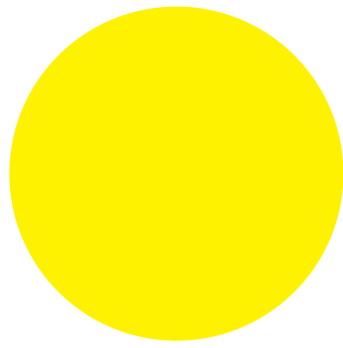


Exports of agricultural products hit \$5.2 last year, up by 29%: *IRICA*

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Expert-level meet means red lines respected in Iran-US talks



By Mostafa Shirmohammadi
Editor-in-chief

OPINION

The second round of negotiations between Iran and the United States aimed at resolving disputes over Tehran's nuclear program came to a close in the Italian capital Rome with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi describing the talks as "moving forward." The latest diplomatic push picked up where the first round in Muscat, Oman, had left off. Just days after the opening discussions' mixed signals came out of Washington. US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff initially said that Iran could maintain a uranium enrichment program. However, in a dramatic U-turn, he walked back his statement less than 24 hours later, declaring that Iran's uranium enrichment must be entirely dismantled. The firm stance laid down by Iran's chief negotiator Araghchi, who immediately hit back by saying that enrichment was not up for talks, appears to have forced the Americans to backtrack. Araghchi's statement in the wake of the talks in Rome that negotiators had "reached a better understanding on a set of principles and objectives" and agreed to carry on with expert-level talks on Wednesday suggests that both parties might have chosen to respect each other's red lines.

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Iran, US reach 'better understanding' of goals in nuclear talks: *Araghchi*

'Expert-level talks to be held on Wednesday' 2 >



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (2nd R) attends a meeting with Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani (not pictured) in Rome, April 19, 2025 before a second round of nuclear talks with the United States. IRNA

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Iran, US reach 'better understanding' of goals in nuclear talks: Araghchi

'Expert-level talks to be held on Wednesday'

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Iran and the United States reached better understanding of a series of principles and goals during the second round of negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program. In a live televised interview shortly after the end of nearly four hours of negotiations in Rome on Saturday, Araghchi said that the talks were held in a "constructive atmosphere" and are "moving forward". Iran's top diplomat added that technical negotiations at the expert level will be held in Oman on Wednesday and "experts will have more time to design a framework for an agreement."

The two sides will review the result of the Wednesday's negotiations in separate talks which is scheduled to be held in Oman on Saturday to "see how close we are to the principles of an agreement".

"I hope that we will be in a better position after the technical talks."

Talks only on nuclear issue

The Iranian foreign minister underlined that only the nuclear issue was raised by the American side during the discussion. "The Americans have not raised any issues unrelated to the nuclear topic so far," Abbas Araghchi told the Tasnim News Agency.

There was no immediate readout from the US side after the meeting at the Omani Embassy in Rome's Camilluccia neighborhood. However, President Donald Trump has been pushing for a rapid deal with Iran while threatening military action against it.

'Fair, binding deal'

Oman's Foreign Ministry in a statement after the talks said that Araghchi and US special envoy in the Middle East, Steve Witkoff agreed to enter into the next phase of the discussions that would aim to "seal a fair, enduring and binding deal" which would ensure "Iran completely free of nuclear weapons and sanctions and maintaining its ability to develop peaceful nuclear energy".

Araghchi and Witkoff led the first round

of the negotiations in Oman, which were described by the two sides as "positive and constructive".

The negotiations are aimed at reaching a diplomatic agreement surrounding the Iranian nuclear program and to put an end to decades of disputes over the issue.

The talks are even happening represents a historic moment, given the decades of enmity between the two countries since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Trump, in his first term, unilaterally withdrew from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018, setting off years of negotiations that failed to restore the accord.

Western countries including the US have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons – an allegation Tehran has consistently denied, insisting that its program is for peaceful civilian purposes.

Araghchi-Tajani meeting

Before talks with the US delegation, Araghchi held talks with Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani.

Tajani said Italy was ready "to facilitate



Police and reporters stand outside Oman's Embassy in Rome during a closed-door meeting between US and Iranian delegations to discuss Iran's nuclear program on April 19, 2025. AP

the continuation of the talks even for sessions at the technical level." A diplomat deal "is built patiently, day after day, with dialogue and mutual respect," he said in a statement.

Reaffirming Iran's commitment to diplomacy, Araghchi urged all parties to seize the opportunity for a "logical and

reasonable understanding" that would recognize Iran's legitimate rights and lift "unjust and illegal sanctions." He emphasized Iran's peaceful nuclear intentions, reiterating the country's rejection of weapons of mass destruction based on its religious and national values and defensive doctrine.

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill over 90 in 48 hours



People run for cover as a plume of smoke rises above tents at a camp for displaced Palestinians in northern Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, during an Israeli strike on April 19, 2025. AFP

Israeli strikes in Gaza have killed more than 90 people in 48 hours, Gaza's Health Ministry said Saturday, as Israeli troops increase their attacks on the besieged territory. Children and women were among the 15 people killed overnight, and some had been sheltering in a designated humanitarian zone, according to hospital staff, AP reported.

At least 11 people were killed in the southern city of Khan Yunis, several of them in a tent in the Muwasi area where hundreds of thousands of displaced people are staying, hospital workers said. Israel has designated it as a humanitarian zone.

Four other people were killed in

strikes in Rafah city, including a mother and her daughter, according to the European Hospital, where the bodies were taken.

There was no immediate Israeli military comment. Israel has vowed to intensify attacks across Gaza and occupy indefinitely large "security zones" inside the small coastal strip of over 2 million people.

Israel also has blockaded Gaza for the past six weeks, again barring the entry of food and other goods. This week, aid groups raised the alarm, saying thousands of children have become malnourished and most people are barely eating one meal a day as stocks dwindle,

according to the United Nations. On Friday, the head of the World Health Organization's eastern Mediterranean office, Dr. Hanan Balkhy, urged the new US ambassador in Israel, Mike Huckabee, to push the country to lift Gaza's blockade so medicines and other aid can enter.

"I would wish for him to go in and see the situation firsthand," she said.

Israel's offensive has since killed over 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

The war has destroyed vast parts of Gaza and most of its food production capabilities. Around 90% of the population is displaced, with hundreds of thousands of people living in tent camps and bombed-out buildings.

Israel shattered a cease-fire last month and continued its deadly strikes on the Palestinian territory.

Iran in no rush to establish ties with new Syrian government



Members of Syria's new authorities' security forces gather in Sanamayn, in the southern province of Dara'a, during a military campaign on March 5, 2025. AFP

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran has no intention to establish contacts with Syria's new rulers until they ensure security in the Arab country.

"Iran is not engaging with the current Syrian government. We have no contacts and we are not in a hurry to establish relations. At the same time, we are not taking any measures against it, the Iranian foreign minister said in an interview with Russia Today.

"We are just waiting for them to complete their work to ensure security, stability and to establish an inclusive

legitimate government that includes all ethnic groups," the Iranian foreign minister said.

Araghchi paid a two-day visit to Russia on Thursday and Friday, during which he held talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and his counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

Araghchi said that the issue of Syria was raised during his meeting with Lavrov.

Both Iran and Russia are extremely concerned about the situation in Syria, Araghchi added.

Tehran and Moscow were the main allies of the former Syrian government during nearly a decade of war with the foreign-backed terrorists.

Expert-level meet means ...

Iran's biggest red line in the nuclear negotiations has always been to preserve the right to have its enrichment program—something enshrined in the statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency that allows member states to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, including enrichment, provided they adhere to safeguards under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Iran has time and again maintained that its nuclear work is entirely peaceful for purposes such as power generation and medicine.

Expert-level talks typically drill down into technical and specialized issues and the most technical matter under dispute in the talks between

Iran and the US seems to be uranium enrichment by Tehran.

The very fact that both parties have agreed to hold technical discussions is a strong indication that the US may have come round to the idea of Iran retaining some level of enrichment under a possible agreement.

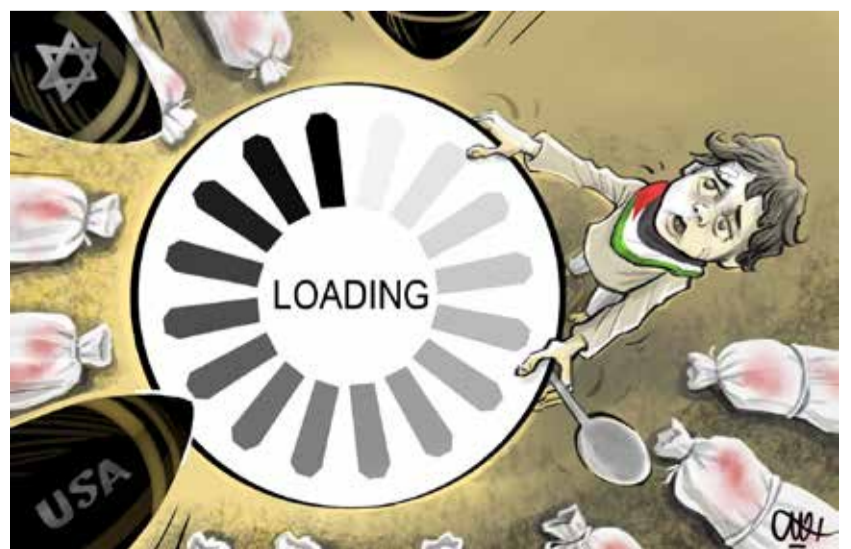
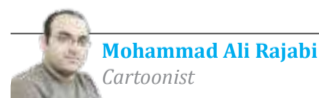
It now seems President Donald Trump, who once mocked the JCPOA and labeled it a "bad deal" before pulling out of it in 2018, might be warming to the idea of returning to a similar arrangement.

The fine details of any potential accord will emerge in time, but early signs suggest it would mirror the JCPOA, with minor tweaks that could go down well with both sides, particularly Trump, who may wish

to sell it to the American public and the international community.

Should such a win-win deal be clinched, it would be a major achievement for Iran and its negotiating team, who are going into these talks with the backing of the Leader and as per his advisor with "full authority."

Trump is still struggling to chalk up a meaningful foreign policy victory and has yet to deliver on key campaign promises such as ending the war between Russia and Ukraine or halting Israel's aggression on the Gaza Strip in favor of a cease-fire acceptable to the Palestinians. Therefore, under such circumstances, striking a deal with Iran could count as a feather in his cap.



Deputy minister: NIOC ready to guarantee full investment security

Hamid Bovard
SHANA

Economy Desk

CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Hamid Bovard expressed the company's comprehensive support for national and international investors and economic stakeholders, saying, "NIOC is prepared to provide all necessary guarantees to ensure investment security in upstream oil projects."

Placing a premium on the NIOC's commitment to leveraging private sector capital in major oil industry projects, Bovard said, "The oil industry is Iran's economic locomotive," adding

that, "Production and development are inseparable, and attracting substantial investment is essential to achieving our production targets."

Speaking on the "Transformation in Investment and Development of Iran's Upstream Oil and Gas" event scheduled to be held in Tehran on Tuesday, the deputy oil minister underlined that the event was the result of eight months of intensive work by NIOC's investment team.

"Since the start of the current administration, we have assembled a professional team to identify weaknesses and pro-

pose solutions for investment development," he said. "We hope constructive efforts will lead to significant progress in this sector."

Pointing to recent remarks by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on securing investors' capital, Bovard added, "NIOC stands ready to provide all necessary guarantees for investment security in upstream oil projects."

"Our goal is to attract investment, boost oil and gas production, and maximize returns for investors," he continued.

Turning Iran into a major industrial hub

The NIOC chief also highlighted reduced investment risks through flexible oil contracts, ensuring both security and profitability for investors.

"By attracting investment in oil projects, we will develop oil and gas fields while utilizing contractors in construction and operations—boosting employment and economic growth," Bovard said.

"We aim to transform Iran into a major industrial hub through thriving oil sector investments," he added.

Speaking at the event, the deputy oil minister outlined plans to beckon investment from Iranians abroad and said, "These resources are readily available—we just need to align contract terms with financial incentives."

Bovard noted that a significant portion of upstream oil project financing could come from domestic capital, saying, "Several promising proposals are under review and will be announced soon. The incentives in this sector are highly attractive and expected to draw strong public interest."

Bovard emphasized NIOC's flexible approach to revising contract frameworks and said, "Given the need for investment, we are open to expert recommendations to facilitate deals and enhance mutual benefits in oil contracts."

The current administration's oil industry strategy is highly adaptable, he said, no rigid con-

tract model is enforced, and we are ready to address weaknesses to improve deal attractiveness.

Removing investment barriers

Bovard stressed that new contract models offer significantly improved returns on investment, saying, "Considering the forex-based nature of these contracts, profitability is guaranteed."

He expressed hope that with support from executive and legislative bodies, obstacles to oil industry investment would be lifted.

The "Transformation in Investment and Development of Iran's Upstream Oil and Gas" event will take place Tuesday at the Summit Conference Hall of Tehran, attended by political and economic leaders as well as oil and gas stakeholders. Over 200 upstream oil and gas investment opportunities will be unveiled for the first time.

NIOC to introduce 23 oil, gas exploration blocks

According to the Iranian Oil Ministry's news service Shana, the NIOC is set to introduce 23 onshore and offshore exploration blocks at the event to accelerate hydrocarbon resource exploration and attract investment.

The estimated in-place reserves of these blocks total more than 193.8 billion barrels of oil and 783 trillion cubic feet of gas.

A set of investment opportunities, comprising 23 exploration

blocks across various regions of the country, has been identified and is ready for domestic and foreign investors. These blocks, located in areas including the Caspian Sea, other offshore zones and onshore sites, aim to discover new oil and gas reserves.

The combined area of these exploration blocks spans approximately 108,000 square kilometers, with estimated in-place reserves of 193.875 billion barrels of oil and 783 trillion cubic feet of gas. These resources could play a significant role in expanding Iran's production capacity and strengthening energy security.

Among the blocks, five are in the Caspian oil region, covering an area of about 11,625 square kilometers. Their in-place reserves are estimated at 191.8 billion barrels of oil and 738 trillion cubic feet of gas.

The remaining 18 blocks, under the direct supervision of NIOC's Exploration Directorate, are located in various parts of the country. These blocks cover more than 96,290 square kilometers and hold estimated in-place reserves of 2.075 billion barrels of oil and 45 trillion cubic feet of gas.

The introduction of these exploration blocks and the facilitation of investment opportunities reflect NIOC's strategic policy to sustainably develop Iran's hydrocarbon resources, optimize geological potential and enhance the country's role in the global energy market.

Iran's first Monazite production factory opened near Tehran

Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Mohammad Atabak inaugurated for the first time on Saturday a factory producing monazite, a reddish-brown phosphate mineral that contains rare-earth elements widely used in cutting-edge technologies.

Praising the achievement at the opening ceremony of the factory at Abbas Abad Industrial Town on the outskirts of Tehran, Atabak said, "A few countries have succeeded in producing rare earth elements, and for this reason, this event is of great significance in our country."

The minister expressed hope that with the activation of such factories, the country's achievement of "high-tech" industries with advanced tech-

nology would continue at a faster pace.

Pointing to the processing of rare earth elements as a fundamental measure for the development of advanced industries, Atabak said, "We hope that with the efforts of experts, the scope of production and the activation of project-based programs will expand to meet the goals of comprehensive upstream documents."

Morteza Ali-Akbari, a mining stakeholder, stated at the event, "This success is due to the around-the-clock efforts of the specialized and elite staff of this company, who have managed, through their diligence, to place Iran among the advanced countries in the field of extraction and processing of rare earth elements."

Regarding the Ministry of Industry,

Mining and Trade's perspective following the visit to Iran's first rare earth elements factory, he said, "The minister's perspective was very positive and he called for development in this sector."

Ali-Akbari stressed that, "We have been able to manufacture, install, and launch 100% of the equipment, some of which have been made for the first time in Iran and are being utilized. This equipment has been designed and built with the knowledge and expertise of our colleagues and in collaboration with a private company."

He added, "We practically witnessed two inaugurations; the inauguration of the set of machinery and equipment that had been made and installed, and the inauguration of the

extraction and processing line for the monazite concentrate of rare earth elements and the production of oxides of these elements, which was achieved through the extraordinary efforts of our specialists."

Ali-Akbari said this facility can be used as a research laboratory and semi-industrial center for testing and processing about 90% of the country's major minerals, which "will significantly accelerate our work so that within the next 2 to 3 months, by adding complementary equipment, we will reach the final capacity of this line."

Monazite has a wide range of applications, from agriculture, medicine and aerospace to steel production and the manufacturing of electronic chips and electric generators.

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Mohammad Atabak inaugurates a factory producing monazite near the capital Tehran on April 19, 2025.
IRNA

Exports of agricultural products hit \$5.2 last year, up by 29%: IRICA

Economy Desk

The Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said the export of agricultural products in the last Persian calendar year (March 19 to May 22, 2024) reached five billion and 200 million dollars, showing a 29% increase. Citing figures from IRICA, a report published by IRNA on Saturday said the weight of agricultural product exports during the period was seven million and 600 thousand tons, which indicates an 11% increase compared to the same period last year. According to report, the main exported agricultural products in the last Per-

sian calendar year included pistachios, tomatoes, and dates.

During the period, 1.5 billion dollars' worth of various pistachios, 233 million dollars' worth of tomatoes, and 205 million dollars' worth of dates were exported.

50 countries buy Iranian saffron

The report said 214 tons and 300 kilograms of saffron worth 184 million and 700 thousand dollars were exported. "This amount of saffron exports in 1403 shows a 4% decrease in weight and a 13% decrease in value," said Hamid Bayat, the director general of the

statistics and information processing department of IRICA, adding that the United Arab Emirates, Spain and China were the three major buyers of Iran's exported saffron last year.

According to Bayat, during this period, 50 million dollars of saffron was exported to the United Arab Emirates, 40 million dollars to Spain, and 30 million dollars to China.

The director general of the statistics and information processing department of IRICA stated that in 1403, a total of 65% of the total value of Iran's saffron exports went to the aforementioned three countries.

He added that Iranian saffron is ex-

ported to more than 50 countries worldwide.

Exports of fishery products

The report also announced that 196 thousand tons of fishery products worth 372 million dollars were exported abroad last year.

"During this period, the export of fishery products showed a 29% increase in weight and a 17% increase in value," Arezou Ghaniun, an official with IRICA, was quoted by IRNA as saying. Ghaniun added that the main fishery products exported last year included various types of shrimp, tuna, and different types of carp, which accounted



for 64% of the weight and 65% of the total value of exports among fishery products.

The official underlined that the primary buyers of Iran's exported fishery products were China, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates.

What Chinese modernization contributes to world



By Yuwen Li
Professor of
Peking University

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Modernization has long been taken as an epoch of human history that involved the rise of industrial inventions applied in social production. In Western countries, it has been made synonymous with the emergence of machines and technologies in the mid-18th century in Great Britain or the early 19th century in its European peers. Based on the great discoveries of modern mathematics, physics, and chemistry, inventions of these machines and technical gadgets boosted the social production force and produced massive industrial commodities to meet the soaring demand of expanded markets. Western Empires, like the European countries and especially Great Britain, grew to be industrial giants due to their early manipulation of steam engines, modern machines, sheer scales of colonies, paving railways, and steam vessels, greatly expanding world trade and commercial business. Great Britain was followed by her European patterners who developed comparative advantages in world trade, depending on their respective geological advantages or even world imperial hegemony. Therefore, taking advantage of industrial modernization, the Western industrial pioneers exploited the rest of the world, which made the Westerners the leaders of human modernization ever since the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In the oriental continents, modernization happened rather late due to the safe and sound agricultural social production system and tact social structure embodied by the long-lasting feudalism born almost 2,000 years ago. In some way, the eastern-hemisphere countries were almost dragged into the sweeping tide of modernization by the Western countries, which seemingly have more power and more advanced technologies.

China, an old empire that occupied a large land in the eastern hemisphere, was beaten by the Western industrial power allies during the Opium War in the 1840s and was forced to sign numerous one-sided treaties to cede territory and pay indemnities to major Western industrial powers. Therefore, the modernization of China in the late 19th century and early 20th century was indeed accompanied by unaccountable humiliations that left a sad historical scar in the minds of the Chinese. The old and intact Chinese civilization was therefore



● JIN DING/CHINA DAILY

broken by the strong and sweeping industrial force from the western hemisphere.

Led by the Chinese Communist Party, which was founded in 1921, the Chinese started the modernization with their own social characteristics. First, they won their national independence by freeing the country and its people from the ruling and semi-colonizing Western industrial powers. The significant national revolution led by the communists finally established a brand-new People's Republic in October 1949.

During that period — to be exact, from 1931 to 1945 — the Chinese also fought a bitter war with Japan and suffered untold sadness. The bloody invasions of Japanese military imperialism brought great losses to China. Yet, it taught the Chinese the lesson that without national independence and national emancipation, there could never be peace and

liberty, and consequently, no modernization at all. National independence established the necessary prerequisite for independent modernization in China.

Therefore, the first contribution of Chinese modernization is to set an example and convey an indisputable truth — that is, real modernization should start with an independent and self-determined regime, with complete sovereignty and a strong government that can determine its own fate. Governments with no real independence can never make their own decisions in modernization. In this vein, modernization relies on having the sole claim to your country's sovereignty and destiny, regardless of the name of that country. From the historical lessons of facing the danger of losing sovereignty, the Chinese learned that only an independent country with complete sovereignty can guarantee a successful modernization.

Modernization in whichever country, led by whichever political party, shall create its own way instead of simply copying other patterns. In the 1950s–60s, the first generation of the People's Republic leaders attempted to borrow bits of advice and experiences from other modern countries but failed due to the unfriendly loaners who wished to take over China's sovereignty. Therefore, the founding fathers of new China determined to find their own way to modernization and did not yield to the stronger powers who still posed hegemonic requests. For the past 70 or more years, China adhered to its own way of modernization and has been seeking a model of modernization with Chinese characteristics. The success of China's modernization up till now exemplifies the correctness of this choice. To be concise and direct, any country that wishes to become modern shall find its own way and

maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity to safeguard its way of modernization. This is indeed the first contribution of the Chinese Communist Party to any country that wishes to start its own modernization.

Modernization is a thorough change in all spheres of the society. It is an overall yet gradual social construction that involves not only breaking up with the old agrarian tradition of a rather lower productive force but also eliminating the out-of-date feudalist social relations, which prevent the minds of people from leading new lives or creating new things. However, the modernization of a country or a society is in fact the modernization of its people in the end because human beings are nothing if not the owners of the world, the most active factor of any social productive force. China has a massive population of over 1.4 billion people, which accounts for almost one-fourth of the whole

population of the world. So, when China's modernization focused on changing the living conditions and spiritual needs of men, it was indeed a good point in the history of modernization in terms of its effect on the population.

Since the Reform and the opening up in the 1970s, China has had its main focus on the elimination of poverty and illiteracy at the grass roots level. After half a century's worth of diligent struggle and hard work, by the end of 2021, over 770 million poor Chinese people got rid of poverty and became self-sufficient in their livelihoods. With 1.4 billion rich and prosperous people, China has led over 70% of world poverty elimination efforts, surpassing the target of the Millennium Development Goal set by the United Nations in 2000. This can be defined as the second contribution of China to the world no doubt.

Chinese modernization is in nature a combination of



For all countries and societies wishing to become modern, China's story of modernization sets a good example or even provides a good model. Chinese experience and plan for modernization will benefit all its developing partners. However, China does not intend to impose its plan on anyone at all. The Chinese cherish friendship with all peace-loving people and hope to make friends with them. Therefore, Chinese people firmly believe that any independent country and society has the freedom, right, and sovereignty to make their own way to modernization.



City view of Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong Province
● VCG

a self-directed model and an other-directed model, with internal all-around development in agriculture, industry, science, technology, and national defense, as well as external full-scale cooperation with countries wishing to develop themselves. The Chinese modernization is a totally self-reliant mod-

ernization, adhering to finding its own path with Chinese characteristics. China does not indeed intend to develop a predatory model of modernization by enslaving anyone or colonizing any land. Therefore, as claimed by President Xi Jinping at the 20th National Congress of the Party in 2022, Chinese

modernization features a peaceful road to development, which is in stark difference from any other industrial empire. The reason for that is that Chinese civilization is a peace-loving one instead of a war-like one. The deep-rooted cultural tradition tells the Chinese to make peace, not war. So, in the minds of

all Chinese people, we are not afraid of war but we do not want war with any country. By making peace in the process and the end result of modernization, China is devoting itself to world peace. This shall be another contribution of Chinese modernization to the world. For all countries and so-

cieties wishing to become modern, China's story of modernization sets a good example or even provides a good model. Chinese experience and plan for modernization will benefit all its developing partners. However, China does not intend to impose its plan on anyone at all. The Chinese cherish friendship with all

peace-loving people and hope to make friends with them. Therefore, Chinese people firmly believe that any independent country and society has the freedom, right, and sovereignty to make their own way to modernization. Therefore, China wishes to join hands with all those who enjoy their own way of life and

their own freedom to become modern. All in all, people who love peaceful modernization, shall unite and work together to make their own dreams come true.

The article was sponsored by a Chinese national project, entitled "Overseas Study on Chinese Modernization".

How China's record trade surplus helped spark Trump's tariff war

By Joe Leahy, William Langley & others
Journalists

ANALYSIS

China is comfortably the world's trading superpower. Its trade surplus — the difference between imports and exports — rose to almost \$1t last year. Beijing's exporting machine is one of the main reasons President Donald Trump has launched the opening shots in his new global trade war. But it is not just the US that is alarmed.

Emerging economies and established rivals are also concerned about their industries being crushed by cheaper Chinese goods — a situation that could be exacerbated if products once destined for the US end up in their markets instead. China's trade surplus affects the whole world.

No country has escaped Trump's tariffs, but China's massive trade surplus has seen it hit with the steepest measures. The US and Beijing are locked in an escalatory row that has seen Washington place levies of more than 104 percent on Chinese goods entering the US.

The US president hopes that his tariff regime will erode China's surplus and enable American manufacturers to compete again. But Beijing's trade juggernaut is built on deep competitive advantages built up over decades that will not be easily dislodged.

"The sheer scale of China's dominance is unprecedented; no other country in recent decades has matched this level across such a broad range of products," says Vincent Vicard, head of the International Trade Analysis programme at economic think-tank CEPII.

The battery sector is a clear example of China's prowess in capturing industries and squeezing efficiencies until foreign rivals can no longer keep up. This is usually achieved by combining comprehensive government support with the entrepreneurialism of Chinese businesspeople like Wang Jiang. Wang, a former factory worker who now runs a recruitment business, moved to the dusty industrial hub of Sanhe in southern Guangdong province two years ago, drawn by its efforts to build a complete supply chain for battery production, or in Chinese factory parlance, "the whole dragon". "There are a lot of plastic parts in a battery, as well as hardware parts and some packaging consumables," he

explains from his office on the ground floor of a former housing unit.

"There are material factories, plastic factories, electronics factories, and product factories. All of them are involved in the clean energy industry chain."

This region of southern China is a hotbed for battery production. It is home to a research centre for the world's third biggest lithium producer, Ganfeng Lithium, as well as Contemporary Amperex Technology (CATL), the world's largest battery maker, and EV producer BYD. In Sanhe, restaurants and homes are plastered with advertisements for jobs in green tech. The area's booming lithium-ion battery industry encapsulates the benefits manufacturing industries in China enjoy when building "the whole dragon".

Raw materials critical to battery production are found in only a few locations, with Australia, Chile, Indonesia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) among the top producers — and China has a presence in all of them. Even where mine ownership remains in local hands, Chinese entities have secured long-term agreements for the supply of raw materials, such as lithium from Chile and Argentina.

Beijing's supremacy is even starker further down the supply chain. China dominates mineral processing and the production of parts, according to data from Benchmark Mineral Intelligence. China is home to the vast majority of refineries and factories that produce anodes and cathodes, key components which are then assembled into battery cells. China produces three in ev-

ery four lithium-ion batteries sold globally, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Battery prices in the country have also been falling at a faster rate than the rest of the world, thanks to a fiercely competitive local market counting almost 100 producers.

Unrivalled government backing has been crucial in establishing the industry and driving down costs. Last year, the average Chinese battery pack was more than 30 percent cheaper than those made in the EU and 20 percent cheaper than in the US.

Having all the components required to make a battery located within a radius of a few hundred kilometres has not only helped reduce prices and lead times, it has also fostered innovation.

China has a commanding lead in the global share of patents filed for lithium-ion batteries, in recent years accounting for around 80 percent of the annual total,

according to an analysis by Simon Lux, a battery researcher at the University of Münster in Germany.

"No other region globally provides the same unique combination of resources, advanced manufacturing capabilities, skilled labour, investment capital, and substantial governmental support for the battery industry," says Lux. If any company exemplifies why it will be hard for other countries to rival China's battery sector dominance, it is CATL. Founded in 2011, the battery maker rode the initial wave of China's EV boom, recording a compound annual growth rate of 110 percent from 2014 to 2022.

CATL's autonomy is the envy of rivals. By late 2023, half of the company's required cobalt, nickel, phosphate, and lithium refining was handled internally. It has been targeting, by this year, to boost its self-sufficiency in cathode and precursor material to around 35 percent and 45 percent, respectively. Most

worryingly for competitors, the company is building new factories at about half the cost of its foreign rivals.

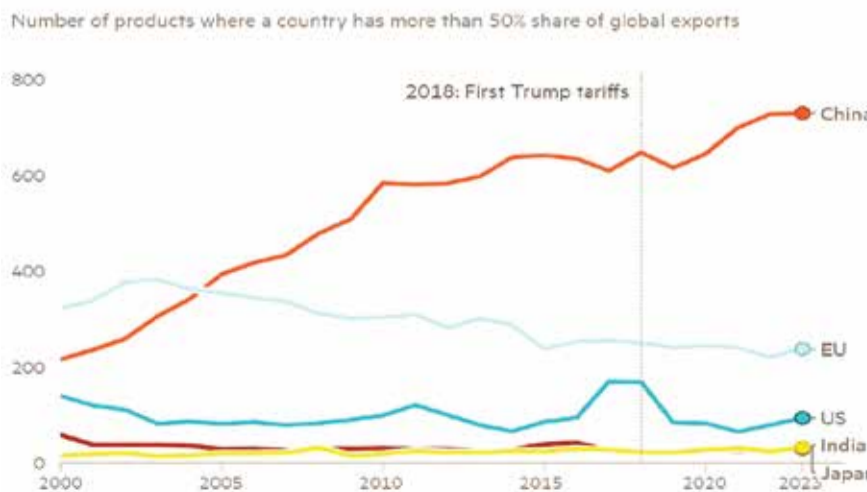
"CATL is not only the largest scale player in the industry but it also has the best technology and the highest utilisation levels," says Neil Beveridge, who leads investment group AllianceBernstein's energy research in Hong Kong. Batteries are just one high-profile example among hundreds of products, including PCs, smartphones, and steel, where China exerts a stranglehold on the global market.

Other critical sectors include vitamins, pharmaceutical raw ingredients, household appliances, and personal items such as wigs, where China accounts for around 75 percent of the export market. Overall, the country supplies at least 50 percent of global exports for 730 of 5,000 classified trading products, three times higher than the EU and almost eight times as many as the US, according to CEPII.



LIU XIDAN/GT

China's trade dominance has risen despite tariffs



CEPII analysis of UN Comtrade data
FT



Recruitment advertisements are posted on a wall in Sanhe in Guangdong Province, an area packed with battery production facilities — including a factory owned by EVE Power, which makes batteries for electric vehicles.
WILLIAM LANGLEY/FT

And while the EU and the US have held comparable export market shares in the past, trade now makes up a significantly larger part of the world economy — around 60 percent of global GDP.

Even with US tariffs on China's exports exceeding 100 percent, the country's superiority in so many sectors will make it challenging for importers to switch suppliers, at least in the short term. This is especially true for emerging markets, many of which have strengthened their trade relationships with China in recent years.

As the share of Beijing's direct exports to the US has declined since Trump imposed tariffs during his first term, China's trade with fast-growing economies like Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico, and Brazil has grown.

Those countries have in turn increased their own exports to the US, often turning components imported from China into finished products destined for the American market.

"The US trade deficit with China improved marginally, but this was offset by a significant deterioration with the rest of the world," analysts at financial services group Nomura wrote.

Brad Setser, of the Council on Foreign Relations, said in a recent post: "The US bilateral balance with China, Southeast Asia, and Taiwan is probably a better base for estimates of true US imports of Chinese content these days than direct imports from China."

Although they are calculated using a crude formula, Trump's tariffs on Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, and other Southeast Asian countries might well be intended to stymie this diversion of

Chinese goods. Concern about China's exporting might is not confined to Washington. Beijing's sustained push to boost manufacturing output, combined with a drawn-out period of tepid domestic demand, has flooded global markets with Chinese goods. And countries are fighting back.

China accounts for only 15 percent of global consumption — less than its 18 percent share of world GDP and far below its 30 percent share of manufacturing. That means it needs demand in other countries to absorb its enormous excess production. China shipping more goods than it brings in is far from a recent development — Beijing has recorded an overall trade surplus for 30 years. However, the gap between its exports and imports has more than doubled since 2019, climbing to almost a trillion dollars last year.

Trading partners beyond the US have levelled criticism at Beijing that these large trade imbalances are not sustainable, posing a real threat to their economies as they struggle to develop, or maintain, their own domestic industries in the face of cheaper Chinese products.

Industrialised nations as well as fast-growing economies have expressed unease at the negative impact this is having on their manufacturing sectors. But Chinese officials have mostly denied the existence of any problem with oversupply. The US and EU — which make up almost two-thirds of China's trade surplus — have been vocal in chastising Beijing on its industrial overproduction.

The full article first appeared on The Financial Times.

Persian Gulf Pro League: Tractor on course, Sepahan wins Iranian Clasico to remain in contention

Sports Desk

The Persian Gulf Pro League title race has effectively narrowed to two horses after the latest round of fixtures in the Iranian top flight on Friday. Tractor tightened its grip on the top spot with a 3-0 home win over Malavan, while second-placed Sepahan stayed within touching distance of the summit by defeating nearest rival Persepolis 2-0 in the so-called 'Iranian Clasico.' Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh sent the home crowd at the packed Yadegar-e Imam Stadium into raptures with his 10th league goal of the season deep into first-half stoppage time, and Croatian Domagoj Drozdek

scored twice in the second half as Tractor edged closer to a maiden domestic league crown. Having a game in hand, Tractor is on top of the table with 58 points – two points clear of Sepahan – though Dragan Skocic's men could extend their lead to five when they visit fourth-placed Foolad Khuzestan next Friday in a rescheduled fixture from matchday 22. Tractor will also play away to Shams Azar and Esteghlal Khuzestan either side of a home game against Nassaji Mazandaran until the end of the season. Sepahan, meanwhile, capitalized on a front-foot start at Tehran's Azadi Stadium later on Friday to keep alive

its slim hopes of lifting a first league trophy in a decade. Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi put Sepahan in front inside two minutes, tapping in a Milad Zakipour's corner-kick on the near post, before Georgian center-back Giorgi Gvelesiani headed the ball into his own net on a Mohammad Karimi's cross nine minutes later. A fourth successive win against their familiar foes this campaign saw Sepahan move five points clear of Persepolis and build crucial momentum in the battle for an AFC Champions League spot with three games remaining. Sepahan will welcome Golgozar Sirjan next in the league before facing bottom-club Havadar (away)



Tractor players celebrate a goal during a 3-0 victory over Malavan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Yadegar-e Imam Stadium, Tabriz, Iran, on April 18, 2025. tractor-club.com

and Esteghlal (home). Persepolis, the dominant force in the Iranian club football with seven league titles in eight years, will finish a below-par season with games against Mes Rafsanjan (A), Khaybar (A), and Havadar (H). Elsewhere in the league, Ramin Rezaeian scored from the spot in the second

minute of added time to cancel out a Mohammadreza Azadi's ninth-minute own goal and help Esteghlal salvage a point at Golgozar Sirjan on Wednesday. In Tehran, Reza Jabireh scored a brace with Ali Shojaei – from the spot – and Hossein Karimzadeh also on the scoresheet as Mes hammered Havadar

4-0 to move six points clear of the relegation zone. Nassaji Mazandaran – second from bottom – was dealt a massive blow in its bid to stay in the top-tier league after suffering a 1-0 loss at Khaybar – courtesy of Mohammad-Javad Mohammadi's spot-kick late in the first half. Iralco and Chadormalou

shared the points in a goalless game in Arak, while Pedram Qazipour's strike led Zob Ahan to a 1-0 win against Esteghlal Khuzestan at home on Thursday. In Ahvaz's Foolad Arena, Hooman Rabizadeh's first-half OG helped Foolad edge Shams Azar 1-0 and close the gap on Persepolis to three points with a game in hand.



Asian U18 Athletics Championships: Kamareh grabs 3000m gold as Iran finishes with three medals

Sports Desk

The final day of the Asian U18 Athletics Championships saw Iran's Mohammad-Saleh Kamareh walk away with the ultimate prize of the boys' 3000m event in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. The Iranian boy clocked 8:37.55 minutes in Friday's final to set a new national cadet record and beat Uz-

bek duo Timur Nasimov (8:51.27) and Asilbek Tukhtamurodov (9:01.95) to the top podium. This was a third, and most colorful, medal for the Iranian nine-athlete squad in Dammam. Amirreza Ahanin-Maram won a bronze in the boys' hammer throw event on Day 1 of the competitions in the Saudi coastal city. Ahanin-Maram began the

final showpiece with a 67.74m effort, and then registered 69.88m, before his final attempt of 70.83m saw the Iranian finish behind the host's Mohammed Siraj Alzayer (79.11m) and Chinese Wang Ankang (74.81m). A second bronze medal for Iran came in the girls' 3000m event on the penultimate day, when Samia Shahpari finished the cross-line in a new national-re-

cord of 10:09.07 minutes – following Uzbekistan's Anastasiya Silchenkova (9:45.17) and Suolang Zhuoma (10:00.44) of China.

Mohammad-Saleh Kamareh (L) poses with the Iranian flag after winning the boys' 3000m gold medal at the Asian U18 Athletics Championships in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, on April 18, 2025. iranathletics.ir

Central Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships: Iranian girls rout Uzbekistan to close in on title

Sports Desk

Iranian girls continued their winning run at the Central Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships in Almaty, Kazakhstan, with a 3-0 victory over Uzbekistan on Friday. Vania Yavari claimed a first win for the Iranian team with a 3-1 triumph against Arujan Kamalova, before Setayesh Iloukhani came out victorious in straight game against Asel Erkebaeva.

Yekta Larkian rounded off the victory for the Iranian under-19 team when she defeated Adelina Khasanova in a five-game thriller. This is was a second win in as many matchups for the Iranian girls, who secured qualification for the 29th Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships – starting June 26 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Sitting atop the four-team table with four points, Iran had begun its campaign with a 3-2

victory over the host on Friday. Kazakhstan bounced back from the first-day setback to beat Kyrgyzstan 3-0 on Saturday. The Iranian girls will take on Kyrgyzstan in their final outing in Almaty today. In the men's draw, however, the Iranian team got off to a losing start on Friday, suffering a 3-2 defeat against Uzbekistan. Iranian Samran Karimi fell short in four games

against Shokhrukh Iskandarov, before world No. 6 Benyamin Faraji came from behind to beat Diyorbek Dilshodov in five games and level the scoreline at 1-1. Mohammad Habibi gave Iran the lead when he defeated Khurshid Akhmedov 3-0, but Uzbekistan rallied from behind through Iskandarov and Dilshodov, as both came out on top against Faraji and Karimi, respectively, in five games.



Irania Desk

Salmas is a city in the West Azarbaijan Province of Iran, bordered to the north by Khoy, to the east by Shabestar and Lake Urmia, and to the south by Urmia. Covering an area of 2,544 square kilometers, Salmas boasts a rich history spanning 10,000 years, making it the first chessboard city in Iran. Located 90 kilometers north of Urmia, Salmas lies near the Iran-Turkey border along the shores of Lake Urmia. According to the book 10,000-Year History of Salmas, after the Dilmagan earthquake, which resulted in the complete destruction of the city, the recognition of the necessity for a new city to be established — not merely to clear the ruins — led to the implementation of a modern urban planning model featuring a chessboard layout, designed by Asadollah Khan. One of the advantages of this layout is that all urban services are strategically positioned to minimize travel distances, thereby saving time for residents navigating the city, IRNA wrote.

Tohid Malekzadeh, an author, noted that in this urban planning method, facilities such as religious, educational, and health establishments were designed in accordance with the pedestrian path regulations of the time. Consequently, since all houses, offices, and public buildings are visible, no structure is concealed, allowing for easy accessibility. He pointed out that this urban planning approach was an innovative concept for its time and was embraced by urban planners of that era. Furthermore, another advantage of this city's design is its chessboard layout, which effectively alleviates urban traffic issues caused by vehicle congestion common in modern cities. In Salmas, it is possible to reach a desired location via four different routes, making traffic less problematic.

As the first chessboard city in Iran, Salmas not only showcases beautiful architectural styles but also features numerous historical and natural attractions that draw both domestic and foreign tourists each year.

Why Salmas should be on your travel list



Ahranjan Hill

Ahranjan Hill, rising about four meters above the surrounding terrain, is considered one of the oldest human

settlements, dating back to the late 7th and 8th millennia BCE. The remnants found on this hill extend the history of Salmas back 10,000 years.

Sheikh Bathhouse

The Sheikh Bathhouse was constructed during the Pahlavi dynasty, employing traditional Iranian architectural styles. The construction of the bathhouse took three years, from 1930 to 1932. It features a rectangular geometric layout with an area of 860 square meters, and its floor is situated three and a half meters below ground level. The bathhouse was supplied with water from two streams located to the south and west of the city. The materials used in its construction include stone, brick, plaster, lime, and sand. Following the earthquake of 1930,



the Sheikh Bathhouse is considered the first and oldest bathhouse in Salmas. In 2000, this historic site was registered as one of the attractions on

Iran's National Heritage List and has since transformed into a cultural and artistic complex, serving as an exhibition space for anthropological works.

Qarniyaroq Cave

Qarniyaroq Cave is one of the most captivating natural attractions in Salmas, located in a mountain bearing the same name.

According to local legends, a tale is associated with this cave concerning a girl who had three brothers vying for her hand in marriage. The

condition for marriage was that one brother must create a cave within the mountain; whoever completed this task first would win her.

While the fissures in the cave were primarily formed due to geological changes, the presence of chambers suggests some level of human intervention in its formation. Geographically, the cave lies in the southern part of Salmas, where the remnants of a fortress dating back to the time of the Medes can also be found.



Zola Chai Valley

Zola Chai Valley is another natural gem in Salmas and is regarded by locals as a cozy and idyllic spot for vacationing. A seasonal river flows through this valley, enhancing its greenery and charm. In spring, when the surrounding mountains come alive with

lush vegetation and the snow — fed by melting snow from the mountains — flows through, it creates a breathtaking scene. The river originates from the mountains along the Iran-Turkey border. During rainy seasons, when precipitation is abundant, this river empties into Lake Urmia.

Khor Khoreh Waterfall

The Khor Khoreh Waterfall is situated in a valley of the same name, located in southern Salmas, between the villages of Shur Gol and Mamakan. This waterfall, found deep within a valley approximately 80 meters deep, is considered one of the main beautiful recreational spots in the

area and is one of West Azerbaijan's natural attractions. When traveling from Salmas to Urmia, after covering about 11 kilometers, you will notice a side road on the right marked with a sign for the village of Tamar. Following this road and passing through Tamar village, you will reach Khor Khoreh Valley af-

ter an additional 20-kilometer journey. From the heights of the valley, you can witness the stunning Khor Khoreh Waterfall, which is estimated to be around 42 meters tall. The valley is filled with small and large rocks, mosses, and shrubs, and the water from the waterfall cascades into a small pond within the valley, creating a pleasant environment.

As spring approaches and rains begin, along with the melting of snow, the waterfall reaches its peak flow, providing an incredibly picturesque view. Locals believe that the soothing sound of the waterfall is how the valley earned its name. This location attracts numerous tourists annually.



Abgarm Village

Abgarm village is another notable village in Salmas, celebrated for its unparalleled natural beauty and extraordinary landscapes. It is renowned for its pristine environment and hot springs, drawing many visitors each year for recreation and healing. In this village, you can explore various attractions, including

a hydrotherapy complex, the Imam Shafi'i Mosque, Shour Darreh Waterfall, a dilapidated teahouse, and the village's beautiful natural scenery. Abgarm has a rich history, established many years ago, and dating back hundreds of years. The village is characterized by semi-mountainous terrain filled with vineyards and diverse fruit trees.

West Azarbaijan Province

The lush landscapes and historical sites of West Azarbaijan Province have established this province as one of the best destinations for sightseeing. The capital of West Azarbaijan Province is the city of Urmia, which features numerous attractions, including

museums, springs, traditional markets, and historical buildings. In addition to Urmia, other cities in the province — such as Salmas, Mahabad, Khoy, Takab, Chaldoran, Sardasht, and Maku — host beautiful ancient and natural sites. This land is a realm of wonders. Throughout this ancient territory, traces of magnificent

civilizations linger. The convergence of various religions and ethnicities, combined with pristine and captivating nature, pleasant weather, and warm-hearted, hospitable people, creates a vibrant tapestry of beauty for every traveler to admire. Exploring the diverse corners of this province offers a unique and

delightful experience. This region is home to the legacies of great figures such as Shams Tabrizi, Puriya-ye Vali, and even Cyrus the Great. In West Azarbaijan Province, you will encounter astonishing ancient sites and breathtaking, untouched natural landscapes waiting for you to discover. The attractions of West

Azarbaijan are not only prominent in Iran but also recognized around the world. Their allure goes beyond beauty and antiquity, intertwining with legends and remarkable natural phenomena. Furthermore, this province boasts unique religious attractions, some of which have gained international acclaim.

Iran proposes new cultural, tourism pact with Turkey to deepen bilateral ties



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri (C) meets with Turkey's Ambassador to Iran, Hicabi Kirlangic (2nd L), to discuss bilateral relations in Tehran, Iran on April 19, 2025. ● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Saturday proposed a broad cultural and tourism agreement with Turkey, aiming to expand cooperation across heritage preservation, tourism development, and economic investment. The proposal was made during a meeting in Tehran with Turkey's ambassador to Iran, Hicabi

Kirlangic. Minister Reza Salehi Amiri called for a "comprehensive and forward-looking" memorandum of understanding that would set a new foundation for bilateral collaboration. He said the agreement would go beyond traditional diplomacy to reflect the "deep historical and cultural ties" between the two neighboring nations. "The relationship between Iran

and Turkey is not merely political or diplomatic," Salehi Amiri added. "It is rooted in shared cultural heritage that has continued since the Ottoman era." Highlighting the global stature of Rumi, Salehi Amiri described the poet as a "universal figure" who could serve as a cultural bridge. "Rumi belongs to the whole of humanity and can be a foundation for civilizational dialogue between our countries," he said. Tourism emerged as a central focus of the proposed agreement. Salehi Amiri noted the strong interest among Iranians in visiting Turkey, attributing it not only to tourism infrastructure but also to deep "cultural com-

monalities." He also pointed to growing interest from Turkey's Alevi community in visiting Iranian religious and cultural sites, including Mashhad and the shrine of Haji Bektash Veli in Neyshabur. The minister described Iran as a country "rich in tourism potential," citing 28 UNESCO World Heritage sites, over 43,000 nationally registered monuments, and thousands of cultural and historical attractions. "These assets make Iran a unique and distinguished destination for global travelers," he said. Addressing economic cooperation, Salehi Amiri extended an invitation to Turkish investors to participate in Iran's expanding tourism infrastructure, announcing plans to build 100 new hotels annually. "We welcome Turkish economic actors in our tourism sector and are ready to facilitate investment," he said. He also pointed to Iran's strong

position in handicrafts, with over \$500 million in annual exports. "A significant portion is informal or suitcase exports," he explained, adding that Turkey could become a "strategic partner" in developing international markets for Iranian handicrafts. Turkish Ambassador Kirlangic welcomed the initiative, saying the relationship between Iran and Turkey went beyond routine neighborly ties. "Our nations have lived as culturally intertwined communities," he said. "If we strengthen our cultural and social relations, this harmony will extend to other areas as well." He also called for more visibility of Iran's tourism potential in Turkey and emphasized the need for targeted promotional campaigns. Deputy Minister Ali Darabi highlighted Iran-Turkey cooperation in jointly registering the cultural tradition of Iftar and suggested organizing joint cultural weeks and museum exhibitions.

Deputy for Tourism Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey called for the establishment of technical committees to promote collaboration in specific areas, including halal food and pilgrimage tourism. Maryam Jalali, deputy minister for handicrafts, announced an agreement with Istanbul's mayor to establish a dedicated space for showcasing Iranian handicrafts, describing the move as a "key step in expanding international markets." Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, head of the Ministry's Investment Center, said Iran was developing specialized consulting and facilitation packages to attract Turkish private investment. "We are actively working to guide Turkish investors into Iran's tourism projects," he said. The proposal comes amid broader efforts by both countries to strengthen people-to-people engagement and leverage cultural diplomacy as a means to enhance regional cooperation.

Iran, Indonesia eye tourism growth

Tehran-Jakarta direct flight to be launched

Arts & Culture Desk

As Iran and Indonesia explore new avenues to deepen bilateral cooperation, tourism has emerged as a key focus, with religious and cultural tourism offering significant potential to strengthen people-to-people ties. Tourism officials say the shared Islamic heritage between the two nations — both boasting a rich tapestry of religious sites and traditions — creates a natural bridge for increased travel, IRNA reported. "Ninety percent of Indonesia's population is Muslim," noted Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey, Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. He emphasized the potential for "pilgrimage tourism" and highlighted that millions of Indonesians travel abroad

each year. "We can take meaningful steps to welcome these travelers." Recent high-level meetings between the two countries have paved the way for a direct flight between Tehran and Jakarta — a move aimed at "facilitating tourism exchanges," according to Mohseni-Bandpey. Plans for the launch of the route are underway, following what he described as "promising agreements" with Indonesian officials. The announcement comes on the heels of the 37th UNWTO East Asia and Pacific Commission and the 60th South Asia Commission meetings in Jakarta, during which Tehran was named host of the first World Forum on Urban Tourism, scheduled for June 24-25. Mohseni-Bandpey also announced that Isfahan has been selected to host

the 2026 Global Tourism Commission meeting — a milestone that he says "challenges the Iranophobia narrative" by spotlighting Iran's "vast tourism capacity" and cultural charm. Amid ongoing efforts to develop the sector, Iran continues to promote underexplored destinations across its provinces. Lesser-known regions such as Ilam, Lorestan, and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad saw a "sharp rise in tourist arrivals" during Nowruz, signaling a more balanced national tourism flow and what officials call "tourism justice." Tehran has also invested heavily in improving visitor experiences. Enhanced transportation, fuel supply, and safety



measures during the Persian New Year holidays were a result of "direct orders from the President," Mohseni-Bandpey said.

Emergency services and health infrastructure were also scaled up, contributing to what he described as "a safer and more enjoyable holiday season."

91 foreign publishers apply for first Tehran Publishing Fellowship

Arts & Culture Desk

A total of 91 foreign publishers from 34 countries have applied to participate in the first Tehran Publishing Fellowship, Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced on Saturday. The event, which aims to strengthen Iran's presence in the global publishing landscape, is scheduled to take place May 12-15 alongside the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, IRNA reported. According to a statement from the Cultural Affairs Department of the Ministry, 30 of the 91 foreign applicants will be selected

by a panel of judges. The participating publishers represent a diverse array of countries, including Argentina, Australia, China, Egypt, Hungary, India, Italy, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, and Vietnam, among others. In addition to international interest, 64 Iranian publishers have also registered for the fellowship. Of these, 40 will be selected to take part in the program, based on specific criteria evaluated by the selection committee. The Tehran Publishing Fellowship, a first-of-its-kind initiative for Iran, is designed to foster collaboration among publishers,



authors, and literary agencies. It focuses on the sale and exchange of intellectual property rights, and will highlight children's and young adult literature with an emphasis on illustrated works in its debut edition. The ministry has previously supported similar efforts through translation and publication grant programs such as "Grant" and

"TOP" (Translation of Persian Works), aimed at promoting Persian literature abroad. However, no official Persian equivalent for the term "fellowship" has yet been designated by relevant institutions. The 36th Tehran International Book Fair will run from May 7 to 17 under the theme "Let's Read for Iran."

Iranian film awarded at US Ivy Film Festival

The screenplay 'The Last Howl of the Sheep', co-written by Iranian screenwriters Mostafa Rostampour and Atefeh Rezaeian, has won second place in the Graduate Short Screenplay category at the 23rd annual Ivy Film Festival in the United States. Recognized as one of the most prestigious student film festivals in the world, the Ivy Film Festival once again drew submissions from emerging filmmakers and writers from around the globe. The festival is held annually at Brown University and serves as a major platform for young voices in cinema. In a statement addressed to the screenwriters, the festival's jury



praised the work, stating: "We received screenplays from a wide range of talented student writers from around the world, but yours stood out among the selected works for its overall quality and creativity."