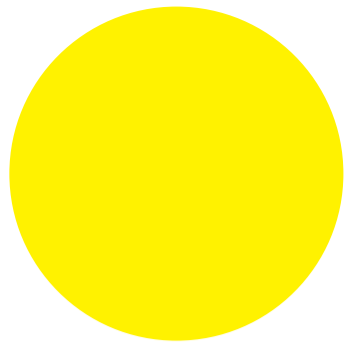


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Trump's big gamble, Iran's trump card

OPINIONS

Tensions between Tehran and Washington are heating up as indirect negotiations hang in the balance. Trump's recent comments throw a wrench in the works, suggesting a shift toward bilateral talks. Amid mixed messages from US officials, some experts argue that the deployment of bombers is a show of force rather than a prelude to conflict. The "carrot and stick" tactic may backfire, as Iran stands firm against pressure. With concerns mounting over a potential military confrontation, analysts weigh in on the future of these fraught relations, hinting that the outcome of any talks could tip the scales toward peace or escalation. [See pages 4-5 >](#)



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A protester holding flags stands atop a rickshaw as he participates in a demonstration in solidarity with the Palestinian people in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on April 7, 2025. [MUNIR UZ ZAMAN/AFP](#)

Netanyahu aims to offset pressure during visit to Washington



By Hassan Hanizadeh
Mideast affairs expert

OPINION

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's trip to Washington to meet with US President Donald Trump, his second visit during Trump's second term, serves multiple purposes, stemming from Israel's complex internal and international circumstances. After months of military operations following the Al-Aqsa Storm, Israel's economy faces a serious challenge. The heavy cost of the war in the Gaza Strip, estimated at over \$100 billion, has severely impacted the regime's economy. Meanwhile, growing political isolation in global public sentiment has prompted Netanyahu to leverage the media and political clout of the Zionist lobby and US support to rebuild Israel's tarnished reputation. A key focus of the visit is the controversial plan for managing the popula-

tion of Gaza. After the initial idea of forcibly relocating Gazans to Jordan, reportedly supported by Trump, faced widespread backlash and failed, a new plan has emerged: relocating Gazans to Syria. This plan involves creating a buffer zone of around 700 square kilometers in the highlands between occupied Golan Heights and Syria, from Jabal al-Sheikh to Daraa. Israel seems to be aiming to turn this area, which it holds under its influence or occupation, into a new settlement for around two million Gazans, potentially using military force and capitalizing on Syria's ongoing instability. Netanyahu also seeks to win over the US Congress and Trump to implement this plan, hoping that Syria's internal crises will facilitate his goal. The plan is likely to receive a green light from Trump and sections of the US Congress. Coinciding with this visit, Israel's intensified attacks on Gaza and the West Bank, and the proposal for a new security corridor called "Philadelphia II" across the Gaza Strip, have

heightened concerns about the region's future. Given Trump's staunch support for Netanyahu's hardline policies, the renewed killing of Gazans, breaches of cease-fire agreements, and obstruction of humanitarian aid seem to be carried out with US coordination and approval. Trump appears unbothered by the public backlash. However, internal divisions within Israeli political factions have made things tough for Netanyahu. Thus, the Washington trip and Trump's overt support may serve as a means to shore up Netanyahu's shaky position in Israel's power structure, even if it comes at the cost of continued devastation and bloodshed in Gaza and escalating tensions in the region. Personal and legal dimensions also play a major role in this visit. Domestic criticism of Netanyahu has reached a crescendo, and legal cases against him, especially after the ICC prosecutor's statement regarding potential new charges against Israeli officials, have put him in a tight spot. This trip might be an attempt to sidestep these pressures and evade legal

repercussions. Given that the US is not a member of the ICC and Netanyahu used to hold dual Israeli-American citizenship, it is speculated that he might revert to his American citizenship to escape ICC prosecution if he is ousted from the premiership, which is not unlikely. Netanyahu aims to persuade Trump to use his presidential powers to grant him political immunity or full citizenship after his term, ensuring he remains beyond the reach of international prosecution. Regional issues are also on the agenda, with Iran and Yemen taking center stage. The recent intensified US and UK attacks on Ansarullah positions in Yemen indicate Washington and Tel Aviv's joint determination to weaken and remove the Houthis from the resistance axis. Iran, naturally, tops Netanyahu's priorities. He will strive to push the US toward creating a new crisis in the region and ratcheting up sanctions against Iran, with the goal of forcing Tehran to capitulate to US demands, particularly regarding a complete halt to nuclear activities.

President: Iran seeks negotiations 'but not with ignominy'



International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian reiterated that the Islamic Republic is seeking negotiations to resolve a dispute with the West over its nuclear program but "not with ignominy." The president said that Iran believes in negotiation and is ready to hold talks with the entire world but "we do not negotiate at any cost." He made the remarks in a meeting with the representatives of the country's political parties on Sunday in Tehran. Pezeshkian said that the other side should also prove that is seeking negotiation. Since taking office in January, the US President Donald Trump has repeatedly called for talks with Iran to reach an agreement on its nuclear program. At the same time, he has threatened Iran with bombing if an agreement is not reached between the two sides.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a meeting with the representatives of the country's political parties in Tehran on April 7, 2025.
● president.ir

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

Iran has responded to the letter through Oman. Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that Iran has sent its response to Trump's letter and is now waiting for the US decision in this regard.

"Iran's proposal for indirect negotiations was a generous and wise proposal given the history of the issue and trends related to the nuclear talks over the past decade. We are focused on what we have proposed," the ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei said.

On Thursday, the US president said he favored "direct talks," arguing they were "faster" and offered a better understanding than going through intermediaries. But 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," Araghchi added during a cere-

mony on the occasion of Iran's new year, in which ambassadors and envoys from foreign countries attended.

Earlier on Saturday, Pezeshkian said his country is 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?"

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 for 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 warns neighbors against backing military offensives in region

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei warned the neighboring countries on the use of their territories by others for aggression against regional countries.

Speaking at a weekly press conference in Tehran on Monday, Baqaei said that no country in the region is allowed to let other countries to use its territory for aggression against another country.

He emphasized that Iran's message in this regard has been clear, and this is a message that all countries in the region are aware of.

His remarks came amid military threats by the US President Donald Trump against Iran over its nuclear program.

Trump has recently threatened Iran with bombing if an agreement is not reached between the two sides on Tehran's nuclear program.

On Sunday, Reuters claimed that Iran has issued stern warnings to neighboring countries hosting US military bases that they could face retaliation if they support potential American strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities.



The Iranian government has formally notified Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Turkey and Bahrain that any assistance to a US attack on Iran — including allowing use of their airspace or territory — would be considered "an act of hostility" with "severe consequences," Reuters cited a senior Iranian official who the news agency said was speaking on condition of anonymity. Iran has repeatedly warned that it will decisively respond to any aggression on its territorial integrity, sovereignty, and national interests.

Global outrage at Israel's mounting onslaught after shattered cease-fire

International Desk

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets in many countries to protest against Israel's crimes in the Gaza Strip as the regime has resumed its air and ground offensive in the Palestinian territory since last month.

In Tunisia, the protesters called for the closure of the US Embassy and expulsion of its ambassador from the African country.

In the capital Tunis, dozens gathered outside the US Embassy in protest at Israel's war on Gaza and Washington's complicity in the genocide that has claimed over 50,000 lives.

"America is the other face of Zionism. (...) They're not just supporting genocide in Gaza they are participating in it," declared Bashir Khodri, head of the Ansar Palestine Association.

Students, leaders and activists of different political parties and common people also staged demonstration across Bangladesh to condemn the ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza and demanded an immediate end to Israeli's barbarity.

The protesters also called for boycotting Israeli products. At some places, the protesters



A group of protesters hold a Palestinian flag and a banner reading "Youth demand an end to genocide" referring to conflict in Gaza, as they block the traffic in central London on April 7, 2025.
● HENRY NICHOLLS/AFP

formed human chain and some groups held protest processions and rallies, demanding immediate stop of the ongoing genocide and mass destruction in Gaza.

Similar protests were also held in several major cities of Pakistan, including Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. During the protests, the Pakistani demonstrators expressed their solidarity with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Pakistanis also staged a general strike in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

A coalition of Palestinian political movements — including Fatah and Hamas — called a global strike to protest what they described as "the genocide and the ongoing massacre

of our people."

In the occupied West Bank, Palestinians also held a general strike demanding an end to the Gaza war.

Shops, schools and most public administrative offices were closed across the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

Lebanese students and British youth also staged small protests in Beirut and London to denounce the Israel's crimes against Palestinians.

Israel resumed its deadly air strikes on Gaza on March 18, ending nearly two months of cease-fire with Hamas. More than 1,200 Palestinians have been killed since Israel restarted its military offensive in the Palestinian territory.

Moscow voices readiness to help resolve US-Iran nuclear tensions



Dmitry Peskov

The Kremlin said on Monday that Russia was ready to do all it could to help resolve tensions between the United States and Iran around Tehran's nuclear program as Washington demands Tehran do a nuclear deal with it or be bombed. Moscow has repeatedly offered to

mediate between the two sides after warnings of military action against Iran by US President Donald Trump have rattled nerves across the region, Reuters reported.

"We are in constant consultations with our Iranian partners, including on the topic of the nuclear deal," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"This process will continue, including in the near future. And, of course, Russia is ready to make every effort, to do everything possible to contribute to this problem's resolution by political and diplomatic means."

During his first term, Trump withdrew the US from a 2015 deal between Iran and world powers that

placed strict limits on Tehran's disputed nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. Iran says it needs nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and denies it is seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said last week that Trump's comments about bombing Iran only served to "complicate the situation" and cautioned that strikes could be "catastrophic" for the wider region.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova also said Russia, China, and Iran will hold consultations at an expert level on the Iranian nuclear program in Moscow on today.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



NIPC: 18 petchem projects set to go online this year

Economy Desk

The National Iranian Petrochemical Company (NIPC) announced plans to commission 18 new projects valued at \$5 billion this year, expanding production capacity by approximately 9 million tons and introducing several domestically produced petrochemical products for the first time in the country, according to the company's CEO.

"This year, approximately 18 projects with a total value of \$5 billion will become operational, adding around 9 million tons of production capacity. Some products from these facilities will be manufactured in the country for the first time," Hassan Abbaszadeh said.

Expanding the value chain, boosting exports, completing semi-finished projects, and diversifying product offerings are among the key priorities driving the petrochemical industry, SHANA wrote.

Deputy Oil Minister for Petrochemical Affairs discussed the industry's achievements, challenges, and plans for the past and upcoming years in an interview with SHANA. He described these projects

as a "record-breaking leap" for the sector.

When asked whether new 18 products would be added to the industry's portfolio alongside value chain expansion, he confirmed that some products would indeed be first-time offerings. For example, the isopropyl alcohol unit at Arman Sepahan Petrochemical in Isfahan — a product partly used in skin-friendly disinfectant alcohols, among other industrial applications — is scheduled for commissioning in the first half of the current Iranian year, 1404 (began on March 20, 2025).

Abbaszadeh emphasized that the petrochemical industry plays a pivotal role in strengthening the oil sector's value chain and generating foreign currency. The key objectives include meeting domestic demand for finished products and maximizing hydrocarbon resources to produce higher-value goods.

\$13.5b petrochemical exports

According to the official, approximately 70% of petrochemical output is exported to secure foreign currency, as domestic



markets absorb only 30%. In 1403 (began on March 20, 2024), \$13.5 billion worth of petrochemical products were exported, with equivalent revenue transferred to the Central Bank and reintegrated into the national economy. Around \$2 billion was allocated to importing essential goods, equipment, catalysts, and chemicals for the industry.

Despite energy shortages in 1403 — including feedstock supply constraints due to unprecedented cold weather and rising household and commercial gas demand — the industry's foreign currency earnings remained stable compared to 1402 (began on March 20, 2023), Abbaszadeh added.

Total petrochemical production in 1403 reached

75 million tons against an installed capacity of 97 million tons. Exports from this output increased year-on-year, generating \$13.5 billion in revenue. Meanwhile, roughly \$10 billion worth of products were supplied domestically, a figure consistent with the previous year, he said.

The most pressing challenge under the Seventh

Development Plan remains feedstock supply, the official said, stressing, "Currently, 20% of the industry faces shortages, and without intervention, this gap will widen. However, a dedicated committee was established in recent months to ensure sustainable feedstock provision, with ongoing meetings to explore solutions."

Minister warns of 20,000 MW deficit amid power sector challenges



Economy Desk

Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi outlined on Monday the challenges and initiatives undertaken by his ministry in the electricity sector over the year.

"Rising temperatures across the country, which will peak during summer, have created a significant imbalance between power generation capacity and consumption. This year's peak demand is projected to reach 85,000 megawatts, while maximum generation capacity under optimal conditions will be 65,000 megawatts, resulting in a power shortfall exceeding 20,000 megawatts," Abbas Aliabadi said.

Speaking at a training workshop on electricity consumption management to address the current year's peak load on Monday, Aliabadi emphasized the critical need for optimizing

electricity use to navigate this year's demand surge.

He explained that a substantial portion of the supply-demand gap can be managed through efficiency programs, noting, "During summer, 35,000 megawatts of electricity demand is added by air conditioners and cooling systems alone — a figure exceeding the total consumption of several neighboring countries."

Referring to challenges faced during the cold season due to fuel constraints, he added, "The power industry encountered significant difficulties in winter due to fuel supply limitations, including reduced time frames for major and routine maintenance of power plants."

Causes of recent electricity blackouts

Meanwhile, the CEO of Iran's Power Generation and Distri-

bution Company (TAVANIR) on Monday apologized for the lack of communication regarding recent electricity supply limitations, stating, "These restrictions will be managed in the coming days."

"Due to drought this year, we cannot maximize the use of hydropower plant capacity. Compared to last year, we can only utilize one-third of hydropower plants' capacity," Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi said.

"Some power plant maintenance, postponed to this year due to fuel shortages, must now undergo major repairs," he added.

The spokesperson for the power industry noted, "Approximately 30% of the country's power plants are aging, and these repairs are essential."

He further clarified, "To ensure the nuclear power plant operates fully during summer, we temporarily took it offline for fuel replacement operations."

He continued, "These factors have resulted in our production capacity failing to meet demand. Electricity consumption has grown by over 6% since the start of the year — a significant figure. We urge our compatriots to manage their electricity usage."

"Air conditioner use has begun in parts of the country, and maintaining a temperature of 25°C is critical. We call on major industries with operational power plants to activate them," Rajabi Mashhadi emphasized.

GSI targets mining industry growth with maps, aerial survey



Economy Desk

The Geological Survey of Iran (GSI), as the world's fifth-largest holder of mineral reserves, unveiled its annual plans, which include preparing 120 geological maps and launching a 2-million-kilometer aerial geophysical survey to identify and develop valuable mining industries. Hossein Shariatmadar Tehrani, a senior advisor to the head of the geological survey and mineral explorations organization, said that preparing 120 geological maps and launching a 2-million-kilometer aerial geophysics survey to obtain subsurface mineral reserve data are among the organization's priorities for the current year.

According to Shariatmadari, Iran — with \$27.3 trillion in mineral capital

— is the world's fifth-largest holder of mineral reserves.

The official emphasized that the geological maps serve as foundational data, providing a suitable platform for geoscientists and investors to extract and develop valuable mining industries.

As reported by the GSI, Shariatmadari also highlighted the implementation of the aerial geophysics program in the north strip of Iran's southern province of Fars as a priority for the department of geology and mineral exploration in Shiraz under a three-year framework.

He urged investors to consult the Shiraz bureau or access the Geological Survey's geoscience database (NGDIR.ir) to utilize available information for resource exploitation.

Markets sink as Trump's tariffs roil global trading system

President Donald Trump's sweeping tariff plans battered global markets again on Monday after he said foreign governments would have to pay "a lot of money" to get the levies removed, while US stocks got a brief lift on hints of a pause, only to slide again.

Asian and European shares plunged and oil prices plummeted as investors feared the duties Trump likened to "medicine to fix something" at the weekend could lead to higher prices, weaker demand and potentially a global recession, Reuters reported.

US stocks initially tumbled as well, then rebounded after White House adviser Kevin Hassett said according to CNBC that Trump was considering a 90-day pause in tariffs for all countries except China. Stocks then slid again after the broadcaster cited the White House as saying the pause comment was "fake news."

The European Union, which has been divided on how strongly to punch back against Washington without risking more pain for its own companies and consumers, said it wanted to negotiate but was also ready to retaliate. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU had offered Trump "zero-for-zero" tariffs on industrial goods.

Goldman Sachs raised the odds of a US recession to 45% in the next 12 months, joining other investment banks in revising their forecast. JPMorgan economists now estimate the tariffs pushing the US economy into a 0.3% contraction, down from an earlier estimate of 1.3% growth of gross domestic product.

Trump had shown no sign of relaxing his tariff policy earlier on Monday, blasting China for hitting back with retaliatory tariffs and repeating a call for the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates. As Trump's circle hit back at critics, White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said talk of a recession was "silly."

Hassett, director of the National Economic Council, said separately that Trump had talked to world leaders all weekend and would listen to proposals for great deals.

The tariff announcement has met with bewildered condemnation from other leaders and triggered retaliatory levies from China, the world's No.2 economy, which called Trump's behavior "economic bullying."

After stocks in mainland China and Hong Kong cratered on Monday, China's sovereign fund stepped in to try to stabilize the market. Shares in Taiwan plummeted almost 10% — the biggest one-day percentage fall on record.

TSE slumps Nearly 1%

Tehran Stock Exchange also slumped nearly 1%. During Monday's trading session in the capital market, over 20.336 billion shares were traded across 448,000 transactions. The stock index declined by 26,961 units, settling at 2,746,859 units.

According to the report, in Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) markets, 9.069 billion securities were exchanged in 311,000 transactions. The OTC benchmark index (IFX) dropped 93 units, closing at 24,747 units.

Trump's big gamble, Iran's trump card

OPINIONS

While Iran insists on indirect negotiations with the US, Donald Trump, in his latest claim, asserted that he doesn't think "that's necessarily true anymore." The US president further argues that negotiations should be carried out bilaterally. Earlier, Axios reported, citing sources, that Washington is seriously reviewing Tehran's response and may accept Iran's request for indirect talks.

Amid contradictory statements from Western media and the ambiguous positions of US officials — which have made predicting the future of tensions between Tehran and Washington more complex — some experts believe the deployment of American bombers to the Indian Ocean was solely meant to show off strength. They claim that Trump, following his own unique strategies, is seeking to reach negotiations or even an agreement, yet he is trying to achieve his goal by relying on the alleged "carrot and stick" tactic — a possibility Tehran has drawn as its red line, insisting it will not negotiate under pressure.

On the other hand, another group, expressing serious concern over the audacious approach of the White House occupant, believes that if Washington's demands are not met as the US president intends, the stage could be set for a military confrontation — a costly option for both the region and the United States.

On this note, the Persian-language newspaper *Etemad* spoke with several experts on international relations, namely Abdolreza Faraji-Rad, Amir Ali Abolfath, and Hassan Beheshtipour, to analyze the current situation between Tehran and Washington and the future of tensions under the shadow of contradictory statements and pressure.

Faraji-Rad believes Trump's recent claims indicate that Iran and the US are moving toward direct talks, provided Washington adopts a non-supremacist approach focused on nuclear issues.

Abolfath, however, stressed that more important than the format of the talks is their outcome and the balance of concessions between the two sides. Regarding the regional military buildup due to Washington's recent moves, he said that the likelihood of a military attack depends on the outcome of negotiations and the US assessment of the costs.

Beheshtipour, from a different angle, believes the US has no issue even with indirect talks, but Iran must explain to the public why direct negotiations are not advisable.



NEWSWEEK

Trump after showing off power, not confronting Iran



Anwar Gargash (L), diplomatic advisor to the president of the United Arab Emirates, meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Tehran, Iran, on March 12, 2025, delivering a letter from the US President Donald Trump to Iran's Leader.

IRNA



By **Abdolreza Faraji-Rad**
Former diplomat

Given the statements of Iranian officials as well as Donald Trump's remarks — especially his latest claim during his recent trip — it can be concluded that the letter sent by Iran to Trump has had an impact. Based on available information, the American side received this letter just a few days ago, and it can be inferred that the process of starting negotiations between Iran and the US is gradually taking shape.

In other words, it can be concluded that if the US agrees to negotiations based on Iran's

demands — that is, within the framework of a dialogue from an equal position focused on the nuclear issue (and not other topics such as missile capabilities) — the possibility of direct talks between Tehran and Washington could open up. It appears that the American side has accepted that, for now, negotiations should revolve solely around nuclear issues.

Moreover, some Iranian officials have hinted at the possibility of defining joint economic projects with the US. This is also significant for Trump, as his economic policy is centered on raising tariffs, boosting domestic production, and increasing US exports. Trump is looking to ramp up

American domestic production and export to global markets rather than heavily relying on imports from other countries. This is one of the Trump administration's economic priorities, and when the US pulled out of the JCPOA, it claimed that the deal had mostly benefited Russia, China, and Europe while the US gained nothing.

Therefore, I believe that if talks begin, even if indirectly at first, evidence suggests that the US and Trump himself have no desire to get into a military conflict and their recent moves confirm this. This is a behavior specific to Trump — not just toward Iran but in relations with other countries as well. He uses a particu-

lar rhetoric, whether in dealing with Europe, Russia, China, Canada, or even Mexico.

Ultimately, if we compare the current situation with the last week's, it seems we are seeing progress. Although it is slow, regardless of the accuracy of the news circulating, both sides appear to be gearing up for negotiations. Initial negotiations may kick off indirectly, as Iran has already agreed to this format. However, if Trump's point man in the talks avoids a condescending or coercive stance, indirect talks could easily turn into direct discussions.

From the very beginning, Trump has both called for negotiations and reaching an agreement

and placed fostering favorable relations with the Iranian people on his agenda. At the same time, however, he has claimed that if no deal is reached, he will launch military strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities. A person with such behavioral traits is flexing power to convey the message that if Iran does not enter talks, the US will resort to force.

Another key point is that the US military deployment in the region and the Indian Ocean is not solely related to Iran. Part of these military movements is tied to America's clashes with the Houthis and the intense battles between the two sides. Currently, various US warships and military aircraft are stationed in the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and these assets are not solely aimed at threatening Iran.

Part of this military capability is deployed in the Persian Gulf, but we are not seeing a significant uptick in military activity within the Gulf itself. Some movements may be underway at US military bases in Bahrain, but most operations are concentrated in areas like the Indian Ocean, the island of Diego Garcia, and the Red Sea. Therefore, these movements do not necessarily signal an imminent military conflict — especially when talks are also on the table.

Trump's recent remarks — such as "forget the letters" and the possibility of direct talks — indicate that groundwork for dialogue is being laid. It seems he has picked up signals from Iran, whether through the statements of the country's officials, who have adopted a calculated diplomatic approach, or through messages that may have been relayed via intermediaries, particularly Oman.



Ultimately, if we compare the current situation with the last week's, it seems we are seeing progress. Although it is slow, regardless of the accuracy of the news circulating, both sides appear to be gearing up for negotiations. Initial negotiations may kick off indirectly, as Iran has already agreed to this format. However, if Trump's point man in the talks avoids a condescending or coercive stance, indirect talks could easily turn into direct discussions.

US strategy combines military pressure, diplomacy

By Amir Ali Abolfath
Expert on US affairs

Regarding Trump's reaction, it should be noted that he recently told a reporter, "Forget the letters." He added that indirect negotiations are a time-consuming process and that he believes Iran is not leaning toward indirect talks anymore. Keep in mind he was not speaking on his own behalf there — he claimed such an inclination exists in Iran. All signs indicate that the US government is keen on direct talks, while Iran still prioritizes indirect dialogue. However, unofficial signals and reports from some Iranian officials suggest that if indirect negotiations move forward smoothly, Tehran would not rule out switching to direct talks. Perhaps these very remarks have led Trump to conclude that Iran is also warming up to direct negotiations. In any case, from my perspective, the debate over the format of negotiations — direct or indirect — is a distracting hurdle; What matters is the outcome, not the form. The method itself holds no inherent value, even though Tehran and Washington's preferences differ. Still, national interests should not be tied to this issue because ultimately, what will be decisive is the deal's substance, not how it is reached. If securing the country's interests requires it, direct talks should also be put on the table.



US President Donald Trump (standing) speaks to a crowd of top US officials in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington on April 2, 2025. EYEPRESS/NEWSCOM

Getting bogged down in repetitive debates over the negotiation format, in my view, is unproductive. The focus should remain on both sides' conditions, Iran and America's demands, the room for maneuver, and possible scenarios. The key question is how much we can expect these talks to yield a favorable outcome aligned with national interests.

Right now, negotiations are stuck on determining the format. This phase includes issues like the timing and location of talks, the composition of negotiating teams, and delegation accommodations — matters that are ultimately secondary. Meanwhile, the issue of "guarantees" is directly tied to the substance of negotiations, though in practice, none exist. After all,

Donald Trump even scrapped an agreement he himself signed with Mexico and Canada — let alone one with Iran. Thus, the key issue is not guarantees but the balance between concessions given and received by Iran — in other words, the parity between what the US demands and what it offers in return. When this balance is struck, both sides will

be more satisfied, and adherence to commitments becomes likelier. Otherwise, no document, memo, or resolution — whether from the US Congress, Iran's National Security Council, or Iran's Parliament — can ensure the deal's implementation. The only effective factor is mutual satisfaction with the agreement's terms. We haven't reached that stage yet; the country

is still hung up on the negotiation format. Once we move past this, we must assess which issues are negotiable, where flexibility exists, what topics can form the core of talks, and which red lines Iran has drawn. That's why the "guarantee" discussion will arise in the final stages, not at the outset. In my view, the US government is keeping both military confrontation and negotiations on the table, and Washington's current military posture serves these dual objectives. If talks yield an outcome favorable to the US, the likelihood of military escalation will drop. But if America concludes no agreement with Iran is possible while assessing military action as low-cost, strikes against Iran may come into play. The US has entered the region prepared for both war and talks — hence the deployment of its bombers. What sets Trump apart from other US officials is his blunt declaration that he secures peace, negotiations, and deals through power and pressure. His trade tariffs follow the same logic; he claims they force other countries to the negotiating table. A similar approach is being taken with Iran. It would be wrong to say Washington is solely after military conflict or that its military buildup is purely for show. Both objectives must be analyzed together because America's current strategy is built on combining military pressure with diplomacy.

Washington seeking leverage, not war

By Hassan Beheshtipour
Expert on int'l affairs

The US doesn't oppose indirect negotiations. Trump, too, prefers reaching his goals through talks. However, Trump personally prefers taking center stage and exploiting opportunities for political gains. It's the Iranian side that must explain to the public why direct talks aren't smart, wise, or honorable while indirect negotiations are productive and sensible. We shouldn't forget that Iran chose this path of indirect negotiations during president Raisi's administration, and it led nowhere. A second issue, raised in US media, is that the US is combining threats with incentives for talks to both gain more concessions and tell the public, through its public diplomacy, that it favors dialogue and diplomatic solutions from a position of strength. In this context, Iran must also emphasize resolving issues through preliminary talks and articulate its "re-

sistance diplomacy" to the public. Iran's media approach toward the US has two major flaws: First, it amplifies American threats and excessive demands — as if to justify avoiding talks — when the media should instead explain resistance diplomacy and show how Iran can achieve its goals through it. Sending a clear message to the world — that Iran isn't seeking war and aims to end unjust sanctions through diplomacy — is crucial. Meanwhile, implementing fundamental economic reforms would complement resistance diplomacy's success. This term has a broad meaning and isn't limited to nuclear issues. Its primary goal is countering and neutralizing US maximum pressure, which is pursued through maximum sanctions. Resistance diplomacy is a multifaceted strategy with several dimensions:

1. Political/diplomatic: This includes strengthening ties with allies — particularly countries opposing US policies or not backing sanctions — to mitigate sanctions'



Iranian FM Abbas Araghchi (2nd-R) talks with the Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami (2nd-L) during an event to celebrate the Persian New Year, in Tehran, Iran, on April 5, 2025. MIZAN

impact. Leveraging international bodies like the UN to condemn sanctions and push for their removal is also vital. **2. Negotiations:** Engaging with the US and others should be done

to secure agreements serving Iran's interests.

3. Economic: This itself has other facets including:

- Building a resilient economy by reducing oil dependence and developing agriculture, industry, and technology
- Expanding trade with non-sanctioning countries
- Circumventing sanctions through legal/extra-legal means to meet economic needs

4. Military/security: From this perspective, the goal is to:

- Boost deterrence to prevent potential attacks
- Support regional resistance groups against US influence
- 5. Media/cultural:** The objective here is, again, twofold:
 - Articulating Iran's stance to domestic/global audiences and countering US propaganda
 - Strengthening national unity to withstand external pressure

However, there will be challenges to resistance diplomacy, including:

- Resource constraints due to sanctions
- Domestic disagreements over tactics, which weakens cohesion
- Ongoing US pressure, which complicates implementation of strategies

Resistance diplomacy is a complex, multidimensional strategy requiring a comprehensive, coordinated approach. Its success hinges on factors like maintaining domestic unity, cultivating alliances, and effective economic/military policies. The conditions for imposing war on Iran are riper than ever, but all these US moves are aimed at extracting more concessions at the negotiating table. They aren't after war — but if Iran doesn't engage with the international community, we may see strikes on its nuclear facilities.

The full article first appeared in the Persian-language newspaper *Etemad*.

The US is combining threats with incentives for talks to both gain more concessions and tell the public, through its public diplomacy, that it favors dialogue and diplomatic solutions from a position of strength. In this context, Iran must also emphasize resolving issues through preliminary talks and articulate its "resistance diplomacy" to the public.



Four US Air Force B-2 bombers are visible on the ramp (from center to lower right) in a satellite image of a joint US-British air base on Diego Garcia island in the Indian Ocean on March 29, 2025. PLANET LABS

Iranian Volleyball Premier League Finals: Ataei vows Foolad fightback after Shadab draws first blood

Sports Desk

Foolad Sirjan head coach Behrouz Ataei said there would "definitely be a third game" in the Iranian volleyball Premier League Finals after his side fell to a 3-1 defeat against Shahdab Yazd in the first of the best-of-three series on Sunday.

Veteran opposite Amir Ghafour chipped in a game-high 29 points, including three aces, and middle-blocker Masoud Gholami had 10 points to help Shahdab come from behind to beat Foolad 24-26, 26-24, 25-21, and 25-17 in Tehran's Federation Hall.

Outside-hitter Amir Esfandiari topped the scoring chart for Foolad with 21 points, followed by international teammate Ali Hajipour and middle-blocker Seyyed Mohammad Mousavi, who finished on 15 and 11 points, respectively.

Shahdab will be looking to clinch the title when the two familiar foes are back in the same venue for Game 2 today.

This is the fourth final showpiece featuring Foolad and Shahdab over the past 12 months, with the former coming out on top in all three previous occasions.

Foolad beat Shahdab to the Iranian Premier League crown last April, and then went on to come out victorious in the AVC Asian Club Championship showdown in September, before Ataei's men lifted the Iranian Volleyball Cup trophy thanks to a straight-set triumph in February's final.

"We knew it was going to be a tough match. Shahab is a really



Shahdab Yazd's Amir Ghafour (R) hits a spike during Game 1 victory over Foolad Sirjan in the Iranian Volleyball Premier League Finals in Tehran, Iran, on April 6, 2025.

● MASOUD AKBARI/volleyball.ir

strong and top-quality team and had already beaten us twice in the regular season," Ataei said after the game.

"My players thought they had the victory in their pocket before the contest and my coaching staff and I had warned them against underestimating their opponent. You have to fight for the victory on the court and we

did everything to make them understand the game isn't won before it's played," added the former Iranian national team boss. "We got off to a strong start, but our players thought they would win the game under any circumstances, until they hit a brick wall in the second set and couldn't hold their ground. "After that, they started play-

ing on edge and out of sync. We tried to keep their frustration in check and play with the same calm composure as Shahab, but instead, we were tense and rushed."

Ataei was still confident that his team would bounce back in Game 2.

"It's no big deal. It takes two wins to clinch the title and you

will defiantly see a third game in the series," Ataei said.

Asked how the head-to-head between two opposites Ghafour and Hajipour played a part in the final outcome, Ataei said: "They are both top-notch players and have crucial roles in their teams. Ghafour, with all his experience, did a great job to change the course of the game,

while Hajipour let the pressure get to him. He lost focus, and just couldn't bring his A-game today." Meanwhile, Ataei's opposite number Mahdi Mahdavi, who was only appointed to the role in February, was full of praise for Shahdab players for having "the right mindset."

"Our route in the playoffs was much tougher than Foolad's as we had to dig deep for victory against Paykan and Chadormalou. That's why we had nerves of steel in today's game," said the former Iranian setter.

"Foolad is the Asian champion and a world bronze medalist, with quality players and coaching staff, who truly deserve all their achievements over the past year. But credit to my players, they came in with the right mindset and held their own throughout the game.

"All of the players, even the substitutes, made a massive contribution to the victory. We were great in terms of collective defending as we registered 14 successful blocks.

"We are going to play with the same determination and hope to seal the title by the end of the second encounter."

Should Foolad level the series in Game 2, the two sides will meet in the decider on Thursday.

FIBA Asia Cup 2025: Second-seed Iran to learn fate in main draw

Sports Desk

The Iranian national basketball team will learn about its group opponents at the FIBA Asia Cup – starting August 5 in Saudi Arabia – when the draw for the flagship continental tournament takes place in Jeddah today.

Three-time champion Iran will be placed in Pot 2 of the draw – based on the latest FIBA World Rankings on March 28 – and

will avoid Lebanon, China, and the Philippines in the group phase of the 16-team event.

Host Saudi Arabia is in Pot 1 alongside two-time defending champion Australia, Japan, and New Zealand.

Pot 3 features Jordan, South Korea, and the Chinese Taipei, with India, Qatar, Guam, and Iraq in Pot 4. The 16 teams will be split into four groups, with the top teams of each pro-

gressing to the last eight, while the No. 2 and 3 teams will play in a Qualification round for to quarterfinals. Iran finished the qualifiers with a 5-1 record to win Group E – thanks to back-to-back wins over India and Kazakhstan under new Greek head coach Sotirios Manolopoulos in the final window in February.

Team Melli's lone defeat came against Qatar, and former Iran coach Hakan Demir, last November.

Guardiola hits out at United fans' chant about Foden's mother

THE GUARDIAN – Pep Guardiola has said that the Manchester United fans who chanted abuse at Manchester City's Phil Foden about his mother during Sunday's goalless derby lacked "class".

The invective was directed at the winger during the first half when City attacked the Stretford End at Old Trafford. Guardiola was asked about the chant.

"[It was a] lack of class," City's manager said. "But it's not United, it's the people [supporters], you know? We are so exposed in football – managers, owners, and football players especially. Honestly, I don't understand the mind of the people involving the mum of Phil, it's a lack of integrity, class, and they should be ashamed."

It is understood that City were shocked and disgusted by the chants and the number of people involved. United's stance is that they condemn all abusive chants aimed towards players.

The draw leaves City in



Pep Guardiola (L) hugs Phil Foden after substituting the Manchester City forward during a goalless draw against Manchester United at Old Trafford, Manchester, Britain, on April 6, 2025.

● GETTY IMAGES

fifth place on 52 points, a point behind Chelsea in fourth, with seven games left. Concerning the challenge for a Champions League place, Guardiola said, "Seven games, Crystal Palace [next], go for it. I'd prefer to have 10 more points or 12 more points but it is what it is. It's Old Trafford, it's always difficult. We fought and we were there. The players gave everything. We should attack with more fluidity.

"I'm not concerned about next season right now, I'm just concerned about recovery, Crystal Palace, Everton, Aston Villa and the FA Cup semi-finals [against Nottingham Forest].

"It would have been better to win but Old Trafford is Old Trafford and United are a transition team. We wanted to make a good buildup and process and we defended really well. They are dangerous when we lose

balls in the position like we are not good."

United remain 13th in the table, and Ruben Amorim was asked how difficult it will be to turn the club's fortunes – and style of play – around. "I can say we want to be competitive in the short space of time but to be really dominant against that type of opponent is going to take a lot of time," United's head coach said.



● FIBA



Kheirabad Chahartaqi
● wikipedia.org

Breathtaking beauty and historical marvels of Gachsaran

Iranica Desk

These days, the presence of fields filled with colorful tulips, abundant springs, the shores of the Kosar Dam, rivers, and the roaring waterfalls of Gachsaran in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province have transformed the area into a paradise for nature enthusiasts. However, the stunning landscapes and beautiful nature are not the only attractions for tourists; the historical monuments and the shrine of Hazrat Bibi Hakimeh (PBUH), have made Gachsaran the queen of Nowruz tourism in this province.



Sassanid Bridge
● IRNA

Kheirabad Chahartaqi

One of the significant historical and tourist attractions is the Kheirabad Chahartaqi, an architectural unit consisting of four-barrel vaults and a dome. The use of *chahartaqi* in non-religious architecture is often ceremonial, observed in the establishment of certain structures. This type of ceremonial setup can be seen in the temporary construction of *chahartaqi* as part of decorations during celebrations.

Sassanid Bridge

The Sassanid Bridge in Kheirabad is another noteworthy tourist attraction in Gachsaran. This historical bridge, located just 130 meters from the Kheirabad Chahartaqi, dates back to the Sassanid era and was added to Iran's National Heritage List on November 4, 2007.

Marin village

Marin village is regarded as one of the scenic locations in Gachsaran. This beautiful village, with its pristine nature and historical attractions dating back to pre-Islamic times, is a popular tourist destination in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province. To reach Marin Village, if you travel along the old Dehdasht-Gachsaran road, you will arrive at the Kuh-e-Dil Protected Area after about an hour. Just before reaching Dil village, there is a mountain road on the left that winds through hills and oak forests, leading you to Khamin Mountain, where Marin Village, surrounded by numerous orchards in the heart of the valley, is located. Marin village is situated 36 kilometers north of Gachsaran and 198 kilometers southeast of the provincial capital city of Yasouj.

Kheirabad River

The Kheirabad River is considered one of the attractions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, flowing along the foothills of the mountains in Gachsaran. This river originates 25 kilometers northeast of Dogonbadan and flows northwest. At 28 kilometers northeast of Dogonbadan, it merges with a large tributary flowing from the northwest and becomes known as the Shah Bahram River. Just one kilometer south of the Gerdab village, it combines with the Taghar River and, flowing southwest, is referred to as the Kheirabad River.

Kosar Dam

Kosar Dam is another picturesque location in Gachsaran, located 60 kilometers northwest of Dogonbadan. This beautiful multi-pur-

pose dam in the four-season province of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province provides drinking and industrial water for the cities and ports along the Persian Gulf. The stunning lake created by the dam has the potential to become one of the most stunning tourist destinations in the southern part of the country, attracting many visitors every year, especially during the Norouz holiday.

Ganj Banar Waterfall

The Ganj Banar Waterfall is another remarkable tourist attraction in Gachsaran. Located seven kilometers north of Gachsaran on the slopes of Khaeiz Mountain, this waterfall has a height of 30 meters, with its waters supplied by several springs. Despite the typically warm weather of Gachsaran, the air in this area is incredibly cool and pleasant, making it a popular destination for tourists each year.

Suleiman Castle

Suleiman Castle (Deje Soleiman) is another highlight located about 15 kilometers southwest of Gachsaran. This castle, likely one of the forts from the Ismaili movement, is situated next to the village of Suleiman and approximately 15 kilometers southwest of Gachsaran.

Lishtar Dome

The Lishtar Dome is a prominent sight in Gachsaran and an architectural relic from the Seljuk era, listed among Iran's national heritage sites. A dome is a type of structure that resembles a hollow hemisphere. The history of dome construction in Iran dates back to prehistoric times, with these domes utilized in ancient Middle Eastern buildings and tombs. This beautiful dome is a highlight of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province and is located 30 kilometers west of Gachsaran, along the ancient route connecting Dogonbadan to Behbahan, in the Lishtar plain.

Tomb of Bibi Hakimeh (PBUH)

The tomb of Bibi Hakimeh (PBUH) is a significant religious, historical, and tourist site located 81 kilometers south of Gachsaran on the eastern side of Bibi Hakimeh village, attracting many pilgrims. Bibi Hakimeh is the sister of Imam Reza (PBUH), the eighth Imam of Shia Muslims. Near the tomb, there is a small door known as Bab al-Morad, which, according to various accounts, leads to a cave where Bibi Hakimeh took refuge with her maid to hide from their enemies.



Marin village
● IRNA



Kheirabad River
● IRNA



Kosar Dam
● IRNA



Ganj Banar Waterfall
● safarhazi.com



Suleiman Castle
● yjc.ir



Tomb of Bibi Hakimeh (PBUH)
● IRNA

Sarakhs Caravanserai; elegant rest stop of ancient travelers

Sarakhs Caravanserai (Robat-e Sharaf), renowned as the Museum of Brickwork in Iran, is situated in the city of Sarakhs, Khorasan Razavi Province. This stunning structure is a relic of the illustrious Seljuq era (1037-1153). Caravanserais were essential places for travelers to rest during lengthy journeys. They established these buildings along major routes, including the Silk Road, at regular intervals. Within these caravanserais, travelers found rooms, barns, and facilities to store water and prepare hot food, allowing them to rest and recuperate before continuing their journeys. Robat-e Sharaf, specifically, was constructed on the orders of the ruler

of Marv in the early 12th century. The design of Sarakhs Caravanserai features a rectangular layout divided into two primary sections. Each section showcases a four-ivan (four-porch) courtyard. The first courtyard has a rectangular shape surrounded by guard rooms, while the inner courtyard is square and contains a pool. It is theorized that the outer courtyard was intended for the general public, whereas the inner courtyard served as the residence for government officials. One of the key reasons for the fame of Sarakhs Caravanserai lies in its breathtaking and intricate architectural decorations.

The building is adorned with elaborate brickwork and various stucco details throughout its sections, including the mihrab, beneath the dome, and at the entrance. The entire structure is covered with brick inscriptions, and it originally featured six towers and two mosques. Despite having undergone damage and renovations numerous times from the Seljuk period to the present, the Sarakhs Caravanserai remains a remarkable testament to the art and craftsmanship of brickwork characteristic of the Seljuq era in northeastern Iran. Additionally, this site offers a valuable collection of original inscriptions from that period.

Be certain to include a visit to this unique complex in your itinerary after exploring the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), the eighth Imam of Shia Muslims in Mashhad, the spiritual heart of Iran. The caravanserai is located approximately 45km from Sarakhs, conveniently situated along the road from Mashhad to Sarakhs. After arriving in the city of Mazdavand, continue your journey for about 25 kilometers to reach the village of Shurloq. From this village, a six-kilometer drive along the asphalt road will lead you directly to the magnificent Sarakhs Caravanserai. The ideal time to visit this remarkable attraction is during the spring.



● visitiran.ir

Restoration work at Persepolis resumes after Nowruz holidays



Arts & Culture Desk

Restoration activities at Persepolis have resumed following the Nowruz holidays, with key projects focused on the southern inscription of Darius' wall, the northern Apadana Palace, and the tomb of Artaxerxes III. According to Shahram Rahbar, head of the conservation and restoration team at Persepolis World Heritage Site, the workshops had been semi-active from March 15 to April 4 due to the influx of visitors during the holiday season. However, restoration efforts are now back on track, IRNA reported. Rahbar said, "During the Nowruz holidays, experts focused on preparing for the influx of visitors, while several restoration workshops were temporarily paused. From April 5, work has resumed

on the southern inscription of Darius, the B2 column base in the northern Apadana Palace, and the tomb of Artaxerxes III." The southern inscription of the Darius wall, in particular, has presented significant challenges. "The preservation and restoration of this inscription have been complex, with several proposals reviewed by the technical council," Rahbar explained. He noted that the complexity arose from various factors, including the condition of the southern wall and the inscription itself, making this restoration project unique. Differences in opinion among the conservation, archaeology, and engineering teams led to the formation of a joint task force to coordinate efforts. Rahbar assured that collaboration among the teams is now fruitful,

with emergency preservation work currently underway on the upper section of the southern inscription. The restoration is expected to be completed by the end of spring. The southern inscription of Darius at Persepolis, carved in three languages—Old Persian, Babylonian, and Elamite—on a single stone column, remains one of the most significant historical artifacts from the Achaemenid period. "This inscription, along with the Bisotun inscription in Kermanshah, is undoubtedly one of the most important relics of Darius the Great," Rahbar concluded. The inscription not only celebrates Darius' divine power but also includes a unique prayer that calls for protection from enemies, drought, and falsehoods, highlighting its exceptional historical value.

Iranian film wins two awards at California festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian film 'My Little Moon,' by Ali Atshani, earned two major awards at the 22nd Riverside International Film Festival in California. The feature was named Best Film at the festival's closing ceremony, held April 6 at the historic Fox Theater in Riverside, ILNA wrote. Actress Natalia Polo also took home the Best Actress award for her performance in the film. The Riverside festival, held annually in April, is considered a

notable event in the US independent film circuit. Produced by American Brightlight Film Productions in 2025, 'My Little Moon' tells the story of two teenage girls — one from the US and the other from Iran — who form a deep friendship online. The film explores themes of connection beyond borders and cultures. The drama has already received recognition at several festivals, including Kansas City and Santa Fe. The cast includes Natalia Polo, Nicole Amato, Brent Kubelik,



Matthew Fehrmann, and Elnaz Bagheri.

Sassanid-era pottery jar discovered in Fars Province

A Sassanid-era pottery jar was uncovered during road construction in Marvdasht, Fars province, according to Mohammad Sabet-Eghlidi, the head of the provincial tourism department. The jar, believed to be from the Sassanid period, was found while excavating the road connecting Marvdasht to Arsanjan. Sabet-Eghlidi confirmed the find and emphasized its historical significance, IRNA reported. The jar, used for grain storage during the Sassanid era, was found empty, with no valuable coins or metals inside. For further analysis, the artifact has been transferred to the Persepolis World Heritage site.



Red Cross lauds Iran's humanitarian efforts, regional role



Social Desk

Iran plays a key role in humanitarian efforts across the Middle East, according to the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Tehran, Vincent Cassard. Speaking in an exclusive interview with IRNA, Cassard highlighted Iran's strong cultural and humanitarian presence in a region marked by conflict. Cassard, with over 20 years of experience in the ICRC, emphasized that the Iranian people demonstrate a deep commitment to supporting one another. This is evident in their active participation in humanitarian and health programs, particularly during Nowruz, the Persian New Year. He commended the Iranian Red Crescent Society for its significant contributions in disaster response, such as after earthquakes, and its role in assisting vulnerable groups, including Afghan refugees. The ICRC has been present in Iran since the final

years of the Iran-Iraq War, overseeing prisoner exchanges between the two countries. Today, its focus remains on promoting international humanitarian law, while Iran's longstanding support for these principles remains vital. Cassard also noted ongoing cooperation with Iranian authorities to further strengthen respect for humanitarian law. Reflecting on the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, Cassard praised the Iranian government's endorsement of these international norms. Despite this, he warned of an alarming global trend: escalating conflicts and diminishing respect for international humanitarian law. He pointed to ongoing violence in Gaza, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo as examples of this worrying shift. Cassard stressed the ICRC's ongoing efforts to advocate for the protection of civilians in conflict zones. He noted that political dynamics often complicate the enforcement of humanitarian laws, making it crucial to push for greater respect for these norms, particularly in politically charged military environments. Looking ahead, Cassard reiterated the ICRC's commitment to collaborating with the Iranian Red Crescent, focusing on vulnerable populations and supporting displaced families. The ICRC will continue to engage with Iranian officials to promote better adherence to humanitarian laws, particularly in light of the growing humanitarian crises worldwide.

Employers face hefty fines for hiring unauthorized foreign workers



Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare announced new penalties for employers hiring foreign workers without valid work permits. As of March 21, employers will face daily fines of approximately \$16.3 per illegal hire, ISNA reported. The updated fines were communicated through an official memo sent to provincial labor offices. According to the min-

istry's directive, employers caught using unauthorized foreign labor will incur a penalty of \$16.3 for each day of illegal employment. This new penalty reflects a fivefold increase in relation to the daily minimum wage. Employers who repeat the offense will face double the fine. The law, outlined in Article 120 of Iran's Labor Code, stipulates that foreign nationals may only work in the country if they hold the necessary visa and work permit. Employers

who fail to comply risk severe consequences, including hefty fines and potential imprisonment. Officials have expressed concerns about the broader security, cultural, and economic implications of employing unauthorized foreign workers. The Ministry of Labor continues to prioritize the regulation of legal foreign workers and is focused on ensuring they are properly documented and traceable. Authorities have also emphasized that local businesses must adhere to regulations and avoid hiring unauthorized workers. Tehran's governor has warned that any establishment found employing illegal foreign workers will face penalties, including possible closure. While foreign labor is permitted in industries with labor shortages, such as construction and agriculture, some businesses continue to flout the law, ignoring the potential legal consequences.