed for children and adolescents. We seek to nurture a narrative of resistance through the lens of culture and creativity,” he emphasized.

The prize is not merely an award ceremony but a platform to encourage innovation and artistic expression among young creators, he added.

He highlighted the vital role of cultural production in shaping the values and perspectives of the next generation. The aim is to create engaging and thought-provoking content that resonates with the unique sensibilities of children and adolescents while simultaneously instilling the spirit of resistance.

Elaborating on the selection criteria, Zufan explained that the judging panel will evaluate each submission based on several key factors. “Creativity, originality, and the effective conveyance of the resistance narrative are paramount,” he stated. “Furthermore, we will assess the educational value of each work and its potential to inspire and empower young minds.”

The International Hanzala Prize is now open to submissions from around the world. Zufan emphasized the international nature of the competition, aiming to foster collaboration and exchange among creators from diverse cultural backgrounds. “We believe that the exchange of ideas and experiences is crucial for fostering creativity and innovation,” he stated. “The diverse



voices of young creators will be instrumental in shaping the narratives of resistance.”

Following the judging of submissions by mid-September, the closing ceremony will be held, he said and added: “However, unlike other festivals, the closing ceremony for us is not the end of the journey; it is the beginning of a support phase for the winning works. Financial support, publishing, marketing, and international development will be part of our program for the selected products.”

He also announced a prize of 32,000 Euros in cash for the winning entries. “We do not limit this prize to Iran. We are currently engaging in consultations with cultural activists in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and some African countries. This is a global cultural initiative.”

Vahid Vali, Secretary General of the Hanzala Prize, referred to recent regional developments and the awakening of global consciousness regarding the crimes of the Zionist regime. He stated, “A major event has occurred in the world that cannot be overlooked. During the Al-Aqsa Storm, in the heart of a land that had been lost multiple times, a movement began that overturned all calculations. This was not just a military operation; it was a redefinition of the true meaning of resistance.”

“The Zionist regime, with all its media and political tools, tried to erase Palestine from the global memory. However, today, it has once again become the foremost

issue for the Islamic world and even free nations worldwide. This demonstrates that the time has come to move beyond traditional forms of struggle. We need new narratives and innovative tools to convey the concepts of resistance.”

“Media and news are only one aspect of the story. We must transform resistance into play, entertainment, and educational tools—things that enter children’s lives and familiarize them with truths they will stand for with their lives in the future,” he mentioned.

This prize was established with that very purpose: to bring resistance from the realm of news into the heart of families and classrooms, he noted.

“We do not merely honor the winners of this prize; we support them, help them produce in large quantities, create markets for their work, and pave the way for their international recognition. For us, this is not just a program; it is a historic necessity,” he explained.

For his part, Soheil Asaad, a special guest at the session, focused on the concept of “Hanzala” as the symbol of the prize, revisited the significance of this character.

“Hanzala is not just a cartoon character; he has become a collective conscience. Hanzala embodies a generation that has turned its back on oppression but has not ceased fighting. He reminds us that sometimes silence speaks louder than words. Today, through this prize, we aim

to nurture new ‘Hanzalas’—children who learn to stand against injustice through toys, books, and educational games.”

The International Hanzala Prize is expected to contribute significantly to the enrichment of children’s literature and cultural production. The emphasis on resistance narratives reflects a broader cultural movement aimed at nurturing a generation equipped with critical thinking skills and a commitment to social justice. The prize further aims to support the development of creative talent and provide a platform for young writers, artists, and designers to showcase their work to a global audience.

Hanzala is a powerful symbol of Palestinian identity and resistance, created in 1969 by cartoonist Naji al-Ali. First appearing in 1969 and adopting its iconic pose in 1973, Hanzala is depicted as a ten-year-old boy with his back turned and hands clasped behind him, representing the innocence and steadfastness of the Palestinian people.

The character’s age signifies al-Ali’s own childhood when he was forced to leave Palestine in 1948. Hanzala’s ragged clothes and barefoot stance symbolize solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Al-Ali envisioned Hanzala as an eternal youth, embodying the ongoing struggle for justice and return.

Despite al-Ali’s assassination in 1987, the character’s image persists globally, adorning walls, tattoos, jewelry, and serving as a symbol in several movements.

Platform 101 representing Iranian digital art at Expo 2025 Japan

TEHRAN—Platform 101, directed by Mohammadali Famouri, is the only digital art team from Iran and West Asia participating in the Expo 2025 Osaka-Kansai, Japan, in the Projection Mapping section.

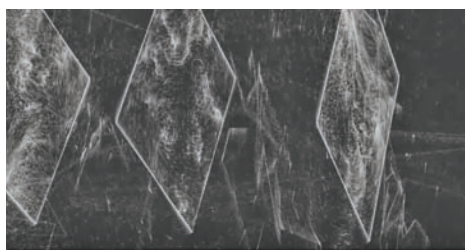
The Iranian art institution is present at the event with its projection mapping artwork “Infinite Realms” at the iconic Shining Hat Pavilion, IRNA reported.

“Infinite Realms” is an innovative and integrative work of generative art, immersive sounds, and mapping technology. It explores the fractal nature of the universe, revealing interconnected patterns in parallel worlds. Through monochromatic visuals, it evokes infinite dimensions of existence and introspection.

Directed by Mohammad Ali Famori, the collaborative project has been created by Arash Masoum (generative art) and Ehsan Masoudian and Reza Famori (music and sound design). It explores a symbolic interpretation of fractal geometry in parallel universes, bridging digital art and architecture.

“This marks a new horizon for Iranian artists to engage in international collaborations in the field of creative coding technologies in digital arts production,” Mohammad Ali Famori said.

“Platform 101 is the only digital art team from Iran and West Asia among 68 countries participating in the projection mapping program of Expo 2025 Japan, which is con-



IRANIAN DIGITAL ART TEAM
EXPO2025
Platform101 (Iran)
EXPO Hall “Shining Hat”
PROJECTION MAPPING

sidered the most advanced event for image production and display in the field of digital arts. “Infinite Realms” is set to be showcased several times at the iconic Shining Hat structure in Osaka during the Expo,” he added.

The digital artist further said that the platform seeks to achieve an opportunity to display and represent Iranian digital art. “We hope that by participating in this event, we can present the technology and the systematic path that has been formed in Iran for creating artistic works,” he noted.

Expo 2025 is a World Expo organized and sanctioned by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), which is being held in Osaka, Japan.

Having started on April 13, it continues for six months until October 13. This is the second time Osaka hosts a World Expo, having previously hosted Expo 1970. The projected visitor count is approximately 28 million.

The theme for the expo is “Designing Future Society for Our Lives,” with sub-themes of “Saving Lives,” “Empowering Lives” and “Connecting Lives”.

EXPO Hall “Shining Hat”, with its large, golden, circular roof and its strong, rough walls rising from the earth, is a symbol for the entire Expo site. Projection mapping will be held every night during the Expo utilizing the walls of EXPO Hall as a screen.

Mohammad Ali Famori studied photography at the Tehran University of Art, and later at the Islamic Azad University, from where he graduated with a master’s degree in cultural management.

He is specialized in spearheading exhibitions and creative projects including running the first glitch video art group exhibition in Iran. He has more than 10 years of experience in art directing, graphic design, photography, and visual arts, as well as exhibiting his works in 30 international exhibitions.

Founded by Famori in 2018, Platform 101 is an independent and non-profit institution promoting trailblazing artists and cutting-edge forms of art.

Platform 101 has already made a name for itself in the world of new media art. The institution is widely known for creating a unique space that promotes freedom of expression and creativity. Platform 101 can also be considered the birthplace of glitch art in Iran.