

MP: Iran plans settlement expansion on Persian Gulf islands

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Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks during a ceremony on the occasion of Iran's new year at Iran's Foreign Ministry in Tehran on April 5, 2025. mfa.gov.ir

Iran-US talks; hot topic on diplomatic radar

OPINION

The resumption of negotiations between Iran and the United States aimed at resolving the nuclear standoff have shot back into the spotlight in recent days. Last month, US President Donald Trump sent a letter to Iran, expressing Washington's willingness to open a dialogue. While the contents of the letter were not made public, remarks from officials on both sides suggest the message was blunt: either hash out a deal on outstanding issues—chief among them Iran's nuclear program—or brace for a potential military strike. Iran responded to the letter. Iranian officials have stressed that they will never enter direct talks with the US under pressure. Meanwhile, senior military commanders have warned that any American aggression will be met with retaliation. Several analysts have weighed in on the likelihood, framework, and potential content of future Iran-US talks. Their insights follow.

Chances of deal depends on US flexibility

By Amir-Ali Abolfath
US affairs expert

Washington is keen on launching direct negotiations with Iran to hammer out a deal, believing that indirect talks are simply time-consuming. Trump has reportedly laid down a two-month window for addressing the Iran issue, and within this timeline, the US seems determined to push through talks—one way or another.

At this stage, Iran continues to insist on indirect negotiations, and it remains unclear whether it will eventually come around to sitting down face-to-face with the US. The situation is shrouded in uncertainty. Should Trump's executive memo form the backbone of the talks, negotiations will be difficult, leaving little room to wiggle around core demands.

There is still a chance for a deal—provided Trump's memo does not set the bar. If the Americans scale back their expectations and back away from certain demands, especially in areas where Iran has drawn a red line, like its missile and defense programs, then some progress might be made. But until talks—direct or indirect—get off the ground, it will remain unclear exactly what the US wants or how much room there is to negotiate or maneuver.

No go without Leader's green light

By Jabbar Kouchakinejad
Iranian conservative MP

When it comes to talks with the US—which sits at the helm of the Western world—negotiations have gone on in the past and will likely crop up again.

Iran does not have any inherent objection to the idea of negotiations. However, the format, framework, and demands of such talks are ultimately laid out by Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

As the Leader has declared: "No direct talks." This is not a suggestion—it is a decree. Direct negotiations are off the table. [Page 2 >](#)

If direct talks are to be considered, a specific set of steps must be followed and any move must be signed off on by the Leader.



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Steel industry requires investment in energy, transportation

OPINION As Iran enters the "Year of Investments for Production," the spotlight is on ramping up capital flow into key industries, particularly steel. The strategic focus aims to bolster economic resilience against sanctions and global fluctuations. With steel playing a crucial role in various sectors, investment could enhance domestic production and reduce reliance on imports. However, challenges loom—energy shortages and infrastructure bottlenecks threaten to hold back growth. As the Iranian steel industry strives to maintain its global standing, addressing these hurdles through targeted investments may pave the way for a brighter economic future. Can Iran overcome these challenges and emerge stronger on the world stage? The clock is ticking, and the stakes have never been higher. [See page 4 >](#)



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Direct talks with US 'pointless' under pressure: Araghchi

'Iran ready to try path of indirect negotiations'

International Desk

Iran's foreign minister once again dismissed direct negotiations with the United States on Iran's nuclear program, describing it as pointless due to the Washington's threats and pressure.

Since taking office in January, the US President Donald Trump has repeatedly called for talks with Iran to reach an agreement on its nuclear issue.

At the same time, he has threatened Iran with bombing if an agreement is not finalized between the two sides.

Trump sent a letter to the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei last month calling for negotiations.

On Thursday, the US president said he favored "direct talks," and argued that they were "faster" and offered a better understanding than going through intermediaries.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Saturday that direct talks made no sense with a country "that constantly threatens to resort to force in violation of the UN Charter and that expresses contradictory positions from its various officials."

"We remain committed to diplomacy and are ready to try the path of indirect negotiations," he underlined during a ceremony on the occasion of Iran's new year, in which ambassadors and envoys from foreign countries attended.

On Saturday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said his country was willing to engage in dialogue with the United States on an "equal footing."

He also questioned Washington's sincerity in calling for negotiations, saying, "If you want negotiations, then what is the point of threatening?"

Iran and the United States have had no diplomatic relations short-

ly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, with some regional countries like Oman playing a mediating role between the two sides.

In 2015, the country reached a landmark deal with the permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely the United States, France, China, Russia, and the United Kingdom, as well as Germany, on its nuclear activities.

The agreement provided sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Iranian nuclear activities.

In 2018, during Trump's first term in office, the US withdrew from the agreement and reinstated sanctions on Iran. In response, Iran rolled back on its commitments under the agreement and accelerated its nuclear program.

Western countries including the US have long accused Iran of pursuing a nuclear weapon, which Tehran has denied, insisting its enrichment activities were solely for peaceful purposes.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks during a ceremony on the occasion of the Iranian New Year at the country's Foreign Ministry in Tehran on April 5, 2025. mfa.gov.ir

Top general: Iran not seeking war, nor will stand bullying

International Desk

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri said the Islamic Republic is not seeking war, but will not tolerate bullying and coercion and will stand up to it.

Bagheri made the remarks in a meeting with commanders, managers, and the personnel of the Armed Forces' general staff and the Khatam Al-Anbiya Central Headquarters on Sunday.

He said that Iran's strategy is to defend its own interests and to move towards its outlined plans. His remarks came as the US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened Iran with bombing if an agreement is not reached between the two sides over Iran's nuclear program.

Pointing to the content of Iran's response to a recent letter from Trump to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution over talks on Iran's nuclear program, Bagheri said Iran's response stressed that, "We seek peace in the region."

"We are not the ones who start wars, but we will respond to any threat with all our might," Bagheri



Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri speaks in a meeting with commanders and the personnel of the Armed Forces' general staff in Tehran, Iran, on April 6, 2025. IRNA

eri said of the content of Iran's response.

Iran knows 'formulas for defeating enemy': Salami

The chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) also said on Saturday that Iran has learnt formulas for defeating the enemy and will never back down even "one step" if threatened.

"We are absolutely not concerned about a war. We will not initiate a war but are ready for any war," Major General Hossein Salami said in a meeting with senior IRGC commanders and managers on Saturday.

"We are prepared for both sce-

narios of the enemy's psychological operation or military action. However, we will not take a single step back in the face of the enemy," he added.

Based on its false assumptions about Iran's deterrent power, the enemy seeks to force Tehran to choose between the two options of confrontation and acceptance of the enemy's conditions, he noted.

The IRGC chief emphasized that the Israeli regime is vulnerable because its interests are sprawling and within Iran's reach everywhere.

"We have acquired the know-how and formulas to overcome this enemy and have incorpo-

rated them into all elements of our weaponry and equipment," he said.

He stressed that Iran has the necessary hardware and software at its disposal to defeat the Israeli regime despite the United States' absolute support.

He warned adversaries to avoid miscalculations, as Iran's expanding influence and enduring capabilities remain a formidable force.

"We have accumulated capabilities and can reach and target the enemy, and we are ready to demonstrate our true capabilities," he emphasized.

He said Iran's "successful" retaliatory operations against Israel, dubbed Operation True Promise I and II, last year served as just one example of Iran's military capabilities.

Salami emphasized that despite Israel's multi-layered missile systems, 581 of the Iranian missiles landed in the occupied territories.

The two operations, carried out using hundreds of ballistic missiles and drones, showcased Iran's ability to strike sensitive Israeli military and intelligence targets with surgical accuracy.

IAEA chief says plans to visit Iran to prevent escalation with US

International Desk

Chief of the UN nuclear agency said his visit to Tehran in the coming weeks is to reduce the possibility of a confrontation between Iran and the United States over Iran's nuclear program.

In an interview with Argentinian TV channel La Nacion, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi warned that the military confrontation between Iran and the US could have catastrophic and dangerous consequences that must be prevented.

"To avoid any misunderstanding, I emphasize: Iran does not have nuclear weapons," he said.

Grossi, who had previously announced his possible plan to visit Iran in April, stressed that Iran does not have nuclear weapons, claiming, however, that Tehran has obtained many of the items and pieces of the puzzle to build a nuclear weapon.

"Iran has produced the necessary amount of nuclear mate-

rial to make a nuclear bomb. To build a bomb or a nuclear warhead, you need many components. But the most important element, the one that gives the bomb its destructive power, is enriched uranium," he said.

Referring to Iran's enriched uranium stockpile, the IAEA chief said, "I don't want to get too technical, but Iran has enough enriched uranium to make six or seven nuclear weapons. But once again, I emphasize: Iran does not currently have nuclear weapons." "In my view, we are at a moment where we need to move forward. Yesterday, upon arriving in Buenos Aires, I spoke with Iran's foreign minister and we agreed that I will travel to Iran in the coming weeks," Grossi said.

"In my conversation with the Iranian foreign minister, we also agreed that Iran should clarify as soon as possible the matters that have remained ambiguous, so that we can reduce the possibility of any confrontation. Any confrontation would be devastating."

Iran-US talks ...

In any negotiations, Iran must stand its ground and ensure the enemy does not trample over its rights. Such a stance would itself keep the adversary from daring to suggest military conflict.

Extreme caution must be exercised regarding Trump's proposals. Those on Iran's negotiation team must take care not to give away too much in indirect talks with Washington.

Saving face and building trust

By Sina Azodi
GWU professor

There are several reasons why Iran insists on keeping talks indirect. One key argument, especially after the US pulled out of the JCPOA, is that

formal talks should remain indirect. However, the more compelling reason is likely concern over appearances. Iran does not want to come off as having been strong-armed into negotiations under threat.

One benefit of indirect talks is that it allows Iran to signal that it is entering discussions of its own volition—not because it was backed into a corner.

Another issue that looms large is the deep distrust between Iran and the United States. Employing a neutral go-between like Oman—long respected for its role as a mediator between the two—could help bridge the trust gap.

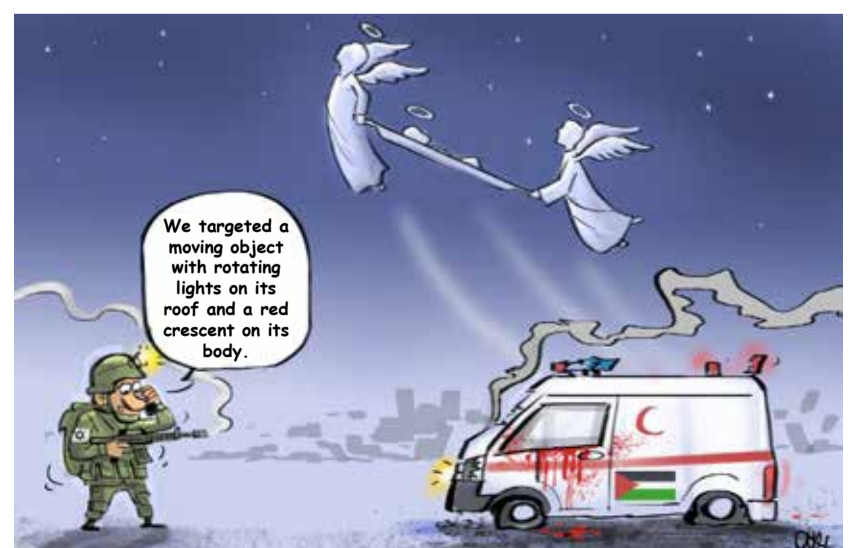
As for whether the US will go along with indirect talks, that remains uncertain. One thing is clear about

Trump: he is obsessed with media coverage and soaking up the spotlight. He likes to present himself as the man who struck a deal. If indirect talks succeed and Trump claims credit, then the door may open for direct talks—which would suit him just fine.

But will Trump walk back his demands? It is hard to say whether his team will shift gears. Right now, there is a clear split inside the White House: on one side is Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff, focusing on oversight of Iran's nuclear program; on the other is his national security adviser Mike Waltz, demanding a total dismantling of Iran's missile and nuclear activities.

It seems Trump himself would rather zero in on Iran's nuclear work.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



MP: Iran plans settlement expansion on Persian Gulf islands



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

An Iranian parliamentarian announced the government's plans for housing construction and improving residential settlements on the three Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf. In an interview with Iran Daily, Abdulkarim Hashemi, the representative of the southern province of Hormozgan and member of the parliament's Plan, Budget and Accounting Committee, said the government had plans for enhancing residential facilities on the three islands.

Hashemi addressed unfounded claims against Iran's territorial integrity, emphasizing, "The three islands are inseparable parts of the Islamic Republic; these islands have been Iranian for many long years and will remain Iranian forever."

Referring to Iran's historical sovereignty over the three islands, he stated, "These islands have been part of Iran's governance during eras when many of the

current Persian Gulf states had not yet been formed."

The islands have historically been part of Iran for many centuries, proof of which can be found and corroborated by countless legal, historical and geographical documents in Iran and other countries. But the UAE has questioned Iran's sovereignty over the islands over the past decades.

Iran has time and again stressed that the three islands are an "integral part of Iran's territory," and advised the Arab country not to take positions undermining bilateral friendship.

The member of the parliament's Plan, Budget and Accounting Committee added, "In this context, the Islamic Republic and its governing institutions, including the government and Parliament, are pursuing programs to develop the Iranian islands of the Persian Gulf. This includes implementing plans and activities to revitalize the islands and attract populations from various regions of the country."

"Job creation on the islands is also a priority to eliminate concerns about employment for those residing there. Additionally, enhanced services for families living on these islands and for employees of executive agencies sta-

tioned there have been planned." "To increase the population of the three islands, recent measures include allocating land to applicants for housing construction and providing incentives in this regard," the parliamentarian stressed.

"Developmental initiatives on the three islands began during the previous administration but have intensified under the current government. Prioritizing the three islands does not imply neglect of Iran's other Persian Gulf islands. Hormozgan Province has 14 islands in the Persian Gulf, and provincial authorities are advancing development plans across all of them," Hashemi explained.

On the strategic importance of the three islands, he elaborated, "Iran's three islands hold a strategic position in the Persian Gulf and are of high significance in security and economic matters. These islands possess substantial untapped potential for development in economic sectors, agriculture, and tourism."

"Located near the Strait of Hormuz and along key shipping routes, they serve as critical hubs for maritime navigation and



MEHR



Abdulkarim Hashemi

trade in the Persian Gulf," he stated.

Regarding tourism potential, he noted, "Due to their unique geographical location and warm, humid climate — particularly during colder seasons — these islands can provide travelers with a warm and temperate environment."

Acknowledging existing challenges, Hashemi said, "The primary obstacle hindering the three islands from achieving adequate development has been their considerable distance from the mainland. Additionally, the islands have lacked proper passenger transportation infrastructure. To address this, im-

proving freight and passenger transport infrastructure as well as service facilities for the three islands must be prioritized. This will encourage more people to settle there. Simultaneously, developing recreational and tourism amenities will attract visitors to choose these islands as destinations."

Exports to Americas grow 4.5-fold amid expanding trade with Europe: TPO



Economy Desk

Iran's exports to the Americas in the past Iranian calendar year — 1403 — (began on March 20, 2024) increased 4.5-fold compared to the previous year — 1402 — (began on March 20, 2023), according to the head of Europe and America Office at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

"Iran's exports to the Americas in 1403 grew 4.5-fold compared to 1402, and only one step remains to implement a free trade agreement between Iran and Venezuela after 20 years," IRNA quoted Ahmad Firoozi as saying. On Sunday, Director-General of the TPO's Europe and America Office announced the growth in Iran's exports to the Americas, saying, "Iran's imports from the Americas in 1403 saw a slight decrease compared to 1402. However, exports to this region experienced a 4.5-fold rise in the same period. For example, Iran's official exports to Brazil in 1403

grew 8.5-fold compared to 1402."

Addressing Iran-Europe trade in 1403, he said, "Trade between Iran and Europe witnessed a minor decline this year, occurring under circumstances where Iran faces restrictions in accessing European markets. It should be noted, however, that this assessment is based on official statistics. Unofficial data indicates that Iranian traders maintain their presence in European markets by collaborating with third countries, utilizing alternative routes to supply Iranian goods to Europe." Firoozi highlighted the increase in Iran's trade centers in Europe, "In 1403, the [Trade Promotion] organization issued permits to establish trade centers in Serbia, Oman, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. These centers will significantly contribute to expanding Iran's private sector trade with Europe. Additionally, Iran's second commercial attaché in Europe was stationed in Hun-

gary during 1403."

He also emphasized efforts to access new markets, "Specialized meetings were held in 1403 to facilitate Iranian traders' access to new markets, with Canada and Mexico among the targeted countries in the Americas. Concurrently, the Trade Development Organization has intensified efforts to finalize trade agreements in line with the government policies. In this regard, substantial progress has been made toward establishing free trade with Venezuela. Only one step remains to implement the Iran-Venezuela free trade agreement in 1404 (began on March 20, 2025), after two decades of preparations."

Regarding other trade agreements, Firoozi added, "Negotiations to conclude a free trade agreement with Serbia commenced in 1403. Preferential trade agreements with Cuba and Bosnia and Herzegovina were also revised during this period. Furthermore, efforts to finalize a barter trade agreement with Cuba are currently underway."

Firoozi expressed hope that this year, despite the increasing speed of developments in global trade and the challenges posed by tariffs, we will see the fruits of the foundational achievements made in recent years, including the implementation of free trade, preferential, and barter agreements, and benefit from the results of efforts made to access new markets.

Iran-Eurasia free trade to take effect in mid-May Rial-based SWIFT system operational

Economy Desk

Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states are about to launch a landmark zero-tariff free trade agreement next month, marking a historic leap in regional economic integration after seven years of negotiations.

"Under the finalized agreement, the implementation of a zero-tariff free trade regime between Iran and member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) will commence simultaneously in Iran and EAEU countries on May 15, 2024," Mirhadi Seyedi, an advisor for international affairs and trade agreements at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced.

In an interview with Tasnim, Seyedi stated that the free trade agreement between Iran and the five-member Eurasian Economic Union — comprising Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Armenia — was ratified by

the parliaments of all six countries after nearly seven years of negotiations and was officially notified on March 16.

"Per the agreement, implementation begins 60 days after the final ratification by all parties. Following coordinated efforts, the agreement will take effect simultaneously in Iran and EAEU countries on May 15," he added.

Regarding expectations for the agreement, Seyedi said, "Over half of global trade currently occurs under similar agreements, which eliminate or reduce tariffs between nations. This framework provides a more secure and cost-effective pathway for commercial goods."

Emphasizing the agreement's significance for Iran, he explained, "This marks the first time Iran has implemented such a comprehensive agreement, reducing customs tariffs to zero. The deal effectively comprises five distinct agreements between Iran and each of the five Eurasian states."

"Once implemented, 87% of Iran's exported goods to these five countries will benefit from zero customs tariffs. This will substantially facilitate and accelerate trade between Iran and the EAEU member states," Seyedi continued.

Rial-based SWIFT system

Seyedi also highlighted financial advancements, stating, "In the realm of financial facilitation, a Rial- and Ruble-based SWIFT system has been established, enabling financial transfers between Iran and other countries, particularly Russia. Additionally, Iran's National Bank has revolutionized financial transactions by founding the Mir Business Bank in Russia." Concluding his remarks, Seyedi noted, "This agreement, which builds on interim accords dating back to October–November 2019, has already driven significant improvements in transportation and financial exchanges between Iran and Eurasian nations."

Iran's first coal-fired power plant to be operational in four years

Economy Desk

Iran's first coal-fired power plant in Tabas, located in South Khorasan Province, will be operational in at least four years, according to an official with the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH).

"The construction period for the first steam power plant unit typically requires 4 to 5 years under normal circumstances. However, given the partial existing infrastructure in Tabas, the operationalization of this plant could be achieved in the best-case scenario within three and a half years," Director of TPPH Steam Power Plant Projects

Behnam Khaefi-Nejad was reported as saying by Mehr news agency.

"Coal-fired power plant construction has been prioritized for years, with the National Energy Document outlining plans for 5,000 megawatts (MW) of such capacity," Khaefi-Nejad said, adding, "The Supreme Energy Council also passed a resolution on this matter in the early 2010s."

According to the official, comprehensive studies for coal-fired power plant construction in Iran have been completed, including site selection and capacity determination, with a focus on the southern coastal regions —

particularly the Makoran coast — to identify suitable locations. Khaefi-Nejad underlined that the Tabas project includes two steam units, each with a capacity of 325 MW.

"The existing strategy for coal-fired power plant development requires revision. Globally, these plants are built near open waters due to their higher water consumption, especially coal-fired steam plants compared to similar-capacity alternatives. Given the severe water crisis in Iran's central regions, decision-makers are now approaching coal-fired power plant expansion with greater caution," he further elaborated.

> By Kiarash Arab-Ameri
Economic researcher

OPINION

In today's economy, the speed of investment processes determines the success or failure of economic projects. Despite Iran's high capacities in production and human resources, its complex and time-consuming bureaucratic procedures have prevented it from securing a strong position in attracting domestic and foreign investors.

Reports indicate that the time required for issuing permits and completing legal procedures in Iran is several times longer than in competitor countries — a factor that has led to capital flight and reduced the competitiveness of the national economy. This piece aims to provide practical solutions for transforming investment processes from an obstacle-ridden path into a streamlined and transparent flow. By combining technology, legal reforms, and institutional convergence, these solutions can minimize investment timelines and turn Iran into an attractive destination for investors.

Challenges in Iran's investment process

Iran's investment process faces multiple structural challenges, each of which can independently increase the time and cost of project implementation.

- **Bureaucratic complexity:** One of the biggest hurdles is the complexity of administrative procedures. Investors must obtain approvals from dozens of different entities, fill out redundant forms, and sometimes wait months for responses. This fragmentation of responsibilities is not only time-consuming but also eliminates transparent follow-up mechanisms.
- **Unclear and unstable regulations:** Frequent changes in investment policies and guidelines undermine investor confidence. For instance, an investor may start a project under current laws, only to face new amendments midway that disrupt their entire economic calculations.
- **Weak digital infrastructure:** Many processes are still carried out manually and on paper due to inadequate digital infrastructure. This not only increases the likelihood of errors but also prolongs the review process. While countries like Estonia complete company registration online in under an hour, even a simple application in Iran requires in-person visits to government offices.
- **Inefficient banking system:** Transferring capital, obtaining loans, or exchanging currency faces numerous obstacles, creating major difficulties, especially for foreign investors.

Practical solutions for streamlining investment

To turn investment processes into a fast and obstacle-free path, immediate and practical solutions must be implemented.

- **Full digitalization:** Establishing an integrated online system covering all steps — from application submission to permit issuance — can reduce waiting times from months to days. Singapore, for example, has cut company registration time to 15 minutes through such a system. This platform should enable real-time tracking, electronic payments, and direct communication with relevant authorities.
- **Legal reforms and eliminating redundant steps:** A specialized task force comprising private sector representatives, chambers of commerce, and government offi-



'Investments for Production' How to go from motto to action in 100 days

cial should review cumbersome regulations (e.g., Article 169 of the Direct Taxation Law). Removing duplicate permits (such as requiring 10 separate permits for one industrial project) and replacing them with a "comprehensive permit" would further simplify procedures.

- **Single-window investment service:** Centralizing all administrative steps under one entity (e.g., the Investment Organization) instead of scattering them across multiple ministries would eliminate redundant visits. In the UAE, investors can obtain all permits in one place through the Dubai Business Services Center. Implementing this model in Iran requires coordination among the Ministry of Industry, the Iranian National Tax Administration, and the Central Bank of Iran.

- **Adopting advanced technologies (AI & Blockchain):** AI can analyze investor data to identify errors before submission, reducing correction time. Blockchain ensures transparent, tamper-proof records, boosting foreign investor trust. Georgia successfully integrated blockchain into its land registry system, cutting property transfer time from one month to a single day.

- **Empowering the private sector:** Delegating supervisory tasks to accredited private entities (e.g., rated accounting firms) can reduce the government's burden. In Turkey, checking the financial eligibility of investors is handled by reputable accounting institutions, with the government only overseeing the process. This model has increased speed and cut administrative costs by 30%.

Government's role

As the key player in facilitating investment, the Iranian government must take concrete steps to implement the following solutions:

- **Forming a special reform committee:** A committee with private sector, judiciary, and parliamentary representatives should review outdated laws (e.g., the 1932 Commercial Law) and eliminate redundant regulations. A similar committee in Malaysia removed 40% of legal investment barriers in under two years.
- **Tax incentives and investment security:** Offering five-year tax exemptions for pioneering production projects or reducing tariffs on industrial machinery imports can attract investors. Vietnam used such incentives to

increase foreign investment from \$2.4 billion in 2010 to \$15.8 billion in 2022. An investment guarantee fund, backed by the Central Bank, could also mitigate financial risks. Turkey's similar fund covers 50% of losses from sanctions or currency fluctuations.

- **Transparency and anti-corruption measures:** As the government's most critical role, launching public financial tracking systems that display government contracts and expenditures can restore investor trust. A pilot project in Tehran's municipal tenders reduced violations by 40%.

Realizing New Year's motto

The motto "Investments for Production" will only materialize if investment processes shed their current complexities and become fast, transparent, and reliable. Leading countries and domestic examples prove that shortening permit issuance times, digitizing procedures, and reforming cumbersome laws are not only possible but can also drive production growth and attract idle capital. Sustainable and competitive production cannot be achieved without swift, hassle-free investment.

When investors spend months securing permits, their resources are drained by bureaucracy rather than production line expansion or technological upgrades. Thus, fulfilling the year's motto requires prioritizing rapid investment facilitation.

To this end, launching an investment emergency task force under the president's direct supervision is proposed. This task force could prioritize large-scale production projects (e.g., petrochemicals, steel, or advanced tech) and minimize their administrative processes within 100 days.

Moreover, a production progress monitoring system, transparently publishing investment and production data, would boost public trust and participation. Ultimately, achieving the year's motto, set by the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution, is not a choice but an economic imperative. Rapid investment drives production, and strong production is the only path to national strength and social prosperity.

The article first appeared in Persian on Eghtesad Moaser.



The motto "Investments for Production" will only materialize if investment processes shed their current complexities and become fast, transparent, and reliable. Leading countries and domestic examples prove that shortening permit issuance times, digitizing procedures, and reforming cumbersome laws are not only possible but can also drive production growth and attract idle capital.



Steel industry requires investment in energy, transportation



By Hassan Asgharzadeh
Expert on steel industry

O P I N I O N

The designation of the Persian calendar year 1404 (started March 21, 2025) as the “Year of Investments for Production” by the Leader of Iran’s Islamic Revolution underscores the importance and necessity of channeling capital toward production, particularly in strategic and foundational industries. In this regard, investment in the steel sector, as one of the fundamental pillars of industry and the economy, is of utmost significance.

Undoubtedly, “Investments for Production,” particularly in foundational industries like steel, will significantly contribute to realizing a resilient economy and reducing the country’s vulnerability to sanctions and global fluctuations. This approach not only fosters sustainable economic growth but also serves as a driver for technological advancement and enhances the competitiveness of domestic industries on the international stage, leading to the development of numerous industries and jobs.

With this same approach, “Investments for Production” in the steel sector — especially investment in infrastructure and cross-sectoral prerequisites for its development in 1404 — will play a decisive role in achieving the country’s major economic objectives and will undoubtedly pave the way for a bright future for Iran’s industry and economy.

Iron and steel, as two of the most crucial raw materials in various industries — from construction to automotive and machinery production — play a vital role in the country’s economic development. Investment in this sector not only boosts domestic production capacity but can also help reduce dependence on imports, create sustainable employment, and strengthen the country’s industrial value chain.

Iran’s steel industry, its global standing

Iran’s steel production capacity exceeds 55 million tons, and over the past two years, despite cross-sectoral challenges in the energy sector, it has managed to produce over 32 million tons, ranking among the world’s top 10 steel-producing countries. At times in 2024, Iran even climbed to the ninth and seventh positions globally in steel production.

According to data from the World Steel Association, Iran produced 32 million tons of crude steel in 2024, a 5.5% increase compared to 2023. Meanwhile, global steel production in the previous year stood at 1.882 billion tons, showing a roughly 1% decline compared to 2023. In December 2024, global steel production reached 144.5 million tons, marking a 5.6% increase compared to December of the previous year. Nevertheless, Iran remained the world’s tenth-largest steel producer by the end of 2024.

However, Iran’s steel production in 2024 also recorded a noticeable decline, primarily due to energy shortages. Despite this, with the production of 2.6 million tons of

crude steel in December and 3.1 million tons in November 2024, Iranian steelmakers once again surpassed Brazil, Germany, and Turkey to secure the seventh position globally. By increasing production of this strategic product and accounting for 56% of crude steel production, Iran has claimed the top spot in the West Asian region.

Tackling challenge of cross-sectoral investment

According to industry experts and stakeholders, the imposition of gas and electricity restrictions due to shortages is a key factor behind the decline in crude steel production. To maintain Iran’s global and regional standing, infrastructure and cross-sectoral challenges in the steel industry must be swiftly addressed through timely and effective investment, particularly in resolving the country’s energy shortages.

However, the issue is not limited to energy, electricity, gas, and water shortages. Shortages in raw material supply as well as fundamental problems in transportation and logistics are other critical challenges that, if resolved, could lead to a 10% growth in crude steel production — a goal that is not far-fetched.

That said, sanctions cannot be overlooked. Iran’s steel industry, as a foundational and transformative sector, was among the first to be targeted by sanctions, with some steel companies explicitly named. Nevertheless, Iran’s steel industry has managed to endure, maintaining its position in both the national economy and global rankings.

Now that the “Year of Investments for Production” has been wisely designated, it is essential to implement macro-level planning by facilitating the issuance of permits for combined-cycle power plants and centralized solar power plants across the country.

Investment opportunities in stock market

Investment in foundational sectors is crucial for the development of the steel industry and other priority industries since few industries worldwide are unrelated to or independent of iron and steel. This flagship and foundational industry encompasses an extensive chain of mines, facilities, and factories, requiring substantial infrastructure — including exploration, en-



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ergy supply, raw material procurement, transportation facilities, and investment in each of these areas proportional to their scale.

Understanding the challenges and opportunities in the steel industry reveals that mining activities entail significant costs, such as exploration, extraction, and processing, making this sector a “golden opportunity” for attracting both small and large-scale public investments.

By examining the prices of galvanized sheets, color-coated sheets, and other steel products listed by steel producers, it becomes evident that another avenue for investment in iron and steel is the stock market. Major steel producers such as Mobarakeh Steel Company, Esfahan Steel Company (a.k.a. Zob Ahan), Khorasan Steel Complex, Iranian Alborz Steel, Azerbaijan Steel, Khouzestan Steel, South Kaveh Steel, and Arfa Iron & Steel — which together supply the bulk of Iran’s steel — present an opportunity for those well-versed in capital market investments.

However, to attract public investment toward the steel market — beyond creating motivational and incentive frameworks and ensuring accessible market infrastructure — legislators and market regulators must decisively and promptly combat specula-

tive trading in the iron and steel commodity exchange. Under such conditions, real buyers, such as factories and production workshops, can confidently invest and purchase in the market.

Profitable market compared to alternatives

Investment in the iron and steel industry not only directly contributes to employment growth but can also drive other industries. Studies indicate that fluctuations in steel prices are often tied to shifts in supply and demand, which may stem from domestic or international factors.

For instance, the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine challenged the global economy, with the iron and steel market being one of the most affected. Both Russia and Ukraine are major producers and exporters of commercial steel products, particularly specialized and high-grade steel, to many parts of the world. Reduced supply due to decreased production impacted markets not only in Iran but globally.

Energy, transportation critical bottlenecks

Another fundamental issue influencing the price and market of iron and steel products — and even the prices of related consum-

er goods — pertains to the energy and transportation sectors. In Iran, these two areas have become major bottlenecks for the industry.

One of the most critical requirements for steel production is energy. Electricity and gas play vital roles in melting, direct reduction, and other steelmaking processes. However, due to shortages in the supply chain, uneven development, inadequate infrastructure upgrades, and the deterioration of existing facilities, many steel producers face severe gas shortages in winter and electricity shortages in summer, directly impacting market prices.

The transportation industry is another bottleneck for steel industry development. Due to infrastructure limitations, the steel production chain often faces significant challenges. Raw materials must be transported in large volumes from mines to steel plants, sometimes requiring multiple changes in transport modes before they are processed into usable forms. Furthermore, finished steel products must reach downstream industries to be utilized in factories and workshops.

Iran’s rail transport sector also suffers from a shortage of rail lines and locomotives. So, investment in this area could be highly beneficial for the steel industry’s prosperity. Reducing road transport costs through such investments would increase profit margins for steel producers and shareholders.

While cross-sectoral and large-scale industrial investments require substantial capital and extensive government participation, attracting public investment through the iron and steel commodity exchange appears to be the best method for channeling small-scale capital into the market. Such investments, if directed toward the production of this strategic product, can not only yield profits for investors but also significantly contribute to national development, driving economic growth, industrial advancement, job creation, and reinforcing Iran’s steel industry in global markets.

“

Undoubtedly, “Investments for Production,” particularly in foundational industries like steel, will significantly contribute to realizing a resilient economy and reducing the country’s vulnerability to sanctions and global fluctuations. This approach not only fosters sustainable economic growth but also serves as a driver for technological advancement and enhances the competitiveness of domestic industries on the international stage, leading to the development of numerous industries and jobs.



The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

ISNA

AFC U17 Asian Cup: Coach Chamanian wants more from Iran after North Korea draw

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Abbas Chamanian was satisfied with his team's 1-1 stalemate against North Korea in their opening game at the AFC U17 Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia but expects his players to improve for their remaining Group D fixtures.

Mahdi Sahneh found the net for Iran midway through the first half to cancel out Choe Chung-hyok's eighth-minute opener.

North Korea, which beat Iran 4-1 in the qualifiers, was unlucky not to restore the lead before the break after Iranian goalkeeper and defenders put their bodies on the line to produce heroic blocks in a frenetic scramble at the end of the first half.

Iran came close to a second goal on the hour mark when Ri Kang-song's header back to his keeper was intercepted by Ehsan Kheradpisheh but Jong Hyon-ju pulled off a great save to deny the striker.

Another quick counter in the 77th minute saw Mohammadreza Yousefi send a superb curled pass beyond the North Korean backline but Kherad-

pisheh could not get a touch as the teams shared the spoils in Jeddah.

With Tajikistan leading the group table thanks to a 2-1 victory over Oman earlier in the day, Iran and North Korea will be desperate to walk away with maximum points in their second outing on Tuesday to remain on course for a last-eight spot and qualification for November's U-17 World Cup in Qatar.

"North Korea is a very strong team and it was a difficult match, but our players performed well considering this was our opening game," said Chamanian.

The vastly experienced tactician said his players would still have to put in more effort to further improve, especially in the final third, if they want to overcome two-time champion Oman next. "Our defense is solid but we need to sharpen our attacks. We have intelligent players who can help us get good results and win our next two matches if we work on this component."

Iran will take on 2018 runner-up Tajikistan on Friday. The top two of the group will progress to the quarterfinals.



Iran's Mahan Alipour (1) is challenged by North Korean Kim Tae-guk during a Group D game at the AFC U17 Asian Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on April 5, 2025. AFC



Tractor's Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (3rd R) scores his second goal during a 2-1 win against Esteghlal at the Persian Gulf Pro League in Tabriz, Iran, on April 4, 2025. MASOUD SEPEHRINIA/IMNA

Sports Desk

A defining round of fixtures at the Persian Gulf Pro League saw Tractor open a four-point lead on top of the table with a game in hand to edge ever closer to a maiden Iranian top-flight crown. Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh's first-half double steered Tractor

to a 2-1 victory over Esteghlal at home on Friday.

A Ramin Rezaeian's corner-kick was deflected off Tractor skipper Shoja Khalilzadeh's knee in the eighth minute to silence the capacity crowd at the Yadegar-e Imam Stadium, before Hosseinzadeh found the net twice inside 14 minutes against his former club to

Persian Gulf Pro League:

Tractor extends lead to close in on maiden title

take his tally to 16 goals across all competitions for the season.

Tractor's massive win was followed by frustrating draws for nearest rivals Sepahan and Persepolis on Saturday.

A late drama in Arak saw Sepahan take a 92nd-minute lead against Iralco through Mohammad Karimi's spot-kick after the visitors were awarded a controversial penalty following a lengthy VAR review.

Just when Sepahan – down to 10 men after French midfielder Steven Nzonzi was sent off in the 89th minute – thought it had done enough to walk away with maximum points, Mohammad-Amin Kazemian salvaged a draw for the home side from the spot in the 12th minute of stoppage time – a ninth goal of the season for the Iralco striker.

Meanwhile, Persepolis's bid for an eighth league title in nine seasons was dealt a massive blow after a goalless stalemate at home against Esteghlal Khuzestan.

Hit by a flu virus in the buildup to the game, Ismail Kartal's men were insipid and out of sorts throughout the game, with the courageous visitors registering more attempts and shots on target than the defending champions at the Azadi Stadium, which welcomed only female supporters due to ban for the Tehran Reds.

Tractor is on top of table with 54 points, with Sepahan (50) and Persepolis (48) lagging behind and likely to battle it out for a runner-up finish and an Asian Champions League Elite spot in the remaining five rounds of fixtures. Elsewhere, Iranian international center-back Ali Nemati gave

Foolad Khuzestan a 53rd-minute lead against Golgozar Sirjan at home, only to see his goal canceled out by Mahdi Tikdari 11 minutes later as it finished 1-1 between the fourth and fifth teams of the table on Friday.

Ali Yahyazadeh's early strike helped Chadormalou end a four-game losing streak with a 1-0 win at Zob Ahan.

In Tehran, Dariush Shojaeian and Karim Eslami scored in each half as Havadar defeated 10-man Malavan 2-0 to keep slim survival hopes alive.

Having a game in hand, Havadar remains at the bottom of table with 18 points but managed to close the gap on Mes Rafsanjan and Nassaji Mazandaran to six and three points, respectively, after the fellow-relegation candidates played to a goalless result in Rafsanjan.

Verstappen wins Japanese GP for fourth straight year

REUTERS – World champion Max Verstappen banished his early season misery with a fourth successive pole-to-flag victory at the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday, holding off the previously dominant McLarens with some ease for his first win of the year.

Verstappen crossed the line in his Red Bull for his 64th grand prix victory to a huge ovation from the 115,000 crowd some 1.4 seconds ahead of McLaren's championship leader Lando Norris

in second place. "I am incredibly happy. This weekend started off quite tough but we didn't give up, kept improving the car. Today it was on its best form," said Verstappen, the first driver to win four times in a row at Suzuka.

Norris's lead over Verstappen in the drivers' standings was slashed to one point after an all but incident-free race effectively decided in Saturday's qualifying.

"Max drove a good race today, no mistakes," said

Norris, who won the season-opening race in Melbourne.

"It was a flat-out race from start to finish, so tough, but just not enough today, nothing special that we had that we could get Max on."

Oscar Piastri in the second McLaren, who won last time out in China, rounded out the podium in third place on his 24th birthday as the top six finished as they had started on the grid.

All 20 cars crossed the line after 53 laps with no rain,

none of the trackside grass fires that disrupted practice, and not a single yellow flag.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was fourth, the Mercedes of George Russell and Andrea Kimi Antonelli finished fifth and sixth with Lewis Hamilton seventh in the other Ferrari after moving up one place in the race.

Racing Bulls rookie Isack Hadjar was eighth, Alex Albon of Williams ninth, while teenager Ollie Bearman took the last point in 10th for Haas.



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates winning the Japanese Grand Prix in Suzuka, Japan, on April 6, 2025. ISSEI KATO/REUTERS

Embrace nature in Dohezar Forest of Mazandaran Province

Iranica Desk

In recent years, ecotourism and camping in nature have emerged as some of the most enjoyable forms of travel and recreation. Iran offers various regions for camping, including deserts, seas, mountains, and forests, with the Dohezar Forest in the north of the country being one notable destination. The best time for camping in this area is from May to November, while winter camping is not recommended due to harsh conditions. To fully enjoy this exciting experience, having proper camping equipment such as tents, sleeping bags, and hygiene supplies is essential. Additionally, careful consideration should be given to selecting an appropriate location, particularly avoiding camping near rivers.

The Dohezar Forest, located in Mazandaran Province near the town of Tonekabon, is part of the ancient Hyrcanian forests, dating back millions of years. The road leading to this forest takes travelers from Tonekabon to the Dohezar region, offering stunning views of mountains, rivers, and lush pastures along the way. The name Dohezar, meaning two thousand, derives from the area's elevation, as parts of this forest are situated at altitudes of two thousand meters or more above sea level. Alongside its neighboring forests — namely Sehezar and Almistan — Dohezar is considered one of the most popular ecotourism destinations in northern Iran, IRNA wrote.

In terms of flora, the Dohezar Forest boasts a variety of native trees, including oak, Persian ironwood (Zaban Gonjeeshki), poplar, and beech, making it an excellent destination for botany enthusiasts. Additionally, numerous medicinal plants like thyme, chamomile, and saffron thrive naturally in this forest. From an animal perspective, the forest's natural environment serves as a habitat for wildlife such as boars, rabbits, deer, and large birds like eagles, hawks, and owls. The diverse animal species contribute to the forest's rich and complex ecosystem.



iranbomgardi.com

Attractions

Daryaser Plain: Known for its beautiful landscapes and diverse vegetation, the Daryaser Plain is a fantastic spot for hiking and enjoying nature.

Falakdeh village: The village, with its wooden houses and pristine surroundings, offers visitors a taste of rural life. The hot springs in Falakdeh village are perfect for relaxation and healing.

Chaldareh Forest Park: With lush trees and a tranquil environment, Chaldareh Forest Park is an ideal location for picnicking and resting.

Best time for camping

The camping conditions in this ecosystem vary throughout the year:

Spring: The Dohezar Forest comes alive in spring, showcasing vibrant greenery due to seasonal rains, blooming trees, and flourishing plants and flowers. The weather is pleasant, and the aroma of wild grass adds to the experience. This period is ideal for camping and hiking, though it is advisable to avoid setting up tents near river paths and to be prepared for heavy rain.

Summer: Summer is also a favorable time for camping in the Dohezar Forest. During this season, temperatures in the mountainous areas are mild, and the high altitude keeps the intense summer heat at bay. The cool

and pleasant nights enhance the overall camping experience.

Autumn: Autumn is one of the most beautiful times to experience the nature of Dohezar. The forest is adorned with vibrant yellow, orange, red, and brown leaves, creating a stunning landscape ideal for camping and photography. The temperatures are mild, making it perfect for exploring the outdoors. Remember to pack warm clothing and sufficient gear for the chilly nights and early mornings.

Winter: In winter, camping in the Dohezar Forest is not advisable due to snow and severe cold. Enduring the frost in this high-altitude area can be extremely challenging, and various risks may arise.

Eco-friendly camping

Dohezar Forest is one of the most important protected areas in Iran, and many of its plant and animal species are threatened. When camping here, it is crucial to observe environmental regulations and avoid harming this delicate ecosystem.

Accessibility: Choose locations with easy access to roads or walking paths.

Safety: Consider the safety of the area by avoiding remote and secluded spots. If necessary, camp near roads or busier locations.

Distance from trees: Ensure the campsite is located away from tall trees to minimize the risk of falling branches during strong

winds or heavy rainfall.

Flood risk: If camping near rivers or seasonal springs, steer clear of areas prone to flooding or rising water levels at night.

Hazardous branches: Be aware that dry trees or broken branches may fall due to adverse weather conditions, so it's best to camp in locations where there is no risk from falling trees or branches.

Suitable locations for camping

Around the lake: One of the best camping spots in Dohezar Forest is the area surrounding the lake in the Daryaser Plain. Nestled among tall trees, this lake offers a calm and pleasant environment. If you're seeking a cozy retreat away from the crowds, the natural lake in Daryaser Plain is an excellent choice. However, be mindful that it may not be suitable for camping in all seasons and can be dry during hot, arid periods.

Around the rivers: Dohezar Forest features several rivers and streams where camping nearby can be quite enjoyable. Choosing a spot close to the river allows you to appreciate the soothing sounds of flowing water and the activity of small river inhabitants at night. Generally, there are flat and suitable grounds for pitching tents, but it's essential to avoid camping too close to the river, especially during rainy seasons, and to maintain a safe distance

from potential flooding.

Highlands: In areas above the forest level, you'll find breathtaking views of the surrounding trees and mountains. Access to these points may be more challenging, but their elevation and stunning scenery make them worthwhile to visit.

Plains: The plains and areas with less vegetation provide good options for camping. These locations offer a more comfortable environment in terms of temperature and humidity, allowing you to fully immerse yourself in the natural surroundings.

Recreational activities

Dohezar Forest, with its pristine nature, clean air, and stunning views, provides an ideal environment for a variety of recreational activities. Here are some common and popular activities you can enjoy while camping in this area:

Dohezar Forest: situated on the southern slopes of the Alborz Mountains, offers a variety of trails for hiking and walking enthusiasts. This area is characterized by tall trees, cool, flowing rivers, and unique natural beauty. Trekking through the forest can lead you to various destinations, including nearby villages and mountain peaks. The hiking trails range in difficulty from easy to hard, depending on the terrain and challenges. If you're seeking a trail for a long hike

with expansive views, opt for paths that lead to higher peaks or elevated areas. For those interested in overnight camping, it is advisable to select trails that provide easy access to water, food, and other facilities. Always check the weather conditions before starting your hike and remember to carry a map and navigation tools like a GPS.

Nature photography

Nature photography is one of the most popular activities in Dohezar Forest, where the pristine landscapes offer beautiful subjects for capturing images. The diverse biodiversity and natural beauty make this area an excellent location for photography. The sturdy trees, wild plants, and flowers, along with clouds and mists dancing through the forest, create stunning visuals. You can also observe wildlife such as wild boars, rabbits, birds, and other creatures, which provide captivating subjects for your photos.

Fishing

Surrounding Dohezar Forest are crystal-clear rivers and streams that offer excellent fishing opportunities. This activity presents a relaxing and enjoyable experience, as some rivers provide a better fishing environment due to their cool, abundant waters.

Campfire nights

One of the main delights of camping in Dohezar Forest is

spending nights immersed in nature. Set up your tent in the woods and enjoy pleasant evenings by the campfire. The nighttime sounds of the forest, paired with the warmth of the fire and a starry sky, create a dreamy and unforgettable camping atmosphere.

Water activities

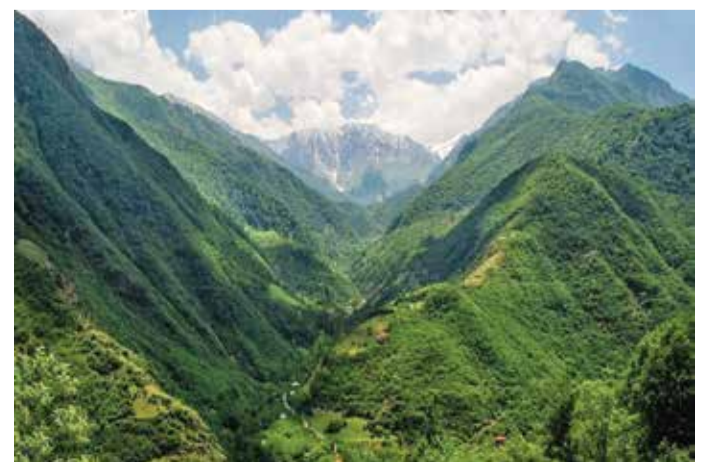
In certain parts of Dohezar Forest, rushing rivers and streams provide opportunities for water activities such as boating, swimming, or bathing in the cool, clear waters. Swimming in these waters during the pleasant weather is a unique experience; however, be sure to take necessary precautions for your safety and that of your loved ones, and be aware of the potential dangers associated with swimming in rivers and flowing waters.

Cycling

For cycling enthusiasts, Dohezar Forest offers suitable trails for biking. Enjoy pedaling through nature while adhering to safety guidelines and wearing gloves and a proper cycling helmet.

Wildlife watching

If you are interested in wildlife, Dohezar Forest is one of the best places for observing various animal species. In these woods, you can encounter diverse wildlife, including wild boars, deer, rabbits, and a variety of birds.



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Over 55,000 visited 'Picasso in Tehran' show during Nowruz holiday



Arts & Culture Desk

Over 55,000 art enthusiasts flocked to the 'Picasso in Tehran' exhibition at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA) during its 18-day run. The exhibition showcases an impressive collection of 66 pieces from the celebrated Spanish painter and sculptor, highlighting various phases of his artistic evolution. Notably, it features 26 aquatint prints from the famed series "La Tauromaquia" (The Art of Bullfighting), which have never been displayed in Iran before. This unique presentation has drawn considerable attention, with many visitors eager to explore Picasso's intricate depictions of bullfighting. In addition to Picasso's masterworks, the exhibition also spotlights selected pieces from Iranian artists influenced by his style, including Bahram Dabi-

ri, Bahman Mohasses, Jalil Ziapour, Mohsen Vaziri Moghaddam, Garnik Der-Hacopian, Hannibal Alkhas, and Parvaneh Etemadi. Furthermore, works from notable contemporaries such as Georges Braque, Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, and Joan Miró are also on view, showcasing the interconnectedness of artistic movements across borders. The exhibition has been well-received by both art critics and the general public, with many praising its thoughtful curation and the way it brings together diverse artistic voices. "The response has been overwhelming," remarked a museum representative. "We're thrilled to offer a platform that celebrates not only Picasso's legacy but also the talent of Iranian artists who have been inspired by him." Visitors wishing to experience 'Picasso in Tehran' can do so until May 21, 2025.

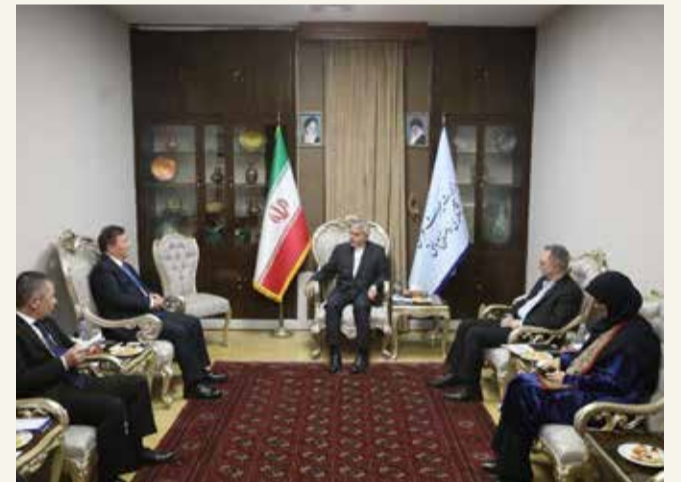
Iran, Kazakhstan forge path to enhanced tourism cooperation

Social Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, proposed an extension of the visa waiver period and the introduction of direct flights between Iran and Kazakhstan. The plan aims to foster tourism and cultural exchanges between the two nations, emphasizing their shared heritage and potential for collaboration, IRNA reported. During a meeting on Sunday, with Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Tehran, Ontalap Onalbayev, Salehi-Amiri outlined measures to enhance cultural interactions and tourism development. He added, "Increasing the visa waiver duration from 14 days to one month, along

with expanding direct flights, are essential steps in promoting tourism and deepening our bilateral relationship." The minister stressed the importance of showcasing the unique tourism attractions of both countries as a means to facilitate greater people-to-people connections. He proposed the creation of targeted investment packages aimed at establishing five-star hotels and inviting prominent Kazakh cultural figures to Iran. These incentives, he believes, would serve as catalysts for enriching cultural exchanges. In addition, Salehi Amiri expressed the ministry's readiness to organize joint cultural and artistic exhibitions in both countries, viewing this as a vital opportunity to deepen mutual understanding and foster a

cultural dialogue that brings their peoples closer together. He highlighted the significance of collaboration in preserving shared cultural elements, such as the international recognition of Nowruz, and called for joint efforts to register shared historical sites with UNESCO. Onalbayev affirmed Kazakhstan's commitment to bolstering relations with Iran across various sectors, particularly in cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts. He revealed that the Kazakh government is fully prepared to implement initiatives aimed at identifying and promoting shared historical artifacts, producing cultural documentaries, and establishing specialized working groups.



Iran to conduct new national census initiative for 2025

Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian issued an executive order to carry out the 2025 National Population and Housing Census. The directive, dated March 13, 2024, aims to ensure the cooperation of all relevant agencies in the successful implementation of this vital program, president.ir reported. The directive has been disseminated to key governmental bodies, including the office of the Supreme Leader, the judiciary, and various ministries, highlighting the collaborative effort required to establish the necessary infrastructure for the census. According to the presidential decree, "Achieving the objectives of the Islamic Republic and the advancement of the country necessitates comprehensive and effective planning, which in turn requires accurate, timely statistics and information." The order cites the need for a transition from traditional statistical methods to a modern, registration-based system. It mandates that all ministries, particularly the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, continuously provide essential data to the Statistical Center of Iran. Furthermore,

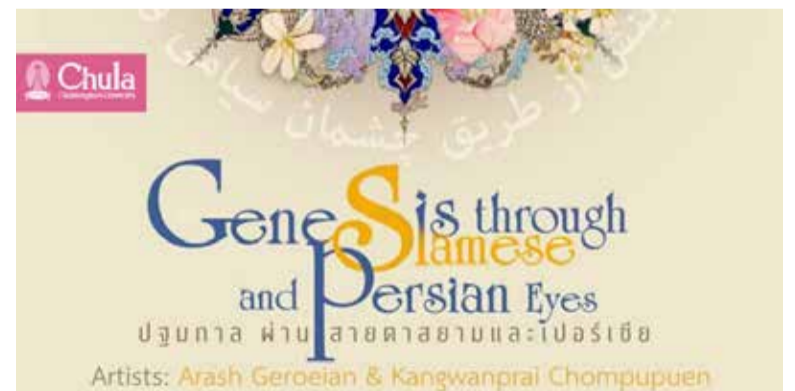


these entities must ensure that all necessary resources are made available during the census process, aligning with the provisions outlined in the laws governing the Statistical Center. As stipulated by the Iranian Constitution, national population and housing censuses are conducted every ten years, with the last one taking place in 2016 when Iran had a population of 79,926,270. The data collected will underpin future territorial planning and development strategies for the nation. The executive order signifies a crucial step for the Iranian government as it seeks to upgrade its statistical infrastructure, ultimately aiming to enhance the quality and timeliness of the information that will guide policy decisions in the coming years.

Iranian, Thai artists showcase cultural ties through painting exhibition

Arts & Culture Desk

An art exhibition titled 'Genesis Through Siamese and Persian Eyes' celebrating the 70th anniversary of Iran-Thailand cultural relations is underway at Chulalongkorn University's main hall in Bangkok, on the rich tapestry of cultural and historical narratives shared by the two nations. This exhibition brings to life the ancient Lanna legend "Pathommunmuli," an old palm-leaf manuscript from northern Thailand that narrates the creation of the world by Grandfather Sangkhaya Sangkasi and Grandmother Itthangkaya Sangkasi who are regarded as the ancestors of Lanna, IRNA reported. The exhibition showcases the works of two artists from distinct cultural traditions. Kangwanprai Chompupuen from Thailand interprets the legend through a contemporary Thai acrylic painting on canvas, and Arash Geroeian from Iran, uses traditional Persian watercolor techniques on paper. The two artists have also collaborated on special pieces that blend their unique artistic identities. "This exhibition is not just a collection of artworks; it's a mirror reflecting the profound humanistic perspectives of two ancient civilizations," said Iran's Cultural



Attaché during the opening ceremony. "It's an honor to stand among scholars, art lovers, and thinkers from both nations as we celebrate this artistic bridge between our cultures." The event also marked a unique intersection of two traditional New Year celebrations—Nowruz in Iran and Songkran in Thailand—further underscoring shared values of renewal and spirituality. The artworks on display focus on themes of creation, spirituality, and human connection, offering a side-by-side exploration of Persian and Siamese artistic traditions. "In Iranian culture, creation is sacred, steeped in mystery," noted the

Iranian representative. "Similarly, Siamese traditions intertwine creation with symbols, colors, and spiritual narratives." Visitors have been quick to pick up on these parallels. "The exhibition lays bare both the differences and striking similarities between our cultures," said one attendee. "It's fascinating to see how two distinct artistic traditions converge in their exploration of universal themes." The event has also been hailed as a shining example of cultural diplomacy. "Such collaborations are a testament to mutual respect and constructive engagement between nations," emphasized the Iranian Cultural attaché.