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By Mashallah Shakeri

Iran's former ambassador to Pakistan

O P I N I O N E X C L U S I V E

Iran's unique geography—bordering fifteen countries—has played a crucial role in shaping its foreign policy. The importance of neighborly relations for Iran goes beyond routine diplomacy; it reflects a broader outlook that combines bilateral engagement with a regional mission. Iran's neighborhood policy is not just about working with others—it is about stepping up to create peace, stability, and shared prosperity across its borders. This approach has remained a pillar of foreign policy under both the late president Ebrahim Raisi and his successor, President Masoud Pezeshkian. Pakistan is one of Iran's most important neighbors. With a population of over 200 million and deep civilizational ties to Iran, it occupies a vital place in Tehran's regional calculus.

The Monday visit by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to Islamabad—his second in just seven months—reflected two important tracks: diplomacy and regional peacebuilding. The trip also focused on strengthening two-way ties.

Iran and Pakistan are not only geographically close but have also long worked together as trade partners. Iran supplies energy resources that Pakistan urgently needs, while Pakistan exports agricultural goods that are essential to Iran's food market. The economic relationship is built on mutual needs and shared potential. The two neighbors are culturally intertwined as well. Decades of joint work in the arts, education, and religious dialogue have laid the groundwork for deep mutual understanding.

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Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (R) shakes hands with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi at the Prime Minister House in Islamabad on May 5, 2025.

PAKISTAN'S PRIME MINISTER OFFICE

Tehran stresses commitment to secure peace, stability in South Asia

Araghchi urges restraint in India, Pakistan standoff

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Iranian exports to Iraq fetch \$12b

Iraq stands as second-largest non-oil export market



INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Iran's booming exports to Iraq have hit a record \$12 billion — and that is just the official figure. As Tehran eyes a \$20 billion trade target, insiders say untapped sectors like automotive parts, gold, and technical services could unlock even greater potential.

But what is driving Iraq's demand, and how is Iran outpacing regional rivals like Turkey? Check out page three where Iran Daily has explored the shifting dynamics of this crucial trade relationship and the high-stakes deals shaping the region's economic future in an interview with a board member of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce.

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Tehran stresses commitment to secure peace, stability in South Asia

Araghchi urges restraint in India, Pakistan standoff

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi emphasized Iran's commitment to play its role in securing peace and stability in the South Asian region amid soaring tensions between Pakistan and India over a last month's deadly attack in Indian-controlled part of Kashmir. Iranian top diplomat, who has traveled to Pakistan to mediate between the two neighboring countries, made the remarks in a meeting with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in capital Islamabad on Monday. Araghchi's visit to Islamabad is the first by a foreign dignitary since tensions flared in the wake of the April 22 killing of 26

people — most of them Indian Hindu tourists — in the town of Pahalgal, which India blames on Pakistan, an accusation that Islamabad denies. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack in Kashmir. Upon his arrival in Pakistan, Araghchi urged India and Pakistan to exercise restraint. "We seek de-escalation and urge all parties to exercise restraint and avoid increasing tensions," Araghchi told reporters on arrival in Pakistan's capital. Shehbaz Sharif thanked Araghchi for his peace efforts, according to Pakistan's government statements. He expressed Pakistan's serious concerns over the current tensions in South Asia since the

Pahalgal incident in India. He also categorically rejected any attempt to link Pakistan to the incident without providing any evidence. Pakistan's prime minister said Islamabad has proposed a "transparent, impartial and credible" international investigation to clarify the facts behind the Pahalgal incident. Also on Monday, UN chief Antonio Guterres urged the two nuclear-armed countries to exert "maximum restraint" and step back from the brink of war. New Delhi's accusation against Islamabad have sparked a series of heated threats and diplomatic tit-for-tat measures. The Pakistani military said on Monday that it had conducted

a second missile test since the standoff began. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given his military "full operational freedom" to respond and Islamabad has warned it will hit back against any aggression. India will also conduct mock civil defense drills on Wednesday, government officials said. Iran's foreign minister is also scheduled to visit India on Thursday to meet with Indian officials.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) walks along with his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar (R) upon his arrival in Islamabad, Pakistan on May 5, 2025.
● PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN MINISTRY



Pezeshkian underscores national unity to counter enemies' plots

President Masoud Pezeshkian underlined the importance of national unity, asserting that his administration will take no actions that could be exploited by the country's enemies. Speaking at an official session of the sixth term of the Assembly of Experts in Qom on Monday, Pezeshkian highlighted his commitment to fostering national consensus since the beginning of his presidential campaign, president's official website reported. The president stressed the necessity of maintaining social cohesion, warning that officials must avoid any decisions or actions that could jeopardize national unity that the country's enemies, including the US and the Israeli regime, actively seek to undermine it. Addressing the issue of hijab, Pezeshkian cautioned that officials should refrain from decisions that could weaken the ideals of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. He affirmed that while the government will not ignore issues of modesty, it will approach them with caution to prevent exploitation by the enemies. The president also asserted that social reforms cannot be achieved through coercion, emphasizing that his administration



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks in a gathering of members of the country's Assembly of Experts in Qom, Iran, on May 5, 2025.
● president.ir

will adopt prudent measures to address dress codes issues. Furthermore, he affirmed the

administration's commitment to justice in education, healthcare, and livelihoods as its top priorities. In terms of foreign policy, he said, the administration aims to strengthen relationships with neighboring countries, including Iraq, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and others.

Iran decries US contradictory statements as 'unhelpful' in nuclear talks

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said contradictory remarks by the US officials over a nuclear deal with Iran are not helpful as the two countries have engaged in new negotiations on Tehran's nuclear program. Baqaei made the statement after the US President Donald Trump and his Secretary of State Marco Rubio called for total dismantlement of Iran's nuclear program while stressing on the path of diplomacy to resolve a decades-long dispute over the issue. "Such conflicting messages does not affect our determination to stand by our fundamental positions," Baqaei told reporters in his weekly press conference on Monday. "If there is sincerity in the claim that the American side's demand is for the Islamic Republic of Iran not to possess a nuclear bomb, then I believe many issues can be worked out, as we have already declared – and demonstrated in practice – that we are not in any way seeking to weaponize our nuclear program," the Iranian official said. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also reacted to Trump's remarks, underscoring the consideration of "mutual respect and mutual interests" as a way to reach an agreement between the two sides. "If their ultimate goal is, as President Trump has repeatedly said, the only thing they can't have is nuclear weapons, an agreement is achievable, but there is only one way to achieve it: diplomacy, based on mutual respect and mutual interests", Ara-

ghchi said on X. Trump said on Sunday that his goal in discussions with Iran is "total dismantlement" of that nation's nuclear program. He also said that he is willing to listen to arguments for allowing Iran to pursue civilian nuclear energy while ending what he called its nuclear weapons program. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has also called on Iran to "walk away" from uranium enrichment. In a Thursday interview with Fox News Rubio claimed that "the only countries in the world that enrich uranium are the ones that have nuclear weapons." Iran's top diplomat hit back at Rubio's remarks, saying that, "Iran has every right to possess the full nuclear fuel cycle," citing Tehran's long-standing membership of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Iran and the United States have held three rounds of nuclear talks since April 12, their highest-level contact since Washington withdrew from a landmark deal with Tehran in 2018, during Trump's first term as US president. However, the fourth round of talks initially scheduled for Saturday was postponed due to "logistical reasons." Baqaei said that Tehran was flexible regarding the timing of talks and was waiting for details from mediator Oman regarding the next round of negotiations with the US. The US and other Western countries have long accused Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons – a claim Tehran denies, insisting that its atomic program is solely for civilian purposes.

FM's Pakistan visit ...

Politically, Pakistan plays a key role within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), where Iran has been advocating for closer cooperation—especially around the issue of Palestine. Pro-Palestinian sentiment resonates strongly in Pakistani society—from the public to religious scholars and intellectuals. Pakistani newspapers put out daily editorials on Gaza, and TV and radio programs host roundtables on the crisis. This is of course a people-powered movement, and at the governmental level, there remains a need for more structured consultations so that policy directions and stances can be better aligned between Iran and Pakistan, with the OIC still remain-

ing the best platform to hammer out such alignment. As part of his Monday visit, the top Iranian diplomat sat down for high-level talks typical of the diplomatic exchange between two like-minded, friendly states. The second and broader dimension of the trip however speaks to Iran's active diplomacy in promoting peace and stability in the region. Here, Iran has shown a readiness to look beyond its own interests or domestic needs, and instead to invest its diplomatic resources in settling regional tensions. That is why Araghchi is also scheduled to visit India soon—a move that falls in line with this broader diplomatic strategy. Given Iran's balanced approach to these two

South Asian countries, the goal is to leverage its influence to pave the way for dialogue and, ultimately, building bridges between Pakistan and India. It is important to note that Iran is pursuing this diplomatic path as it is facing internal and international challenges, among them the high-stakes nuclear negotiations with the United States. In fact, those challenges have not made Iran lose sight of its regional mission. The latest visit by Araghchi to Pakistan and his upcoming trip to India send a clear message not only to these two countries, but to the international community that Iran remains deeply committed to promoting just and lasting peace, security, and cooperation on a global scale.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



President warns gov't offices of summer blackouts unless solar panels installed

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday warned government agencies that they would be denied electricity during the summer unless they install and use solar panel systems.

In remarks outlining the government's energy plans, Pezeshkian stressed, "All public offices must install solar panels. Electricity will not be provided to agencies this summer unless they use solar panels. Ministers are required to submit progress reports on this initiative by next Wednesday."

Government offices are required to source at least 20% of their electricity from renewable energy. The president issued a two-month compliance period for government agencies to install solar panels, effective June 21.



According to the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization of Iran (SATBA), efforts are underway to equip a significant portion of executive and government agencies with solar power systems by this summer.

Iran's vice presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy was among the offices that launched a 40-kilowatt solar power plant on the rooftop of its main building, aligning with the government's mandate for executive bodies to transition toward electrical self-sufficiency and promote renewable and clean energy adoption.

Meanwhile, the deputy energy minister predicted peak electricity demand could surpass 85,000 megawatts, despite the fact that the country's thermal power plant capacity has risen by 10% compared to last year.

Homayoun Haeri, during a joint meeting of senior officials from the ministries of Industry and Energy to coordinate maximum power supply for industries, warned of an unprecedented surge in electricity consumption this summer.

He noted that early and extreme heatwaves — projected to be 3 to 6 degrees above long-term averages — will sharply drive up demand. Meanwhile, Iran's hydropower plants, with a capacity of 12,500 megawatts, face severe operational constraints due to a over 40% decline in water reserves. These reserves are being safeguarded for July and August, when the grid will experience its most critical shortages.

"Last year's average electricity demand was 936,062 megawatt-hours, which has climbed to 1,021,000 megawatt-hours this year — a 9% increase in national power consumption," Haeri added.

Iranian exports to Iraq fetch \$12b Iraq stands as second-largest non-oil export market

A board member of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, Hamid Hosseini, highlighted the growth of Iran's exports to Iraq, stating, "By the end of the Iranian calendar year 1403 (began on March 20, 2024), Iran's exports to the neighboring country exceeded \$12 billion, placing Iraq as Iran's second-largest non-oil export market after China."



Hamid Hosseini

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

In an interview with Iran Daily, Hosseini emphasized, "A positive aspect of Iran's exports to Iraq is that, among our top trading partners, Iraq is the only country with a trade balance entirely in Iran's favor. In contrast to Iran's \$12 billion in exports to Iraq, our imports from the country amount to \$500 million, creating a significant trade surplus for Iran."

"For comparison, our exports to the UAE — one of our largest trading partners — stand at approximately \$7 billion, while imports from the UAE total \$22 billion. Similarly, our exports to China amount to \$14 billion, but imports from China reach \$19 billion, tilting the trade balance scale in their favor," he added.

Hosseini noted, "Iraq and Afghanistan are key markets that help balance Iran's overall trade deficit, as both maintain trade surpluses in Iran's favor."

Regarding the \$20 billion trade target with Iraq, he stated, "Achieving a \$20 billion trade volume with Iraq is entirely feasible in the short term. In fact, this goal has already been met if we include unofficial exports, the value of electricity exports, transit of Iraqi petroleum products through Iran, and goods shipped from Bandar Abbas to Iraq's Kurdistan Region alongside official trade figures."

"The potential for Iran-Iraq trade far exceeds current levels, but reaching higher figures requires penetrating new sectors



Iraq

of Iraq's market. Iraq has significant demand for goods such as tires, automotive parts, tobacco, and gold — areas where Iranian presence remains limited," said the board member of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce.

He further underlined, "Iran holds substantial untapped potential in exporting technical and engineering services to Iraq. Activating this sector could significantly boost our exports. Previously, challenges with bank guarantees hindered participation in Iraqi tenders, but the current administration has resolved this by issuing government-backed guarantees. If this progress continues, Iran could export up to \$4 billion annually in technical and engineering services to Iraq."

On Iraq's position among Iran's top trade partners, Hosseini said, "Iraq currently ranks as Iran's third-largest trading partner after the UAE and China. In 2024, increased exports to Iraq

allowed Iran to surpass Turkey's market share in Iraq, securing a larger portion of the Iraqi market."

He concluded, "Within the region, Iran faces no major competitors — aside from Turkey — in exporting technical services and heavy industrial goods, positioning us to meet regional demand in these sectors."

Regarding export composition, Hosseini explained, "Iran's primary exports to Iraq include construction materials, food products, fruits and vegetables, household appliances, chemicals, and petrochemicals. In contrast, imports from Iraq largely consist of metal scrap."

On recent bilateral engagements, he added, "Last week's Iran Expo exhibition saw the participation of 100 Iraqi business delegates, alongside 10 Iraqi governors and heads of chambers of commerce, resulting in several promising cooperation agreements between the two countries."

Knowledge-based firms set \$500m record in last year's exports: Official



Economy Desk

The director general of the evaluation office for knowledge-based companies at the Vice Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy emphasized the pivotal role of such companies in advancing Iran's technology and industry, announcing their significant \$500 million export of products in the last Iranian calendar year 1403 (began on March 20, 2024).

In a specialized meeting titled "Next Steps in Formulating the National Industrial Progress Document", which was held at the 14th INOTEX Exhibition's Governance and Legislation Forum in the capital Tehran, the participants stressed the critical importance of knowledge-based companies and

the necessity of industrial policy for the country's economic development.

Among the attendees were Amir Younesian, Barzin Jafartash Amiri (industrial policy researchers), and Mohsen Mohammadi (assistant to the deputy minister for industrial policy affairs).

During the meeting, Younesian highlighted the key role of knowledge-based companies as drivers of science and technology in Iran's industrial progress.

He noted their \$500 million export achievement last year, calling the figure "remarkable given the fledgling status of many of these firms."

Younesian also underscored "the urgent need to develop science and technology infrastructure to support knowledge-based companies."

Tehran, Dushanbe target \$500m in trade: Iranian official

Economy Desk

Secretary of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Cooperation Commission Mohammad Vali Alaeddini announced a \$500 million target for trade between the two countries under joint cooperation frameworks.

In an interview with ISNA, Alaeddini stated, "The 17th meeting of the Joint Economic Commission of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Tajikistan commenced on Monday, coinciding with Shiraz Day, in this metropolis," ISNA reported.

The head of the International Affairs Center at the Ministry of Energy described the meeting's purpose as "expanding joint economic, cultural, social, and tourism cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan."

Alaeddini referenced President Masoud Pezeshkian's recent visit to Tajikistan, adding, "During this trip, 23 cooperation documents were signed between the two



nations, with a target to increase our economic exchanges with Tajikistan to \$500 million."

The official emphasized, "Iran possesses exceptional capabilities in technical and engineering services, manufacturing, and equipment — particularly in water, electricity, roads, oil and gas, petrochemicals, knowledge-based industries, and health-care. We can leverage these capacities to deepen bilateral collaboration."

Miankaleh caught in crossfire of industry, livestock



Construction vehicles stand waiting on the Hoseynabad pastures in the Miankaleh peninsula, Mazandaran Province, Iran.

● IRNA

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The outcry from environmental and wildlife advocates reached the ears of the current Iranian government, prompting President Pezeshkian to call off the petrochemical project in the Miankaleh peninsula. No one was more pleased by the suspension of the construction of a petrochemical plant there than the local herders, who set their sights on the green pastures of Hoseynabad, hoping to hold on to their modest assets and put food on the table.

PERSPECTIVE

The Miankaleh peninsula, situated in the extreme south-eastern part of the Caspian Sea in Iran's Mazandaran Province to the north, has gone through a turbulent history, ranging from choking wildfires to dust storms that have made their way into the reserve. However, nothing has sent shockwaves through Miankaleh more than the anxiety over the construction of a petrochemical plant and the separation of 90 hectares of pristine land and pastures in Hoseynabad. Industrial wastewater, polluting gases, and fuel pipelines from the petrochemical industry pose a serious threat to this natural treasure, and any encroachment by polluting industries chips away at its ecological value and raises the specter of being struck off the UNESCO list.

The Miankaleh petrochemical project, also known as Mazandaran (Miankaleh) Petrochemical, has run into controversy since day one. Despite its bumpy ride, the project quietly picked up steam again in recent weeks, only to be brought to a halt by a government red card.

Miankaleh Lagoon is the 36th registered wetland in the world, and the construction of polluting industries on its fringes rings alarm bells about the risk of its removal from the UNESCO list. The outcry from environmental

and wildlife advocates reached the ears of the current Iranian government, prompting President Pezeshkian to call off the petrochemical project. No one was more pleased by the suspension of the Mazandaran Petrochemical construction than the local herders, who set their sights on the green pastures of Hoseynabad, hoping to hold on to their modest assets and put food on the table.

Environmental activist Hor Mansouri, while commending the government for pulling the plug on the Miankaleh project, stated: “The government, by considering the law, national interests, and the legitimate demands of the people, took a hard look at the Miankaleh petrochemical issue from scientific, legal, environmental, and social angles.” He added: “The government’s decisive move to put the brakes on this project is a clear sign of national resolve to safeguard natural resources, uphold the law, and stand up to environmental violations and threats. Today, it can be said that the government stands shoulder to shoulder with the people, environmental activists, and Miankaleh’s vulnerable nature. This move is a major step towards looking out for the rights of future generations and preserving Miankaleh’s unique ecosystem.”

Just as the process of transferring national lands is complicated, re-

claiming them is even more tangled and hinges on a court ruling. While land reclamation is not impossible, everyone should keep in mind not to muddy the waters and assume the government has carte blanche in such matters; if such absolute authority is handed over to the government, it will inevitably spill over into cases of land transfers one day.

Behzad Angouraj, a natural resources expert, explained that national lands are public property under the control of the Islamic governance, meaning they do not belong to the state per se, and the president’s order cannot be enforced without a court ruling. He added that if one looks back on the Rouhani government’s 2020 decision to address the needs of downstream petrochemical industries, it becomes clear that both attracting investment and capital flight can be read into the various permits, approvals, and even objections. According to Article 44 and the Law on Facilitating Investment, as well as other regulations, he continued, the development of the private sector is mandated, but social activists believe there is a disconnect with current laws, especially regarding bank loans and land allocation, which they see as a form of rent-seeking. Angouraj noted: “With the government’s current management, it cannot say for sure whether the land allocated to the Hosey-

nabad project is national pasture or non-national, nor can it confirm whether there are any disputes. It must be understood that a suspension order — whether from the judiciary or the president — does not mean the project executor is incapable of carrying out the plan.”

“The Miankaleh lands fall within the Miankaleh biosphere reserve zone, and any development in this area must stick to strict environmental guidelines and relevant laws.”

Reclaiming national lands no walk in park

Angouraj believes the issue of reclaiming lands allocated to this project is highly contentious and intriguing as the same authority that signed off on the project is now backtracking.

“The credibility of approvals and objections from a key organization responsible for environmental protection should not be called into question in this way as the process of reclaiming allocated lands is anything but straightforward, and the government should not be looked to for land reclamation.”

According to Shana, Hassan Abbaszadeh, the CEO of the National Petrochemical Company, stated on May 2 that the implementation of the Miankaleh petrochemical project was contingent from the outset on securing environmental permits. He explained, “It was planned that,

pending approval and issuance of the necessary permits, the development of the methanol chain and its downstream industries using natural gas would be put on the agenda. However, the project failed to secure the required environmental permits from day one, and no authorization was granted as time went on.”

Furthermore, Mehdi Younesi Rostami, governor of Mazandaran Province, also clarified that the legal suspension of Miankaleh Petrochemical’s activities was put into effect by a Cabinet decision on April 23, 2025, and all activities have been deemed illegal and shut down as of that date.

Younesi Rostami added that given the revocation of the establishment license for the so-called Miankaleh Petrochemical by the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade, as well as the failure to obtain required environmental permits from the Iranian Department of Environment, all activities related to this project have been illegal and called off as of the aforementioned date.

“As the government’s top representative in the province, I stress that from now on, any action or operation under the Miankaleh Petrochemical project lacks legal standing, and any violations will be dealt with strictly according to the law.” Younesi Rostami reminded that the Mazandaran Governor’s Office insists on the need to stick to sustainable development principles, protect public rights, and look after the province’s natural resources and environment. Any industrial investment is subject to strict compliance with technical, environmental, and legal standards.

The Miankaleh Petrochemical project has become a hot potato, drawing widespread criticism. On June 24, 2023, reports emerged of fencing and resumed construction on the site, even though, according to Article 38 of the Sixth Development Plan, even minor activities such as fencing count as the start of project implementation and fly in the face of environmental regulations. This prompted opposition from the Department of Environment, and based on the latest correspondence from the judiciary, even the disputed land must be returned.

The article first appeared in Persian on Mehr news agency.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian
● TASNIM



Sheep walk past fences in the middle of the construction equipment in the Miankaleh peninsula, Mazandaran Province, Iran.
● ROKNA

Threat of land subsidence looms over Iran's capital



PERSPECTIVE

Land subsidence in Tehran has spiraled into a grave crisis, with the National Cartographic Center (NCC) issuing warnings about the rapid pace of sinking in certain areas and flagging up the potential for an environmental and human catastrophe in the capital. Land subsidence — a phenomenon that slowly and silently breaks down the ground beneath — has turned into a nightmare for Tehran's residents. NCC reports indicate that the rate of subsidence in some parts of Tehran has reached alarming levels, setting off alarm bells for urban infrastructure, residential areas, and even public health.

NCC warning

As the main body tasked with monitoring land subsidence in Iran, the NCC has repeatedly raised the red flag over Tehran's critical situation through detailed and documented reports. According to the latest data, southern, southwestern, and eastern parts of Tehran are bearing the brunt of high subsidence rates, with some spots sinking by more than 30 centimeters annually — a deeply concerning figure.

The most recent NCC data indicates that subsidence in the southwestern outskirts of Tehran has topped 31 centimeters. Land subsidence stands as one of the gravest environmental threats facing Tehran Province, having taken hold of the capital over recent years. Yet, this crisis has not been taken seriously enough. Around 150 million cubic meters of groundwater are extracted annually in the province. Over-extraction via authorized and unauthorized wells is the main driver of subsidence in Tehran. As the population grows, water consumption goes up. Without regulations to clamp down on well-digging and groundwater withdrawal, water tables will steadily decline, opening the door to crises like land subsidence.

Excessive pumping from licensed and unlicensed wells in the Varamin and Shahriar plains around the city of Tehran has played a key role in worsening the crisis. In areas like Moein Abad in Varamin and Eshtehard, subsidence has caused dangerous cracks that jeopardize existing infrastructure. Other contributing factors include water consumption per capita — more than double the glob-

al average — widespread dam construction, extensive urban asphalt paving, and the lack of water infiltration pathways to underground layers. Currently, subsidence is a serious concern in Tehran's districts 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 21 out of 22 districts. Land subsidence poses a serious threat to the city's sustainability. Without swift and decisive action to control the phenomenon, irreversible damage to infrastructure, buildings, and even citizens' lives could be on the horizon.

Factors driving subsidence

Experts pin the blame squarely on the over-extraction of groundwater as the leading cause of subsidence in Tehran. Population growth, industrial and agricultural expansion, and reduced rainfall have pushed up water demand, and excessive withdrawal from aquifers has thrown off the land's hydrological balance. Besides over-pumping, factors such as soil type, land slope, and active fault lines also weigh in on land subsidence.

What threats does subsidence bring?

Land subsidence can lead to cracks and breaks in water and

sewage pipes, gas lines, power grids, and roads. This can trigger outages in water, gas, and electricity, disrupt transportation, and push up repair and maintenance costs. Subsidence can also cause buildings to settle unevenly and crack. If ignored, structures may become unsafe, posing a serious risk to residents. It can reshape the land and reduce the capacity of waterways, exacerbating flood risks during rainfall and even allowing pollutants to seep into groundwater, thereby compromising water quality and public health. This phenomenon can also render agricultural and residential lands unusable, potentially sparking forced migration and fueling social and economic challenges.

How to tackle subsidence?

Water resource management: The government must roll out comprehensive water management plans to put a stop to excessive groundwater extraction. These plans should include measures such as improving water efficiency in agriculture, promoting recycled water use, and plugging leaks in distribution networks.



A qanat, an ancient type of water supply system, collapses near Navab Square, Tehran.
● ISNA



Experts agree that Tehran's subsidence crisis is a silent emergency demanding urgent attention. Ignoring it could lead to a major disaster soon. Proper water resource management is the key to getting a grip on Tehran's subsidence. The government, in partnership with the public and private sectors, should do its best to swiftly implement comprehensive water management plans.

- **Construction control:** Municipalities should crack down on construction in high-risk areas to avoid piling pressure on the land. Building codes must be revised to ensure structures are resilient against subsidence.
 - **Aquifer recharge:** The government can step up efforts to inject water into aquifers to boost groundwater levels and prevent land subsidence.
 - **Continuous monitoring:** The NCC should keep tabs on land subsidence continuously and feed accurate, up-to-date data to officials and the public.
 - **Public awareness:** The government must spread the word about the dangers of land subsidence and encourage public participation in water conservation.
- Experts agree that Tehran's subsidence crisis is a silent emergency demanding urgent attention. Ignoring it could lead to a major disaster soon. Proper water resource management is the key to getting a grip on Tehran's subsidence. The government, in partnership with the public and private sectors, should do its best to swiftly implement comprehensive water management plans.
- Land subsidence in Tehran is a serious threat to the city's stability, requiring immediate and firm action. The government, the municipality, NGOs, and citizens must join forces to tackle the crisis. Otherwise, Tehran faces the risk of a silent collapse.

Key facts, figures

- Annual subsidence rate in some Tehran areas is over 30 centimeters
- Groundwater level drop in Tehran plains stands at about 1 meter per year
- Groundwater reservoir deficit in Tehran plains amounts to over 1 billion cubic meters"

The importance of studying and finding solutions for this crisis can be summed up as follows:

Land subsidence pulls the city under and devours structures. As the ground shifts and changes, infrastructure is damaged, buildings lean toward subsidence zones, foundations crack, and roads and streets deform. Major subsidence events shake up the fabric of communities. These destructive phenomena not only spark floods in coastal areas but also put inland regions at risk. No one is immune to the economic or social fallout of this crisis.

Many countries worldwide are grappling with this problem, making land subsidence one of the most pressing challenges for geologists, geotechnical engineers, surveyors, civil and mining engineers, urban planners, and the public at large. Land subsidence carries significant social, environmental, and economic consequences. For instance, damage to road infrastructure runs up substantial costs for the country. Another impact is the change in the volume of water an aquifer can hold.



People gather around where the land subsided in Valiasr Street, Tehran, Iran, injuring one.
● ENTEKHAB

The article first appeared in Persian on Mehr news agency.

IWF World Youth & Junior Championships: Iran's Yazdani, Zare' grab triple golds, collect six medals on Day 5

Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifters Hossein Yazdani and Abolfazl Zare' made a clean sweep of three medals in their respective events at the IWF World Youth & Junior Championships, grabbing triple golds between them on Day 5 of the competitions in Lima, Peru. Representing the country in the men's youth +102kg contests, Yazdani began his snatch campaign with a 138kg lift before a second effort of 144kg saw the 17-year-old Iranian settle for a bronze medal behind Armenia's Harutyun Hovhannisyan (150kg) and Russian Semen Karavaev (147kg), who competed as a neutral. The Iranian teenager went on to dominate the clean & jerk event, raising 190kg above his head to beat Ukrainian Volodymyr Chmykh (180kg) and Karavaev (175kg) to the ultimate prize of the category. A 144-190-334 tally secured the total gold for Yazdani, with Hovhannisyan and Chmykh – both recording 323kg – taking the silver and bronze medals, respectively. "I was a bit stressed during the snatch event, but thank God, I managed to win a medal. I felt much calmer in the clean & jerk because I was confident I'd finish on the podium," the Iranian said after his impressive performance in the Peruvian capital. In the junior competitions, 18-year-old Zare' got off to a flying start in the men's 102kg event by claiming the snatch gold, thanks to a successful 176kg lift on his

third attempt. Brazilian Matheus Pessanha finished runner-up to Zare' on 175kg, with Egyptian Mahmoud Hosny registering 168kg for the bronze. Amirmohammad Soleimani was the other Iranian in the weight class, finishing fourth in the snatch competition with 166kg. Pessanha topped the C&J standings with a new world record of 220kg – 10kg clear of silver-winning Zare' – to become his nation's first male world champion in any age group, while Hosny settled for the bronze with 203kg. Soleimani, meanwhile, again missed out on the podium, finishing fifth after lifting 184kg with his second effort. Zare' secured his second silver of the afternoon by recording 386kg in total, following Pessanha (395kg), with Hosny (371kg) and Soleimani (350kg) in third and fourth places. Dedicating his medals to those who lost their lives in last week's massive explosion at a commercial port in southern Iran, Zare' was pleased with his performance in Lima, saying: "I gave it my all today. I really wanted to complete six successful attempts, but I missed the 214kg snatch. Hopefully, I can make up for that mistake in future competitions and win triple golds instead of just one." When asked about his ultimate ambitions in the sport, Zare' replied: "Every athlete dream of winning the Olympic gold one day, and I'm no exception." Sunday's results came after Iran



Iranian weightlifter Hossein Yazdani is seen in action in the men's +102kg contests of the IWF World Youth & Junior Championships in Lima, Peru, on May 4, 2025.

had picked up five junior medals on the preceding night. Having missed out on a snatch medal, Hamidreza Zarei went on to lift 203kg for the C&J gold in the men's 96kg class. Zarei would have also won the

total gold, had he made his final attempt on 209kg, but he failed and stood fourth on a 158-203-361 record. Zarei's compatriot Amirhossein Sepah made sure Iran would finish the event with a total medal

after he took the silver with 364kg – a third medal for the Iranian following his snatch and clean & jerk bronzes. Illia Salehipour was also among the Iranian medalists on Saturday, succeeding with the 195kg effort

to win the C&J bronze in the men's 89kg class. Iranian girl Alma Hosseini had notched up first medals for the country in Lima, collecting a silver and a bronze in the women's youth 64kg event on Friday.

Superheavyweight rivalry to headline Takhti Cup



Sports Desk

All eyes will be on the freestyle 125kg contests when the Takhti Cup gets underway in Isfahan, Iran, on Thursday, as two of the world's best superheavyweights wrestlers in Amirhossein Zare' and Amirreza Ma'soumi are the favorites to lock horns in a highly-anticipated final. Iranian wrestlers will be joined participants from 10 other countries across different weight classes at the 45th edition of the annual event, named after late Iranian wrestling legend Gholamreza Takhti. According to the pathway for the Iranian team trials, a gold medal in Isfahan will guarantee a place at September's World Championships in Zagreb for Zare', who is desperate to make up for his Olympic final loss with a third world gold in four years. The road to the world event, however, will be tougher for Ma'soumi – a six-time

world champion across different age groups since 2021, who also cruised to the Asian senior gold in March. The wrestling prodigy must first win the Takhti Cup gold, and then face Zare' in either a domestic head-to-head or an international tournament to secure a spot on the Iranian team. Two-time world 92kg champion Kamran Qassempour will also be among the Iranians to watch in Isfahan as he is set begin his bid for a berth at the Los Angeles Games with participation at the 86kg Olympic class, where a gold medal will punch the Zagreb ticket for him. The Takhti Cup will also serve as the first phase of the Iranian world trials in the 57kg, 70kg, 74kg, 79kg, and 97kg weight categories. The Iranian Wrestling Federation confirmed last month that Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan, Rahman Amouzad, and Amirhossein Firou-

zpour have already been secured a spot at the UWW Worlds. Mohammadnejad-Javan will be the Iranian 61kg wrestler in the Croatian capital, thanks to a gold-winning run in February's Zagreb Open and an Asian bronze in Amman. Amouzad, an Olympic silver medalist last year, has been given a shot at a second world 65kg gold after domestic rivals Yassin Rezaei and Ali Khorramdel had below-par runs at the Ranking Series season-opener in Zagreb. Meanwhile, Firouzpour's impressive run of results in recent months, which has seen him win the Asian and Zagreb Open titles, convinced the Iranian coaching staff to pick him for the world 92kg contests.

Iranian wrestlers Amirhossein Zare' (l.) and Amirreza Ma'soumi, pictured in training, will be the favorites for the freestyle 125kg title at the Takhti Cup in Isfahan.

Mohammadpour: Mirjalili is the world's best beach soccer keeper

After helping Iran edge Mauritania in their curtain-raiser, he was magnificent in a 5-1 reverse of Paraguay. His performance inside the Paradise Arena included two stunning saves and a trademark wonder goal. "He's the best goalkeeper in the world," his international teammate Movahed Mohammadpour said of the Iranian keeper to FIFA. "He's outstanding. We also have a very strong defence, we don't

allow opponents many chances, but when we do he always comes up with big saves. "Then he's the best with his feet. He's really good at setting up plays and scoring goals. We have power plays when he's on the pitch. He has a great understanding with the rest of the players. We link up really well. He's a huge asset for Iran." "I thank Movahed for saying that," said Mirjalili. "It's not for

me to say if I'm the best. I train really hard. I do three sessions per day. I'm always trying to improve. "I have to thank my team-mates for being able to score goals. They have confidence in me, and that enables me to try things, to attempt passes, to go for goal. Their movement is good, they get in good positions for me, free up space for me." "We don't care who is standing

in front of us: we will go toe to toe with anyone," added Mohammadpour, who finished as the top assister at the last global finals. "We only have one target at this tournament: to become champions. Nothing else. That's our only target." Mirjalili added: "The Iranian people have their fingers crossed for us. We will fight for our country, for our flag, for our people."



Sassanid era inscription suggests active ancient trade, industry



ISANA

Iranica Desk

Thanks to the efforts of Isfahan archaeologists, a Sassanid ceramic inscription fragment has been discovered in Lenjan, Isfahan Province. Its content indicates the existence of an ancient commercial and industrial settlement along the Zayandeh Rud River. In early May 2025, this ceramic inscription piece was recognized as one of the year's most significant archaeological findings and has the potential to open a new chapter in regional historical research. Aqil Aqili, head of the Archaeology Committee of the Lenjan Heritage Preservers Association, told ISNA that

this accidental discovery resulted from the ongoing, dedicated efforts of the association's members, ISNA wrote. Following an initial site survey by Hamid Salimian, the association's CEO, and subsequent focused follow-up efforts, a brainstorming session was held to prepare for the official registration and protection of the site in coordination with the Isfahan Province Cultural Heritage Organization. The site requires further research and studies; future investigations could undoubtedly revolutionize the understanding of the region's history. He added, "During a scientific visit to the site, ar-

chaeological evidence was observed, including architectural remains, scattered pottery shards, metal slags, a stone tool, and most notably, a piece of ceramic inscription (ostrakon) in Pahlavi Sassanid script." He also mentioned that, in the initial examination and reading of this ceramic inscription, he realized that the inscription indicates the number "six" in Middle Persian (Pahlavi). Aqili emphasized that this ceramic inscription holds great value from both linguistic and archaeological perspectives. He explained: "It is written in 'Broken Pahlavi' script, a form that was common at the end of the Sassanid period and is

now very difficult to decipher." He further states that, like other known examples from Varamin, Chaleh Tarkhan in Rey, Abu Naser Palace in Shiraz, and Hegmataneh in Hamadan, this piece was not part of an intact vessel but served as a medium for recording information such as receipts, transfers, and exchanges of goods. Based on the research of Rasoul Bashash, a faculty member at the Institute for Linguistic Studies, conclusions can be drawn from Parthian-era Ostraca in Nisa (1st century BCE) to inscribed pottery from the late Sassanid and early Islamic periods (7th and 8th centuries CE). These include

examples such as shards from around Varamin, Chaleh Tarkhan in Rey, Abu Naser Palace in Shiraz, and Hegmataneh. He added, "In Nisa, every inscribed ceramic was part of an intact vessel, with details such as the names of gardens, their locations, the dates of fruit extract deliveries (like vinegar), the quantities, and the names of the deliverers recorded on it. In contrast, inscribed shards around Varamin, Chaleh Tarkhan, and similar sites were broken pieces used as receipts or notes, with inscriptions unrelated to the main vessel." He continued, "The main content of ceramics from Nisa involved the transfer of

extracts like vinegar, while inscribed shards around Varamin, Chaleh Tarkhan, and Hegmataneh recorded various agricultural products such as wheat, barley, and other goods. These inscriptions functions as receipts or transfer notes issued to individuals. The discarded lines seen on many shards around Varamin are likely signs of corrections or settlements of the recorded items." He concluded that from the content of this ceramic inscription — likely related to counting or exchanges — it can be inferred that the site was an important industrial and commercial settlement at the end of the Sassanid period, possibly extending

into the early Islamic centuries. The presence of metal tools and slag remnants further supports the activity of metal smelting and processing at this location. He also pointed out that this recent discovery has once again drawn attention to Lenjan, noting: "Lenjan's strategic position, access to the Zayandeh Rud River, and proximity to ancient routes have historically given it an important role." He expressed hope that with the formal registration of this site, scholarly studies and excavations would commence, shedding new light on the economic, cultural, and environmental history of this part of Isfahan Province.

Elevate your adventure with Kaman and Zereshk Chairlift

Iranica Desk

The Kaman and Zereshk Chairlift is situated approximately 15 kilometers southwest of Qazvin on the road to Razmian. It is located within the prestigious Kaman and Zereshk Exemplary Tourist Region. This modern telecabin boasts a capacity to transport 1,250 passengers per hour and is equipped with advanced PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) technology, which adheres to interna-

tional standards, ensuring safety and efficiency. Positioned at an elevation of 430 meters, the Kaman and Zereshk Chairlift is supported by fourteen pylons and operates at a lofty altitude of 2,700 meters above sea level. It spans a distance of approximately 1,450 meters, providing breathtaking views and an exhilarating experience for visitors. The construction of this impressive structure commenced in February 2014, with fund-

ing contributed by Qazvin Municipality and Moham-madiyeh Municipality. This innovative facility holds the distinction of being the first in Iran designed to simultaneously serve skiers and tourists by integrating cabins and chairlifts. The telecabin features fourteen intermediate pylons, supporting cabins capable of carrying six passengers each. These cabins are outfitted with hydraulic locks for added safety and are man-

ufactured by the renowned French company Poma, incorporating cutting-edge global technology. The Kaman and Zereshk Exemplary Tourist Area stands out as one of the most prominent attractions in Qazvin Province. If you are passionate about mountains and natural scenery, Zereshk village and its surroundings are among the top destinations to explore. Often called the "Roof of Qazvin," this region is renowned for

its moderate climate and pleasant weather, making it one of the most comfortable and scenic spots in the province. Many locals and visitors alike come here to relax and enjoy the peaceful environment. Kaman village, part of Roudbar district, is situated along the road connecting Qazvin to Alamut. It lies at the foot of a mountain, offering a serene mountain retreat. After passing Zereshk village, travelers will en-

counter a fork in the road. At this point, take the turn away from the main route, and after roughly two kilometers, you will arrive at Kaman village. The journey is quite convenient — marked by smooth roads and close proximity to Qazvin — making it easily accessible for visitors. Most people prefer to visit this scenic region during the summer months. As a popular summer getaway, the village is lush

with cherry orchards and blooming trees. The houses in Kaman are built in traditional style, featuring charming wooden balconies decorated with pots of geraniums, enhancing the village's rustic charm. Overall, Kaman and Zereshk offer a perfect blend of natural beauty, cultural history, and modern amenities, making them a must-see for visitors interested in discovering the scenic wonders of Qazvin Province.



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Iran, Egypt open ‘new chapter’ in tourism ties, minister says

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran’s Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts said on Monday that Tehran and Cairo have entered a “new and strategic phase” of cooperation in tourism, signaling a shift in relations between the two regional heavyweights.

Speaking to reporters upon arrival in Cairo for the 4th D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, Reza Salehi Amiri said the fresh momentum in Iran-Egypt ties stems from a recent high-level meeting between the countries’ presidents, IRNA reported.

“A new chapter has opened,” he noted, adding that tourism now stands at the heart of this budding relationship.

“The goal is to move beyond general diplomacy and tap into areas where mutual interests can be pursued in a



Iran’s Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri (2nd R) and his delegation arrive in Cairo, Egypt on May 5 to attend the 4th D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Tourism.

● dolat.ir

targeted and strategic way,” he said. The minister emphasized that boosting people-to-people exchanges through tourism would strengthen broader economic and cultural ties.

The visit follows last year’s meeting between Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Egyptian Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. It marked a turning point after decades of diplomatic strain. Since then, both sides have been working to rebuild trust and identify common ground, particularly in cultural and historical sectors.



Salehi Amiri highlighted the deep civilizational roots shared by the two nations. Calling Egypt “a pioneer of Islamic and

Arab civilization,” he said Iranian tourists are eager to explore its heritage. In turn, he noted Iran’s UNESCO-listed

treasures could offer Egyptian visitors a glimpse into its “unmatched cultural depth.”

“The potential is enormous,” he said. “It’s time we show the world what unites us.”

The Iranian minister also underlined the role of media and academia in fostering public awareness. “We need to get the word out—through national media, social platforms, and cultural figures,” he said.

Salehi Amiri’s visit to Cairo, made at the official invitation of the Egyptian government, also includes side meetings with tourism ministers from Turkey, Azerbaijan, and other D-8 nations. The D-8, or Developing-8, is an organization of eight Muslim-majority countries promoting economic and cultural cooperation.

This year’s summit runs May 5-6 and features participation from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Malaysia, Indonesia, and others.

One key topic is Egypt’s recent move to officially allow Iranian tourists to visit—a decision viewed by Tehran as a potential “turning point” in bilateral ties. Discussions on how to operationalize the policy are expected to take place on the sidelines of the summit.

Iran, Tajikistan eye stronger relations as visa-free travel boosts cultural exchange

Arts & Culture Desk

The lifting of visa requirements between Iran and Tajikistan has paved the way for a surge in “cultural, scientific, and artistic” exchanges, a senior Iranian official said on Monday, as the two countries work to deepen their strategic cooperation.

Mohammad Vali Alaeddini, head of the Center for International Affairs of the Ministry of Energy, and co-chair of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Commission, made the remarks at the opening of the commission’s 17th session, held in Shiraz.

The historic city—long regarded as a cradle of Persian art and mysticism—hosted delegates from both sides in what Alaeddini called a “decisive” moment for bilateral ties. “This year offers a unique opportunity to align our economic strengths and build on complementary capacities,” Alaeddini told participants.

The gathering brought together more than 25 business leaders from Tajikistan and over 30 Iranian counterparts for a series of technical meetings.

Alaeddini pointed to the recent visit by



Head of the Center for International Affairs of the Ministry of Energy Mohammad Vali Alaeddini addresses the audience at the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Commission, held in Iran’s southwestern city of Shiraz, on May 5, 2025.

● [ILNA](http://ilna)

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Dushanbe, during which 23 cooperation agreements worth over \$450 million were signed.

He described the deals as a “milestone” that now demand swift and serious implemen-

tation.

“Our goal is clear: raise bilateral trade to more than \$500 million annually,” Alaeddini said. “This is within reach if we stay committed and work hand in hand.”

Beyond trade, he underlined key areas of potential growth—including technology transfer, joint investment in Tajikistan’s free trade zones, energy cooperation, and transit infrastructure.

Alaeddini emphasized that the mutual cancellation of tourist visas had not only eased travel for intellectuals and entrepreneurs but also strengthened people-to-people ties. The move, in place since early 2022, has helped both countries “break new ground” in cultural diplomacy.

Tajikistan’s Energy Minister Daler Juma, who also co-chairs the joint commission, attended the meeting—seen by many as a sign of political will to push cooperation beyond formal agreements.

The Shiraz meeting coincided with the city’s annual day of celebration, underscoring the symbolic link between heritage and development.

Italian official sees Iran as ‘fertile ground’ for attracting tourists

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran holds strong potential for international tourism and investment, the head of Italy’s tourism committee told ILNA in an exclusive interview.

President of CTO San Marino Luca Ruco said Iran is “well-organized,” offers “fertile soil,” and could prove highly attractive as an “emerging product” in global markets.

“Iran will surely appeal to new markets,” he said, pointing to its underexplored potential and growing interest from European stakeholders. Ruco’s remarks came during a conversation focused on the role of Italy’s tourism commission, which was launched during the COVID-19

pandemic.

The committee, he noted, was established “to stand up to the crisis that hit tourism hard — a crisis no one saw coming.”

“Thanks to the committee, especially in San Marino,” Rocco added, “we got through that tough time. Not only did companies survive, but many bounced back stronger, creating new jobs and continuing to grow even post-COVID.”

Italy’s tourism sector contributes about 13% to the country’s GDP, making resilience planning critical. The San Marino initiative he referred to has been praised for supporting small businesses and sustaining employment during the pandemic.



Looking ahead, Ruco suggested that deeper cooperation between Italy and Iran could unlock new opportunities. “You’ve got the infrastructure, the history, the charm — the makings of something truly promising,” he said.

Iran has been working to diversi-

fy its economy away from oil, and tourism has featured prominently in its 2025 plan. The country hopes to attract 20 million tourists annually by the end of the decade, a goal that would require increased international investment and collaboration.

Sobh International Media Festival announces winners



The third edition of the Sobh International Media Festival, which is underway in the Iranian capital Tehran, has announced outstanding contributions in media that emphasize regional issues and spirituality.

The six-day festival, which began at the International Conference Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), on Saturday, has showcased a diverse array of works from around the globe, Press TV reported.

The event received 4,160 entries from 40 countries, including the Netherlands, Argentina, Tunisia, Afghanistan, Russia, Peru, South Korea, Lebanon, Qatar, Syria, Italy, the UK, Singapore, Germany, Brazil, the United States, China, Ireland, and Palestine.

Among these, 533 entries were allocated to the Palestine section, while 3,627 were part of the main competition.

The festival’s categories encompassed television programs, news blogs, visual



Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) Peyman Jebelli addresses the 3rd day of the 3rd edition of the Sobh International Media Festival at the IRIB’s International Conference Center in the Iranian capital Tehran, on May 5, 2025.

● PRESS TV

arts, music videos, short films, documentaries, and animated shorts for the Palestine section.

It, as well, welcomed entries comprising social media output, radio programs, podcasts, written content, motion graphics, news reports, documentaries, and television programs for its main section.

The festival has addressed critical topics in four specialized sessions, including developments in the West Asia region after the Al-Aqsa Operation Storm, a historical resistance operation against the occupied Palestinian territories that took place in October 2023.

The third edition of the festival accepted entries from January 5 until February 3.

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