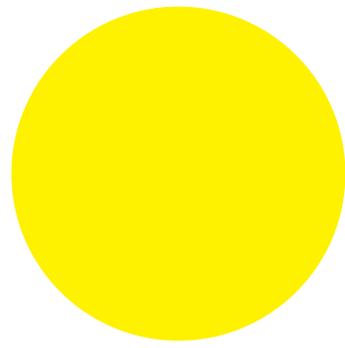


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Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad addresses an international conference aimed at offering investment opportunities in Iran's petroleum industry in Tehran, Iran on April 22, 2025. **BORNA NEWS**

China, Russia could help ease execution of possible Iran-US deal

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has traveled to China as Iranian and American negotiators are engaged in indirect talks over Tehran's nuclear program and the lifting of sanctions against the Islamic Republic. Araghchi's China trip took place several days after a second round of Iran-US talks in Italy's capital, Rome. Just a day ahead of the Rome discussions, the top Iranian diplomat concluded a two-day trip to Russia. In the meantime, Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud was in Tehran last week on a high-level visit in decades. Iran Daily has conducted an interview with Mohsen Shariatinia, an academic of international relations, about the significance of such trips and their timing with the Iran-US nuclear negotiations.

IRANDAILY: Araghchi's trip to China happens at a time when Tehran and Washington are in talks about Iran's nuclear program. What is your assessment of his trip?

SHARIATINIA: Overall, this trip can help improve relations between Tehran and Beijing, as Iran is increasingly cementing its strategic alliance with China. I believe that the visit will contribute to foster cooperation between the two countries in the future, especially if there is a potential agreement on the nuclear issue. China is a key participant in the JCPOA - the 2015 nuclear deal officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action from which the United States withdrew in 2018. The more high-level interactions Iran has with China, the more stable and sustainable a potential deal will be.

China at the same time can play a positive role in the coming months in possible discussions to prevent the snapback of sanctions on Iran under the JCPOA. If any possible agreement is reached between Iran and the US,

China will remain a valuable partner in implementing the deal, both in terms of nuclear cooperation and as Iran's main trading partner and a key investor in Iran's economy. I see this trip primarily as a move to further develop strategic trust between Iran and China, strengthening their partnership on multiple levels.

Regardless of the fact that Iran and the US reach or do not a deal on Tehran's nuclear program, is the strategic trust between Iran and China is crucial and beneficial for both sides?

Yes, absolutely. Iran needs to strengthen its trust with China because China is a strategic partner. It has played a major role in reducing the pressure of sanctions on Iran. Iran does not have any profound disagreements with China, and its main discussions are centered around shared interests. **Page 2 >** Araghchi's visit helps Iran develop a better mutual understanding with China.



Riyadh's view on Iran-US talks 'positive': Envoy

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Iran's economy could be opened up to American firms: *Araghchi*

'Iranian market large enough to breathe new life into struggling US nuclear industry'



Abbas Araghchi
AFP

International Desk

Iran's top diplomat reiterated that the country's trillion-dollar economic opportunity could be opened up to Amer-

ican companies as the two sides have begun negotiations to settle a dispute over Iran's nuclear program. The remarks are part of the text of a speech that Foreign Minister Abbas

Araghchi was to deliver at the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference. His scheduled address was canceled on Monday.

Araghchi said that Iran has never stood in the way of economic and scientific cooperation with the US, stressing that the main obstacle has been previous US administrations, which often acted under the influence of certain special interest groups.

"As I recently explained in an article published by The Washington Post, the trillion-dollar economic opportunity that our country offers could be opened up to American companies. This includes firms that could help us generate clean power from non-hydrocarbon sources. Iran currently has only one operational reactor at the Bushehr nuclear power plant. Our long-term plan involves building at least 19 more reactors—meaning tens of billions of dollars in potential contracts are up for grabs. Iran's market alone is large enough to breathe new life into America's struggling nuclear industry," he

said.

Safeguarding economic interests

He underlined that any possible nuclear agreement between Tehran and Washington must be based on safeguarding Iran's economic interests alongside a robust monitoring and verification mechanism to ensure the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

The Iranian foreign minister said that only such an approach can bring about long-term trust between the two sides. Araghchi added that the subject of negotiations should focus solely on lifting sanctions and the nuclear issue.

Iran's security non-negotiable

The foreign minister said that in the turbulent West Asia region, "Iran will never put its security on the table."

Iran and the US have engaged in talks to reach an agreement on Iran's nuclear program which has been the source of a decades-old dispute between Tehran

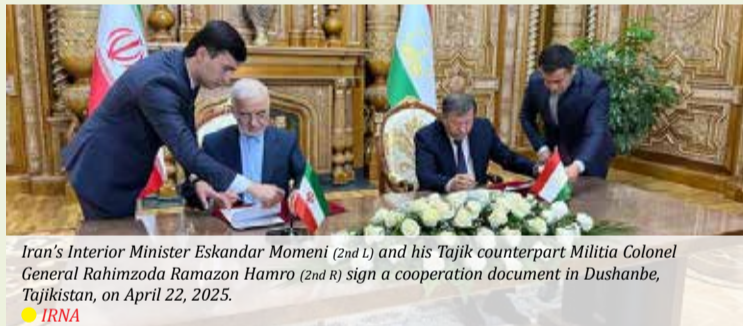
and some Western countries. Since April 12, the two sides have held two rounds of talks in Oman and Italy. Araghchi and the US special envoy in the Middle East, Steve Witkoff are leading the negotiations which are set to resume in Oman on Saturday. So far, both sides have described the talks as "positive and constructive." Two days after the second round of negotiations, the US President Donald Trump said on Monday that the US had very good talks with Iran. The ongoing talks represent 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.

Iran, Tajikistan sign security agreement

International Desk

Iran and Tajikistan signed a memorandum of understanding on Tuesday to broaden security ties in the fields of fighting terrorism, combating organized crimes and human trafficking. Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni and his Tajik counterpart Militia Colonel General Rahimzoda Ramazon Hamro signed the agreement in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan.

It came after the two countries inked dozens of agreements during a visit by the Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Tajikistan in January. The Iranian interior minister said that with the implementation of the cooperation document, Tehran and Dushanbe will witness greater security.



Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni (2nd L) and his Tajik counterpart Militia Colonel General Rahimzoda Ramazon Hamro (2nd R) sign a cooperation document in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on April 22, 2025.
IRNA

Referring to the age-old cultural and historical relations between the two Persian-speaking countries, the Iranian official said, "In addition to the economic and security fields, the expansion of cultural cooperation can bring the two countries closer in terms of culture and tourism." On January 16, Pezeshkian paid an of-

ficial visit to Tajikistan, during which the two countries signed 23 documents on cooperation in the fields of politics, economy, culture, society, education, transportation, customs services, trade, health, veterinary, electronic systems, technology, as well as ties between the two countries' police forces.

China says expects 'in-depth' talks during Iran FM visit

International Desk

China on Tuesday said it expected "in-depth" talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi during his visit to China this week, adding the two countries would work on "deepening political mutual trust."

"Both sides will have in-depth exchanges on China-Iran bilateral relations and international and regional hotspot issues of mutual concern," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said.

The visit to China by Tehran's top diplomat comes ahead of a third round of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States.

Araghchi previously visited China, which was a signatory to a since-abandoned 2015 agreement, in December. China is Iran's largest commercial partner and the main buyer of its oil, with Tehran still under crushing US sanctions.

Around 92 percent of Iranian oil heads towards China, according to Iranian media.

In 2021, Tehran and Beijing signed a comprehensive 25-year strategic agreement covering energy, security, infrastructure and communications among other areas.

China on Tuesday hailed its "traditional friendship" with Iran.



Guo Jiakun

"The two countries have maintained mutual respect, trust, and support, promoting the healthy and stable development of bilateral relations and contributing to regional and global peace and stability," Guo said.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said earlier this week that Araghchi's visit would start on Tuesday, though China said it would be on Wednesday.

The visit to China comes after a trip to Russia last week, where Araghchi discussed the latest developments in talks between Tehran and Washington.

After the visit to Russia, Araghchi told state TV that Tehran always consults closely with its friends, Russia and China, over the nuclear issue.

"It is natural that we will consult and brief China over the latest developments in Iran-US indirect talks," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said, adding that Beijing can play a constructive role in this process.

China, Russia could ...

What about Russia? How much can this country play a role in a potential agreement between Iran and the US and in advancing that deal?

Naturally, all major powers are important, including the JCPOA parties namely Russia, China, and Europe. The main player remains the US. But in the process of executing a possible new agreement, cooperation and consultations with all major players are crucial for Iran's benefit and are in line with Iran's national interests. And Moscow and Beijing can play a central role.

How about Arab countries? How much do you think they can play a role in advancing a potential agreement between Iran and the US? Considering this, the Saudi defense minister visited Iran last week after Tehran and Washington held a first round of their negotiations. What is the role of the Persian Gulf Arab countries?

Fortunately, the collective attitude of our neighbors toward a possible Iran-US agreement is positive. Arab countries are playing an important mediating role. Oman is acting as a supporter of an agreement, while countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE have also expressed their support. The support is significant because it

can facilitate both the negotiation process and the implementation of a possible agreement. Unlike in the past, when Arab countries often obstructed the JCPOA, they are now becoming part of the solution. Of course, their influence is not comparable to that of major powers, but the consensus of regional neighbors are a crucial factor for the successful and sustainable implementation of a possible nuclear deal.

You mentioned that the roles played by Arab countries differ from those of major powers. Could you please elaborate a bit more on this?

What I mean is that we have a group of neighboring countries with varying interests and different perspectives regarding Iran. However, currently, from Central Asia and the Caucasus to Turkey, Arab countries, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, all these nations fortunately hold a positive outlook toward Iran-US indirect negotiations and a potential agreement. If this positive attitude persists, it could facilitate the implementation of an ensuing deal.

Iran can work on expanding its relations with its neighbors as well after a deal is clinched. In the past, regarding the JCPOA, there was a kind of division among neighboring countries' stance on the 2015 deal. Some countries supported the agreement,

some were indifferent, and others obstructed it. But now, it seems that the environment has become more unified, with all countries supporting Tehran-Washington negotiations and a potential agreement. This is an advantage for Iran, which it should use to reach a common understanding with its neighbors to cooperate effectively.

Why do you think this difference in perspectives has emerged? Why do we see a convergence of viewpoints among countries, especially those with strategic influence, who are all expressing support? What could be the reason for this change?

Well, the regional circumstances back then, at the time of the JCPOA, were quite different. Geopolitically, the region was extremely tense. Iran was involved in significant issues with Saudi Arabia, which impacted its relationships with neighboring countries. However, Iran has now made some progress in building trust. The neighboring countries have also realized that a stable Iran with a peaceful nuclear program can actually contribute to regional stability. As a result, both Iran's view of the region and the neighbors' perceptions have become more aligned compared to the time of the original JCPOA negotiations.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran unveils \$135b investment opportunities in petroleum sector

Economy Desk

The Iranian Oil Ministry announced on Tuesday more than 200 investment opportunities valued at more than \$135 billion, new incentive and financing packages and the launch of an Oil Guarantee Fund to support investors in the strategic industry, emphasizing, "We are prepared to negotiate with the private sector regarding various types of contracts."

Addressing the opening ceremony of the "Strategic Transformation in Iran's Upstream Oil & Gas Sector", Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad highlighted the event's focus on three pillars, including investment, production and structural transformation.

"The Oil Ministry has so far signed 16 contracts under the IPC (Integrated Petroleum Contracts) framework for the development of 23 oil and gas fields, with total investments exceeding \$27 billion. Of these, nine contracts worth approximately \$13 billion are under implementation, while the remainder are nearing finalization and ratification," he said.

The minister cited the recent signing of the South Pars shared field pressure-boosting project, with an investment of around \$17 billion, as the largest recent initiative, expressing hope that, "This contract will soon be ratified, and its execution will commence with the participation of major domestic contractors."

Paknejad noted that approximately 200 investment opportunities have been defined across 200 packages, primarily

targeting the development of oil and gas fields.

"This framework includes plans to develop over 100 oil and gas fields to boost upstream production, as well as enhance output of petroleum products in downstream and refining sectors," he continued.

Regarding financing, the minister referenced coordination between the National Iranian Oil Company and the National Development Fund to secure project resources, stating, "This matter has been largely finalized, though transitioning from finalization to execution will require some time. We expect this issue to be resolved shortly."

On the sidelines of the event, Paknejad responded to a question about the potential participation of American companies in Iran's oil sector should Iran-US negotiations yield positive results, "There are no restrictions on utilizing foreign investors or international oil and gas companies, provided they can meet the necessary requirements. This is a general principle and rule."

Tax exemptions

Meanwhile, Head of the National Iranian Oil Company Hamid Bovard announced at the ceremony that, "Comprehensive financial packages, including tax exemptions, have been prepared to attract investors."

Bovard also highlighted a recent Economic Council resolution to reduce maximum contract timelines in the oil industry to six months, adding, "Planned upstream oil and gas investments



Deputy Oil Minister Hamid Bovard (L) unveils an oil-and-gas field-related project at the ceremony of the "Strategic Transformation in Iran's Upstream Oil & Gas Sector" in Tehran on April 22, 2025.

ALIREZA KHAZRAEI/SHANA

include the development of approximately 50 oil fields and 50 gas fields."

First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, also addressing the event, remarked, "Estimates

indicate that achieving 8% economic growth requires over \$100 billion in domestic investment. To meet this, we are focusing on the private sector, regional partnerships, and in-

ternational investments within our policy framework."

He further emphasized, "Significant domestic capital is available through the private sector, which can be mobilized via con-

fidence-building mechanisms. Simultaneously, we are pursuing joint regional investments with friendly nations and international ventures aligned with our strategic priorities."

Minister: Over 1,000 MW of electricity to be saved daily via DST

Economy Desk

The Iranian energy minister emphasized that adjusting the official clock will save over 1,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity — equivalent to the output of a large thermal power plant — and mandated all government offices to "exceed legal requirements in installing and expanding solar power plants."

Speaking at a national electricity consumption management event, Abbas Aliabadi said, "Iran's electricity consumption has grown 22-fold over recent decades, while the population has only increased 2.5 times since the 1970s." He stressed the "urgent need to stabilize the grid, especially during peak summer demand."

Aliabadi confirmed simultaneous efforts to boost thermal and renewable energy capacity, adding, "Thirty-six consumption optimization measures will be implemented this summer."

The minister reiterated that, "Industries, not just households, must adopt serious energy-saving actions." On Monday, the minister predicted that, "If planned mea-



asures are implemented, this year's electricity deficit in the country will drop to below 10,000 megawatts (MW)."

Aliabadi noted that, "Last year's electricity shortage was estimated at 18,000 to 20,000 MW. If this year's plans are executed, we will reduce the shortages."

Daylight saving bill advances

Also, at a weekly briefing, Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani announced that the cabinet's approval of a dual-urgency bill to reinstate seasonal clock changes had been sub-

mitted to Parliament.

"This aligns with global practices to maximize natural daylight, saving 1,000–1,500 MW — equivalent to a 1,200 MW power plant," she explained.

If passed, clocks will shift forward in spring and revert on September 23.

Iran abolished daylight saving time (DST) in April 2022 after Parliament voted to scrap the policy. Previously, clocks shifted annually in March and September. Critics argue the repeal has led to "higher peak-hour energy use," "reduced productivity," and "unnecessary financial burdens."

Uzbekistan calls for Iranian investment in fishery sector

Economy Desk

A delegation from Uzbekistan's Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery Union expressed their readiness to utilize Iran's experience in aquaculture, aquatic trade, and aquatic feed, calling for Iranian investment in their country.

Citing the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture, the potential areas of fishery cooperation between the two countries were discussed during a meeting between Abbas Mokhtari, the director general of the Agriculture Ministry's Office of Quality Improvement, and Sharifov, the director of Uzbekistan's Agriculture Ministry as well as Kadiov, head of Uzbekistan's Fishery Union.

During the meeting, Mokhtari highlighted Iran's exports of aquatic products and feed to Uzbekistan and announced Iran's readiness to expand cooperation in such areas. It was agreed that the Uzbek delegation would visit Iranian aquatic feed factories and aquaculture farms during the upcoming Joint Commission meeting of the two countries.

The Uzbek side, referencing the Joint Commission's scheduled meeting next month, reiterated their readiness to leverage Iran's expertise in aquaculture, aquatic trade, and feed, and



urged Iran to invest in Uzbekistan.

Additionally, according to the head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), the joint commission document between the two countries will be signed within the next three weeks.

In a Sunday meeting with Shokhrukh Gulamov, the deputy minister of Investments, Industry, and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi, emphasized the need to develop a bilateral trade roadmap.

Dehqan noted the preliminary agreements on signing a preferential trade agreement between Iran and Uzbekistan, stating, "The Joint Commission document will be signed within the next three weeks. Accordingly, working groups for technical

negotiations can be divided into trade, industrial, financial and banking, agricultural, logistics, mining, and other sectors."

Both sides also discussed the importance of enhancing bilateral trade cooperation and formulating a trade roadmap.

During the meeting, Gulamov emphasized expanding exhibition cooperation, adding, "The draft of the Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Commission is under review across relevant institutions."

The Uzbek deputy minister expressed satisfaction with the TPO's support for organizing a joint Iran-Uzbekistan trade conference, stating, "Having a trade partner like Iran is a source of pride, and we hope the trade programs of both sides will proceed optimally."

Riyadh's view on Iran-US talks 'positive': Envoy

INTERVIEW

Khalid bin Salman Al Saud, the Saudi defense minister, arrived in Tehran on Thursday, heading a high-ranking delegation. This rare visit immediately drew the attention of regional and international media. Beyond Khalid bin Salman's customary meetings with his Iranian counterpart and the president, his meeting with the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution and the delivery of a message from the King of Saudi Arabia were interpreted as the beginning of a new chapter in Tehran-Riyadh relations. The timing of this visit — coinciding with ongoing indirect negotiations between Iran and the US to lift sanctions and the efforts of Islamic countries to unite in condemning Israel's relentless attacks on Gaza — signals the emergence of the political will in Iran and Saudi Arabia to focus on securing shared interests. Alireza Enayati, a seasoned diplomat and Iran's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, sat down with IRNA to talk about the significance of Khalid bin Salman's visit to Tehran, its overt and covert messages, the reasons behind Tehran and Riyadh's focus on comprehensive relations development, the prospects of this relationship amid efforts to ease Iran-West tensions, and the opportunity for regional countries to reduce tensions with Tehran. The text of the key parts of the interview follows.

IRNA: It seems Tehran and Riyadh are witnessing a new chapter in bilateral relations — one where shared interests and countering common threats have replaced mutual threat perceptions. In brief, what factors, in your view as someone closely following the comprehensive development of relations, have led to this new chapter? Many wonder what motivations have brought the two countries onto the path of bilateral relations development after years of tension.

ENAYATI: It is true that both countries have decided to embark on a new phase of ties, moving away from a past marked by stagnated or severed relations and building on cooperation and synergy. This has been clearly evident over the past two years, since March 2023. Of course, the 2000s also saw a flourishing period in Iran-Saudi relations, beginning around 1997 and lasting nearly a decade. Currently, we may be witnessing unparalleled progress in some indicators.



It is entirely accurate that the two countries have stepped into a new era of cooperation, some aspects of which are unprecedented. As for why this has happened, the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy has always been based on expanding relations with neighbors, repeatedly stating that its arms are open for cooperation and closer ties with regional countries. This was explicitly highlighted during the previous Iranian government as a principle under the framework of good neighborliness and neighborhood policy. The current government has also emphasized this at various stages. That is why prioritizing neighbors in foreign policy has come to fruition. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, with a fresh perspective on regional issues and within the framework of expanding neighborly relations, has prioritized economic and developmental outlooks. This shared understanding has led Iran and Saudi Arabia to move forward with expanding relations, paving the way for smoother ties.

This was explicitly highlighted during the previous Iranian government as a principle under the framework of good neighborliness and neighborhood policy. The current government has also emphasized this at various stages. That is why prioritizing neighbors in foreign policy has come to fruition. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, with a fresh perspective on regional issues and within the framework of expanding neighborly relations, has prioritized economic and developmental outlooks. This shared understanding has led Iran and Saudi Arabia to move forward with expanding relations, paving the way for smoother ties.

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We witnessed the rare visit of Saudi Arabia's defense minister to Tehran and meetings indicating a different relationship between the two countries. How do you view his meeting with the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution? What do you think this meeting's message will be for the region and beyond, especially for the Islamic world amid heightened tensions due to Israel's crimes in Gaza?

This visit was highly significant. This is actually the Saudi defense minister's second such visit; in 1999, Prince Sultan traveled to Iran, signing an air transport agreement that led to direct



flights between the two countries. Recently, this agreement was revived, with direct flights to Mashhad resuming months ago. In any case, Prince Khalid bin Salman's visit and meetings with top Iranian officials, especially the Leader, can set the stage for broader and elevated relations. During these meetings, the Saudi defense minister learned of Iran's resolve to expand international relations. God willing, this exchange of views and this visit — one of the most important bilateral trips in the past two years — will translate into actionable steps, furthering Iran-Saudi relations. Undoubtedly, amid regional turmoil and Israel's ongoing attacks on Gaza, Iran-Saudi cooperation carries greater significance than ever. Within the OIC framework, several meetings have been held in Saudi Arabia at Iran's request, with both countries holding continuous consultations in support of Palestine.

Our relations with Saudi Arabia have seen many ups and downs, making public concern about the sustainability of this new chapter — and the risk of third-party interference — somewhat natural. What political or economic factors could deepen these ties today,



Past initiatives, like Iran's Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE), should move from theory to practical dialogue. In that initiative, Iran suggested a regional forum for all eight Persian Gulf states to have clear, sincere talks — an inclusive model lacking today. One such meeting during the ACD summit in Doha showed potential.

and what threats must be cautiously managed?

Yes, Iran-Saudi relations have indeed had ups and downs. We once referred to a "golden era" from 1997 to 2007, followed by two ruptures. While fluctuations are normal, Iran's policy — especially toward neighbors like Saudi Arabia — is to expand and strengthen relations.

We are on the right track, and statements by Iranian officials, along with the Foreign Ministry's actions, reflect unwavering commitment to this relationship. Both nations have repeatedly expressed their desire to deepen ties, institutionalizing brotherly relations to minimize vulnerabilities. One way to shore up relations is to broaden them beyond the capitals and political-military spheres, making them people-centric through economic, cultural, and tourism exchanges. A stable relationship requires decisions at the top to trickle down, but the base and middle must also buy into these ties for institutionalized progress.

Media speculation suggests Riyadh seeks a greater role in easing US-Iran tensions, particularly regarding JCPOA revival or a similar deal. Do you confirm this? How do you assess Riyadh's view of these talks?

Such speculation exists, but beyond evaluating it, we see Saudi Arabia's genuine efforts to foster peace, stability, and regional order. Saudi statements supporting nuclear talks in Oman, along with GCC and Iraqi statements, reflect a shift from tension to a positive, de-escalatory approach. Region-



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) meets with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, in the city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on March 7, 2025.

● SPA



Saudi statements supporting nuclear talks in Oman, along with GCC and Iraqi statements, reflect a shift from tension to a positive, de-escalatory approach. Regional countries aim to resolve lingering disputes, and Saudi Arabia's constructive stance aligns and helps with this.



Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud (L) meets with the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran, Iran, on April 17, 2025.

● leader.ir

all countries aim to resolve lingering disputes, and Saudi Arabia's constructive stance aligns and helps with this.

Will we soon see the president visit Saudi Arabia?

I have no information on the president's travel plans, but high-level visits can yield significant fruits and further expand relations. We've taken many steps, though major decisions are still needed.

Is Iran pursuing past proposals for a regional security pact, particularly among Persian Gulf states? Is the timing ripe?

Beyond bilateral ties, which we truly regard as the first step, we may have to start considering multilateral cooperation. Iran and Saudi Arabia can later explore regional collaboration, which would undoubtedly bring economic, trade, and social benefits.

Past initiatives, like Iran's Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE), should move from theory to practical dialogue. In that initiative, Iran suggested a regional forum for all eight Persian Gulf states to have clear, sincere talks — an inclusive model lacking today. One such meeting during the ACD summit in Doha showed potential.

What is referred to as the "Regional New Order" must be built by regional nations, free from external interference. Our eight nations must move together, rendering futile any misguided Israeli attempts to gain a regional foothold.

The full article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

Why Saudi Arabia backs Trump's Iran deal but not Obama's



By Vivian Nereim
Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

Ten years ago, when US president Barack Obama and other leaders reached a deal with Iran to limit its nuclear program, Saudi Arabia was dismayed.

Saudi officials called it a “weak deal” that had only emboldened the kingdom’s regional rival, Iran. They cheered when President Trump withdrew from the agreement a few years later.

Now, as the second Trump administration negotiates with Iran on a deal that might have very similar contours to the previous one, the view from Saudi Arabia looks quite different.

The kingdom’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement recently saying that it hoped the talks, mediated by neighboring Oman, would enhance “peace in the region and the world”.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman even dispatched his brother, Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman, to Tehran, where he was received warmly by Iranian officials dressed in military regalia. He then hand-delivered a letter to Iran’s Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

What changed? Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran have warmed over the past decade. As important, Saudi Arabia is in the middle of an economic diversification program intended to transform the kingdom from being overly dependent on oil into a business, technology, and tourism hub. The prospect of Iranian drones and missiles flying over Saudi Arabia because of regional tensions poses a serious threat to that plan.

“Their mindset is different today,” said Kristin Smith Diwan, a senior scholar. “Under Obama, the [Persian] Gulf States feared US and Iran rapprochement that would isolate them. Under Trump, they fear US and Iran escalation that would target them.”

Iran and the United States wrapped up a second round of diplomatic talks over Tehran’s nuclear activities on Saturday, setting an agenda for rapid-paced negotiations. Mr. Trump has been vague about the objectives of the negotiations, other than to repeat that Iran must never get a nuclear bomb.



But Iranian officials say the deal taking shape would not require them to dismantle the country’s nuclear infrastructure.

Arab states including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, and Bahrain have all welcomed the talks, preferring diplomacy to an escalating conflict.

“These talks are gaining momentum and now even the unlikely is possible,” Oman’s Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi wrote on X on Saturday.

The negotiations come against a backdrop of tensions across the Middle East as US airstrikes target the Iran-backed Ansarullah (Houthi) fighters in Yemen and Israel continues its deadly bombardment of Gaza. Last month, Mr. Trump said he would bomb Iran if it did not reach a deal over its nuclear program.

Israel had planned to strike Iranian nuclear sites as soon as next month but was waved off by Mr. Trump in recent weeks in favor of negotiating a deal with Tehran to limit its nuclear program, according to US administration officials and others briefed on the discussions.

“More than ever, Arab States are status quo powers in search of lasting stabil-

ity, a prerequisite for achieving their lofty economic visions,” said Firas Maksad, managing director for the Middle East and North Africa practice at Eurasia Group, a political risk consultancy. “Their strong preference is for Iran’s destabilizing activities and its nuclear program to be curtailed through diplomacy.”

Sunni Muslim-led Saudi Arabia and Shia Muslim-majority Iran had long backed opposite sides in regional conflicts, including a grinding war in Yemen that precipitated one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. The two countries had no diplomatic relations between 2016 and 2023, espousing open hostility.

Prince Mohammed has repeatedly threatened that if Iran obtains a nuclear weapon, Saudi Arabia will, too. (Separately, the Trump administration has revived talks over a deal that would give Saudi Arabia access to US nuclear technology and potentially allow it to enrich uranium.)

But in 2023, Iran and Saudi Arabia announced a formal reconciliation, mediated by China. By then, Prince Mohammed’s foreign policy focus had shifted toward calming regional conflicts.

“The potential rewards of negotiation



A man reads a daily paper that shows headlines discussing the Iran-US nuclear talks, in Tehran, Iran, on April 19, 2025.

● ARASH KHAMOOSHI/THE NEW YORK TIMES

look better today than the risk of a regional war,” Ms. Diwan said.

A decade ago, Persian Gulf leaders felt sidelined in the negotiations. This time, Iran has conducted regional outreach, said Sanam Vakil, director of the Middle East and North Africa program at Chatham House, a research institute.

“What was striking after the first round of negotiations is that the Iranian foreign minister reached out to counterparts, including in Bahrain,” she said. “Iran wants to have regional buy-in and [Persian] Gulf States are not only supportive of the negotiations but looking to prevent any escalation that could have implications for their economic and national security.”

The article first appeared on *The New York Times*.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (R) walks alongside Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan at the Department of State in Washington, the United States, on April 9, 2025.

● REUTERS



US president Barack Obama (R) meets with Saudi crown prince Muhammad bin Nayef (C) in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, the United States, on May 13, 2015.

● REUTERS



Arab states including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, and Bahrain have all welcomed the Iran-US talks, preferring diplomacy to an escalating conflict. The agreements are shaping up to be very similar, but Persian Gulf support for a nuclear deal shows how much the region has changed.

Persian Gulf Pro League:

Esteghlal boss Bozovic bemoans 'psychological issue' after Havadar draw

Sports Desk

Esteghlal head coach Miodrag Bozovic lamented the "psychological issue" among his players after the Tehran Blues were held to 2-2 draw at home by bottom-side Havadar in the Persian Gulf Pro League on Monday.

Prolific fullback Ramin Rezaeian put the Blues in front with four minutes into the game at the Azadi Stadium, only to see his goal canceled out by former Esteghlal midfielder Dariush Shojaeian two minutes later.

Mohammad-Hossein Sadeqi gave Havadar a surprise lead with a sensational strike just before the half-hour mark, winning the ball deep in his own half before charging forward all the way and slotting home a low drive from the edge of the box.

Esteghlal still managed to restore parity through Kasra Rahmati's own goal six minutes after the break, though the final result extended the Blues' winless run to nine games across all competitions since Bozovic took charge in February.

A four-time champion since the introduction of the Iranian Pro League in 2001, Esteghlal has collected only four points in seven top-flight outings under

the Montenegrin coach, sitting 11th in the 16-team table with 30 points.

"It's clearly a psychological issue. That's the only reason I can think of," Bozovic said of his side's poor run of results.

"We dominated the game and created numerous chances. Today's performance was by far the best from my players since I took the job, and I don't think they have lost their motivation," added the Montenegrin, who also believed some refereeing decisions, as well as time wasting by Havadar players denied his side a first league victory since February 22.

Esteghlal had two late winners – from Mohammad-Hossein Eslami and Rouzbeh Cheshmi – chalked off by VAR, which also overturned the referee's decision to award the Blues a 64th-minute spot-kick after Mohammad Sattari's challenge on Eslami in the box.

"Havadar's first goal was offside, while I saw no problem with Eslami's strike. VAR interruptions disrupted our rhythm and tempo in the second half, giving Havadar players the opportunity to recover their energy. That's ultimately why we dropped points today.

"We barely had 20-25 minutes of effective play in the second half, as their goalkeeper and other players wasted so



Esteghlal head coach Miodrag Bozovic reacts on the touchline during a 2-2 draw against Havadar in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on April 21, 2025.
● ALI HADDADI ASL/MNA

much time by laying down on the pitch. I don't think that sort of behavior has any place in football," added Bozovic, who can still steer his side to Hazfi Cup silverware at the end of a dreadful cam-

paign. Esteghlal will resume domestic cup action with a last-eight home game against second-tier club Paykan on Saturday.

Havadar, meanwhile, is on the verge of relegation after Monday's result left it struggling at the bottom of the table with 20 points – seven adrift of safety – with three games remaining.

Iranians collect two medals in Western Asian youth chess meet



Sports Desk

The first day of the Western Asia Youth Chess Championship saw Iranians collect a couple of medals in the rapid contests in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Taraneh Taqizadeh settled for a silver medal in the girls' under-14 age

class on Monday, while Ramtin Kavavand took the bronze in the boys' under-12 event.

Iranians will vie for further success across different age groups in rapid, blitz, and standard competitions in Dushanbe until Tuesday.

The event features players from 14 countries in the region.

Iranian shooter Rostamian shatters national record

Sports Desk

Iranian shooter Hanieh Rostamian set a new national record in the women's 25m pistol category on Tuesday.

The milestone came during the Iranian trials for the 55th CISM World Military Shooting Championship – starting June 23 in Elverum, Norway. A three-time world bronze winner, Rostamian registered 590 points in Tuesday's event to better the previous record, possessed by herself, by two points.

The 26-year-old Iranian girl – also a World Cup air pistol gold medalist in 2022 – stood third in the qualification round to make it to the final showdown in last year's Paris Olympics, but eventually settled for a sixth-place finish.



● IRNA

Iranian Basketball Super League:

Tabiat beats Naft to take 2-0 series lead in semifinals

Sports Desk

Tabiat defeated Palayesh Naft Abadan 80-78 in Tehran on Monday to edge closer to a place in the Iranian Basketball Super League Finals.

The victory saw Mehran Shahintab's men take a 2-0 lead in the best-of-five series ahead of Thursday's Game 3 in Abadan.

American point-guard stole the show for Tabiat with 20 points, six rebounds, and double assists.

Tabiat had come out victorious by a 79-73 scoreline in Game 1 on Saturday.

The winner of the series will take on Shahrdari Gorgan or Kaleh Mazandaran in the Finals.



● FATEMEH AMUZAD/MNA

Shahrdari and Kaleh will square off in Game 3 today in Gorgan, with the series evenly-poised at 1-1. Kaleh won the first game 82-76 before Shahrdari bounced back with a 122-68 rout of its host in the second game.

United plan £62.5m Cunha move

THE GUARDIAN – Manchester United are pushing to sign the Wolves forward Matheus Cunha but may have to raise the money to trigger his £62.5m release clause by selling Marcus Rashford or other players.

Ruben Amorim has identified the 25-year-old as his prime target for the No 10 berth, one of the head coach's two priority positions, along with a centre-forward. Rashford is on loan at Aston Villa, who have an option to buy the forward for £40m. United could get a higher fee if Rashford were sold to another club.

Rashford earns about £365,000 a week and will have three years on his contract in the close season. His transfer would release about another £56m in saved salary, giving United close to £100m to finance the deal for Cunha. The Brazilian is thought to earn about £90,000 a week, so if he agreed terms for five years with a considerable salary increase, offloading Rashford should allow United to finance most of his purchase.

Rashford is minded that he will not play again competitively for United while Amorim and this executive are there owing to a breakdown in the relationship.

Jadon Sancho, Antony, Casemiro and Rasmus Højlund

are other players whose departure would boost United's transfer budget. Amorim's first-choice signing at centre-forward is Liam Delap, who has a £30m release if Ipswich are relegated, which is all but guaranteed.



● DAVID DAVIES/PA

Bridging generations through silk weaving in Zavin

Iranica Desk

The town of Zavin, part of the city of Kalat in Khorasan Razavi Province, is recognized as one of the most important centers of silk weaving in Iran. In 2023, this city was designated as the "National City of Silk Weaving," highlighting its rich history and diverse culture, with silk weaving being one of its most prominent aspects.

The art of silk weaving is considered a vital cultural heritage that not only symbolizes the creativity and artistry of the people in this region but also reflects the deep history and cultural richness of the ethnic groups residing there. Silk

weaving in Zavin dates back centuries and has gradually transformed into a significant industry over the years. This art form has served not only as a source of income for many families but has also played a crucial role in shaping local culture and customs.

A handicrafts expert noted in an interview with ISNA that Zavin, due to its favorable climatic and geographical conditions, has long been an ideal location for raising silkworms and producing natural silk. Over time, this industry has emerged as one of the economic and cultural pillars of the region, with numerous families engaged in this craft, ISNA wrote.



Essential skill

Marjan Khodsetan remarked that silk weaving is recognized as both an art and an industry that helps preserve local culture and identity. For generations, silk weaving has been seen as an essential skill in the daily lives of Zavin's residents, often utilized in various ceremonies and celebrations. Kalat, particularly Zavin, is home to a variety of ethnic groups, each celebrated for their unique customs and traditions. This ethnic and cultural diversity is a striking feature of the region, with each group showcasing its distinct clothing and attire during local ceremonies and festivities. The handicrafts expert emphasized that local attire serves as

an important tourism attraction in Kalat, introducing visitors to the rich culture of the area. In Zavin, various ethnic groups, including Turkmen, Kurds, and other communities, coexist harmoniously, each contributing to the region's cultural diversity with their unique languages, customs, and traditions. This cultural diversity is evident not only in language and customs but also in the realm of arts and handicrafts. Silk weaving has become a common cultural element among these ethnic groups, helping to strengthen social and cultural connections between them.

She pointed out that local attire in Kalat is particularly prominent during special cer-

emonies such as weddings. She emphasized that the garments produced in this region are not only beautiful and unique but also embody the cultural identity of each ethnic group. Made from natural fibers, these clothes are crafted in diverse designs and colors, especially for use in ceremonies and celebrations.

She described the design of local clothing in Zavin as distinctive, noting that these garments capture the attention of every viewer through their vibrant colors and traditional patterns. The expert revealed that these outfits typically include long skirts, beautiful blouses, and various accessories that further enhance their beauty. In wedding ceremonies, these garments serve as powerful symbols of the cultural and social identity of the bride and groom, representing joy and liveliness during the celebrations, reinforcing the ties that bind generations and cultures in Zavin. She added that although most of the clothing produced in Zavin is consumed within the county, some producers update their products to participate in international exhibitions and introduce them to global markets. This effort not only helps increase the income of families but also promotes the culture and art of the region to the world.

In Zavin, there are between 300 and 350 workshops producing local clothing. These workshops create various types of local and silk garments, and their products are admired for their beauty and high quality. Additionally, the creations from these workshops are unique, each reflecting the artistry and taste of local artisans.

Role of women

Khodsetan stated that each silk weaving workshop in Zavin is typically operated by families, which helps preserve family traditions and transfer skills to new generations.



She noted that women play a key role in these workshops and are recognized as the primary artisans and producers of silk weaving. These women utilize their skills to produce beautiful silk fabrics that are used on various occasions. Silk weaving in Zavin is recognized not only as a profession but also as a social activity.

Khodsetan expressed that this industry provides opportunities for both women and men in the region to work together and share their cultural experiences. Furthermore, since the production of local and silk clothing is family-based in this area, it strengthens social and cultural relationships among family members and the community.

Future prospects

One of the challenges facing silk weaving in Zavin is the transfer of knowledge and skills of this industry to younger generations. While many older women are familiar with this art, younger individuals have shown less interest in these crafts. Therefore, organizing workshops and educational courses for the youth can help preserve and develop this art. Some garment weavers in the area believe these workshops can motivate young people to learn these skills and pass them on to future generations.

Khodsetan stated that holding educational courses could include practical skills in silk weaving, design of local clothing, and familiarization with new production techniques. She added that these courses can be conducted in cooperation with educational and cultural insti-

tutions, allowing young people to become acquainted with the art of silk weaving and engage in this field.

She emphasized that local institutions can also play an important role in promoting and supporting silk weaving in Zavin. Providing financial facilities, advice, and training to local entrepreneurs and producers can improve production conditions and enhance product quality. Additionally, creating suitable sales markets, facilitating the export of products, and effective advertising can help boost silk weaving in Zavin.

The handicraft expert pointed out that the increasing global attention to handicrafts and traditional arts could be a suitable opportunity for silk weaving in Zavin. With the rising demand for handmade and natural products, this industry could be recognized as an important part of the local and national economy. She continued by stating that in the future, considering the growing interest in handicrafts and cultural tourism, one can expect silk weaving in Zavin to be recognized more than ever as a tourist attraction. She expressed that this industry could help attract both domestic and foreign tourists and create more job opportunities for the region's residents.

Ancient art

Khodsetan pointed out that silk weaving in Iran is recognized as one of the ancient and valuable arts. This art is significant not only due to the beauty and diversity of its products but also because of its deep connection to Iran's history and culture.

She regards silk weaving in Zavin as one of the manifestations of this art in Iran, reflecting the taste and creativity of local artists who create valuable works using traditional techniques and unique designs.

This handicraft expert indicated that silk weaving in Zavin is not just an industry but also a cultural heritage that must be preserved and developed through collective efforts. She stated that this art can act as a bridge between generations, helping the youth in the region embrace their cultural roots with pride while also improving their economic and social conditions.

A source of inspiration

She added that considering all aspects of silk weaving in Zavin, this art can be recognized as a source of inspiration for other regions in the country and even globally. She hoped that Zavin continues to move toward development and progress, becoming recognized as a cultural and economic symbol both nationally and beyond.

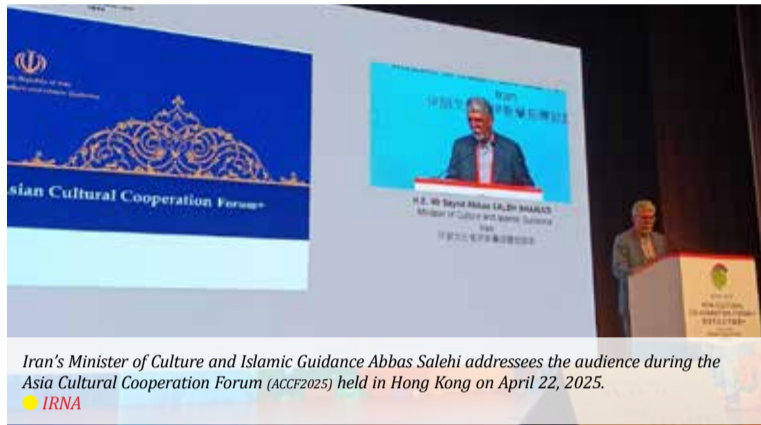
Given the importance of silk weaving and local attire in Zavin, it is essential that efforts to preserve and develop this art continue and be passed on to future generations.

Additionally, considering the tourism potential of this area, better promoting silk weaving and local clothing can create new avenues for economic and cultural development. Undoubtedly, Zavin, as the "National City of Silk Weaving," can serve as a model for other regions in the country regarding the preservation and promotion of handicrafts and culture.



Minister urges stronger cultural dialogue to shape Asia's future

Iran proposes launch of Asia Film Festival



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi addresses the audience during the Asia Cultural Cooperation Forum (ACCF2025) held in Hong Kong on April 22, 2025.

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance floated the idea of establishing an "Asia Film Festival" during a gathering of top Asian cultural officials in Hong Kong on Tuesday, offering Tehran as the host for its first edition. The proposal came during the Asia Cultural Cooperation Forum (ACCF2025), which brings together ministers, cultural leaders, and representatives from over 30 nations, IRNA

reported. The event aims to boost regional exchanges, strengthen cultural diplomacy, and tackle shared challenges through dialogue and collaboration. "As the world moves from a unipolar to a multipolar structure centered on Asia," said Abbas Salehi, cultural cooperation has become "more important than ever" to foster understanding and stability across the region. Salehi pointed to Asia's rich tapestry of civilizations and

vast human capital as a springboard for deeper partnerships. He stressed that Iran, with its strategic location and "civilizational heritage," has always welcomed constructive cultural ties with its neighbors. Turning to global crises, Salehi voiced strong concern over the ongoing conflict in Gaza, calling it "one of the ugliest human events" and describing Gaza as "an open wound" that intensifies the "human duty" of the global community. Throughout his remarks, Sale-

hi underscored the power of culture to "build peace" and promote "human dignity," urging Asian nations to double down on shared projects, specialist working groups, and continued dialogue. The ACCF2025, underway in Hong Kong's Special Administrative Region, features a packed agenda of workshops, roundtables, and expert meetings. Since its launch, the forum has sought to carve out a bigger role for cultural cooperation in shaping Asia's future.

Iran courts deeper ties with SCO judicial chiefs in China

Justice is not a choice, it's a necessity: Iran's top judge says

Social Desk

Iran's top judge met with judicial leaders from Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states this week in Hangzhou, calling for stronger legal ties and united action on global challenges. Chief Justice Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei of Iran landed in eastern China for the 20th SCO Judicial Summit and held a string of bilateral talks with his counterparts from India, China, Pakistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. During a meeting with China's highest judicial authority, Zhang Jun, Ejei called the summit a

"platform for convergence," and praised China's judiciary for its "professional trajectory." He stressed the need to "step up cooperation" under the Iran-China 25-year strategic partnership. Iran also struck a common chord with Turkey, Pakistan, and India on judicial exchanges. Ejei and Turkey's Supreme Court head, Ömer Kaz, discussed signing an agreement to protect travelers' rights and manage prisoner issues. "We can reach a comprehensive and reasonable agreement," said Ejei. In a similar tone, Pakistan's Chief Justice Yahya Afridi backed more frequent legal dialogues, stating,

"Judicial cooperation should not be limited to top levels." He extended an official invitation to Ejei to visit Islamabad. With India, talks touched on cyber threats, crypto laws, and the need to counter what Ejei called "unilateral and biased interpretations" of human rights and terrorism by Western nations. Justice Sanjiv Khanna of India highlighted the deep historical links between the two countries and expressed readiness for "close cooperation" on judicial reforms. Ejei's emphasis on digital transformation in the justice sector featured heavily throughout the summit. He urged SCO states to embrace smart tech-



Iran's Chief Justice Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei (1st L) attends the 20th SCO Judicial Summit in eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou, on April 22, 2025.

nologies, calling it "not a choice, but a necessity." At each meeting, Ejei raised alarm over Israel's military campaign in Gaza. He called on SCO members to use their collective voice to "halt the Zionist regime's war machine," describing the situation as "atrocious crimes" and "deliberate targeting" of civilians. Iran's top judge also voiced support for closer legal coordination



with Central Asian neighbors. Talks with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan focused on common culture, visa waivers, and shared civilizational roots. "We must build on our affinities to strengthen justice cooperation," Ejei said. Kazakhstan's judiciary echoed Iran's call for faster implementa-

tion of joint legal agreements. "We are eager to expand our ties," said Mergalif Islambek, Kazakhstan's judicial head. Iran will host next year's SCO judicial summit, and expectations are high. As Zhang Jun put it, "Iran holds a strategic position—we want long-term ties."

Iranian delegate's FIA term renewed

Arts & Culture Desk

Ramin Salehkhoo, Iran's representative in the International Historical Commission (CHI) of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), has secured a two-year extension to his membership following a vote by the organization's World Council for Mobility and Tourism. Salehkhoo, head of the Historical Vehicles Association under the Iranian Touring and Automobile Club, will continue as a titular member of CHI. The renewal signals strong backing from the

FIA for what it called his "professional approach" and "recognized expertise." The FIA's CHI, tasked with global policy and standards around historic vehicles, plays a key role in preserving automotive heritage. Salehkhoo has been active in shaping those policies during his previous term, contributing expert views and taking part in high-level meetings. A senior official from the FIA's mobility sector wrote to Salehkhoo, congratulating him and encouraging his "active participation" in the future of the historical motoring landscape. Salehkhoo



also serves as vice president and board member of the International Federation of Historic Vehicles (FIVA). He brings decades of experience in technical, research, and executive roles related to classic vehicles.

Asghar Farhadi sets new film in Paris with top French cast

Arts & Culture Desk

Acclaimed Iranian director Asghar Farhadi is set to begin shooting his next film in Paris this fall, marking his return to European cinema with a French-language project featuring a lineup of leading French actors. Details surrounding the film remain under wraps. The title is yet to be announced, and the plot has not been disclosed. Still, industry watchers see it as another bold step by Farhadi, who has long straddled both Iranian and international film landscapes, ISNA reported. The project comes not long after Farhadi hinted at filming in Los Angeles. It remains unclear whether this Paris shoot is tied to that earlier mention or if it marks a shift in direction. What is clear is his choice to "bring together" a

group of top-tier French talent for the production. Farhadi, 52, is no stranger to filming abroad. His 2013 film 'The Past' was shot in France, followed by 'Everybody Knows' in Spain, starring Penélope Cruz and Javier Bardem. Despite his global reach, it is his Iranian dramas — 'About Elly,' 'A Separation,' 'The Salesman,' and 'A Hero' — that have cemented his reputation as one of contemporary cinema's most powerful storytellers. The director was cleared in 2023 of legal accusations involving the origin of the storyline of 'A Hero'. A former student had claimed co-authorship of the idea, sparking a courtroom battle in Iran that ultimately ended in Farhadi's favor. Farhadi has won two Oscars for Best International Feature Film, a rare feat for a non-Western director.

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Sirjan Jahan Steel Company is pleased to announce the sale and export of 10,000 tons STEEL BILLET (Size 150 x 150 mm) with the possibility of increasing the contract amount to 15,000 MT on basis of FOB. Interested bidders are invited to get documents with send an email to sales@sjsco.ir

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