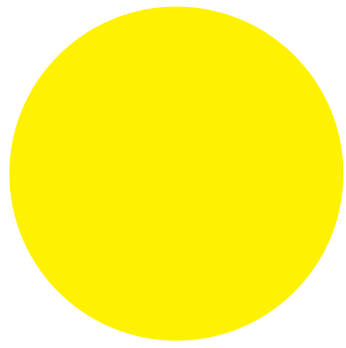


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Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad (Standing L) and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister for Energy Affairs Hayan Abdul-Ghani al-Sawad supervise the signing of cooperation agreements at a meeting in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on April 14, 2025. Shana.ir

Talks could be win-win if US isn't staging political theater



By **Rouhollah Lak-Aliabadi**
Iranian lawmaker

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The Saturday talks between Iran and the United States in Oman are unfolding based on guidance and decisions laid down by the Leader. Once negotiations kick off, their scope quickly spills beyond the table. Media messages start to fly back and forth, and various officials and actors from both sides weigh in, shaping the course of events. As Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has noted, the talks are "going very well," but even beyond the outcome, Iran has already sent a strong message to the world that it is a nation that stands for peace and dialogue, and resolving issues,

not warmongering. The negotiations in Oman are being carried out with honor, courage, and dignity, under the skilled management of Iran's experienced diplomatic corps. Tehran has made its position crystal clear beforehand, and the Leader himself gave a firm pushback to President Donald Trump's threats, saying unequivocally that Iran is not there for photo ops or political theater. It was made clear that Iran would sit down at the negotiating table only if its interests were secured. Wherever those interests can be advanced, Iran will be present. Its negotiation team is made up of intelligent, brave, and capable professionals.

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Need to protect negotiation process

OPINION

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Arab states rally behind Oman talks, eye peace over provocation

ANALYSIS

Persian Gulf Arab states are standing behind new Iran-US talks in Oman, hoping diplomacy can stop another crisis before it starts. With past wars still fresh in their minds and economies tied closely to peace, countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE see these talks as more than politics—they see them as a lifeline. Leaders are speaking out, warning of the risks of strikes or another war in the region. From fears of environmental disaster to the threat of being pulled into a larger conflict, their concerns are real. These countries want to protect the region, their resources, and their future. For them, peace is not just a goal—it is a need. As the talks begin, one thing is clear. Persian Gulf Arab states are watching closely. For more on this, check page 3.

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Iran: No obstacle to Tehran-Washington economic cooperation

'Tehran in contact with JCPOA signatories'

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said that there has been no obstacle to economic cooperation between Iran and the US, blaming Washington for the lack of such cooperation.

During his weekly press conference on Monday, Baqaei said it is the US itself that, through complex legislation, has deprived its own citizens of investment in Iran.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian earlier said that Tehran has no objection to American investors doing business in Iran.

The Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has also pointed to the issue in an article published by the Washington Post, saying that 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.

Since Saturday, Tehran and Washington have begun new negotiations to resolve a longstanding dispute over Iran's nuclear program, which if successful, the two countries could see a boost in their economic cooperation. The first round of the talks were held in Oman's capital, Muscat. The two countries described the negotiations as "positive and constructive" and agreed to resume the negotiations on Saturday.

Rome to host 2nd round of talks

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said on Monday that the second round of nuclear talks will be held in Rome. "We received a request from the inter-

ested parties and from Oman, which is playing the role of mediator, and we have given a positive response," Tajani was quoted by ANSA as saying at the world Expo exhibition in the Japanese city of Osaka.

US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that he expected to make a decision on Iran very quickly.

Trump, who has threatened military action if no deal is reached on Iran's nuclear program, told reporters aboard Air Force One that he met with advisers on Iran and expected a quick decision.

"We'll be making a decision on Iran very quickly," he said.

Foreign Ministry's spokesman also confirmed that Iran continued to engage with the other signatories of the 2015 nuclear deal from which the US withdrew in 2018.

"From a legal standpoint, the JCPOA (2015 nuclear agreement) is a living and existing agreement," he said, adding that Tehran remained committed to consultations within its framework.

Araghchi to visit Russia

He announced that Araghchi is scheduled to visit Russia later this week in a



Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei speaks during his weekly press conference in Tehran on April 14, 2025.

MIZAN

trip that was planned in advance, but would also include discussions related to US-Iran talks.

In parallel, Iran has continued its European consultations, including during a recent visit by senior diplomat Majid Takht-Ravanchi to Europe, the official stated.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot on Monday welcomed talks but

insisted Europe would be "vigilant" its security concerns were taken into account.

"We very much welcome this step, but we will be vigilant with our British and German friends and partners to ensure that any negotiations that may be undertaken are consistent with our security interests," Barrot said at a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg.

IAEA chief due in Tehran on Wednesday

Grossi: Diplomatic solutions 'urgently needed' on Iran nuclear issue

International Desk

The head of the UN nuclear watchdog, Rafael Grossi, will arrive in Tehran on Wednesday for discussions with senior Iranian officials ahead of new round of talks between Iran and the United States.

During his visit, Grossi is set to meet Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), IRNA reported on Monday, citing Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi.

"The trip falls within the framework of ongoing interaction and cooperation between the two sides," he added.

Grossi also in a post on X acknowledged that he will travel to Tehran this week to discuss cooperation on the country's nuclear program, saying that diplomatic solutions were "urgently needed".

"Continued engagement and cooperation with the Agency is essential at a time when diplomatic solutions are urgently needed," Grossi said.



Rafael Grossi
AP

Back in March, Gharibabadi and Grossi held a meeting at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna where they discussed the Iran-IAEA cooperation, the resolution of two outstanding issues, the security of nuclear facilities, the latest developments surrounding the nuclear issue, and the lifting of sanctions on Iran.

Currently, Iran and the IAEA are in a dispute triggered by the agency's claims of "uranium traces" found at "undeclared nuclear sites" in Iran.

Iran has categorically rejected the accusations regarding undeclared nuclear activities or materials. Tehran maintains it is prepared to cooperate with the IAEA to settle disputes.

Algeria orders expulsion of French officials amid rocky relations

Algeria on Monday ordered a dozen French officials to leave the country within 48 hours, increasing diplomatic tension between the two countries.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot asserted on Monday that the order is linked to the recent arrest of three Algerian nationals suspected of kidnapping a high-profile critic of the Algerian government in Paris last year, Al Jazeera reported.

Barrot asked the Algerian authorities to "abandon these expulsion measures", saying if they persisted with their decision, France would have no choice but to "respond immediately".

A diplomatic source told the AFP news agency that the 12 included some members of the French Ministry of the Interior.

Last week, French prosecutors indicted three Algerians, including a consular official, on suspicion of involvement in the kidnapping of Amir Boukhors.

The men, who were placed in pre-trial detention, are also being

prosecuted for "terrorist" conspiracy.

An opponent of the Algerian government, the social media influencer has more than one million followers on TikTok under the name of "Amir DZ".

Boukhors, who was granted asylum by France in 2023, was taken in a Paris suburb in April last year and released the following day, according to his lawyer.

Algiers is demanding he return to face trial, having issued nine international arrest warrants against him on accusations of fraud and terror offenses.

The diplomatic spat threatens to upend recent efforts to normalize strained relations between France and its former North African colony, including a visit to Algeria by Barrot a week ago.

Last July, French President Emmanuel Macron angered Algeria by recognizing a plan for the autonomy of the Western Sahara region under Moroccan sovereignty. Tensions mounted further last month when an Algerian court



AFP

sentenced French-Algerian writer Boualem Sansal to five years in jail for undermining national unity, prompting a call for his freedom from Macron.

Just last week, following talks with Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, Barrot had declared that ties were back to normal.

The French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs said on Monday that should Algiers follow through with its order, it would be the first expulsion of French diplomats since Algeria gained independence in 1962.

Talks could be ...

Chief negotiator Araghchi is one of the most consummate diplomats in the Foreign Ministry, having seen through the lengthy JCPOA talks and served in various governments. I believe he can steer the process with prudence.

Iranian lawmakers are standing firmly behind the negotiators, fully aware that the table is more than a place for talks—it is a battleground. Iran is going toe-to-toe not just with the US, but also with European powers like France, the UK, and Germany, who are now pushing for the snapback of sanctions on Iran. Most international actors seem to be steering clear of muddying the waters, recognizing that both Iran and the US are key global players.

Iran, in particular, holds massive sway in the Middle East, and if a war were to break out in the region, the fallout would hit home for many. Even Europe has come to see that the stakes of these negotiations extend far beyond Tehran or Washington and the outcome can either strengthen or threaten the interests of all countries.

Iran offers a lucrative, untapped market—with 85 million people and vast geography—and European firms have their eyes on it. A successful deal would rev up business and investment, especially for economies still reeling from the Ukraine conflict. No wonder European countries are not in the mood to rock the boat and sabotage the talks. This could very well turn out to be

a win-win negotiation, but only if the US refrains from turning it into political theater. Washington must avoid a repeat of its failed North Korea spectacle, where Trump's flashy photos with Kim Jong-un led nowhere.

Iran has entered these talks in good faith, and its negotiators enjoy full domestic support. No matter the outcome, the negotiations will certainly benefit Iran. Either the US is genuinely at the table and the cruel sanctions start to lift, jumpstarting the economy, or the talks turn out to be another propaganda show and fall flat, driving home once again the trust gap and reinforcing Iran's case of distrusting US intentions. Either way, Tehran has shown it is ready to talk—but not to sell out.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran, Iraq ink deals to enhance joint energy ties

Economy Desk

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad and Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister for Energy Affairs Hayan Abdul-Ghani al-Sawad signed on Monday agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to enhance their countries' cooperation in the fields of oil and gas.

Paknejad and Sawad inked the documents in an official meeting in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad as they discussed the prospects of the development of joint cooperation in energy sectors between the two sides and the exchange of expertise and investment.

"There are favorable grounds for cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Iraq. In the oil sector, considering such commonalities, we have started activities. Some of these activities relate to the memorandums of understanding that were pre-

viously signed between the two countries, and during this visit, we took steps to implement these memorandums," Paknejad said on the sidelines of the meeting, pointing to cultural, religious and historical commonalities between the two neighbors. The Iraqi deputy minister, for his part, said his country has promising gas investment projects and is working to achieve self-sufficiency in petroleum derivatives.

"Iraq strives to achieve self-sufficiency in the production of oil derivatives and seeks to develop technical and investment cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran," Sawad said.

Paknejad expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and visit to Iraq, as well as the deep cultural relations between Tehran and Baghdad.

The Iranian minister underscored the importance of con-



Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad (L) and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister for Energy Affairs Hayan Abdul-Ghani al-Sawad pose for a photo after a meeting in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on April 14, 2025.

● SHANA

tinuing relations between the two countries in all fields.

The Iranian side also secured a contract to convert flare gas from Iraqi oilfields into feedstock for petrochemical plants located near its border with the Arab country.

Paknejad started his two-day visit on Monday at the invitation of his Iraqi counterpart.

He is scheduled to meet the Iraqi ministers of oil and electricity, in addition to the prime minister.

Upon arrival, Paknejad paid tribute to the memorial site of General Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic



Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's

Popular Mobilization Units (PMU). Soleimani, Muhandis and their companions were assassinated

in a US drone strike near Baghdad's International Airport on January 3, 2020.

ISPA warns unprecedented power curbs could leave scars on steel industry



Economy Desk

The secretary of the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) announced on Monday that the unprecedented restrictions on power supply in the new Persian calendar year (started March 21) are taking heavy toll on the strategic industry across the country.

Rasoul Khalifeh-Soltani raised the alarm as he pointed to the grave consequences of power shortages for various sectors of the Iranian economy, not

least production, employment and the domestic market.

"In less than 20 days since the beginning of the year, steel industries have faced severe and surprising electricity restrictions. These restrictions have led to a 30-50% decrease in the supply of electricity to the units, and in some cases, it even reaches 80%," Khalifeh-Soltani said.

"Such conditions, which have been unprecedented in recent years, have caused serious problems for the pro-

duction and continued activity of this industry."

The official underlined that steelmakers were facing serious problems in gas and electricity supply until the end of last year, but they expected to pass at least one month of the new year without energy restrictions.

"Since the onset of April, they suddenly faced warnings from the regional electricity authorities and had to reduce their electricity consumption," he said, adding, "This situation has not only disrupted the production process, but has also increased concerns about its impact on employment and domestic markets."

Touching on ISPA's reports from the major steel companies, such as Mobarakeh Steel, Khuzestan Steel, Hormozgan Steel, South Kaveh Steel and other steel manufacturers, Khalifeh-Soltani said, "Since April 1 of the new year, steel companies have been forced to reduce their electricity consumption by at least 30%, a measure in stark contrast with the motto of the year — investment for production."

Speaking at the inauguration of the 6th National Iranian Steel Festival and Exhibition in January, ISPA chief Bahram Sobhani said the country's annual steel

production capacity stands at 50 million tons, but due to energy shortages, only 30 million tons are being utilized. Sobhani highlighted that production limitations and the failure to maximize capacity stem from energy supply challenges, particularly shortages and disruptions in gas and electricity during various seasons.

Sobhani emphasized the localization of the steel industry, stating that domestic companies and producers have reduced reliance on imports by manufacturing components and equipment locally.

Sobhani stressed that despite sanctions and energy imbalances, the steel industry generates approximately \$8 billion annually in foreign exchange earnings.

He underscored the need to increase the industry's share of non-oil exports to over 20 million tons, noting that steel accounts for 16% of Iran's non-oil exports and plays a significant role in the national economy.

Iran's steel production capacity exceeds 55 million tons, and over the past two years, despite cross-sectoral challenges in the energy sector, it has managed to produce over 32 million tons, ranking among the world's top

10 steel-producing countries. At times in 2024, Iran even climbed to the ninth and seventh positions globally in steel production.

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

However, Iran's steel production in 2024 also recorded a noticeable decline, primarily due to energy shortages. Despite this, with the production of 2.6 million tons of crude steel in December and 3.1 million tons in November 2024, Iranian steelmakers once again surpassed Brazil, Germany, and Turkey to secure the seventh position globally. By increasing production of this strategic product and accounting for 56% of crude steel production, Iran has claimed the top spot in the West Asian region.

Arab states rally behind Oman talks, eye peace over provocation

ANALYSIS

The first round of Iran-US negotiations held Saturday in Muscat, kicked off with upbeat statements from both sides and was widely welcomed by Persian Gulf Arab states who hailed the diplomatic effort as a chance to shore up regional peace and stability.

In a region already on edge from mounting tensions between Iran and the West, such diplomatic engagement plays a crucial role in keeping a lid on conflict. For Persian Gulf countries with deep reliance on trade and natural resources any escalation in hostilities is seen as a direct blow to their national interests. As calls for de-escalation grow louder, diplomacy has increasingly been held up as the only viable path to head off full-blown war. Qatar's Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani sounded the alarm in a March interview with Tucker Carlson, warning that a strike

on Iran's nuclear facilities could set off an environmental catastrophe, threatening the Persian Gulf's water sources.

His remarks struck a chord, underscoring a shared Arab concern that one misstep could spiral into a crisis endangering not only national security but also the region's economy and environment.

Arab states are backing talks for a series of reasons. First, Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members are determined not to let their backyard become a battleground for global powers again. With bitter memories of Iraq still fresh, they know the devastating toll war can take. Second, diplomacy gives them a chance to step in as mediators and push back against the kind of militarization that could choke already fragile economies.

Statements from Riyadh, Manama, Kuwait City, Doha and Abu Dhabi after the first round of talks all pointed to one thing: a genuine desire

to de-escalate tensions and keep the peace and stability of the region.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry stressed its support for dialogue as the path to end all regional and global disputes, adding it hoped the talks would pave the way for stronger regional cooperation for peace, security and stability of the region and beyond. Bahrain echoed that sentiment, praising Oman's mediation and backing peaceful conflict resolution.

Kuwait reiterated its faith in dialogue and diplomatic solutions, expressing hope the negotiations would boost peace and security.

Qatar, too, commended both the tone of the talks and Oman's constructive role in bringing both parties to the table.

UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in a phone call with his Omani counterpart, lauded Muscat's mediation as a step toward bridging the gap between Washington and Tehran and rebuild-

ing trust that could set the stage for peace and stability.

Former Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, Jordan and, Qatar Mohammad-Ali Sobhani believes that the reception of Persian Gulf Arab states to the Oman talks is genuine. He views things as follows.

Arab states back talks out of sheer security need

The warm reception from Arab countries toward the Iran-US talks in Muscat stems from one clear motivation which is their urgent need for regional security. Iran's security doctrine in the Persian Gulf has been based on collective cooperation and creating opportunities for all countries to ensure regional security and a stable, peaceful life—an approach that goes back even before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Yet, at various turning points in the region's fraught history, some Persian Gulf Arab nations have drifted toward Tehran's adversaries and sought to es-

calate tensions between Iran and the United States and Israel to tip the balance of power in their favor. This has at times led to their lining up behind anti-Iran stances.

Broadly speaking, Arab states have thrown their support behind de-escalation efforts because they understand full well that any armed clash between Iran and the US would have far-reaching fallout—dragging them in, like it or not. These countries face deep-seated economic and social vulnerabilities. If war were to break out, there is no guarantee they could stay out of the line of fire. That's why the key demand from Persian Gulf Arab states is to dial down the tension.

Their reaction to the first round of talks has been genuine and grounded in hard realities. It is not just diplomatic theater. There is a very real desire to mend fences between Tehran and Washington. After all, regional peace is a prerequisite for continued economic growth.

Need to protect negotiation process



By Abbas Akhondi
Former Iranian
minister of Roads,
Urban Development

OPINION

Now is a suitable time to end tensions or at least manage the conflict between the United States and Iran — provided that both sides protect the negotiation process. This is because there are saboteurs on both sides. These two countries, as members of the United Nations, recognize each other, yet for 46 years, their relations have been in a state of conflict.

In my opinion, after more than four decades, the time has come to manage and move on from this conflict. The United States has realized that the various threats and measures it has employed against Iran so far have not inflicted existential damage on the Islamic Republic, and Iran has been able to carry on with its progress. Iran, too, has understood that by picking a fight with the United States, which plays an influential role in global politics, it cannot push forward its own objectives.

The key point is that, beyond Iran and the United States, the world currently has no appetite for war and wants both sides to put an end to these conflicts. This has created an opportunity that increases the likelihood of the negotiations succeeding.

If we compare the current situation with the time of the JCPOA negotiations, we see that back then, some regional countries went all out to block an agreement and prevent the JCPOA's success.

But now, no country in the region wants these two nations to fail to reach an agreement. Even the United Arab Emirates, which is considered a strategic ally of the Israeli regime, as well as Saudi Arabia, wants Iran and the US to come to an agreement.

This indicates that regional countries see their own interests in ending — or at least managing — the conflicts between Iran and the United States.

China, as a major global power, also cares about regional security given its interests in global supply chain stability and the region's importance in terms of energy supply, consumer markets, and its role in global transportation. So, China also wants these nego-



An Iranian woman holds the Iran Newspaper featuring portraits of Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) and Steve Witkoff, White House special envoy, in downtown Tehran, Iran, on April 9, 2025.
● MORTEZA NIKOUBAZL/GETTY IMAGES



US President Donald Trump (R) speaks to businessman Steve Witkoff in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C., on March 1, 2018. The two have known each other since the 1980s.
● EVAN VUCCI/AP

tiations to succeed. Russia, too, may play a constructive role in facilitating the talks.

The European Union, despite its dissatisfaction with Iran, does not seem inclined to keep up conflicts in the region. In fact, we are at a point where all regional and global powers agree that the conflict between the US and Iran should be handled and brought to an end. On the other hand, if we look at US demands, its current demands are in no way comparable to those put forward by Pompeo in the previous administration.

Now, the focus is solely on reaching a nuclear agreement, not the complex and extensive conditions of the past.

Thus, we are at a unique historical juncture and must make the most of this opportunity. This does not mean being naive. Rather, we must carefully watch out for spoilers, both domestic and foreign, on both sides. Negotiations of this complexity, after 46 years of conflict, will undoubtedly face many difficulties and go through numerous ups and downs. The negotiations will not be

short-term and, given the sensitivity of the issue and its long history, will take time. Moreover, negotiating with the US, due to the complexity and chronic nature of the discussions, will naturally require a lengthy process.

Right now, protecting the very essence of the negotiations is as important as their content. The actions of actors opposed to an agreement must be put under the microscope by political activists in Iran and worldwide.

Globally, the Israeli regime stands to gain nothing from the success

of these talks and will try its hardest to create obstacles. Within the US, the Israel lobby and sanctions profiteers will keep up their negative efforts. In Iran, too, certain groups whose interests lie in the continuation of sanctions oppose the success of these negotiations. Nevertheless, taking a broad view, the conditions for negotiations are in place, and we must capitalize on the global and domestic consensus — excluding sanctions profiteers.



The key point is that, beyond Iran and the United States, the world currently has no appetite for war and wants both sides to put an end to these conflicts. This has created an opportunity that increases the likelihood of the negotiations succeeding. If we compare the current situation with the time of the JCPOA negotiations, we see that back then, some regional countries went all out to block an agreement and prevent the JCPOA's success.

Rescheduling to next week signals 30% of deal done



By Abdolreza
Faraji-Rad
Former Iranian
diplomat

OPINION

Personally, I consider these talks positive. The reports we are getting indicate that the focus has been primarily on nuclear negotiations, which has been Iran's objective. That is, the United States has not, in this initial phase, brought up discussions or demands regarding missile issues, regional matters, or the Resistance Front. Naturally, if this remains the case, we can have a relatively positive assessment and expect

that the timeline for the next round of talks or future steps will be clarified soon.

The scheduling confirmation shows that both sides are genuinely willing to negotiate and are focusing solely on the nuclear issue to reach an outcome. Both sides need the talks. Regional tensions must be reduced, and conflict must be avoided. If the talks have indeed been pushed to next week, I believe 30% of the path has been covered. Because in Iran-US negotiations, this first phase is a crucial one.

One reason the Iranian side insisted on indirect talks was that they did not know what

the American demands would be. There were concerns that US demands might include dismantling the nuclear program, addressing missile issues, and discussing the Resistance Front. Now that the next round has been set, it appears the focus is on the nuclear issue, with other matters not being brought up. This itself indicates that Mr. Trump's recent remarks — where he reiterated that he only wants to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons — were precise. Naturally, the Americans will engage in talks on this matter. In future negotiations, they may not bring up missile issues at all,



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) meets his Omani counterpart, Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, prior to negotiations with US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff in Muscat, Oman, on April 12, 2025.
● IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY

but they could hold discussions on certain Middle East matters, for instance, on how Iran could help reduce tensions in the Red Sea. For now, however, the focus on the nuclear issue is positive, and it is expected that the talks will carry on.

US must show will to lift sanctions

If we consider the first round positive, it means that in later stages, both sides must work on confidence-building to ensure Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons and that sanctions are lifted. For this to happen, one step would be for Iran to show its willingness to scale back 60% enrichment. If Iran agrees to bring down its 60% enrichment, this part of the negotiations will drag on, with both sides haggling over the extent of the reduction.

Another key issue is sanctions. Iran expects that if talks progress over several rounds and trust is built, some sanctions will be eased and the US side will demonstrate its readiness to remove sanctions.

The Americans expect the International Atomic Energy Agency to step up its monitoring and oversight. Iran's nuclear activities during the negotiations and Mr. Grossi's upcoming visit to Iran are crucial. If Mr. Grossi

delivers a positive report, it will indicate that part of the Iran-US talks has been smoothed out. Therefore, bargaining must also take place on the issue of inspections, and an agreement between Iran and the IAEA should be reached — which could shorten the duration of negotiations.

Trump likely wants to bypass Europeans

Alongside these matters, Iran must engage with Europe, and talks with Russia and China are also important, as all these countries are part of the P5+1 group. Mr. Trump appears to want to bypass the Europeans, which will likely draw protests from them. Therefore, Iran must avoid repeating its past mistakes with Europe, move closer to them, and provide updates. Iran must also take the snapback issue seriously. Ultimately, before snapback comes into play, Iran needs to reach a broad agreement with the US so that the Europeans can more comfortably set aside the issues of sanctions and snapback.

I predict that the talks will ultimately move toward becoming direct. The question now is whether the next round on Saturday will be direct or not. In any case, preliminary dis-



Omani security personnel watch a convoy believed to be carrying US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff in Muscat, Oman, on April 12, 2025. **FATIMA SHBAIR/AP**

cussions have already taken place between the two sides through the mediation of Oman's foreign minister. Both sides have returned to their respective countries and re-

ported back to their leaders — whether in Iran or the US. They will then decide whether the next round of talks should be direct or indirect. However, in my opinion, the negoti-

ations will most likely be direct. There is a chance of this, though it is not certain.

The article first appeared in Persian on ILNA.

Now that the next round has been set, it appears the focus is on the nuclear issue, with other matters not being brought up. This itself indicates that Mr. Trump's recent remarks — where he reiterated that he only wants to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons — were precise.

First round of talks, its future

By Saber Gol Anbari
Expert on int'l relations

OPINION

As I predicted, both the Iranian and American sides assessed today's talks as positive and constructive. The only thing left is for Trump, in his remarks, to ramp up the dose of optimism by speaking of the possibility of reaching an "imminent" agreement!

The Iranian negotiating team's media presence in this round was notably more active than in the past. It seems Trump's unique media approach has led the Iranian side to rethink its conservative media policy and even put out information before the American side.

Although Trump is an enemy of traditional media, he is obsessed with media and imagery, always seeking to turn everything into a media spectacle, and places great importance on image-building and narrative.

It appears that future talks will take on a more direct format. The brief, few-minute meeting between Araghchi and Witkoff after the indirect talks seems to lay the groundwork and set the stage for a shift in the dialogue's form.

Despite Araghchi and Witkoff expressing satisfaction with the first round of talks, an easy start does not mean easy progress. The negotiations in subsequent rounds may swing between optimism and pessimism, and it would not be surprising if, at some point, they even reach the brink of collapse — with Trump possibly threatening to walk away as a pressure tactic. Yet, the talks will not fall apart and will continue.

Ultimately, an Iran-US agreement is more likely than no agreement — though Trump's negotiating temperament may cause problems at certain stag-



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (2nd L) speaks with members of the Iranian delegation during a visit to Muscat, Oman where he held "indirect" talks with US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff on April 12, 2025. **ENTEKHAB**

es. For example, even if talks come very close to an agreement, he might spring new demands or issues to create serious shocks and extract more concessions.

In reality, four factors could drive an agreement — whether temporary or final: first, Trump's own personality; second, the narrowing of the talks' agenda to the nuclear issue, facilitated by the US president's haste; third, Iran's specific condi-

tions; and fourth, the relatively favorable regional environment, along with the inability of Israel and Saudi Arabia to jointly lobby against the talks.

But the decisive variable here is Trump himself. Unlike the deep state in the US, he does not see himself entangled in the historical issues and problems between Iran and America and easily moves past these obstacles.

The Biden administration and the Europeans,

however, are not like this.

For psychological reasons, Trump is obsessed with quick deals — whether with Iran, Russia, China, or others — often for the sake of image-building. He has repeatedly demonstrated this by emphasizing his willingness to negotiate and reach a deal with Tehran, sending letters, and so on.

While the unprecedented US military threats against Iran and the deployment of military equipment

to the region should not be downplayed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that this militarization is less a serious sign of potential war and more a move to speed up the process of reaching an agreement, reflecting Trump's impatience on the matter.

Of course, these threats also serve other motives beyond maximum pressure on Tehran to secure a deal — acting as a catalyst to that end. These include reassuring Israel's right-wing cabinet and its hardline lobby in the US to keep them in check, as well as preemptively shaping the post-agreement narrative from a position of strength.

However, if, during the talks, Trump perceives that limited force could be used without any significant cost to break potential deadlocks, he would resort to it.

But overall, the notion that Trump is paving the way for war and military conflict reflects a misunderstanding of his character. Trump is impatient in achieving his goals and does not bother with lengthy preparations. Due to the costs of war, he has no appetite for it. His decisions are based on economic cost-benefit analysis — which is why, when tariffs backfired, he quickly suspended most of them.

Alongside his efforts to reach a deal with Tehran, Trump is also pushing for normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia, which is impossible without ending the Gaza war. Given the unlikelihood of Palestinian statehood as a condition for Riyadh-Tel Aviv relations, Trump seems to be trying to use a Gaza cease-fire and reconstruction as an alternative bridge.

Meanwhile, Trump is set to visit Riyadh and the region next month, likely preceded by a Gaza cease-fire in the coming two to three weeks. After that, we will see what happens with other regional issues.

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FIBA West Asian Super League: Tabiat undone by Al Riyadi in dead rubber

Sports Desk

Iranian champion Tabiat Basketball finished its Group A campaign with a 92-78 loss to Lebanese powerhouse Al Riyadi at the FIBA West Asian Super League in Zouk Mikael, Lebanon, on Sunday night.

Having beaten other Lebanese club Sagesse (75-73) on the preceding night to secure a runner-up finish in the group and a place in next month's Final 8, Tabiat started on the front foot at the Stade Nouhad Naufal and won the first quarter 27-23, before Wael Arakji inspired the defending champion to finishing the tilt with a pristine 8-0 record.

The Lebanese point guard contributed with 27 points – including three from behind the arc – with Amir Saoud (16), American Marcus Georges-Hunt (15), Marin Maric (10) also finishing in double figures. Saoud delivered 13 points in the second chapter alone as he powered the turnaround that saw the reigning BCL Asia champion turn a six-point deficit to a 50-41 advantage enter-

ing the break.

Croatian center Ivan Buva continued his impressive run for Tabiat with a game-high 29 points and 10 rebounds, while Sina Vahedi chipped in 14 points.

Tabiat showed some fight late in the game, managing to cut the gap to nine, but Georges-Hunt and Arakji joined hands for a mini-run to restore order, 89-76, with only 1:22 left.

Finishing the group campaign with a 5-3 record, Tabiat will be back in the Iranian league action – starting with a game against Palayesh Naft Abadan on Saturday in the last-four playoffs – before shifting into high gear for WASL's culminating event, the date and venue of which to be announced soon.



Al Riyadi center Ilimane Diop (21) goes up for a basket against Tabiat's Ivan Buva (25) during a FIBA West Asian Super League game in Zouk Mikael, Lebanon, on April 13, 2025.

● FIBA



Moroccan fullback Amloud nearing exit door at Persepolis



● kabavarzeshi.com

Sports Desk

Persepolis fans may have already seen the last of Ayoub El Amloud in the Tehran Reds colors as the Moroccan fullback will reportedly leave the Persian Gulf Pro League club once his one-year contract expires in July. Amloud, whose campaign has been interrupted by several injury spells, was last in action during a 3-2 loss at Shams Azar in the domestic league on March 30, leaving the pitch in the 50th minute with a groin problem. The Moroccan left for his home country after the game and is not expected to return to Iran ahead of what promises to be a summer of shake-up under Turkish head coach Ismail Kartal.

Having joined from Wydad AC last summer, Amloud got off to flying start to his career in the Iranian league under former Spanish boss Juan Carlos Garrido, bagging a late equalizer in 1-1 draw at Tractor in only his second game for the Capital Reds.

However, his campaign has been interrupted by several injury spells throughout the season, with his contribution limited to one goal and an assist in 24 games across all competitions.

Center-back Farshad Faraji has done a decent job in playing out of position to fill in for the Moroccan right-back, bagging three goals and double assists, while Iranian U20 international Yaqoub Barajeh impressed during Friday's hard-fought 1-0 victory at Nassaji Mazandaran.

Having dominated the Iranian club football with eight top-flight trophies in nine seasons, Persepolis is third in the league table with 51 points with four games remaining – trailing leader Tractor, which has a game in hand, by four points, and two adrift of second-placed Sepahan.

Kartal's men will be looking to boost their slim hopes of third successive title when taking on Sepahan at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Friday.

Iranian squash girl Eqtedari runner-up at Yokohama Open

Sports Desk

Iranian squash player Fereshteh Eqtedari won a precious runner-up trophy at the Dynam Cup Yokohama Open in Japan.

World No. 263 Eqtedari claimed four victories before suffering a 3-0 (11-2, 11-6, 11-8) loss to Malaysia's Yashmitha Jadishkumar in Sunday's final showpiece at the Yokohama Squash Stadium SQ-Cube.

The 25-year-old Iranian began her campaign with a straight-game win against the host's Ryoko Kadota, and then went on to beat Malaysian Yu Jie Chen (3-0), South Korea's Mingyeong Heo (3-2), and Sze Wing Wai of Hong Kong (3-2) for a place in the final.

This was a second runner-up trophy for Eqtedari, who joined the Professional Squash Association in 2016, at the PSA Tour, following her final defeat against South African Alexa Pienaar Joburg Open



● squashiran.ir

2024 in Johannesburg last September.

Eqtedari also reached the last four

in last year's HCL Squash Tour and Sunil Verma Memorial Open in India.

Clippers, Timberwolves win to secure NBA play-off spot



● AFP

BBC- The LA Clippers and the Minnesota Timberwolves each secured a play-off spot with victories on the final day of the regular NBA season. The Clippers finished fifth in the Western Conference with

a 124-119 overtime win over the Golden State Warriors, who drop into the play-in tournament.

James Harden scored 12 of his game-high 39 points in overtime as the Clippers set

up a play-off meeting with the Denver Nuggets, who had already qualified for the play-offs but clinched fourth place by beating the Houston Rockets 126-111.

Anthony Edwards top-scored with 43 points as the Timberwolves beat the Utah Jazz 116-105 to finish sixth and set-up a play-off with the Los Angeles Lakers.

The play-offs begin with the play-in tournament between the four teams finishing seventh to 10th in the regular season.

Seventh play eighth – with the winners going straight into the play-offs to face the second seed. But the losers get a second

chance, as they then face the winners of the play-in match between the teams in ninth and 10th. The losers of that game are eliminated, while the winners go into the play-offs to face the top seeds.

Play-off rounds are decided by a best-of-seven series, with match-ups decided by seedings.

The first round is followed by the conference semi-finals, then the conference finals, with the winners of each conference meeting in the NBA Finals.

The NBA play-ins take place between Wednesday and Friday. The play-offs are scheduled between 19 April and 2 June.

Economic, environmental impacts of wetland tourism



IRNA

Iranica Desk

Wetland tourism is a form of ecotourism focused on visiting wetland areas with an emphasis on environmental conservation, education, and sustainable development. Wetlands, as ecosystems rich in biodiversity, are not only habitats for migratory birds and aquatic life but also have high potential for attracting nature-loving tourists due to their unique landscapes. Azadeh Abedinzadeh, involved in tourism affairs, wrote in a note: Wetland tourism, unlike mass tourism, is conducted with small, planned groups to minimize harm to the environment and maximize benefits for local communities. The Hara forest in Sohili village is part of the Khor Khoran Wetland of Qeshm, one of the most beautiful and valuable wetlands in Iran, which is protected as a biosphere reserve by UNESCO, chtn.ir wrote.

This forest, with its unique mangrove ecosystem, is home to dozens of species of migratory and indigenous birds, aquatic life, and marine creatures. A distinctive feature of this area is its saline water and continuous tidal movements, which make it possible to navigate among the intricate roots of the mangrove trees. Animal species in the Hara forest include birds like flamingos, herons, pelicans, egrets, spoonbills, and Siberian migratory birds. Additionally, aquatic creatures like wetland fish, palm crabs, and native shrimp live in this region. The vegetation is primarily composed of mangrove trees, which have the ability to purify seawater. The Sohili village, leveraging its unique location adjacent to the Hara forest, has the potential to become a hub for wetland tourism in southern Iran. However,

the key point is the implementation of responsible tourism at the Sohili tourism dock, where visits are conducted in groups of 6 to 10 people with local guides. This method offers multiple benefits, including reducing environmental pressure by preventing noise pollution and habitat destruction for birds and controlling the number of visitors to maintain ecological balance.

Wetland tourism has been able to generate income for the local community through job creation, including local guides, boatmen, and handicraft vendors, as well as boosting eco-lodges and local seafood restaurants. This type of tourism also contributes to indirect education, raising awareness and sensitizing tourists by familiarizing them with the importance of mangrove forests in water purification, biodiversity conservation, and promoting a

culture of beach clean-up and waste reduction.

With proper planning, wetland tourism can bring about increasingly positive transformations in Sohili village, including the quantitative and qualitative development of tourist facilities that provide visitors with welfare and accommodation services.

The village council, in collaboration with the tourism department of the Qeshm Free Zone, has decided to attract nature-loving tourists and researchers by constructing birdwatching shelters with minimal interference in nature and establishing nature interpretation centers to familiarize visitors with the Hara ecosystem. This initiative aims to create value by organizing birdwatching and wildlife photography tours and fostering collaboration with universities for environmental research.

Cultural significance of Chaleshtar Castle

Iranica Desk

The Chaleshtar Castle in Shahrekord symbolizes the fusion of Iranian-European architecture and stone carving art, according to the deputy head of the provincial Cultural Heritage, Handicraft, and Tourism Organization. Qodratollah Valizadeh-Kaji noted that the castle comprises two separate buildings from the Qajar era, constructed in 1905 on an 8,000-square-meter plot, with a built area of 3,000 square meters, chtn.ir wrote. He elaborated, "The architecture of Chaleshtar Castle represents a blend of styles from the Qajar period, combined with European architectural influences, featuring 40 standing stone columns and bas-reliefs crafted through

intricate stone carving." He mentioned that, according to the elder residents of Chaleshtar, there were once 22 circular towers with four gates facing each direction, as evidenced by existing documentation and aerial photographs. He reminded that the castle originally boasted a grand entrance and gates, many of which have since been lost. Currently, the surviving remnants are at risk due to ongoing urban development. The official described the castle's tower and walls as constructed from brick and adobe, standing six meters tall and three meters wide, with origins that may trace back to the Safavid period. Valizadeh-Kaji noted, "The rooms of Chaleshtar Castle are adorned

with designs in the London painting style, which blends Iranian and European artistic traditions. This style peaked during the Qajar period and features motifs of flowers and vases, as well as narratives such as the legend of Layla and Majnun, the tale of Bahram Gur, and Islamic motifs like the story of Joseph and Zuleikha, often accompanied by inscriptions of Quranic verses." He highlighted that the stone bases within the castle underground display designs of plants, grape clusters, abstract trees, winged angels, and intricate vases. He added, "Chaleshtar Castle is embellished with turquoise blue and white tiles, while the inner ceilings exhibit frames and windows for the various rooms and doors, all crafted and deco-

rated with geometric woodwork sourced from walnut trees." Valizadeh-Kaji pointed out that six museums currently operate within the historical and cultural complex of Chaleshtar Castle. He further mentioned that numerous valuable cultural and historical works, including the Grand Mosque, Sotoudeh House, Azadeh House, the castle's grand entrance, the Painting Room, the Anthropology Museum, the Stone Museum, and the Bathhouse Museum of Chaleshtar, have been officially registered as national heritage sites in Iran. Lastly, the official emphasized that the historical and cultural complex of Chaleshtar Castle is recognized as a national heritage site, dating back to the Qajar era.



Pezeshkian urges broader job diversity, prioritizes rural employment

Social Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian called for more targeted and diversified job creation projects, placing rural entrepreneurs at the heart of the government's employment agenda. Speaking at the 86th meeting of the Supreme Employment Council on Monday, Pezeshkian stressed the government's commitment to supporting small business owners and job creators, particularly in rural areas, president.ir reported. "The goal is clear: empower entrepreneurs, expand job opportunities, and reduce economic pressure," he said. He stressed that employment support must be "well-directed and traceable," with clarity on how resources are spent. The president cited Iran's

Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's emphasis on the strategic value of job creation, saying the 14th administration would fully back innovators and new business ventures. According to Pezeshkian, employment is not only a tool to fight poverty but also a cornerstone of national economic revival. "Job creation drives production, builds wealth, and helps reduce budget deficits," he said, adding that the support of executive bodies and provincial governments is vital to achieving this goal. He also highlighted the need for more diverse employment options. "A broader range of jobs means greater access to the labor market," he said. On the distribution of financial support, Pezeshkian

urged banks and relevant institutions to closely monitor how loans are allocated. "We must distinguish active entrepreneurs from passive recipients," he said. The president also warned that the current picture of Iran's domestic market and export potential remains unclear. He called for a cohesive national strategy to align domestic production with market demands and export opportunities. Pezeshkian recommended leveraging media to encourage cooperation from commercial banks in financing job-creating ventures, especially in underdeveloped regions. The meeting concluded with the approval of ten new resolutions aimed at boosting employment across the country.



president.ir

Culture minister promotes contemporary approach to Attar's teachings

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, marked the national commemoration of Sheikh Farid al-Din Attar of Nishapur by urging a renewed engagement with the 12th-century mystic's thought through the lens of modern discourse. In a message on Monday, Salehi described Attar as a towering figure in Persian-Islamic mysticism and literature, emphasizing that today's responsibility extends beyond hon-

oring his memory, IRNA reported. "It is our duty," he wrote, "to reinterpret his message in today's language for current and future generations." Attar, born in Nishapur in northeastern Iran, was a poet, mystic, and master storyteller. His works, including 'The Conference of the Birds' (Mantiq al-Tayr) and 'Memorial of the Saints' (Tadhkirat al-Awliya), have long been celebrated for their symbolic depth and spiritual insight. Attar's narratives, Salehi noted, tap into "the hidden truths of the human soul" and continue to offer clarity

and meaning in a world grappling with spiritual thirst. Calling Attar a "radiant jewel of wisdom and gnosis," Salehi described his poetry as a sacred breath that still refreshes the soul of the modern seeker. The minister highlighted the importance of cultural and educational institutions, particularly in Nishapur, in keeping Attar's legacy alive. He encouraged local and national authorities to invest in research, creative productions, and infrastructure that reflect the sage's enduring rele-

vance. Salehi also called for greater collaboration between scholars, artists, and young thinkers in the field of Attar studies, underlining the role of collective cultural will in safeguarding what he termed a "global heritage." "As long as people of culture and committed officials remain engaged," the message concluded, "Nishapur will continue to shine as a beacon of wisdom, mysticism, and poetic grace, and Attar's name will echo with vitality in the hearts of generations to come."



Iran showcases non-fiction titles at Moscow book fair

Arts & Culture Desk

Over 80 Iranian books were presented at the 25th International Fair Non/fictionN in Moscow, as part of a broader cultural program backed by the Islamic Republic's Cultural Center in Russia. Held from April 10 to 13 at the historic Gostiny Dvor exhibition hall near Red Square, the event brought together nearly 300 domestic and international publishers, IRNA reported. Iran's presence included titles across diverse fields such as resistance literature, Persian language education, Iranian studies, and both classical and contemporary prose. The pavilion also highlighted children's and young adult literature, which drew considerable interest from Russian readers. Several books previously translated into Russian were also featured in a dedicated section. Iranian publishers, represented chiefly by Nakhle Sabz Publication, took part under the trade name "Kinigis." The company showcased 80 titles, in addition to 400 works by Sadra Publishing, affiliated with the Ibn Sina Islamic Studies Foundation. Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, and Masoud Ahmadavand, the cultural attaché, visited the Iranian stands on the second day of the fair. Ali Mahdavi, director of the Nakhle Sabz Trans-



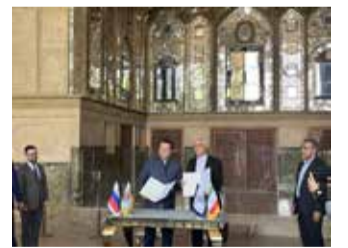
lation Center, noted that this marks their fifth appearance at Russian book exhibitions. In the past two events alone, the publisher has offered 35 translated titles in Russian, covering family issues, psychology, and heroic figures from Iran's contemporary history — including tributes to General Qassem Soleimani and late President Ebrahim Raisi. Mahdavi observed a strong interest in motivational titles such as 'The Successful Man and The Successful Woman', as well as youth fiction and educational novels — especially among ethnic Russians with growing familiarity with Iranian culture. Launched in 1999, the International Fair Non/fictionN is one of Russia's premier literary events. Since 2023, it has been held biannually in spring and fall, underscoring Moscow's expanding role as a global hub for cultural exchange.

Kazan official praises Iran's hospitality, cultural richness

Arts & Culture Desk

In a recent visit to Iran, the Mayor of Kazan, Ilсур Metshin, expressed admiration for the country's hospitality and cultural heritage. The visit, aimed at strengthening ties between Kazan and Iranian cities, included the signing of sister city agreements and participation in the BRICS+ Association of Cities and Municipalities. During his stay, Mayor Metshin signed a sister city agreement with Isfahan, highlighting the city's rich history and cultural significance, IRNA reported. He noted the city's cleanliness, tranquil atmosphere, and the respectful interactions among its residents. Particularly striking was the communal gathering along the Zayandeh Rud River, where citizens of all ages enjoyed the serene environment, free from litter and noise. In Tehran, discussions with city officials led to an agreement

aimed at fostering friendly relations. Mayor Metshin observed the capital's active development, citing the opening of 20 new metro stations and the acquisition of 3,000 new buses over the past three and a half years as evidence of its commitment to improving public transportation. Reflecting on his visit, Metshin remarked on the contrast between his experiences in Iran and the portrayal of the country in Western media, describing Iran as a "peace-loving" nation with "smiling and very sincere" people. He also highlighted the peaceful coexistence of various religious communities in Isfahan, including Orthodox churches, synagogues, and Zoroastrian temples. The visit coincided with the BRICS+ Cities Forum in Tehran, where Kazan's active participation was noted. Agreements were reached on hosting



a BRICS+ children's festival and urban planning awards in Kazan, initiatives aimed at strengthening international friendships. The next BRICS+ Cities Forum is scheduled to be hosted by Brazil. Kazan, the capital of Russia's Republic of Tatarstan, has a history of fostering international relations, having previously established sister city ties with Shiraz. The city also hosted the BRICS Summit from October 22 to 24, 2024, marking Iran's first official participation in the summit with President Masoud Pezeshkian in attendance.