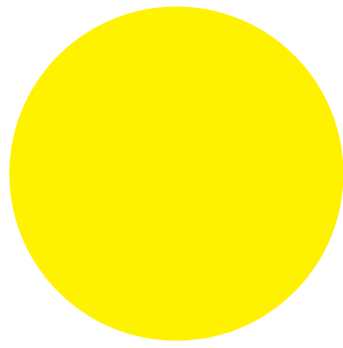


\$7 billion investment capacity in national railway industry: *Official*

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Deputy FM: Iran serious in nuclear talks with US, rejects delay

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US approach to nuclear talks no longer high-handed



By Yaghoub Rezazadeh
Presiding board member of Iranian parliament

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

As is known, the proposal for talks between Iran and the United States came from the American side. In response to their letter—crafted in accordance with the guidance of the Leader—the Iranian Foreign Ministry suggested indirect negotiations. Though initially resistant, the Americans ultimately gave in and agreed to hold the talks via an intermediary. Accordingly, the first round was carried out in Muscat, the capital of Oman and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi deemed it positive. Araghchi also expressed satisfaction with the second round, which took place Saturday at the Omani Embassy in Rome, calling the negotiations “moving forward.”

So far, the conduct and posture of the American negotiating team point to a shift from their previous, more domineering stance during the JCPOA-era nuclear talks. In the current negotiations, there appears to be a level of mutual respect from the US side, and one can say that reason and logic have taken the reins in their remarks and statements.

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Iran, Saudi Arabia; a strategic shift from ideological confrontation to shared interests

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Red flag raised: Where did it all go wrong for Persepolis?

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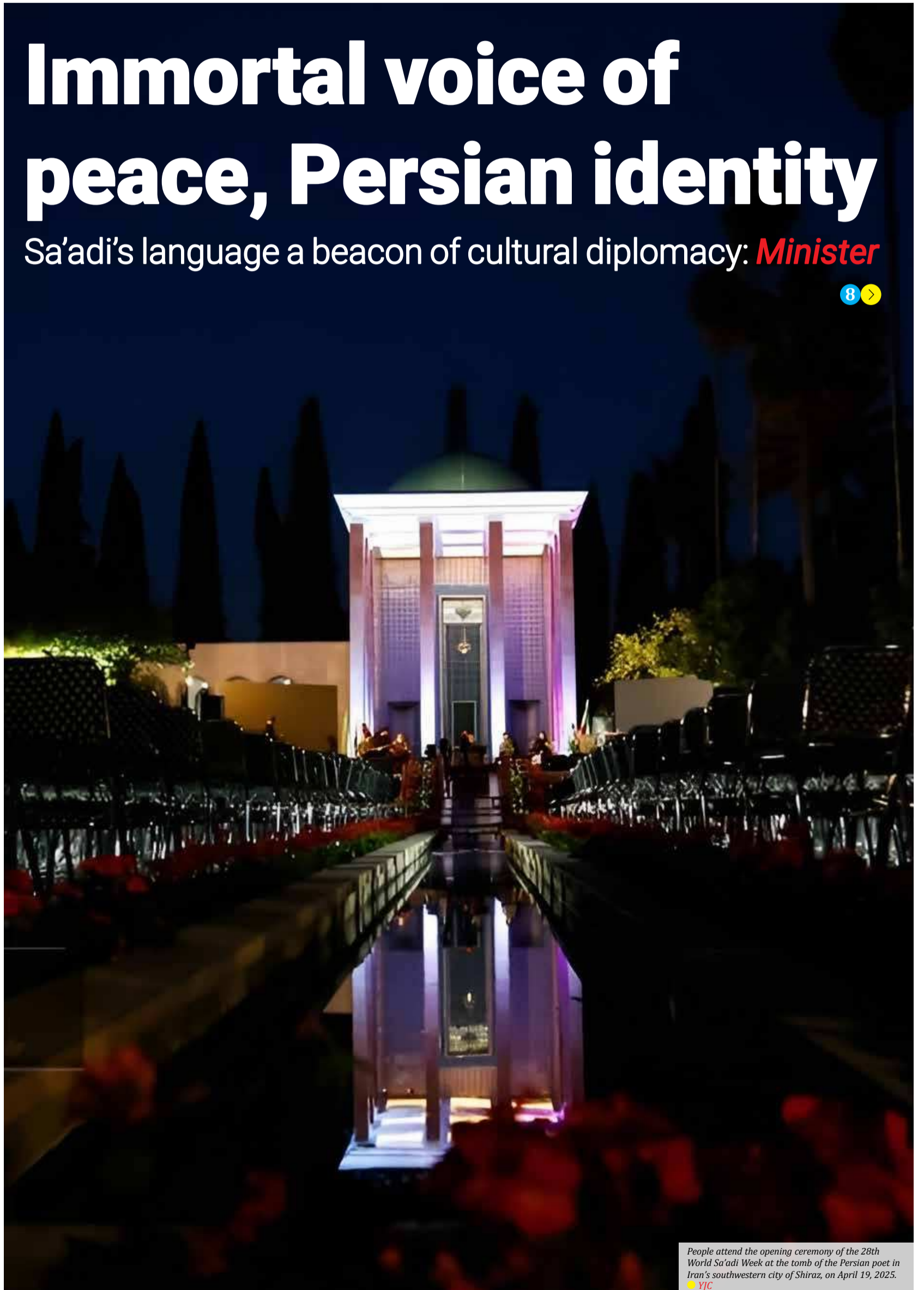
Beckoning features of Bastak Salt Dome in Hormozgan Province

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Immortal voice of peace, Persian identity

Sa'adi's language a beacon of cultural diplomacy: *Minister*

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People attend the opening ceremony of the 28th World Sa'adi Week at the tomb of the Persian poet in Iran's southwestern city of Shiraz, on April 19, 2025. YJC

Deputy FM: Iran serious in nuclear talks with US, rejects delay

IAEA chief optimistic about ongoing negotiations



Vehicles of the US delegation are escorted by Italian police at the entrance of the Omani Embassy in Rome where a second round of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States was held on April 19, 2025.
● ANDREAS SOLARO/AFP

International Desk

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said on Sunday that Iran is serious in the nuclear talks with the US, stressing that the Islamic Republic does

not want any delay in the negotiations. Gharibabadi, who briefed the Parliament's National Security Committee on the two rounds of negotiations between Iran and the US, said that Iran wants the removal of sanctions in the ongoing ne-

gotiations.

He said that Tehran will not negotiate on the principle of its right to enrich uranium because Iran is not seeking nuclear weapons and enriches uranium for peaceful purposes.

Meanwhile, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi expressed optimism on talks between the US and Iran on Tehran's nuclear program, saying that the second round of the talks in Rome "really could have collapsed" due to the high level of risks looming over the hotly-debated issue. Both sides were "prepared to discuss concrete aspects with each other," Grossi told Italy's La Repubblica newspaper in an interview published on Sunday. Grossi said he was satisfied with progress to date. "The talks really could have collapsed in this second round. Then everything would have come to a halt," he said.

"The risk was there. Instead, the spirit of Rome showed it is possible to make progress," the IAEA head said without

providing details.

Iran and the US concluded the second round of nuclear talks in Rome on Saturday, which are being mediated by Oman. After the negotiations, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who leads Iran's delegation, said that both sides reached better understanding of a series of principles and goals during the second round of negotiations.

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.

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".

A senior US official also said Tehran and Washington made "very good progress" in the second round of talks.

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."

President Donald Trump has been pushing for a rapid deal with Iran while threatening military action against it.

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.

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.

US protesters stage nationwide rallies against Trump's policies



International Desk

Thousands of protesters rallied in Washington and other cities across the US on Saturday to voice their opposition to President Donald Trump's policies on deportations, government firings, and the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

Outside the White House, protesters carried banners that read, "Workers should have the power," "No kingship," "Stop arming Israel" and "Due process," media footage showed.

Some demonstrators chanted in support of migrants whom the Trump administration has deported or has been attempting to deport while expressing solidarity with people fired by the federal government and with

universities whose funding is threatened by Trump.

"As Trump and his administration mobilize the use of the US deportation machine, we are going to organize networks and systems of resistance to defend our neighbors," a protester said in a rally at Lafayette Square near the White House.

The administration is carrying out "a direct assault on the idea of the rule of law and the idea that the government should be restrained from abusing the people who live here in the United States," Benjamin Douglas, 41, told AFP outside the White House.

Wearing a keffiyeh and carrying a sign calling for the freeing of Mahmoud Khalil, a pro-Palestinian student protester arrested last month, Douglas said individuals were being singled out as "test cases to rile up xenophobia and erode long-standing legal protections."

Other protesters waved Palestinian flags while wearing keffiyeh scarves, chanting "free Palestine," and expressing solidarity with Palestinians killed in Israel's war in Gaza.

Some demonstrators carried symbols expressing support for Ukraine and urging Washington to be more decisive in opposing Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine. Since his January inauguration,

Trump and his billionaire ally, Elon Musk, have gutted the federal government, firing over 200,000 workers and attempting to dismantle various agencies.

The administration has also detained scores of foreign students and threatened to stop federal funding to universities over diversity, equity and inclusion programs, climate initiatives and pro-Palestinian protests. Rights groups have condemned the policies.

Near the Washington Monument, banners from protesters read, "Hate never made any nation great," and "Equal rights for all does not mean less rights for you."

"We are in a great danger," said 73-year-old New York protester Kathy Vally, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, adding that their stories of how Nazi leader Adolf Hitler rose to power "are what's happening here."

"The one thing is that Trump is a lot more stupid than Hitler or than the other fascists," she said. "He's being played... and his own team is divided."

Demonstrations were also held in New York City and Chicago, among dozens of other locations. It marked the second day of nationwide demonstrations since Trump took office.

Israeli airstrikes kill over 25 people in Gaza



Mourners bid farewell to a Palestinian child killed in an Israeli strike, at the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on April 19, 2025.
● AFP

Gaza's civil defense agency reported that Israeli airstrikes since dawn on Sunday killed at least 25 people across the Gaza Strip, including women and children. Israel resumed its aerial and ground assault on Gaza on March 18, reigniting fighting after a two-month cease-fire that had paused more than 15 months of war in the coastal territory.

"Since dawn today, the occupation's airstrikes have killed 20 people and injured dozens more, including children and women across the Gaza Strip," Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for the civil defense agency told AFP.

In a separate statement later, the agency reported that five people were killed in an Israeli drone strike on a group of civilians in eastern Rafah.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday vowed to continue the war and bring home the remaining hostages held in Gaza without yielding to

Hamas's demands.

"We are at a critical stage of the campaign, and at this point, we need patience and determination to win," Netanyahu said in a statement, rejecting calls from Hamas to end the war and withdraw troops from Gaza. Since Israel resumed its offensive last month, at least 1,827 people have been killed in Gaza, according to the territory's health ministry.

The overall death toll in the Gaza war has reached 51,201, the majority of them civilians, according to the ministry, figures the UN considers reliable.

The war broke out after Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israel in October 2023, which resulted in the deaths of 1,218 people on the Israeli side, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

During that attack, Palestinian fighters arrested 251 people, 58 of whom are still held hostage in Gaza, including 34 the military says are dead.

US approach to nuclear ...

All of this has paved the way for a constructive path in the indirect talks, and if the Zionist factions and their lobbying arms within the US Congress do not weigh in too heavily or throw a wrench into the process, and if the talks keep moving along this trajectory, there is a real possibility of reaching a desirable outcome.

One particularly striking aspect of this round is that the US entered the negotiations going against the grain of Israeli preferences. The Zionist regime remains vehemently opposed to any continuation of these talks, pushing instead for war and escalation. However, this time it seems that President Donald Trump is not quite the same man he was five years ago. His transformation became apparent when, just

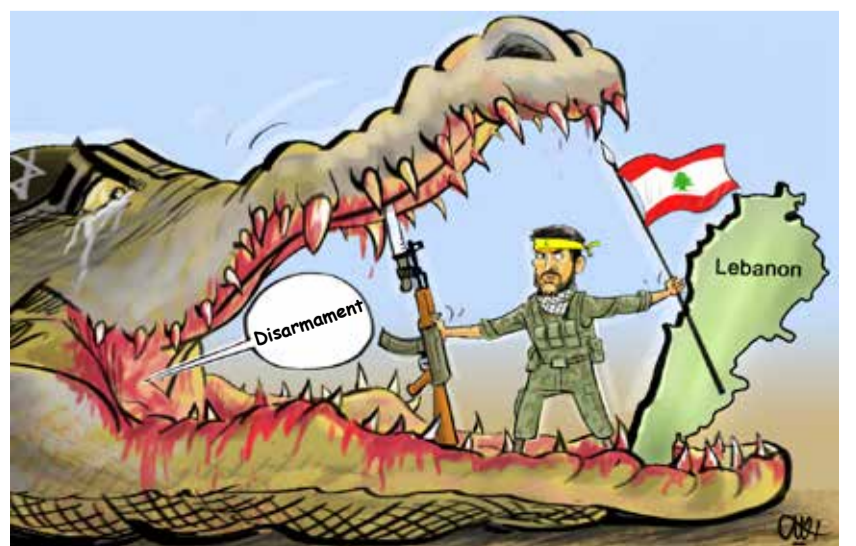
a few days before the talks were set to begin, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flew to meet Trump in the US. Despite Netanyahu's presence, Trump publicly announced that the US intended to negotiate with Iran and that no one can interfere in these talks. This open declaration—made right in front of Netanyahu—clearly did not sit well with the Israeli leader.

As for the outcome of the second round, it appears that both sides are now gearing up for technical discussions on nuclear matters. As repeatedly stated, the Islamic Republic of Iran is pursuing a peaceful nuclear program and has no intention of using this technology for non-peaceful purposes. This was confirmed during a recent visit to Iran's nuclear facilities by Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agen-

cy Rafael Grossi who signed off on the peaceful nature of Iran's activities. That said, the specific applications and scope of Iran's nuclear program will be addressed in the upcoming expert-level negotiations on Wednesday, during which both teams will hash out the technical details. As previously said, uranium enrichment remains a red line for Iran, although the exact level of enrichment will be subject to further negotiation.

Regarding the format of future Iran-US talks, the overarching policy set forth by the Leader continues to favor indirect negotiations. However, if talks proceed positively in the future, the possibility of shifting the format—either to continue indirectly or to begin direct engagement—can be reassessed based on the Leader's guidance.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



\$7 billion investment capacity in national railway industry: *Official*

Economy Desk

The deputy head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways announced at a railway industry investment ceremony that the sector holds a \$7 billion investment capacity.

Referencing the quantitative goals of the Seventh Development Plan for the country's railway industry, Nourollah Beiranvand was reported by ILNA as saying, "Raising the share of rail freight to 30% and increasing transit to 40 million tons are key quantitative targets under the Seventh Development Plan. To achieve this, a comprehensive program prioritizing private sector involvement has been developed, focusing on infrastructure, fleet, and non-operational sector investments."

Beiranvand added that, "The planned investment amounts to \$6.4 billion, with 77% allocated to fleet development and 23% to infrastructure. Specifically, \$1.5

billion will be invested in infrastructure and \$4.892 billion in fleet expansion. To facilitate this, an investment incentive package for the railway transport sector has been designed and presented." The deputy of capital and transport economics at Iran Railways emphasized, "The incentive package focuses on economic returns, project financing, and risk reduction for investors."

"In March of last year, 330 billion tomans, and in April of this year, another 330 billion tomans in loans from fuel savings were allocated to private rail companies. Projections indicate a \$7 billion investment capacity across these initiatives," he further noted. Beiranvand stressed, "The railway sector generates \$1.2 billion in annual benefits."

\$750 million investment memorandum

Additionally, a \$750 million investment memorandum for the

national railway transport industry was signed on Sunday in the presence of the Minister of Roads and Urban Development.

According to ISNA, Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh and Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways Jabbar Ali Zakeri signed the investment memorandum with Avan Rail Trains Company and Pars Oqab Hashtgerd Agro-Industry Company.

Under this agreement, Avan Rail Trains Company will procure and produce 300 diesel self-propelled passenger units, 50 freight locomotives, and 600 tanker freight wagons.

Pars Oqab Hashtgerd Agro-Industry Company, per the memorandum, will supply and purchase 650 bulk freight wagons for grain transport, leveraging domestic production capacity, collaborating with local manufacturers, and facilitating technology transfer.



12 projects in South Pars economic zone to be introduced to investors

Economy Desk

Director of Economic Development and Investment at the South Pars Special Economic Zone announced that "12 industrial, welfare, and infrastructure projects" will be introduced to investors at an international oil and gas event on Tuesday.

The "Strategic Transformation in Iran's Upstream Oil & Gas Sector" event will be held in Tehran on April 22.

Mahmoud Sheikh-Mamoo, speaking on Sunday about the upcoming event aimed at attracting investors to the country's oil, gas, and petrochemical industries, emphasized, "Investment in oil and gas projects, conversion industries, and downstream petrochemicals within the South Pars Special Energy Zone is both attractive and aligned with domestic and global market demands."

Stressing that "completing infrastructure and conversion industries will create significant job opportunities in the region," he expressed hope that "the economic potential of the South Pars Special Energy Zone will materialize into tangible economic activity this year."

Sheikh-Mamoo added, "In this 'Year of Investment for Production,' we will make every effort to support and encourage investors to invest in the South Pars Special Zone as the nation's



energy hub. Investors can register and submit their proposals through the electronic business process management system of the Special Economic Zone at BPMS.PSEZ.IR."

He highlighted customs exemptions for imported goods and equipment, long-term tax exemptions for locally produced goods, and access to abundant and diverse petrochemical raw materials as key advantages of investing in the South Pars Special Economic Zone. The official also pointed to the private sector's expertise and capital capacity within the country, noting, "Over the past decade, the necessary legal and regulatory frameworks for financing and executing projects across various

sectors through public-private partnerships (PPP) have been established. Infrastructure projects in this region can now be implemented via private sector collaboration under PPP contracts. Several industrial and service projects in the zone are already being executed through this model."

Sheikh-Mamoo reiterated that "special economic zones are designed to facilitate easier access to global markets," expressing optimism that "with improved conditions and the full or partial lifting of sanctions, international investors will be able to participate in the region, boosting economic prosperity and employment opportunities here."

30 foreign chamber heads to attend Iran Expo 2025

Economy Desk

Head of the Iran Expo Headquarters at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), emphasized the importance of the upcoming Iran Expo 2025 during a press conference on Sunday, confirming that more than 30 presidents of foreign chambers of commerce are set to attend the event.

The country's largest trade and export showcase will take place between April 28 and May 2 at the Tehran International Exhibition Center, IRNA reported.

Speaking about the exhibition's international participation, Ali Chaghervand said, "This year, 30 joint chambers of commerce will take part in the expo, and 30 chamber presidents from abroad have formally confirmed their attendance."

Managed by the Iran Chamber of Commerce, the event will span nearly 2,000 square meters, said Chaghervand, who leads the Iran Expo 2025 Headquarters.

"Several high-level associations will be present in halls dedicated to various commodity groups," he added. Regarding the participation of African and American investors and traders at Expo 2025, Chaghervand stressed that, "The exhibition will host visitors from the Americas, though no specific trade delegation from the United States itself has been confirmed yet."



The head of Iran Expo 2025 Headquarters identified Pakistan as having the most significant trade delegation presence, stating, "This year, we anticipate 400 visitors from Pakistan."

The Export Capabilities Exhibition, simply known as Iran Expo, is a platform to bring manufacturers, 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.

Iran Chamber of Commerce: Nuclear talks boosted hope among economic actors

Economy Desk

The head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture stated that the resumption of negotiations on the country's nuclear dossier had boosted hope among the public and economic actors.

During the first meeting of the Iran Chamber's Council of Representatives on Sunday, Samad Hassanzadeh thanked the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei for "supporting our country's negotiating team," and described the pursuit of negotiations "based on national interests and constructive engagement with

the global economy" as "a vital step toward consolidating economic stability and social calm."

He said the decision and "the consensus reached at the highest levels of governance to pursue talks reflect the rationality of the [political] system and will enhance social capital in the country." Representatives from Iran and the United States held two rounds of talks on Iran's nuclear program anti-Iran sanction relief.

After nearly four hours of indirect talks on Saturday with the US delegation led by Steve Witkoff, the US special envoy for West Asia, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters that the

second round of talks had been "productive" and the overall process is "moving forward."

Hassanzadeh also said, "While we desire a favorable outcome from the negotiations, the country's economy must not remain idle, awaiting their results. We expect the government to simultaneously initiate serious economic reforms domestically."

Iran's Chamber of Commerce chief proposed that "our negotiating team include economic experts alongside political representatives."

Hassanzadeh emphasized the importance of "how the business community responds to the outcomes of the nego-

tiations," stating, "In this regard, the Iran Chamber, as the representative of the private sector, must proactively and strategically plan for post-agreement scenarios. By leveraging all capacities of joint chambers, provincial chambers, specialized commissions, and trade associations, we can more effectively capitalize on potential opportunities." Stressing Iran's accession to international conventions linked to FATF (Financial Action Task Force), he noted, "Parallel to negotiations, necessary measures must be taken to reduce transaction risks and enhance transparency in the banking and financial systems. In this context, we urge the Expediency



Discernment Council to finalize Iran's accession to the Palermo Convention and CFT (Combating the Financing of Terrorism) through expert deliberations and in light of the private sector's perspectives."

Iran, Saudi Arabia; a strategic shift from ideological confrontation to shared interests

By Reza Raeisi
Journalist

ANALYSIS

When national resources and capital can be directed toward understanding and cooperation — yielding enhanced national security and significant, tangible achievements in energy and sustainable development with minimal cost—why choose a path of futile confrontation and tension?

Analysts from both major political camps have viewed Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud's visit to Tehran with skepticism, raising varied and conflicting concerns. Some question the timing and purpose of this visit, asking, "Why invite a Saudi prince at this juncture, particularly when concerns persist over potential ground attacks by Saudi- and Emirati-aligned opposition groups against the Houthis — strategic allies of Iran — and whether this aligns with regional interests?"

Others express reservations, asking, "Given Saudi Arabia's obstructive role in Iran's past nuclear negotiations with the P5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members — China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US — plus Germany), could welcoming their delegation now revive their negative influence or meddling in ongoing talks?"

Another group worries, "Might establishing relations at this level signal weakness or submission to external parties?"

Finally, some dismiss the very notion of engagement, citing decades of escalating rivalry and full-scale geopolitical competition between the two nations. They deem any effort toward neighborly relations as fundamentally misguided.

To address these critiques, several points merit consideration: First, Khalid bin Salman did not arrive in Tehran at the invitation of Iranian officials but as a messenger bearing an unprecedented letter from the Saudi monarch to Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Naturally, fostering ties is not a unilateral endeavor — it requires mutual goodwill. Iran, for its part, has shown no hesitation in receiving the Saudi defense minister, extending full diplomatic courtesy. Ayatollah Khamenei touched on "some of Iran's advancements", telling the Saudi defense minister in Tehran that the Islamic Republic is ready to share them with the kingdom.



Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud (L) delivers the message of his father King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran on April 17, 2025.
● Khamenei.ir



If the Saudis are now sending one of their most prominent officials to Tehran at this critical juncture, delivering a message from their highest authority to Iran's Leader, this can only signal an effort to build trust regarding their role in future negotiations with Tehran.

Mohammed bin Salman, called on the leader in Tehran on Thursday to present the message of Saudi Arabia's King Salman.

Second, in the context of the Houthi conflict with Israel and subsequently the United States, the current phase has seen minimal friction between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Unlike past cycles, Saudi Arabia has not directly intervened, nor have the Houthis — despite their capacity to target Saudi oil and gas infrastructure — opted for escalation. Instead, the Houthis have focused on striking deep into Israeli territory despite immense challenges, avoiding a direct US-Iran confrontation. This calculated restraint has, in fact, laid the groundwork for trust-building and strategic recalibration between these two pivotal powers in the Middle East and the Islamic world. Third, Saudi Arabia's posture today differs markedly from its

in current or future talks lack credibility and merit.

If the Saudis are now sending one of their most prominent officials to Tehran at this critical juncture, delivering a message from their highest authority to Iran's Leader, this can only signal an effort to build trust regarding their role in future negotiations with Tehran. Consider, for example, how the Iranian side did not welcome the UAE-mediated delivery of Trump's letter to Tehran. The Saudis, by contrast, aim to demonstrate their positive intent and leverage their deep ties with the US and Donald Trump himself to secure a more substantial role in upcoming talks. By earning Iran's confidence, they seek to bolster their credibility in international diplomacy — much as they did during US-Russia negotiations over Ukraine or through hosting global festivals and sporting events to shape international

regional equation. It now understands that pouring vast resources into this zero-sum approach has not only failed but also squandered unique opportunities.

Mediated by China, Iran and Saudi Arabia reached an agreement in March 2023, in the Chinese capital of Beijing to restore their diplomatic relations and re-open embassies and missions, seven years after their ties were broken off over several issues. The two sides signed the Beijing Agreement aims to restore diplomatic ties and promote mutual respect for sovereignty and security between Iran and Saudi Arabia under the principles of the UN Charter, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and international law. Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian protesters, enraged by the execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr by the Saudi government, stormed its embassy in Tehran.

The two sides had held five rounds of negotiations in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad since April 2021. Saudi Arabia's regional doctrine over the past two to three years has prioritized de-escalation and economic development over expanding political influence or asserting Islamic leadership — a strategy that previously drained resources and undermined its strategic economic and energy se-

curity interests.

Why choose a path of futile confrontation and tension when national resources can instead be directed toward understanding and cooperation? With minimal cost, this approach enhances national security while yielding significant, tangible achievements in energy and sustainable development. As the saying goes, "cutting losses wherever possible is itself a gain."

The years-long war in Yemen, with its billions squandered on an unwinnable conflict, served as a wake-up call for Saudi Arabia to recalibrate its policies toward its neighbors. The visit by the high-ranking Saudi official underscores Riyadh's seriousness about shifting its foreign policy strategy — opting for regional dialogue over rivalry and prioritizing shared interests, a stance mirrored by Iran's welcoming response. This marks a move toward balanced diplomacy over hostility, aligning actions with long-professed rhetoric about Islamic unity.

This bilateral shift could establish a new paradigm in regional dynamics, extending beyond Iran-US negotiations to fundamentally reshape interactions among Middle Eastern neighbors and their engagement with external rivals.

The article first appeared on the Persian news website Asriran.



Top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani and Minister of State of Saudi Arabia Musaad bin Mohammed Al Aiban pose for pictures during a meeting in Beijing, China on March 10, 2023
● REUTERS



In this July 14, 2015 file photo, British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond (2nd R), US Secretary of State John Kerry (R), and European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini (L), talk to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif as they wait for Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, for a group picture in Vienna, Austria.
● CARLOS BARRIA/AP

Khalid bin Salman, brother of Crown Prince and de facto ruler

stance during the JCPOA era (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) and the early Trump administration. Far from aligning with Israel, Riyadh now sends overt and subtle signals of solidarity with Iran in post-October 7 conflicts, positioning itself alongside Tehran rather than its adversaries.

Notably, Saudi Arabia was among the first nations to openly welcome and endorse the resumption of Iran-US negotiations. Given this shift, fears of Saudi obstructionism

public opinion. Additionally, stability, security, and the avoidance of war and heightened tensions along their borders — and within the heartland of global energy — remain paramount for the Saudis. After decades of ideologically charged rivalry with their traditional Middle Eastern competitor, vying for leadership of the Islamic world, and two decades of geopolitical competition, Saudi Arabia has come to recognize the futility of eliminating rivals from the



Khalid bin Salman's visit to Tehran affirms Iran's regional power

ANALYSIS

An Arab news outlet reported that the Saudi defense minister's visit to Tehran underscores Iran's influence in shaping the regional balance and reflects Arab states' efforts to forge stronger ties with it.

An Arab news outlet reported that the Saudi defense minister's visit to Tehran underscores Iran's influence in shaping the regional balance and reflects Arab states' efforts to forge stronger ties with it.

The visit of Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud to Iran and his meeting with Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has reshuffled the geopolitical deck in West Asia, much like the 2023 Beijing Agreement. This visit carries implications and signals that starkly contradict recent media narratives portraying Iran and its allied Axis of Resistance as weakened. Instead, it reaffirms Iran's enduring regional clout while highlighting Saudi Arabia's desire for strategic hedging in a volatile environment. It also sends a clear message to global powers: regional states are increasingly inclined to collaborate and align their interests. Whether motivated by fear of war, anticipation of a US-Iran deal, or a sober reassessment of Iran's regional role, this high-level engagement reflects the Saudi leadership's prioritization of pragmatism and national/regional interests above all else in foreign relations. Should bilateral ties continue on this upward trajectory, such interactions could herald a new era of multipolar equilibrium benefiting the region's nations and peoples.

According to Alkhanadeq, Muhammad Shams, an Iran affairs expert, explained that there is no doubt that the Saudi defense minister's visit to Tehran — accompanied by a high-ranking delegation and his meetings with Ayatollah Khamenei and Iran's top military and political leaders — significantly affirms Iran's status as a regional power. This dialogue between influential actors comes at a critical juncture, "with the region facing heightened sensitivities and Iran confronting military threats from the United States and Israel."

Shams emphasized the visit's role in dispelling rumors about Iran's diminished strength, stating that this trip and its



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets with Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman in Tehran, on April 17, 2025.
● IRNA

accompanying meetings prove Iran's resilience. Contrary to hostile media claims that Iran weakened after the Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on October 7, 2023, the reality is that Iran has grown stronger, and influential regional powers now seek closer ties with it. The primary loser here is the Israeli regime. The only party aggrieved or enraged by this visit is the Zionists. Cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia — two major regional powers — will positively impact regional stability while undermining Israel's interests:

First: Framework and significance — Meeting with Iran's Leader

A meeting with Ayatollah Khamenei is an honor reserved for the highest-ranking foreign officials, with exceptions made only for leaders of regional resistance groups and movements. Ayatollah Khamenei embodies the Islamic Revolution and leads the Axis of Resistance, making this encounter particularly significant for bilateral relations.

A closer look at the significance of this meeting for the relations between the two countries is evident, as the Saudi defense minister conveyed a message from his father, King Salman, to

Ayatollah Khamenei. The Leader stressed that stronger Iran-Saudi relations benefit both nations, though he acknowledged external adversarial forces seek to obstruct this progress.

"We believe that the relationship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia will be beneficial for both countries and the two countries can complement each other. It is much better for brothers in the region to cooperate and help each other than to rely on others," the leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that the expansion of relations between the two countries has enemies. "These hostile motives must be overcome, and we are ready for this," he said.

Referring to some of Iran's advancements, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "The Islamic Republic is ready to help Saudi Arabia in these areas."

The Saudi defense minister expressed great satisfaction with the meeting, saying, "I have come to Tehran with the agenda of expanding relations with Iran and cooperation in all fields."

"And we hope that the constructive talks will provide for stronger relations between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran than in the past," he added.

This reaffirms that Saudi officials view Iran — despite years of sanctions and isolationist campaigns — not merely as relevant but as indispensable to regional stability. If weakness breeds isolation, strength attracts others to one's doorstep. Iran's sustained influence in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, alongside its ties to resistance movements, has solidified its position as a pivotal regional actor. Thus, Khalid bin Salman's visit validates what many in the region now acknowledge, Engaging Iran is not merely a priority — it is a necessity.

Second: A message to Washington

As one of the pillars of US hegemony in the Persian Gulf and the broader region, Saudi Arabia may be using this visit to signal to Washington that it does not seek war with Iran — given the repercussions such a conflict would have on the Kingdom and regional stability. Instead, Riyadh prefers to pursue a path of cooperation that serves shared interests.

This visit could also be interpreted as a preemptive Saudi maneuver. Sensing the looming possibility of a US-Iran agreement — which would carry significant regional consequences

— Riyadh aims to avoid being sidelined. By strengthening ties with Iran before Washington formalizes any accord, Saudi Arabia positions itself to integrate into future arrangements, ensuring its security and economic interests are accounted for.

Third: Implications for Arab states

Khalid bin Salman's visit will likely resonate across the region, particularly among Arab states striving to improve relations with Iran. The trip serves as a green light for deeper engagement with Tehran.

The visit will also impact Arab nations closely aligned with both Saudi Arabia and Iran, such as Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Consequently, the coming period may witness bilateral cooperation that helps halt aggression against Gaza and ushers in an era of restored calm and stability for the region. Undoubtedly, the Zionist regime will emerge as the primary loser in such developments. It remains the sole party invested in perpetuating regional instability and chaos, which enables its expansionist occupation agenda.

The article first appeared in Persian on ISNA.



Muhammad Shams, an Iran affairs expert writing on Alkhanadeq emphasized on the role of Khalid bin Salman's visit in dispelling rumors about Iran's diminished strength, stating that this trip proves Iran's resilience.



Red flag raised: Where did it all go wrong for Persepolis?



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

The latest defeat in the Persian Gulf Pro League left Persepolis supporters facing the harsh reality of a shift in power in the Iranian top flight.

The Tehran Reds entered Friday's so-called 'Iranian Clasi-co' against Sepahan knowing any outcome other than maximum points would end their slim title hopes.

However, Ismail Kartal's men looked all over the place in the opening stages, conceding twice inside 11 minutes, and were then toothless and clueless in the final third as Sepahan walked away with a

fourth successive win against its familiar foe this season to stay within touching distance of Tractor in what will be a two-horse title race with three games remaining.

It was the latest episode in a dreadful campaign for the Reds, who had crashed out of the AFC Champions League Elite and the Iranian domestic cup and face the prospect of finishing the season without a trophy for only a second time over the past eight years.

The writing was perhaps on the wall for Persepolis – seven-time league champion over the past eight seasons – even before the Reds began the new campaign.

Persepolis had to part ways with Iranian international goalkeeper Alireza Beiran-

vand, and wizard winger Mahdi Torabi – two linchpins of the Reds' decade-long domestic dominance – as well as fullback Danial Esmailifar – all three joining Tractor – but the club failed to recruit effective replacements for the key trio.

Spanish boss Juan Carlos Garrido still got off to a flying start to his reign on Persepolis bench but the physical strain of a hectic calendar and the new head coach's training methods began to catch up with the Reds' ageing squad as a run of poor results led to the Spaniard's dismissal in December.

The introduction of former Fenerbahçe manager Kartal in midseason did little to turn the Reds' fortune around,

with Persepolis managing five wins, conceding four defeats, in 13 outings across all competitions under the Turkish boss, who has been lamenting the lack of quality and frustrating injuries within his squad throughout his short spell.

With a number of star players in Vahid Amiri, Omid Aalishah, Soroush Rafiei, Morteza Pouraliganji, Issa Alekasir, Masoud Rigi, and Giorgi Gvlesiani well into their 30s and past their prime, a summer of shakeup looks inevitable for Persepolis and Kartal, or they will have to watch Tractor and Sepahan build on their financial superiority to dominate the Iranian club football in the coming years.



Persepolis skipper Vahid Amiri reacts during a 2-0 defeat against Sepahan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on April 18, 2025.
● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

AVC Men's Volleyball Champions League:

Foolad Sirjan eyeing third continental crown



● MASOUD AKBARI/volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

Foolad Sirjan will be looking to build on its dazzling year-long form when beginning its title defense at the AVC Men's Volleyball Champions League – starting May 11 in the Japanese cities of Hirakata and Kyoto.

Fresh from a second successive crown at the Iranian Premier League, Foolad will fancy a comfortable run in Pool C – also featuring Chinese Taipei's Taichung Bank and Nakhon Ratchasima QminC of Thailand.

Behrouz Ataei's men will begin their bid for a third Asian title against the Thai champion on the opening day of the competition, before taking on Taichung Bank two days later.

A top two finish in the pool will

send Foolad into the quarterfinals, where a much tougher test will await Ataei's men, who will likely face home-favorite Osaka Bluteon or Chinese club Shanghai Bright for a last-four place.

Iranian opposite Ali Hajipour, who won the MVP prize in the Iranian league finals against Shahdab Yazd, as well as veteran middle-blocker Mohammad Mousavi and prolific outside-hitter Amirhossein Esfandiari will be the men to watch in the Foolad squad in the Asian event. Ataei announced in an interview on Friday that French stars Earvin N'Gapeth and Trévor Clévenot are also set to join Foolad on short contracts ahead of the visit to Japan.

N'Gapeth and Clévenot played key parts in France's Olym-

pic gold-winning run on home soil last summer, as they were named the joint best outside-hitters of the dream team, with the former also picking up the Most Valuable Player award in Paris 2024.

Ataei, who stepped down from his role as Iran head coach midway through a dreadful Olympic qualification campaign in October 2023, has enjoyed a turn of fortune in his career since taking over the Foolad job, leading the club to double domestic league titles, plus the Asian success and the Iranian Volleyball Cup trophy over the past 12 months.

Foolad also made it to semifinals at the FIVB Club World Championship last December, before leaving Brazil with an impressive bronze medal.

Lakers lose to Timberwolves in play-off opener

BBC—The Los Angeles Lakers slumped to a 117-95 defeat at the hands of the Minnesota Timberwolves in the opening game of their NBA Western Conference first-round play-off.

Jaden McDaniels top scored with 25 points for the sixth-seeded Timberwolves, who were the only away team to win in the opening matches of the best-of-seven post-season series.

Naz Reid scored 23 points off the bench while Anthony Edwards added 22 points, eight rebounds and nine assists for Minnesota, who led by 27 points at one stage.

Lakers star LeBron James, who is chasing a fifth title in his 22nd NBA season, failed to score in the opening quarter for the third seeds but went on to

hit 19 points.

Luka Dončić, in his first post-season game with the Lakers after arriving from the Dallas Mavericks in February's high-profile trade, top-scored on 37.

In the other Western Conference first-round game, reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokić scored 29 points and added nine rebounds, 12 assists and three steals as the Denver Nuggets edged past the Los Angeles Clippers 112-110 in overtime.

In their Eastern Conference match-ups, the New York Knicks scored 21 unanswered points in the final quarter to pull away for a 123-112 win over the Detroit Pistons, while the Indiana Pacers defeated the Milwaukee Bucks 117-98.

Sports Desk

Iran's Ali Meskini settled for a bronze medal at the third Karate 1-Premier League event of the season, finishing third in the men's kumite -60kg contests in Cairo, Egypt.

Meskini bounced back from a last-eight setback against Japanese Hiromu Hashimoto to come out victorious (7-3) against Colombian Juan David Forero and share the third podium with Germany's Florian Haas.

Hashimoto went on to grab the ultimate prize of the class, thanks to a 7-3 victory over the host's Ziad Aly.

Meskini began his campaign in Cairo with an 8-5 win against Kazakhstan's Zholaman Bigabyl in Pool 3, and then defeated Frenchman Rayyan Meziane 7-4, before a stalemate against Abdallah Hammad of Jordan saw the Iranian progress to quarterfinals as the pool winner.

Meskini's compatriots Bahman Asgari and Amirreza Borzouei, meanwhile, left the Egyptian capital empty-handed.

Former world champion Asgari won two bouts and lost one to miss out on a knockout place in the men's -75kg contests – the same outcome for Borzouei in the -67kg class, after he managed only one win, against Italian Rosario Ruggiero, in three outings to finish third in the pool.

Karate 1-Premier League: Iran's Meskini settles for kumite bronze



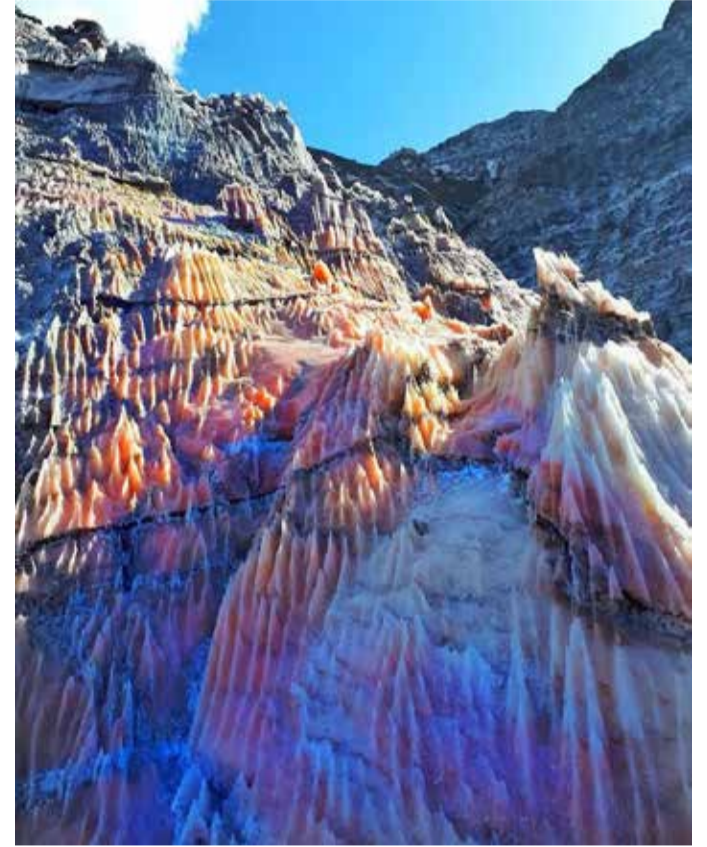
Beckoning features of Bastak Salt Dome in Hormozgan Province



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● wisgoon.com



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Iranica Desk

Along the southern section of the Zagros Mountains, about 200 salt domes have been identified so far, with 80 of them located in Hormozgan Province. The provinces of Fars and Bushehr also play a significant role in this geological phenomenon. Among the salt domes in Hormozgan, approximately 70 exhibit salt rock outcrops, creating stunning and unique views of colorful crystalline layers of salt amidst the dry and mountainous landscape of the region. One of the most notable of these formations is the Bastak Salt Dome.

The Bastak Salt Dome is part of the Hormuz salt formation and derives its name from its location on the eastern side of the

Gavbast anticline. This remarkable natural feature is situated along the main road connecting Bastak to Lar, within the boundaries of Bastak. The nearest village to this dome is Fatuyeh, which lies just four kilometers away. The access route to the northern viewpoint of the dome includes approximately three and a half kilometers of hiking through pristine, untouched nature, a journey that promises an unforgettable experience for nature enthusiasts, chn.ir wrote. Covering an area of more than seven square kilometers, this salt dome is elongated in a rectangular shape aligned with a north-south axis. The length of the dome is about five kilometers, and its width is two kilometers. The Bastak Salt Dome is

an active geological feature, with salt continuously being pushed to the surface from within the earth.

The salt within this dome is visible in thick, extensive veins, creating flows resembling glaciers in the northern and southern sections. These flows, commonly referred to as salty glaciers, are considered one of the distinctive characteristics of this dome.

The dome is drained by a network of seasonal water flows that are branched and dendritic. The waters from the northern part of the dome flow into the Rasoul River (also known as the Gudar River), while the waters from the southern part drain into a branch of the Mehran River. Because these rivers pass through saline lands, their waters are

also salty.

In the northern part of the dome, there are two permanent saline springs with low discharge that remain active even during the driest months of the year. The rise of salt from the underlying layers has altered the structures of the surrounding rocks. The towering, hard limestone walls in the north of the dome restrict the further spread of salt, and in some areas, the movement of salt comes to a standstill. This interaction between salt and hard rock has led to erosion and the formation of diverse geological landscapes.

As a result of the dissolution of salt by water, narrow and deep valleys have formed on the surface of the dome. These valleys typically emerge at the sites of

primary rock fractures and feature nearly vertical walls. The varying resistance of different parts of the dome against erosion has resulted in the creation of beautiful and occasionally fearsome cliffs.

Cuts and grooves can be observed on the surface of the dome, resulting from the gradual dissolution of evaporative and gypsum rocks. In certain areas, the salts from the springs have crystallized and settled around the spring openings in cauliflower-like formations, imparting a fantastical appearance to the region's landscape.

In dry and low-rainfall areas, when salty water flows from heights and evaporates along the way, the remaining salt settles on the surface, forming landscapes

resembling frost and icy rivers. This phenomenon, known as the "salt waterfall," is among the most unique natural features of the Bastak salt dome, highlighting that this dome remains active and subject to transformation.

The Bastak Salt Dome stands as one of the most astonishing and lesser-known natural attractions in southern Iran. The diversity of geological structures, the stunning colors of the salt, the unique landscapes, and the relatively easy access make it an ideal destination for nature lovers, geology enthusiasts, and geo-tourists. Undoubtedly, with further promotion of this marvelous phenomenon, Bastak could emerge as one of the key hubs for geological tourism in the country.



● itto.org

Kurangun Petroglyph reveals 5,000-year-old Elamite Civilization

Kurangun is the name of an ancient petroglyph located near the city of Rostam, approximately ten kilometers northwest of Fahlian, around the village of Sehtolan, close to Nourabad Mamasani. It lies along the route from Behbahan to Shiraz, Fars Province, carved into Kurangun Mountain about 100 meters above the Fahlian River, locally referred to as Fahliun.

The Kurangun Petroglyph was first discovered by Baron Max von Oppenheim, a German lawyer, diplomat, and ancient historian, in 1882. Three years later, it was studied by German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld. This petroglyph serves as a memorial to the ancient Elam civilization, dating back nearly 5,000 years, and is believed to have been commissioned by Elamite kings who ruled from the seventh to the third century BCE. The name Elam appears in cuneiform as Haltamati, meaning "the land of the gods", visitiran.ir wrote.

At the center of the Kurangun Petroglyph are two worshipping human figures, surrounded by seventy-two other small and large figures, some of which are partially eroded over time. Scholars propose that these figures represent Humban, an Elamite god, and Kiririsha, the mother of the gods. Some experts suggest that one of these figures may also be Inshushinak, the great national god of Elam. Together, these three figures may represent the deity triangle of Elam.

Each figure in the Kurangun Petroglyph holds a snake in their hand and is seated on a throne made of a curled-up snake. The two deities wear horned caps, a symbol associated with divinity among the Sumerians, while worshippers on either side are depicted: women dressed in long clothing facing left and men facing right. Snakes, especially the depiction of two snakes, are common motifs in ancient Elamite art, symbolizing fertility, life, and birth.



● visitiran.ir



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Immortal voice of peace, Persian identity

Sa'adi's language a beacon of cultural diplomacy: *Minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts described the language of 13th-century Persian poet Sa'adi as a vital "tool of diplomacy," calling for the global promotion of his message of peace, morality, and humanism in the face of escalating violence and cultural estrangement. Speaking Saturday evening at the opening ceremony of the 28th World Sa'adi Week in Shiraz, Reza Salehi Amiri emphasized that Sa'adi is more than a celebrated literary figure — he is a cornerstone of Iran's "soft power," IRNA reported. "Beyond preserving this heritage," the minister said, "we seek to harness it as a national force of cultural influence."

"Sa'adi is the fountainhead of Iran's soft power," he added, stating that Iran's ancient civilization continues to "shine on the world stage," despite sustained efforts to spread "Iranophobia." The minister drew a sharp contrast between Iran's historical identity and modern-day violence, adding that "Iranians are peace-loving people," whose culture reflects "adaptability and harmony." According to him, Sa'adi's enduring message offers "a breath of fresh air" in a world worn down by vengeance and division. "Tonight, we gather at Sa'adi's tomb to draw from this deep well of virtue," he said, calling the poet's ethical and spiritual worldview more essential than ever. "If we are still here, it's because of the identity they created for us."

Salehi Amiri noted that Iran's younger generations — "men and women, boys and girls" — are in need of Sa'adi's moral and mystical guidance now "more than ever." Sa'adi's message, he said, is not just poetic ornamentation but a map for living. Calling for the world to turn away from "oil and petrochemicals" and instead embrace the "language of Sa'adi and Hafez," the minister urged the international community to recognize Iranian culture through the lens of its literary heritage. "We should raise the flag of peace from Shiraz," he said, suggesting that the world has strayed far from the values Sa'adi embodied. "If the child-killing Zionist regime understands nothing but blood

and revenge," Salehi Amiri remarked, "it's because it has not smelled the fragrance of Sa'adi's wisdom." He lamented the global neglect of Persian humanistic traditions, saying, "We are sitting beside an ocean and searching for a drop." According to him, Sa'adi is not simply a "national poet" but a living discourse — a "guiding light" for mankind. "Sa'adi's relevance does not expire," Salehi Amiri said. "His immortality lies not in monuments or verses but in his speech, in his language — timeless and wise." The minister drew a literary parallel between Iran's great poets, asserting: "If Ferdowsi is the architect of the Persian language, then Sa'adi is its identity." Mahmoud Shalouei, head of the



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri addresses the audience at the opening ceremony of the 28th World Sa'adi Week in Iran's southwestern city of Shiraz, on April 19. ● IRNA

Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries, recited selections from Sa'adi's oeuvre, praising his dual mastery of love and reason. "He's a torchbearer of both passion and prudence," Shalouei said. "A burning lover, yet wise in faith and thought."

Iran pushes for UNESCO world heritage status for mirrorwork art, Falak-ol-Aflak fortress



Iran has formally submitted two cultural heritage dossiers to UNESCO in a bid to secure world heritage status for its centuries-old mirrorwork art and the historic Falak-ol-Aflak Fortress, according to the country's deputy cultural heritage minister.

Ali Darabi, speaking during a high-level heritage week session in Tehran, confirmed that Iran has "put forward" the cases of mirrorwork and the ensemble of prehistoric caves and the Falak-ol-Aflak Fortress in Khorramabad Valley to the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization for evaluation, Mehr News Agency reported. "We are optimistic about their successful inscription on the UNESCO lists," Darabi said, underscoring their "universal significance" and the "deep cultural resonance" these sites hold within Iran's national identity. Iran hopes the UNESCO designation will not only safeguard the two cultural treasures but also cement their global recognition, particularly as the country doubles down on its cultural diplomacy. If approved, the listings would reinforce Iran's presence on the global heritage map and shine a brighter light on its rich artistic and architectural traditions. The submission is part of a broader heritage drive, with Darabi noting a series of upcoming cultural programs, including the fourth edition of Iran's intangible heritage council and a mul-

timedia festival slated for late autumn. He also addressed challenges, from underfunded restoration projects to a recent surge in waste near the Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System, calling for improved "heritage literacy" and stronger cross-agency cooperation. Elsewhere in the meeting, tourism deputy Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey highlighted Iran's expanding footprint in international tourism forums, including participation in the 37th East Asia Joint Summit in Indonesia. He described Iran's recent diplomatic efforts as "a soft yet strong form of diplomacy," aimed at drawing in both tourists and credibility. Mohseni-Bandpey announced that Isfahan has been selected to host the 38th global tourism summit in June, a move expected to spotlight the city's architectural heritage and economic potential. "All members voted unanimously," he noted, calling it a "vote of

confidence" in Iran's capacity to host international gatherings. On the handicrafts front, Deputy Minister Maryam Jalali reported nearly 1,000 handicraft bazaars set up across the country during the recent holiday season, with artists showcasing traditional crafts in heritage sites. She also revealed that a dossier on Yazd's traditional jewelry has been submitted for international evaluation, potentially paving the way for the city to become Iran's 17th World Craft City. Jalali added that Iran is actively pursuing markets in Persian Gulf and Caspian countries, with 50 artists recently representing the country at Art Dubai. "This is how we boost cultural value," she said. As Iran doubles down on showcasing its cultural assets, officials are hopeful that its enduring legacies—both tangible and intangible—will finally get the global nod they've long deserved.

Iran greenlights cultural pact with Portugal

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Parliament has approved a comprehensive cooperation agreement with Portugal aimed at deepening bilateral ties in culture, education, sports, youth, tourism, media, and language exchange. The measure passed during Sunday's open session with 223 votes in favor, five against, and four abstentions out of 249 lawmakers present—marking a decisive move to expand Iran's cultural diplomacy footprint in Europe, IRNA wrote. According to the Cultural Com-

mission's spokesperson Ahmad Rastineh, the agreement taps into "one of the most powerful tools" for modern diplomacy—cultural exchange. "There are unparalleled capacities between nations in areas such as education, tourism, and sport that can lead to cultural synergy," he said, emphasizing Iran's unique position as a bridge between Islamic and Persian civilizations. The accord outlines mutual commitments, including the promotion of language and cultural studies, exchange of students and scholars, and collaborative efforts



to protect cultural heritage. Both nations will encourage studies of Persian and Portuguese languages and work through online platforms to broaden access to educational content. Cultural diplomacy, long seen as a soft-power tool in Iran's foreign policy arsenal, is expected to play a key role in countering what officials describe as "Iranophobia" and "Islamophobia." As Deputy Parliamentary Affairs Chief Kazem Delkhosh put it, "Engaging with the world is the antidote to

fear-based narratives. We must introduce the world to the real Iran." While largely welcomed across party lines, a handful of MPs raised concerns. Mohammadreza Sadeghian, representing Mehriz, warned of the risks tied to Western cultural influence, especially through digital media. "Western culture has already crept into our homes," he said. "What guarantees are there that this won't be another channel for cultural invasion?"

Iranian animation 'Bug' heads to Bulgarian festival

Iranian short animation 'Bug,' directed by Ali Masoumi, was selected for the 16th edition of the Bulgarian International Animation Film Festival, set to take place in Sofia on May 7. Produced by the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), "Bug" examines the enduring influence of parents' behaviors and responses on their children's development, tracing the long-term effects of these interactions from early childhood to adulthood. A production of 2024, the six-minute animation depicts a family of three that has recently moved in, and the little girl inspects the new home with curiosity, when a small cricket finds its way into their home as a surprise visitor. But with the father's unexpected reaction, the child's perspective begins to shift, turning a simple encounter into something far more unsettling. The technique used in creating the animation is the multi-plane camera. It involves stacking three to six layers of glass with overlapping



surfaces, while the camera is positioned at the top to create depth and a sense of perspective. For character animation, replacement faces are used, with multiple face designs crafted in different sizes to accommodate long shot, close-up, and medium shot. All materials are natural, including wood, fabric, and soil.

Saipa Wheel Manufacturing Company - Tender for CONVEYOR CHAIN 1000 SERIES

Saipa Wheel Manufacturing Company intends to purchase 530 meters of conveyor chain 1000 series. Interested companies are requested to offer their quote based on the specification mentioned in the attached file on www.kswco.com. Please receive the tender form and send your PI to commercial2@kswco.com by April 25 2025. Please write Tender No in email subject. For further information please contact Mr.Zanganeh: +989123162409