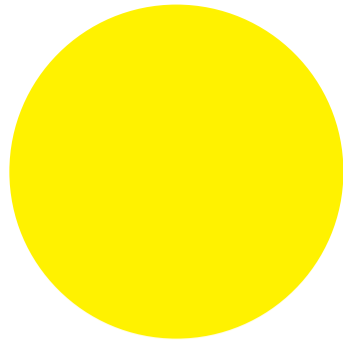


Leader urges young poets to nurture revolutionary spirit in poetry



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# Iran Daily

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A plume of smoke billows during a US strike on Yemen's capital Sana'a early on March 16, 2025. MOHAMMED HUWAI/AFP

### Iran has plan to offset Trump's maximum pressure



By Mostafa Matourzadeh  
Iranian lawmaker

#### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

As widely expected, US President Donald Trump wasted no time in pressing ahead with his maximum pressure campaign against Iran upon his return to the White House. His strategy aims to clamp down on Iran's peaceful nuclear program, curtail its defense capabilities, and further shut it out of the global economy. In line with this approach, Washington recently did away with Iraq's waiver from US banking sanctions, preventing Baghdad from purchasing Iranian energy (electricity). In 2018, when the Trump administration slapped energy sanctions back on Iran, exemptions were granted to certain countries, including Iraq, so they could meet their energy needs.

This move comes at a time when Iraq is grappling with severe electricity shortages, making energy security a top national priority. Iran's neighbors—especially Iraq—have expressed a strong desire to continue working with Tehran. Not only do they seek to meet their own needs, but they also aim to help Iran push back against what they see as Washington's cruel sanctions. Page 2 >



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### Why Iran experiencing severe land subsidence?

Implications, solutions

**ANALYSIS** Iran is sinking fast as land subsidence picks up speed at an alarming rate. Decades of draining underground water reserves have hollowed out vast areas, causing the ground to give way and wreak havoc on infrastructure, farmland, and even historical sites. Cities like Tehran and Isfahan are bearing the brunt, with deep cracks tearing through roads and buildings, forcing residents to pack up and leave. Experts warn the crisis is spinning out of control, with Iran now ranking among the worst-hit countries, as some regions sink more than 15 cm per year. Climate change and poor water management have piled on the pressure, while sanctions have tied Iran's hands, limiting access to water-saving technology. Satellite data shows the problem has snowballed, tripling in just five years and putting nearly half the population at risk. With the government scrambling to contain the damage, land subsidence is no longer a problem Iran can sweep under the rug—the consequences are already coming home to roost. For more on the crisis, check out page 4. See page 4 >

# US launches large-scale aggression on Yemen

## Iran condemns strikes as 'gross violation' of UN Charter

US President Donald Trump launched large-scale deadly military strikes on Yemen on Saturday, citing Ansarullah's retaliatory attacks on shipping in the Red Sea as the reason.

The unfolding strikes – which one US official told Reuters might continue for weeks – represent the biggest US military operation in West Asia since Trump took office in January.

"To all Houthis, YOUR TIME IS UP, AND YOUR ATTACKS MUST STOP, STARTING TODAY. IF THEY DON'T, HELL WILL RAIN DOWN UPON YOU LIKE NOTHING YOU HAVE EVER SEEN BEFORE!" Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

At least 31 were killed and 101 others injured in the US strikes, mostly women and children, Anees al-Asbahi, spokesperson for Yemen's Health Ministry said in an updated toll on Sunday.

Yemen's Ansarullah movement's political bureau described the attacks as a "war crime."

"Our Yemeni armed forces are fully prepared to respond to escalation with escalation," it said in a statement.

Strikes targeted the capital Sana'a, southwestern city of Taiz, and the town of Dahyan in Saada.

A Pentagon spokesperson said the Ansarullah has attacked US warships 174 times and commercial vessels 145 times since 2023. Ansarullah movement says the attacks are in solidarity with Palestinians over Israel's war in Gaza with Hamas resistance group.

In a statement, Ansarullah blamed the US and the UK for "wicked" aggression targeting residential areas in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a.

The UK did not participate in Saturday's US strikes but it did provide routine refueling support for the US.

Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei "strongly condemned the brutal air strikes by the US" in a statement, denouncing them a "gross violation of the principles of the UN Charter."



CENTCOM forces launch an operation on Yemen on March 15, 2025.  
CENTCOM

## Araghchi: US has 'no authority' to dictate Iran's foreign policy

### IRGC chief threatens 'decisive' response to any attack



Abbas Araghchi

#### International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Sunday that Washington had "no authority" to dictate its foreign policy after US President Donald Trump urged Tehran to end support for Yemen's Ansarullah's movement.

"The United States Government has no authority, or business, dictating Iranian foreign policy," Araghchi said in a post on X, while urging the US to stop the "killing of Yemeni people."

Trump on Saturday said Washington had launched "decisive and powerful military action" to end the threat posed to Red Sea shipping by Yemen's Ansarullah movement, and demanded Tehran's support "must end immediately."

Iran's top diplomat said that the time when Washington could dictate Tehran's foreign policy ended in 1979, when the Islamic Revolution toppled the West-

ern-backed Pahlavi regime.

Araghchi further denounced the US government's support for Israeli terrorism and genocide in Gaza, spending tens of billions of dollars between October 2023 and September 2024.

"Biden was last year bamboozled into handing over unprecedented 23 billion dollars to a genocidal regime. More than 60,000 Palestinians killed and the world holds America fully accountable," Araghchi said.

He urged US statesmen and officials to halt their support for the Tel Aviv regime's vicious moves and acts of terror, and stop aggressive attacks on Yemen's infrastructure and civilian centers.

"End support for Israeli genocide and terrorism. Stop killing of Yemeni people," the Iranian foreign minister concluded.

Chief of Iran's Revolution Guards Corps also reacted to Trump's remarks, threatening a "decisive" response to any attack. Major General Hossein Salami denounced Trump's threats in a televised speech on Sunday, adding that "Iran will not wage war, but if anyone threatens, it will give appropriate, decisive and conclusive responses."

The commander called the Ansarullah movement "the representative of the Yemenis," adding that the group makes its "strategic and operational decisions" independently.

## Tehran congratulates Armenia, Azerbaijan on peace agreement

#### International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian congratulated Armenia and Azerbaijan after the two countries agreed on the text of a peace agreement to end nearly four decades of conflict between the South Caucasus countries.

Pezeshkian in a phone conversation with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Sunday welcomed the agreement reached between Yerevan and Baku, saying that Iran has always welcomed the establishment of peace, convergence and stability in the region.

"Iran has always welcomed the establishment of peace, convergence and stability in the region, especially among the neighbors, while preserving the territorial integrity of countries," he said.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei also on Friday welcomed the agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He described it as a necessary and important step towards achieving lasting peace in the South Caucasus region.

Azerbaijan and Armenia said Thursday that they had wrapped up talks aimed at resolving the Caucasus neighbors' decades-long conflict, with both sides agreeing on the text of a possible treaty.



Nikol Pashinyan

Masoud Pezeshkian

A deal to normalize ties would be a major breakthrough in a region where Russia, the European Union, the United States and Turkey all jostle for influence.

Baku and Yerevan fought two wars for control of Azerbaijan's Armenian-populated region of Karabakh, at the end of the Soviet Union and again in 2020, before Azerbaijan seized the entire area in a 24-hour offensive in September 2023.

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have repeatedly said a comprehensive peace deal to end their long-standing conflict is within reach, but previous talks had failed to reach consensus on a draft agreement.

During the Sunday phone conversation, Pezeshkian also pointed to good and progressing relations between Iran and Armenia and called on the two countries' high-ranking officials to expedite

the implementation of bilateral agreements in various fields.

Pashinyan, for his part, informed Pezeshkian on the finalized draft text of the "Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan" and the completion of negotiations on the agreement and hailed Iran's support for the treaty.

The Armenian prime minister said his country would strive to continue negotiations and consultations aimed at implementing the agreement and also to organize regional relations.

He expressed hope that the two countries would sign and implement the deal in the near future. Pashinyan also commended the efforts by the Iranian government to improve mutual relations and noted that his country is keen to implement the agreements signed with Iran.

## Iran has plan to ...

Over the past two weeks, a delegation from the Iranian Parliament's Economic Committee touched down in

Iraq for talks on various economic issues. During these discussions, Iraqi officials made it clear that they are willing to support Iran against US sanctions. They have not forgotten Iran's key role in driving out terrorist groups and securing their country's territorial integrity. However, Iraq's financial sector, particularly its banks, is under Washington's thumb, facing intense pressure to avoid transactions with Iran.

In light of such challenges, Iran has devised a plan to fend off Trump's maximum pressure campaign. The country must draw on its experience with US sanctions and ensure that its

financial and banking institutions find ways around restrictions to facilitate the movement of assets and currency abroad.

One of the key tools in offsetting economic and banking sanctions is stepping up diplomatic efforts—particularly through informal channels and especially with neighboring states. In this regard, chambers of commerce, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations have a crucial role to play in standing up for Iran's rights on the international stage and pushing back against unjust US bans. Iran's access to its financial assets abroad—funds legally earned through trade and services—is an undeniable right. Yet, Washington is pulling out all the stops to block Tehran from reclaiming these resources.

Given extensive research on Iraq's economic landscape, there is no doubt that Baghdad is keen to lean heavily on Iran for a significant share of its imports. Iraq, in particular, is struggling to keep up with its electricity demand. While the country produces around 27,000 megawatts, it requires nearly 40,000 MW, leaving it with a massive energy shortfall. Over the years, Iraq has turned to Iran to make up for the gap, and officials there remain adamant about sourcing their gas and power from Tehran. With this in mind, Iranian authorities must map out a strategy that not only safeguards Iran's rights but also ensures that friendly neighboring nations can continue their economic and financial transactions with Tehran.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



# Pezeshkian outlines gov't plan to replace fossil fuels via renewables

## Iran's target set for becoming regional energy hub

### Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian announced Sunday that his government's plan is to replace fossil fuels with electricity wherever feasible and economically viable, particularly through the expansion of solar power plants. Speaking at a meeting with the Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade and other ministry officials, Pezeshkian stressed the need to shift oil and gas usage to sectors with higher added value while prioritizing renewable energy sources.

Pezeshkian highlighted Iran's abundant solar resources as a key advantage for developing solar energy infrastructure.

He called for expert input on the feasibility and best practices for implementing this transition, emphasizing the importance of economic, social, and environmental evaluations.

"Currently, natural gas is cost-effective for various sectors, including transportation, residential, and industrial use, but this is largely due to subsidized prices. If gas were priced at global market rates, its economic viability would be questionable," he said.

"We must carefully assess all aspects of this plan, including the efficiency of burning gas for electricity versus other uses."

The president noted that oil and gas are finite resources, while solar energy is sustainable and inexhaustible. He also pointed out that electricity is a cleaner energy source with lower transmission costs, higher efficiency, and safer distribution compared to fossil fuels.

Pezeshkian reiterated his personal commitment to meeting with investors and industrial stakeholders to address bureaucratic inefficiencies and expedite economic reforms.

"Our reliance on oil and gas has made our economy vulnerable to sanctions. By removing obstacles for investors and fostering regional economic cooperation, we can reduce this dependency and achieve significant economic growth," he said.

He also called for modernizing industries and upgrading transportation systems to reduce pollution, emphasizing the importance of expanding rail transport as a secure, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly option. Additionally, he urged the replacement of home heating systems with more efficient and low-consumption alternatives.

The president stressed the need for a comprehensive roadmap, developed with input from experts and stakeholders, to guide such initiatives. "We must avoid delays in transformative projects and ensure that our plans are actionable and aligned with national, regional, and global goals," he said.

Pezeshkian also addressed the revival of the Ministry of Commerce, questioning whether structural changes alone could solve existing challenges. "If we clearly define the responsibilities and authority of the Ministry of Commerce, the current structure can effectively carry out its duties," he said.

He highlighted the potential of certain industrial and production units to become regional and global hubs with proper support, urging ministries to delegate authority to provincial

officials to leverage local capacities for economic growth.

In closing, Pezeshkian praised the newly enacted free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union, describing it as a significant opportunity for expanding trade, economic, and industrial cooperation with member countries. Earlier in the meeting, Mohammad Atabak, the Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade and his deputies provided updates on the ministry's achievements, including the activation of 381 idle mines, the resolution of 1,500 out of 1,700 stalled mining cases, and progress on completing and enhancing the value chain of mining and industries.

They also noted the near-finalization of the national industrial strategy document, coordinated with the private sector and organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, and highlighted efforts to boost car production capacity beyond 1 million units annually and address industrial electricity needs.

### Becoming regional energy hub

Meanwhile, in the first meeting of the Regional Energy Trade Steering Committee on Sunday, Vice President Mohammadreza Aref emphasized the country's goal to become a regional energy exchange hub.

He stated that achieving the objective is a top priority for the government as a key part of its strategic agenda.

The meeting, held at the Vice President's office with members of the Regional Energy Trade Steering Committee in attendance, began with a compre-



President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) is being briefed by Industry Minister Mohammad Atabak (L) at a meeting with senior officials of the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade in Tehran on March 16, 2025.

president.ir

hensive report from Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad.

The report outlined efforts in gas swap agreements with neighboring countries, their impact on addressing natural gas shortages in northern Iran, and the development of strategic collaborations with neighbors to strengthen Iran's position in the regional energy market. The oil minister highlighted the significance of such initiatives, particularly in addressing energy imbalances and enhancing Iran's influence in the regional energy sector.

Aref also said according to the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan, Iran must become a regional energy exchange hub.

He stressed that achieving this goal, which is a key strategy of the Pezeshkian administration,

requires concerted efforts. The inaugural meeting of the Regional Energy Trade Steering Committee was held to advance this objective.

The vice president noted that implementing the plan could help resolve energy imbalances and reduce losses in the industry caused by energy shortages.

He expressed gratitude that the first meeting of the committee was convened under this administration and emphasized the need for regular meetings and expert decision-making in this field. A secretariat for the committee will be established at the Oil Ministry to ensure organized and effective operations.

Under Article 44 of the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan, the Regional Energy Trade Steering

Committee was formed within six months of the law's enactment. The committee aims to transform Iran into a regional energy hub, targeting annual gas exports and imports of 40 billion cubic meters and 20 billion cubic meters, respectively. It also seeks to facilitate the swap of oil products and crude oil from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries at a rate of 200,000 barrels per day and electricity exchanges of at least 20 billion kilowatt-hours annually.

The committee is chaired by the president (or the vice president in the president's absence) which includes the ministers of foreign affairs, oil, and energy, as well as a member of the parliamentary Energy Committee as an observer.

## Iran expands shipping lines to West, Southwest Africa: TPO



### Economy Desk

The head of the Africa Department at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran announced that, based on a resolution by the Africa Task Force chaired by Vice President Mohammadreza Aref, shipping lines between Iran and the western and southern regions of Africa are set to be expanded.

Mohammadreza Safari stated on Sunday that shipping lines between Iran and East and North Africa are already operational, with Iranian vessels regularly traveling to ports in Tanzania, Kenya, and Libya. These ships depart for North and East Africa every month or two, depending on cargo load

and logistical coordination.

He added that the Africa Task Force has decided to establish a mechanism for developing shipping lines between Iran and West and Southern Africa, with the modernization of the shipping fleet also on the agenda.

Safari noted that African countries have been categorized into three priority groups for trade with Iran. Countries where Iran has embassies, trade centers, and commercial attachés are given top priority. Accordingly, Kenya, South Africa, Algeria, and Nigeria are prioritized for trade with Iran.

He emphasized that Iran-Africa trade largely operates on a barter

system, which not only involves the exchange of goods but also complex currency and banking mechanisms.

Safari highlighted that minerals, agricultural products, and precious stones such as diamonds and gold are prioritized for imports from Africa to Iran. For exports from Iran to Africa, petrochemical products, equipment, and machinery are prioritized. However, he noted that African nations prefer investment in local production over importing machinery and equipment. Currently, bitumen and urea are the top exports from Iran to Africa.

Safari revealed Iran's special plan to export petrochemicals to Africa at the Iran-Africa Summit in 2025. He also mentioned a comprehensive program for overseas farming in Africa as part of Iran's trade strategy, which is particularly important due to currency restrictions on importing raw materials. He explained that Iran could source raw materials from Africa by having private Iranian companies engage in overseas farm-

ing on the continent. To achieve this, the Ministry of Agriculture must issue import permits and set quotas for these items.

Safari added that Iranian traders who use their own currency and the barter mechanism to conduct overseas farming in Africa and import raw materials to Iran will receive special incentives next year. Operational mechanisms for the initiative will require coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Regarding Iranian overseas mining in Africa, Safari acknowledged the challenge of Iran's preference for purchasing products from Africa rather than investing in the continent's mines. He stated that if the issue of currency outflow during investments in Africa can be resolved, overseas mining in Africa would be a priority.

He concluded that Iran's priorities for mineral extraction in Africa have already been determined, and plans are in place for which mines to target. Additionally, there is potential for transferring Iranian technology and machinery to Africa.

## Railway CEO affirms expansion of cargo rail transit via Iran

### Economy Desk

The CEO of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways emphasized the development of rail transit for cargo through the country's railway network.

According to IRNA, Jabbar-Ali Zakeri, during a visit to the Aparin Dry Port accompanied by a high-ranking delegation from the United Arab Emirates' Customs and Ports Authority, stressed the importance of expanding rail transit for cargo via Iran's railway network.

During the visit, the potential capacities of the Aparin Logistics Center, a key rail hub and crossroads in the country and region where major east-west and north-south rail corridors intersect, were outlined. Agreements were reached to enhance cooperation in the area.

The railway CEO welcomed the high-level Emirati delegation and expressed Iran's readiness to expand cooper-



ation within the framework of national laws. He called for increased collaboration to maximize the utilization of Iran's rail corridor capacities.

### Grain, cotton transport

Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, head of Dubai's State Ports Customs, highlighted Iran's rail transport capabilities during the meeting. He stated that the purpose of the visit was to conduct an on-site assessment of the logistical capacities of the dry port and explore further investment opportunities.

Referring to the \$1

trillion trade potential among CIS member countries, he emphasized that due to the lack of sea access for many of these nations, Iran's rail route is well-suited for transporting various goods, including cotton and grain.

Senior customs officials also emphasized their readiness to cooperate and sign memorandums of understanding to provide customs services in this regard.

The customs office of the Aparin Dry Port officially began operations on March 10, and is now prepared to offer services in imports, exports, and transit.

# Why Iran experiencing severe land subsidence?

## Implications, solutions

### ANALYSIS

Land subsidence, a phenomenon with multiple causes, has accelerated at an extremely alarming rate in Iran in recent years. To what extent is this due to climatic conditions and ecosystem management, and to what extent is it linked to external factors? Iran's environmental conditions have become far more concerning in recent years. Even before the publication of images and videos showing sediment accumulation in parts of dams like Karaj, Latyan, and Lar, autumn shutdowns due to air pollution signaled the escalation of environmental challenges.

Many experts argue that the entanglement of climate change impacts and mismanagement in environmental conservation has been a key driver of this situation over decades. Some, however, emphasize intermediate variables. Sanctions, in their view, have compounded the problem, restricting the government's ability to address environmental issues. For example, energy shortages — linked to insufficient investment in energy extraction and distribution — are cited as worsening air pollution.

Critics counter that "tying people's access to water to sanctions" solves nothing, stressing that internal causes of environmental crises must be identified and managed. Nevertheless, the impact of sanctions on Iran's ecosystems is undeniable. Ali Salajeqeh, the former vice president and head of Iran's Department of Environment, has repeatedly stat-

ed that sanctions hinder effective action against climate change. His successor in the current administration, Shina Ansari, emphasizes, "Without lifting sanctions, adherence to environmental goals is impossible."

Environmental challenges are not limited to air pollution and droughts. In connection with all these crises, land subsidence — particularly in central regions — has long sounded the alarm of "the ground collapsing beneath our feet."

### Subsidence warnings

After five decades of sanctions, their effects are now evident across all sectors, with every Iranian facing some form of sanctions in their daily lives. While industries are directly impacted by sanctions, sectors like the environment face indirect consequences. Subsidence and its expansion have become a serious national concern, with a recent parliamentary report warning that 18 provinces now contain high-risk subsidence zones.

The most significant consequence of subsidence lies in its environmental damage. A key finding of the report is the harm subsidence inflicts on surface and subsurface infrastructure, ultimately leading to cracking in buildings, ruptures in vital pipelines, and damage to historical and cultural sites.

Studies show that nearly half of Iran's population lives in or adjacent to subsidence zones, with the area of affected land tripling compared to five years ago.

The primary cause of subsidence is excessive extraction

from groundwater wells, which has long been the easiest method of accessing water in Iran. Over-extraction depletes underground water resources, causing the spongy structure and pores of aquifers to compact and collapse. This loss of aquifer porosity, driven by declining groundwater levels, has intensified subsidence nationwide.

### Iran's global ranking

Global studies indicate that only 3–5% of the world's subsidence zones experience rates of 10–15 cm/year, with most areas below 10 cm. Iran's subsidence rates exceed 15 cm/year, placing it second globally after India, where some regions exceed 50 cm/year. Iran shares this ranking with parts of the US and China.

Half of Iran's population resides in subsidence zones, with concentrations varying by province. For example, 3 million people in Tehran live in subsidence-prone areas, where rates in the southwestern region reach 20 cm/year. In Isfahan, 2.7 million people are affected, with entire neighborhoods evacuating due to widespread cracks. In Marvdasht, Fars Province, subsidence rates hit 17 cm/year, threatening ancient sites like Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam. Even Mazandaran, once unaffected, now sees 9 cm/year subsidence along the Caspian coast as sea levels recede — a stark contrast to five years ago, when subsidence there was nonexistent.

### How are subsidence and sanctions connected?

But how exactly have sanctions



Ali Beitollahi

intensified subsidence, increased its rate, and expanded affected areas? At first glance, subsidence seems unrelated to sanctions, as its causes are not directly tied to external restrictions.

Ali Beitollahi, Head of the Engineering Seismology and Risk Assessment Department at the Road, Housing, and Urban Development Research Center, explains in an interview with IRAN, "From a control-measures perspective, there is no direct link between subsidence and sanctions. However, a critical factor exacerbating subsidence in Iran is indirectly influenced by sanctions."

The issue lies in Iran's reliance on water-intensive methods to produce fodder and agricultural crops. Virtual water — used for livestock and crop cultivation — is consumed at staggering rates. During droughts, deep wells are drilled to meet water demands, accelerating subsidence. "We could import these water-intensive products from water-rich neighboring countries, but sanctions hinder imports," he notes. "If sanctions tighten constraints, we'll have to domestically produce most water-heavy crops. This would inevitably increase water consumption, worsening subsidence," Beitollahi adds.

"Sanctions indirectly intensify subsidence by limiting cross-border farming and imports of essential goods. To meet livestock, agricultural, and food needs, Iran must ramp up water-intensive production — even amid water scarcity — placing further strain on aquifers."

Emphasizing the scientific basis of these findings, Beitollahi states, "From this angle, sanctions unquestionably worsen subsidence. Subsidence depends on climate, rainfall, and water resources. The critical issue is water management: sanctions drastically affect water usage, diverting water meant for aquifer recharge to water-heavy agriculture. Even in provinces like Mazandaran and Golestan, well water is funneled into farming, accelerating subsidence."

On whether sanctions hinder access to subsidence-mitigation technology and expertise, he clarifies, "For earthquake and subsidence research over the past three decades, access to scientific papers, conferences, and materials has not been restricted. However, Iranian researchers faced visa denials for international conferences due to sanctions. Equipment for subsidence monitoring is not sophisticated or sanctioned — it's produced domestically. Satellite and radar imagery for subsidence measurement remains publicly accessible and unaffected by sanctions."

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



After five decades of sanctions, their effects are now evident across all sectors, with every Iranian facing some form of sanctions in their daily lives. While industries are directly impacted by sanctions, sectors like the environment face indirect consequences.



# Connection between earthquakes, dams?

## ANALYSIS

Nearly two years have passed since the major earthquake in Turkey, and according to local authorities, after two large earthquakes with magnitudes of 7.8 and 7.5 Richter in the south and southwest of Turkey, over 6,000 aftershocks swept through these regions, leaving behind more than 50,000 fatalities in Turkey and Syria. Two weeks after these two earthquakes, other quakes with magnitudes of 6.3 and 5.7 Richter shook the same areas again, causing even more extensive damage. Regarding the causes of this major earthquake, many views and theories have been put forward, each of which is significant in its own right. However, the Turkey earthquake can generally be examined from various dimensions and for various reasons — from its location on the major faults of the Anatolian Plateau to the construction of the largest dams in the region and even the world. The formation of massive reservoirs behind these dams has increased water pressure on the underlying tectonic plates, stimulating faults and triggering earthquakes. All of these factors contributed to the occurrence of the earthquake and have raised concerns among many in Iran due to the similarity of conditions between the two countries. This piece addresses the question of whether there is a connection between dams and earthquakes.

### How many dams in Iran?

An examination of dam statistics in Iran shows that Iran has around 518 operational dams, the majority of which were constructed and put into operation between the 1990s and the present. According to statistics on Iranian dams published by the Sanyeh Civil and Computer Engineers Group, there are 30 watersheds (or drainage basins) in the country, where a total of 936 dams are expected to become operational in the near future.

Watersheds in ...	Dams Under Preliminary Study*	Dams Under Construction	Operational Dams	Total
South and southeast	52	8	100	160
Southwest	118	34	42	194
West and northwest	80	27	158	265
North and Caspian Sea	22	9	19	50
East and northeast	11	3	86	100
Central	41	13	113	167
Total	324	94	518	936

\*Dams Under Preliminary Study refers to those for which preliminary studies have been completed and construction has been confirmed.

The table's statistics are from the year 2022. Reflecting on the numbers in the table can reveal valuable insights. First, if these numbers are mapped onto Iran, they show that dam construction projects (operational, under construction, and under study) are increasing when you move from the eastern to the western half of the country. In other words, there were only 260 dams (under construction, study, or operation) in the eastern half in 2022, while in the western half, there were 459 dams under construction, study, or operation. The northwest region had 265 dams, ranking first in dam construction in the country. If we add the statistics for dams in the central region, which are mostly located in the Markazi Province and the western watershed, to the western half, the number of dams in the western half reaches 626. Thus, the scale tips heavily toward the western half compared to the eastern half



The photo on the left shows the Maydanki dam in Aleppo, Syria, and the photo on the right shows a huge crack in the body of the Maydanki dam on February 6, 2023, as a result of the powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck southeastern Turkey and northwestern Syria.

(294 dams), with nearly double the number of dams.

If we delve deeper into the number of dams constructed, more profound insights emerge. The northwest region of Iran had 265 dams, ranking first in dam construction in the country. The provinces of West Azarbaijan, East Azarbaijan, Ardabil, Kurdistan, Markazi, Kermanshah, Hamadan, Zanjan, Lorestan, and Qazvin are all located in this region.

The next rank in this table belonged to the southwestern regions of the country, including the provinces of Ilam, Fars, Khuzestan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Bushehr. The third rank in dam construction went to the central regions of the country, with 167 dams, including the provinces of Isfahan, Yazd, Qom, Tehran, Alborz, and Semnan. The southern and southeastern regions had 160 dams, including the provinces of Kerman, Hormozgan, and Sistan and Baluchestan. The provinces

Watersheds in ...	Provinces in the Region	Earthquakes	Operational Dams	Total Dams
South and southeast	Kerman, Hormozgan, and Sistan and Baluchestan	1133	100	160
Southwest	Ilam, Fars, Khuzestan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Bushehr	1424	42	194
West and northwest	West Azarbaijan, East Azarbaijan, Ardabil, Kurdistan, Markazi, Kermanshah, Hamadan, Zanjan, Lorestan, and Qazvin	1668	158	265
North and Caspian Sea	Gilan, Mazandaran, and Golestan	338	19	50
East and northeast	Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, and South Khorasan	2056	86	100
Central	Isfahan, Yazd, Qom, Tehran, Alborz, and Semnan	1573	113	167
Total		8192	518	936

Looking at these figures side by side shows that the highest number of earthquakes occurred in the eastern and northeastern regions, with 2,056 earthquakes, while around 86 dams were operational in this area. Next is the western and northwestern region, which experienced 1,668 tremors in the same year in 2022. These areas had 158 operational dams. The central regions, with 113 constructed dams, ranked next in terms of earthquake frequency. The southern and southeastern regions ranked fourth in terms of both the number of dams constructed and the number of earthquakes that year. The lowest number of earthquakes occurred in the northern regions, which had fewer dams.

These figures were specific to the year 2022. If we add the new earthquake data for 2023 and 2024 (which, unfortunately, are not yet fully available), we find that Iran experienced over 8,692 tremors in 2023 alone, with an average of one event per month with a magnitude of over 4.5 Richter. Fars Province, with the highest number of recorded seismic events (241), ranks first, followed by Hormozgan and Kerman Provinces with 231 and 201 recorded seismic events, respectively. After that, West Azerbaijan with over 150 earthquakes and Bushehr with over 100 recorded earthquakes had the highest earthquake statistics among the country's provinces.

If we consider the correlation between the number of operational dams and the number of earthquakes in 2022 in the mentioned regions (excluding the northeastern and eastern regions) to be logical, then in the near future, if all dams whose construction has been authorized become operational, the southwestern regions of the country, with 194 dams, are likely to experience the most earthquakes after the western and northwestern regions. This

is supported by earthquake statistics in Fars, Hormozgan, and Bushehr Provinces.

Such a possibility can also be allowed for other regions by considering the number of dams constructed and earthquakes. This is what Mehdi Zare, a professor at the International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology, emphasized in an interview with IRNA.

According to him, the western regions of the country, due to their proximity to the Zagros Mountains and the presence of rivers and, consequently, numerous dams, have experienced a high number of earthquakes with magnitudes below 5 Richter in recent years.

However, it should be noted that the eastern and northeastern regions lie on the largest faults, and although there is not much correlation between the number of dams and earthquakes in these areas compared to others, this issue can be examined from another angle.

According to Zare, Khorasan Razavi Province and, in general, the eastern provinces do not have as many rivers, where dams could be built, as the western regions. Nevertheless, there are at least 100 dams in the eastern and northeastern regions, and the filling and emptying of these dams can contribute to earthquakes.

Furthermore, among all Iranian provinces, Khorasan Province has always been one of the largest producers of agricultural and industrial production, which consumes a lot of water. Excessive water extraction in some earthquake-prone areas located on faults, such as the "Tus Plain" in Khorasan Razavi, has led to numerous earthquakes there in recent years. Therefore, one of the reasons for earthquakes in these regions could be the excessive extraction of groundwater for many years.

The scientific connection between earthquakes and constructed

dams is something that was addressed and proven years ago in a scientific study. Therefore, this connection cannot be denied, and the findings of scientific research are applicable to all countries, not just Turkey, Syria, etc.

Of course, numerous factors, such as being located in volcanic areas and lying on fault lines, contribute to the occurrence of earthquakes. However, what is important is that, despite significant scientific advancements, the predictability of earthquakes based on these factors remains very limited. Although some say there is a connection between the number of dams constructed in a region and the occurrence of earthquakes, and this could help prevent some earthquakes through better management of dam construction, it should not be overlooked that there are significant geological differences between the locations of dams, making it very difficult to predict whether an earthquake will occur or not. Earthquakes cannot be definitively linked to every dam in a region as several factors must be examined, including the geology of the area, water volume and changes, dam design and construction, earthquake history, and the duration and manner of dam use. In summary, it can be said that the geography of earthquakes has extended from the desert regions of Iran's south and southeast to the western, southwestern, and northwestern regions, and the western half of the country has experienced more earthquakes in recent years than the eastern regions. This is something that Abbas Charchi, a professor at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, pointed out in 2019, noting that with the change in seismic behavior in the south and southwest of the country, the likelihood of an increase in the number of earthquakes in Khuzestan has risen.

Perhaps the earthquake in Turkey and its irreparable human losses, which occurred in the vicinity of our country, can be seen as a serious warning of something that has reached Iran's doorstep. Since 2021, we had an earthquake in the Iranian city of Khoy, four other earthquakes in the same region, two earthquakes in Kermanshah Province, and four other earthquakes in the southern and southeastern regions of the country. These can all be "warnings" that the earth, based on the Gaia hypothesis as a living entity, is giving to the country.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



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## Sports Desk

Iran will be the clear favorite to lift a record-breaking trophy at the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup when the flagship event gets underway in Pattaya, Thailand, on Thursday. Stepping into the competition as the reigning champion and the World Cup bronze medalist, Iran is drawn in Group C alongside two-time champion United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, and Indonesia. Iran played Russia in a couple of friendlies in Bushehr last week, suffering defeat on both occasions. Mohammad Naderi's men were beaten 5-1 in the first game and then shared the spoils with the European opponent in 3-3 draw before Russia came out on top 4-3 in the shootout.

Naderi has made four changes to the squad that won a prestigious bronze medal in last year's World Cup in the UAE, with former skipper Moslem Mesigar playing no part for Team Melli after calling time on his illustrious career following a friendly outing against Belarus in January.

Seyyed Mahdi Mirjalili, Abbas Rezaei, Reza Amirzadeh, Saeid Piramoun, Seyyed Ali Nazem, Mahdi Shirmohammadi, Ali Mirshekari, Movahed Mohammadpour, Mohammad-Ali Mokhtari, Mohammad-Ali Nazarzadeh, Mohammad

Ma'soumizadeh, and Seyyed Mohammad Dastan are the 12 players in the Iranian squad for the visit to Pattaya.

Iran will begin its title defense against Indonesia on Friday, before taking on Afghanistan two days later at the Jomtien Beach Arena.

The final round of the group fixtures will see Iran square off against the UAE on March 25.

The top two of the group will progress to the last-eight of the 11-day tournament.

Host Thailand is joined by Kuwait, Lebanon, and India in Group A of the competition, while Japan – also a three-time champion – is in Group B with China, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

In Group D, Bahrain – the inaugural champion in 2006 – and 2015 winner Oman will vie for a top-two finish along with Malaysia and Vietnam.

The top three teams of the competition will qualify for the 2025 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup – starting May 1 in Victoria, Seychelles.



Iranian beach soccer players (white) are seen in action during a friendly game against Russia in Bushehr, southern Iran, on March 11, 2025.

● MOHAMMADREZA FALLAHI/FFIRI

## AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup: Iran to chase record fourth title in Thailand



● L'ÉQUIPE

## Sepahan set to sign French striker Ben Yedder

## Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Sepahan is set to sign former French international Wissam Ben Yedder as a free agent in the coming days, according to Iranian media.

Ben Yedder, 34, who is in Isfahan for talks with the Iranian top-flight heavyweight, has been without a club since parting ways with Ligue 1 outfit Monaco last July.

The prolific striker made his professional debut with Toulouse in his home country in 2010, bagging 71 goals and 21 assists in 174 appearances across six seasons with the top-tier club.

Ben Yedder joined LaLiga club Sevilla for the start of the 2016/17 campaign and went on to net 70 goals – including 10 in the UEFA Champions League – in three seasons, while providing his teammates with 22 assists.

On his return to the French top flight, Ben Yedder signed for AS Monaco and registered a remarkable 118 goals and 31 assists in 201 outings to become the club's second all-time top scorer.

He was the joint leading marksman of the French league in the 2019/20 season – canceled out in April due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the country – with 18 goals, alongside then-

PSG striker Kylian Mbappé.

Capped 19 times for the national team, Ben Yedder has three international goals under his belt, lifting the UEFA Nations League trophy with Les Bleus in 2021.

Should a deal with the Iranian club go through, Ben Yedder will be teaming up with fellow-Frenchman and former Sevilla teammate Steven Nzonzi.

Sepahan is desperate to make a frontline signing after prolific winger Mahdi Limouchi suffered a knee injury during a 1-1 draw against Esteghlal Khuzestan in the Iranian league last week and could face a lengthy period on the sidelines.

## Norris holds off Verstappen to win F1 opener in Australia

**REUTERS** – McLaren's Lando Norris swept to victory in a wet and wild Australian Grand Prix on Sunday, holding off defending champion Max Verstappen in a white-knuckle finish to a Formula One season-opener littered with crashes and safety cars.

Mercedes' George Russell was third on the slippery Albert Park circuit where only 14 of the 20 cars finished in the treacherous conditions.

Norris, the pre-season favourite for the drivers' title, started the Formula One

season as he finished the last at Abu Dhabi, with victory from pole.

The Briton's win ended Verstappen's long run at the top of the championship standings dating back to May 2022.

Norris's teammate Oscar Piastri started second on the grid but finished ninth, his dreams of becoming the first home driver to claim victory or a consolation podium ending with a skid into grass.

Norris claimed his first win in Melbourne and the fifth of his career, saying it was difficult with Verstappen breath-

ing down his neck.

"It was amazing. Tough race, especially with Max behind me," he added.

"I was pushing, especially in the last two laps. It was a little bit stressful, not going to lie.

"This time we got it right and ended on top so I'm happy."

Red Bull kept Verstappen out on worn tyres hoping for a break in the rain but he was ultimately forced to pit, potentially costing him a better shot at Norris. Verstappen said it was "worth the gamble".

"It was quite spicy on the slick tyres. It was alright in the end," he said.

"This is where I expected to be. In the first stint we were lacking a bit of pace to the McLaren."

Lewis Hamilton's debut for Ferrari proved a damp squib with the Briton finishing 10th, two places behind teammate Charles Leclerc.

Seven-times world champion Hamilton complained his car was "hard to drive" and said the team had made the wrong call with the weather late on which proved costly.

"It was very tricky and it went a lot worse than I thought it would go," he said.



McLaren's Lando Norris celebrates with teammates after winning the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on March 16, 2025.

● TRACEY NEARMY/REUTERS



## Real's Ancelotti vows no more matches with less than 72 hours' rest



● PABLO MORANO/REUTERS

**REUTERS** – Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said his team will no longer play matches after less than 72 hours' rest because of the physical strain it puts on players.

Following Real's 2-1 comeback win at Villarreal, thanks to Kylian Mbappé's brace, the coach was concerned about his side's physical condition following Wednesday's shootout win over Atletico Madrid in the Champions League.

"I think today is the last time we will play a game before 72 hours. We will never play a game with less than

that," Ancelotti told a press conference.

"The team is exhausted, but that was to be expected. It's a victory that says a lot about our squad and the resources we have."

Ancelotti noted that his club had contacted LaLiga about the scheduling conflicts but had yet to receive an answer.

"The important thing for us was to win today, tomorrow I will watch the game but as a football fan. The result doesn't matter," Ancelotti said.

# Visit Semnan; a hub of historical, cultural significance

## Iranica Desk

Semnan is one of the cities in Semnan Province that, thanks to its numerous historical and cultural monuments, can offer you a unique and enjoyable experience. Notable attractions in Semnan include the Arg Gate, the Grand Mosque, the Pahneh Bathhouse, the Tadayon House, and more, allowing you to visit some of the most famous sites during your day trip. You can also stroll through the traditional Semnan bazaar and purchase local handicrafts and souvenirs.

Semnan is located on the Tehran-Mashhad road, making it easily accessible; for this reason, it is an excellent option for a short and memorable trip. Additionally, due to Semnan's proximity to Tehran and other large cities like Shahroud, a one-day trip to this city is quite feasible. Throughout your short travel, you will have the opportunity to visit various tourist attractions and become familiar with the history and culture of the city, IRNA wrote.

Situated in a desert region, Semnan typically experiences hot summers and cold winters. Therefore, the best times to visit Semnan are in the spring and early autumn when the weather is mild and pleasant.



Darvazeh Arg  
● destinationiran.com



Jaame Mosque  
● chtn.ir



Pahneh Bathhouse  
● poyeshgroup.com



Semnan Bazaar  
● mrbilit.com



Chashm village  
● IRNA

## Darvazeh Arg

Start your one-day trip to Semnan at the Arg Gate (Darvazeh Arg), a symbol of this historical city, and take some memorable photos with this Qajar-era structure. This beautiful gate, adorned in green and yellow colors, represents the city of Semnan. It is advisable to appreciate this magnificent edifice, which welcomes visitors with its authenticity and beauty upon arrival. The seven-meter height of the Arg amplifies its grandeur, making it one of the most beautiful historical buildings and a remnant from the Qajar period.

In ancient times, args played an essential role for kings, which is why their design was of high importance. The Arg-e Gate of Semnan was once the entrance to the governmental center of this city. In the governmental center of Semnan during the Qajar era, various buildings such as baths, a water reservoir, and a telegraph office existed, but these were later destroyed on the orders of the governor, leaving only the Arg Gate behind.

## Jaame Mosque

Next, head to the Grand Mosque (Jaame Mosque) of Semnan, one of the oldest mosques in Iran, which is only about one kilometer from the Darvazeh Arg. Enjoy the architectural artistry of this historical monument. The mosque has undergone many changes over time, and many believe that the Grand Mosque of Semnan was built in the first century AH on the ruins of a fire temple. Throughout history, the Grand Mosque of Semnan has held significant religious, cultural, and social value.

The Grand Mosque of Semnan has been registered on Iran's National Heritage List. This beautiful mosque is considered the first and oldest symbol of Islamic architecture in the city. It represents the grandeur of Iranian-Islamic architecture, a blend of art and architecture from the early Islamic centuries to the medieval period.

## Pahneh Bathhouse

Located about 500 meters from the mosque, there is a well-known tourist attraction called the Pahneh Bathhouse or the Hazrat Bathhouse, which functions as a museum. It displays artifacts such as the skeleton of a pregnant woman dating

back 4,000 years, gray pottery, Islamic-era items, and more. The Pahneh Bathhouse covers an area of nearly 1,000 square meters and consists of three sections: a *sarbineh* (changing room), a *garmkhaneh* (hot room), and a treasury. It has two separate entrances for women and men. Due to its small area and the artifacts displayed in this museum, this place has always attracted the attention of travelers passing through the province and the residents of the city.

## Tomb of Imamzadeh Yahya

The shrine of Imamzadeh Yahya (PBUH) is just a few steps away from the museum, and many tourists include a visit to it in their plans, especially around noon. Located in the historic part of the city, it is regarded as one of the significant religious sites and tourist attractions in the area. It is said that this tomb belongs to the son of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (PBUH), who accompanied Imam Reza (PBUH) during his journey from Medina to Khorasan. Imam Reza (PBUH) assigned his brother to guide the people of this region, and after his martyrdom, Hazrat Yahya was also martyred in Semnan. The shrine features a large dome and a beautifully tiled portico, which stands approximately 12.5 meters tall. The tiles were installed in 1959.

## Semnan Bazaar

After lunch and resting, you can head to the Semnan Bazaar, a place worth visiting with its arched ceilings, narrow alleys, and both old and modern shops. The Semnan Bazaar was built during the Qajar era and is considered one of the most important shopping centers and sightseeing spots in Semnan. The bazaar is also listed as a national heritage site of Iran. This bazaar is approximately 1,600 meters long, featuring architectural styles of ancient Iranian architecture, with clay and brick ceilings designed to fit the specific climatic conditions of the desert region.

## Tadayon House

Your next destination could be the Tadayon House, which is only 500 meters from the bazaar. This Qajar-era house, belonging to one of the prominent merchants of Semnan, features a wind catcher, two courtyards, a pool room,

and winter and summer rooms.

The Tadayon House is one of the valuable Qajar houses and a noteworthy attraction in Semnan, designed with two main sections: the outer and the inner. The outer part of the house has two large arches and a basement, while the inner section includes summer areas equipped with wind catchers, winter rooms, and several small and large rooms.

## Amir Museum Garden

For an evening stroll, head to the Amir Museum Garden, located two kilometers from the Tadayon House. This site operates as an ethnological museum, displaying a variety of items, from old radios and televisions to bread-baking tools and more. The garden itself is beautifully landscaped, providing a tranquil environment for visitors to relax and enjoy.

There are many natural and historical attractions surrounding the city of Semnan, a few of which are highlighted here:

## Chashm village

Chashm village is located on the borders of Semnan, Mazandaran, and Tehran provinces, nestled in the Alborz Mountains. With its cool and pleasant weather during the summer, it provides a delightful escape from the sweltering heat of Semnan. The cool air of this village is so unexpected in the heart of the desert that it has become a popular destination for tourists seeking tranquility and pleasant weather. Chashm village is part of Shahmirzad, situated 36 kilometers north of Mahdishahr and 53 kilometers north of Semnan.

## Cheshmeh Ali Spring

Cheshmeh Ali Spring is considered one of the recreational and tourist attractions of Damghan, a city in Semnan Province. Due to its cool weather in the summer, it has become a favorite spot for locals and tourists, with many setting up their picnic gear there. This attraction, one of the few remaining water gardens in Iran, features a beautiful structure whose reflection in the water enhances the appeal of this historical site. The distance from Semnan to Damghan is 113 kilometers by bus, taking about 1.5 hours to reach, provided there's no traffic.

## Salt Cave of Garmsar

The Salt Cave of Garmsar, also in Semnan Province, is one of the most astonishing natural attractions in Iran, situated in an active salt mine. With its winding corridors, beautiful salt stalactites, sparkling crystals, and towering stone columns, it presents an extraordinary landscape. There is also a stunning lake within the cave, creating a dreamlike scene. The distance from Semnan to Garmsar is 117 kilometers, which takes one to two hours by car.

These attractions and the rich history of Semnan ensure that your visit will be both enriching and memorable, giving you a taste of the diverse cultural and natural beauty that this region has to offer.



Cheshmeh Ali Spring, Damghan  
● pana.ir

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# Leader urges young poets to nurture revolutionary spirit in poetry

## Ayatollah Khamenei applauds rise of poetry among youth

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei met on Saturday with a diverse group of young and veteran poets on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of Imam Hassan Mojtaba (PBUH), the second Shia Imam and grandson of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), fostering a spirit of camaraderie among Persian literature enthusiasts.

During the meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei expressed satisfaction with the rise of committed and revolutionary poetry, describing the recited works as generally of high quality, leader.ir wrote.

He said, "The growing wave of poetry, especially among the youth, is highly encouraging." Reports indicate that poets have risen to the occasion this year, showcasing their talents.

The Leader highlighted the unique position of poetry as an unparalleled form of art and media, saying, "No other medium can diminish its authority."

He called for a balance between quantity and quality in poetic

works, urging poets to strive for excellence alongside increased participation.

The Leader posited that the current era could be likened to a golden age for Persian poetry, reminiscent of the revered poets Sa'adi, Hafez, and Nezami.

He noted that unlike the Pahlavi era, where poets lacked respect, today's environment offers significant social recognition and media presence for poets, creating fertile ground for their development.

Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out that the contemporary Persian poetic language is unprecedented, cultivated during the Islamic Revolution, and serves as a foundation for emerging poetic talents.

He urged young poets to maintain their integrity and adherence to moral principles, emphasizing that the purity of a poet's inner self directly influences the quality of their work. "The more refined a poet's heart, the more pure their poetry," he added.

He encouraged poets to draw from the rich legacy of Persian literature while also warning



Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei meets with a group of young and veteran poets on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of Imam Hassan Mojtaba (PBUH), the second Shia Imam and grandson of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in the capital Tehran on March 15, 2025. leader.ir

against the dilution of their works by popular, shallow themes. "Love poetry, expressing heartfelt emotions, is valuable, but it

must remain within the bounds of decency and virtue," Ayatollah Khamenei advised.

He emphasized that themes of

unity and wisdom are not only valuable but resonate deeply with audiences.

During the event, 36 poets pre-

sented their works, covering a range of religious, social, and political themes, contributing to an exchange of ideas and artistry.

# Minister calls for modern technology in heritage protection

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, urged the integration of modern technologies in the preservation and documentation of the nation's cultural assets.

In a recent meeting with ministry officials, he stressed the importance of cultural heritage in shaping national identity and enhancing cultural diplomacy, IRNA reported.

Salehi Amiri described cultural heritage as a vital element that contributes

not just to cultural policy but also to international relations and sustainable development. He argued that its protection and revitalization should be a cornerstone of national policy, rather than a mere operational concern.

He underscored the need for skilled human resources to drive change in cultural governance. "No development strategy can succeed without relying on committed and capable professionals," he added. Improving the livelihoods of ministry employees is not just a welfare issue but a strategic necessity for fulfilling the ministry's national objec-

tives. The minister also called for a redefinition of roles among managers and experts within the decision-making process to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

Cultural diplomacy, he noted, serves as a key pillar in regional and international geopolitics, positioning Iran as a major civilizational hub that can leverage its heritage to bolster its global standing and cultural ties.

Addressing tax and insurance challenges faced by the handicraft and tourism sectors, Salehi Amiri urged for a fair

and supportive tax system that can facilitate growth in these areas.

He stressed that cultural heritage protection is a national duty that requires the involvement of all governmental and civic entities.

The minister called for a cohesive policy framework grounded in data-driven governance and modern technological applications for preserving and restoring historical sites.

He emphasized the need for a robust protective force to safeguard the nation's cultural treasures, equipped with advanced technology and operational

capabilities. Salehi Amiri concluded by stating that strategic decisions must be based on comprehensive data and expert consultations, and that continuous policy discussions among leaders are essential for achieving the ministry's long-term goals.

He declared the current Persian calendar year as a transformative year for cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts, focusing on management cohesion, operational effectiveness, and the integration of scientific and technological resources.

# Iran, Netherlands team up for joint film project with 'Black Tulip'

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Azita Moguie is set to direct and produce 'Black Tulip,' a feature film jointly made by Iran and the Netherlands, following official approval for production.

The film, which intertwines an ancient Bakhtiari legend with a thematic link to the Netherlands, marks Moguie's third directorial project after 'Tragedy' and 'Mastermind'. The director, who has recently been engaged in theater production, returns to cinema with this cross-border collaboration, ILNA reported.

Moguie, herself of Bakhtiari descent, co-wrote the screenplay with Mohammad Hosseini. Hosseini, whose work 'North by Southwest' was featured at this year's Fajr Film Festival, brings



his storytelling expertise to the project.

With pre-production now underway, the cast and key production members will be announced in the coming weeks.

Moguie has previously produced two theater productions, 'The Story of Timeless Songs' and 'Galileo', and her latest film is expected to bridge historical narratives with contemporary cinematic storytelling.

# Iran's women art to be displayed on sidelines of UNHR session

A specialized exhibition of Iranian Women's Art will be held on the sidelines of the UN Human Rights Council Session in Geneva.

The specialized exhibition of Iranian women's art will be held from March 17 to 24, coinciding with the 58th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Mehr News Agency reported.

The event will showcase the artistic works of active Iranian women in various fields of art.

The exhibition is organized by the Institute for Protection of Women's Rights in collaboration with the Vice Presidency for Women and Family Affairs, the Iranian Mission in Geneva, and other non-governmental organizations.

The main objective of this exhibition is to introduce the capabilities of Iranian women in the field of art and to strengthen cultural diplomacy at the international level. The organizers of this event are striving



to create a suitable space for presenting and highlighting the works

of Iranian female artists in international forums.