



A Palestinian man reacts as he mourns among the bodies of victims of Israeli strikes on Jabalia, at the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip on May 14, 2025.

Merkel’s legacy: Building strong Israel-Germany ties in the 21st century

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN – Over the past two decades, Israel-Germany relations have evolved from a partnership based on Holocaust remembrance into a robust strategic alliance.

Since the early 2000s, military and intelligence cooperation has intensified, with Germany becoming Israel’s leading European trading partner and key defense supplier.

Under Angela Merkel, Israel’s security became part of Germany’s “reason of state,” and joint cabinet meetings and diplomatic support deepened ties. Despite policy differences, shared democratic values and economic, security, and global initiatives have made their alliance one of the most vital in Europe and the Middle East.

Deepening military and diplomatic cooperation in the 2000s

In the early 2000s, Germany-Israel relations experienced significant growth, particularly in military and diplomatic spheres. Germany emerged as a crucial supplier of advanced military technology to Israel, notably providing Dolphin-class submarines and collaborating on sensitive projects like the secret development of a nuclear early-warning system (Operation Bluebird), reflecting deep strategic trust.

Through the pen or the rifle

By Sim Zahra

TORONTO – On March 18 2025, Naji Abu Seif, known as Abu Hamza, was martyred alongside his family. Abu Hamza was particularly one who kept the message of the Ahulbayt (a) alive, quoting their sermons in his speeches, and in the way he carried himself, constantly reminding the believers what our duty here on this earth is, pleasing God.

In one of his speeches, he said: “Our position is clear: are we not on the side of truth? Then we do not care about bombardment, hunger and displacement.”

Here Abu Hamza quoted Ali Akbar (as) and Imam Husayn (as) when Ali Akbar (as) had asked his father, “Dear father, aren’t we on the side of the truth?” To which Imam Husayn (as) responded, “Yes, by Allah, we are indeed on the side of the truth.” Ali Akbar (as) then expressed, “In that case, we have no fear of death.”

Resistance is a way of life, martyrdom is not an end but rather the beginning of the true eternal life. Imam Husayn’s (as) resistance to tyranny, his longing to please his Lord, and his martyrdom showed the believers that this life is fleeting, and in order for change to take place we must not be afraid to take a stance against the tyrants of our time no matter what consequences we may face.

Lebanon’s choice is nothing but resistance to Israel

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON — Throughout successive phases of Lebanon’s history, the political oligarchy imposed by the French mandate falsely referred to the “decision of war and peace” as part of a plan to subjugate Lebanon, in favour of the Israeli occupation regime.

This political oligarchy has always falsely claimed to be a “sovereign” power, openly embracing an identity opposed to the Levantine Arab identity, and striving to place Lebanon within a sectarian quota that imposes absolute loyalty and subservience to the imperialist West.

Its alleged “sovereignty” was tested by the extent to which it resisted all resistance—local or regional—as its record was replete with bloody massacres and corrupt policies that destroyed Lebanon since the era of Camille Chamoun (the second president of Republic after Lebanon’s so-called independence from French occupation), especially after his involvement in the Eisenhower Pact and the subsequent intervention of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in July 1958.

► Page 5

Tehran stresses commitment to dialogue as amid talks with E3 in Istanbul

TEHRAN – Senior Iranian and European diplomats held a round of political consultations on Friday in Istanbul, reviving nuclear diplomacy at a sensitive moment in the region’s geopolitical landscape.

The discussions took place at Iran’s Consulate General and focused on the future of the 2015 nuclear agreement, the status of indirect Iran-U.S. negotiations, and efforts to avert further escalation.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazern Gharibabadi, who led Tehran’s delegation, confirmed that talks with representatives from the United Kingdom, France, and Germany—collectively known as the E3—centered on the latest developments in sanctions-lifting negotiations.

“We exchanged views and discussed the current state of nuclear and sanctions-related talks,” Gharibabadi said following the meeting. “Both Iran and the E3 are committed to preserving diplomacy and continuing dialogue. We will reconvene as needed to keep the channels open.” ► Page 2

IRGC chief hints at defense tech breakthrough: ‘Revelation through action imminent’

TEHRAN – Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Commander-in-Chief, Major General Hossein Salami, has signaled an imminent transformation in the nation’s defense systems by announcing a top-secret technological breakthrough soon to be demonstrated on the field.

At a ceremony honoring the late President Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran on Thursday, Salami offered few details, describing the advance as a watershed moment in military innovation.

“In recent weeks, we have reached an unprecedented milestone in our defense capabilities—a development I am not detailing today because its impact will soon speak for itself,” he stated, underscoring that this achievement will solidify Iran’s irreversible strategic superiority.

The announcement builds on Iran’s proven track record of indigenous military innovation, particularly in air defense.

The Bavar-373 system—a flagship achievement operational since 2019 and comparable to Russia’s S-400—boasts a 300-kilometer engagement range, advanced radar immunity to jamming, and the ability to track stealth aircraft and ballistic missiles. ► Page 3

Istanbul talks reassess Europe’s role in evolving global diplomatic landscape

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – On Friday, May 16, Iran resumed nuclear negotiations with the United Kingdom, France, and Germany—collectively known as the E3—in the Turkish city of Istanbul.

This meeting of senior diplomats unfolds amid heightened geopolitical tension and uncertainty, as a potential fifth round of indirect talks between Tehran and Washington is anticipated in the coming days. This upcoming round could represent a pivotal moment, bringing both parties closer to a renewed understanding on the future of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the landmark nuclear agreement that once symbolized diplomatic progress and multilateral cooperation.

The talks with the E3 are far from a mere procedural step preceding the US-Iran dialogue. Rather, they reflect a strategic and nuanced effort by Tehran to maintain open diplomatic channels with Europe, and to gauge the evolving positions of European capitals regarding the possible reinstatement of international sanctions. ► Page 5

Ferdowsi remembered as guardian of Persian language

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — The Iranology Foundation hosted a ceremony on Wednesday evening to mark Ferdowsi Day, gathering scholars, cultural experts, and literary enthusiasts to celebrate the enduring legacy of Persian language and literature.

The event honored the legacy of Abu’l-Qasem Ferdowsi Tusi (c. 935– c. 1020-26 CE), the celebrated Persian poet and author of the Shahnameh (“Book of Kings”), the Persian national epic, which, according to many sources, helped preserve and revitalize the Persian language and cultural identity during a time of great political and cultural upheaval.

Distinguished speakers at the ceremony included Ali Akbar Salehi, President of the Iranology Foundation; ► Page 6



Pezeshkian inaugurates over \$140m in projects during Kermanshah visit

TEHRAN – President Masoud Pezeshkian inaugurated more than 70 trillion rials (over \$140 million) worth of projects during a two-day visit to Kermanshah Province, as part of his sixth provincial tour since taking office.

Pezeshkian arrived in Kermanshah on Wednesday afternoon and was welcomed by the Leader’s representative in the province, the governor, members of parliament, military and police commanders, and other local officials at Shahid Ashrafi Esfahani Airport.

Several officials accompanied the president, including Mohammad Jafar Ghaempanah (Vice President for Executive Affairs), Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh (Vice President for Rural and Underserved Areas), Zahra Behrouz Azar (Vice President for Women and Family Affairs), Alireza Kazemi (Minister of Education), ► Page 4

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

The doors of Eurasia opened to Iran

Jam-e-Jam wrote about Iran's free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union: This agreement is a document beyond an economic contract; it is a geo-economic turning point that can take Iran from the periphery of the global economy to the center of a dynamic network of regional trade. The world is entering a new order. Regional economic alliances, from Southeast Asia to Eurasia, are redefining new rules for trade and power. The Islamic Republic of Iran, which is at the heart of the most important trade routes, including the North-South and East-West corridors, now has an unprecedented opportunity to redefine its position with the activation of permanent membership and the implementation of tariff rules in the Eurasian Free Trade Agreement. If Iran can accelerate the completion of joint infrastructure projects, such as the North-South Corridor with Eurasian members such as Russia, it can consolidate its position as a transit hub. But this will require political coordination and overcoming diplomatic obstacles, which will be challenging given the geopolitical complexities of the region.

Etemad: A step towards leaving the FATF blacklist

Etemad discussed the approval of Palermo by the Expediency Council in an interview with Mohammad Sadr, a former deputy foreign minister and a current member of the council. He said: Amidst the news of Trump's trip to the region and in a situation where many Iranians were following Trump's statements and looking for positive or negative pulses regarding a possible agreement between Iran and the United States, the news of the approval of the Palermo bill by the Expediency Council attracted the attention of many Iranians and economic and political activists. The decision was made after the 14th government's many efforts to reopen the study of the Palermo and CFT bills, bringing Iran one step closer to smoothing its trade, economic, and banking relations (with the outside world). Being on the FATF blacklist had caused other countries, even many friendly countries, to be cautious in their trade and economic relations with Iran, and indirectly there was a perception that the risk of any type of trade and economic relationship with Iran was high. Fortunately, the approval of this bill will compensate for the losses of not approving it. Of course, the approval of these bills does not mean that all problems will be resolved, but steps

will be taken to improve Iran's trade situation with the world.

Javan: Insistence on maximum pressure campaign is counterproductive

In an analysis, Javan addressed Trump's counterproductive remarks. It wrote: Hostile statements are being made while the atmosphere of indirect (nuclear) talks between Iran and the United States has improved to some extent, and there are hopes about the possibility of an agreement. However, Trump's provocative tone not only does not help advance the diplomatic talks but can also block the path to interaction. Trump's call for the implementation of sanctions against Iran is a revival of the same policy that was previously known as "maximum pressure." Trump's return to this strategy shows that he is still attached to the failed campaigns of the past. Therefore, if Trump really wants to reach a lasting agreement with Iran, he must abandon unilateral and contradictory policies and instead of pressure, turn to trust-building and mutual respect. Otherwise, the claim of negotiation will be merely a political show, not a strategy for a real solution to the crisis. Experience has shown that pressure not only does not produce the desired result but also paves the way for further conflict.

Ham Mihan: Chance for agreement small but serious

In a commentary, Ham Mihan discussed the talks between Trump and Iran. The paper said: The American and Iranian negotiators gathered for the fourth round of nuclear talks. The two sides are still far apart on fundamental issues and their time is running out. The U.S. has expanded the deployment of forces in the region, and B-2 stealth bombers are still stationed. If the talks fail, they would serve both as a negotiating leverage and as preparation for a potential air strike. Iran may reject the U.S. conditions or prolong the talks with the hope of gaining more concessions. Trump may decide that the concessions he has received are not enough and therefore change course towards a snapback. If the talks fail and the United States or Israel attacks Iran's nuclear facilities, Iran will retaliate by targeting U.S. military targets in the region and moving toward weaponizing its nuclear program. These are all realistic scenarios, but despite these risks, the current round of diplomacy represents the most serious opportunity to reduce nuclear tensions since the collapse of the JCPOA seven years ago.

Tehran marks first anniversary of former president Raisi's martyrdom



TEHRAN – A large crowd of citizens and top Iranian officials gathered in Tehran on Thursday to commemorate the first anniversary of the tragic death of Iran's former president Ebrahim Raisi and his companions, who lost their lives in a helicopter crash last year.

The memorial ceremony, held at Imam Hussein Square, drew participants from across the social spectrum. The event honored the memory of former president Raisi, former foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, late Ayatollah Ale-Hashem, Malek Rahmati, IRGC commanders Brigadier Generals Mehdi Mousavi, Mohsen Daryanoush, Seyyed Taher Mostafavi, and Colonel Behrouz Ghadimi—all of whom died in the crash in Varzaqan.

The ceremony opened with the recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an, followed by the national anthem of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Attendees held Iranian flags and photos of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Martyr Raisi, and the other fallen officials,

chanting slogans such as "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

Speaking to reporters at the event, Mohammad Mokhber, senior advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, praised Raisi's legacy. "Martyr Raisi deeply internalized the qualities of Imam Khomeini and the Leader of the Revolution. These principles shaped his path, one he followed without a single deviation," he said.

In a keynote speech, Major General Hossein Salami, Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), hailed Raisi's sacrifices. "He embraced the hardships of leadership and risked his life to uplift our nation, bring pride to Iran, and uphold the light of Islam. Though his journey ended in tragedy, he ascended to eternal honor," Salami said.

Brigadier General Esmail Qaani, commander of the IRGC Quds Force, also attended the ceremony.

Tehran stresses commitment to dialogue amid talks with E3 in Istanbul

From page 1 ► The meeting marked the first formal engagement between Iran and the E3 since a planned summit in Rome was called off earlier this month due to delays in U.S.-Iran indirect negotiations. Friday's discussions were also attended by EU Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs Olof Skoog, as well as Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi.

Tehran continues to express concern that the European parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) might activate the "snapback mechanism," which would automatically reinstate United Nations sanctions lifted under the deal. Iranian officials warn such a move could irreversibly damage the agreement and eliminate Europe's role in future negotiations.



Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, writing in an op-ed for the French publication Le Point, described the Istanbul talks as "a fragile but promising beginning." He cautioned, how-

ever, that "time is running out," adding: "The decisions we make now will shape Iran-Europe relations in ways that go far beyond this agreement. Iran is prepared to move forward—

we hope Europe is, too."

Speaking earlier this week, Araghchi reiterated that any misuse of the snapback clause would be viewed by Tehran as a hostile and irreversible breach of trust.

Iran has held four rounds of indirect nuclear negotiations with the current U.S. administration—mediated by Oman—with both sides calling the progress "constructive." The Iranian team is led by Araghchi, while the American side is headed by regional envoy Steve Witkoff.

Tehran has made clear that any new agreement must include firm guarantees that the U.S. will lift all sanctions and not unilaterally withdraw from the deal again, as it did in 2018 under the Trump administration.

None of Iran's nuclear facilities will be dismantled: FM Araghchi



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaking at the 36th Tehran International Book Fair on May 15, 2025.

TEHRAN—Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi declared Thursday that Tehran will not shutter or dismantle any of its nuclear facilities.

His remarks at a public forum during the 36th Tehran International Book Fair highlighted Iran's firm commitment to maintaining its civilian nuclear infrastructure while insisting on sanctions relief in exchange for transparency measures, following four rounds of indirect nuclear negotiations with the United States.

"Defending the rights of the Iranian people in the nuclear field, including [uranium] enrichment,

is one of these principles and rights of the people that we will not compromise on, neither in the media nor at the negotiation table," Araghchi declared at the Foreign Ministry's booth. "This is the right of the Iranian people, and no one can deny it."

Earlier on Sunday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian made it clear that any proposal to entirely dismantle Iran's nuclear infrastructure remains unacceptable.

He emphasized that while Iran engages in dialogue in pursuit of peace, it will not compromise its nuclear capabilities.

"Nuclear energy plays a vital role in healthcare, technological advancements, agriculture, environmental sustainability, and industry. This achievement is not something we will surrender easily," Pezeshkian stated.

Reaffirming Iran's position, the president added, "Iran will not relinquish its peaceful nuclear rights."

Continuing his remarks at the book fair, Araghchi directly refuted claims that Washington had submitted a written proposal during recent discussions.

"During the talks, ideas were presented to the other side in written form, but we haven't received any written proposals until now," he stated.

'Our red line is clear', Iran dismisses The Guardian's claims of uranium enrichment freeze

TEHRAN – A senior Iranian official has strongly rejected claims that Tehran is engaged in negotiations with the United States over a proposed three-year suspension of its uranium enrichment program, calling the allegation "baseless" and reaffirming Iran's uncompromising stance on its nuclear rights.

The denial came from Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, who responded on the social media platform X to a report published

by The Guardian. The British outlet alleged that Washington had floated a proposal to Iran seeking a temporary halt to uranium enrichment as part of efforts to ease tensions and revive diplomatic engagement.

Gharibabadi dismissed the notion outright, saying such a suspension is not on the table and asserting Iran's position in unequivocal terms.

"Our negotiating counterparts know very well that the Islamic Republic of Iran will never bargain away an achievement that was gained through the

blood of martyrs and at great cost," he wrote.

"The right to uranium enrichment is our absolute red line. Any suspension of enrichment is categorically unacceptable."

The remarks underscore a consistent theme in Iranian nuclear diplomacy: resistance to pressure and refusal to compromise on its sovereign right under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Enrichment, Tehran argues, is a peaceful right exercised by many nations and must not be

politicized or restricted under Western demands.

Gharibabadi's comments come amid renewed speculation about indirect talks between Tehran and Washington, with European intermediaries attempting to revive elements of the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). However, Iranian officials have repeatedly emphasized that any return to negotiations must respect Iran's technical advances and national dignity.

Muslim world must stand against Israel's genocide in Gaza: Iran Parliament speaker

TEHRAN – Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has called on the Muslim world to close ranks in solidarity with the Palestinian people, as Israel's war in Gaza continues to claim thousands of lives.

Speaking after Friday prayers at Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque—where he was attending the 19th high-level session of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC)—Qalibaf urged Muslims to unite against what he described as an ongoing genocide in Gaza.

"It is our Islamic duty to stand together in the face of global arrogance and prevent what is now the largest genocide in modern history," he said.

Qalibaf stressed that the people of Gaza—particularly children, women, and the sick—are looking to the Muslim world for support. "They expect us to be their voice and not abandon them in these dire times," he added.

Israel launched its war on Gaza on October 7, 2023. Since then, at least 53,010 Palestinians—mostly women and children—have been killed, and over 119,998 others injured. Despite

Palestinians. "For decades, fabricated narratives have tried to swap the roles of victim and perpetrator," he argued. "They hypocritically preach peace while expanding genocide and aggression, tout human rights while grossly violating them, and silence innocent voices demanding an end to this slaughter."

The ambassador reiterated Iran's stance on Palestinian rights, stressing their "inalienable right to self-defense and return to their homeland."

He blamed the Israeli regime and its supporters for "displacing millions, orphaning children, and destroying Palestinian lives," calling them the "main source of regional instability."

Since October 7, 2023, Tel Aviv's war in Gaza have caused catastrophic civilian harm, with the latest reported figures indicating at least 61,709 killed, including 17,492 children, over 111,588 injured, and more than 14,222 missing and presumed dead.

The UN and human rights organizations have documented systemic destruction of hospitals, schools, and residential infrastructure, deepening the humanitarian crisis.

'Israel's crimes in Gaza are textbook genocide', says Iran's UN envoy

TEHRAN – Amir Saeed Iravani, Iran's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, delivered a scathing condemnation of Tel Aviv's atrocities in Gaza during a UN special session marking the anniversary of the Nakba.

The term "Nakba," Arabic for "catastrophe," marks the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, now commemorated at the UN Headquarters on its 77th anniversary.

In his address, Iravani characterized the Israeli regime's military campaign in Gaza as "textbook genocide," emphasizing that the United States is a "full partner" in these atrocities.

"While we gather here, the Israeli regime, with U.S. support, deliberately targets hospitals, schools, women, children, UN staff, and journalists," Iravani stated, citing figures of "over 60,000 martyrs" and "countless injured and missing."

He emphasized that the evidence of Israel's "brutal crimes" is "undeniable," with international courts and judicial bodies "fully aware of their barbarity."

Iravani also criticized the "war of narratives" waged by Israel and its allies, calling it "double injustice" against

IRGC chief hints at defense tech breakthrough: ‘Revelation through action imminent’

From Page 1 ▶ Its upgraded variant, Bavar-373-II, unveiled in March, now intercepts high-speed, long-range targets with enhanced precision.

Similarly, the 15 Khordad system gained global attention in 2019 by downing a U.S. RQ-4 Global Hawk drone, showcasing its capability to detect stealth aircraft at 150 kilometers and intercept cruise missiles, drones, and fighter jets within a 120-kilometer range. Recent drills confirmed its ability to simultaneously target up to six projectiles, including Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs).

Complementing these systems are newer platforms like Arman, designed for short-to-medium range defense against drones and low-altitude threats, and the 358 system, designed to counter drones, helicopters, and jets with infrared homing and autonomous navigation for precise, “fire-and-forget” strikes.



IRGC Commander-in-Chief Major General Hossein Salami during a speech at a ceremony in Tehran on May 15, 2025.

Developed under stringent sanctions, these advancements underscore Tehran's doctrine of self-reliance as a cornerstone of national security.

‘Trump’s Riyadh remarks on Iran too far from reality’

General Salami reserved sharp

criticism for U.S. President Donald Trump's recent remarks in Saudi Arabia, where Trump contrasted Iran's economy with Riyadh's agricultural projects and offered Tehran a “new path.”

Dismissing the overture as hypocritical, Salami stated, “The

gap between [Trump's] delusions and Iran's reality is as vast as heaven and earth.

You imposed sanctions on our sick, blocked medicines, and labeled us terrorists—yet here we stand, stronger than ever.”

The commander also invoked Trump's 2019 description of the Iranian people and rebuked it as “extremely hostile,” questioning, “How can a man who called our nation terrorists now pretend to be our friend? The Iranian people see through this hypocrisy.”

Earlier on Wednesday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian condemned Trump's rhetoric as “rooted in arrogance and historical blindness” during a national address.

“Threats only strengthen our nation's resolve,” Pezeshkian asserted. “The U.S. president fails to grasp the ingenuity of our youth, who turn sanctions into stepping stones for progress.”

Sanctions relief would unlock ‘immediate’ nuclear agreement, Shamkhani says to NBC



Ali Shamkhani, a political advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, during an interview with NBC News broadcast on May 15, 2025.

TEHRAN – Ali Shamkhani, a political advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, delivered a public roadmap for U.S.-Iran reconciliation in an interview with NBC News, emphasizing Tehran's readiness to formalize

a nuclear agreement if Washington addresses the “Bibi effect.”

Shamkhani, formerly the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, coupled pragmatic concessions with sharp critiques of U.S. policy, describing the Israeli regime's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, also known as Bibi, as a key obstacle to progress.

“If the Americans remove the Bibi effect, they can easily sign the deal,” Shamkhani stated in his interview broadcast on Thursday, referencing Netanyahu's longstanding opposition to U.S.-Iran engagement.

Hours after his interview was published, U.S. President Donald Trump shared the interview on Truth Social, amplifying the Iranian official's proposal and fueling speculation about shifting political winds in Washington.

Shamkhani outlined a possible quid pro quo: “Tehran would permanently forswear nuclear weapons, dismantle stockpiles of

highly enriched uranium, limit enrichment to civilian-grade levels, and submit to rigorous international inspections.”

In exchange, he demanded the “immediate lifting of all sanctions”. When asked if Iran would ink such a deal today, Shamkhani replied with a definitive “Yes.”

“It's still possible [to improve relations] if the Americans act as they say,” Shamkhani added, though he criticized Trump's tone and simultaneous threats against Iran.

“He talks about the olive branch, which we have not seen. It's all barbed wire,” the official remarked, referring to Trump's recent remarks in his speech at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

While Shamkhani struck a conciliatory tone on diplomacy, he aligned with President Masoud Pezeshkian's defiance toward U.S. pressure.

Earlier Wednesday, Pezeshkian had dismissed Trump's threats, declaring, “We will not bow to any bully.”

Istanbul talks reassess Europe’s role in evolving global diplomatic landscape

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – On Friday, May 16, Iran resumed nuclear negotiations with the United Kingdom, France, and Germany—collectively known as the E3—in the Turkish city of Istanbul.

This meeting of senior diplomats unfolds amid heightened geopolitical tension and uncertainty, as a potential fifth round of indirect talks between Tehran and Washington is anticipated in the coming days. This upcoming round could represent a pivotal moment, bringing both parties closer to a renewed understanding on the future of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the landmark nuclear agreement that once symbolized diplomatic progress and multilateral cooperation.

The talks with the E3 are far from a mere procedural step preceding the US-Iran dialogue. Rather, they reflect a strategic and nuanced effort by Tehran to maintain open diplomatic channels with Europe, and to gauge the evolving positions of European capitals regarding the possible reinstatement of international sanctions.

This dual-track approach underscores Iran's diplomatic pragmatism in a complex international environment. Meanwhile, the European Union views these negotiations as a critical opportunity to regain some of its diplomatic weight after years of relative marginalization in key global issues—ranging from the Ukraine crisis and climate negotiations to the recent strategic realignments unfolding across West Asia.

Europe faces the challenge of strategic autonomy

Since Donald Trump's presidency and the unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, the United States has signaled its intent to sideline Europe in many major geopolitical discussions. The abandonment

of multilateral frameworks and the pursuit of bilateral initiatives—whether with Tehran, Moscow, or Beijing—have chipped away at the EU's traditional role as a central pillar of the postwar international order. In particular, the imposition of U.S. secondary sanctions has tested European resolve and independence, especially regarding its relations with Iran.

The transatlantic relationship, once considered a cornerstone of global stability, has experienced unprecedented strain in recent years.

Disagreements over pandemic management, trade disputes, divergent approaches to climate change, and contrasting strategies towards rising powers like Russia and China have all contributed to fracturing this once-solid alliance.

This growing distrust was laid bare at international forums such as the Munich Security Conference, where European leaders openly criticized what they perceived as growing U.S. indifference—and even hostility—toward European interests and the continent's security architecture.

Amid this evolving geopolitical landscape, the European Union faces a fundamental challenge: to what extent can and should it pursue a more autonomous foreign policy? The negotiations with Iran, therefore, are not merely about nuclear non-proliferation—they are a litmus test for Europe's capacity to act independently and assert its influence on the global stage.

Within this tense and shifting environment, Tehran remains wary but not dismissive of European engagement. Interim Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has reiterated Iran's willingness to continue talks with the E3, while cautioning against activating the “snapback” mechanism—a provision allowing the automatic re-imposition of UN sanctions on Iran without a new

Security Council vote.

Araghchi has warned that resorting to snapback could have dire consequences: “A confrontational approach could lead to a global crisis in nuclear proliferation, the repercussions of which would directly impact Europe,” he said in an op-ed published by the French weekly Le Point.

From Tehran's perspective, triggering snapback would effectively end European participation in the nuclear deal and obliterate the fragile trust that remains between the parties.

Iran's concerns reflect a broader unease about the risks of escalating tensions and the potential unraveling of diplomatic gains painstakingly built over years of negotiation.

In this light, Tehran's ongoing dialogue with the E3 serves as both a strategic safeguard and a platform to signal its red lines to the West.

Iran questions Europe's response after U.S. withdrawal

From Iran's viewpoint, much of the current deadlock stems from the limited response of European capitals following the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018.

The decision by Washington to abandon the deal and reimpose sanctions forced European companies into a difficult dilemma.

According to Tehran, many commercial interests over multilateral commitments, complying with U.S. sanctions rather than upholding the deal's promises.

“The promised economic benefits under the agreement never materialized,” Araghchi lamented. “European companies decided to comply with U.S. sanctions instead of honoring commitments made by their own governments.”

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Two Iranians revered as key players in Asia Futsal Cup

TEHRAN – Maral Torkaman and Fereshteh Khosravi are among the key players the-AFC.com has picked out from Iran who could make the difference between glory and heartbreak in the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup 2025.

The AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup 2025 will witness the crowning of first-time champion – either Japan or Thailand, while the third and final qualification berth to the inaugural FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup Philippines 2025 is on the line in the third-place playoff between China and Iran.

She is making waves at her first ever AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup, but Maral Torkaman has established herself as a real star for a while now despite her young age.

Aged 11, the Karaj native made the Iran U-14 national team and a switch to futsal in 2019 has proved to be very successful with numerous accolades at both club and international level.

Capable of both scoring and setting up teammates, the skillful Torkaman came close to sparking a comeback with two powerful strikes against Japan in Iran's semi-final defeat and will be vital to their chances of redemption in the third-place playoff.

Moreover, part of the 2018 title-winning squad, Fereshteh Khosravi returned to the Iran squad hoping to win a second straight crown but has still starred despite them suffering semi-final heart-break.

The 29-year-old Saipa Tehran player represented her country at both U-19 and senior international level on the 11-a-side pitch before turning her attention to the hard court, and has established herself there as well.

It was Khosravi, who struck in extra time to help Iran see off Chinese Taipei in the quarter-finals and also laid on an assist for Torkaman in the semis against Japan, proving her ability to be a game-changer.

Iran’s Sharifi snatches gold in 2025 Asian Weightlifting

TEHRAN – Ayat Sharifi of Iran won a gold medal in the 2025 Asian Weightlifting Championships held in Jiangshan, China on Thursday.

Sharifi lifted 195kg in snatch and 227kg in clean and jerk for a total of 422kg in the men's +109kg division.

Hwang Woo-man and Lee Yang-jae, both from South Korea, claimed silver and bronze with 421kg and 396kg, respectively.

Ali Alipour and Alireza Moeini of Iran had previously won a gold and a bronze medal respectively in the competition on Wednesday.

Alipour claimed the title for a total of 390kg and Moeini seized the bronze with 383kg in the 96kg weight class.

The 2025 Asian Weightlifting Championships were held in Jiangshan, China, from 9 to 15 May 2025.

Iran futsal women coach Soleimani focuses on beating China

TEHRAN – Iran's women's futsal head coach, Forouzan Soleimani, emphasized that their main focus is to defeat China and secure third place at the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup China 2025.

As the only team to have previously won the competition, the two-time champions entered this edition with hopes of retaining the title. However, they now must recover quickly from the disappointment of a 3-2 semi-final loss to Japan.

“I respect our opponents and would like to thank them for their excellent hosting,” she stated. “I believe their goal before the tournament was to finish in the top three and qualify for the World Cup. As two-time champions, we faced a more challenging situation.”

She reflected on the recent match: “Last night was our worst night ever. We understand that

we've lost the championship, but now we need to motivate the players, including psychologically, for the upcoming match.”

Soleimani, who was also in charge when Iran's team won the inaugural edition in 2015, added that they will not underestimate China, as the team has “developed and improved a lot” since their last encounter at a friendly tournament in July 2024.

“They are strong fighters and fast runners,” she said. “We will give our best—as we have done so far—and we must focus on winning against China.”

Foolad book berth in AVC Men’s Champions League semis

TEHRAN – Foolad Sirjan defeated Shanghai Bright of China 3-1 (24-26, 25-21, 28-26, 25-23) at the inaugural AVC Men's Champions League on Friday.

The Iranian team had previously defeated Thailand's Nakhon Ratchasima QminC and Taichung Bank of Chinese Taipei.

Foolad Sirjan will face either Osaka Bluteon of Japan or Nakhon Ratchasima QminC in the competition's semi-finals on Saturday.

Japan's Suntory Sunbirds Osaka will also face Al Rayyan of Qatar in another semi-finals.

The competition takes place at the Panasonic Arena in Hirakata for the preliminary round and Shimadzu Arena Kyoto in Kyoto for the final round from May 11 to 18.

Both champions and runners-up will qualify for the 2025 FIVB Men's Volleyball Club World Championship.

Hosseinzadeh wins Iran league Golden Boot

TEHRAN – Tractor football team striker Amir Hossein Hosseinzadeh has won the 2024-25 Iran Professional League Golden Boot.

He scored 14 goals in the season and won the accolade.

Persepolis forward Ali Alipour came second with 12 goals.

Esteghlal winger Ramin Rezaeian finished in third place, scoring 10 goals.

Tractor won the IPL title for the first-time ever, followed by Sepahan and Persepolis.

Sepahan runners-up in 2024/25 PGPL

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team defeated Esteghlal 3-1 and finished the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Thursday.

Esteghlal's Mohammadhossein Eslami was on target in the 10th minute but Kaveh Rezaei in the 36th minute.

Mohammadmehdi Mohebbi made it 2-1 in the 76th minute and Wissam Ben Yedder scored Sepahan's goal with two minutes remaining.

In Tehran's Azadi Stadium, Persepolis defeated already-relegated Havadar 2-0, thanks to two late goals from Oston Urunov and Yaghoob Barajeh.

Sepahan joined PGPL champions Tractor and will represent Iran in the 2025/26 AFC Champions League Elie play-off.

Iran come second in 2025 Asian Beach Handball C’ship

TEHRAN – Iran lost to Oman 2-0 (21-18, 14-10) in the final match of the 10th Asian Beach Handball Championship held in Muscat, Oman.

Hudhaifa Al-Siyabi was named the best player of the match for his exceptional performance.

Additionally, Pakistan secured third place after defeating Jordan, while in the women's division, Vietnam won the championship, followed by the Philippines in second place, and India in third.

Iran and Oman will represent Asia in the IHF Beach Handball World Championships.

Monthly trade balance in Arvand FTZ hits \$14m



TEHRAN – Iran's Free Zones High Council announced that the trade balance of Arvand Free Trade Zone, in Iran's southwestern province of Khuzestan, was \$14 million positive in the first Iranian calendar month Farvardin (March 21-April 21).

The council announced that the total export of goods from the zone during Farvardin reached \$20 million, while the value of imported goods (excluding machinery) from this zone was \$6 million, indicating a positive trade balance of \$14 million.

Consumer goods, raw materials, and vehicles were the major products imported to Arvand FTZ during the first month.

As reported by Iran's Free Zones High Council, the trade balance of the country's free trade zones was \$41.463 million positive in Farvardin.

The total export of goods and services from these zones in the first month reached \$100.85 million. In contrast, the imports from the free zones, excluding machinery, were announced at \$59.207 million, indicating a positive trade balance of \$41.643 million.

In mid-February, Iran's Free Zones High Council Secretary Reza Masrouf stated that regulatory restrictions in free trade zones have hindered their intended function in recent years.

He pointed to past policies, such as the ban on vehicle imports into free zones while allowing them in mainland Iran, as an example of such constraints.

However, recent government efforts have led to the removal of several limitations.

He emphasized the council's focus on enhancing the export role of free trade zones, as a significant portion of their production has historically been directed toward the domestic market, contradicting their core purpose. The new policy framework aims to steer businesses toward export-driven production.

Gas pressure boosting project in South Pars launched

TEHRAN – Iran has officially launched its long-anticipated gas pressure boosting project at the South Pars field, the country's largest natural gas reservoir, with energy officials emphasizing the need for strict timelines and private sector coordination to ensure its success.

Touraj Dehghani, head of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), said on Thursday that advancing the pressure boosting initiative requires a comprehensive operational roadmap, timely decision-making, and adherence to scheduled targets.

"We hope that with the serious commitment of contractors, we can move this project forward along the correct path," he stated during a two-day round of meetings with senior executives from OIEC, Petropars, MAPNA, and Khat-

Iran's monthly road transit rises 6%, hits 1.2m tons

TEHRAN – Iran reported the transit of over 1.2 million tons of goods by road during the first month of the Iranian calendar year (March 20 – April 20), reflecting a six percent year-on-year rise in total cross-border freight activity, according to the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization.

Javad Hedayati, Director General of the Transit Bureau at the organization, said on Thursday that 1.23 million tons of transit cargo moved across Iran in the mentioned month, facilitated by more than 54,500 trips by international freight carriers.

In the same period, 186,000 tons of imported goods entered Iran through 8,400 shipments,

Masrouf highlighted that while free trade zones are more service- and commerce-oriented, special economic zones focus primarily on production and exports.

To improve export performance, new incentives have been introduced for production units engaged in exports.

Additionally, the council has partnered with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) to establish export management companies in free zones to facilitate international trade.

Masrouf addressed concerns about smuggling in free zones, stating that all import processes are recorded in official systems.

He also announced a shift in trade exhibition policies, stating that foreign exhibitions, which were previously held outside free zones, have been limited due to high costs. Moving forward, exhibitions will be held exclusively within free trade zones, ensuring they target relevant markets and yield better economic results.

The official revealed plans for a greater emphasis on technology in free trade zones, and mentioned the development of an AI assistant tailored for free trade zones.

On international cooperation, he proposed the establishment of a Supreme Eurasia Trade Council within Iran's Foreign Ministry to strengthen ties with regional economic blocs.

He noted ongoing discussions with Turkey and Pakistan about creating joint free trade zones, although such projects require parliamentary approval.

Masrouf concluded by affirming the council's commitment to enhancing the competitiveness of free trade zones, increasing exports, and minimizing smuggling, with continued government collaboration to improve policies and investment conditions.

The establishment of free trade zones (FTZs) in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989 – March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

am al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters.

The framework contracts for the pressure boosting plan were signed in late 2024, and both contractors and the employer are now responsible for fulfilling their obligations under those agreements, Dehghani noted.

He underscored the need for an integrated engineering approach and swift finalization of technical service scopes, adding that minimizing bureaucracy and maintaining unity of operations are essential for progress.

The project aims to address declining reservoir pressure at South Pars, which provides the majority of Iran's gas output. Dehghani reaffirmed that overcoming challenges is inevitable, but the company remains committed to advancing the project with maximum diligence and efficiency.

while 1.5 million tons of exports exited the country via 43,000 outbound trips, he added.

Altogether, import, export, and transit freight volumes recorded in April showed a six percent increase compared to the same month last year.

Hedayati noted that Iran currently operates 26 border terminals across 12 provinces. The country's international freight sector includes around 40,000 transport vehicles and 51,000 drivers.

He also reported that 1,870 international freight companies are active in the country, alongside 59 passenger transport firms and branch offices.

Iran, EAEU implement free trade agreement, slashing tariffs

TEHRAN – Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) have officially implemented a comprehensive free trade agreement, significantly reducing customs tariffs and expanding market access for both sides.

Under the newly enacted deal, the average import tariff on goods from EAEU member states to Iran has dropped from 20 percent to 4.5 percent, Iranian media reported on Thursday. The agreement replaces a provisional trade pact that had been in effect since 2019 and covered only a limited range of products.

The EAEU said in a statement that the full-scale agreement would substantially reduce customs duties and open new export opportunities. "This comprehensive agreement provides broader and preferential access to the Iranian market for producers from EAEU member countries," it noted.

The agreement was signed in December 2023 and ratified by EAEU members—Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and



Armenia—as well as Iran, in early 2025.

According to Andrey Slepnev, Minister of Trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission, preparations are underway for the first meeting of the joint committee, scheduled for the second half of 2025. The meeting will focus on expanding bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

The deal covers 90 percent of goods categories and sets mutual obligations to provide preferential services. Compared to the

earlier temporary pact, the new agreement includes more robust regulatory frameworks aimed at removing mutual trade barriers.

Experts estimate the agreement could boost bilateral trade between Iran and the EAEU to \$12 billion in the medium term—nearly double the current level.

Russian officials, cited by Interfax, said the agreement marks the first time Iran has opened its domestic market to third-country goods, having previously shielded it to support domestic produc-

Pezeshkian inaugurates over \$140m in projects during Kermanshah visit



TEHRAN – President Masoud Pezeshkian inaugurated more than 70 trillion rials (over \$140 million) worth of projects during a two-day visit to Kermanshah Province, as part of his sixth provincial tour since taking office.

Pezeshkian arrived in Kermanshah on Wednesday afternoon and was welcomed by the Leader's representative in the province, the governor, members of parliament, military and police commanders, and other local officials at Shahid Ashrafi Esfahani Airport.

Several officials accompanied the president, including Mohammad Jafar Ghaempanah (Vice President for Executive Affairs), Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh (Vice President for Rural and Underserved Areas), Zahra Behrouz Azar (Vice President for Women and Family Affairs), Alireza Kazemi (Minister of Education), Mohammad Reza Zafarghandi (Minister of Health), Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji (Minister of Agriculture), Farzaneh Sadegh (Minister of Transport and Urban Development), Seyyed

Mohammad Atabak (Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade), Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri (Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts), and Abbas Aliabadi (Minister of Energy).

The president's itinerary included meetings with various community groups, an administrative council session, site visits, and the signing of more than 1 quadrillion rials (over \$20 billion) in economic and investment agreements. The president also oversaw the launch of four major projects, valued at over 70 trillion rials (about \$140 million), and heard directly from residents about their needs.

Pezeshkian said the financial, banking, and executive backing for all trip-related approvals had been determined in planning sessions. He noted that the newly inaugurated projects span industrial, agricultural, and infrastructure sectors and were launched under his direct instruction.

In a televised interview Thursday night, Pezeshkian said nearly 260 trillion rials (around \$5.2 billion) from the national budget had been allocated to development plans for Kermanshah Province. Detailed programs for utilizing this funding have also been finalized, he added.

The president also announced a support package for private manufacturers, including 160 trillion rials (about \$3.2 billion) in bank loans to help expand privately owned facto-

ries.

"These resources are not just promises," Pezeshkian emphasized. "They have been formalized with signed agreements by ministers, institutional heads, and bank CEOs."

He further noted that the private sector has committed to investing approximately 1.1 quadrillion rials (over \$22 billion) in projects, which, if implemented, could transform the province's economy. "The government's role is purely facilitative and supportive," he said.

Iran launches first bio-refinery to produce green fuel

In a live televised link, Pezeshkian inaugurated Iran's first bio-refinery, marking the official start of green fuel production.

Speaking from the site, Minister of Industry Seyyed Mohammad Atabak launched the bioethanol production plant on Thursday, part of a broader push toward clean energy under commitments made during the Leader's visit to Kermanshah.

The facility, which will produce 66 million liters of bioethanol fuel and 66,000 tons of fermented animal feed annually, is considered a milestone in Iran's biotechnology sector.

According to Atabak, the refinery will help improve the quality of gasoline, reduce air pollution, optimize the use of agricultural waste, and boost the supply of high-protein livestock feed.

Korean Cultural Box Unveiling, beginning of 5 key initiatives by Korean Embassy in Iran this year

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- The Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Iran held the "Korean Cultural Box Unveiling Event" at the place of the embassy in Tehran on Thursday, May 15.

The ceremony, which was practically unveiling a small museum of Korean rich culture, provided a unique opportunity for the visitors to learn about this culture.

The participants also had the chance to wear traditional South Korean clothes, enjoy South Korean delicious foods, and play a number of redesigned games from the "Squid Game" Korean series.

While the event provided opportunity for the guests to get acquainted with the Korean culture, the friendly atmosphere, created by Korean Ambassador, Mr. KIM Junpyo, Cultural Attaché, Mr. Kim Jongoh, and the staff of embassy, made the event an unforgettable memory for all participants.

In the beginning of the ceremony, Mr. Ambassador delivered a speech, that its text comes as follows.

"Distinguished guests, dear friends who love Korean culture,

Thank you sincerely for attending the "Korean Cultural Box Unveiling Event."

The Korean Cultural Chest is a museum exhibit made possible with the support of the National Folk Museum of Korea. Each item was crafted by traditional Korean artisans, allowing viewers to experience the depth and beauty of Korea's traditional culture and heritage all in one place.

I am very pleased that today, we are able to open this cultural box together—like unveiling a precious time capsule—and take a journey through the heart of Korean tradition.

It is my sincere hope that this Korean Cultural Box will serve as a meaningful starting point for deepening cultural exchange between Korea and Iran by introducing the richness of Korea's traditional culture to our Iranian friends.

This event also marks the beginning of one of the five key initiatives being pursued by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Iran this year. One of these major focus areas is cultural exchange. Starting with today's unboxing ceremony, we plan to further pro-



mote mutual understanding and cooperation through a variety of cultural programs, including an upcoming Korea-Iran Calligraphy Exhibition and other collaborative initiatives.

Through this event, I hope you will spend a meaningful time seeing, hearing, and experiencing firsthand the many elements of Korea's traditional culture.

In addition, we have prepared a special feature—the "Squid Game Experience Zone"—which presents Korea's traditional games with a creative, modern twist. I encourage you all to participate and enjoy.

Moving forward, our embassy will continue to create opportunities for closer cultural engage-

ment and shared experiences between our two peoples.

Once again, I thank each and every one of you for joining us today, and I hope you enjoy a joyful and enriching time.

Thank you."

Korean Culture Box is a mobile museum installation that introduces Korean culture through real world objects displayed in relevant contexts.

Designed for both exhibitions and hands-on experiences, it introduces visitors to diverse aspects of Korean culture, including traditional housing culture, hanbok (traditional Korean clothes), and Hangeul (Korean alphabet).

Fresh wave of ethnic cleansing unfolds in Gaza

In three days, over 300 Palestinians have been killed

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The Israeli regime's on-going genocide in the Gaza Strip continues to result in mass civilian casualties amid international silence.

The mass slaughters are taking place as Palestinians mark the 77th Nakba Day, also known as the Palestinian Catastrophe, which comprised the destruction of Palestinian society and homeland in 1948, and the permanent displacement of a majority of the Palestinian people.

The massacre also took place as Donald Trump, whose country is the chief backer of Israel, was visiting the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar as well.

In northern Gaza, Israeli airstrikes have killed and injured over 100 Palestinians. The regime's warplanes carried out a series of extremely violent attacks across various areas, leaving many civilians dead, wounded, or missing.

Regional media reported that the bombardment targeted multiple locations in northern Gaza.

Reporters on the ground confirmed that Israeli bombs struck Beit Lahia, the Jabalia refugee camp, and Tal al-Zaatar, leading to dozens of civilian casualties, mostly women and children.

They also noted that many people were either injured or trapped under rubble after occupation forces bombed a building in the Jabalia camp.



Footage shows residents of the Jabalia camp searching for missing family members beneath the rubble of homes leveled by Israeli warplanes amid a lack of rescue equipment.

The new wave of brutalities against the Palestinians in Gaza started on Wednesday. Over the past three days, more than 300 people have been killed and 500 others injured in the ongoing bombardment.

Gaza Civil Defense teams have recovered the bodies of more than 50 people from homes struck by Israeli attacks on Friday, including eleven members of a single family.

"Our teams are overwhelmed and can no longer keep up with the volume of emergency calls," the Civil Defense spokesperson said, adding that "many remain trapped under rubble and unreachable, while anyone moving in northern Gaza is being

targeted."

In addition, Israeli occupation forces reportedly surrounded a school sheltering displaced people in the al-Sultan area of northern Gaza. Reports indicate the occupation regime aims to "clear the al-Sultan area near the Zikim settlement"

The Indonesian Hospital, already barely functional, is overwhelmed with casualties from air raids on northern Gaza homes.

Meanwhile, in the southern Gaza Strip, fighter jets struck makeshift tents sheltering displaced families along a road west of Khan Younis.

Just 115 Gazans, mostly women and children, were killed on Thursday. According to Al Jazeera, Israeli air strikes also killed more than 100 Palestinians across Gaza since dawn Friday.

Gaza's Ministry of Health has also said the occupation regime is "using modern, internationally prohibited

weapons to target civilian infrastructure."

The Health Ministry has called for an urgent international investigation into the types of banned weapons being used, saying a "disturbing rise in the number of deformed fetuses, a direct result of these attacks."

"We are also facing a severe shortage of medical supplies, personnel, and intensive care capacity. On top of that, the lack of water and sanitation security is placing an enormous burden on the ministry and deepening the humanitarian catastrophe," the ministry stated.

Last cancer-treatment facility out of service

International medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) also said on Thursday that the Gaza European Hospital, the last facility providing cancer treatment across the strip, "is now out of service" after Israeli forces struck it.

"Repeated strikes on healthcare facilities are yet more examples of the Israeli authorities making the Strip unlivable," warned the MSF.

Since October 7, 2023, Gaza has faced a brutal war of extermination, with more than 172,000 people killed or wounded amid a suffocating Israeli blockade.

The siege has led to severe shortages of food, essential supplies, and medical aid after the Israeli regime blocked the entry of all humanitarian assistance since March 2, 2025.

YAF target Ben Gurion Airport with ballistic missile



The Yemeni Armed Forces (YAF) launched a hypersonic ballistic missile at the Israeli Ben Gurion Airport in occupied Yafa, in a decisive response and rejection of the ongoing genocide committed by the Israeli enemy in the Gaza Strip, Al Mayadeen reported.

According to YAF spokesperson Brigadier General Yahya Saree, the operation successfully struck its target, forcing millions of settlers into shelters and halting airport operations for nearly an hour on Thursday.

According to Israeli reports, the missile was detected, causing activity at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv to halt as sirens sounded across vast occupied lands. Israeli news outlet Yedioth Ahronoth stated that "a missile from Yemen sent millions into shelters," especially those attending a celebration in the settlement of Beit Shims in occupied al-Quds.

The statement further noted that faced with the urgent developments in Gaza, marked by the continued genocide, daily massacres, and famine due to the suffocating siege, and confronted with the failure and betrayal of Arab and Islamic nations, the Yemeni Armed Forces, alongside all free peoples of the Ummah, assume a profound religious, moral, and humanitarian responsibility.

Senators seek to block Trump's UAE, Qatar defense deals

A group of United States senators is trying to halt \$3.5bn in weapons sales to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar over concerns that the deals will personally benefit the family of U.S. President Donald Trump, Al Jazeera reported.

Two "resolutions of disapproval" were submitted on Thursday by Democratic Senators Chris Murphy, Chris Van Hollen, Brian Schatz and Tim Kaine, along with Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent who often votes with Democrats.

The legislators also issued statements accusing Trump of actively engaging in the "corruption of U.S. foreign policy" over the timing of the sales and recent investment deals.

The Department of State this week approved the \$1.6bn sale to the UAE of Chinook helicopters and equipment, F-16 aircraft components, and spare and repair parts to support Apache, Black Hawk and Chinook helicopters. Initial reporting cited the figure as close to \$1.3bn, but the \$1.6bn figure was used in a statement from the legislators. The lawmakers are also seeking to block \$1.9bn in sales to Qatar of MQ-9B Predator drones and associated equipment, which was approved by the State Department in March.

Trump suggests US 'take' Gaza, make it 'freedom zone'

President Trump on Thursday suggested the U.S. would look to take control of the Gaza Strip and turn it into a "freedom zone," highlighting one of his more controversial foreign policy proposals during a visit to Qatar, according to The Hill.

"I have concepts for Gaza that I think are very good: Make it a freedom zone. Let the United States get involved, and make it just a freedom zone," Trump said during a business roundtable.

"I'd be proud to have the United States have it, take it, make it a freedom zone, let some good things happen. Put people in homes where they can be safe, and Hamas is going to have to be dealt with," Trump added.

Qatar has played host to periodic ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas in an attempt to stop the fighting between the two sides, but so far negotiations have been at a stalemate as bombings continue.

The president earlier this year first proposed the idea of the U.S. taking control of Gaza, which has been devastated by Israeli military strikes.

Trump has previously suggested Palestinians living in Gaza would relocate elsewhere in the region while the U.S. rebuilt the strip. He has brushed off questions about how the U.S. would take over the territory, though he previously floated that Israel would turn it over at the conclusion of its war with Gaza.

The idea has drawn pushback from the head of the Palestinian National Authority, as well as from U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia.

Russians and Ukrainians meet in Turkey for first talks in 3 years



Russian and Ukrainian negotiators met in Istanbul on Friday at their first direct peace talks in more than three years, under pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War Two, Reuters reported.

Live television showed Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan addressing Russian and Ukrainian negotiators at the lavish Dolmabahce Palace on the Bosphorus. Half of the Ukrainian delegation wore camouflage military fatigues, sitting at a table directly facing their Russian counterparts, who were in suits.

Fidan said it was critical to achieve a ceasefire as soon as possible. He said he was happy to see the will of both sides to open a new window of opportunity for peace, and it was important that the Istanbul talks form the basis for a meeting between leaders of the two countries.

"There are two paths ahead of us: one road will take us on a process that will lead to peace, while the other will lead to more destruction and death. The sides will decide on their own, with their own will, which path they choose," Fidan said.

The warring sides had not met face-to-face since March 2022, the month after the conflict started.

China urges action on two-state solution to end Palestinian suffering

Speaking at a UN event commemorating Nakba Day, Geng Shuang, Chinese deputy permanent representative to the UN, urged the international community to take real actions to advance the two-state solution and bring a just, lasting resolution to the Palestinian issue. He reaffirmed China's firm support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with full sovereignty, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

According to CGTN, Geng said China will continue working with all peace-loving nations to ensure Nakba becomes a thing of the past.

Lebanon's choice is nothing but resistance to Israel

Implementation of the humiliating 'May 17 Agreement' would have transformed Lebanon into an Israeli colony



The 17 May Agreement of 1983

From page 1 ► In his diaries, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the U.S. president during the 1950s, affirm, to what Washington was wary of former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, especially after his refusal to join the Baghdad Pact, his acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine, and his victorious exit from the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt in 1956.

Washington feared that Abdel Nasser's control over oil resources would guarantee his dream of Arab unity, which would pose a threat to the secu-

rity of the Zionist entity.

From what Eisenhower wrote in his diaries, we can understand the true reasons behind the first American intervention in Lebanon, which involved 70 ships, hundreds of aircraft, and approximately 14,000 troops.

When then Lebanese Army Commander, Major General Fouad Chehab, protested, the U.S. Presidential Envoy to Lebanon Robert Murphy threatened him: "The aircraft carrier Saratoga, stationed off the coast of Beirut, has any of the aircraft on board that could be loaded with nuclear weapons, and it could wipe Beirut and its suburbs off the face of the earth in a single minute."

Crises continued in Lebanon until the Gemayel family assumed the presidency. The Hebrew book "1982 – Lebanon, the Road to War" reveals that the leader of the Lebanese Phalange Party, Bashir Gemayel, made a decision in 1976 to cooperate with then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

On September 14, 1982, Habib Shartouni assassinated Bashir Gemayel—who famously rose to the presidency on the back of an Israeli tank—and

was succeeded by his brother, Amin Gemayel.

The following day, Israeli War Minister Ariel Sharon arrived in Bikfaya (the stronghold of the Lebanese Phalange Party—whose military wing was the Lebanese Forces) to offer his condolences.

Sharon was received by Bashir's father, Pierre Gemayel, who told him, "Bashir has informed me of his close ties with you, and I will perpetuate his mission."

Sharon sharply interrupted him: "I am here only to offer my condolences for the loss of a friend."

Coinciding with the signing of the humiliating "May 17 Agreement," Hezbollah's first founding cell met with Imam Khomeini (ra), including martyr Sayyed Abbas al-Musawi and martyr Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

Imam Khomeini told them, "Your situation is not more difficult than ours in Iran. The Shah was even much stronger. However, with reliance on God, determination, and the will of the people, we were able to overcome this Shah.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



sectarians through his words and actions. He was one who strived to bring unity among the believers compared to leaders today who incite hatred amongst certain sects.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Merkel's legacy: Building strong Israel-Germany ties in the 21st century

ly brokered a high-profile swap, earning public praise from Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

During the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict, Germany further demonstrated its commitment by negotiating for the release of Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah, at the request of Israeli officials.

Israeli leaders even considered the prospect of a German military presence in Lebanon, highlighting the growing trust and depth of cooperation between the two nations.

The Angela Merkel era: A unique alliance and pragmatic support

Angela Merkel's tenure as German chancellor (2005–2021) marked a transformative



Standing ovations for Chancellor Angela Merkel after her speech in the Knesset on March 18, 2008

From page 1 ► Diplomatically, 2000 marked a milestone with Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's visit to Israel, symbolizing stronger bilateral ties. Germany played a key mediating role in prisoner exchanges, most notably in 2004 when its intelligence agency (BND) successful-

Cultural heritage minister calls Ferdowsi architect of a borderless language



TEHRAN—Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri has said the great poet Abolqasem Ferdowsi became the architect of a language which went beyond geographical borders of dialogue.

The masterpiece that Ferdowsi created was not only a literary work, but also a semantic system for the combination of epic, wisdom, morality, and identity, IRNA reported.

May 15 as a day to mark Persian Language is not merely a reminder of a language heritage. It is a historical event for reviewing a civilizational project which is tied to the great name of Ferdowsi.

He was not only a great poet, but also a strategic thinker who turned the language into a supporter of culture, identity, and survival in a sensitive time of history.

The great poet shaped the language epic without stepping into the boundaries of hostility with other clans or languages.

He wrote at a time when Iran was scarred by historical turmoil and cultural threats.

With an eye to the past and future, he didn't give up to isolation. He resorted to awareness and created a masterpiece.

Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, more than a narrative of wars, is a cultural document for endogenous peace and the revival of the linguistic and historical identity of a nation.

Ferdowsi became an architect of language that echoed the thought, literature, mysticism and dialogue beyond borders in an area stretching from Indian subcontinent to Central Asia, Caucasus to Anatolia, and West Asia to North of Africa.

Iran National Museum journal launches new issue on occasion of Cultural Heritage Week

TEHRAN – The new issue of the Iran National Museum Quarterly Journal (Volume 3, Issue 1) has been published on the occasion of the Cultural Heritage Week, which commences concurrent with the International Museum Day on May 18.

This issue includes 17 articles spanning archaeological field research, studies on collections housed in the Iran National Museum, and other topics related to museums and museology. The journal is published in both English and Persian and is freely accessible to the public.

Among the highlights of this issue are the results of field research conducted at the Lower Paleolithic site of Dehtal in Hormozgan Province. Additionally, animal remains from Wazmeh Cave in Kermanshah shed light on the diversity of fauna in the western Zagros region over the past 70,000 years.

The journal also presents findings on cremated human remains from Zardeh Sahel near Kashan, which provide new evidence of burial rituals during the Neolithic period. A clay seal discovered at Tepe Jameh Shuran in the Mahidasht Plain offers insights into prehistoric connections between the central Zagros, Susiana, and Mesopotamia.

Further contributions include a study of a Bakun-period site in the highlands of Fars Province, which reveals evidence of seasonal pastoral activities.

The analysis of Susa clay tablets (3100–2900 BC) documents early crop cultivation, labor organization, and reinforces Susa's role as an administrative center. A newly identified Akkadian tablet details the reconstruction of the Ababar Temple in Larsa by a Babylonian king.

The journal also explores sacrificial scenes depicted on the Arjan Bowl and examines Elamite terms such as takara found in the Persepolis archives, which illuminate administrative practices of the Achaemenid Empire.

Persian language in light of Shahnameh, was rescued from oblivion and turned into the one of the most deeply rooted cultural media of the nations.

In today's world, languages are not only the tools for relations but a strategic cultural asset and pillar of soft power diplomacy.

Persian language, supported by Ferdowsi's legacy, has unique potential for presence in the scene of global interactions.

The language that carries justice in words, peace in mind, and beauty in expression deserves to play a role in global civilizational dialogue.

Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts relies on these deep roots and redefines Persian language as a global asset; a language for the collaboration, dialogue, and coexistence of nations.

Currently, we need to recognize Ferdowsi as a cultural strategist more than ever. Just as our civilizational memory began with him, our cultural future depends on the continuity of his thought.

The masterpiece that Ferdowsi created was not only a literary work, but also a semantic system for the combination of epic, wisdom, morality, and identity.

In today's challenging world, where identity wars are raging beneath the surface of linguistic and cultural differences, Ferdowsi calls us to a deep understanding of ourselves and respect for others.

As the Persian language has developed civilization in cooperation with Arabic, Turkish, Urdu, Pashto, and other neighboring languages throughout history, it can also be a link for new civilizational dialogues.

This language reserves the joint memory of nations that have lived together and can generate a new future.

The day to mark the Persian language is a time for praising Ferdowsi.



Advanced methodologies are showcased in studies such as CT scans of the Chehrabad salt mummies, which analyze injuries caused by mine collapses. Another investigation explores the functional purpose of holes in the column capitals of Persepolis, suggesting they were used to hang lightweight decorations.

The issue also discusses coins excavated by Herzfeld at Persepolis, Egyptian-style artifacts in Achaemenid Iran, and the sourcing of cobalt in blue-glazed ceramics from Iran and China (12th–17th centuries CE).

A Qajar-era painting in the Iran National Museum's collection is newly attributed to the 1804 Battle of Yerevan. Practical museological topics are addressed as well, including strategies to mitigate earthquake risks to museum objects and the application of Kant's concept of the sublime in the context of museum artifacts.

Since its inception, the journal has published 43 articles, attracting 18,286 views and 10,513 downloads.

This reflects its growing role as a platform for interdisciplinary research bridging archaeology, history, and museum studies. The publication underscores the Iran National Museum's commitment to fostering scholarly dialogue and disseminating knowledge about Iran's rich cultural heritage.

Ferdowsi remembered as guardian of Persian language

From Page 1 ► Gholamali Haddad-Adel, President of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature; Seyyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad, faculty member at Shahid Beheshti University; Mandana Tishehyar, faculty member at Allameh Tabataba'i University; Nimet Yildirim, Turkish academic of Persian literature; and Vladimir Ivanov, professor from Russia, among several others. Their lectures mainly shed light on Ferdowsi's enduring significance in the realms of epic poetry, philosophy, and Iranian cultural heritage.

In his opening remarks, Salehi emphasized Ferdowsi's "unparalleled role" in the preservation and enrichment of Persian literature and identity. "Ferdowsi is not merely a poet; he is the architect of the Persian language," Salehi stated. "At a time when political and cultural storms threatened the very foundations of Iranian heritage, it was Ferdowsi of Tus who, through the Shahnameh, safeguarded not only the Persian language from oblivion but also en-



Ali Akbar Salehi, President of the Iranology Foundation, addresses a gathering of scholars, cultural experts, and literary enthusiasts during a ceremony on Ferdowsi Day held at one of the foundation's halls on May 14, 2025.

shrined Iran's history, culture, and core values in an enduring and noble form for future generations."

Highlighting Ferdowsi's three decades of tireless effort in composing the Shahnameh, Salehi noted that his work breathed new life into ancient Iranian myths and legends, reviving a cultural identity that might other-

wise have been lost. "Persian is not merely a tool for communication; it is the very foundation of our historical identity and a pillar of national cohesion across centuries," he said.

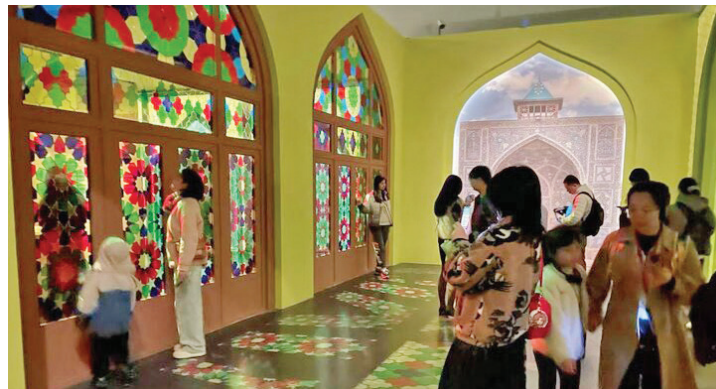
Salehi further remarked on Ferdowsi's remarkable achievement in uniting a vast and diverse cultural sphere under the banner of the Per-

sian language. "Is it not extraordinary that Ferdowsi, through his poetry, brought regions from India to Transoxiana, from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, under the unifying umbrella of the Persian tongue? His work fostered linguistic and cultural unity that has endured for centuries and remains a source of pride for us today," he added.

"Ferdowsi taught us that language is more than just words – it is the house of our existence. If this house remains strong, so too will our thoughts and identity," Salehi concluded. He called upon all attendees to reaffirm their commitment to preserving the Persian language and culture, urging them to continue Ferdowsi's path toward enlightenment, dignity, and freedom.

Ferdowsi's towering contribution to Persian literature and global epic poetry is celebrated annually on Ordibehesht 15 of the Iranian calendar, which marks the completion of the Shahnameh after 30 years of devoted effort.

Iran's "Land of Kindness" draws over 300,000 visitors in China



TEHRAN — The "Land of Kindness" exhibition, showcasing relics from Iranian museums, has attracted over 300,000 visitors in China and garnered more than 100 million views on social media platforms.

Organized by Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in collaboration with the China International Cultural

Exchange Center, the exhibition is currently underway at the Guangdong Museum in Guangzhou. Previously, it was held in Chengdu, drawing significant public attention in both cities.

The exhibition features 151 artifacts from museums across Tehran province, including treasures from the Reza Abbasi Museum, Moghadam Museum, Glassware

and Ceramic Museum (Abgineh), Carpet Museum of Iran, and the Museum of National Arts. The collection includes metalwork, ceramics, silk textiles, carpets, seals, and other artistic items that reflect the grandeur of Iran's Islamic-Iranian civilization.

"This is the first time that museums from Tehran province are independently holding an exhibition abroad," said the representative of China's exhibition art organization in Tehran. "Our aim is to present a true and balanced image of Iran, countering stereotypes and misconceptions about Iran and Islam that exist in some parts of the world."

The exhibition also includes select works from Chinese museums, highlighting the thousand-year history of cultural interaction between Iran and China.

Archaeologists discover new clues of cave dwelling in western Iran

TEHRAN--Ancient cave dwelling remains in Eivan city of the western province of Ilam, indicate the existence of early human beings in the Zagros area, said Habibollah Mahmoudian, a faculty member at Islamic Azad University of Ilam.

He told ISNA that the geographical area of Eivan was the settlement of cave dwellers.

Archaeological studies in this region have discovered evidence of early human beings and related objects in various caves such as Khofash cave, Barreh Zard cave, and Baskel-eh-ye Garmeh cave.

Zagros, as the most extensive mountain range of Iran, has numerous caves and shelters, some of which have historical importance and others are significant in terms of their scientific nature.

The caves located in Eivan particularly in slopes of mountains of Sivan, Kabirkuh, Chehel Sotoon, Darreh Deraz, show the preliminary phases of human settlement.

He explained that Baskel-eh village is one of the ancient regions which is located 18 kilometers north of Eivan. It is in the main route to Kermanshah, he said, adding there are numerous caves that are of high importance in terms

of archeological studies.

Baskel-eh-ye Garmeh I cave is located in southern slope of Dizgeh mountain, northwest of Baskel-eh village. The walls and ceiling of the cave are made of natural stones.

Potteries have been seen in the area, he said, adding based on available findings, they may belong to Chalcolithic era (Copperstone).

Baskel-eh-ye Garmeh II is located two kilometers off Baskel-eh village. The existence of cultural symbols at this location increases the likelihood that it belongs to a historical era.

Baskel-eh-ye Garmeh III is located three kilometers off Baskel-eh village and at height of 220 meters. There are scattered potteries in the area.

Baskel-eh-ye Garmeh IV is located 3.5 kilometers off Baskel-eh in slopes of Gavmeh Mountain. This cave is like a rock shelter.

The potteries found here include simple and handmade potteries using plant-based chamotte. The presence of an obsidian blade in this area also indicates its use in the Chalcolithic era.

He pointed out that studying these sites face numerous challenges. The extensive di-



Zagros, as the most extensive mountain range of Iran, has numerous caves and shelters, some of which have historical importance and others are significant in terms of their scientific nature.

versity of the sites, difficult access to some caves and lack of documentaries are major hinderances toward precise identification of the cultural and civilizational developments of humans in this area, he mentioned.

However, these findings can pave the grounds for further research on social, cultural and environmental developments of cave dwellers in Eivan, he concluded.

Mohseni-Bandpei calls on UN Tourism to help show a clear image of Iran

body, talked about tourism policies, IRNA reported.

He presented Iran's points of view and perspectives on international relations.

Pointing to cultural and historical commonalities between Iran and Greece, he called the programs offered by Theoharis as remarkable.

He emphasized on attention of the UN tourism on launching a data and statistics center, promoting marketing, using successful global models, paying attention to the achievement of Muslim nations, especially in Halal food and pilgrimage.

Mohseni-Bandpei pointed out that the current approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to promote tourism diplomacy and have an active presence in international events.

He called, introducing Iran's diverse tourism po-

tentials as one of the main priorities.

Welcoming the "think globally, act regionally" approach of Greece candidate, he emphasized on promoting regional management in structure of UN Tourism.

"The role of the upcoming secretary general in fighting against Iranophobia and introducing true Iran is a core issue for creating balance in the global narrative of the country's tourism potentials. "

He invited Theoharis to visit Iran, see the security, safety, calmness, and diversity of the country's potential, and convey its reassuring message to the world.

It is noteworthy to say that the current UN Tourism Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili will stay until the end of 2025.

Second phase of polio vaccination to be launched

TEHRAN – The health ministry is scheduled to implement the second phase of the polio eradication campaign in the country's northern half from May 17 to 19.

The first phase was conducted from April 12 to 14. The polio eradication campaign kicked off in winter, targeting around 300,000 more children under five years of age to get vaccinated in two phases in high-risk areas in the country's northern half in spring, according to the health ministry.

Polio is a highly infectious viral disease that largely affects children under 5 years of age. The virus is transmitted by person-to-person spread mainly through the fecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (for example, contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and cause paralysis.

It can be prevented through immunization. The development of effective vaccines to prevent paralytic polio was one of the major medical breakthroughs of the 20th century. The Polio vaccine, given multiple times, almost always protects a child for life.

High-risk areas are remote villages, the outskirts of cities, and



places where refugees reside. According to statistics, some 314,00 children under the age of five have received vaccinations in the first phase of the campaign, and the same number of children will be vaccinated during the second phase of the supplementary immunization campaign, ISNA quoted Mohsen Zahraei, an official with the health ministry, as saying.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the virus is transmitted by person-to-person spread mainly through the faecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (for example, contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the

nervous system and cause paralysis.

To prevent the outbreak of the disease in the country's southern half, in the past Iranian calendar year which ended on March 20, the annual door-to-door polio vaccination campaign was implemented in two phases, with a month interval between them, targeting children under the age of five in high-risk regions in the southern part of the country.

The first phase was conducted from January 4 to 6, and the second phase started on February 15 and concluded on February 17. During the campaign, some 840,000 Iranian and foreign national children under the age of 5 were immunized against polio

by medical universities in Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman, Fars, Hormozgan, Bushehr, Khuzestan, South Khorasan, and Yazd provinces.

Polio vaccination should be given at 2, 4, 6, 18 months of ages with supplementary vaccination to be received at 6 years of age, ISNA reported.

The supplementary immunization campaign to eradicate polio in Iran started in 1994. Thanks to the campaign, the country has been polio-free since 2000.

However, in Iran's two neighboring countries, namely Afghanistan and Pakistan, endemic transmission of wild poliovirus is still prevalent. Due to frequent travel to these countries, as well as intensified migration of Afghans to the country because of political changes in Afghanistan in recent years, Iran is exposed to the resurgence of the disease, Borna quoted Alireza Raeisi, an official with the health ministry, as saying in February.

Moreover, the fact that in 2024, the number of wild poliovirus positives in Afghanistan and Pakistan increased by four and twelve times, respectively, compared to 2023, indicates that the country is highly at risk, Raeisi noted.

Iran has no capacity to host illegal refugees: interior minister



TEHRAN – Referring to the two million undocumented foreign nationals residing in the country, Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni highlighted that Iran has no capacity to host these refugees.

“Despite having numerous religious, historical, and cultural commonalities with neighboring countries, the country simply has no more capacity for illegal refugees. Our top priority is to send them back to their home countries,” ISNA quoted Momeni as saying. The official made the remarks on Friday in Kerman province.

Unauthorized refugees take job opportunities away from citizens and consume subsidies. God willing, they will return and help develop their own countries, the official further noted.

Over 6 million Afghan nationals residing in Iran

According to the head of the National Organization for Migration, Nader Yar-Ahmadi, a total of 6.1 million authorized and unauthorized Afghan nationals are living in the country.

Iran is host to one of the largest and most protracted refugee populations in the world, the majority of whom are Afghan refugees.

Some 2.1 million of the immigrants are documented, the information of the two million others have been registered, and the rest have illegally entered the country, ISNA quoted Yar-Ahmadi as saying.

Over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2024 – March 2025), more than one million undocumented nationals were deported to their own country, of whom forty percent returned voluntarily, the official noted.

Women and children make up the majority of unauthorized foreign nationals, who may be even working in the country and pose no threat. However, due to high costs (of food, transportation, fuel, and so on), imposed by refugees on the country, and inadequate international aid, Iran wants them to return to their own home country, he added.

In a recent meeting between Afghanistan's Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation and the Director General for South Asia at Iran's Foreign Ministry, the Taliban called for joint meetings with Tehran to address the situation of Afghan migrants.

According to reports on Saturday, Afghanistan's Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Mawlawi Abdul Kabir met with Mohammad Reza Bahrami and his accompanying delegation in Kabul.

During the meeting, Abdul Kabir highlighted the deep historical ties between the two nations and expressed appreciation for Iran's decades-long hospitality toward Afghan migrants. He also called for continued Islamic compassion in Iran's treatment of these migrants.

The Taliban official noted that Kabul is implementing plans for the voluntary return of Afghan refugees and revealed that 46 residential townships are currently under construction to accommodate returnees.

In response, Bahrami acknowledged the presence of several million Afghan nationals in Iran, many of whom lack legal documentation.

He emphasized the need for greater cooperation between the two countries to address ongoing challenges and extended an official invitation to the acting minister to visit Tehran.

The Iranian diplomat also welcomed Afghanistan's housing initiative, describing it as a positive step toward facilitating the voluntary return of migrants to their homeland.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has said Afghan refugees will return to their country in a process that will be gradual and with dignity.

He said that officials of the two countries are working on a plan to return Afghans residing in Iran, IRNA reported.

“We are negotiating with the Afghan government so that this process can be done in a principled and organized way.

We do not want the return of [Afghan] nationals to become a social crisis for the two countries. The important principle for us is to do the work based on a logical and reasonable procedure,” he explained.

In case the international community refrains from taking responsibility and fairly sharing the burden of hosting refugees, the Islamic Republic of Iran will probably revise its immigration policies, Yar-Ahmadi has said.

Gender equality empowers women to contribute to digital age: WTISD

TEHRAN – Access and affordability of the internet, digital devices, and technologies have the power to accelerate progress across every sector of society. However, they remain out of reach for some 2.6 billion of people, majority of whom are women.

Combined with limited digital knowledge and skills, it continues to hinder women and girls' participation in today's economy and in shaping tomorrow's digital solutions.

Bridging this divide is essential to unlocking new pathways for economic growth, innovation, and sustainable development.

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) 2025 highlights the pressing need to advance digital gender equality, so that women and girls everywhere can also benefit from and contribute to digital transformation.

WTISD also marks the founding of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) – the United Nations agency for digital technologies. In 2025, ITU commemorates its 160th anniversary, highlighting its long-standing role in advancing global connectivity and fostering international cooperation.

The purpose of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) can bring to societies and economies, as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide.

Digital development opportunities

In September 2024, Zahra Behrouz-Azar, the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, called for efforts to tackle challenges such as the digital divide and gender discrimination in technology so that women can fully benefit from the opportunities brought by digital development.

The official said that women should be empowered through the development of the digital economy to solve social problems. “In our opinion, women's development should not be limited to the economic and digital fields, but women should be empowered through the development of the digital economy, and then solve other social problems,” said Behrouz-Azar, in an exclusive interview with China Global Television Network (CGTN).

She made the remarks on the sidelines of participating in the 5th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Women's Forum which was held from September 10 to 12 in Qingdao, China.

In her speech at the forum, the official stated that women drive change, and together they can harness their capabilities, particularly in the fields of technology, economy, and politics, to help improve people's livelihoods and achieve a more just, compassionate and stable society, China Daily reported.

In the digital age, new technologies offer women unique opportunities, as social networks, online platforms, and digital tools have empowered women to make their voices heard, Behrouz-Azar said.



TEHRAN – According to a report released by the Ministry of Education, the dropout rate has lowered from 1.97 percent in Iranian year 1401 (2022-2023) to 1.65 percent in 1403 (2024-2025).

The dropout rate in the academic year 1401-1402 (September 2022 – June 2023) amounted to 287,617 children, with 0.97 percent (87,544 students) in primary school, 4.09 percent (149,288 students) in lower secondary school, and 2.59 percent (50,785 students) in upper secondary school.

In the next academic year, the dropout rate was about 1.65 percent, accounting for 247,242 children of whom 0.91 percent (84,001 students) were in primary school, 3.47 percent (130,432 students) in the lower secondary school, and 1.65 percent (32,809 students) in the upper secondary school.

During the same period, the number of out-of-school students rose from 902,188 to 928,729.

In the academic year 1401-1402, out of 902,188 out-of-school children, 156,835, 195,568, and 549,785 were in primary school, lower secondary school, and upper secondary school, respectively.

However, in the next academic year (September 2023 – June 2024), the number of out-of-school children came to 928,729 students. Some 171,992, 198,109, and 558,628 students were in primary school, lower secondary school, and upper secondary school, respectively.

Out-of-school students are classified as those who have not enrolled in a school year, it includes children who may have passed away, immigrated, or those who suffer from severe mental retardation.

Compared to previous decades, the educational coverage index in Iran, particularly in the primary school, has improved, reaching about 98 percent.

Despite these efforts, the number of dropouts and out-of-school students indicates failure in fully achieving literacy goals.

Educational equity a fundamental goal

In December 2024, President Masoud Pezeshkian said that the administration intends to transform the education system so that no student is deprived of the right to quality education, highlighting that educational equity is not a mere slogan but a fundamental goal.

It is not acceptable that students in public

schools in underprivileged areas do not receive a good education while they have to compete with students in private schools that benefit from the best education, Pezeshkian stressed.

The president said providing vocational training alongside education is one of the key areas of transforming educational methods, through which the youth will develop skills needed for a profession after graduating from high school.

Referring to the extensive plans to solve the infrastructural challenges of schools, the president stressed, “We will overcome all school construction challenges within a year. One of our main objectives is to turn public schools into the best education model.”

The president urged governor generals and all executive officials to cooperate with other sectors on a national plan to promote equity in educational spaces within the specified timeframe.

He went on to stress the necessity of public participation and the role of citizens in realizing the major national plan of building schools, saying, “We need to share our plans with the people to build not only schools for their children but also appropriate sports and recreational spaces for extracurricular activities.”

Pezeshkian further emphasized the importance of action instead of mere speeches, stating that his administration has prioritized solving the issue of educational space shortages, especially in deprived areas across the country, within a year.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

\$4m allocated to promote non-motorized transport

Some 170 billion rials (around \$4 million) has been allocated to promote bike lanes across the capital city of Tehran, Sakineh Ashrafi, deputy mayor of Tehran, has said.

One of the main issues in the next year's budget bill was development of non-motorized transportation, which focuses on active transportation and human powered transportation including walking and bicycling.

According to Tehran development plan, biking as a green transport has been taken into consideration in order to mitigate traffic congestion and air pollution, she further noted, ISNA reported on Sunday.

تصویب اعتبار ۱۷ میلیاردی برای توسعه دوچرخه‌سواری همگانی در پایتخت

سکینه اشرفی معاون برنامه‌ریزی، توسعه شهری و امور شورای شهردار تهران از تصویب حدود ۱۷۰ میلیارد ریال اعتبار برای توسعه دوچرخه‌سواری همگانی در پایتخت خبر داد.

وی اظهار کرد: یکی از موضوعاتی که در بودجه سنواتی سال آینده شهرداری تهران به آن توجه شده، موضوع توسعه حمل و نقل عمومی غیرموتوری از جمله دوچرخه‌سواری همگانی است.

به گزارش روز یکشنبه برگزارای ایسنا وی ادامه داد: در برنامه سوم توسعه شهر تهران، موضوع توجه به دوچرخه‌سواری به عنوان یک حمل و نقل پاک برای کاهش ترافیک و آلودگی هوا مورد توجه و تاکید قرار گرفته است.



Loving humanity is second only to having faith in Allah as one of the best deeds in Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 19:24 Dawn: 3:18 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 4:57 (tomorrow)

What's in Tehran art galleries



Photo

* Saleess Gallery is currently playing host to an exhibition of photos by Reza Daryakenari.

The exhibition will be running until May 27 at the gallery that can be found at 148 Karim Khan Ave.

Painting

* A collection of paintings by Shervin Pashai is currently on display in an exhibit at Binesh Gallery.

Named "Raaspee Returns", the exhibition runs until May 25 at the gallery located at 22 Khakzad Alley, Vali-e Asr Ave.



* An exhibition of paintings by Shima Shoghi Beigi is underway at Ebtada Gallery.

The exhibition titled "What I Endure" will run until May 20 at the gallery located at 35 Farrokhi Alley, near Vali-e Asr Square.

* Paintings by Mohammad Nourian are on display in an exhibition at Negar Gallery.

The exhibit named "The Lovers' Dusk" will be running until May 26 at the gallery, which can be found at No. 5, Bahrami alley, Mashahir Street, Qaem Maqam Farahani Avenue.



* Paintings by Sina Qadaksaz are currently on view in an exhibition at Dastan Basement Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until May 21 at the gallery located at 6 Bidar St., off Fereshteh St.

* Paintings by Mona Kalahroudi are on display in an exhibition at Soo Gallery.

The exhibition named "From Silence to Form" will continue until June 6 at the gallery located at 30 Purmusa St. off Somayyeh St.



* Javid Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Nima Zeitoun-Nejad.

The exhibition runs until May 26 at the gallery that can be found at 17 Zartosht St., Vali-e Asr Ave.

* Sohrab Gallery is hanging a collection of paintings by Bozorgmehr Hosseinpour in an exhibition.

The exhibit will run until June 2 at the gallery located at 142 Somayyeh St.



* Neda Saeidi is putting her latest paintings on view in an exhibition at Bavan Gallery.

The exhibit will run until May 26 at the gallery located at 7 Abdo off Lareztan St. off Motahari Ave.

* Emkan Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Noushin Shafiei.

The exhibit will be running until May 30 at the gallery that can be found at No. 3, Second Alley, Mirza Shirazi St.

«و تمام این همه می لغزد»
نوشین شافیعی

Iran-Russia joint media cooperation working group held in Moscow

TEHRAN - The Iran-Russia Joint Media Cooperation Working Group was held in Moscow on Tuesday evening, with the participation of the Deputy Minister of Media and Advertising of Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Deputy Minister of Communications and Mass Media of Russia.

The meeting began with the opening remarks of Mohammadreza Norouzpour and Bella Cherksova, the heads of the Iranian and Russian delegations. The discussions were summarized with the presence of Kazem Jalali, the Iranian ambassador to Russia, Honaronline reported.

In his opening speech, Norouzpour elaborated on the capacities and capabilities of Iranian media. He emphasized that one of the main missions for Iranian and Russian media is to enhance mutual understanding between the two nations.

The official pointed out that Iranians' understanding of Russia over the past two centuries has been shaped through the works of great Russian writers and poets, stating that Iranians know old Russia better than modern Russia.

"Information about modern Russia mainly comes through Western media sources, which is partly due to the lack of strong connections between the media of the two countries," he added.

The deputy minister stressed the role of media in strengthening the mutual understanding between the people of Iran and Russia and identified another area of cooperation as combating fake news.

"Media can help strengthen the joint cooperation capacities between Iran and Russia and encourage citizens to travel and explore the cultural, artistic, scientific, and tourism potentials of the other country," Norouzpour emphasized.

He further proposed that Iranian and Russian artists, leveraging the cultural, political, economic, and tourism capacities of both countries, produce joint documentaries, films, and television series.

Strengthening cooperation in the field of book publishing, video



games, and training courses for media professionals were among his other suggestions.

For her part, Bella Cherksova referred to the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Treaty between the presidents of Iran and Russia during Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Moscow on January 17 and stated, "We highly value enhancing media cooperation with Iran within the framework of this treaty, and the joint media committee of both countries can help take practical steps in this regard."

She called for enhanced connections between Russian and Iranian mass media, especially print media, noting that the role of media in deepening public understanding and implementing Moscow-Tehran agreements is very significant.

The deputy minister also expressed interest from several Russian media organizations, including Rossiya Segodnya, RT, and others, in expanding their media presence in Iran, opening representative offices, and broadcasting programs in Russian and Arabic.

Kazem Jalali, the Iranian ambassador to Russia, also spoke at the meeting, describing the strengthening of media cooperation between the two countries as a basis for flourishing bilateral relations.

Jalali mentioned the determination of the leaders of both countries to strengthen bilateral relations and elevate them to a strategic level with the signing of

the Comprehensive Strategic Treaty. He highlighted the importance of intellectual support and the role of media in realizing the cooperation potential.

A number of media managers from Iran and Russia also participated in the meeting, presenting their capabilities and achievements and proposing ideas for expanding cooperation in the software and hardware domains of information dissemination and media.

In a separate meeting in Moscow, Norouzpour and Jalali met with Maria Zakharova, the director of the information and press department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

The two sides stressed the strong determination of Tehran and Moscow to elevate media cooperation in line with the Comprehensive Strategic Treaty, enhance the exchange of experiences, hold training workshops, and focus on media literacy and joint efforts to combat fake news.

During the meeting, Jalali pointed to the positive trends in developing media cooperation and announced the facilitation of travel conditions and activities for Russian journalists in Iran. He emphasized the importance of strengthening media relations as one of the foundations of bilateral relations.

Norouzpour, while outlining the goals and programs of the Iranian media delegation, highlighted the

strategic importance of relations with Russia in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"If the two nations seek to maintain and expand bilateral interactions, their media relations must grow at the same level as their political relations and reach a strategic stage," he noted.

He also announced Iran's readiness to expand bilateral media interactions, hold joint workshops and educational seminars, and facilitate the presence of Russian journalists in Iran.

Maria Zakharova, in turn, expressed her pleasure with the presence of the high-ranking Iranian media delegation in Moscow and their active participation in joint media and specialized meetings.

"The Russian Federation views the development of media cooperation with Iran seriously and strategically and welcomes dialogues between media, the exchange of knowledge and professional experiences, and joint efforts to confront emerging threats such as fake news," she added.

Zakharova also invited Iranian journalists and media managers to have a greater presence in Russia and specially to participate in the International Conference on Combating Fake News, hosted by Russia. She emphasized the importance of continuing targeted consultations and purposeful interactions in this regard.

Tehran theater to host reading performance of "Attempts on Her Life"

TEHRAN - Shahrzad Theater Complex in Tehran will be playing host to a reading performance of British playwright Martin Crimp's 1997 play "Attempts on Her Life" on May 23.

The performance will be directed by Rujman Rostampur with a cast composed of Fatemeh Zainali, Mahya Ashouri, Nina Rafiei and Farid Shabani.

"Attempts on Her Life" is an enigmatic, boundary-pushing theatrical work that explores the nature of truth, identity, and violence in the modern media-saturated world. Comprising 17 loosely connected scenarios, the play lacks a tradi-

tional plot or characters; instead, a rotating cast of six actors assumes various roles, discussing or depicting the elusive figure of Anne—referred to by different names—without ever seeing her. Throughout the play, Anne remains an absent presence, possibly representing a terrorist, a victim, or even a symbol of consumer culture, leaving her true identity ambiguous.

The play questions how we come to know and interpret the "Other," suggesting that the process of understanding is inherently violent, especially when the object of inquiry is a woman—a figure historically subjected to the male gaze. Set in

a dystopian, game-show-like environment, scenes range from intense psychological interrogations to absurd, humorous acts like karaoke performances, highlighting the play's kaleidoscopic tone.

Crimp's work challenges conventional theatre, blending performance with multimedia art to provoke reflection on media culture, global capitalism, and the construction of reality. "Attempts on Her Life" is less about uncovering Anne's truth than examining how we seek and produce it—an unsettling mirror to contemporary society's obsession with spectacle and the Other.



Jon Fosse's "The Other Name" available in Persian

TEHRAN - The Persian translation of the novel "The Other Name" written by Jon Fosse has been released in the Iranian bookstores.

Iman Amirteymour has translated the book and Borj Publication has brought it out in 392 pages, Mehr reported.

"The Other Name" follows the lives of two men living close to each other on the west coast of Norway. The year is coming to a close and Asle, an aging painter and widower, is reminiscing about his life. He lives alone, his only friends being his neighbor, Asleik, a bachelor and traditional Norwegian fisherman-farmer, and Beyer, a gallerist who lives in Bjørgvin, a couple hours' drive south of Dylgja, where he lives.

There, in Bjørgvin, lives another Asle, also a painter. He and the narrator are doppelgängers—two versions of the same person, two versions of the same life.

Written in hypnotic prose that shifts between the first and third person, The Other Name calls into question concrete notions around subjectivity and the self. What makes us who we are? And why do we lead one life and not another? Through flashbacks, Fosse deftly explores the convergences and divergences in the lives of both Asles, slowly building towards a decisive encounter between them both.

A writer at the zenith of his career, with "The Other Name," the first two volumes in his "Septology," Fosse presents us with an indelible and poignant exploration of the human condition that will endure as his masterpiece.

Jon Fosse, 65, is a Norwegian author, translator, and playwright. In 2023, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature "for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable."

Fosse's work spans over 70 novels, poems,

children's books, essays, and theatre plays, which have been translated into over 50 languages.

The most performed Norwegian playwright after Henrik Ibsen, Fosse is currently—with productions presented on over 1,000 stages worldwide—one of the most performed contemporary playwrights globally.

His minimalist and deeply introspective plays, with language often bordering on lyrical prose and poetry, have been noted to represent a modern continuation of the dramatic tradition established by Henrik Ibsen in the 19th century.

Fosse's work has often been placed within the tradition of post-dramatic theatre, while several of his notable novels have been described as belonging to the style of post-modernist and avant-garde literature, due to their minimalism, lyricism and unorthodox use of syntax.