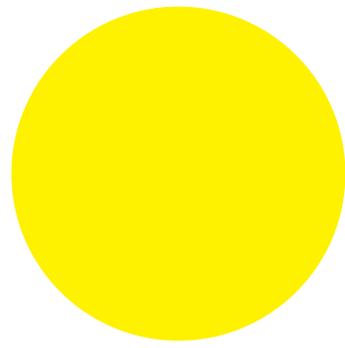


Pezeshkian highlights 'smart' tackling of energy shortages

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Iran-US nuclear talks 'well implemented' in first step: **Leader**

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Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses senior officials from the Islamic Republic's executive, judicial, and legislative branches in Tehran on April 15, 2025. [khamenei.ir](#)

Media buzz vs. real talks

OPINIONS

US special envoy Steve Witkoff has said talks with Iran would center around verifying its nuclear program, holding off on demands for full dismantlement and including checks on Iran's missiles. "The conversation with the Iranians will be much about two critical points," Witkoff told Fox News on Monday. The first is verification of uranium enrichment, "and ultimately verification on weaponization, that includes missiles, type of missiles that they have stockpiled there." According to two Iranian analysts, the Islamic Republic will not give in to adding missile-related issues to the agenda.

Iran draws line on missiles

By Hassan Beheshtipour
International affairs expert

Witkoff's remarks as part of the US media playbook—a tactic aimed at shaping public opinion back home. Just like Donald Trump before him, Witkoff is playing to the gallery, saying whatever suits his purpose, regardless of what is on the table. In diplomacy, there is a branch called "media diplomacy," which works to set the stage through public messaging. The talks are still in early stages. Only one meeting has taken place, and the upcoming session in Oman on Saturday will decide the actual agenda. If missiles make it onto the agenda, then analysts can begin to evaluate Iran's stance. Until then, any talk about missiles is just noise. The real yardstick for negotiation is the written agenda, not what is floated in the media. [Page 2 >](#)



Armenia demands boost to \$3b in bilateral trade with Iran

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Discover architectural wonders of Fakhre-Davud Caravanserai

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Ancient human life unearthed in western Iran

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Big war and future of free trade

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

The ongoing trade war between the United States and China is shaping up to be the biggest trade conflict in history, with potential fallout for the global economy. As tariffs have ratcheted up, moving from 104% to 125% on Chinese imports, both nations are caught in a cycle of retaliation that is disrupting their economic relationship and causing ripples worldwide. Historically, free trade has been the backbone of global markets, but this conflict threatens to upend that principle, highlighting China's rise through self-reliance and an open-door policy. President Xi Jinping has said that China is not afraid of US pressure and experts suggest that Beijing may seek new markets or shift its focus from exports to domestic consumption. The world could witness a shift toward either a more liberalized trade model or a retreat into protectionism, where countries put up barriers to safeguard their interests. How China will respond remains the key question. [See page 5 >](#)



Middle East or China: Which is more important for US?

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All to play for as Iranian top flight enters final stretch

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Iran-US nuclear talks 'well implemented' in first step: *Leader*

International Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the negotiations between Iran and the United States over Tehran's nuclear program have been "well implemented in their initial steps". Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with the heads of the Islamic Republic's executive, judicial, and legislative branches on Tuesday.

"Talks are one of a dozen dossiers followed up by the Foreign Ministry. We are neither overly optimistic nor pessimistic regarding them. After all, it is a process which was decided and its first steps have been well implemented," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that the development of the country's various affairs should not be linked to the negotiations, asserting that the country had to lead those various affairs independently and rely on its own resources.

"Let us not tie the country's issues to the

talks," the Leader said, adding that despite Iran's sentiment of great skepticism regarding the talks, "We are optimistic about our own capabilities."

"At the time (of the JCPOA), we made everything conditional on the progress of the negotiations," he said.

"This mistake... should not be repeated here."

"When an investor sees that the country is conditional on negotiations, they do not invest," he said.

Tehran and Washington are due to meet again in Oman's capital on Saturday to hold the second round of negotiations on Iran's nuclear program a week after top officials from both sides held the first meeting described by the both sides as "positive and constructive".

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday that the second round of the talks will also be held in Oman after some Western media reported that Italy's capital, Rome, will host the negotiations.



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses senior officials from the Islamic Republic's executive, judicial, and legislative branches in Tehran on April 15, 2025.

● khamenei.ir

On Monday, US President Donald Trump said he believes Iran is intentionally delaying a nuclear deal and that it must abandon any drive for a nuclear weapon or face a possible military strike on Tehran's atomic facilities.

"I think they're tapping us along," Trump told reporters.

"Iran has to get rid of the concept of a nuclear weapon. They cannot have a nuclear weapon," Trump said.

Asked if US options for a response include a military strike on Tehran's nuclear facilities, Trump said: "Of course it does."

Trump said the Iranians need to move fast to avoid a harsh response because



"they're fairly close" to developing a nuclear weapon. Iran has repeatedly rejected the US

claims, saying its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, especially energy production.

UN report raises fresh concerns over UAE's role in Sudan war

Iran expresses concern about dire situation in Darfur

International Desk

Pressure is mounting on the United Arab Emirates over its presence at a conference in London aimed at stopping the war in Sudan after a leaked confidential UN report raised fresh questions over the UAE's role in the devastating conflict.

The UAE has been accused of secretly supplying weapons to Sudanese paramilitaries via neighboring Chad, a charge it has steadfastly denied.

However, an internal report – marked highly confidential and seen by the Guardian – detected "multiple" flights from the UAE in which transport planes made apparently deliberate attempts to avoid detection as they flew into bases in Chad where arms smuggling across the border into Sudan has been monitored.

The allegations raise complications for the British foreign secretary, David Lammy, who controversially invited the UAE alongside 19 other states for Sudan peace talks on April 15.

The date marks the second anniversary of a civil war that has caused the world's biggest humanitarian crisis, displacing more than 12 million people. A senior diplomat, who



People fled attacks by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in an open field near the town of Tawila in war-torn Sudan's western Darfur region on April 13, 2025.

● AFP

is familiar with the leaked report but requested anonymity, said: "The UK needs to explain how it is responding to massacres of children and aid workers while hosting the UAE at its London conference."

Sudan's government has not invited to the conference. Sudan's Foreign Minister Ali Yousif warned of the dangerous precedent being set by sidelining Sudan's internationally recognized transitional government, while inviting the UAE, a country standing trial at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for allegedly aiding genocide in Darfur.

Questions over the UAE's alleged role

in backing the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) arrive after a weekend that saw its fighters kill more than 200 civilians in a wave of violence against vulnerable ethnic groups in displacement camps and around the city of El Fasher, the last major city still held by the Sudanese Army in Darfur, the vast western region of Sudan.

Iran's Foreign Ministry expressed concern about the dire situation in El Fasher and called for the lifting of the siege on the city and an end to attacks, and the protection of civilian lives based on the principles of international humanitarian law.

IRGC: Iran's defense capabilities, national security 'non-negotiable'

International Desk

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said Tuesday the country's national security and defense capabilities are not up for any negotiations as Iran and the US are scheduled to hold the second round of talks on Iran's nuclear program in the coming days.

"National security and defense and military power are among the red lines of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which cannot be discussed or negotiated under any circumstances," IRGC spokesman Ali Mohammad Naeini said. Iran and the United States will hold another round of talks in Muscat on Saturday, a week after top officials met in the Omani capital for the highest-level discussions since the 2015 nuclear deal collapsed.

On April 12, Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, met with US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff in Oman for talks.

Witkoff said on Monday that any nuclear deal be-



Ali Mohammad Naeini

tween the US and Iran will hinge on verification of Tehran's enrichment and weaponization capabilities.

"The first meeting, was positive, constructive, compelling," Witkoff said in a televised Fox News interview.

Witkoff appeared to stop short of calling for a complete dismantling of Iran's nuclear program, saying "this is going to be much about verification on the enrichment program."

"They do not need to enrich past 3.67 percent," the real estate magnate said, referencing the maximum level allowed under the prior nuclear agreement that Trump exited

during his first term, in 2018.

"In some circumstances, they're at 60 percent, in other circumstances 20 percent," Witkoff said. "That cannot be, and you do not need to run, as they claim, a civil nuclear program where you're enriching past 3.67 percent."

Verification of "weaponization" capabilities will be another "critical" point in the negotiations with Iran, Witkoff said.

"That includes missiles, the type of missiles that they have stockpiled there, and it includes the trigger for a bomb," he told Fox host Sean Hannity.

Media buzz vs ...

What gets written down is what counts. Diplomacy and media narratives often go down different paths. The media in each country builds a narrative that fits its own goals. Witkoff's comments, in this view, are part of that narrative-building. Iran will not budge on its missile program. If the issue ever enters the talks, then and only then can its inclusion be analyzed. For now, Iran's position remains firm.

Missiles off table, nuclear issues take center stage

By Sirous Borna-Boldaji
International affairs analyst

Two key factors will shape the outcome of the Muscat talks – mutual

concessions and synchronized steps. Both sides need a reliable framework for give-and-take.

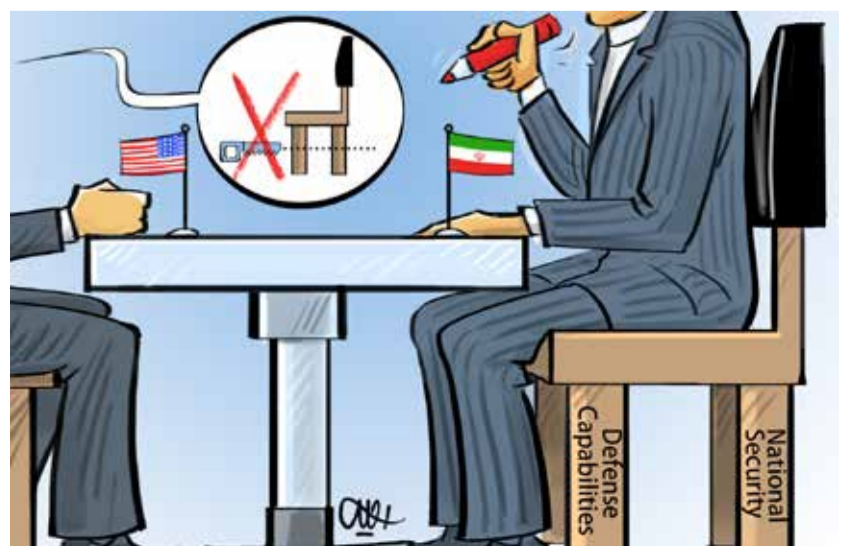
Iran is clearly pushing to keep the talks confined to nuclear matters. That means multiple details must be hammered out. One sticking point is the system of inspections of its nuclear work: Will they be random or prearranged? Will they be under the IAEA's oversight or carried out by the US unilaterally?

Another hot-button topic is Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium. The US is said to favor moving it out to a third country, especially since some of it is enriched beyond 20 percent. The enrichment level itself—now at 60 percent—is also a major topic, especially since the collapse of the JCPOA.

Another hot-button topic is Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium. Whether these enriched materials are kept in Iran or in a third country, apparently is a serious concern for the Americans. Top of Form Time is also not on their side. Trump is in a hurry and wants results fast. With snapback of sanctions on Iran looming in October, Washington wants to wrap things up before the clock runs out.

The US is using media to gain leverage and test the waters, but Iran will likely play ball only on nuclear issues. On matters like moving enriched material abroad, Tehran might be flexible. But when it comes to missile capabilities, Iran sees that as a red line—non-negotiable and off the table.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Pezeshkian highlights 'smart' tackling of energy shortages



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) meets with senior members of the National Iranian Productivity Organization (NIPO) in the capital Tehran on April 15, 2025.
● President.ir

Economy Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said at a meeting with senior members of the National

Iranian Productivity Organization (NIPO) that the government strives to tackle shortages in energy and other sectors in a fully "smart and precise" manner.

Having listened to the organization members' views and suggestions regarding imbalances in various fields, Pezeshkian said many of the concerns about

improving national productivity are being pursued by his government, stressing, "Everything you mentioned is accepted by us, and for instance, in addressing shortages, we are simultaneously seeking to manage them in supply as well as in demand and consumption control." Underlining that since the beginning of his government's term last July, he has followed up on suggestions and opinions regarding the enhancement of productivity, and has discussed the matter with experts, the president said, "However, we have been cautious about making decisions based on each suggestion and implementing them, as we believe that we must identify and integrate the results and find potential side effects of various solutions and suggestions and make decisions for each topic based on the specifics of that region and environment before entering the implementa-

tion phase." Pezeshkian said his government is seriously and intensively identifying problems and gathering data and specifics of various regions, adding, "Specialized task forces have been formed, and by categorizing regions based on environmental specifications, we are collecting and providing the necessary managerial tools and authority to address the issues of each region." Emphasizing that the executive solutions are being drafted according to regional conditions, he said, "The pace of implementing the solutions will also be adjusted according to the collected data in order to minimize potential repercussions and achieve the highest and most effective results. Accordingly, we have seriously sought the participation of universities and scientific centers in each region, which have a more accurate understanding of their en-

vironment. On the other hand, we have tried to consider the shares and interests of various social and public sectors, from social classes to various associations, to engage their participation in implementing the programs." Pezeshkian pointed out that, "We will strive to manage imbalances in a completely smart and precise manner," stressing, "In this regard, you as experts and concerned individuals about the important issue of productivity can greatly assist the government, as the more accurate our data and information are, the better solutions will be designed and interventions regarding shortages will be more effective." Pezeshkian also called for the establishment of a headquarters to enhance collaboration and consultation between the government and the NIPO in a more organized manner.

Armenia demands boost to \$3b in bilateral trade with Iran

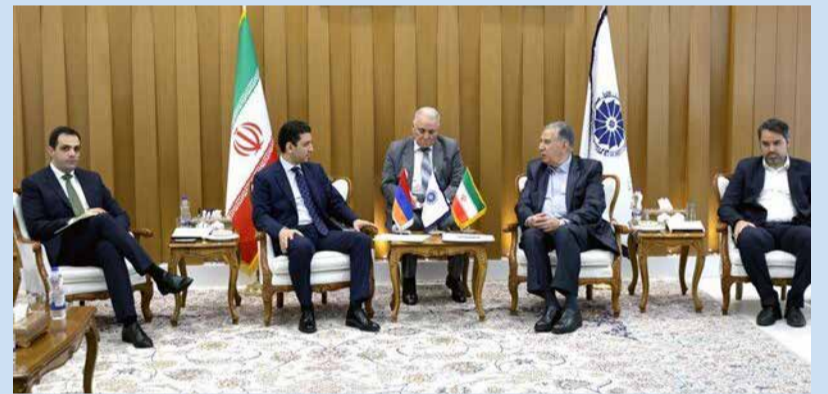
Economy Desk

The Armenian ambassador to Iran expressed regret that the economic relations between the two countries do not match the high level of their political ties, calling for the enhancement of trade level to three billion dollars through joint and active cooperation from both sides.

Grigor Hakobyan said in a meeting with Samad Hassanzadeh, the head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, that relations with Tehran are a priority for the Armenian government, adding, "Developing bilateral relations in all economic, political, and cultural fields is of great importance to the government and people of Armenia." Expressing regret that the economic relations between the two countries do not correspond to the high level of their political relations, Hakobyan said, "We do not impose any limitations on deepening and developing relations. We need joint cooperation to first achieve the goal of one billion dollars and then aim for three billion dollars in the volume of bilateral

trade; of course, this requires more active relations between the chambers of the two countries." The ambassador emphasized the importance of sending and receiving business delegations in developing relations between the two countries, saying, "There are many opportunities for investment and joint investments in Armenia, and the Embassy is ready for the necessary cooperation in this area to familiarize Iranian traders with these opportunities." Hakobyan said the private sector plays a decisive role in developing the economic relations of the two countries, adding that, "Together with the chambers of commerce of both countries, we must define common mechanisms to solve the issues and problems of trade between Iran and Armenia." Pointing to the importance of developing tourism between the two countries, the diplomat said, "Iran's presence in Eurasia as an observer member and the initiation of free trade with the countries of the union is a good opportunity for developing cooperation. By making joint invest-

ments, we can export joint productions to the Eurasian region." Hassanzadeh, for his part, said Iran's capacities for collaboration with Armenia are significant, and its pivotal position in Eurasia and the cultural and social ties between the two countries have made Armenia an important partner for Tehran. "The Iran Chamber of Commerce is ready to take any action toward developing collaborations," Hassanzadeh said. "We are interested in dispatching and hosting business delegations, and this year we have plans to send a delegation to Armenia." The chamber head stressed that Iran's private sector is particularly ready to export technical and engineering services and participate in investment in Armenia's civil engineering projects. He also said the medical, therapeutic, and pharmaceutical fields are among other advantages that can serve as a core for good collaboration between the two countries. "The private sector in Iran has good capabilities in the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries, automotive



Armenian Ambassador to Iran Grigor Hakobyan (2nd L) meets with Samad Hassanzadeh (2nd R), the head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, in the capital Tehran on April 15, 2025.
● IRNA

manufacturing, food industries, and building materials, and it can offer products that meet high global standards," Hassanzadeh added. Referring to Iran's high capacities in tourism and health tourism, Hassanzadeh said, "In the tourism sector, we request more support from Armenia and facilitation of matters related to Iranian tourists by this country." He mentioned the Iran Expo 2025, scheduled to be held from April 28, and officially invited the Armenian

ambassador to attend the exhibition, stressing, "This exhibition will showcase Iran's production and export capabilities, and many ambassadors and business delegations from around the world will visit it."

Russian merchants invited to actively partake in Iran Expo 2025

Economy Desk

Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali invited Russian companies on Monday to actively participate in Iran Expo 2025, the country's largest trade and export showcase taking place between April 28 and May 2 at the Tehran International Exhibition Center. The invitation was made during a meeting with Sergey Katyrin, president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation, as the two sides underlined the importance of expanding trade cooperation and exchanging business delegations under the framework of the Iran-Eurasian Economic Union Free Trade Agreement. Praising trade ties between Tehran and Moscow as growing, Jalali called for the full implementation of the free trade deal, which was signed in January 2024 in St. Petersburg and will come into effect on May 15, 2025, following ratification by all member states.

The agreement covers 87 percent of traded goods between Iran and the five member states of the Eurasian Economic Union, granting them customs exemptions. Calling for strong participation from Russian companies and economic stakeholders at Iran Expo 2025, Jalali also announced an upcoming visit to Moscow by a high-level Iranian trade delegation, led by the head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture. Katyrin, for his part, welcomed the Iranian delegation's upcoming visit and said Russia's Chamber of Commerce was ready to host its Iranian counterpart. Urging boost in bilateral economic ties between Moscow and Tehran, Katyrin also encouraged greater participation by Iranian and Russian companies in each other's trade exhibitions. The Export Capabilities Exhibition, simply known as Iran Expo, is a platform to bring manufacturers,



Sergey Katyrin Kazem Jalali

exporters, and investors together and provide foreign visitors with a comprehensive view of the country's export capabilities with the ultimate goal of boosting non-oil exports. The exhibition this year is being held while indirect talks between Iran and the US have raised hopes of an improvement in trade with the Islamic Republic. Thus, the number of participants is expected to be significantly higher compared to previous years. Last year's exhibition featured more than 700 knowledge-based companies, presenting some 1,500 products and a unique opportunity to expand scientific diplomacy with world countries.

Tehran, Ankara to establish joint free trade zone

Economy Desk

The secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones said the Islamic Republic is moving forward with plans to establish joint free trade zones with neighboring countries, with Turkey being the top priority, as part of a broader strategy to attract investment and boost regional economic integration. Speaking at a high-level meeting with deputy ministers and managing directors of Iran's Free Trade Zones (FTZs), Reza Masrouf announced that detailed studies and follow-up efforts are underway to create joint economic zones with Turkey, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan. Underlining the importance of forming a joint free zone with Turkey and calling for the establishment of an ac-

tive Iran-Turkey working group to accelerate the initiative, Masrouf added that a key meeting with Turkish investors and representatives from Turkey's FTZs is scheduled for July in one of Iran's own free zones. The official called on the heads of each FTZ to be directly involved in task forces and ensure that tangible outcomes are achieved within six months. He also stressed that the overall investment climate in the free zones must improve significantly, with incentives for investors being approved and implemented without delay. "Investment zones were created specifically to attract capital," Masrouf said. "What has been done in the past must now be followed by a visible leap forward." He also stressed that the success of FTZs depends on

the support of local communities, saying, "In regions where the local population is more actively present, their satisfaction is crucial. Investment projects must be transparent and clearly communicated to ensure local backing." Masrouf urged zone managers to develop serious plans to attract knowledge-based companies, which he described as the "engine of production," adding, the zones are expected to provide tailored incentives and streamlined licensing processes to facilitate this. Turkey, as Iran's western neighbor and a major regional power, plays a strategic role in Iran's trade plans, especially amid growing pressure on Iran's economy due to illegal Western sanctions and limited access to global financial systems.

Middle East or China: Which is more important for US?

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The Middle East is losing its exclusive position in the energy sector that it held during the 1970s and 1980s.... However, Trump's efforts to portray himself as a problem-solver and resolver of all global crises have led to renewed attention from the US president to the region and its key issues.



US President Donald Trump (R) attends a bilateral meeting with China's President Xi Jinping during the G20 leaders summit in Osaka, Japan, on 29 June, 2019.
● REUTERS

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China's increasing advancements in economic, diplomatic, and other areas, along with the serious threat of its surpassing and replacing the United States in the international system, have led to the policy of containing Beijing becoming the central focus of US foreign policy, manifesting in various strategies such as the Indo-Pacific policy.

ANALYSIS

The Middle East has always been one of the most critical regions on the United States' strategic map, with American officials, regardless of party affiliation, maintaining a special focus on the area. However, since the Obama administration, Washington's primary foreign policy priority has been defined as strategic competition with Beijing. Now, nearly three months into Donald Trump's second presidential term, the operational priorities of his administration are gradually coming into focus, shedding light on the likely trajectory of his foreign policy over the next four years. A closer examination of these initial three months reveals that a central theme of Trump's policymaking remains his nationalist — or more precisely, exceptionalist — view of the United States. This aligns with the historical American concept of "American exceptionalism." During this period, Trump has showcased an even more intense and overtly nationalist approach compared to his first

term. While his initial presidency pursued a domestic-focused "America First" agenda — withdrawing from international agreements, periodically threatening global rivals, and engaging in tariff wars with adversaries like China — his second term has seen him unsheathing the sword of trade confrontation against a broader array of nations, both allies and foes alike. In early April 2025, Trump hosted a ceremony in the White House Rose Garden, attended by his cabinet members, several senators, and senior US political figures, to announce new tariffs on goods imported into the United States. Dubbed the "Day of Freedom" by Trump, the event had been promised weeks in advance. At the ceremony, Trump revealed a 25% tariff on all foreign-manufactured vehicles imported into the US, stating that tariffs would apply to "nearly every import pathway." He's not entirely wrong. Among the destinations subject to tariffs, in addition to the European Union and allied European countries, even the name of the Zionist regime is visible, which is unprec-

edented and historic. It seems Trump is determined this time and is not joking with any of his allies. Israeli officials were very surprised to be on this list. The Finance Minister of the Zionist regime has stated that the tariff will severely damage Israeli industry. The US also announced that since Israel imposes a 33% tariff on goods imported from the US, this tariff is in response to Israel's action. Despite a 90-day suspension of these tariffs (excluding China, which faces a 125% tariff), the new trade policies are poised to redefine the US' relations with other nations, particularly major economic partners and rivals. This appears to mark the acceleration of a strategy inherited from previous US administrations: countering and constraining China's global influence. The "pivot to Asia" policy, which began during the presidency of Barack Obama, was one of the first serious steps taken by US governments to address China's growing influence on the global stage. However, the continuous advancement of China was so significant that it gradually captured the full attention of US officials, leading the United States to shift its focus from international issues and challenges in regions like the Middle East to China. In fact, it can be said that China's increasing advancements in economic, diplomatic, and other areas, along with the serious threat of its surpassing and replacing the United States in the international system, have made the policy of containing Beijing the central focus of US foreign policy, manifesting in various strategies such as the Indo-Pacific policy. From this perspective, recent events, including the imposition of steep tariffs on China, become clearer. During his "Day of Freedom" speech, Trump remarked, "I have great respect for President Xi [Jinping] of China, great respect for China, but they were taking tremendous advantage of us." he said, "If you look at that... China, first row, 67%. That's tariffs charged to the USA, including

currency manipulation and trade barriers." The US president also boasted, "I stood up to China like no administration has ever done before. Bringing in hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars pouring into our Treasury from China when no other president had gotten even 10 cents. Not one president got — and I literally mean — not 10 cents. We got hundreds of billions of dollars." Predictably, China retaliated within a day, imposing a 34% tariff on all American goods. It seems the tariff wars of Trump's first term are reigniting, but on a far grander scale. All this background is provided so that when we consider why Trump is giving special attention to the Middle East at the beginning of his second term in the White House, we do not overlook the state of global equations and avoid making analytical errors. The reality is that the Middle East has always been one of the most important regions in American analytical frameworks, and US officials, regardless of political trends and party affiliations, have given it special attention. The reasons for this are evident, chief among them being the Middle East's geo-strategic significance, its unparalleled role in global energy supply, and the existence of the Zionist regime. During his brief second term, Trump has sought to prioritize and resolve lingering Middle Eastern issues. Yet the question remains: Why such heightened attention? Is it solely the region's inherent importance driving Trump's focus, or has the Middle East itself risen in priority within the US strategic calculus? The answer, it seems, is both yes and no. A closer look at global trends shows that the United States' desire to maintain a presence in the region has been declining year by year, and this is due to global changes. First, the importance of the Middle East has been diminishing as new energy sources are discovered in other parts of the world and as the world gradu-



ally transitions to cleaner, less polluting energy sources. In essence, the Middle East is losing the monopoly it held over energy markets during the 1970s and 1980s. Second, the rise of new global powers has compelled the United States to reorient its strategic focus — a shift that had largely stalled in the post-Cold War era but has now regained urgency amid accelerating geopolitical competition. Furthermore, the US' scaled-back regional presence over the past three decades underscores its declining prioritization of the Middle East. Yet, paradoxically, a combination of factors has recently reignited US attention toward the region. These include the enduring importance of Israel to American policymakers and the undeniable influence of Zionist leaders in shaping US foreign policy. The conflict between the Zionist regime and the Axis of Resis-

tance has inadvertently made the region more significant for the United States. Additionally, Zionist media and officials are constantly working to create the impression that Iran and the Axis of Resistance have become weaker, framing the current situation as an opportunity to diminish Iran's power and establish a new Middle Eastern order. Of course, the Zionist regime's objective is clear: to secure greater American support — financial, military, and diplomatic — thereby insulating itself while maneuvering to pit Iran against the US. These efforts have already left their mark, significantly influencing recent developments between Tehran and Washington. Trump's upcoming visit to regional countries likely fits into this broader strategy, with the Middle East's renewed prominence prompting him to prioritize West Asian nations in his second-term dip-

lomatic agenda. Beyond these factors, Trump's personal psychology may also play a role. Trump's efforts to portray himself as a problem-solver and resolver of all global crises have led to renewed focus on the region and its key issues; issues that, if resolved, would indeed bring significant advantages for him and his administration. Perhaps the simultaneous focus of Trump on the Ukraine crisis and Middle Eastern issues can be understood from this perspective. Putting all the pieces of this puzzle together, it appears that both the Middle East and Ukraine have become important to Trump and his administration because they offer opportunities for him to gather political capital, which can be used both domestically and internationally. This would allow him to approach other issues, such as the challenge of China, with greater

ease and more resources. In recent years, the United States has placed a special focus on policies aimed at containing China in East Asia. However, to advance this strategy, Washington needs to manage and reduce existing crises in West Asia. Issues such as Lebanon, Gaza, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and most importantly, Iran, are all at the top of the White House's strategic priorities. Therefore, the United States must adopt specific policies toward the region to reclaim its hegemony and create favorable conditions for focusing on containing China. This has led to the Middle East taking center stage in Trump's foreign policy priorities; a situation that is likely to be short-term, with this focus on the region changing in the future.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



Workers labor on the production line of towels at a textile manufacturer in Huai'an city in east China's Jiangsu Province, April 2, 2025. AP

Big war and future of free trade

By Gholamreza Mansouri
International affairs expert
ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

The trade war between the United States and China is the largest trade conflict the world has ever seen. The combined GDP of the US and China constitutes over 40 percent of the global economy, indicating that this conflict could have far-reaching repercussions worldwide.

Trump previously raised tariffs on Chinese goods to 104 percent, and after China retaliated by hiking tariffs on US goods to 84 percent, Trump further escalated tariffs on Chinese imports to 125 percent.

One of the consequences of this back-and-forth exchange of tariffs is the disruption of the economic relationship not only between these two nations but also globally.

After World War II, free trade emerged as the central tenet and organizing principle of the global market. It was this principle that shaped the outcome of the Cold War between the two blocs of the US and the Soviet Union. In this model of cooperation, governments are expected to refrain from intervening in the markets, allowing free trade to chart the course.

Free trade has historically fueled increased production and elevated exports. The more a country can export, the greater its economic strength and prosperity. Since the 1970s, China has adopted an open-door policy that has allowed it to achieve remarkable economic growth through unparalleled hard work. After five decades, China's economy has surpassed that of the US. In this context, higher production and exports have been fundamental principles for the Chinese economy. Chinese President Xi Jinping has acknowledged this by stating, "For over 70 years, China's development has relied on self-reliance and hard work — never on handouts from others, and it is not afraid of any unjust suppression."

This economic logic has been em-



An aerial view of new cars waiting for shipment at a pier for ro-ro ships in Yantai city in eastern China's Shandong Province, March 30, 2025. AP

braced in many regions globally, particularly in the United States. The reason for China's substantial economy, which supplies affordable consumer goods to the world due to its low production costs, is that the American consumer market is especially keen to utilize these Chinese products because of the high domestic production costs.

Before 2018, the economic relationship between China and the US operated seamlessly. Global crises, including the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as subsequent involvement in the Middle East due to the rise of Islamic movements and its support for Israel's actions against Palestine, presented a unique opportunity for China to enhance its export strategy.

During his first presidential term, Trump highlighted these issues and declared his main focus as countering China's economic expansion. Another important point raised was Trump's belief that the Chinese government, instead of following free-market principles, manipulates economic factors to secure greater advantages.

What do statistics indicate? Statistics show that China's economic dependency on exports is greater than that of the US.

In simpler terms, high tariffs on imports would yield greater profits for the United States. In the current international trading regime, some countries, like the United States, constantly import more than they export, while others, such as China and Germany, consistently export more than they import. As stated in a Carnegie report, "The United States, as a deficit country, experiences the opposite of what surplus countries experience. The current trade system increases the capacity of American households to consume, while reducing the competitiveness of American manufacturing. As a result, US producers are effectively forced to subsidize US

consumers, which has hollowed out the American manufacturing industry. The US share of global manufacturing fell from 15 percent to 10 percent over the period 2000 to 2021."

Trump's argument is that the principles of free trade, which are correctly implemented in the United States, have become a tool for China to dominate the US economy.

By imposing heavy tariffs, Trump has shown that he can no longer tolerate such a situation. Now it remains to be seen how China will respond. The first comments from the Chinese president after the imposition of retaliatory tariffs were that there would be "no winners."

He warned President Trump that China is "not afraid" — and shortly after his statement, Beijing announced reciprocal tariffs of 125% on all US imports.

Xi is well aware that the US market is China's largest economic dynamic, making it difficult for China to walk away from it easily. Experts believe that China's strength lies in its dynamic and export-oriented economy. If this strength is undermined, China is likely to pursue three scenarios. First, it would retaliate against US tariffs. Second, it would explore new markets for its exports. Finally, it may shift its economic strategy from one centered on exports to one that relies on domestic consumption.

If China were to adopt the third scenario, considering the high production costs in the US, the world might see a transition towards a new economic model. This model could either result in a true liberalization of global trade (as Trump desires), with governments stepping back from market involvement, or, due to reduced trust in the principles of free trade, governments might pursue strategies that contradict free trade ideals on a global scale. For example, they might prioritize domestic production and consumption over reliance on exports.



A building for Cubic Corporation, a US company added to a Chinese government list of companies facing trade sanctions, is seen on April 4, 2025, in San Diego. GREGORY BULL/AP

All to play for as Iranian top flight enters final stretch

Sports Desk

There will be all to play for at both ends of the table when the Persian Gulf Pro League season enters the final four rounds of fixtures today.

Despite a 2-2 draw at Chadormalou last time out, Tractor remains the favorite to lift a maiden league crown, holding a decent lead in the three-horse title race.

Sitting two and four points clear of nearest rivals Sepahan and Persepolis, respectively, with a game in hand, Tractor will be looking to get back in the winning ways against in-form Malavan on Friday.

The chasing duo, meanwhile, will square off at Tehran's Azadi Stadium later on Friday, eager to keep their slim title hopes alive, while a runner-up finish and a place in next season's AFC Champions League Elite will also be on the line.

Tractor will have to visit fourth-placed Foolad Khuzestan on April 25 – in a rescheduled fixture from Matchday 22 – and then play away to Shams Azar and Esteghlal Khuzestan either side of a home game against relegation-threatened Nassaji Mazandaran.



● SOHEIL SAADATMANDI/FFIRI

Sepahan, which will shift focus to Iranian Hazfi Cup last eight after Friday's trip to Tehran, will host fifth-placed Golgozar Sirjan on return to league action before facing bottom-club Havadar (away) and Esteghlal (home).

Two of the relegation candidates will come Persepolis's until the end of the season.

Persepolis, which have dominated the domestic league with seven titles in eight seasons, will play at Mes Rafsanjan – third

from bottom – having lost the reverse fixture 3-1 at home last December in former head coach Juan Carlos Garrido's final game on the Reds bench.

The two-time defending champion will also visit Khaybar in the penultimate

round, before concluding its below-par campaign against Havadar at home.

Survival battle

Separated by five points, three teams will be hoping to extend their stay in the Iranian top-tier league for

next season.

A defining encounter will see Mes host Havadar today, with Nassaji – three points above Havadar – closing watching before playing away to Khaybar on Thursday.

All too familiar with the

relegation threat in recent years, Nassaji, which has former coach Saket Elhami back in the dugout, will then welcome Havadar to the Vatan Stadium on May 2, with tricky tests at Tractor and at home against Zob Ahan also coming its way. Mes, meanwhile, will square off against Zob Ahan (A) and Khaybar (H). Havadar head coach Omid Ravankhah will hope to see his men build on an impressive form of late in the closing stage of a dreadful season.

Havadar is rock bottom with 19 points – seven of which have been collected in the previous three outings – with a game in hand, and will be looking to close the gap on safety following today's game and the rescheduled visit to Esteghlal on Monday.

Nassaji (A), Sepahan (H), and Persepolis (A) also await Havadar.

Elsewhere in the league, Golgozar welcomes Esteghlal to Sirjan today, and Iralco and Chadormalou go head-to-head in Arak on Thursday.

Also on Thursday, Zob Ahan and Esteghlal Khuzestan meet in Isfahan, with Foolad hosting Shams Azar in Ahvaz's Foolad Arena on Friday.

Iran's Alamian up by 63 spots in ITTF Rankings

Sports Desk

Iranian table tennis player Nima Alamian moved up by a remarkable 63 spots in the latest ITTF World Ranking – released on Tuesday.

The second-best leap among the top 200 players saw Alamian sit in the 153rd place in the Men's Singles Ranking with 116 points – thanks to a last-four finish at the WTT

Feeder Havirov tournament in Czechia earlier in the month. Alamian defeated German world No. 69 Steffen Mengel in the quarterfinals but suffered a loss to Bahrain's Ammirreza Abbasi in a five-game thriller.

Alamian's older brother, Noshad, remains the highest-ranked Iranian in World Men's Ranking, standing 54th with 525 points.

Navid Shams moved down by four spots to sit 165th, with Iranian prodigy Benjamin Faragi dropping by three places to the stand 178th – sixth in the boys' singles under-17 ranking.

Lin Shidong retained the top spot in the ranking with 8325 points, followed by fellow-Chinese Wang Chuqin (6925pts) and Tomokazu Harimoto (4725) of Japan.



● RÉMY GROS/WTT

Concacaf opposes 64-team World Cup plans for 2030

BBC – Concacaf president Victor Montagliani has criticised a proposal to expand the 2030 men's World Cup to 64 teams.

The plans, put forward by South American governing body Conmebol, have also drawn opposition from Uefa president Aleksander Ceferin and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

The tournament will be hosted by Spain, Morocco and Portugal, after the opening matches are held in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

The 2026 World Cup, which will take place across the United States, Mexico and Canada, has already been expanded from 32 to 48 teams.

But Conmebol said it wanted to add more participants to mark the

competition's 100-year anniversary.

"I don't believe expanding the men's World Cup to 64 teams is the right move for the tournament itself and the broader football ecosystem, from national teams to club competitions, leagues, and players," Montagliani told ESPN.

"We haven't even kicked off the new 48-team World Cup yet, so personally, I don't think that expanding to 64 teams should even be on the table."

Concacaf is the governing body of football in North America, Central America and the Caribbean.

The decision to expand the 2026 World Cup to 48 teams was taken in 2017 following a unanimous vote at a Fifa congress.

Fifa's 75th congress will be held in Paraguay on 15 May, when Conmebol's proposal could be discussed. If the proposal is accepted, the 2030 edition would consist of 128 matches, double the number played under the 64-game format used from 1998 and 2022.

In March, Ceferin described the proposal as a "bad idea" while AFC president Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa said it would cause "chaos".

"If the issue remains open to change, then the door will not only be open to expanding the tournament to 64 teams," said Salman.

"But someone might come along and demand raising the number to 132 teams. Where would we end up then? It would become chaos."



● GETTY IMAGES



● chn.ir

Discover architectural wonders of Fakhr-e Davud Caravanserai

Iranica Desk

A researcher and archaeologist from Khorasan Razavi Province stated that the Fakhr-e Davud Caravanserai is one of the most prominent covered caravanserais in the region, renowned for its unique architecture and strategic geographical location along the Silk Road. This historical structure, with origins dating back to the Timurid era, was registered as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2023.

Rajabali Labbaf-Khaniki discussed this in an interview with ISNA, noting that various types of caravanserais, or rabats, were constructed based on the geographical context using specific forms and materials. For instance, caravanserais on mountainous routes were typically roofed and built with stone and mud mortar, while those in plains, which accommodated a larger number of travelers, were larger and had greater capacity. Due to the ease of sourcing different building materials, they often exhibited both refinement and sturdiness.

He added that along heavily trafficked routes connect-

ing major cities, royal caravanserais or palace rabats were built as accommodations for kings, princes, and high-ranking officials. These structures, designed with distinct characteristics, included many that, like the Sharaf Caravanserai, were located along the Silk Road. Labbaf-Khaniki emphasized that the Fakhr-e Davud Caravanserai is one of the most beautiful and well-equipped covered caravanserais along the Silk Road. This caravanserai is situated on the southern edge of the village of Fakhr-e Davud, approximately 56 kilometers southwest of Mashhad and 400 meters north of the Mashhad-Neyshabur road. It was constructed using bricks, plaster, and sand mortar on a foundation of rubble stone and lime mud.

He noted that the entrance to the structure is reached through a tall ivan with a pointed arch. Each corner of the caravanserai features a cylindrical tower, and the presence of observation windows and arrow slits in the tower walls indicates that they served not only a structural purpose but also functioned as watchtowers for defense, ensuring the

protection of the caravanserai. The entrance includes a cruciform nave that extends along a longitudinal axis toward the center of the building.

The interior space of the caravanserai consists of a square hall with four thick, multi-faceted brick columns in the center, surrounded by small ivans along the side walls. Each ivan has an elevated platform that served as a resting place for travelers' animals.

He continued: "On top of each small ivan, there is a dome that forms a series of archways, providing coverage for the caravanserai. In the middle of the four central columns, a square platform about one-meter-high serves as a goods unloading area, topped by a tall octagonal dome with four lanterns that illuminate and enhance the space beneath it. It is possible that this area was used not only for unloading goods but also as a resting place. To the south, not far from the caravanserai, a brick water reservoir was constructed for travelers to access the water they needed."

Labbaf-Khaniki mentioned that this caravanserai has attracted significant attention

from travelers throughout history. The French historian Henri René d'Allemagne referred to it as the Rabat-e Hasanabad, placing it between the two stops of Sharifabad and Ghadamgah.

He continued: "Afzal al-Mulk, a travel writer, described the Fakhr-e Davud village and the caravanserai in the year 1320 AH as follows: 'The village of Fakhr-e Davud is a place for caravan unloading. There are twenty households here. A Shah Abbasi Caravanserai has been built here.'"

He emphasized that while Afzal al-Mulk attributed the caravanserai to Shah Abbas Safavid, no inscription or conclusive evidence supports this claim. Based on the architectural style of the building and its similarity to the covered space of the Alaqband Caravanserai and the covered section of Amir Ali Shir Navai's caravanserai in Sang Bast, it can be inferred that this structure was established during the Timurid era and later restored.

He stated that this structure was registered as a national heritage site on September 9, 1998, and as a UNESCO World Heritage site on September 17, 2023.



● mehrnews.com



● neshan.org

Wildlife and wonders of Nayband National Park



● visitiran.ir



Nayband National Park is a conservation area located in Assaluyeh, approximately three hundred and twenty kilometers southeast of the city of Bushehr, the capital city of Bushehr Province. Parts of the park also extend into the Kushkenar district of Parsian in Hormozgan Province. This park is situated about seven hundred and seven kilometers from the southern sea borders of Iran.

The Nayband Coast lies between the cities of Nakhle-

Taqi, Assaluyeh and Bid Khun. Spanning an area of about fifty thousand hectares, Nayband National Park is recognized as Iran's first national sea park. Of this vast area, 27,000 hectares are submerged underwater, while the rest comprises land. The park features a long cape, sandy beaches, tree plains, deep valleys, showcasing a diverse landscape.

Nayband National Sea Park is home to a rich variety of wildlife, including tigers,

gazelles, bustards, wild goats, chinkaras, grey francolins, rams, sheep, turtles, dolphins, sharks, crabs, and mudskippers.

Notably, a species of sea salamanders inhabits the sharp megaliths of the cape. A research study conducted in the 2000s revealed the presence of over forty thousand birds from sixty-five different species within the park. Among these bird species were flamingos, curlews, white pelicans, plovers, sandpipers,

large white-headed gulls, Sternidae, and Dalmatian pelicans.

With its pleasant weather, Nayband National Sea Park serves as a vital habitat for migratory birds from all over the world. The environmental conditions in the area have contributed to the growth of a diverse range of plant species. Some of these species include the broad-leaved banyan tree, the Hara forest of semi-floating trees, and tamarisks. A remark-

able feature of Hara trees is their ability to thrive without fresh water. Approximately eighty percent of the aquatic animals in the Persian Gulf lay their eggs among the roots of these trees.

Along the coast, desert vases, and sand dunes can be seen on the beach, which is filled with shells and white sands. The underwater ecosystem of the park supports various forms of life, including corals, seaweeds, and benthic organisms.

Ancient human life unearthed in western Iran

Social Desk

Archaeologists in western Iran have uncovered compelling evidence of human settlement dating back 80,000 years in Qamari Cave, near the city of Khorramabad.

The findings, which span from the Middle Paleolithic to the Chalcolithic period, may bolster efforts to secure UNESCO World Heritage status for the site, Rokna news agency reported.

The excavation, led by Fereidoun Biglari—head of the Paleolithic Department at National Museum of Iran—revealed a sequence of cultural layers that offer rare insight into the lives of prehistoric humans, including Neanderthals.

According to Biglari, the cave was chosen for study based on recommendations from ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), which identified the Khorramabad Valley as a priority area lacking sufficient archaeological data.

The first phase of excavation, conducted between February and April 2024, was authorized by Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. It was carried out in collaboration with Sonia Shidrang from Shahid Beheshti Uni-

versity and a team of experts including archaeozoologist Hossein Davoudi, and archaeologists Ali Saki, Masoud Akbari, and Atefeh Younesi.

Among the most significant discoveries were remains from the Middle Paleolithic period, including stone tools, animal bones, and charcoal fragments. These artifacts shed light on the behaviors and environmental adaptability of Neanderthals in the Zagros Mountains. "The presence of wild goat and deer bones suggests these species were hunted," Biglari added. The tools, primarily crafted from regional flint, illustrate early humans' skill in utilizing local resources.

Later strata revealed remnants from the Chalcolithic era, including stone-lined hearths, decorated and plain pottery, and the bones of domesticated animals such as sheep and goats. Initial analyses suggest similarities with ceramic traditions of ancient Khuzestan. These findings point to a community engaged in herding and limited agriculture, with livestock forming the backbone of their economy.

Caves and natural shelters, like Qamari, often served as dwellings or animal enclosures for these groups, according to



Biglari. He emphasized that human presence in Iran may trace back as far as 700,000 to 1 million years, with earlier evidence found in Khorasan's Kashafrud Basin and caves such as Darband Rashi and

Qaleh Kord. Despite these groundbreaking findings, Iranian archaeologists face persistent challenges. "We lack interdisciplinary specialists like geoarchaeologists, and facilities for radiocarbon dating," Biglari

said. Restrictions on exporting samples further complicate research. He called for investment in domestic laboratories, especially for carbon-14 dating, which would enable more precise analysis of ancient remains.

Iran's membership on UN tourism board extended

Isfahan named host for 2025 regional summit

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has retained its seat on the Executive Council of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for another four-year term and will host the organization's next major regional meeting in 2025, officials confirmed following a key summit in Indonesia.

Speaking at the 60th meeting of the UNWTO Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Jakarta, Iran's Deputy Minister of Tourism Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said the Islamic Republic will continue to represent South Asia on the top policy-making body for global tourism,

alongside India. The reappointment comes after months of diplomatic engagement aimed at securing Iran's position within the council, which plays a critical role in shaping international tourism strategy and cooperation.

"This is a significant gain that reinforces Iran's active presence in global tourism policymaking," Mohseni-Bandpey said.

He emphasized that the tourism sector is "highly sensitive to international cooperation" and stressed the importance of real-time data and collaboration for effective planning.

Iran has held a seat on the council for the past decade. According to officials,

this continuity reflects years of targeted outreach by the country's foreign tourism marketing and development office.

Council membership provides access to expert consultation, specialized training, and advanced statistical modeling through Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA), all of which are vital for national planning.

In addition to its ongoing involvement in the UNWTO's Silk Road initiative, Iran has also received institutional support for the launch of an international center for tourism research and development, to be established in collaboration with the organization.

In a further win for Iranian tourism

diplomacy, the UNWTO announced that the central city of Isfahan will host the 38th session of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific in 2025. The decision was endorsed by a majority of over 30 member states attending the Jakarta meetings.

Iran's delegation, led by Mohseni-Bandpey, formally presented Isfahan's candidacy, highlighting the city's historical significance and tourism potential. A promotional video showcasing Isfahan's cultural and architectural heritage was also screened.

"This is a milestone in Iran's tourism diplomacy," Mohseni-Bandpey said following the vote. "Hosting high-pro-



file international events is a strategic priority for strengthening Iran's global tourism standing."

The UNWTO, headquartered in Madrid, is the United Nations' specialized agency for tourism, tasked with promoting sustainable, inclusive, and accessible tourism worldwide.

Second Announcement

N.I.S.O.C
NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 08-38-0040003

The National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) is seeking to procure the specified goods listed in the table below through a Qualitative Evaluation Call for conducting a public tender via the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD). All stages of the tender process including the receipt of tender documents, submission of bidders' proposals, and the opening of bid envelopes, shall be carried out exclusively through the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD) portal at www.setadiran.ir. Bidders who have not previously registered must complete the registration process on the aforementioned portal and obtain an Electronic Signature certificate to participate in the tender.

Items	Material Description	Quantity
04	ROCK BITS 8-1/6 IN., JET TYPE, LESS NOZZLES, 2 MOTOR TYOE, HIGH RPM, MIN RPM: 250	30NO&30ST

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 33,942/95 EURO or 15,858,859,544 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS CFR, NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, BANDAR IMAM KHOMENI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

NOTE: Based on enactment notified by Nisoc's Tender committee, foreign companies must submit a Bid Bond Guarantee amounting to aforementioned (paragraph 2) Euro amount. Otherwise, their quotations will not be considered.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex, Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 34 12 4644
Fax No.: 061 34 45 74 37

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Iran's 13th-century academic complex faces collapse amid funding shortage

Arts & Culture Desk

Rab'-e Rashidi, once hailed as the world's largest medieval academic complex, is now teetering on the brink of collapse due to years of neglect, environmental damage, and a critical lack of funding, Iranian officials and preservationists warn, according to ILNA.

Built over 700 years ago in Tabriz, northwest Iran, Rab'-e Rashidi was commissioned by the Ilkhanid vizier Rashid al-Din. At its peak, it hosted students from across Asia and the Persian Gulf, offering instruction in seven languages. Experts have likened its historical significance to that of a "university town," a precursor to modern academic cities.

But the sprawling site, battered by earthquakes, floods, and unauthorized construction, is now at risk of vanishing entirely. Iran's Cultural Heritage Organization says it needs roughly \$1.1 million to safeguard the site's core area—funds that are currently unavailable.

"This is not just about preservation," said one official. "Rab'-e Rashidi is a national asset with untapped diplomatic potential."

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in his early days in office underscored the importance of cultural heritage, calling it the country's "greatest diplomatic resource." During a

museum event earlier this year, he singled out Rab'-e Rashidi as a prime example of Iran's scientific and architectural legacy.

Despite its historic status and registration as a national heritage site, Rabe Rashidi remains largely unknown, even within Iran. Experts say poor public outreach and limited research funding have left the site in the shadows.

Mehrdad Azimi, head of East Azarbaijan's Restoration Association, noted that "documentation and restoration are essential," but stressed that "proper identification and introduction" of the site must also become a strategic priority.

Excavation efforts have resumed after delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A new agreement signed last year between Iran's Cultural Heritage Department and the Islamic Art University of Tabriz has relaunched archaeological studies, marking the fourth official research phase. A fifth round is being planned, pending final permits.

Vahid Navadad, Deputy Director of East Azerbaijan's Cultural Heritage Department, confirmed that studies will continue under a five-year framework, but warned that major challenges remain. Chief among them is securing legal control over the surrounding land, part of which has been overtaken by urban development.