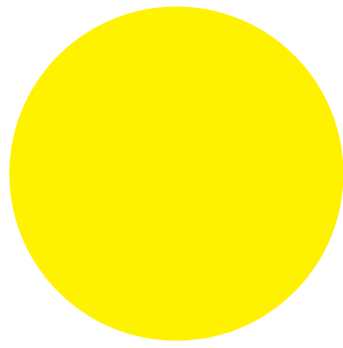


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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (2d R) is seen at an exhibition of the country's new nuclear achievements in the capital Tehran on April 9, 2025. [president.ir](#)

Iran won't cave in to unreasonable demands



By Ebrahim Rahimpour
Former Iranian deputy foreign minister

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Reports suggest that Iran and the United States are gearing up for imminent talks in Oman. While the exact format and nature of the negotiations have been kept under wraps or only unofficially alluded to, what is clear is that getting the two sides back to the table, regardless of how the talks are conducted, is a positive and constructive step forward. The Americans have already shown a willingness to sit down and talk, as evidenced by President Donald Trump's interest in negotiations with Iran during his first term, regardless of what his real intentions might have been. Even then, Iran had laid out its own preconditions before entering into any talks. During President Joe Biden's tenure, there were also reports of indirect dialogue between the two countries. Other, behind-the-scenes discussions likely took place at various levels, though they were never made public. Still, such efforts failed to bear fruit, and even the revival of

the JCPOA talks under Biden never got off the ground in any meaningful way. Now, a fresh round of negotiations is about to kick off at a time when both the regional and global conditions have shifted, and the US president has changed. Under these new circumstances, restarting diplomatic channels carries promise and has struck a chord with public sentiment. Whether these negotiations are held directly or through intermediaries is secondary; the real priority is for both parties to reach common ground and ultimately hammer out an agreement. The outcome could either be signed or remain an informal verbal understanding, as is sometimes the case in delicate negotiations. Even when such agreements are not officially signed, they can still pave the way for future accords, since both parties have considerations to take into account for reaching final agreements. Plus, many such agreements often have to make it through each country's legislative bodies, which can slow things down or complicate the process. Although it has been announced that direct talks may begin, there is every possibility that the parties may shift gears and engage more openly as the process unfolds. [Page 2 >](#)



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Pezeshkian:

Tehran not opposed to US investment

'Iran open to dialogue based on dignity'

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said Wednesday Tehran has no objection to American investors doing business in Iran as the two countries are set to hold nuclear negotiations in Oman in the coming days.

"The Leader has no objection to the presence of American investors in the country," Pezeshkian said during a commemoration ceremony of National Nuclear Technology Day.

"We oppose their flawed policies, such as conspiracies and attempts at regime change."

In an article published by the Washington Post on Tuesday, the Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also said Iran is not opposed to Americans' investment in Iran.

"There is a serious misconception that needs to be cleared up. Many in Washington portray Iran as a closed country from an economic point of view. The truth is that we are open to welcoming businesses from around the world. It is the US administrations and congressional impediments, not Iran, that have

kept American enterprises away from the trillion-dollar opportunity that access to our economy represents," Araghchi said.

"Indeed, when the United States agreed to license the sale of passenger aircraft as a part of the JCPOA (2015 nuclear agreement), Iran immediately negotiated a contract with Boeing to buy 80 planes. To say that the scope for trade and investment in Iran is unparalleled is an understatement," Iran's top diplomat added.

Iran seeking peace

Iran's president also said the Islamic Republic seeks peace and is open to dialogue.

"We seek peace and security, and we are open to dialogue, but based on dignity and pride. We will not back down from our achievements, nor will we compromise on them, and we will never allow anyone to prevent us from thinking or to prevent us from being innovative and creative," he said.

Pezeshkian also reiterated that Tehran does not seek nuclear bombs.

The president said the West claims that

Iran wants to produce nuclear bombs. They have verified it a hundred times, and they can verify it a thousand times more.

Tehran needs nuclear energy

But he underlined that they should know that, "We need nuclear science and nuclear energy in all fields."

The president said Iran does not seek war but remains strong against any possible aggression.

High-ranking delegations from Iran and the US are scheduled to meet in the Omani capital of Muscat on Saturday to commence indirect negotiations on Iran's nuclear program and removal of anti-Iran sanctions.

It comes after Tehran and Washington expressed their interest to begin new negotiations on Iran's nuclear program after President Donald Trump took office in the US in January.

The talks follow a letter sent by Trump on March 7, calling for Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to resume nuclear negotiations and warning of possible military action if Iran refuses.



Masoud Pezeshkian
president.ir

Tehran responded weeks later, saying it was open to indirect negotiations and dismissed the possibility of direct talks as long as the United States maintains its "maximum pressure" policy reinstated after Trump returned to White House for his second term in January. During his first term, Trump unilaterally

withdrew from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers and reimposed sweeping economic sanctions. Tehran adhered to the 2015 deal for a year after Washington withdrew from it, but later began rolling back its own commitments.

Iran unveils new nuclear achievements on Nuclear Technology Day

National Desk

The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) on Wednesday unveiled new nuclear achievements as the country marked its National Nuclear Technology Day.

President Masoud Pezeshkian accompanied by Iran's nuclear chief Mohammad Eslami and a group of senior officials visited the nuclear exhibition in which eight products were showcased.

On display was Iran's achievements

in fuel cycle, energy and electricity generation, production of heavy water and its derivatives, radiopharmaceuticals, plasma technology, application of radiation, and other relevant cutting-edge technologies.

The event includes pavilions showcasing homegrown breakthroughs in the fields of airborne geophysics, exploration and operational projects of uranium mines, yellow cake production, uranium processing, production of pellets and fuel

complexes, the enrichment process, the production of heavy water and radiopharmaceuticals and the development of plasma technology, the use of radiation in medicine and agriculture, blood irradiation.

In recent years, Iranian scientists have made remarkable progress in the field of peaceful nuclear technology despite the sanctions imposed by the West. It is the 18th year Iran is celebrating a national day to mark its achievements in the nuclear industry.

Iran won't cave in ...

It appears there is a degree of national consensus in Iran on the need to negotiate with the United States, but this current alignment cannot be directly compared to the consensus that once formed around the JCPOA. Even that earlier consensus, despite being broadly supported, did not pan out in the end, largely because the agreement was thrown out the window when the US administration changed hands.

Still, the new talks are being welcomed as an auspicious development. Representatives from both sides are being sent to Oman, and negotiations are about to get underway. From the looks of it, the Americans seem eager to push for quick results, while Iran appears in no rush to seal a deal hastily.

President Trump's personality suggests he is someone who thrives on making big moves and wants to make headlines as the first US president in decades to clinch a major deal with Iran, especially because such an achievement could play well for him in America's domestic political arena. In this short time during his second term, Trump has already set himself apart from previous presidents by adopting different methods, not just in handling Iran but in dealing with Europe and other global players as well. He has laid out a list of international priorities, and Iran certainly figures

prominently among them. Naturally, he would want to start with the easier items. But US-Iran relations are no walk in the park. Beyond the nuclear dossier, which has been on the table for years, there are deeper layers involving Israel and other sensitive issues that make any negotiations incredibly thorny.

President Trump, in this brief second-term stint, has already dabbled in multiple international crises. Take Ukraine, for instance—things have not moved along at the speed he expected. He waded into the Gaza conflict with heavy-handed threats, yet he has not managed to resolve it swiftly. He has also taken aim at China, primarily driven by economic interests, but tackling that challenge is anything but straightforward. At the same time, he is also juggling issues involving Denmark, Greenland, Mexico, Canada, and others—each of which will inevitably spill over into the rest of his foreign policy agenda. So, at this stage, it is anyone's guess whether he will hit the mark on any of these fronts.

Regarding Iran-US talks, both sides are coming to the table with their own expectations and red lines. But to strike a win-win deal, both parties must have their demands taken into account, and the eventual outcome should leave them both satisfied. If the US, emboldened by its power or bullying tactics, attempts to strong-arm Iran into accepting unreasonable

terms while ignoring Iran's legitimate concerns, then naturally Iran will not bow to pressure. Such a deal would be unacceptable not just to Iran but to any sovereign state. Even a small country like Denmark refused to give in to US demands regarding Greenland.

A model agreement like the JCPOA could still serve as a viable blueprint for the upcoming talks, as it was built on a give-and-take framework—a true win-win arrangement. President Trump, however, did not see it that way. He believed Iran had pulled a fast one on Obama through the JCPOA, which is why he tore it up unilaterally. Now, with new negotiations on the horizon, it remains to be seen what kind of calculations each side will bring to the table and what specific demands they will put forward. The US currently has nuclear-related concerns. In addition, issues surrounding Israel and Iran's support for regional resistance movements may also crop up in these discussions.

That said, Trump is hardly in a position to make demands on Iran's defense capabilities—this is a matter of national security. No country would ever willingly disarm itself in the face of potential threats or hostilities. Such expectations are not only unrealistic for a major power like Iran but would also be rejected outright by international organizations and sovereign states around the world.

Trade war escalates as China hits US with huge tariff

National Desk

China announced Wednesday massive retaliatory tariffs on US goods, sharply escalating a trade war started by President Donald Trump and fueling fresh panic in global markets.

Trump's latest salvo of tariffs came into effect on dozens of trading partners earlier Wednesday, including punishing duties of 104 percent on imports of Chinese products, AFP reported.

Beijing originally planned to respond with a 34 percent tariff on imports of US products from 1601 GMT Wednesday, but the finance ministry said it would now raise the toll to 84 percent after Trump dramatically hiked his own duties on imports from China.

"The tariff escalation against China by the United States simply piles mistakes on top of mistakes (and) severely infringes on China's legitimate rights and interests," the ministry said.

Washington's moves "severely damage the multilateral rules-based trade system," it added.

In a separate statement, Beijing's commerce ministry said it would blacklist six American artificial intelligence firms, including Shield AI and Sierra Nevada Corp.

Trump did not immediately react to the Chinese counterattack but he called on companies to start relocating to the United States

to avoid tariffs.

Trump believes his policy will revive America's lost manufacturing base by forcing companies to relocate to the United States.

The escalating trade war has wiped off trillions of dollars in market value since last week as investors fear that the trade war will spark a recession.

After some respite on Tuesday, stock markets were in panic mode again, with Tokyo's Nikkei index closing almost four percent lower on Wednesday.

Paris and Frankfurt sank four percent in afternoon trading while London was down 3.5 percent. US equities were expected to open with more losses.

The Bank of England warned of risks to "UK financial stability" from increased geopolitical tensions, including the fallout from the US tariffs.

Italy is preparing to cut its 2025 growth forecast in half, to 0.6 percent from 1.2, a government source said, while Spain is also set to downgrade its outlook.

Central banks in India and New Zealand cut interest rates to boost their economies in the face of tariffs.

Oil prices fell below \$60 a barrel, their lowest level in four years.

Government bond yields – essentially the interest countries pay to borrow money – rose in the United States, Japan and Britain, among other countries.



Iran, Qatar stress boost in energy cooperation

Economy Desk

Iran's oil minister emphasized strengthening bilateral energy cooperation during a meeting with Qatar's ambassador to Tehran.

Mohsen Paknejad and Saad Abdullah Saad Al Mahmoud Al Shareef underscored the need to expand energy collaboration between the two nations during their talks in Tehran on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

One of the current government's foremost priorities is enhancing cooperation with neighboring countries, particularly in oil and gas sectors.

Active energy diplomacy has consistently been a priority for the Oil Ministry under the sitting administration, with the oil minister holding numerous meetings with officials from neighboring countries to advance such efforts.

Iran and Qatar share the South Pars gas field, where it is known as the North Field. Qatar has significantly increased its gas deliveries to Europe and Asia since 2022, securing major long-term contracts with countries includ-



Iran's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad (r) meets Qatar's Ambassador to Tehran Saad Abdullah Saad Al Mahmoud Al Shareef in the capital on April 9, 2025.

● MOJTABA MOHAMMADQOLI/SHANA

ing Germany, Italy, China, and South Korea. Unlike Iran, Qatar is not subject to major international sanctions, allowing it to make substantial investments in gas infrastructure, including advanced Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals.

Iran's development of the South Pars gas field consists of 24 phases, with production starting in 2002. Currently, Iran produces around 700 million cubic meters of gas per day from the field. To date, Iran has invested approximately \$90 billion in its development.

About 33 percent of the recoverable gas reserves from South Pars belong to Iran. While Iran has developed its portion independently, the Qatari side has primarily relied on foreign companies for development.

In mid-March, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) announced



that the country's South Pars gas field will see a substantial investment in increasing gas

pressure, with an estimated \$17 billion allocated for this project. The agreement, signed on March

8 in Tehran, involves NIOC and five local companies. The project aims to ensure the preservation

of maximum gas production, reduce shortages of gas and gasoline.

Oil prices tumble to four-year low amid US-China trade war

Economy Desk

Global oil prices plunged as much as 7% on Wednesday, hitting fresh four-year lows before recovering some ground, after China announced additional tariffs on US goods in retaliation against President Donald Trump's tariff policy.

China will impose 84% tariffs on US goods from Thursday, up from the previously announced 34%, the finance ministry said, Reuters reported.

Brent futures were down \$2.47, or 3.9%, to \$60.35 a barrel at 1423 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were down \$2.35, or 3.9%, at \$57.23.

Both contracts lost about 7% before paring losses.

Trump's 104% tariffs on China kicked in on Wednesday, ratcheting up duties after Beijing failed to lift its initial retaliatory tariffs on US goods. The escalating trade war between China and the US is stoking fears of a global recession, said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

"While oil demand has likely not suffered yet, rising concerns of weaker oil demand over the coming months require lower prices to trigger supply adjustments to prevent an oversupplied market," Staunovo added.

European Union countries, meanwhile, are expected to approve the bloc's first countermeasures against Trump's tariffs on Wednesday, adding to China's and Canada's retaliatory measures.

Brent and WTI have fallen for five sessions since Trump announced sweeping tariffs on



A pump jack operates near a crude oil reserve in the Permian Basin oil field near Midland, Texas, US, February 18, 2025.

● ELI HARTMAN/REUTERS

most imports, prompting concerns over economic growth and demand for fuel.

"Some US analysts suggested that the White House wants to drive oil prices closer to \$50 as the administration believes that the US oil and gas industry can survive a period of disruption," said Panmure Liberum analyst Ashley Kelty.

Reduced consumption, political risks

An Iranian analyst said that the recent drop in oil prices stems from a natural seasonal decline in demand during spring and reduced geopolitical risks in the Middle East.

According to a faculty member at the Institute of International Energy Studies, the reasons behind the recent oil price slump are "Global energy consumption" that "naturally decreases in spring".

However, he said, "Uncertainty in the global economy due to trade wars and political crises, particularly tariff tensions among major economic powers, risks triggering a recession. Such a downturn would directly reduce energy consumption."

Mortaza Behrouzifar emphasized, "Geopolitical ten-

sions in the Middle East have eased compared to last year. The Lebanon crisis is under control, Syria has stabilized further, and the Houthis' role in disrupting oil shipments has diminished. There's even hope for US-Iran agreements to lower tensions. All these factors have reduced geopolitical risks, contributing to lower oil prices."

On future price trends, he remarked, "It's natural for prices to remain at current levels in early spring. However, if tariff wars escalate among economic powers, a global recession could further depress oil prices."

"Given the economic rationality and experience of the parties involved, I doubt the crisis will linger. I predict oil prices will rebound to the \$70-\$85 range in coming months," he added.

Regarding OPEC's role, Behrouzifar concluded, "If tariff conflicts persist, OPEC would need to enact sharp production cuts — like a 5 to 10 million barrel reduction — to prevent further price collapses. Reaching consensus on such measures is challenging. Stability can only return if the tariff crisis remains short-lived."

Iran, Japan underscore expansion of ties in AI, digital economy

Economy Desk

Deputy ministers of communications from Iran and Japan placed a premium on the expansion of technological collaboration in Artificial Intelligence (AI), digital economy, and sustainable communication infrastructure development during a strategic meeting in Tokyo, marking a milestone in forging deeper, long-term technological ties between the two nations.

Ehsan Chitsaz, deputy for policy-making, ICT development planning, and digital economy at Iran's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, met with Tako Imagawa, deputy for international affairs at Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), during his visit to Tokyo, ISNA reported. The meeting, part of Iran's ongoing pursuit of its "Technology Diplomacy" strategy initiated by Minister Sattar Hashemi, aimed to strengthen bilateral ties in technology and innovation. During the talks, the two sides emphasized the need to enhance strategic cooperation in AI, digital

economy, technology governance, and sustainable communication infrastructure development.

Chitsaz outlined the Ministry of Communications' action plan, detailing Iran's vision for digital transformation and a smart economy.

He highlighted Iran's strategic initiatives in AI, bolstering communication infrastructure, supporting the startup ecosystem, and data governance, describing collaboration with Japan as a pivotal opportunity to advance these programs. Key proposals from Chitsaz included establishing an "Iran-Japan Digital Innovation Center" for joint technological research, startups, and innovation; bilateral cooperation in policymaking for emerging technologies like AI, big data, and platform regulation; and specialized workforce development in the digital economy through joint academic programs.

The deputy minister urged Japan to support Iran's active participation in international technology and communications forums. Imagawa, who brings a distinguished background in interna-



Deputy communication ministers from Iran and Japan, Ehsan Chitsaz (r) and Tako Imagawa, shake hands in a meeting in Tokyo on April 9, 2025.

● ISNA

tional communications policy and academic roles at institutions like Tokyo, Waseda, and Stanford universities, welcomed the proposals and expressed Japan's readiness to embark on a new chapter of digital collaboration with Iran. "Iran is pursuing digital transformation with a domestic, long-term vision. Japan supports this approach and is fully prepared to operationalize constructive proposals to advance our cooperation," Imagawa said. The two sides agreed to establish a joint working group to implement the outlined objectives.

NIOC unveils 15 oil and gas investment opportunities

Economy Desk

The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) published a list of 15 investment opportunities to be presented at the "Strategic Transformation in Iran's Upstream Oil & Gas Sector" event, which is to be held on April 22 in Tehran.

The investment opportunities announced by the Oil Ministry include the development of oil and gas fields, exploratory blocks, flare gas recovery, natural gas liquids (NGL), liquefied natural gas (LNG), storage tanks, power generation and transmission, desalination plants, pipelines, optimization projects, gas pressure boosting in-

telligent pigging, rapid-deployment processing units, and support projects (floating facilities, marine logistics, buildings, and roads), IRNA reported.

Earlier, the director of investment and business at the National Iranian Oil Company highlighted that 200 investment opportunities in upstream oil and gas industries — with an estimated total value of \$137 billion — will be publicly unveiled for the first time at the upcoming event.

On Monday, Amir Moqiseh, the NIOC deputy director for the investment and business affairs, said that one of the goals of holding the major national investment event in Iran's oil industry is to introduce

the Oil Industry Guarantee Fund as a major measure to finance oil plans and projects, adding, "In this regard, agreements will be signed with the presence of banks, which will play an important role in attracting investment to the oil industry."

Referring to the importance of this event, he added, "Senior government managers, executive officials from the presidential office and ministries, as well as the private sector and investors interested in investing in the upstream sector, will participate in this event. We invite all interested parties to register for this event and take advantage of this opportunity."

Bab al-Mandab Strait key to dignity of Gazans



By Ali
Ma'roufi Arani
Researcher on
Zionism, Judaism

OPINION

The scope of the attacks of Ansarullah (the Houthis), alongside the Yemeni army and armed forces, demonstrates that they are not only steadfast in their resolve to prohibit the passage of targeted ships but are also emerging more powerfully than before in this arena. According to Ansarullah, what the US and Britain witnessed in the naval and missile warfare in the Red Sea was only a fraction of Yemen's capabilities — with greater and more significant surprises yet to come. They, for example, targeted the aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman with a long-range precision ballistic missile, which American and British forces failed to intercept. The statement of this Yemeni group reads as follows: "Despite all pressures, Yemen continues to stand up for the Palestinian cause, making it a target for powers seeking dominance and reshaping the region according to their interests."

The people of Yemen today serve as a moral and humanitarian model in supporting Gaza, playing an active and significant role despite limited resources. This has prompted aggressors to seek its suppression to prevent the spread of this Arab and Islamic model. Yemen's effective attacks on Israeli ports and strikes on Zionist commercial fleets are the main reason behind US assaults on Yemen.

A question arises here: Why does Yemen support Gaza? The answer is clear, though some fail to see the truth. This is a matter of upholding ethics, values, principles, and, above all, Palestine, which stands as a symbol of patience, heroism, and resistance. Yemen, like Hezbollah in Lebanon and others, has supported Gaza and stood firm against the aggression of the Zionist regime and the US. In fact, by resisting genocidal wars and ethnic cleansing waged against defenseless people, Yemen backs the enduring resistance in Gaza. More importantly, Yemen has



Protesters, mainly Ansarullah (Houthi) supporters, rally to mark the International Quds Day on the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, in Sana'a, Yemen, on March 28, 2025.

● REUTERS



Why does Yemen support Gaza? The answer is clear, though some fail to see the truth. This is a matter of upholding ethics, values, principles, and, above all, Palestine, which stands as a symbol of patience, heroism, and resistance. Yemen, like Hezbollah in Lebanon and others, has supported Gaza and stood firm against the aggression of the Zionist regime and the US.

demonstrated that, in addition to being able to prevent the passage of Israeli, British, and American ships bound for occupied territories, it also controls the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Red Sea — and will not relinquish this control to any country. This shift in power dynamics will transform the global balance.

The situation has now reached a point where the Zionist newspaper The Jerusalem Post recently wrote that the US-led Prosperity Guardian naval coalition and the EU's Aspides operation in the Red Sea have failed to deter the Houthis (a.k.a. Yemeni forces). The newspaper further admitted in its report: "THIS FAILURE of the world's leading military powers to deter the Houthis still lacks a convincing explanation." Notably, these attacks have not only paralyzed the apartheid regime's maritime-dependent economy but have also over-

shadowed more than half of Britain's economy.

The war with Yemen is entirely different from any other war. The Zionist regime is now engaged in a real war of attrition with Yemen. Yemen's complex geography has left the Zionist regime helpless. The regime cannot grasp how determined Yemenis are to resist. In fact, the Zionist regime is now in a critical state, having suffered heavy losses in its war with Yemen. The residents of the occupied territories should expect a life filled with fear, as all the regime's deterrence theories have failed in its wars with Hamas and Hezbollah — and these failures are far from over.

Yemen, like Hezbollah, will be remembered for its stances. On the day the world fell silent and turned away from Palestine, Yemen became the voice of resistance. Since then, Yemen has proven that threats will never frighten

it, and its support for Gaza will continue — because this support is not a choice but a duty. In the meantime, the ongoing battle to shatter the prestige of the Zionist regime and the US will persist.

It is worth noting that the Yemeni front remains impenetrable to the Zionist regime. The intelligence and espionage training of US and Zionist mercenaries in various countries to infiltrate and strike Yemen has flopped. While the Zionists may test different methods against Yemen's government and people, Yemen's Islamic resistance remains vigilant — as evidenced by its recent capture of enemy infiltrators.

The escalating and consistent attacks by Yemen's army on occupied territories, warships, and aircraft carriers show that Yemen is not bargaining over its support for Gaza and the Palestinian cause. Rather, the Yemeni front's presence in any future confron-

tation will bring many new surprises. The continuous military parades of Yemen's Islamic resistance forces send a clear message of support to Hamas, proving that Yemen has never forgotten Gaza and Palestine.

It must be emphasized that issuing statements and condemnations by Islamic leaders does nothing to help the oppressed people of Gaza and Yemen or stop the bloody attacks by the Zionist regime and the US-UK coalition on the Gaza Strip and Yemen. The method of support must change — Islamic nations must step up in new and effective ways to aid their Muslim brethren. This shift could involve raising awareness, documenting Zionist crimes against the people of Gaza (especially women and children), and providing military support, among other measures.

The article first appeared in Persian on IQNA.



A ship fires missiles at an undisclosed location after US President Donald Trump launched military strikes against Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthis) in this screengrab obtained from a handout video released on March 15, 2025.

● US CENTRAL COMMAND



Ansarullah (Houthi) soldiers raise weapons and flags of Palestine to show solidarity with the people of Gaza.

● GETTY IMAGES

Other side of Signalgate



By Rozina Ali
Journalist

PERSPECTIVE

On the morning of March 14, while Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and Vice-President J. D. Vance debated a possible US attack on Ansarullah (Houthi) targets in a now infamous Signal chat, it was afternoon in Yemen, and a five-year-old boy named Hamad was still alive. Hamad had spent the day running around the city with his father, and when night fell, he was back home, playing in the yard with his cousins, likely slipping one too many sweets into his mouth. In a thread called "Houthi PC Small Group," which included other top national-security officials, Vance seemed concerned about getting dragged into another conflict that was peripheral to American interests. The operation was meant to disrupt the Houthis' ability to attack commercial ships and American military vessels in the Red Sea, which they had been doing for about a year and a half, in response to Israel's bombing campaign in Gaza. Vance floated the possibility of delaying the strikes so that the Administration could work on the public "messaging." "I understand your concerns," Hegseth told him, but messaging would be "tough" no matter the timing. "Nobody knows who the Houthis are," he explained.

The debate didn't last long. Within half an hour, Vance was persuaded. The next day, as sunset prayers ended and families broke their Ramadan fast in north Yemen, Hegseth announced to the group in Washington, "Weather is FAVORABLE. Just CONFIRMED w/ CENTCOM we are a GO for mission launch." Shortly after, a "package" of F-18s was launched, the first of many strikes.

Just before one in the morning, a man whom I'll call Hassan — he asked that we not use his real name, owing to concerns about his safety — bolted awake to a thunderous sound. His house, in the Qahza area in Saada, was shaking. The windows shattered as he heard another boom, and then another. "The noise of the air strikes were very unlike the Saudi ones because they were too loud, too big," he recently told me, referring to regular bombing campaigns that a Saudi Arabia-led coalition has conducted against Houthi strongholds since 2015.

Smoke and dust filled the rooms, and Hassan scrambled to rush his frightened children outside. He split his family into small groups among relatives' homes and returned to the site of the strike. His neighbor's two-story house, about a hundred metres from his own, was levelled. The house belonged to Mosfer Roga'ah, Hassan told me — a Bedouin from the country's northern Kitaf district who had arrived in the neighborhood around six years earlier. Roga'ah had several sons who were married, so the house was often full of women and children, as it had been that night.

Hassan's brothers were already there, digging through the rubble, searching for the remains of a family. "They were scattered and torn into pieces," he said.

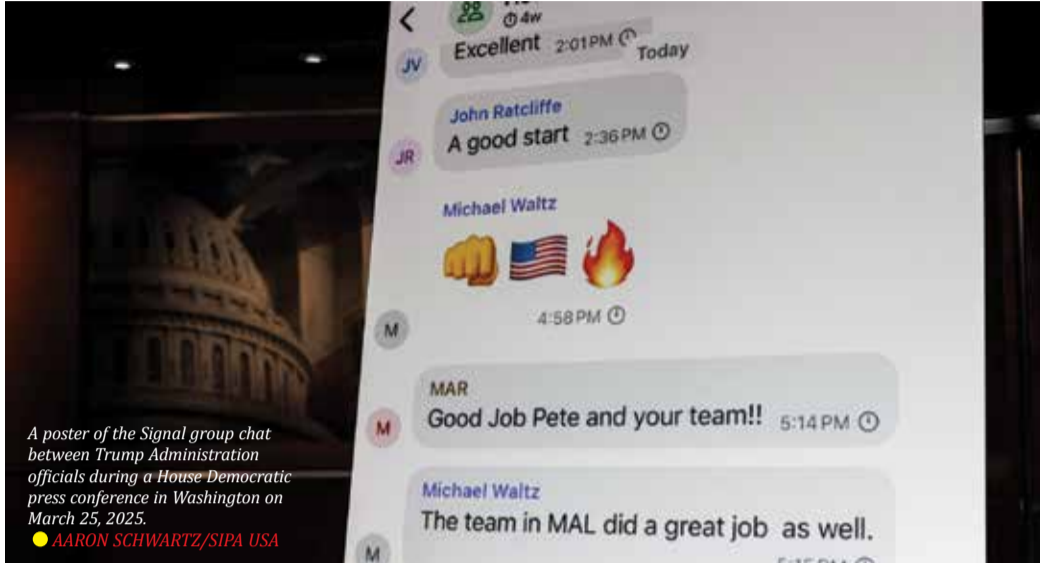
Rescuers recovered mangled bodies. Among them were two faces Hassan recognized well: the five-year-old boy, Hamad, and a three-year-old girl, Dareen, who was rushed to a hospital in Sana'a, Yemen's capital. Hamad was dead.

He "was roasted," Hassan recalled, adding quietly that it was a "horrifying" sight. He later sent me photos of Dareen that were circulating on social media; she was attached to a breathing tube, her body covered in gauze and her face marbled with burn marks. In the debris, locals found remnants of Tomahawk missiles, which Airwars, a British nonprofit organization that tracks civilian harm in conflict zones, confirmed were the munitions used in the strike.

The controversy that has now been dubbed Signalgate has garnered considerable shock, amusement, and anger, illustrating the ineptitude of the Trump Administration for knowingly discussing war plans over a commercial phone app and for unknowingly inviting a journalist into the discussion. (The White House has insisted that it did not reveal any "war plans.") Less has been made of the strikes themselves, which raise their own set of questions, including what the US's aims are in Yemen, and under what legal authority it is pursuing those aims. American presidents have struck Yemen before, often pointing to the Authorization for the Use of Military Force, a joint resolution passed after 9/11, which gave the president the power to attack "terrorist" targets in foreign countries without a formal "declaration of war". But Trump hasn't invoked the A.U.M.F.; instead, he echoed aides who say that it is within the president's constitutional power to launch attacks for defensive purposes. His predecessors, too, seemed to operate with that license: most recently, the Biden Administration continued to strike Houthi targets, without Congressional approval, even after taking the Houthis off the list of foreign terrorist organizations. "For years, presidents have been asserting expansive power to use military force, under questionable legal authorities, with relatively little pushback from Congress," Matt Duss, the executive vice-president at the Center for International Policy, a foreign-policy think tank in Washington, D.C., told me. "That's extremely dangerous no matter who's in the White House, but particularly with someone like Trump."

The Trump Administration's hostilities in Yemen appear more expansive than past campaigns, directed not just at Houthi weapons sites but also at Houthi leaders in residential areas. Perhaps more alarmingly, Trump hints at long-term engagement. "We will use overwhelming lethal force until we have achieved our objective," Trump vowed. There remains little clarity on what right the president has to repeatedly strike a foreign country without the approval of Congress.

In addition to this legal debate, Signalgate raises questions about the reliability of American intelligence. According to Yemen's health ministry, more than 50 people were killed in the strikes,



A poster of the Signal group chat between Trump Administration officials during a House Democratic press conference in Washington on March 25, 2025.
● AARON SCHWARTZ/SIPA USA

and more than a hundred were wounded. One of the attacks hit a cancer treatment center that was under construction, according to Houthi authorities. Another, the Roga'ah house.

Mosfer Roga'ah and his four sons were not home when the missiles dropped, Hassan told me. They were at the mosque for taraweeh, special prayers performed late into the night during the holy month of Ramadan. A video shared on Facebook shows them returning to where the house once stood. A few men can be seen helping someone stagger through the glare of headlights toward the wreckage. Seconds later, a loud scream pierces through a din of panicked voices. According to Hassan, that was one of Roga'ah's sons, Abdullah — the father of Dareen and Hamad. Eventually, Hassan told me, rescuers who dug through the rubble counted 15 dead, all women and children. Among them were Risala, age 13; Saleh, age nine; Abdullah, age six; Nazam, age six; Abdulkader, age five; Hadi, age three; and Motlak, a newborn baby. The baby's mother was also killed.

The New Yorker was not able to fully corroborate Hassan's account, and Saada is nearly impossible for foreign journalists to access at the moment, but news reports and public social-media posts about that night counted civilians among the dead. (Many of the posts were made by people with Houthi affiliations.) Shortly after the strikes began, Trump declared on Truth Social that he had ordered the military "to launch decisive and powerful Military action," adding that the Houthis "have waged an unrelenting campaign of piracy,

violence, and terrorism against American, and other, ships, aircraft, and drones."

Officials in the Trump Administration seemed unfazed by the prospect that civilians might die in the bombardment. "The first target — their top missile guy — we had positive ID of him walking into his girlfriend's building and it's now collapsed," Michael Waltz, the national-security adviser, wrote on Signal, in an update to the team. "Excellent," Vance replied. The C.I.A. Director John Ratcliffe: "A good start." Waltz responded with emojis of a fist bump, an American flag, and fire. (Later, the US Department of Defense said that it "takes allegations of civilian harm seriously and has a process in place to review them".)

Trump's White House, like its predecessors, continues to emphasize that the Houthis are supported by Iran. But the group also emerged from local political dynamics. The founders of the Houthi movement belonged to Zaydism, a Shia branch of Islam that ruled northern Yemen for a thousand years before being overthrown in the 1960s. A couple of decades later, Zaydism was revived as a cultural and political movement by Hussein al-Houthi, in part as a way to challenge Yemen's central government, which disfavored Zaydis and neglected northern areas, like Saada. After 9/11, the US poured military aid into Yemen as part of its global war on terror, expanding the Yemeni president's ability to quell Houthi dissent — in turn drawing more support for the movement. Yemen underwent a significant transformation. The Houthis grew in power and popularity, then launched a conflict that spiralled into a series of wars with the central govern-

ment. During the Arab Spring, in 2012, the Yemeni president stepped down; in the years that followed, Houthis stormed the capital. Regional and world powers, concerned that the group would expand, began to bombard and raid the country. The United States backed Saudi-led bombing campaigns, supported a naval and air blockade, and instituted a sanctions regime; together, these measures have further entrenched the Houthis' hold on power, killed hundreds of thousands of people, and helped to push more than 17 million into conditions of severe hunger. Today, Yemen remains one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world.

The US continues to pummel Yemen. Recently, Trump shared a black-and-white video, from an aerial viewpoint, of a bomb landing on a group of about 70 people in a circle, which a Houthi-led news agency later described as a social gathering for Eid. Smoke fills the screen and, within seconds, a crater emerges. "These Houthis gathered for instructions on an attack. Oops, there will be no attack by these Houthis!" the president wrote.

Meanwhile, Roga'ah and his sons are surveying their own catastrophic damage. The fresh graves of their dead wives and children are lined neatly in a row, the result of a strike hastily agreed to over text message thousands of miles away. "They have hearts broken into pieces," Hassan told me, of Roga'ah and Abdullah. "Every day they are crying, remembering this family that disappeared without any reason."

The article first appeared on *The New Yorker*.



People gather at the site of a house hit by a US strike, in Saada, Yemen, on March 16, 2025.
● NAIF RAHMA/REUTERS



The controversy that has now been dubbed Signalgate has garnered considerable shock, amusement, and anger, illustrating the ineptitude of the Trump Administration for knowingly discussing war plans over a commercial phone app and for unknowingly inviting a journalist into the discussion. (The White House has insisted that it did not reveal any "war plans".) Less has been made of the strikes themselves, which raise their own set of questions, including what the US's aims are in Yemen, and under what legal authority it is pursuing those aims.

Iranian Volleyball Premier League Finals:

Foolad wins five-set thriller to force Game 3

Sports Desk

The Iranian Volleyball Premier League crown will be on the line when Foolad Sirjan and Shahdab Yazd square off in the decisive Game 3 of the Finals at Tehran's Federation Hall today. Defending champion Foolad edged out its familiar foe 3-2 to level the best-of-three series at 1-1 on Tuesday. Stepping on to the court on the back of a four-set defeat in Game 1, Foolad looked to be on its way to an easy victory when it took the first two sets 25-23 and 25-22. However, Shahdab fought back to win the third and fourth sets by a 25-20 scoreline and push the contest into a decider. In a nail-biting fifth set that saw the lead change hands multiple times,

Foolad emerged victorious 18-16. Prolific opposite Ali Hajipour contributed with a game-high 20 points for Foolad, with outside-hitters Amirhossein Esfandiari and Esmail Mosafar chipping in 18 and 13 points, respectively. Cuban Javier Concepción topped the scoring chart for Shahdab with 20 points, followed by fellow-middle blocker Masoud Gholami and opposite Mohsen Delavari, who had 14 points apiece. Veteran opposite Amir Ghafour, who stole the show for Shahdab in Game 1 with 29 points, was limited to just 10 on Tuesday. 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 Behrouz Ataei's men lifted the Iranian Volleyball Cup trophy thanks to a straight-set triumph in February's final.



Foolad Sirjan middle-blocker Seyed Mohammad Mousavi (c) and his teammates celebrate a point during a Game 2 victory over Shahdab Yazd at the Iranian Volleyball Premier League Finals in Tehran, Iran, on April 8, 2025. ● SEPIDEH ABDOLHAY/volleyball.ir



Iran's Mansourian, Taqavi grab golds at Sanda World Cup

Sports Desk

Iran's Shahrbanoo Mansourian and Moein Taqavi bagged a couple of golds on the final day of the Sanda World Cup in Jiangyin, China, on Wednesday. A six-time gold medalist at the World Championships, Mansourian, 39, came out

victorious against Tunisian Rimel Khalifi – a 2023 world champion – in the final to walk away with the ultimate prize in the women's 75kg weight class – a second World Cup gold for the Iranian after her triumph in 2016. Taqavi, meanwhile, out-muscled Saidiakram Rai-

mov of Kazakhstan for the men's 90kg crown. The final-day glory came after Sediqeh Dariaei had bagged a first gold medal for Iran on the preceding night, thanks to a victory over Australian Nicole Lowe-Tarbert – world bronze winner in 2023 – in the women's 65kg showdown.



Iran's Shahrbanoo Mansourian won the women's 75kg gold at the Sanda World Cup in Jiangyin, China. ● iranwushufed.ir

Wrestling World Championships:

Esmaeili, Saravi to spearhead Iran's Greco-Roman squad



Olympic champion Saeid Esmaeili, pictured in March's Asian Championships, will represent Iran in the Greco-Roman 67kg division at the Wrestling World Championships in September 2024. ● UWW

Sports Desk

Reigning Olympic champions Saeid Esmaeili and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi will headline the Iranian Greco-Roman squad in September's Wrestling World Championships in Zagreb, the national governing body of the sport confirmed. Esmaeili and Saravi made a first international appearance since last summer's

Paris Games when they eased to the 67kg and 97kg titles, respectively, at the Asian Championships in Amman in late March. Joining the duo in Hassan Rangraz's 10-man team in the Croatian capital, will be world junior and under-23 champion Ali Ahmadi-Vafa (60kg), the Iranian federation announced, as well as Mohammad-Mahdi Keshtkar (63kg), who settled for a

silver medal at the Asian event. Below-par runs by Iman Mohammadi and former Olympic champion Mohammadreza Geraei in February's Ranking Series event meant Danial Sohrabi will be the Iranian 72kg contestant at the World Championships, after he won the Asian gold in Amman. An Asian silver medal was also enough for Alireza Ab-

devali – a world under-20 gold medalist last year – to secure the Iranian 77kg spot at the UWW Worlds, while Alireza Mohammadi will be looking to build on his Olympic silver when representing the country in the 87kg contests.

Meanwhile, three spots in the Iranian team remain up for grabs, which will be decided through domestic trials or upcoming international events ahead of the World Championships. World silver medalist Pouya Dadmarz and world U17 champion Armin Shamsipour will vie for the 55kg spot when taking part at the Ulaanbaatar Open in May. Mohammad-Ali Geraei will have to see off domestic rivalry from Asian champion Mohammad Naqousi and Gholamreza Farrokhi to have a shot at a second successive world 82kg title. However, all eyes will be on the superheavyweight trials, where a three-way clash will see reigning world champion and Olympic bronze medalist Amin Mirzazadeh, world under-23 champion Fardin Hedayati, who also won the Asian gold in Amman, and Ali-Akbar Yousefi – a world gold medalist in 2021 – battle it out for a 130kg spot in Zagreb.

AFC U17 Asian Cup:

Iran coach Chamanian rues late collapse in Oman defeat

Sports Desk

Head coach Abbas Chamanian lamented the lapse of concentration in the closing stages after his side suffered a 3-2 defeat against Oman in Group D of the AFC U17 Asian Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Mahan Beheshti's left-footed free-kick gave Iran a 39th-minute lead,

before Walid Al Rashdi drew Oman level eight minutes after the break. Iran restored the lead almost from the restart through Ehsan Kheradpisheh, who finished Mahan Alipour's cutback into the top corner. However, Ahmed Al Amrani turned the game on its head inside 15 minutes, bagging a second equalizer for Oman in

the 74th minute, before his last-gasp spot-kick secured all points for the two-time champion. "We didn't focus during the last 15 minutes," Chamanian said. "I told the players that leading by one goal was not enough, and if they didn't score more it would be difficult for us. There were many chances in the first half that we

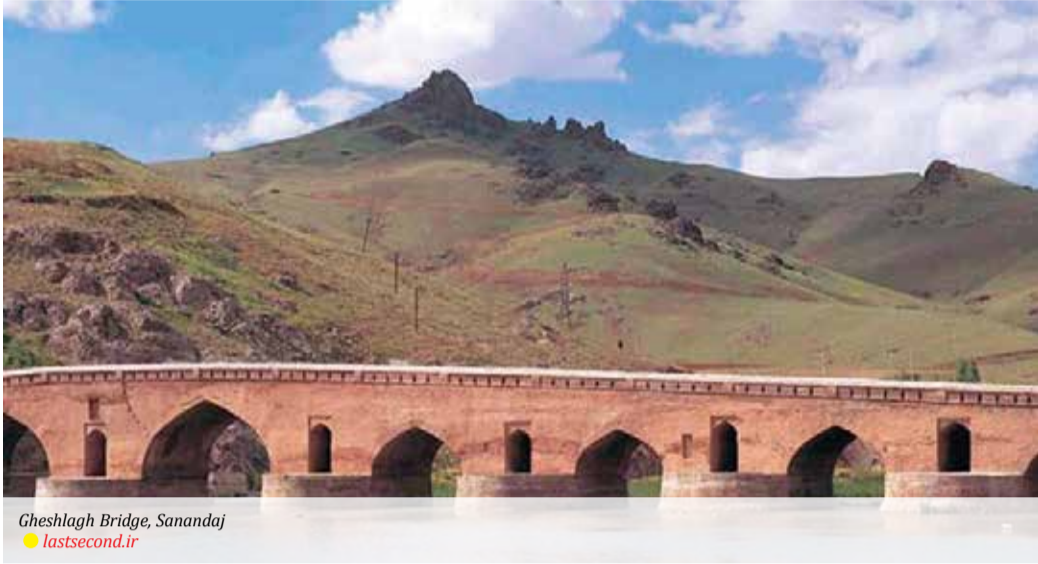
did not take. Oman, however, made good use of theirs in the second." The result left Chamanian's boys bottom of the table with a single point, courtesy of a first-day 1-1 draw against Oman. North Korea defeated Tajikistan 3-0 earlier in the day to overtake the Central Asian side on top of the standings with four points.

Tajikistan, which defeated Oman 2-1 in their first outing, is second – on course for a last-eight spot heading into the final round of the group phase. Champion in 2008, Iran will have to beat Tajikistan on Friday and hope the result in the simultaneous fixture go its way to progress to the quarterfinals.



Iran's Omid Qarechomaqlou (9) is seen in action during a 3-2 loss to Oman at the AFC U17 Asian Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on April 8, 2025. ● AFC

Kurdistan Province; a booming tourist destination in Nowruz



Gheshlagh Bridge, Sanandaj
● lastsecond.ir



Domenareh Mosque, Saqqez
● lastsecond.ir

Iranica Desk

Kurdistan Province of Iran, with its diverse natural, historical, and cultural attractions, as well as the unparalleled hospitality of its people, has emerged as one of the primary tourist destinations during the Nowruz (Iranian New Year) holidays. The Bashmaq border, a key land passage between Iran and the Iraqi Kurdistan region, has become one of the busiest routes for foreign tourists — especially from Iraq — due to its geographical proximity, shared lin-

guistic and cultural traits, and enhanced border services. Many travelers see the Nowruz holidays as a perfect opportunity to visit Iran, choosing Kurdistan for its varied attractions and warm culture, chn.ir wrote. This year, the enhancement of welfare services, the facilitation of travel processes, improved security conditions, and the preparation of reception infrastructure at the Bashmaq border have provided a comfortable and safe experience for travelers, contributing significantly to the increase in tourist arrivals.

From March 16 to April 2, 2025, a total of 41,807 foreign travelers and tourists entered the province through the international Bashmaq border, marking a 50% increase compared to the same period last year. This notable growth has underscored the importance of this border in the region's tourism development. In addition to the influx of travelers, Nowruz celebrations, local rituals, and cultural programs were hosted in various cities throughout the province, adding a joyful and vibrant energy to the re-

gion's social fabric. The surge in tourist numbers directly impacts the province's economic prosperity; accommodation and hospitality centers, transportation services, local markets, and handicraft sales have all benefited from this growth. Foreign tourists, in particular, have shown great enthusiasm for local products and handicrafts, significantly contributing to job creation and strengthening the local economy. These successes can be attributed to years of targeted planning, investment in tourism infrastructure, improve-

ments in border services, and the ongoing efforts of executive bodies, private sector stakeholders, and effective collaboration among travel task force members. Recent actions — including the expansion of tourism advertising, support for cultural events, and the enhancement of access routes — have positioned Kurdistan as a safe, beautiful, and culturally rich destination. Nowruz 1404 (2025) has marked a turning point in these efforts and has painted a bright future for the tourism landscape in this province.



Marivan
● lastsecond.ir

Journey through Mayamey and its historic caravanserais

Iranica Desk

Travel and tourism along historical routes have left behind diverse legacies throughout history. One of the most significant yet straightforward of these legacies is the establishment of buildings designed for comfort and safety against the dangers of travel, often constructed in challenging terrains and hot, arid regions. Iranians were pioneers in creating such structures, which later came to be known as caravanserais. The etymology of the term "caravanserai" indicates that its original concept is deeply rooted in trade and commerce — a place where caravanners gathered to trade and to seek refuge from bandits and natural obstacles. The history of caravanserais reveals that their emergence was closely linked to interactions between different peoples and nations. During the Achaemenid, Parthian, Mongol, Seljuk, Ot-

toman, and Safavid periods, as trade and commerce flourished within their respective political geographies, caravanserais thrived and evolved. A commonly accepted definition of caravanserais among experts is that they were large structures located either outside or within cities, primarily used by caravanners for commercial purposes, but later adapted for military, political, religious, and social functions. The legacy of caravanserais in Iran not only reflects the ancient history and culture of this land but also serves as a vital attraction for tourists and enthusiasts of history and architecture. In today's world, the attention given to these historic buildings and their revitalization can significantly enhance Iran's profile as a cultural and historical tourist destination, thereby aiding in the preservation of the region's identity and history.

Historical significance of Mayamey

Mayamey, located in Semnan Province, sits at the heart of Iran's rich history and culture, particularly recognized for its caravanserais, which stretch from ancient times to the present day. This city, positioned along the vital route connecting Tehran to Mashhad, has witnessed the flourishing and expansion of a network of caravanserais, each serving as a testament to the tumultuous history of the region. These structures are not only symbols of Iranian architecture but also fulfill essential roles as rest areas for caravanners and as facilitators of trade along lengthy routes. Mayamey has consistently attracted attention due to its impressive collection of caravanserais. This introduction will delve into the history and importance of these historical structures along the Silk Road and their integral role in the economic and cultural development of the region. Mayamey, the easternmost city of Semnan Province, lies directly along the route from Tehran to Mashhad. Bordered to the north by Golestan and North Khorasan

provinces, to the east by Khorasan Razavi Province, and to the west by Shahrud, its strategic position along the Tehran-Mashhad corridor has been recognized for its transit and connectivity significance since ancient times.

Miyandasht Caravanserai

Continuing towards Mashhad, 40 kilometers east of Mayamey, on the route from Mayamey to Mashhad, one finds the Miyandasht Caravanserais. This complex is considered the largest caravanserai complex in Iran, encompassing three caravanserais, three cisterns, a pigeon house, a postal station, and the historical Miyandasht village. The western caravanserai dates back to the Safavid era, while the other two belong to the Qajar period, showcasing the architectural evolution through the ages.

Abbasabad Caravanserai

Located 80 kilometers from the center of Mayamey, the historic and attractive village of Abbasabad is home to the Abbasabad Caravanserai. As the largest standalone cara-

vanserai in the city, it is nestled within the historical and terraced layout of Abbasabad village and represents one of the village's most significant attractions. Constructed during the Safavid era, the Abbasabad Caravanserai underwent substantial renovations during the Qajar period, enhancing its historical importance.

Jahanabad Caravanserai

Situated 60 kilometers northeast of Mayamey is the small and remote Jahanabad village, which contains a historical caravanserai believed to belong to the Ilkhanate period. The Ilkhanids strategically constructed large and aesthetically pleasing caravanserais for the convenience of travelers along routes and roads, with designs tailored to the climate of each region.

Guardians of history and identity

In conclusion, caravanserais are

not merely artifacts of Iran's historical and cultural heritage; they also symbolize the human connections and cultural exchanges among various ethnic groups throughout history. These structures have evolved into sanctuaries for travelers, merchants, and passersby, serving as living evidence of Iranian art and architecture across different eras and reminding us of how our history has been shaped along major roads and pathways. Mayamey, with its impressive collection of historical caravanserais, presents unique opportunities for cultural revival and helps position Iran as a prominent destination for cultural and historical tourism. Consequently, the preservation and restoration of these buildings not only enrich historical and cultural knowledge but can also play a crucial role in attracting tourists and showcasing the authentic Iranian identity to the world.



Abbasabad Caravanserai
● IRNA



Jahanabad Caravanserai
● ISNA



Miyandasht Caravanserai
● pelykan.ir

Iran sees tourism as strategic gateway to peace, growth: *Minister*



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is opening its doors wider to international tourism investors, positioning the sector as a strategic engine for long-term development. At a high-level panel during the UAE's Annual Investment Meeting, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri outlined the country's vast and diverse offerings, from UNESCO-listed heritage sites to health tourism and ecotourism, and emphasized Iran's readiness for broad regional and international collaboration, IRNA reported.

"Tourism is not just an economic sector," Salehi Amiri said. "It's a strategic tool for sustainable growth, regional dialogue, and improving the country's global image." He called for a new model of investment focused on smart, civilization-based, and future-oriented approaches. With 28 World Heritage sites and thousands of nationally recognized historical and natural landmarks, Iran offers one of the most diverse tourism landscapes in the region. The minister described the nation as a "gateway to cultural diversity," noting strong potential in sectors such as wellness tourism, digital experiences, and heritage restoration.

He stressed that investment opportunities extend far beyond hotel construction. Iran is prioritizing areas like transport infrastructure, rural and community-based tourism, digital innovation, human resource training, and international cultural events. "We're not only seeking capital," he said, "we're inviting vision." Iran is actively simplifying foreign investment procedures. Incentives include tax breaks, streamlined permits, and access to strategic land. The minister highlighted public-private partnership models and the integration of successful international practices. The strategic importance of tourism is embedded in Iran's national development agenda. Balanced destination growth, a focus on underdeveloped regions, sustainability metrics, and advanced technology integration are core elements of this vision. Addressing the misrepresentation of Iran in Western media, Salehi Amiri

said, "We've been victims of biased narratives. Through cultural diplomacy and tourism, we aim to showcase Iran's true identity — a land of peace, heritage, and hospitality." He added, "Travelers are the new ambassadors of peace." Iran has seen a 40% increase in inbound tourism in 2023 and early 2024, despite ongoing sanctions. According to Salehi Amiri, this growth reflects "the enduring global appeal of Iran's history and culture." On the sidelines of the conference, the Iranian minister met with Sheikh Salem bin Khalid Al Qassimi, the UAE's Minister of Culture. The two discussed expanding cultural collaboration through joint exhibitions, cultural nights, and artisan showcases. "Cultural ties are a foundation for stronger political and economic engagement," Salehi Amiri noted. The Emirati side welcomed the proposals, calling shared heritage a

"valuable asset." The minister also emphasized Iran's strategic partnership with China, calling it a cornerstone of the country's eastward tourism policy. In another news report, in an interview with Phoenix TV, he described the Silk Road as a "symbol of civilizational dialogue," and highlighted joint cultural and media projects under a 25-year cooperation framework with Beijing. Iran has partnered with Central Asian nations and China in reviving Silk Road routes, with Semnan joining the International Alliance of Silk Road Tourism Cities. Plans include collaborative infrastructure development, virtual tourism tools, and content co-production with Chinese broadcasters like CCTV. "We're entering a new phase of cultural cooperation," Salehi Amiri said. "The Silk Road is not just a trade route. It's a cultural bridge uniting ancient civilizations with a shared future."

From Picasso crowds to policy gaps

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art faces crossroads

By Saeideh Ehsani Rad
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

A recent exhibition of works by Pablo Picasso, which opened in Tehran in late March, has emerged as the most prominent visual arts event of the Persian New Year holidays. Crowds lined up outside the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA) once again, reflecting a rare level of public engagement. The event drew broad attention from local media, art critics, and researchers alike. The exhibition titled 'Picasso in Tehran' stood out not only for its content but also for its curatorial method—featuring multimedia elements and a narrative-based, research-driven approach. These elements distinguished it from previous shows at the museum and signaled a broader revival in public interest.

In light of the exhibition's success, Persian-language newspaper Iran conducted an exclusive interview with Reza Dabirinejad, the newly appointed head of the museum. A seasoned museum professional and former director of the Malek Museum, Dabirinejad is the first museum specialist to lead the TMOCA. His appointment follows years of managerial instability and criticism surrounding the institution. The full text of the interview follows:

How would you define the museum's role within Iran's cultural landscape?

The TMOCA holds one of the most significant collections of modern art in Iran and the world. It's not just art museum, it is a national institution. Because of its central role, it sets the standard for other art museums across the country, whether state-run, private, or semi-private. The museum is in a unique position to lead on policy, draft museum regulations, and shape curatorial practices nationwide. It can provide templates for operational guidelines that other

institutions can adopt. In that sense, it functions as a hub within the broader museum network.

How do you assess the museum's condition since assuming leadership?

The museum is housed in one of Iran's most important architectural landmarks. Its structure, design, and collection give it a strong foundation. Over the years, various directors have worked hard to improve it, and many valuable exhibitions and cultural events have taken place here. That said, the museum has experienced highs and lows. Internal administrative and financial issues, along with external social factors, have hindered progress. Museums, by nature, are sensitive to their social surroundings. They need to be responsive and proactive—through events, research, and education. Over the last 50 years, museum practices worldwide have evolved. Standards have changed, and new systems have been developed. Unfortunately, the TMOCA has not kept pace with those developments in key areas like curatorial methods, museology, educational programming, research, conservation, and documentation. Despite its national and international status, the museum still functions like a typical administrative office. It hasn't lived up to its full potential.

As director of the museum, what are your main plans for improvement?

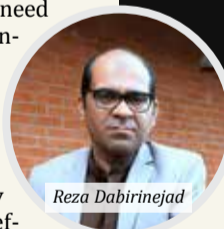
One key initiative is to raise the museum's institutional standing. We plan to establish a policy and advisory council to bring in expertise from professional art sectors. Another priority is strengthening specialized functions—such as conservation, preservation, and museum governance. By doing so, the TMOCA can act as a central and supportive hub for other museums across the country.

What is your biggest concern about the museum?

The biggest concern is the accumulation of unmet needs. If the museum aims to reach proper standards, we need substantial budgetary support to make up for years of delay. Focusing only on exhibitions and ignoring the structural aspects—like documentation, preservation, and long-term service—would be a serious mistake. That imbalance could lead to irreversible losses over time. To modernize operations, we need national-level funding. Administrative-level budgets are no longer sufficient. We must recognize the museum's value and secure backing from policymakers and budget authorities. Only then can we launch urgent efforts to address deficiencies in infrastructure and conservation. We are also supporting a number of projects in provincial museums. Some are progressing well, but others need a push. The main concern in regional museums is the lack of coherent content planning. Globally, the role of museums has shifted. Art museums are no longer just repositories. They act as cultural and artistic meeting points. This perspective should shape how we redefine provincial branches of the museum. A unified content strategy and activity framework will help us reflect contemporary relevance.

Do you have plans to reorganize or expand the collection?

Reorganizing the collection is essential. We are working toward a comprehensive, scientific system for documentation. Improving the storage and exhibition environment is also part of this process. Expanding the collection is another key responsibility. Even if financial conditions are not ideal, collection development must continue. We will define a clear, principled acquisition policy that reflects both the mu-



Reza Dabirinejad

seum's identity and broader cultural developments.

What has been the public response to the Picasso exhibition?

The exhibition showcased works by Picasso that had not been previously displayed as a complete set. After expert consultation and planning, we launched the show late March, coinciding with Nowruz. We focused on research and education. The exhibition offered substantial information, comparable to leading global shows. We used various formats—timelines, graphics, documentary films, motion design—to enhance communication. We also produced themed materials and created interactive features. The exhibit had a curated narrative and a scenario that linked Picasso's position in global art history to Iranian artistic experiences. As expected, the response was strong. Attendance before and during Nowruz exceeded expectations. Daily visitors doubled compared to the museum's usual numbers. Nearly 50,000 people visited during the holiday period. Most attendees were young and unfamiliar with past exhibitions. They had formal art education and were introduced to artists through social media. They found major names in



the museum's collection compelling and came out in large numbers. Many visitors were travelers from other cities. The Night at the Museum program also drew attention. Audience behavior stood out. They engaged deeply with exhibit texts, respected quiet spaces, and watched the media presentations attentively. The self-regulated, orderly visits—even forming lines—were remarkable. It shows that museums can shape their audiences. It's important for us, because every museum needs loyal and engaged visitors. The Picasso show also received international coverage. Diplomats attended the opening, and foreign media reported on public interest. The exhibition projected a positive image of cultural awareness in Iran. That makes our job more important: we need to respond to this growing interest and maintain the momentum.