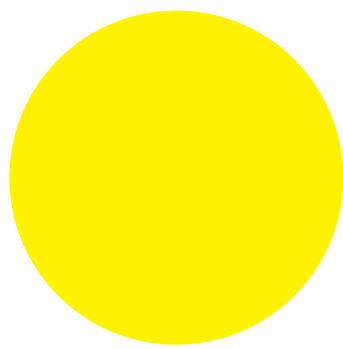


Oscar buzz builds around 'Dolphin Boy 2' as sequel outshines original

8 >



Iran Daily

Vol.7802 • Wednesday, April 9, 2025 • Farvardin 20, 1404 • Shawwal 10, 1446 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages

irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Iran confirms 'indirect' talks with US in Oman

Araghchi: Deal can be reached if US shows goodwill

2 >



Abbas Araghchi
IRNA

Prospects of Iran negotiating with Trump administration



By Ali Nazifpour
US domestic politics expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States are set to start on Saturday April 12. These talks represent embracing rationality and pragmatism on both sides. Iran and the US both have chosen to attempt to overcome the difficulties presented by the history of animosities and differences, and to look toward the future rather than the past. It's welcome news that these talks are going to be led by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US special envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff, two moderate pragmatists who will focus on getting results. For Iran, these talks will contain two major challenges, and it's important to maneuver around them as talks progress. I will list those challenges and how they can be overcome.

Trump's media bluster

US President Donald Trump is a politician who cares most about declaring victory, regardless of the substance of agreements. He also has a habit of talking without prior advice from experts and to improvise when he feels like it. Even when he has failed to gain any real concession, he will claim to have had upper hand. One example was when he agreed to delay tariffs on Canada and Mexico in February by claiming that the two nations had agreed to strengthen border security - despite both having done so before Trump came to power. Trump will blaviate and claim he wants Iran to completely dismantle its peaceful nuclear program or that the talks are direct (despite Iran's insistence that they're indirect). While it's understandable that Iran is sensitive to the symbolic layer of diplomacy and cares deeply about national pride, it's best to ignore Trump's public declarations and focus on the substance of the promises made by Witkoff behind closed doors. It's best for Iran to claim victory separately and not be very sensitive about Trump's possible outbursts.

Malicious actors

One major challenge of indirect and even direct talks with the US is the presence of malicious actors who want to sabotage all diplomatic efforts. Such actors exist in both the Trump administration (e.g. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, National Security Adviser Michael Waltz, or, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth), and among international leaders (chief among them, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu). While Trump is open to diplomacy at the moment, it's not inconceivable that he might be manipulated by these actors to contemplate a limited military strike against Iran (Trump was open to negotiations in his first term as well but actors like Mike Pompeo, then secretary of state, played him and misled him into making a disastrous choice and ordering the assassination of General Ghassem Soleimani). These people want nothing less than the downfall of the Islamic Republic and they will use all opportunities. In order to cancel the threat of these actors, it's much better that Iran uses the first available opportunity to upgrade the talks to direct ones and to establish a quick and permanent backchannel to Trump himself in order to bypass his administration officials. The ability to quickly get in contact with Trump is crucial and vital to prevent disastrous miscommunications.

By overcoming these challenges, both sides can reach a win-win result. Iran can look forward to reentering global trade and improving its economy, and the US will have guarantees about Iran's nuclear program and both sides will avoid an unnecessary and calamitous military confrontation.

Fifth-generation warfare in Urmia
Behind foiled plot to foment ethnic strife, weaken Iran

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The recent events in Urmia, an Iranian border city, was as a wake-up call, exposing a sinister plot to tear the nation apart. They highlight attempts to stir up ethnic and religious divisions, aiming to Balkanize Iran. The incidents reflect a broader strategy by Iran's adversaries to create chaos and undermine national unity. The hybrid strategy targets social fault lines amid mounting economic pressure and foreign threats. Iran must rally together its diverse ethnic groups, using shared history and culture to combat divisive tactics. Promoting solidarity and vigilance is essential to safeguard the nation's integrity and counter the psychological warfare.

See pages 4-5 >



Israeli attacks on Gaza 'brutal revenge against innocent civilians': Hamas

2 >



Iranian Wrestling Federation unveils selection path for UWW Worlds

6 >



Experiencing splendor of Darsajin village in Zanjan

7 >



Eastern Iran's largest steel beam plant opens in Khorasan Razavi

VP calls production of rare, specialized steel as government's priority

3 >

Iran confirms 'indirect' talks with US in Oman

Araghchi: Deal can be reached if US shows goodwill

International Desk

Iran's foreign minister said on Tuesday that Tehran and Washington would hold "indirect" nuclear talks in Oman on Saturday, confirming an earlier announcement by the US President Donald Trump.

Abbas Araghchi, who was on a state visit to Algeria, said he believes a new nuclear deal could be agreed with the US provided it shows sufficient goodwill.

Araghchi said Iran's principal aim remained the lifting of sweeping US sanctions reimposed on Iran after its unilateral pullout of the 2015 nuclear agreement in 2018.

Trump made the surprise announcement that his administration would open talks with Iran during a White House meeting on Monday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Trump said the talks would be "direct" but Araghchi insisted his negotiations with US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff on Saturday would be "indirect."

'Format of talks not important'
"We will not accept any other form of

negotiation," Araghchi told official media. "The format of the negotiations... is not the most important thing in my view. What really counts is the effectiveness or otherwise of the talks. If the other side shows enough of the necessary willingness, a deal can be found... The ball is in America's court."

Iran's government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said on Tuesday that Iran seeks to preserve its national interests in the negotiations. She stressed that the details of the negotiations are not yet clear, but wise negotiations are on the agenda.

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday that Iran is seeking negotiations to resolve the nuclear dispute but "not with ignominy."

Pezeshkian said that the other side should also prove that is seeking negotiation.

'Great danger'

Speaking Monday in the Oval Office, Trump said he was hopeful of reaching a deal with Tehran, but warned that the Islamic republic would be in "great danger" if the talks failed.

"We're dealing with the Iranians, we

have a very big meeting on Saturday and we're dealing with them directly," Trump told reporters.

Trump's announcement came after Iran dismissed direct negotiations on a new deal to curb the country's nuclear activities, calling the idea pointless.

"I think if the talks aren't successful with Iran, I think Iran's going to be in great danger, and I hate to say it, great danger, because they can't have a nuclear weapon," Trump said.

In an interview with US network NBC late last month, Trump went further. "If they don't make a deal, there will be bombing," he said.

Russia, China welcome talks

Russia welcomed the prospect of negotiations for a new nuclear accord to replace the deal with major powers that was unilaterally abandoned by Trump in 2018.

"We know that certain contacts - direct and indirect - are planned in Oman. And, of course, this can only be welcomed because it can lead to de-escalation of tensions around Iran," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, adding that Moscow "absolutely" supported

Abbas Araghchi
IRNA

the initiative. China called on the United States to "stop its wrong practice of using force to exert extreme pressure" after Trump threatened Iran with bombing if it fails to agree a deal.

"As the country that unilaterally withdrew from the comprehensive agreement on the Iran nuclear issue and

caused the current situation, the United States should demonstrate political sincerity (and)... mutual respect," its Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said. Washington should "participate in dialogue and consultation, and at the same time stop its wrong practice of using force to exert extreme pressure," Lin added.

President orders probe into deadly mine incident in Semnan

ROKNA

National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian instructed the industry minister to immediately follow up a deadly mine incident in the central province of Semnan.

Pezeshkian expressed sympathy with the families of the victims of the incident in which seven miners, including three Afghan nationals, lost their lives after they were suffocated by gas in a coal mine located in the village of Mehmandovieh in the city of Damghan.

The president also emphasized the need to dispatch expert teams to investigate the causes behind the accident which occurred Monday afternoon.

Safety measures may have been disregarded, a report said.

Reports indicate that the mine was not officially operational at the time, and that the matter is under investigation. Last week, an iron ore mine collapsed, killing one worker in the country's northwest. Meanwhile, an explosion in a coal mine in eastern Iran killed dozens of workers in September.

Israeli attacks on Gaza 'brutal revenge against innocent civilians': Hamas

International Desk

The Palestinian resistance group Hamas said the increasing intensity of Israeli attacks on Gaza "is not just military pressure, but rather brutal revenge against innocent civilians." It called on the international community to do its part to stop the Israeli violence.

"Increasing the pace of aggression will not break the will of our people, but rather raise the level of defiance, stubbornness, and determination to confront the aggression," Hamas said in a statement published on Telegram. "Netanyahu's policy of revenge against children, women, and the elderly is not a plan to achieve a supposed victory, but rather a recipe for inevitable failure."

The group also warned that the military escalation would not return Israeli captives alive. "It threatens their lives and kills them. Their return is only possible through negotiation," it added. According to Gaza's Health Ministry on Tuesday, at least 58 Palestinians were killed and 213 injured in Israeli attacks



AFP

across the Gaza Strip in just 24 hours. Israel resumed major strikes on the Gaza Strip on March 18, ending a two-month cease-fire with Hamas.

According to the Gaza's civil defense agency, five children and four adults were killed in a strike that hit a home in the central city of Deir el-Balah, while two separate pre-dawn attacks on Gaza City and Beit Lahia in the north left a total of 10 people dead.

Separately, a media outlet affiliated with the Islamic Jihad movement announced the death on Monday of an

employee named Ahmed Mansur in an Israeli strike on a tent used by journalists in the Khan Yunis area.

The Government Media Office in Gaza had on Monday reported the death of journalist Hilmi al-Faqaawi, who worked for a local news agency, in the same strike, which also wounded another nine.

According to the Gaza health ministry, at least 1,391 Palestinians have been killed in the renewed Israeli operations, taking the overall death toll since the start of the war to 50,752.

Russian parliament okays partnership treaty with Iran

International Desk

Russia's lower house of parliament voted Tuesday to ratify a 20-year strategic partnership to consolidate Moscow-Tehran ties in a wide range of areas.

Containing no military commitments from either side, the agreement covers multiple areas, including economy, transportation, energy, healthcare and agriculture as well as cooperation in the field of common challenges such as organized crimes, and terrorism and dealing with climate change.

"The signing of the treaty does not mean the establishment of a military alliance with Iran or mutual military assistance," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko said in an address to the State Duma.

Instead, the treaty states that if either

side is subjected to aggression, the other will not provide "assistance to the aggressor."

"Russia and Iran will not provide military or any other assistance to an aggressor in case either of them comes under attack, and will rely on the UN Charter and other norms of international law to resolve conflicts," Rudenko said. "The treaty, which consists of 47 articles, highlights the parties' intention to interact in the field of foreign policy, to protect state sovereignty and territorial integrity, ensure security and stability; it also determines the principles of developing relations in the trade, economic, scientific, investment and technical fields, as well as in the fields of education, healthcare, sports, culture, tourism and others."

The comprehensive strategic partner-

ship deal was signed by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Masoud Pezeshkian in January, with votes in Moscow's parliament necessary before it can come into force.

Putin at the time called it a "breakthrough document," while Pezeshkian said it would "open a new chapter in relations between Iran and Russia in all fields."

In 2001, Tehran and Moscow signed a long-term cooperation deal, officially known as the Treaty of the Foundation of Mutual Relations and the Principles of Cooperation. It was initially set for 10 years but was extended twice up until 2026.

Iran and Russia, as two close and strategic allies, have over the past years deepened relations in various fields, despite heavy Western sanctions.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

Eastern Iran's largest steel beam plant opens in Khorasan Razavi

VP calls production of rare, specialized steel as government's priority

Economy Desk

The largest steel beam production line in eastern Iran was inaugurated in Khorasan Razavi Province on Tuesday.

Khayyam Sepehr Foulad Neyshabur was inaugurated by Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref presiding over the ceremony. He was accompanied by the minister of industry, mining and trade as well as the governor-general of Khorasan Razavi, members of Parliament and senior provincial officials during the visit.

Located in Khorasan Razavi Province, the facility spans 96 square kilometers and boasts an annual production capacity of 500,000 tons, making it the largest steel beam and medium-section manufacturing plant in the region.

Speaking at the inauguration, Aref described steel's role in industrial development as unparalleled and said it forms the cornerstone of the nation's industry.

"We must prioritize the production of rare and specialized steels to achieve self-sufficiency. However, this hinges on a rigorous focus on the mining sector," he said.

"The production of rare and specialized steels with high added value for application across diverse industrial sectors constitutes the strategic focus of the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and

Trade," he added.

Following a tour of the facility, Aref addressed the challenges faced by the industry, "Last year's energy imbalance, particularly its severe impact on steel production, was deeply troubling. We hope the efforts underway this year will resolve or at least mitigate this issue."

"While expanding domestic production is imperative, our market cannot remain confined to Iran alone. We must also target the 300-million-person market within our civilizational sphere," he said.

Reiterating the critical link between mining and economic growth, Aref noted, "Though Iran is often recognized for its oil reserves, the current value of our mineral resources surpasses that of oil — provided we prioritize production."

Highlighting Iran's global standing, he added, "With 48 million tons of annual steel production, Iran ranks tenth worldwide. Despite harsh sanctions and constraints, our progress remains unbroken, even if temporarily slowed."

Mining as a strategic priority

The vice president underscored the need for revitalizing mining projects, saying, "We must undertake major strides in mineral exploration, prioritize 'mother mines,' and revive long-stalled projects."



Addressing the ceremony, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade, Mohammad Atabak, highlighted the steel sector's challenges, stating, "Last year's energy imbalance reduced

Iran's steel production efficiency to 61%, down from previous years when it outperformed the global average of 77%. This decline hinders the viability of capital-intensive industries like

steel."

Atabak also outlined Khorasan Razavi's export potential, stressing, "The province is positioned to exceed \$2 billion in exports, leveraging its adjacency to Turk-

menistan and Afghanistan. By improving production efficiency and building on its effective management of last year's energy crisis, the region can achieve significant export growth."

Tehran, Baku eye deeper ties ahead of Pezeshkian's visit



Iran's Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh (4th L) meets Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev (3rd R) in Baku on April 8, 2025.
IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh met Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Tuesday in Baku as part of efforts to deepen bilateral ties ahead of a planned visit by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Aliyev welcomed the growing frequency of high-level visits between the two countries, describing them as "a good opportunity to strengthen friendship" and expand cooperation in sectors such as trade, energy and transport, Anadolu Agency reported.

During the meeting, Iranian minister emphasized the necessity of expanding economic cooperation, highlighting the importance of advancing joint transportation and energy projects, Mehr reported.

During the three-day visit, Sadegh will participate in the

intergovernmental commission on economic, trade, and humanitarian cooperation between Azerbaijan and Iran, held in Baku from April 8-10. Discussions will focus on the status and prospects of bilateral collaboration in transportation, transit, oil and gas, energy, trade, and strategies to address challenges.

"The holding of this commission meeting before President Pezeshkian's visit is extremely important for discussing major issues," she said at the meeting. On Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Ismail Baghaei said, "The president's visit to Baku is on the agenda, and we are coordinating the timing."

A field visit to joint border projects by the minister of roads and urban development and the accompanying delegation is among the other activities planned for Sadegh's trip

to Baku. Additionally, the Persian and Azerbaijani versions of the Joint Economic Commission document — signed during the commission's latest meeting in February 2023 — will be unveiled and formally endorsed.

New proposals to draft a memorandum of understanding on transportation cooperation and border affairs will also be introduced during the visit.

The Joint Economic Commission of Iran and Azerbaijan reconvened in Tehran in February 2024 after a three-year pause. At the meeting, Iran's minister of roads and urban development noted a 20% growth in bilateral trade in 2024, reaching a record \$580 million. The minister stressed the urgent need to leverage untapped collaborative potential, aiming to increase trade volume to \$10 billion within five years.

NIDC invests over \$1b to purchase drilling rigs

Economy Desk

The CEO of the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) announced an \$800 million investment from National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) funds to purchase 15 land drilling rigs this year.

Mehran Makvandi added that \$200-300 million from the company's internal foreign currency reserves will be allocated to procure ancillary equipment, such as cementing pumps and nitrogen units, IRNA reported.

On Tuesday, Makvandi outlined NIDC's priorities for the Persian year 1404 (began on March 20, 2025), emphasizing enhanced drilling efficiency and modernization of the drilling fleet. "Existing capital must be utilized for high returns. Last year, the company's Non-Productive Time (NPT) stood at 20%, but through improved management and operational focus, this was reduced to 8%. We aim to further lower NPT to 3% this year."

Investment in equipment development

Regarding comprehensive plans to upgrade



and overhaul the drilling fleet, Makvandi added, "The modernization of light, medium, heavy, and ultra-heavy rigs will continue to the end of the next Iranian year (March 20, 2026). Outdated rigs will be phased out and replaced with new units boasting 1,000 to 3,000 horsepower."

Makvandi highlighted plans to drill 130-150 wells this year, noting, "This target will be achieved through collaboration with clients and focused investments. Human resources and equipment are recognized as key drivers for improving drilling efficiency."

Iran nuclear chief says new achievements to be unveiled Wednesday



The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) announced that new achievements will be unveiled on Wednesday in such fields as the nuclear fuel cycle, healthcare and treatment as well as

industry.

Mohammad Eslami wrote on his X account that the organization will showcase its latest technological advancements during a ceremony, Mehr reported.

According to the AEOI chief, the achievements of the country's nuclear industry will be unveiled in the presence of President Masoud Pezeshkian "on the occasion of the National Nuclear Technology Day on

April 9."

"These strategic and technological achievements include fields of the nuclear fuel cycle, health, healthcare and treatment, as well as industry, which play an important role in the health of society and people's lives," Eslami wrote. The National Nuclear Technology Day is a symbol of the self-confidence and determination of proud Iranian scientists, he added.

Fifth-generation warfare in Urmia

Behind foiled plot to foment ethnic strife, weaken Iran



People of mostly Azeri descent mourn the martyrdom of Imam Ali (PBUH) during a religious gathering in the northwestern city of Urmia, Iran, on March 22, 2025. Anti-Kurdish slogans chanted at the event incited ethnic tensions.

MEHR



By Navid Kamali
Foreign affairs expert

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

The unfortunate events of March 22, 2025, in Urmia, northwestern Iran, were not merely a localized and transient incident, but rather a warning sign and an echo of a geopolitical threat to our nation's security. These bitter events, which occurred after Nowruz celebrations in a targeted, ethnic, and provocative manner in this border city, unveiled the long-standing strategy of Iran's enemies.

The strategy was to engineer chaos and instability by activating ethnic and religious fault lines. It clearly showed that the ill-wishers of the Iranian nation continue to beat the drums of division and fragmentation, exploiting every opportunity and loophole, even misusing national and religious occasions and distorting the cultural rights of ethnic groups, to ignite the flames of ethnic and religious conflicts, ul-

timately aiming for the Balkanization of Iran.

What clearly reveals an asymmetric hybrid strategy at play is that that particular Nowruz celebration was carried out in a biased manner with an emphasis on a specific ethnic identity, was followed by the abuse of the mourning ceremonies for the martyrdom of Imam Ali (PBUH) by certain known individuals, and was peppered with the chanting of divisive and ethnic-nationalist slogans. This was all amidst escalating economic challenges and broad external pressures at a time when the hybrid warfare of enemies against our country had reached its peak. The ultimate goal of this strategy was nothing less than to dismantle the foundations of national unity, create controlled chaos, incite a proxy civil war, and ultimately, fragment and weaken a powerful and independent Iran. These events can be analyzed within the framework of the fifth-generation warfare theory, where the primary focus is on creating instability and internal collapse by provoking social, ethnic,

religious, and economic fault lines. As is evident, these unfortunate events coincided significantly with the intensification of oppressive economic pressures, as well as threatening and interventionist correspondence from the President of the United States Donald Trump regarding Iran's nuclear program. This concurrence adds more complex and worrying dimensions to the situation and underscores the need for heightened strategic vigilance in the country. It appears that Iran's sworn enemies, realizing their inability to confront Iran militarily and witnessing the Iranian nation's resistance to oppressive sanctions, have concluded that they must destabilize and create insecurity within the country. They are relying on their fifth column among certain ethnic and religious groups to pave the way for internal collapse and, ultimately, Iran's submission to their illegitimate and excessive demands. In this context, one should not overlook the fact that the controversial and tension-inducing issue of the Zangezur Corridor remains

unresolved. The governments of Turkey and Azerbaijan, with an evident desire for this strategic corridor and with the support of extra-regional actors, are waiting for an opportunity to establish a direct communication corridor between themselves. This would effectively create a geopolitical chokehold in our northwest, depriving Iran of direct access to the borders of Armenia and, consequently, Europe. This plan not only seriously endangers our national security, but also could lead to extensive geopolitical changes in the South Caucasus region, altering the balance of power to our detriment.

Furthermore, the audacious and interventionist statements of the director of Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), regarding the launch of a Persian-language network with the explicit purpose of hurting Iran, are clear evidence that the enemies are determined to strike at Iran's territorial integrity, independence, and national sovereignty. In this sinister path, they will not hesitate to use any means, not even provoking ethnic

“

What clearly reveals an asymmetric hybrid strategy at play is that that particular Nowruz celebration was carried out in a biased manner with an emphasis on a specific ethnic identity, was followed by the abuse of the mourning ceremonies for the martyrdom of Imam Ali (PBUH) by certain known individuals, and was peppered with the chanting of divisive and ethnic-nationalist slogans. This was all amidst escalating economic challenges and broad external pressures at a time when the hybrid warfare of enemies against our country had reached its peak.

and religious fault lines and waging cognitive warfare against the Iranian people. In addition, the statements of this ostensibly cultural but, in reality, intelligence-tied director of TRT clearly show that the enemies are seeking to create a full-scale psychological war against Iran's public opinion.

It is crucial to recognize that Iran is an ancient country with a rich and eventful history and a vibrant civilization. It has always been known as a land of diverse ethnicities and cultures. This ethno-cultural diversity has never been a point of weakness for Iran. Rather, as wisely stated by the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution, and in accordance with Joseph Nye's theory of soft power, it serves as a source of soft power and a golden, unparalleled opportunity for synergy, prosperity, social capital generation, and the further strengthening of the foundations of national unity and social cohesion.

Throughout the tumultuous history of this land, Iranian ethnicities — Kurds, Azeris, Lurs, Baluchs, Persians, Arabs, Turkmens, and others — have always stood shoulder to shoulder, in joys and sorrows, in hardships and ease, united against foreign threats and aggressions. The eight-year Sacred Defense (Iran-Iraq War) is a shining and undeniable example of this unity, solidarity, and self-sacrifice. During that crucial period, brave and valiant warriors of Islam, from all ethnicities and religions, from all corners of dear Iran, with unwavering faith and iron will, stood together against a fully armed army supported by the arrogant powers of East and West. The formation of combat divisions and brigades based on geographical regions and the presence of fighters from different ethnicities in these units were a clear and inspiring symbol of this unity, integration, and brotherhood. This organic solidarity, unlike the mechanical solidarity proposed by Durkheim, not only doesn't prevent the manifestation of cultural diversity and differences but recognizes it as a source of strength and cultural richness.



People of mostly Kurdish descent gather in Urmia, Iran, on March 21, 2025, to celebrate the Persian New Year (Nowruz). Pan-Kurdish slogans chanted at the event incited ethnic tensions.

X

The American Enterprise Institute, one of the influential and hawkish think tanks in the United States, and based on Seymour Martin Lipset's theory of social cleavages, held a conference in 2005 entitled "The Unknown Iran: Another Case for Federalism?" In it, speakers, emphasizing the ethnic and cultural diversity in Iran and offering biased and tendentious analyses, claimed that Iran, compared to countries like Iraq or Afghanistan, is more susceptible to fragmentation and federalism. They argued that the US should support ethnic and religious minorities in Iran to create political changes and, ultimately, fragment the country. These audacious and interventionist approaches clearly show what sinister plans the enemies have for Iran and Iranians and how they are trying to exploit our country's ethnic and cultural diversity,

which is a point of strength and a unique opportunity, turning it into a weakness and a threat, and thereby achieving their vile goals. This conference and the discussions held within it can be analyzed within the framework of Francis Fukuyama's End of History and Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations — theories that seek to impose the superiority of Western liberal democracy and create confrontation and conflict between different civilizations and cultures! While the great and proud Iranian nation's response to these threats and conspiracies has always been, and will continue to be, unity, solidarity, national cohesion, and standing firm against the enemies, the country's officials and rulers, to counter the new phase of threats from the enemies and neutralize their conspiracies, must adopt comprehensive and multifaceted

strategies that encompass all dimensions and aspects of this complex threat. These strategies must be implemented in a coordinated and coherent manner in various political, economic, social, cultural, and security areas to effectively eliminate the grounds for instability and insecurity and to strengthen unity, solidarity, and national cohesion. First and foremost, national unity must be strengthened by emphasizing shared cultural, historical, religious, and national commonalities, based on the principle of nation-building. Any action that leads to division, extreme ethnic nationalism, and fueling ethnic and religious differences must be strongly avoided. One of Iran's problems in this regard is the occasional deployment of weak and imprudent officials in sensitive positions, especially in multicultural regions,

which, at historical junctures, leads to crises in the country. Naturally, in addressing this issue, it is necessary to exercise greater deliberation and reflection in the selection of officials, even for the smallest responsibilities. Furthermore, through balanced and fair development of different regions of the country, especially border and deprived areas, the grounds for dissatisfaction, discrimination, and deprivation must be eliminated. The creation of economic and social cleavages, which can be exploited by enemies and fuel environmental insecurities, must be prevented. Moreover, all ethnicities and religions must be involved in the country's affairs, at various levels of decision-making and implementation, to strengthen their sense of belonging, responsibility, and participation in the country's

destiny. The creation of any sense of discrimination, injustice, and marginalization among them must be avoided, and social justice must be considered as one of the main pillars of lasting security. Furthermore, all media and cultural tools, especially state TV, social networks, and cyberspace, must be used to enlighten and raise public awareness. People must be made aware of the enemies' sinister goals and conspiracies, especially in provoking ethnic and religious fault lines. In addition, national and Iranian-Islamic identity must be strengthened, and the sense of national belonging and pride among all ethnicities and religions, especially their younger generations, must be reinforced. Patriotism must be promoted as a noble and unifying value. Beyond what has been stated so

far, by emphasizing the high values of Islam, especially the unifying and brotherhood-seeking teachings of the holy religion of Islam, the grounds for convergence, solidarity, and unity among all ethnicities and religions must be provided. The fueling of any kind of difference, division, and religious conflict that could be exploited by enemies must be strictly avoided. Finally, intelligence agencies must also, with vigilance, insight, and sharpness, monitor all the movements and conspiracies of the enemies and, by adopting preventive and deterrent measures, prevent any action that harms the national unity, security, and territorial integrity of the country. Preemptive security must be considered as a fundamental principle in countering the threats of enemies.

Who marches on fault lines of Urmia, why?



People walk on the dried parts of the Urmia lake in northwestern Iran.
● ALI HAMED HAGHDOST/IRNA

By Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh
International affairs analyst
OPINION

The authentic traditions of Iran have always been upheld by the Iranian ethnic groups. One of the characteristics of Iran is that throughout various upheavals, invasions, wars, and hostilities, it has been these diverse ethnic groups and languages in Iran that have prevented the entity known as Iran from being challenged or weakened. What has happened is that certain Nowruz traditions are being

revived by various ethnic groups in Iran, and indeed, the country is indebted to those who preserve such ancient traditions. On the other hand, we see that there have always been groups and movements that have tried to exploit Iran's ethnic and identity diversity to break up the country. I believe that the red line for all authentic Iranian ethnic groups is the entity called Iran. Although these groups uphold their own traditions and customs, whenever any movement has leaned toward separatist policies or slogans, they have quickly been pushed aside by the people themselves.

We have had such separatist movements in Iran since World War II, and it was the Kurdish and Azeri people of Iran who prevented the country's disintegration. After that, especially after the Islamic Revolution, we saw various separatist movements emerge, which again faced public backlash. Iranian ethnic groups know that it is through Iran that they can take pride in their identity in the world — this is a fact.

Dangerous dichotomy facing nation's joy

The second reality is that no one can stand in the way of people's happiness. What has taken shape in recent years is that some of the

country's joyful traditions are being revived, and this joy is rooted in Iranian culture. Any dual exploitation of this joy is condemnable. Reactionary and extremist movements that oppose people's happiness are, in practice, harming the foundation of this country and its joyful way of life. After all, a family that smiles does not fall apart. A country where people live joyfully can always maintain its dynamism. I believe any opposition to joy harms the country. On the other hand, any exploitation of joy for separatist purposes is also condemnable. In any case, people come together during special occasions to



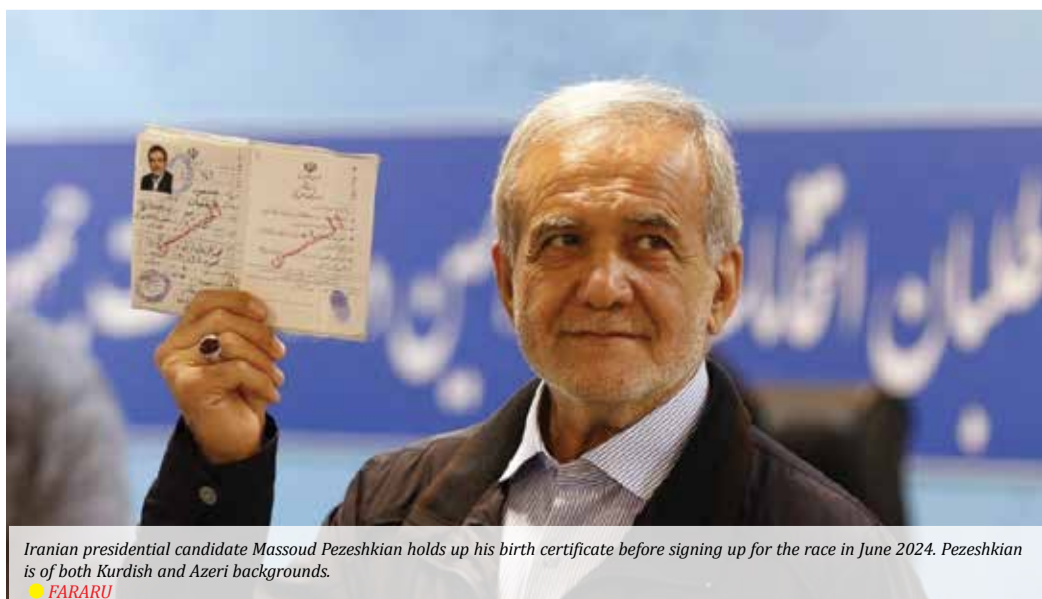
What has happened is that certain Nowruz traditions are being revived by various ethnic groups in Iran, and indeed, the country is indebted to those who preserve such ancient traditions. On the other hand, we see that there have always been groups and movements that have tried to exploit Iran's ethnic and identity diversity to break up the country. I believe that the red line for all authentic Iranian ethnic groups is the entity called Iran.

celebrate. Iran is a country with two main pillars to its culture: Iranian identity and Islamic identity. Even in official development plans, the first clause emphasizes these two dimensions, and cultural policies must accordingly preserve them. Thus, people have always tried to uphold mutual Islamic and Iranian values in this culture, using them for coexistence rather than conflict.

Officials should avoid political bias

Next year, the first day of the new year coincides with Eid al-Fitr, and naturally, this will be a double celebration. These are the realities. Unfortunately, however, some past and present officials, ignoring these facts, have acted in ways that lead to ethnic exploitation and division — something I find indefensible. I believe the current government under Mr. Pezeshkian could and should have performed better. I don't want to politicize the issue, but Mr. Pezeshkian's votes came amid unprecedented solidarity between Kurds and Azeris, and other ethnic groups like the Baluch also supported him. This reflects a non-political rainbow in the country. In such circumstances, government officials — who may themselves be of Kurdish, Azeri, Baluch, or other ethnic backgrounds — must adopt a national perspective on these matters. Instead of taking ethnic or linguistic stances, they should act as unifying figures.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



Iranian presidential candidate Massoud Pezeshkian holds up his birth certificate before signing up for the race in June 2024. Pezeshkian is of both Kurdish and Azeri backgrounds.
● FARARU



The municipality of Urmia organizes the celebration of Nowruz through the Azeri folklore rituals of Takam Gardani and Sallama Shaal in March 2024.
● IRNA

Iranian Wrestling Federation unveils selection path for UWW Worlds

Sports Desk

Seven freestyle spots remain up for grabs in the coming months as Iranian wrestlers will be looking to book a place in the national team for mid-September's World Championships in Zagreb. This week, the Iranian Wrestling Federation unveiled the new pathway for the freestyle team trials, starting with the annual Takhti Cup on May 8-9 in Isfahan.

The national governing body also confirmed that Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan, Rahman Amouzad, and Amirhossein Firouzpour have already been secured a spot at the UWW Worlds.

Mohammadnejad-Javan will be the Iranian 61kg wrestler in the Croatian capital, thanks to a gold-winning run in February's Zagreb Open and an Asian bronze in Amman, Jordan, in March.

Amouzad, an Olympic silver medalist last year, has been given a shot at a second world 65kg gold after domestic rivals Yassin Rezaei and Ali Khorramdel had below-par runs at the Ranking Series season-opener in the Croatian capital.

Meanwhile, Firouzpour's impressive run of results in recent months, which has seen him win the Asian and Zagreb Open titles, convinced the Iranian coaching staff to pick him for the



Iranian wrestler Rahman Amouzad, pictured during a training session in March, will take part at the freestyle 65kg contests in September's World Championships in Zagreb.
● LAWFF

world 92kg contests.

Should Ali Mo'meni – a gold medalist in Zagreb – win the 57kg title in Isfahan, he will secure the Iranian berth; otherwise, he will have to face the Takhti Cup champion for a place at the world event.

Former world under-20 champion Mohammadreza Shakeri

and Asian bronze medalist Sina Khalili are the frontrunners in the 70kg class, but will still have to win the Takhti Cup gold to punch the ticket for Zagreb.

Younes Emami will also have to walk away with the ultimate prize in Isfahan to seal the world spot, or a showdown between him and the Takhti Cup gold

medalist will decide the Iranian 74kg slot for the visit to Zagreb. Fresh off an Asian title, Mahdi Yousefi will be chasing the 79kg gold in Isfahan to set up a best-of-three showdown with reigning world bronze winner Mohammad Nokhodi, who will need a single victory to head to Zagreb.

Two-time world 92kg champion Kamran Qasempour will begin his bid for a place at the Los Angeles Games with participation at the 86kg Olympic class in Isfahan, where a top-podium finish will be enough to send him to the World Championships. The 97kg gold medalist at the Takhti Cup will face a tough job

to secure a world spot as he will have to succeed in a Ranking Series event in May or July to get a head-to-head with Amir-Ali Azarpira, who has been sidelined with a knee injury since winning an Olympic bronze last summer, for a place in Zagreb.

All eyes will be on the 125kg contests at the Takhti Cup, where two of the world's best superheavyweights in Amirhossein Zare' and Amirreza Ma'soumi are likely to lock horns in a highly-anticipated final.

A gold medal in Isfahan will guarantee a world spot for Zare', who is desperate to make up for his Olympic final loss with a third world gold in four years.

The path to the World Championships, however, will be tougher for Ma'soumi – a six-time world champion across different age groups since 2021, who also marched to the Asian senior gold in Amman.

The wrestling prodigy must first win the Takhti Cup gold and then square off against Zare' in a domestic head-to-head or an international tournament to clinch a spot in the Iranian squad.



● IKF

Iranian female squad confirmed for Asian karate meet

Sports Desk

Five Iranian girls secured their place at the kumite contests of the Asian Karate Championships – starting May 23 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan – after coming out on top in their respective weight classes at the national team trials in Tehran on Monday.

Former world bronze medalist Sara Bahmanyar claimed three victories in the -50kg contests to get a shot at a third Asian medal in four editions – following back-to-back third places in 2022 and 2023.

Fatemeh Sa'adati – an Asian bronze winner in 2023 – won three bouts and lost one to finish atop the -55kg event and punch her ticket for the Uzbek capital, while four successive victories secured the -61kg slot for Atou-

sa Golshadnejad – a gold medalist at the Karate 1 Premier League series in Hangzhou, China, in March.

Mobina Kaviani and Hannaneh Salehi won the -68kg and +68kg divisions, respectively, to complete the Iranian kumite lineup.

A gold medalist in January's Karate 1-Series A event in Tbilisi, Fatemeh Sadeqi continued her impressive form of late to win the individual kata contest and will be chasing a fifth Asian medal in Tashkent.

Meanwhile, the trio of Sepideh Amini, Melika Ezzati, Zeinab Hosseini won the team kata event and will be looking to improve on their Asian bronze in Hangzhou last year.

The female trials came after the men's competitions took place in Tehran on the preceding day, where Behnam De-

hqanzadeh (-55kg), Ali Meskini (-60kg), Reza Besharatikia (-67kg), Morteza Ne'mati (-75kg), and Mahmoud Ne'mati (+84kg) came out victorious across different classes.

The -84kg slot will be decided after reigning world silver medalist Mahdi Khodabakhshi recovers from an injury he suffered at the Karate 1 PL tournament in March.

Elsewhere, Ali Zand won the individual kata competition for a place in the Asian Championships, and was then joined by Abolfazl Shahrjerdi and Milad Farazmehr in a title-winning run in the team event.

The trio will be among the favorites for a podium finish in Tashkent, having teamed up for double silver and bronze medals apiece at the Asian Championships since 2017.

FIBA Asia Cup 2025:

Iran to face Japan, Syria, Guam in group phase

Sports Desk

The Iranian national basketball team was drawn against Japan, Syria, and Guam in Group B of the FIBA Asia Cup, starting August 5 in Saudi Arabia.

The draw for the flagship continental event took place in Jeddah on Tuesday, where 16 teams were split into four groups.

Iran will begin its quest for a fourth Asian title with a game against Guam on the opening day of the competition in Jeddah, before taking on Japan on Aug. 7 – in

a repeat of a group encounter between the two teams in the 2022 edition, which Iran won 88-76.

The final round of the group fixtures will see Greek head coach Sotirios Manolopoulos's men play Syria on Aug. 9.

A 5-1 record saw Iran win Group E of the qualifiers – thanks to back-to-back wins over India and Kazakhstan in the final window in February.

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

Elsewhere in the draw, two-time reigning champion Australia was placed in Group A, alongside Qatar, South Korea, and Lebanon, which was beaten by the Aussies in the 2022 final.

Saudi Arabia, 16-time champion China, Jordan, and India are in Group C, with the Chinese Taipei, New Zealand, Iraq, and the Philippines in Group D.

The four group winners in Jeddah will progress to the last eight, with second and third teams in each group playing in a qualification round for to quarterfinals.



● FIBA

Experiencing splendor of Darsajin village in Zanjan

Iranica Desk

Darsajin village, known as the Abyaneh of Zanjan, is located in Abhar, 15 kilometers from the center of the city. This picturesque village is recognized as one of the key tourism destinations in Zanjan Province, with a historical background that dates back to the pre-Islamic era.

The village boasts a mountainous climate, which makes it exceptionally cool and pleasant during the spring and summer. Each year, Darsajin attracts a large number of tourists due to its abundant natural and historical attractions. Some historians attribute the establishment of the village to Keykhosrowpour Siyavash and Darab Kiani, while others link it to Shapur Zolaketaf. Its rich culture, historical architecture, and pristine nature contribute to its designation as the Abyaneh of Zanjan, [chn.ir](#) wrote.

The village's cool weather is due not only to its mountainous location but also to the presence of springs, rivers, and underground sources of fresh water. This results in cool summers and cold autumns and winters, accompanied by mild springs.

Darsajin features traditional adobe houses with windows facing the square, stone platforms, winding cobbled streets, and old neighborhoods. The central square serves as a gathering place for locals and is adorned with plane and cypress trees, contributing to its unique charm. This compelling landscape has led to Darsajin being nominated as a top candidate from Zanjan Province for inclusion in the list of the world's best tourist villages.

However, the village faces significant challenges in terms of tourism infrastructure, including the lack of parking, sanitary facilities, and suitable accommodations. This highlights the urgent need for relevant authorities to take serious action to address these issues.



[pana.ir](#)



[mehrnews.com](#)



[mehrnews.com](#)

Deputy Head of Zanjan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization Davoud Abian, emphasized that the essence of rural tourism lies in the combination of environmental landscapes, farm activities, and unique cultures present in the village. This integration not only provides opportunities for recreation and diversity for tourists but also creates job opportunities and income for local residents.

He noted that the village's traditionally constructed houses feature balustrade balconies adorned with flower pots. Around the square, seating areas offer locals a place to relax. A large platform in the center of the village square, surrounded by plane and cypress trees, enhances the area's beauty. During the day, this square serves as a gathering place for people on break from work, while in the cooler evenings, it

becomes a venue for casual conversations and commerce. Abian continued to highlight that the village's historical significance is marked by numerous attractions, including its historical fabric, rural architectural style, public square, ancient towers and walls, remnants of an old castle, and an old mosque. Rural tourism has become increasingly popular, with its appeal growing day by day.

Davoud Azizkhani, the village manager of Darsajin, acknowledged that while the village is recognized as a tourist destination within Zanjan Province, it suffers from insufficient infrastructure, particularly the lack of public restrooms and adequate parking facilities. He pointed out that the main issue is funding. "Although our village is a tourist destination, there isn't enough local revenue to implement such projects," he explained.

"Some projects require coordination with provincial departments, which can slow down the administrative process. Nevertheless, we hope to resolve these issues in the near future through continuous efforts and by attracting private investors."

Azizkhani mentioned that 5,700 tourists visited Darsajin village during the Nowruz holiday this year, asserting its status as a targeted tourist destination. He emphasized that the village deserves dedicated funding for maintenance, similar to other villages. Mohammad Reza Azizkhani, a local involved in tourism affairs, highlighted the infrastructural challenges faced by this tourist-target village.

"Like many mountainous villages, it boasts unparalleled natural beauty, surrounded by towering mountains and lush plains. Springs, rivers, and sources of fresh underground water contribute to its prosperity and greenery; however, the lack of public restrooms poses a serious challenge for tourists."

He noted that visitors often have to rely on restroom facilities in schools, health houses, or mosques, which may not always be accessible. He emphasized that although Darsajin village is recognized as a tourist destination attracting many domestic and foreign visitors, the lack of suitable infrastructure can negatively impact their experience.

Azizkhani stressed the importance of attracting tourists by providing basic amenities: "This cannot happen without sufficient facilities." He urged authorities to pay more attention to these issues and to invest in tourism infrastructure to create better conditions for drawing more visitors. The village has the potential to become a global tourist destination. However, achieving this goal requires government support and investment in infrastructure.

Heritage and tradition at Ardebil Anthropology Museum

Zahir ol-Eslam Bathhouse is a historical bathhouse in Ardebil, dating back to the Ilkhanate dynasty. It was purchased and restored during the Qajar era by a man named Motamen ol-Ro'aya, who added new rooms to the structure.

Like other traditional Iranian bathhouses, Zahir ol-Eslam features a *kafshkan*, or shoe-removal

area, and a *rakhtkan*, which serves as the locker room. The entryway, called the *sarbineh*, is crowned with a dome. The bathhouse includes *khazineh*, or bathing pools for cold and warm water.

As with many old bathhouses, its plumbing system was constructed from clay pipes. The bathing pools were supplied with water

from a nearby river, which was channeled into the facility via these clay pipes and drained in the same manner. Today, all components and technologies of the bathhouse are displayed at the Ardebil Anthropology Museum. Although the bathhouse continued to operate until the Pahlavi era, it was ultimately purchased and restored by the Cultural

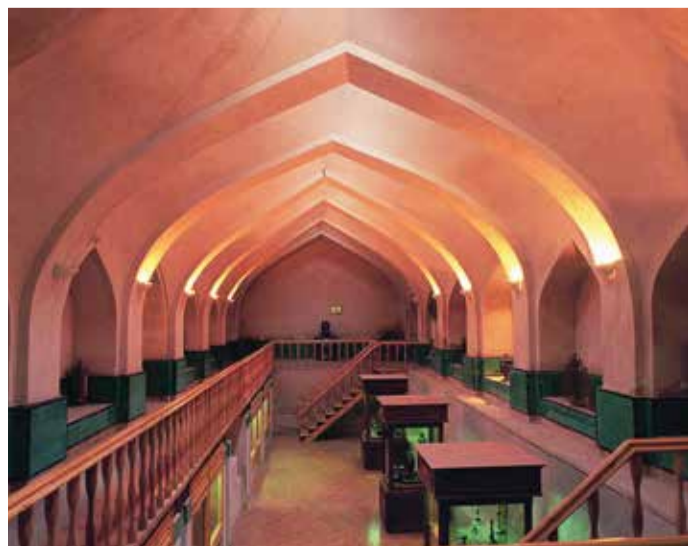
Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization of Iran in 1999, after which it transitioned into a museum.

The Ardebil Anthropology Museum features thirty-three wax sculptures that depict the rituals, traditions, clothing, and lifestyles of the people of Ardebil. Additionally, the museum houses manuscripts, documents, and ar-

tifacts that highlight the region's historical and cultural identity. Visitors can not only explore the structure of a traditional Iranian bathhouse but also immerse themselves in the culture of the Ardebil people.

Located on Sa'di Boulevard, near the Darwazeh (Aali Qapu) district and in front of the Sheikh Safi al-Din Shrine, the

Ardebil Anthropology Museum showcases both the cultural heritage of Ardebil and the architectural significance of the old bathhouse. Visitors can plan their tour to follow a visit to the Sheikh Safi al-Din Shrine, enjoy local delicacies and souvenir shops, and then explore the bathhouse and museum.



[visitiran.ir](#)

● License Holder Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA)
 ● ICPI CEO Ali Motaghian
 ● Editor-in-chief Mostafa Shirmohammadi
 ● Int'l & National Desk Javad Mohammad Ali, Zohreh Qanadi, Amir Mollae Mozaffari
 ● Economy Desk Sadeq Dehqan
 ● Sports Desk Amirhadi Arsalanpour
 ● Iranica Desk Leila Imeni
 ● Arts & Culture Desk Hamideh Hosseini
 ● Language Editor Mehdi Ebrahim

● Editorial Dept. Tel +98 21 84711411
 ● Address 208, Khorramshahr Ave., Tehran, Iran
 ● ICPI Publisher +98 21 88548892-5
 ● Advertising Dept. Tel/Email +98 21 88500601/irandaily@iranagahiha.com
 ● Website www.irandaily.ir/newspaper.irandaily.ir
 ● Email irandaily@icpi.ir
 ● Printing House Iran Cultural & Press Institute



Oscar buzz builds around 'Dolphin Boy 2' as sequel outshines original



Arts & Culture Desk

Following the critical and commercial success of 'Dolphin Boy 1', director Mohammad Kheirandish says its sequel could go a step further—perhaps even to the Academy Awards. "Dolphin Boy 1' made it to the Oscar shortlist and ranked second among 53 submissions," Kheirandish told local media. "Considering the clear improvement in quality, it wouldn't be far-fetched for Dolphin Boy 2 to be selected." The filmmaker described the new installment as a standalone sequel with a 20 to 30 percent upgrade in both narrative and structure. "It's more refined, more universal," he said. "Even those who haven't seen the first film can fully engage with this one." Remarkably, 'Dolphin Boy 2' passed the country's strict review process without any cuts. "Not a single second

was censored," Kheirandish emphasized. "That's rare, especially considering how tough the review board has been with other titles." The film is now gearing up for theatrical runs in Turkey, Russia, and other international markets post-holiday. Early feedback from foreign audiences has been encouraging. "A Russian journalist once asked if our story about the 'mother of the seas' was based on Slavic mythology. I explained it comes from ancient Iranian lore—specifically Mithraism," Kheirandish said, noting the journalist later confirmed the cultural connection. The studio behind 'Dolphin Boy' is also working on a spin-off animated series. The show will feature side characters and build on the film's narrative world. "We brought back characters that performed well in merchandising," the director added. The creative process was closely supervised, especially

during the development of the show's universe and age targeting. According to Kheirandish, the production has attracted animators who previously preferred working with foreign studios. "Now they see their names credited properly, which often isn't the case due to sanctions. Some even returned from abroad to join us." He attributed this shift to improved production quality and more competitive payments. "When they realized their work finally had visible impact, they chose us—even with lower pay at first. Plus, with dollar-based revenues, we can offer more attractive compensation now." Despite budget constraints, the director said the film was produced on par with international titles. "It takes about a million dollars to start an animation project today. We kept costs around \$500,000—but quality didn't suffer."

Over 60 Iranian artworks featured at Russia's exhibition

Arts & Culture Desk

The 'Art Russia' contemporary art exhibition featuring over 60 pieces by Iranian painters was held at the Gostiny Dvor exhibition center in Moscow from April 3 to 6. Masoud Ahmadvand, the cultural attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russia, made the announcement during the exhibition's opening ceremony, which was attended by prominent figures from Russia's cultural and artistic community, ILNA reported. Ahmadvand emphasized the exhibition's role in fostering mutual understanding among artists, gallery owners, and collectors from Russia and beyond. "This event helps familiarize audiences with the capabilities of each other and strengthens the bond between our nations," he

said. In addition to showcasing the works of a new generation of Iranian artists, the event featured a series of lectures by experts, university professors, and artists from both Russia and Iran. The official noted, "These discussions will provide valuable experiences in the realm of artistic collaboration." During a press conference, Ahmadvand highlighted the active participation of Iranian artists in various international exhibitions. He stressed the importance of this event in providing an opportunity for the Russian public to engage directly with Iranian art and its creators. He also recalled the recent cultural week celebrating Iran in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and expressed hope for a reciprocal cultural week

for Russia in Iran in the coming months. "We wish this event will allow Iranians to connect more deeply with your country's artists," he added. Organized by the Synergy company in collaboration with several Russian art institutions, the show featured an extensive collection of artworks, including sculptures, paintings, and digital art from over 200 artists displayed across 110 booths. Additionally, the exhibition included creative works by children and teenagers, as well as a series of 95 workshops led by specialists aimed at enthusiasts of contemporary art. For the sixth consecutive year, 'Art Russia' has brought together collectors, gallery owners, experts, and art lovers, reinforcing its status as a vital platform for modern art appreciation.



Four Iranian films to be screened at Annecy festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The 49th Annecy International Animation Film Festival is set to showcase four short animations from Iranian filmmakers. The selected films include 'Nagofteh Namad' by Mahboobeh Kalae and Ali Fotoohi, 'Dark Orange' by Zahra Azadpour, 'Thank you Dr. Farsi' by Samaneh Shojaei, and 'At Night' by Pooya Afzali, ISNA reported. The festival will run from June 10 to 13 in the picturesque town of Annecy, southeastern France. This year marks a significant achievement for Iranian animation, following its first Oscar win for Best Animated Short with 'In the Shadow of the Cypress' co-directed by Hossein Molayemi and Shirin Sohani. The inclusion of these four films at Annecy reflects a commitment to showcasing diverse voices and innovative storytelling in animation. As the festival approaches, anticipation builds for the contributions of Iranian artists to the global animation dialogue. Out of the 3,900 films submitted from around 100 countries, 72 films from 33 countries were selected to compete in this year's edition. Thirty-six films will compete in the Official category, 9 in the Off-Limits category, 17 in the Perspectives category, and 10 in the Young Audiences category.

Job insecurity, gender gaps fuel Iran's falling birthrate, researcher warns



Social Desk

Job instability and unbalanced family policies are driving Iran's fertility rate to historic lows, a population expert said, warning of growing socio-economic threats if the trend persists. Sepehr Karami, a researcher in population and family studies, told state media that "72% of Iranian men see job insecurity as the main obstacle to having more children." Meanwhile, 67% of employed women experience "stress from the conflict between professional and domestic roles," he said in an interview

with IRNA. According to Karami, Iran's fertility rate has dropped from approximately 6.5 children per woman in the 1980s to fewer than 1.6 in recent years. The sharp decline, he noted, is accelerating population aging and placing mounting pressure on the country's social insurance system. "This trend threatens Iran's economic security and sustainable development," he stated. While the government has launched incentives to raise the birthrate, Karami said they are largely focused on wom-

en. This approach, he argued, fails to reflect the economic burden and decision-making power held by men in Iranian households. "The family is a joint economic unit. If men are excluded from the equation, women will face disproportionate physical and psychological costs," he said. Citing a 40% inflation rate and a 15% unemployment rate among men aged 20 to 35, Karami stressed that under current conditions, most men are unable to shoulder additional financial responsibilities. "Policy must shift to recognize men not only as providers, but also as active partners in child-rearing," he said. Suggestions include progressive tax breaks for large families, long-term housing loans, and free health insurance for third children and beyond. Karami pointed to gaps in Iran's 2021 Family and Youth Law, where fathers' roles are often underdefined. "In custody and parenting, legal emphasis is placed on mothers. Fathers' authority in matters like education and health is unclear," he said. He also noted contradictions between family legislation and Iran's passport law, which grants fathers sole authority to approve a child's travel abroad. "This lack of alignment can weaken paternal

involvement and fuel family conflict," he said. A 2022 parliamentary research report cited by Karami found that while Iranian couples desire an average of three children, actual fertility remains below two. The gap is attributed to structural barriers, such as housing costs, unemployment, and gender inequality. "Policies relying solely on psychological encouragement directed at women are destined to fail," he warned. Karami also pointed to differing attitudes between men and women. While a slightly higher percentage of men (2.3%) prefer to remain childless compared to women (2%), more men (25%) expressed a desire for three or more children, compared to just under 19% of women. Economic concerns are cited by 36.4% of men as the main reason for avoiding parenthood, while only 10.9% of women shared that view. By contrast, nearly half of women (47.3%) said they simply lacked interest in having children, compared to 28.8% of men. "Men and women approach parenthood differently," Karami concluded. "A successful population strategy must reflect these differences and promote shared responsibility—only then can we overcome the demographic crisis."