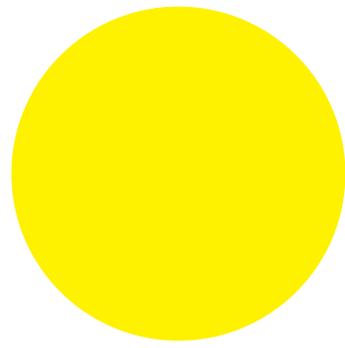


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An air tanker drops fire retardant on a key port in Bandar Abbas, southern Iran on April 27, 2025, a day after a huge explosion caused several infernos. IRNA

Iran, Azerbaijan can build on commonalities to cement ties



By Bahram Amir-Ahmadian
Central Asia, Caucasus affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Azerbaijan is a major milestone in his government's regional diplomacy. The visit, due to take place today, is particularly important as relations between Iran and Azerbaijan had soured for some time due to misunderstandings or certain forces on both sides. However, Pezeshkian places a great deal of importance on this trip to Iran's northern neighbor.

One issue that has lingered is the incident in which an armed man entered the Azerbaijani embassy in Tehran in 2023, which nearly led to a severance of diplomatic ties. Azerbaijan closed its diplomatic mission, and it took some time for the situation to settle down. Baku has expressed the desire for the matter to be addressed. Iran's Judiciary has also confirmed that it is following up on the case, stating that investigations are still ongoing and that those responsible will be prosecuted, meaning that the judicial process is progressing and has not been forgotten or swept under the rug.

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No evidence of foul play found so far in port explosion



By Mohammad Tala Mazloumi
Iranian lawmaker

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families of the victims of the Shahid Rajaei port explosion and wish a swift recovery to the injured. Undoubtedly, such a tragic incident at one of Iran's largest commercial and transit ports has set off alarm bells.

From what has come to light, and based on available evidence, the explosion appears to have stemmed from a failure to adhere to basic safety protocols—something that officials had already warned about on several occasions regarding operations at Shahid Rajaei port and its various sections.

The devastating event is a wake-up call for those responsible for maintaining safety standards in workplaces and for safeguarding the lives of workers across industrial, commercial, and production sites. A thorough and prompt investigation must be carried out to get to the bottom of the incident, and those found guilty of negligence must be held to account in line with the law to prevent such tragedies from rearing their head again in the future.

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Iran mourns tragic blast at major southern port

90% of fire under control

National Desk

Iran declared Monday a day of national mourning after a key port in southern province of Hormozgan rocked by a deadly massive explosion on Saturday.

According to the country's Red Crescent Society, the incident, which occurred at the Shahid Rajaei port in Bandar Abbas, has killed 36 people and injured over 1,240 others so far.

Authorities said only 10 of the dead, including two women, have been identified so far.

Hormozgan Governor Mohammad Ashouri Taziani has also announced three days of public mourning over the deadly explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port which is the most advanced container port in Iran. The iconic Milad Tower in Tehran and Tabiat Bridge turned off their lights to show solidarity with the families of the victims.

Meanwhile, cinemas and comedy shows cancelled their programs.

Damage extent

The explosion at the port destroyed some nearby buildings and damaged vehicles parked near the site of the

incident. Shipping containers burned, goods inside were badly damaged and the explosion was so powerful that windows several miles away were shattered. The blast was also heard in Qeshm, an island 26 kilometers south of the port.

Fire under control

It has also caused a massive fire which has led to extensive material damage in the port. Helicopters and aircraft dumped water from the air on the raging fire through the night into Sunday morning at the Shahid Rajaei Port, where thick smoke continued to billow on Sunday.

With choking smoke spreading throughout the area, schools and offices 23km away in Bandar Abbas, the Hormozgan provincial capital, were ordered closed on Sunday to allow authorities to focus on the emergency effort. The health ministry urged residents to avoid going outside until further notice and to use protective masks.

Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni, who visited the port on Sunday, said that firefighters have managed to bring around 90 percent of the fire under control.

Pezeshkian's visits explosion site

President Masoud Pezeshkian also traveled to Bandar Abbas to review the latest situation. He emphasized the need to expedite the complete extinguishing of the fire and prevent the spread of damage.

He also visited a hospital in Bandar Abbas, where some of the affected people have been hospitalized. Some of the injured victims have been taken to other cities, including in Shiraz. Some of the injured were also airlifted for treatment in the capital Tehran.

The president expressed his appreciation to first responders, adding "We have come to see first-hand if there is anything or any issue that the government can follow up on." "We will try to take care of the families who lost their loved ones, and we will definitely take care of the dear people who got injured," he said.

Oil facilities not affected

National Iranian Oil Products Refining and Distribution Company issued a statement saying that oil facilities in the area were not affected by the blast.

Authorities have launched an investigation to determine the



A charred truck lies at the scene of an explosion that took place at the Shahid Rajaei port dock, southwest of Bandar Abbas in the Iranian province of Hormozgan, on April 27, 2025.
MEYSAM MIRSADEH/TASNIM

cause of the incident which is currently unknown.

Messages of condolences

Global condolences have been pouring in since Saturday over the tragic incident.

The United Arab Emirates expressed "solidarity with Iran" and Saudi Arabia sent condolences, as did Pakistan, India, Turkey, Jordan, Cuba and the United Nations as well as Russia.

Stephane Dujarric, the spokesperson for the UN Secre-

tary-General, expressed the UN's solidarity with the government and people of Iran during this difficult time on Saturday.

"We express our condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We wish the injured a swift recovery," he said.

The Lebanese movement Hezbollah also offered condolences, saying Iran, with its "faith and solid will, can overcome this tragic accident".

In the first reaction from a major European country, the German Embassy in Tehran said on Instagram: "Bandar Abbas we grieve with you."

Russian President Vladimir Putin was one of the first world leaders to offer help to Iran, dispatching several emergency planes to the area. Putin has expressed his condolences over the loss of life and offered to provide help to Iran dealing with the aftermath of a blast, the Kremlin said.

Defense Ministry denies military cargo at port explosion site

National Desk

A spokesperson for Iran's Defense Ministry on Sunday denied media reports that a deadly blast in a southern port in Hormozgan Province may have been linked to the mishandling of solid fuel used for missiles, stating that no military-grade material was present at the site.

Ambrey, a private security firm, earlier claimed that the port took in a shipment of a missile fuel chemical in March. The fuel is part of a shipment of ammonium perchlorate from China by two vessels to Iran first reported in January by the Financial Times.

"The fire was reportedly the result of improper handling of a shipment of solid fuel intended for use in Iranian ballistic missiles," Ambrey added. In a first reaction, the spokesman of Iran's Defense Ministry General Reza Talaei-Nik, denied the reports.

"No sort of imported and exporting consignment for fuel or military application was (or) is in the site



Reza Talaei-Nik

of the port," he told state TV by phone. He called foreign reports on the missile fuel baseless. He added that the claims are part of the psychological operations carried out by enemies. The spokesperson said the authorities will announce the primary and secondary causes of the incident at Shahid Rajaei Port at the appropriate time.

No evidence of...

Observing strict safety and preventive measures is particularly crucial at Shahid Rajaei port, a major hub for the country's exports and imports. Meanwhile, the government must step in swiftly to make amends for the physical and financial losses suffered by the victims and their families, offering both compensation and moral support to help ease the burden of their grief. Of course, no compensation can fill the void left behind by those who lost their lives.

As for the possibility of sabotage by hostile groups or individuals, no hard evidence has yet turned up, and no signs of deliberate foul play

have been reported. Nevertheless, the causes and full dimensions of the explosion must be thoroughly looked into by expert teams, and the findings should be made public without delay.

To get a handle on the full scope of the incident and to monitor the relief efforts for the injured, a parliamentary delegation has been dispatched to region to draw up a comprehensive report for legislature. In addition, lawmakers in various parliamentary committees are following up on the situation closely, and the results will be shared with the public as soon as possible.

Given Shahid Rajaei port's key role in national trade and transit,

particularly in the Persian Gulf and southern regions, urgent measures must be taken to bring back online all its sections. While the part dealing with chemical storage suffered direct damage, other sections are operational, and once authorities give the all-clear regarding secondary hazards, maritime and port operations will resume in full swing.

It should also be noted that the explosion did not cause any damage to the refineries, fuel storage facilities, distribution networks, or the oil and petrochemical pipelines in the region. Operations in Bandar Abbas' oil-related infrastructure are currently running without a hitch.

India, Pakistan exchange fire for third day after Kashmir attack

Troops from Pakistan and India exchanged fire in disputed Kashmir for a third night in a row, officials said Sunday, as relations between the nuclear-armed rivals plunged to their lowest level in years.

India has accused Pakistan of supporting "cross-border terrorism" after gunmen killed 26 people in the worst attack on civilians in contested Muslim-majority Kashmir for a quarter of a century, AFP reported.

Islamabad has denied any involvement, calling attempts to link Pakistan to the attack "frivolous" and vowing to respond to any Indian action.

Pakistan's army, meanwhile, claimed Sunday that it had killed 54 militants who tried to enter the country through its northwestern border with Afghanistan - suggesting the incursion was orchestrated by New Delhi.

The Indian military earlier Sunday held naval drills - releasing images of warships firing missiles - while the country's security forces pressed on with their hunt for those behind the April 22 attack at a tourist hotspot in Pahalgam in Kashmir.

The military blamed Pakistan for the "unprovoked" firing of small arms along Kashmir's Line of Control that separates the two countries.

"(Our) own troops responded effectively with appropriate



Indian Border Security Force soldiers stand guard at the India-Pakistan Wagah border post on the outskirts of Amritsar on April 24, 2025.
NARINDER NANU/AFP

small arms fire," it said of the latest incident.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday in Islamabad, Pakistan's Information Minister, Attaullah Tarar, said there was "no official confirmation" of any clashes at the border with India.

Indian police have issued wanted posters for three suspects in the Pahalgam attack - two Pakistani men and an Indian - who they say are members of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba group, a UN-designated terrorist organization.

India's federal home ministry has handed over the attack probe to the National Investigation Agency, which focuses on counter-terrorism.

"The eyewitnesses are being questioned in minute detail to piece together the sequence of events that led to one of the worst terror attacks in Kashmir," an agency statement said Sunday.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said the country was "open to participating in any neutral, transparent and cred-

ible investigation" into the attack.

India's navy meanwhile said it carried out exercises to "revalidate and demonstrate readiness of platforms, systems and crew for long range precision offensive strike", without detailing where the drills took place.

The Indian Express newspaper on Sunday quoted a top government source as saying "there will be military retaliation" and officials "are discussing the nature of the strike".

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947. Both claim the territory in full but govern separate portions of it.

India's Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday reiterated his pledge that the Pahalgam victims "will get justice".

"Terrorists and their patrons want Kashmir to be destroyed again, that is why such a big conspiracy was hatched," he said in his monthly radio address to the nation.

Pezeshkian: Iran ready to boost ties with Africa in various fields

Minister says \$10b leap in Africa trade on agenda

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed optimism about enhanced cooperation with countries in Africa, underlining that the Islamic Republic is ready to share its achievements and capabilities with African nations.

Pezeshkian made the statement at the 3rd Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Conference in Tehran on Sunday, which was also attended by Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref and Minister of Industry, Mines, and Trade Mohammad Atabak as well as representatives from over 50 African countries, including heads of chambers of commerce.

"We all live in a small house in this world with names like Africa, Asia, or America, but if we have a broad perspective, we all live on this planet and God has provided us with blessings that we can enjoy together," Pezeshkian said.

"Our belief and conviction in Iran is that we are all from one root and we are all one single nation, there is no superiority between us and you except based on humanity, capability, and greater service," he added. "We are ready to share all the achievements we have made with you,

to share our expertise with you in health, trade, industry, agriculture, security, and peace and tranquility, so that we can create a world where all human beings on the earth can coexist in peace, prosperity and harmony."

Pezeshkian also expressed hope that the participation of African representatives and traders in the event in Tehran would strengthen opportunities for cooperation in various sectors.

The president also criticized certain governments for disregarding religious teachings and committing acts of aggression against the other nations.

The 3rd Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Conference is being held in Tehran from April 27 to 29, with the event set to continue in Isfahan from April 30 to May 1.

The African delegates are also scheduled to visit the Iran Expo 2025, which is set to be held in Tehran from April 28 to May 2 with more than 2,500 traders, economic directors and heads of chambers of commerce from over 100 countries.

VP: Africa holds special place in Iran's strategic roadmap

During the opening ceremony of the inter-

national conference, Aref said the Islamic Republic views Africa not merely as a consumer market but as a strategic partner with a special position in the new global power structure.

"In the upstream documents of our country, including the Iran Vision Document, the Seventh Progress Law, and national development programs, the development of South-South relations and the expansion of interactions with African countries are explicitly emphasized," he added.

Aref stressed that Iran has consistently engaged with African countries based on the principles of justice, dignity, and shared historical relations.

He said Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has emphasized the necessity of enhancing ties with African nations, and the Pezeshkian administration seeks to expand relationships with African nations.

Iran possesses abundant resources in oil, gas, and minerals, along with the necessary expertise and technology, Aref said, adding that the Islamic Republic aims to use these capabilities not for domination, but for collaborative and brotherly partnership.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses the opening ceremony of the 3rd Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Conference in Tehran, Iran, on April 27, 2025.
● President.ir

Minister plans for \$10 billion trade leap

Speaking at the event, Atabak pointed to the extensive cooperation capacities between Iran and Africa, announcing plans for a tenfold increase in trade exchanges with African countries to \$10 billion.

Stressing that there are significant opportunities for collaboration between Iran and Africa, the minister said the current level of Iran-Africa trade accounts for only 3% of the Islamic Republic's

exports and 1% of its imports, which is approximately 800 million dollars.

Atabak referred to the development of infrastructure, the construction of industrial parks and refineries, the expansion of new energies and extraterritorial cultivation, the launch of shipping lines to South and Southwest Africa, the launch of air routes, the facilitation of banking exchanges and bartering with the African countries as the major axes of the event.

Iran's sovereign wealth fund, Kyrgyzstan ink €50m credit line deal

Economy Desk

Iran's National Development Fund (NDF) signed a €50 million credit line agreement with Kyrgyzstan on Sunday. The agreement was inked by Mehdi Ghazanfari, chairman of the NDF Executive Board, and Bakyt Sydykov, Kyrgyzstan's minister of economy and commerce, as reported by IRNA.

The credit line will be made available through a bank selected by the exporter, enabling Iranian exporters of technical and engineering services to finance their projects in Kyrgyzstan.

"This investment has two main benefits; on the one hand, it contributes to Kyrgyzstan's economic growth through the implementation of construction projects, and on the other hand, it activates the production chain in Iran, as Iranian contractors will be required to use Iranian goods and equipment," Ghazanfari said.

The chairman of the NDF Executive Board also said the two sides agreed to re-establish a joint investment committee to oversee the projects.

Pointing to the need for high quality projects, he added, "The quality of project implementation is very important for the National Development

Fund. We are seeking to create a mechanism where real representatives of the Iranian private sector, who prioritize national interests, are present in the joint committee so that the interests of the two countries are properly protected."

Ghazanfari announced the possibility of doubling the credit line to €100 million, depending on project performance.

The Iranian official said the goal is to fully absorb the first 50 million euros by 2025, and if successful, the second 50 million euros will also be allocated, adding, "Exporting technical and engineering services will not only generate foreign currency for the country, but will also develop factories and create jobs."

Sydykov, for his part, said Kyrgyzstan and Iran have always had strong relations, and Sunday's deal will pave the way for the development of bilateral economic and technical cooperation.

Emphasizing the importance of this deal, he said, "We in our team are adopting the best working methods to attract investment. The demand for infrastructure projects in Kyrgyzstan is very high, and this joint cooperation with Iran will open a new chapter



Mehdi Ghazanfari (L), chairman of the NDF Executive Board, and Bakyt Sydykov, Kyrgyzstan's minister of economy and commerce, are seen after signing a €50 million credit line agreement in the capital Tehran on April 27, 2025.
● IRNA

in the economic relations of the two countries."

Sydykov underscored the strong and expanding economic ties between the two countries, noting that current cooperation remains far below their potential.

The minister said the new agreement would bolster investment, highlighting Kyrgyzstan's steady economic growth, controlled public debt, and an inflation rate between five and seven percent.

Sydykov also placed a premium on ongoing economic reforms and currency stability in Kyrgyzstan.

Minister urges accelerated shipment of goods to Imam Khomeini Port

Economy Desk

Iran's minister of agriculture called for acceleration in directing ships carrying essential goods to berth at other southern ports, not least Imam Khomeini Port, following Saturday's colossal blast at Shahid Rajaei Port. Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljah made the call on Sunday as he demanded serious and precise follow-up on the matter.

"Based on the initial information received from colleagues stationed at the scene of the incident, it appears that the essential goods present at Shahid Rajaei Port have not sustained serious damage, and there will be no problem in the process of supplying essential goods," Nouri-Qezeljah said.

"In line with emergency measures, the CEO of [the Agriculture Ministry's] Livestock Affairs has been tasked with being dispatched to the site and following up on the transfer of refrigerated containers to powered locations, and if necessary, utilizing the ministry's resources to assist the private sector," he added.

Media reports said Shahid Rajaei Port, which is the main transit and container port and the country's

largest trade center, after a short pause in activities, once again witnessed the resumption of goods exports and imports, and even foreign transit.

Farzaneh Sadegh, the minister of roads and urban development, announced at 9 a.m. local time on Sunday that various loading, unloading, and other activities are currently being carried out as usual in other zones and sections of Shahid Rajaei Port in Bandar Abbas.

On Saturday, a powerful blast rocked the port of Shahid Rajaei in Hormozgan Province after a fuel tanker exploded for reasons still under investigation.

The tragic incident has so far claimed at least 40 lives and injured more than 1,000 individuals.

Iranian officials, emergency services, health departments, and crisis management teams are trying to ensure that victims and their families receive the necessary care and that potentially affected facilities are secured and rehabilitated.

Authorities have further reassured the public that an in-depth investigation is underway to establish the cause of the explosion and prevent its recurrence.

Iran, Azerbaijan can ...

Another issue that has impeded relations is related to customs procedures in Astara. Pezeshkian's visit under these circumstances demonstrates that both countries are keen to resolve disputes through dialogue, especially considering their long-shared land and maritime borders. This reflects the positive nature of Pezeshkian's diplomacy, which aims to foster cooperation and, in fact, to boost bilateral relations.

Both countries have a joint commission for economic cooperation, with meetings held alternately in Azerbaijan and Iran to set the framework for future cooperation. The organizations overseeing this engagement are linked to the relevant ministries in both countries.

Therefore, the ties between Iran and Azerbaijan run deep.

The Zangezur Corridor has also caused friction. Iran's position on the corridor involves the Armenian territory that separates Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan region in the west from the rest of Azerbaijan in the east. Based on a 2020 cease-fire agreement, Armenia was supposed to provide facilities for Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan in turn was expected to allow Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh to use the Lachin Corridor to reach Armenia. However, this provision was not fulfilled, and consequently, the Zangezur Corridor issue also remained unresolved. Iran proposed that since the two countries cannot find common ground, they

should use the same corridor that had been in place since the collapse of the Soviet Union, or even earlier. Since 1988, these two regions relied on Iranian territory to access each other's regions, even before the outbreak of the Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Iran is keen on fostering comprehensive cooperation with Azerbaijan, and hopes that Pezeshkian's visit will be a positive one, helping to resolve outstanding issues and improve relations. The shared bonds between Iran and Azerbaijan are significant. Many Azerbaijanis live in Iran, and the majority of Azerbaijan's Muslim population are Shias. Therefore, if outside meddling does not enter the picture, the two neighbors can easily take advantage of

their shared potential.

Both nations are members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and their cooperation appears to have the potential to lead to mutual economic prosperity. Iran has also abolished the visa requirement for Azerbaijani citizens, allowing them to enter its soil twice a year without the need for a visa. This has made it easier for Azerbaijanis to travel to Iran for tourism, religious pilgrimages, and even medical treatment, as Iran offers high-quality healthcare facilities, particularly for surgeries and disease treatment. Many Azerbaijanis have already benefited from this, which has resulted in very positive outcomes in bilateral relations. Naturally, every country operates

based on its own interests and does not impose conditions on its neighbors. Iran's foreign policy in the region emphasizes regional cooperation and non-interference in the affairs of its neighboring countries. By applying this policy, Iran has shown its goodwill, and there is huge potential for further cooperation, provided that internal and external forces—whether foreign or domestic—do not meddle and disrupt the amicable relations between Tehran and Baku.

Iran is hopeful that its relations with Azerbaijan will grow stronger with each passing day, especially since the Islamic Republic has confirmed that it is pursuing a balanced policy in the region.

Europe's gamble in Syria



● MINTPRESS NEWS

By **Abolfazl Salehnia**
 Mideast affairs
 expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Almost four years ago, after it became crystal clear that the project to bring down Bashar al-Assad's government had fallen through and the state had taken back control of most of Syrian territory, with armed militants hemmed in under Turkish guarantee and Russian approval in the north-western region centered on Idlib, several key European states began quietly laying the groundwork to reopen their embassies in Damascus. They also sent in their intelligence and security delegations to Damascus for talks on cooperation and information-sharing with Syrian intelligence agencies. This was no closely guarded secret, as reports of these European efforts were occasionally picked up by the media.

At the time, Syria was sitting on a goldmine of intelligence regarding foreign terrorists operating within its borders, including those from Europe, Central Asia, and East Asia — data the European parties were eager to get their hands on. Syria welcomed this cooperation as it not only amounted to a form of implicit recognition of the Syrian government after years of international calls for regime change but also counted as a joint effort against a common enemy. This was happening even as political, economic, and trade sanctions on Syria remained firmly in place.

Now, with the sudden and unexpected collapse of Assad's regime, those very militants once targeted in intelligence coordination efforts have risen to power, taken the reins of Syria's executive, judicial, and legislative branches, and, to much astonishment, the same European countries are now rushing to recognize the new rulers and throwing their weight behind efforts to shore up the new regime, which

is defined more by ambiguity in form and composition than clarity.

It is perfectly natural for the new rulers to go after both domestic and international legitimacy. What is unnatural, however, is Europe's haste to prop up this government without adhering to even the most basic standards it has banged on about for centuries. Not only have the Europeans leaped at the chance, but they are also pushing others — including the United States — to follow suit. However, the US seems to be playing it cooler, taking a more measured approach.

The Americans have refused to be swayed by mere cosmetic changes — the militants' clean-shaven faces, suits and ties, and a rhetorical shift from extremist religious discourse to one of democracy, civil rights, and minority protection. Washington has openly stated that its stance will be built on the actions and conduct of Syria's new rulers, not their speeches and press briefings.

According to revelations by Professor Jeffrey Sachs at a recent Antalya conference, the plan to topple Assad's regime was initiated under the CIA's Operation Timber Sycamore in spring 2011,

at the behest of then-president Barack Obama and reportedly with Israeli knowledge and request. Within this framework, the CIA took charge of funding, organizing, equipping, and training the Syrian opposition — many of whom are now in power. Now, the US is treading carefully against the same people it organized and equipped, demanding concrete evidence and practical reasons for any shift away from extremist religious behavior and the abandonment of violent, discriminatory actions that violate the basic rights of religious and ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, Europe appears to be living in a different world.

It is highly unlikely that Europe can pull off legitimizing Syria's new leadership on its own without American backing and without Damascus achieving the bare minimum standards of legitimate governance. This is not to suggest Europe should go out of its way to undermine or sabotage the new Syrian government. Rather, there is a valid criticism to be made about its hurried approach and its failure to make the most of the current opportunity to steer Syria towards a military-political structure that at least resembles a civil govern-

ment.

At this critical juncture, as Syria's new rulers are crying out for legitimacy and external aid, Europe has the chance to lay down certain minimum conditions. Politics should not be built around lofty claims, speeches, and media interviews. For instance, the interim constitution approved by Syria's current government offers a revealing benchmark of their alleged ideological transformation. According to this document, the so-called president essentially holds onto the role of Islamic Caliph and Commander of the Faithful, with unchecked authority and no accountability mechanism in place.

The atrocities committed not long ago in Syria's western coastal regions — particularly the revenge killings of women, children, youth, and the elderly — driven by extremist Takfiri ideology, could serve as a telling barometer for shaping policy towards Syria's current rulers. Sadly, we are witnessing a weak and puzzling stance from the Europeans. Do they truly believe that a government that sent its own forces in to brutally crush and massacre civilians will now genuinely conduct a fair investigation

through a special committee?

The feeble statements and positions of European governments and the EU, regrettably, send the message that Syria's current rulers need not be held accountable for crimes against religious and ethnic minorities — particularly the Alawites. Historically oppressed under religious pretexts, the Alawites were labeled by armed extremists as the ruling sect and made scapegoats for all the government's actions. Over the years, they have repeatedly been threatened with revenge by the very militants now in charge — threats that are, tragically, being carried out today.

In any case, Europe now finds itself in the dock of history. What it does today will be recorded, and future generations will pass judgment on Europe's role in shaping Syria's fate. So far, it seems Europe has failed to settle on a coherent stance. European capitals and the EU continue to roll out the red carpet for Syria's current officials — many of whom once went by extremist noms de guerre starting with Abu. The frequent visits of top European officials to Damascus and their readiness to offer all kinds of assistance to Syria's new leadership flies in the face of the very standards Europe claims to uphold.

If this course of action continues, Europe could very well be playing with fire when it comes to its own future security. Have European officials really thought through the consequences of normalizing ties with a regime that might soon hand out Syrian passports to foreign fighters — fighters who belong to the most radical branches of Takfiri ideology and will be free to slip into Europe under the radar with new identities and legitimate travel documents?

Europe still has time to rethink its rushed game plan, to act in a way that aligns with its long-term interests. But if it doesn't, it may soon find that the clock has run out.

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Now, the US is treading carefully against the same people it organized and equipped, demanding concrete evidence and practical reasons for any shift away from extremist religious behavior and the abandonment of violent, discriminatory actions that violate the basic rights of religious and ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, Europe appears to be living in a different world.



German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (front-L) and her French counterpart Jean-Noel Barrot (C) walk with Syria's new ruler Ahmed al-Sharaa ahead of their talks in Damascus, Syria.

● AFP

How Syria's collapse imperils US interests



US Army soldiers and Syrian forces enter a CH-47 Chinook at the al-Tanf garrison in Syria in February 2025.

● FRED BROWN/US ARMY

By M A Hossain
Expert on political affairs

OPINION

The United States is leaving Syria, not with the thunder of collapsing Saigon embassies or Black Hawk Down spectacles, but through a quiet, undignified fade into irrelevance. Three of America's eight military bases in northeastern Syria are closing. US troop levels are being halved — no declaration, no defined endgame, no accountability. What looks like prudent disengagement from a peripheral war is, in reality, the latest episode of America's strategic abdication. The cost? Not just the abandonment of allies but the empowerment of adversaries — and a region inching toward chaos.

This is not a pivot; it's a pattern. Like Afghanistan before it, Syria is another case study of America's inability to match tactical success with strategic resolve. The illusion that a battlefield victory — defeating the ISIS in territorial terms — would allow for a clean withdrawal has collapsed under the weight of Middle Eastern geopolitics. And while Washington looks away, the region is being reordered by powers with clearer aims and fewer scruples.

Legacy of incoherence

It's worth recalling that the US never had a grand strategy in Syria. The initial aim was modest: degrade ISIS and prevent its resurgence. And in 2019, the ISIS's self-proclaimed caliphate was destroyed. But even then, the critical question remained unanswered: what comes after? That silence, maintained across administrations, now defines America's presence in Syria. The Biden administration, much like Trump's before it, has drifted — supporting the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) with minimal commitment, while avoiding a broader political or diplomatic engagement. This vacuum has left the US presence not as a stabilizing anchor, but as an

exposed, shrinking outpost with no political backing at home and even less deterrent credibility abroad.

In the meantime, Syria has changed. The civil war's original dynamics are unrecognizable. Bashar al-Assad, once seen in the West as the irredeemable villain of the conflict, has been overtaken in parts of the country by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a jihadist outfitted with transnational ambitions. What was once a contest between a brutal secular regime and various opposition factions has devolved into an ungoverned zone of extremists, shifting alliances, and regional interference.

Cost of strategic illusions

Washington's rationale for withdrawal is politically understandable. The American public is exhausted by the "forever wars". Syria, with its complex tribal and sectarian tapestry, holds no obvious economic or political reward. But geopolitics is never a matter of public sentiment, it's a matter of hard realities. And the reality is this; the US is not exiting a war; it is conceding a geopolitical space.

That space will not remain empty. Already, Russia, Iran, and Turkey are maneuvering to shape

post-American Syria. Moscow, with its airpower and regional diplomacy, is entrenching its military and political presence. Iran, through its backed Shia groups and networks, is threading together its long-sought land corridor to the Mediterranean. Turkey, under the guise of counterterrorism, is targeting Kurdish territories and expanding its influence in northern Syria. And now, radical factions are exploiting the uncertainty, aiming to recapture territory and legitimacy. For Washington to pretend this outcome doesn't matter is not merely naïve, it's dangerous. Syria is not just another Middle Eastern mess. It sits at the intersection of regional and global power struggles. It is a testing ground for how far Russia and Iran can go in defying the West. It is a pressure point on NATO's southern flank. And most critically, it is the holding pen for thousands of ISIS fighters who remain in makeshift prisons, watched over by an increasingly abandoned and vulnerable Kurdish force.

Betraying Kurds — again

The betrayal of the SDF is a stain on American credibility. These forces, largely Kurdish, carried the brunt of the fight against ISIS. They did so without air pow-

er, armored divisions, or global diplomatic backing. They fought street by street, died by the thousands, and asked only for recognition and support. Now, they are being left to face Turkish bombardment, regime hostility, and radical revenge. This isn't just a moral failing — it's a strategic blunder. Allies around the world take note of how America treats its partners. The message from Syria is loud and clear: the US will use you, then abandon you. In the corridors of Taipei, Kyiv, and Tbilisi, this message echoes with alarming resonance.

Strategic vacuum, global consequences

Those who argue that Syria is not worth the cost are missing the forest for the trees. The US presence there is not about dominating Damascus or building a new democracy. It's about maintaining a foothold in a region increasingly shaped by hostile powers. It's about preventing the resurgence of ISIS before it threatens the world.

More broadly, it's about signaling that the United States still has the will and capacity to shape global events. In geopolitics, perception is often as important as power. America's quiet retreat signals

something else entirely: fatigue, indecision, and strategic incoherence.

What real strategy looks like

The choice is not between endless war and total withdrawal. There is a middle ground — one grounded in realism, responsibility, and resolve.

The US withdrawal from Syria also disrupts the already fragile balance among regional non-state actors who have long operated in the shadow of major powers. With America's deterrent role vanishing, groups such as Hezbollah and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Iraq may find new strategic corridors to operate across borders with greater impunity. Israel is compelled to conduct more pre-emptive operations without the cushion of American coordination in the region.

Gulf monarchies, sensing a power vacuum and Washington's retreat from its traditional guarantor role, may double down on proxy investments, exacerbating sectarian divides. Moreover, China's silent but steady diplomatic courtship could signal an emerging alignment that adds an Eurasian layer to Syria's crisis. The withdrawal not only weakens US leverage — it accelerates the transformation of Syria into a hub where multipolar competition, extremist resurgence, and regional insecurity converge unchecked.

Verdict of history

Syria is not just another distant conflict. It is a mirror of America's foreign policy choices, its resolve, and its values. A country that allows radical networks to reclaim territory, that surrenders its alliances to Turkish drones and Russian maneuvering, is not leading the world — it is yielding it. The world is watching. Ukraine, Taiwan, and others are studying at this moment closely. If Washington cannot hold the line in Syria, what lines will it hold anywhere? The answer, increasingly, is none.

The article first appeared on Eurasia Review.



A US military convoy is seen passing by in northeastern Syria in January 2025.

● BERNAT ARMANGUE/AP

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This is not a pivot; it's a pattern. Like Afghanistan before it, Syria is another case study of America's inability to match tactical success with strategic resolve. The illusion that a battlefield victory — defeating the ISIS in territorial terms — would allow for a clean withdrawal has collapsed under the weight of Middle Eastern geopolitics.

Iranian Hazfi Cup:

Esteghlal edges Paykan
to remain on course for silverware

Sports Desk

Esteghlal edged out second-tier club Paykan 1-0 at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Saturday to advance to the Iranian Hazfi Cup semifinals.

Ramin Rezaeian found the net with a spot-kick in the 74th minute to help Esteghlal end a nine-game winless run across all competition.

Paykan keeper Hossein Shahriari collided with teenage midfielder Zarfam Saadavi – making a first start in Esteghlal colors – when punching the ball away from a corner-kick, which prompt referee Reza Mahdavi to point to the spot after a VAR review.

Rezaeian sent Shahriari the wrong way for his 12th goal of the season, as interim coach Mojtaba Jabbari got off to a winning start to his role on the Blues bench.

Jabbari took over from Montenegrin Miodrag Bozovic last week to become the sixth coach in the Esteghlal dugout since the start of the season. Ex-Esteghlal midfielder will be eager to steer the Blues to cup silverware and put a lid on a dreadful campaign, which has seen the club sit 11th in the Persian Gulf Pro League table with three

games remaining.

Awaiting Esteghlal in the last-four clash at home on May 23 is San'at Naft Abadan.

San'at, the only second-division club left in the competition, also had a second-half penalty from skipper Taleb Rikani to thank for a 1-0 win against Shahrdari Nowshahr at home later on Saturday.

Elsewhere, a shootout defeat at Malavan left defending champion Sepahan on the brink of finishing the season without a trophy.

There was little to separate the two top-flight sides throughout the contest, as it finished goalless before Malavan keeper Habib Farabbasi denied Reza Shekari and Reza Asadi from the spot to lead his team to a 4-2 victory.

Malavan will play away to Golgozar Sirjan on May 22 for a place in the final showpiece.

Golgozar enjoyed a comfortable 3-1 victory at Nassaji Mazandaran on Friday to progress.

Senegalese center-back Ousmane Ndong scored twice for the visitors either side of Ali-Asghar Aashouri's strike, with Mansour Baqeri bagging a consolation for Nassaji from the spot with four minutes left clock.



Esteghlal players celebrate their winner during a 1-0 victory over Paykan in the Iranian Hazfi Cup last eight at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on April 26, 2025.
● MOHAMMADREZA BOLANDI/ISNA

Iranian Basketball Super League:

Tabiat beats Kaleh in Game 4,
sets Finals date with Shahrdari

Sports Desk

Tabiat Eslamshahr beat Palayesh Naft Abadan 89-82 in Game 4 the last-four series in Abadan on Saturday to progress to the Iranian Basketball Super League.

Arman Zanganeh delivered an MVP performance with a double-double – 14 points and 11 rebounds – to lead Tabiat to a 3-1 win in the best-of-five series.

Tabiat, runner-up to Kaleh in the regular season table, won Game 1 at 79-73 home and then came out on top by a 80-78 scoreline in the second game, before Naft re-



● NAZANIN REZAZADEH/IRIBF

duced the deficit by a 80-72 win in Abadan on Thursday.

Tabiat will defend its title against Shahrdari Gorgan,

in a repeat of last season's final showdown.

American point-guard Glenn Cosey also contributed with a double-double with 25 points and 11 rebounds, to lead Shahrdari to a 95-86 home victory over Kaleh Mazandaran on the preceding night for a 3-1 series win. Shahrdari fell to an 82-76 loss in Game 1, but bounced back to rout Kaleh 122-68 in its own backyard in Amol, before taking a 2-1 series lead with an 89-83 home victory in Game 3 on Wednesday.

Shahrdari had finished fourth in the regular season with 13 wins in 20 outings.



● IRCF

Western Asia Youth Chess Championship:

Iranians grab six blitz medals

Sports Desk

The blitz competitions of the Western Asia Youth Chess Championship saw Iranians win six medals, including two golds, across different age groups in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

There was an all-Iranian top two in the boys' under-12 contests, as FIDE master Ramtin Kakavand collected 8.5 points after nine rounds to walk away with the ultimate prize, with Aihan Rahbar settling for the silver with 7.5 points.

This was Kakavand's second medal in the competitions, following his bronze in the rapid contests.

Mohammad-Hossein Darvishi won a second blitz gold for the country, finish-

ing atop the boys' under-16 standings with 7.5 points, with Uzbekistan's Rauf Kasimov and Indian international master Ethan Vaz in the following spots, respectively, with 6.5 points after nine rounds of play.

Kiasha Mahboubi, meanwhile, tallied eight points for a silver medal in the boys' under-8 division, finishing runner-up to Kazakhstan Adinur Adilbek, who collected nine points.

In the girls' competitions, Saina Kowsari (under-12) and Taraneh Taqizadeh (under-14) added a couple of bronze medals to Iran's haul in the Tajik capital.

Taqizadeh also took her personal tally to two medals, having won a silver medal in the rapid event.

World Snooker Championship:

Iran's Vafaei crashes out
after last-16 loss to Williams

Sports Desk

Iran's Hossein Vafaei missed out on a last-eight spot at the World Snooker Championship after suffering a 13-10 loss to three-time champion and world No. 6 Mark Williams in Sheffield's Crucible Theatre on Saturday.

Trailing 9-7 going into the concluding session, Vafaei had a golden opportunity to narrow the gap in frame 17

but missed the final brown to a center pocket leading 49-47, handing Williams the chance to pot brown, blue and pink for 10-7. Vafaei made a 70 clearance, from 52-1 down, to snatch the 18th and he led 57-26 in the next only for Williams to clear from the penultimate red for 11-8.

A run of 74 boosted Vafaei's hopes of a recovery. Williams led 35-0 in the next when he missed a red to a

top corner, and the Iranian made 72 to close within one. Williams dominated the next for 12-10, and when Vafaei missed a red to a baulk corner early in the next, the 50-year-old Welshman wrapped it up superbly with 115 to become the oldest quarterfinalist in Crucible for 15 years.

"It was very tight and tense. Neither of us played at our best. We were both tired. I am disappointed with my

performance because I gifted him many frames with my mistakes. I have to work more if I want this beautiful trophy. Mark will always be a tough opponent," said the Iranian world No. 24, who had beaten Englishman Barry Hawkins 10-9 for place in the last 16.

Williams will face Scottish world number three John Higgins in the quarterfinals on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Chogha Golan Hill illustrates dawn of agriculture in Iran

Iranica Desk

The ancient Chogha Golan Hill in Mehran, recognized as the oldest discovered site with evidence of the first farmers and settled communities in Iran, has recently become the focus of attention for archaeologists. Efforts to register it as a UNESCO World Heritage Site are currently underway. Located in Ilam Province and boasting a history of over 11,000 years, Chogha Golan has garnered interest from both domestic and foreign researchers and archaeologists, according to IRNA.

This ancient hill, situated near the Golan village, is among the rare sites that archaeologists acknowledge as the beginning of settled life and agriculture on the Iranian plateau.

Findings from past

According to the head of the archaeological group working at this site, the remains discovered in this area indicate the presence of people from the Neolithic era who, around 11,000 years ago, were the first in this region to cultivate grains such as wheat and barley, as well as pulses including lentils.

Hojjat Darabi reported that valuable artifacts and evidence have been uncovered during a 45-day excavation at Chogha Golan. These findings include walls constructed from rammed earth and mud bricks, remnants of early structures with plastered floors, and primitive tools used in agriculture and animal husbandry.

The discovery of burned gypsum remains at this site suggests that this technolo-



gy originated in this region for the first time. Other notable findings include stone tools with sharp edges, which, according to archaeologists' assessments, were used for purposes such as harvesting grains, cutting agricultural products, tanning, and even hunting animals. Additionally, mountain goat horns have been discovered throughout the site, indicating the exploitation of natural resources by early humans of that era.

Significance of site

The architectural evidence and findings have made Chogha Golan Hill one of the most remarkable archaeological sites dating back to the ninth millennium BCE, revealing signs of habitation and human

activity even before the invention of pottery. Experts note that three seasons of archaeological excavations have been conducted at this hill so far, with new findings from these studies significantly contributing to understanding the history of human civilization in the western region of Iran.

Farzad Sharifi, the director general of Ilam Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, emphasized that due to the importance and value of this site, the dossier for registering the ancient hill is being prepared. Once completed, it will be submitted for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List. He also announced plans to transform this valuable site into an open-air museum

for researchers, history enthusiasts, and tourists.

Future prospects

Sharifi stated that Chogha Golan Hill, due to its scope, history, and type of archaeological findings, ranks among the most important and unique prehistoric sites in Iran. Its global registration could significantly contribute to recognizing Iran's cultural and historical heritage. Provincial cultural heritage officials have expressed hope that with the continuation of ex-

cavations and documentation of new findings, preparations for the global registration of the ancient hill of Chogha Golan will be facilitated as soon as possible.

According to experts, the evidence obtained from this site plays a crucial role in understanding the evolution of human civilization, agriculture, and early settlements in the western region of Iran. Establishing it as one of the hubs of archaeological studies in the country will open new horizons

for attracting international tourists and researchers. Chogha Golan is one of the valuable sites related to the prehistoric period and Neolithic era. It is located two kilometers south of the Amirabad Dam and near the village of Golan in Mehran. The discovery of this site dates back to the early 1990s, when workers at the Amirabad Dam encountered the remains of this hill during construction activities. At that time, Ali Mohammad Khalilian introduced this site to the archaeological community of the country. The first protective measures for delineating the area and boundaries of the hill were implemented in 2000 with the efforts of Jabrail Nokandeh.

In 2009 and 2010, a joint

team from the University of Tübingen in Germany, led by Nikolaus Conard and in collaboration with Mohsen Zeidi, conducted specialized studies in stratigraphy and chronology at this site. These studies played a significant role in discovering and analyzing the remnants from the Neolithic period.

A new phase of archaeological excavations at Chogha Golan began in 2023 under the direction of Darabi, with the support of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization of Ilam Province, and is still ongoing. This historical hill was registered as one of Iran's national heritage sites on October 1, 2001, and holds a special place in archaeological studies in the western part of the country.

Allure of Kharpap Waterfall amidst lush forests of Piranshahr

Iranica Desk

Piranshahr is one of the border cities in West Azarbaijan Province, located adjacent to Kurdistan Province. This beautiful and lush city boasts a mountainous and picturesque landscape. One of its most stunning natural attractions is the abundant Kharpap Waterfall. This perennial waterfall is situated deep within the stunning forests of Pardanan, 22 kilometers south of Piranshahr, nestled in the heart of these lush woodlands. It reaches its peak size during the spring, thanks to the melting snow in the mountains and seasonal rainfall, standing at an impressive 15 meters high.

History and naming

Kharpap Waterfall, nestled in the heart of Parashar's forests, derives its name from the Kurdish word "Kharapap," meaning "place with abundant water."



The waterfall has become a popular destination for nature lovers, thanks to its impressive water flow and picturesque landscapes. Its history dates back to ancient times

when Piranshahr served as a significant border center. The surrounding forests and flowing rivers provided ideal conditions for the formation of natural waterfalls.

Nearby attractions

The forests of Pardanan located in the region extend to the border heights between Iran and Iraq, adorned with a variety of trees, especially pines. In

addition to Kharpap Waterfall, the region's mountains, valleys, rivers, and forests come together to create breathtaking and unparalleled natural scenery. This unique landscape

offering opportunities for nature walks, forest trekking, and serene experiences in the great outdoors. The vibrant rivers, and untouched natural beauty further enhance Pi-

ranshahr's charm, making it a remarkable destination for nature lovers.

The area around Kharpap Waterfall is rich in tourist attractions that enhance any visit. Notable spots include Qalatasian Cave in Sardasht and ancient hills that tell tales of the region's history. Additionally, border markets such as Tamarchin and Piranshahr offer excellent opportunities to purchase handicrafts and experience local culture. The region's mountain springs and beautiful rivers also provide recreational activities, including hiking and fishing.

Piranshahr is not only known for its visual beauty but also for its rich biodiversity, featuring a range of animal species and plants that thrive in its varied ecosystems. The combination of majestic mountains, lush forests, and serene waters makes this city a true gem of the region, inviting visitors to explore its tranquil nature.

Iran's ancient Rab'-e Rashidi academic complex to be restored



Arts & Culture Desk

The restoration of Rab'-e Rashidi, the medieval academic complex in Tabriz, has been ordered amid growing concerns over its deteriorating condition. Originally established in the 13th century by the Ilkhanid vizier Rashid al-Din, the site is considered one of the earliest and largest universities in the world, according to IRNA. During a meeting with cultural heritage officials, including Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, President Masoud Pezeshkian instructed the restoration of the ancient site. "Rab'-e Rashidi is a symbol of our scientific and cultural legacy," he stated, highlighting its role as a multi-lingual

intellectual hub 750 years ago. The complex housed a library, translation center, industrial complex, and an autonomous financial system. It operated in seven languages, influencing academic thought across Asia and the Persian Gulf. However, years of neglect, environmental damage, and urban encroachment have put the site at risk. According to Bahram Ajorlou, project director of Rab'-e Rashidi and head of Tabriz University of Art, recent excavations have unearthed significant artifacts from both the Ilkhanid and Ottoman periods. Among the discoveries are advanced water management systems and exquisite tile work, shedding light on the region's architectural and academic

innovations. Despite these breakthroughs, challenges remain. Ajorlou criticized the lack of support from Tabriz's city authorities, citing construction permits that have further encroached on the site. "Only 13 hectares remain of the original 100," he said, calling for urgent measures to protect the area from further development. In 2023, a four-party agreement between the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, the University of Art, Tabriz Municipality, and a German archaeological institute allowed archaeological activities to resume after a hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, securing adequate funding remains a pressing issue, with the site requiring approximately \$1.1 million for preservation.

33 countries to join Tehran tour operators forum

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran will host the international tour operators forum from April 28 to May 2, with over 100 travel agencies from 33 countries attending. The event, aimed at boosting the country's tourism industry, will be held at the Esteghlal Hotel in Tehran and coincide with the 7th Export Capabilities Exhibition (Iran Expo 2025). Moslem Shojaei, Director General of Marketing and Tourism Development at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, emphasized that the event seeks to address a decline in foreign tour operators visiting Iran. He noted that the country is on track to handle 14 million tourists annually, but infrastructure challenges remain. "We need to rethink tourism pathways to distribute visitors more evenly across the country," Shojaei said, IRNA reported. Tourism experts believe that this in-

ternational gathering will provide an essential boost to the sector. Shojaei explained that the event's highlight is the B2B Business Meeting, a key opportunity for networking and collaboration between Iranian and foreign tour operators. The participating countries range from neighboring nations like Turkey and Iraq to more distant regions, including Vietnam, Thailand, and South Africa. This global presence marks a crucial step toward attracting more tourists. As part of the event, foreign delegates will visit iconic Iranian landmarks, such as the Golestan Palace and the ancient Museum of Iran, as well as the scenic island of Kish. Despite the growing number of international arrivals—currently at around 11 million per year—Shojaei stressed that Iran must remain competitive. "We have to fight for market share," he said, underscoring the need for infrastructure improve-

ments, including the construction of 500 new hotels and enhanced transportation options. Looking ahead, Shojaei put the spotlight on Iran's plans to participate in ten international tourism exhibitions and organize five [tourism] roadshows across cities such as Basra, Baghdad, Karbala, and Najaf, as well as in Poland, Hungary, Serbia, and Russia. Shojaei also discussed the importance of overcoming barriers to tourism, such as the difficulties travelers face in converting foreign currencies to rials. However, he reassured that issues related to the issuance of tourist cards are being resolved, with a new system in place for banks to issue these cards. Iran's long-term strategy involves using tourism as a tool for public diplomacy. "Tourism helps show the world the real Iran," Shojaei stated. He also emphasized that the country's membership in the United Nations World Tourism Organiza-



tion remains a valuable asset, with plans for hosting more international events in the coming years. Moreover, he revealed plans for Iran to host a conference dedicated to

the Silk Road countries in Semnan and the third International Health Tourism Conference for ECO member states in Hamedan in the current year.

First Avaye Solh Int'l Film Festival to take place in Aras Free Trade Zone

The first Avaye Solh International Film Festival will be held in Aras Free Trade Zone, showcasing a diverse range of films, including feature-length, short, documentary, and animated films.

Organized by the Cultural and Artistic Deputy of the House of Iran's Peace Corps, in collaboration with the Cultural and Tourism Department of the High Council of Free Trade Zones, the festival aims to promote peace through the medium of cinema, IRNA reported.

The festival is set to create an inspiring and vibrant atmosphere for filmmakers, emphasizing the themes of peace, friendship, and collaboration in both personal and global contexts. It also seeks to strengthen international ties and offer a platform for Iranian cinema to be introduced worldwide. The festival's focus will be on various aspects of peace, including its impact on daily life, community development, cultural heritage, environmental chal-



lenges, and the role of innovation and technology in fostering peaceful solutions. Personal stories and inspiring experiences will also be featured. Films, both Iranian and international, that align with the festival's themes are eligible for submission. The event will provide a unique opportunity to bridge cultural and artistic gaps, fostering global cooperation and understanding.



Arvand Jahan Ara Steel Co.
Bid for Prime Steel Slab
No. AJS/1404/01

Arvand Jahan Ara Steel Co. intend to sell 10,000 Mt Steel Slab via public tender. Those who are interested to participate to this tender, please visit the website www.ajs.co.ir. The bid price should be submitted not later than **05 May 2025** at 16.00 P.M Iran local time.

Tel: 0098-21-8877220-30-40

Email: tender@ajs.co.ir