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8 >



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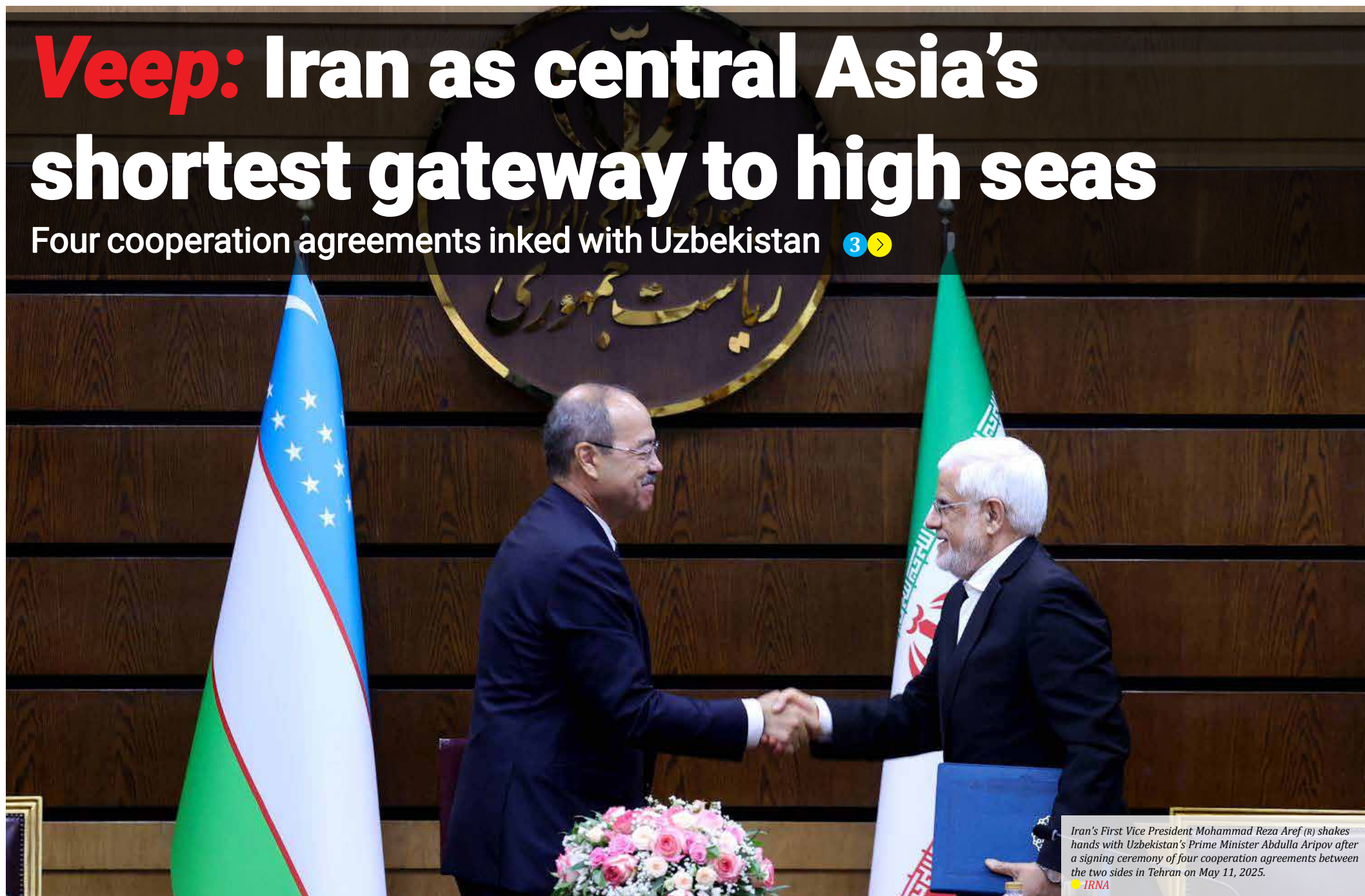
| IranDailyWeb

Iran, US attenuate disparities, agree on sanctions removal: *Araghchi*

2 >

Veep: Iran as central Asia's shortest gateway to high seas

Four cooperation agreements inked with Uzbekistan 3 >



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (R) shakes hands with Uzbekistan's Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov after a signing ceremony of four cooperation agreements between the two sides in Tehran on May 11, 2025.

IRNA



Tehran's Bagh-e Irani;
a living heritage of
nature, architecture

7 >



**'Utterly absurd':
Iran rejects report of
sending missile
launchers to Russia**

2 >



**15 new petchem
projects to come into
service this year: NPC**

3 >



**AVC Men's Champions
League:
Foolad Sirjan labors
to victory in opener**

6 >



**Tehran International Book Fair
Books to lead Iran-Turkey
cultural year planned for 2025**

**INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE**

8 >

Iran, US attenuate disparities, agree on sanctions removal: *Araghchi*

International Desk

Iran and the United States wrapped up the fourth round of nuclear talks in Oman on Sunday with the Iranian top diplomat saying both sides managed to narrow their differences.

Shortly after the end of the negotiations, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in an interview with state TV that Tehran and Washington have narrowed their differences and at the very least, the two sides reached a better understanding of each other's positions. Araghchi described the latest round of negotiations as "more serious" and "more detailed" than previous meetings, adding that "more detailed issues" were discussed and that the negotiations were "moving forward."

Before the Sunday talks, the US officials, including Washington's chief negotiator Steve Witkoff have called Iran's uranium enrichment a red line for the US. Witkoff said in a Friday interview that Iran's "enrichment facilities have to be dismantled."

"That's our red line. No enrichment," he

told US right-wing outlet Breitbart News, after initially suggesting flexibility on Tehran maintaining low-level enrichment of uranium for civilian purposes. The top Iranian diplomat on Sunday reaffirmed that the issue of uranium enrichment is absolutely non-negotiable. But he said that Iran may be open to limit the extent, level, or capacity of enrichment for the purpose of confidence-building over a specified period, similar to what has been experienced in the past.

Araghchi, who leads the Iranian delegation in the negotiations with the US, added that the primary objective of the negotiations is to get the sanctions lifted, and the issue has always been – and remains – one of the fundamental pillars of the talks.

"Fortunately, this matter has also been agreed upon by both sides," he said. Araghchi stressed that Iran's positions are completely transparent and have been made clear to the other side.

"I hope that as we move forward, we will witness further progress in the negotiation process."

This was the fourth round of talks that began nearly a month ago, marking the highest-level contact between the two countries since Washington withdrew in 2018 from a landmark nuclear deal, during President Donald Trump's first term.

Both sides had reported progress in the previous three rounds, and on Sunday Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei said the meeting was "difficult but useful" while a senior US official said Washington was "encouraged." In a post on X, Baqaei said the talks could help "better understand each other's positions and to find reasonable and realistic ways to address the differences."

The US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Washington was "encouraged by today's outcome and look forward to our next meeting, which will happen in the near future," without specifying when.

"Agreement was reached to move forward" and "continue working through technical elements," the US official added.

Oman's top diplomat said talks included



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) arrives in Oman's capital Muscat for the fourth round of nuclear talks with the United States on May 11, 2025.
mfa.gov.ir

"useful and original ideas" that reflected a shared desire to reach a deal between the two countries.

"We completed another round of talks between Iran and the United States in Muscat today. The discussions included useful and original ideas reflecting a shared wish to reach an honorable

agreement. The 5th round of talks will take place once both parties... consult their leaderships," Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi said in a post on X. The fourth round that took place on Sunday was initially scheduled for May 3 but has been delayed, with mediator Oman citing "logistical reasons."

Iran's FM: Tehran ready to turn page in ties with Europe

International Desk

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran is ready to turn the page in its relations with Europe despite political tensions between the two sides.

"Despite tensions, the history between Iran and Europe remains rich. Cultural, academic, and economic ties – spanning energy, technology, the automotive sector, and environmental cooperation—have long proven fruitful," Araghchi said in comments published by French weekly Le Point.

Following the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, relations between Iran and Europe began to deteriorate due to the Europe's failure to fulfill its commitments under the agreement and opted to follow in the footsteps of the US. The relations have also worsened over numerous issues including Iran's relations with Russia. "When former US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – a nuclear agreement signed by Iran and six world powers including Britain, France, and Germany – the moment called

for European resolve. Then-French finance minister Bruno Le Maire declared that Europe would not be a "vassal" of Washington. Yet in practice, the E3 (Britain, France, and Germany) failed to deliver. Promised economic benefits under the JCPOA never materialized, as European firms opted to comply with US sanctions rather than uphold their governments' commitment," Araghchi said.

Referring to Europe's recent threat of triggering the JCPOA snapback mechanism which he said had designed as a last-resort dispute tool and now wielded as diplomatic leverage, Araghchi said, "This strategy of confrontation risks provoking a global nuclear proliferation crisis that would primarily affect Europeans themselves."

Back in April, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said that France, along with Germany and Britain, "will not hesitate for a single second to reapply all the sanctions" scrapped a decade ago if European security is threatened by Iran's nuclear activities.

The Iranian foreign minister said despite the E3's confrontational posture toward Iran, he has extend-

ed multiple invitations to restart meaningful dialogue with Europe not just on the nuclear issue, but across all areas of mutual concern. But he said "the overtures were met with silence. Still, I remain committed to diplomacy."

"This approach has not only damaged state-level relations but also had real humanitarian consequences. For example, last year's EU ban on Iran's national airline – based on missile export allegations later denied by senior Ukrainian officials – severely limited access to life-saving medicines, including cancer treatments," the top diplomat said. Araghchi said he has expressed his readiness to visit Paris, Berlin, and London to begin a new chapter. "This initiative has led to preliminary discussions at the deputy foreign minister level—a fragile but promising beginning. But time is running out," the Iranian foreign minister added.

"How we respond at this pivotal moment will define the future of Iran-Europe relations far more profoundly than many may anticipate. Iran stands ready to turn the page. We hope our European partners are, too."

Putin offers direct talks with Ukraine 'without preconditions'



Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed restarting direct talks with Ukraine in Istanbul on May 15, "without preconditions," an offer that came in response to Ukraine and its allies urging Moscow to commit to an unconditional 30-day cease-fire or face additional sanctions. Putin referenced the unsuccessful 2022 peace talks that took place in Istanbul in March, shortly after Moscow's full-scale invasion, and proposed "restarting" them without preconditions in remarks to reporters in the early hours of Sunday. "We are committed to serious negotiations with Ukraine," Putin said, adding that he doesn't rule out agreeing to a cease-fire later, in the course of direct talks with Ukraine.

Putin's proposal came after leaders from four major European countries threatened to ratchet up pressure on Moscow if it does not accept an unconditional 30-day cease-fire in Ukraine that they offered on Saturday in a strong show of unity with Kiev.

The leaders of France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Poland said their pro-

posal for a cease-fire to start on Monday was supported by US President Donald Trump, whom they had briefed over the phone earlier in the day.

Trump has called for Ukraine and Russia to meet for "very high-level talks," saying they are "very close to a deal" on ending the bloody three-year war.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has previously said he was ready for peace talks, but only after a cease-fire is in place.

Putin said that Russia proposed several cease-fires in recent months — a halt on strikes on energy infrastructure, which Ukraine had agreed to, a unilateral 30-hour Easter truce and another unilateral cease-fire on May 8-10 that has since expired.

Ukrainian officials said Russia repeatedly violated all of those.

Putin on Sunday accused Ukraine of sabotaging "these initiatives time and time again" and launching multiple attacks on Russia.

In March, the United States proposed an immediate, limited 30-day truce, which Ukraine accepted, but the Kremlin has held out for terms more to its liking.

Putin on Sunday once again said the Kremlin needs a truce that would lead to a "lasting peace" instead of one that would allow Ukraine to rearm and mobilize more men into its armed forces.

He said he would speak to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and ask him to facilitate the peace talks on May 15.

'Utterly absurd': Iran rejects report of sending missile launchers to Russia



International Desk

Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations categorically rejected accusations that the Islamic Republic is preparing to supply launchers for short-range ballistic missiles to Russia. Citing two supply launchers for short-range ballistic missiles to Russia, Reuters reported that Iran was pre-

paring to deliver Fath-360 launchers to Russia, which would give Moscow additional firepower in the war with Ukraine, Press TV reported.

The missiles have a range of 75 miles (120 km) and could be used to target Ukrainian frontline positions, nearby military facilities, and population centers close to Russia's border, Reuters said. Iran's mission said the allegation was "utterly absurd."

"We regret that Reuters persists in its habit of circulating baseless allegations against the Islamic Republic of Iran," it said in a statement.

"So long as conflict persists between the parties, Iran will abstain from rendering any form of military assistance to either side," it added.

The United States previously accused Iran of sending Fath-360 missiles to Russia last September on nine Rus-

sian-flagged ships. But reports at the time suggested the missile launchers had not been included in the shipment.

The Western security officials and the regional source, speaking anonymously to Reuters, alleged that the delivery of the launchers was imminent but declined to provide further details, including reasons for the apparent delay in their initial transfer.

Faced with similar accusations in the past, Iran's mission to the UN clarified in September that the Islamic Republic regarded as inhumane any military assistance to parties of the Ukraine conflict that would increase damage to lives and infrastructure.

Iran has said that the United States and its European allies have prolonged the war by sending advanced weapons to Ukraine.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Veep: Iran as central Asia’s shortest gateway to high seas

Four cooperation agreements inked with Uzbekistan

Economy Desk

Iran’s Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref placed a premium on the country’s pivotal role as the “shortest route connecting Central Asian states to international waters and the Persian Gulf” during a Sunday meeting with Uzbekistan’s Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov. Aref, as reported by IRNA, affirmed Iran’s readiness to facilitate Uzbekistan’s access to its ports, stating, “Infrastructure and logistical facilities at Iranian ports are ready, and Iran is prepared to provide necessary arrangements for Uzbekistan’s presence in these ports.” The vice president highlighted the Tehran-Tashkent agreements to elevate bilateral cooperation, stressing, “With the serious resolve of the presidents of Iran and Uzbekistan, cooperation between the two countries has seen a significant expansion during the current government compared to previous periods.” In the presence of Aref and Uzbekistan’s prime minister, four

cooperation documents were also signed, ISNA reported. Strengthening joint collaboration across sectors, revitalizing bilateral ties, and enhancing cooperation in political, economic, and cultural fields were among the key topics discussed during the high-level talks. During the meeting of the Iran-Uzbekistan high-ranking delegations, Aref emphasized, “Both nations possess the necessary will to elevate their relations. The [Iranian] government is determined to advance ties with Uzbekistan in all areas.” He noted that the 16th Joint Cooperation Commission, held alongside the Uzbek prime minister’s visit, lays the groundwork for further prosperity in bilateral relations. “We expect these collaborations to deepen and expand across all fields,” he added. Aref underscored that increasing the volume of exchanges is an actionable goal for Iran, “We hope to achieve this objective swiftly. To this end, mutual understanding of each other’s capabilities is essential, and expert-level ex-

changes — particularly between private-sector actors — must intensify.” Referring to the government’s policy of expanding relations with neighboring and regional states, Aref remarked, “Given the two nations’ understanding of each other’s economies, they can serve as complementary partners in advancing regional economic ties.” The vice president also identified Iranian companies’ readiness to engage in technical and engineering services, exports of agricultural products and equipment, mining, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and historical monument restoration as key areas for cooperation in Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan’s ‘reliable partner in region’

Aripov, who arrived in Tehran earlier on Sunday at the head of a high-level delegation, described the meetings between senior officials as a catalyst for boosting economic and trade interactions, which he said should extend to other sectors.



Iran’s First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (R) and Uzbekistan’s Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov (L) attend the signing of one of four cooperation agreements in Tehran on May 11, 2025. ● IRNA

Noting the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Iran and Uzbekistan, he emphasized, “The Islamic Republic of Iran is Uzbekistan’s close friend

and reliable partner in the region.” Addressing the \$500 million volume of bilateral trade, Aripov stressed that expanding coopera-

tion must be “future-oriented and based on long-term planning.” “The private sectors of Iran and Uzbekistan should fully leverage existing opportunities,” he added.

15 new petchem projects to come into service this year: NPC



Economy Desk

The CEO of Iran’s National Petrochemical Company (NPC) Hasan Abbaszadeh announced that, “15 new petrochemical projects worth \$6 billion will be commissioned this year, raising the industry’s production capacity to 107 million tons.” Speaking at a press conference on Sunday during the final day of the 29th Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining, and Petrochemical Exhibition, Abbaszadeh was reported by IRNA as saying, “The launch of new petrochemical projects will add a total of 8 million tons to the industry’s current capacity.” Stressing that the current petrochemical production capacity stands at 97 million tons, he said, “Under the Seventh Development Plan, this figure must reach 131 million tons by the plan’s end. Last year, 42 million tons of final petrochemical products — excluding inter-complex feedstock — valued at \$24 billion were produced,

with 29 million tons (worth \$13 billion) exported.” Abbaszadeh added that, “13 million tons of petrochemical products, valued at \$11 billion, were sold domestically last year. The petrochemical industry is prepared to attract domestic and foreign investments.”

900 mcm surge in gas feedstock

The deputy oil minister highlighted that “alongside 15 petrochemical projects, four feedstock supply projects will also be inaugurated this year.” Abbaszadeh listed the Bid Boland Refinery’s feedstock supply as among the projects to be operationalized this year. “The four feedstock projects launching this year represent a \$4 billion investment. Through flare gas collection and NGL 3100 operations, 900 million cubic meters of gas per day and 850 barrels of condensates per day will be returned to the industry as feedstock,” he stated.

Expanding exports to neighbors

Abbaszadeh stressed that, “In addition to African nations, the president (Masoud Pezeshkian) has emphasized expanding exports to neighboring countries, including Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey.” He added, “These countries are prioritized in marketing plans, and relevant documentation is being prepared for submission to the presidential office to leverage these opportunities during government officials’ foreign visits.” Stressing positive measures to attract do-

mestic and foreign investors, the deputy oil minister said, “Constructive negotiations were held with foreign companies at this exhibition, and they have expressed readiness to invest.”

\$70m catalyst exports to Russia

Addressing recent trade efforts with Russia, Abbaszadeh underscored “efforts to remove barriers to commercial cooperation,” stating, “Establishing a North-South corridor is the key focus for expanding Iran-Russia collaboration, as most Iranian petrochemical plants are located in the south.” “Iranian companies have made significant strides in producing and exporting catalysts in recent years, with annual exports to Russia reaching approximately \$70 million. Advancements in manufacturing diverse catalysts for various industries are a strength of Iran’s petrochemical sector, and further growth is expected with expanded free trade.”

Boosting knowledge-based firms

Abbaszadeh also emphasized the importance of developing domestic production and supporting knowledge-based companies in the petrochemical industry. “The petrochemical industry’s \$2 billion import market offers major opportunities for knowledge-based firms. A platform has been created to showcase these companies based on their capabilities, with a target to increase domestic manufacturing from the current 70% to 75-80% by the end of the Seventh Development Plan,” he said.

Tehran, Doha discuss bolstering customs cooperation

Economy Desk

The executive director of Qatar’s General Authority of Customs met with the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) and other senior customs officials in Tehran on Sunday to discuss enhancing joint cooperation and exchanging expertise in trade facilitation and development. During the meeting, the customs officials from both countries reviewed strategies to expand customs collaboration, IRNA reported.

According to the report, Foroud Asgari, the IRICA head, highlighted the friendly relations between the two neighboring countries, describing the visit of the Chairman of the General Authority of Customs Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Jamal at the head of a delegation as “highly significant.” At the outset of the meeting, the Iranian deputy minister of economy outlined the operational procedures of Iran’s customs facilities for the Qatari delegation. “All procedural formalities in Iran’s customs are conducted through electronic systems,” he stated. Al-Jamal commended the digita-



lization of Iran’s customs operations and expressed his country’s interest in strengthening relations with Iran. He described the “upstream policies at political and diplomatic levels” as a valuable opportunity to advance customs cooperation. During the talks, the Qatari delegation raised questions about risk management practices in Iran’s customs, prompting the IRICA chief to elaborate on the country’s risk management framework. Asgari also requested that Qatari authorities expedite the clearance of Iranian shipments, particularly perishable goods, at the port of Al Ruwais, while reaffirming Iran Customs’ readiness to collaborate on resolving potential challenges. The meeting aimed to develop joint cooperation and share expertise in trade facilitation, combating smuggling and customs violations, securely exchanging electronic customs data, and organizing joint training programs.

5G mobile Internet to launch countrywide by year end: Minister



Economy Desk

Iran’s Minister of Communications

and Information Technology Sattar Hashemi announced that “5G mobile Internet will be activated in Iran by the end of this Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2025), prioritizing metropolises.” “The issue of finalizing the frequency auction for the 3,600 and 3,700 MHz bands — allocated for 5G — will be resolved this week,” Hashemi addressed reporters on Sunday

during a visit to the 36th Tehran International Book Exhibition. The minister referred to the activation of 5G technology on Samsung phones, “One of the topics pursued under technology diplomacy was enabling 5G connectivity for Samsung devices. Through the invitation of the South Korean ambassador, negotiations, and commitments obtained from him — along with

the ambassador’s follow-ups — the activation of 5G Internet on Samsung phones is currently underway.” He added, “Alongside this, we are advancing the development of 5G infrastructure nationwide. The frequency auction for the 3,600 and 3,700 MHz bands, designated for 5G, will be finalized this week. We hope to launch 5G mobile networks

this year, prioritizing metropolises.” Regarding the use of virtual platforms by visitors at the book exhibition, Hashemi emphasized, “Most activities in this area are led by private-sector operators. Applications have naturally evolved through mutual collaboration, helping visitors explore books aligned with their interests at various exhibition booths.”

Genocide continues in Gaza



A charity kitchen in Jabaliya in northern Gaza in April 2025 feeds people waiting with pots.
 ● SAHER ALGHORRA/THE NEW YORK TIMES



Amnesty International and other human rights bodies have repeatedly warned that the continuation of current policies will drive Gaza to the brink of total destruction. Yet, proposals like the US plan for Gaza's temporary administration show that Western powers are not genuinely interested in solving the crisis but rather in using it to further their own geopolitical interests.

PERSPECTIVE

Amnesty International has emphasized that any forced displacement of Gaza's residents, particularly in the south, amounts to a war crime. The organization has also brought to light Israel's plans to maintain a permanent grip on Gaza, pushing out the majority of its population for an indefinite period. These allegations paint a grim picture of the Israeli strategy — a policy that appears not only aimed at cracking down on Palestinian resistance, but also at changing the demographic make-up and carrying out ethnic cleansing in the region.

One of the most shocking aspects of the current Gaza crisis is Israel's use of the blockade as a tool to ratchet up the pressure on the population. Amnesty International's report points out that Israel's ongoing prevention of food, medicine, and fuel from entering Gaza for over two months is not only a blatant breach of international law but also constitutes "collective punishment". This policy, acting as a weapon of war, has put the lives of more than two million Palestinians on the line. World Health Organization data shows that over 60% of Gaza's hospitals have shut down due to shortages of fuel and medical supplies, leaving patients — especially children and the elderly — in dire straits.

Field reports from Gaza reveal that families are struggling to get by, even when it comes to basic necessities such as drinking water and bread. In these circumstances, Israel's control over the distribution of humanitarian aid has turned this aid into a bargaining chip for advancing military objectives. According to Amnesty, Israel's plans to militarize humanitarian assistance not only hold up the delivery of aid to those in

need but also fan the flames of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This situation raises serious questions about the responsibility of the international community. Why have international bodies, despite clear evidence of human rights violations, failed to step in and bring an end to the blockade of Gaza?

West, its double standards

The role of Western countries, especially the US and UK, in keeping the Gaza crisis going is one of the most contentious issues at play. A recent Al Jazeera report on the shipment of over 8,600 arms consignments from the UK to Israel — even after the official announcement of a halt to military exports — lays bare the depth of double standards in the foreign policy of this state. These shipments, which include bombs, missiles, and F-35 fighter jet parts, have, according to human rights organizations, been used directly in attacks against Gaza's civil-

ians. The exposure of this issue has sparked outrage among the British public and put the government in the hot seat both at home and abroad.

John McDonnell, a Labour Party leader, called out the British government for deceiving Parliament and the public, which is just one part of the backlash to this scandal. Analysts believe that this policy double-dealing stems from the UK's strategic commitments to Israel and the pressure of pro-Israel lobbies in London. At the same time, this episode has once again laid bare that Western claims of supporting human rights and international law often ring hollow. According to The Guardian, human rights organizations in Britain have demanded that the government not only cut off arms shipments to Israel but also take a firm stand against violations of international law by the Israeli regime.

Meanwhile, a possible US plan for the temporary administration of Gaza, report-

ed by Reuters, has set off alarm bells about Washington's intentions in the region. The plan, which is being compared to the temporary administration of Iraq in 2003, could mean the continued occupation of Gaza under the guise of reconstruction. Sources familiar with the matter told Reuters that high-level consultations between American and Israeli officials are underway, and an American official may be appointed as the head of Gaza's transitional administration. This idea, still in its early stages, has come under fire from Palestinian groups and even some Western analysts, who argue that such a plan would not only fail to resolve the crisis but could ratchet up tensions and undermine Palestinian self-determination.

Future of Gaza

The Gaza crisis has turned into more than just a military conflict; it has become a

battleground of wills: on one side, Palestinian resistance standing up to occupation and blockade, and on the other, Israel and its Western backers pulling out all the stops to impose their will on the territory. Contradictory statements about prisoners, human rights allegations against Israel, and the role of Western countries in propping up Israel militarily and politically all underscore the depth of the catastrophe Gaza is grappling with.

What is most alarming is the relative silence of the international community in the face of reported crimes and the lack of concrete action to break the cycle of violence. Amnesty International and other human rights bodies have repeatedly warned that the continuation of current policies will drive Gaza to the brink of total destruction. Yet, proposals like the US plan for Gaza's temporary administration show that Western powers are not genuinely interested in solving the crisis but rather in using it to further their own geopolitical interests.

Today, Gaza is under threat not only from bombs and missiles, but also from blockade, starvation, and colonial schemes. However, the territory's history has shown that Palestinian resistance, even in the darkest moments, has always found a way to hold out. The key question remains: Can the international community and global institutions step up to the plate and play an effective role in stopping this human tragedy, or will Gaza remain caught in the crossfire of double standards and the interests of major powers?

The article first appeared in Persian on YJC.



Aid trucks line up at the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza on March 2, 2025.
 ● AP

‘He kind of got bored’

How Trump’s hopes of Gaza peace fade away



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) talks to US President Donald Trump during a meeting in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington on April 7, 2025.
● KEVIN DIETSCH/GETTY IMAGES



“In the beginning of the administration, all the promise was on Gaza,” said Ilan Goldenberg, a Middle East specialist in the Obama and Biden administrations. “But when the cease-fire fell apart, Trump basically gave the Israelis the green light to do whatever they wanted.”


By Michael Crowley
Journalist
PERSPECTIVE

When President Trump hosted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel at the White House in early April, a reporter reminded Trump that his 2024 campaign promise to end the war in Gaza remained unfulfilled. Israel had recently broken a tenuous cease-fire in its 18-month war with Hamas and renewed its bombardment of Gaza. But Trump professed optimism. “I’d like to see the war stop,” he replied. “And I think the war will stop at some point that won’t be in the too-distant future.” One month later, prospects for peace in Gaza have dimmed even further. Netanyahu warned on Monday of an “intensive” Israeli escalation in the Palestinian enclave after his security cabinet approved plans to call up tens of thousands of reservists for a fresh assault there. Israeli hawks insist that only force can pressure Hamas into finally releasing the more than 20 captives it still holds captive and end the conflict. But many analysts say a major Israeli escalation could kill any hope left for peace. The question now is how Trump will react. Analysts said that, after an early flurry of diplomacy to free the captives and reach a long-term settlement, Trump and his senior officials have grown distracted from the conflict. That has amounted to something of a free hand for Netanyahu, who appears prepared to use it. “In the beginning of the administration, all the promise was on Gaza,” said Ilan Goldenberg, a Middle East specialist in the Obama and Biden administrations. “But when the cease-fire fell apart, Trump basically gave

the Israelis the green light to do whatever they wanted.” “My sense is he’s not that involved,” added Goldenberg, who is now a senior vice president at J Street, a center-left Jewish political advocacy group. “He kind of got bored.” Trump plans to travel to the Middle East next week, with stops in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. A violent escalation in Gaza would be frustrating for Trump, a stark reminder that he has failed to deliver the peace he promised. Yet, it is possible that Trump has lost patience and welcomes talk in Israel of inflicting a final, crushing blow against Hamas in what Netanyahu said his military officials told him would be “the concluding moves” of the war. Trump may also have a high tolerance for Israel’s use of heavy force. He has warned Hamas that “all hell” will break loose if the group does not re-

lease the remaining captives. Michael Makovsky, the president and chief executive of the hawkish Jewish Institute for National Security of America, agreed that Trump was less engaged with Israel on the subject of Gaza than the Biden administration was. President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and his top officials spent a vast amount of time after the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks trying to manage Israel’s Gaza campaign. Their goal was to limit civilian suffering in Gaza and save Israel from international condemnation, even if critics called them far too tolerant of Israel’s use of force. Trump has shown flashes of concern for Gaza’s population, and said on Monday that he would help Gazans “get some food” amid an Israeli blockade. But his attention to the conflict has been sporadic. “It’s like night and day with the Biden administration, which was trying to micromanage Israel’s operations,” Makovsky said.

Israeli officials are not “getting phone calls,” he said. “I don’t think they’re being pressed about how many aid trucks are coming in.” Axios reported on Monday that Israel would launch a new ground operation in Gaza if a deal with Hamas was not reached by the time Trump returned from his trip to the region. Makovsky, who recently attended meetings with senior Israeli officials, said that the report matched his understanding. When it comes to the Middle East, he added, Trump has been more focused on nascent diplomacy aimed at stopping Iran from developing a nuclear bomb. In a statement on Monday, Brian Hughes, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said that Trump “remains committed to securing the immediate release” of captives and “an end to Hamas rule in Gaza”. He added that “Hamas bears sole respon-

sibility for this conflict and for the resumption of hostilities.” One sign of the shifting focus is the portfolio of Trump’s special envoy for the Middle East, Steve Witkoff. In the early days of Trump’s presidency, Witkoff threw himself into Israel-Hamas diplomacy in pursuit of extending a temporary cease-fire agreement reached on January 15. But Witkoff has since become a kind of roving super envoy who juggles many missions. The former real estate developer and longtime Trump friend has also taken on the Iran file and met with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia four times to discuss Ukraine. There is little to suggest that Secretary of State Marco Rubio has stepped in. Rubio, whom Trump last week also gave the job of national security adviser, has yet to visit Israel.

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



Islam Abu Sahloul (c) mourns the death of her sister Lamia, 32, who was killed when an Israeli army strike hit a house, killing at least five people, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on May 1, 2025.
● ABDEL KAREEM HANA/AP

AVC Men's Champions League:

Foolad Sirjan labors to victory in opener

Sports Desk

Foolad Sirjan got off to a shaky start at the inaugural AVC Men's Champions League, edging out Thailand's Nakhon Ratchasima Qmin in a thrilling five-setter (25-17, 22-25, 25-17, 19-25, 15-11) at Osaka's Panasonic Arena in Japan on Sunday. Outside-hitter Amirhossein Esfandiar contributed with a game-high 25 points, including three aces and one block, while opposite-spiker Ali Hajipour chipped in 24 for the newly-crowned Iranian champion. Tamiraa Khangal led the scoring for the Thai club with 21 points. All eyes, however, were on French star Earvin Ngapeth – an MVP during the Olympic gold-winning campaign on home soil last year – who finished with 10 points. "It was the first game of the competition, so, very important to win. It was not easy due to the timing. Playing at 10am is not easy for us, but although we won in five sets, it's

still important. Our next match remains the same as we have to play at 10am again. However, we have to win," Ngapeth said after the match. Foolad showcased its depth and resilience in the opening set, with Ngapeth and Cuban middle-blocker Javier Concepción delivering an all-around masterclass. The Frenchman displayed his vast experience, leaving Nakhon Ratchasima flat-footed by his powerful spikes and delicate dropshots. The prolific Concepción, meanwhile, further bolstered the Iranian side with solid blocks and swift attacks, making the team look nearly uncatchable. Nakhon Ratchasima tried to fight back with intensity, as left-handed Amorntep Khonhan launched attacks from both the flank and backline, but the Iranian defense remained impenetrable. Nakhon Ratchasima improved significantly in a gritty second set, especially in floor coverage. Anurak Phanram was brought in



Foolad Sirjan's Mohammad Valizadeh (27) goes up for a spike during a 3-2 victory over Nakhon Ratchasima at the AVC Men's Champions League in Osaka, Japan, on May 11, 2025.

● AVC

Asian champion with sharp receptions and solid blocks. Lightning-fast attacks from Kissada Nilsawai and Azizbek, combined with powerful spikes from Khangal and Doni, proved to be key assets for the Thai side. Hajipour and Esfandiar launched aggressive attacks from both flanks to help Behrouz Ataei's side recover from a shaky start, but Nakhon Ratchasima maintained its momentum to force the contest into the decider. The fifth set saw both teams battle fiercely, with Foolad surging ahead, and despite Nakhon Ratchasima's determined efforts to close the gap, the comeback ultimately fell short. Foolad Sirjan will wrap up its Pool C campaign against the Chinese Taipei's Tai-chung Bank on Tuesday morning.

to reinforce the team. The Thais read the Iranian plays smartly, dug deep, and blocked relentlessly to break through with precise spikes. Foolad struggled to contain Khangal's powerful attacks

and the superb blocking of Uzbek Azizbek Kuchkorov and Indonesian Doni Haryono. Foolad still managed to mount a successful comeback in the third set, led by Esfandiar, Hajipour,

and Concepción, with the former unleashing a series of explosive spikes and effective blocks to disrupt the Thai defense. Though Khangal and Doni continued to lead Nakhon Ratchasima's offense with

strong performances, they ultimately found the Iranians too formidable to overcome. Nakhon Ratchasima delivered a well-structured performance in the fourth set, dominating the two-time

AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup:

Iran shares the spoils with Vietnam, lands Chinese Taipei in last eight

Sports Desk

Iran and Vietnam played to a goalless draw on the final day of the group phase at the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup in Hohhot, China. The stalemate saw the two sides finish their group campaign with seven points, with Iran finishing

runner-up to Vietnam in the table on goal difference. Next for Iran, which had beaten Philippines (1-0) and Hong Kong (3-1) earlier in Hohhot, is a quarterfinal game against the Chinese Taipei, which finished second to the host in Group A. The result also ended Iran's remarkable winning streak

in the tournament, after the two-time champion had won every one of its 12 games over three editions. Iran saw plenty of the ball in the first half but never really troubled the opponent, apart from a Sara Shirbeigi effort that was well saved by Tran Thi Hai Yen. Iran took its foot off the

pedal after the break, but Vietnam could not take advantage. Tran Thi Thu Xuan came close with a strike from an impossible angle, which was deflected away by Iranian keeper Farzaneh Tavasoli. Then, with two minutes left, Bui Thi Trang dragged a low shot wide of the left post.



● AFC

Esteghlal eyeing Seedorf for sporting director role: Report

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Esteghlal is in talks with former Dutch international Clarence Seedorf regarding the sporting director job at the Iranian top-flight side, according to media reports in the country. Widely regarded as one of the finest midfielders in the recent history of the game, Seedorf, 49, won numerous major trophies during an illustrious club career, including four UEFA Champions

League titles with Ajax, Real Madrid, and Milan. However, the Dutchman has had little success as a coach following his retirement in 2014. His most recent job came with Cameroon during the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations in Egypt, where the Indomitable Lions were knocked out by Nigeria in the round of 16.

Capped on 87 occasions by the Dutch national team, Seedorf currently serves on the supervisory board of the Oranje.

Should the deal – reportedly worth \$250,000 per year – go through, Seedorf will oversee all football operations at Esteghlal, including the appointment of a new head coach and player recruitment for the start of next season, which could mark a new era in the club's management. Lack of technical stability has cost Esteghlal dearly in a dreadful league campaign, with six different coaches in charge of the Blues bench during a nine-month period. A four-time champion since the introduction of the Iranian Pro League in 2001, Esteghlal is eighth in the 16-team top-flight table with one game to play – courtesy of seven wins and nine defeats in 29 outings. The Tehran Blues still aim to finish the season with silverware, as they will face second-tier club San'at Naft Abadan in the last-four round of the Hazfi Cup – the domestic cup competition – at home on May 24, with the winner taking on Golgozar Sirjan or Malavan in the final showpiece five days later.



● FABRIZIO CARABELLI/GETTY IMAGES

Asian Canoe Sprint Championships:

Iran wins men's K2 500m gold, finishes with five medals

Sports Desk

Iran's Ali Aqamirzaei and Payman Qavidel teamed up for the men's K2 500m gold on the final day of the Asian Canoe Sprint Championships in Nanchang, China. The Iranian duo clocked 1:47.647 minutes to beat the Japanese pair to the ultimate prize on Saturday, with China's Bu Ting kai Wang Congkang,

who won the gold medal of the event at the Asian Games two years ago, settling for the bronze. This was Aqamirzaei's third medal in Nanchang. The Iranian had finished runner-up to the host's Zhang Dong – also a gold winner in the Asian Games – in the men's K1 1000m final on the preceding day, and then went on to win the bronze in the K1

500m contest. Represented by seven athletes, including three women, across the three-day event, the Iranian team finished its campaign. Mohammad-Nabi Mirzaei won a silver medal in the men's C1 1000m category after finishing the final race in 4:19.026 minutes, while Tania Kargarpour took the bronze in the women's K1 1000m final with a time of 4:29.992 minutes.



Iran's Ali Aqamirzaei (L) and Payman Qavidel are pictured ahead of the men's K2 500m final at the Asian Canoe Sprint Championships in Nanchang, China, on May 10, 2025.

● ACC

Tehran’s Bagh-e Irani; a living heritage of nature, architecture

Iranica Desk

In the bustling heart of Tehran in Deh Vanak neighborhood, there lies a hidden paradise called, the Persian Garden, known locally as the Bagh-e Irani. This enchanting oasis, with its lush greenery, colorful blossoms, and the delightful aroma of blooming flowers, offers a peaceful and captivating environment. Every corner of this garden tells a story of deep appreciation and love for nature’s timeless allure. During springtime, the garden transforms into a vibrant, shimmering jewel perched on the slopes of the Alborz Mountains. A gentle breeze from the season sweeps through the ancient trees’ branches, carrying fragrant scents of countless flowers. This season bathes the entire space in a kaleidoscope of colors — tulips, violets, daffodils, and more — each contributing to the garden’s enchanting atmosphere. Walking amid the blossoms and listening to the harmonious songs of birds revitalizes the soul, turning ordinary moments into cherished memories. With each passing season, this tiny slice of paradise celebrates life through its unique palette of colors and fragrances, capturing the hearts of all who visit with its enduring charm, IRNA wrote. As you enter the Bagh-e Irani in spring, you are immediately immersed in a riot of vibrant hues and intoxicating scents. The sight of beautiful tulips in shades of red, yellow, pink, and white is breathtakingly harmonious, creating a visual spectacle that seems almost surreal. Alongside these tulips, seasonal flowers such as violets and daffodils augment the garden’s natural beauty. The combination of these colors and aromas leaves visitors with a profound sense of wonder — an unforgettable glimpse into Persian horticultural artistry.

A cultural, historical treasure

Steeped in history and crafted with delicate care, this garden has become a unique cultural treasure. It serves as an ideal location for peaceful family gatherings — where people can sit together in silence or lively conversation, basking in the fresh air and stunning natural surroundings. Keep with us until the end to explore every corner of this fascinating space and immerse yourself fully in its beauty. This Persian Garden is nestled in a site that seems to have been part of it from time immemorial — the historic Deh Vanak neighborhood, one of Tehran’s oldest districts, which still bears traces of its past. Its main entrance is on the southern side, near the famous Jaame Mosque, but there is also an alternative entrance accessible via Sabri Street on its eastern boundary. Spanning approximately 30,000 square meters, with roughly two-thirds dedicated to verdant green space, the Bagh-e Irani is home to some ancient trees that date back as far as the Qajar era. Its architecture reflects the classic Persian garden style of that period, characterized by symmetry, water features, and elegant design elements.

Architectural significance, preservation

Recognized as one of Tehran’s most treasured parks, the garden boasts extensive operating hours. It is open to visitors from early morning at 6 a.m. until late at night, 11 p.m., making it accessible throughout the weekday and weekend. While the garden itself can be visited at any time during these hours, the libraries within the garden operate from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and are closed during holidays. Historically, Bagh-e Irani belonged to a distinguished family from the Qajar era — the family of Mirza Hassan Khan Mostowfi-ol-Mamlak, son of Mirza Yusuf Khan Mostowfi and Shakar Khanum. The Mostowfi-ol-Mamlak dynasty was a significant political family, owning vast landholdings in Deh Vanak. Their ancestor purchased these lands from Nasereddin Shah, transforming the area into a thriving settlement through the construction of qanats — ancient underground water channels that sustain the lush greenery and support the garden’s beauty. Like other famous Persian gardens such as Eram Garden in Shiraz and Shazdeh Mahan Garden in Kerman, the Deh Vanak’s garden features distinctive elements: intricately crafted brick lattice screens, towering old trees, tranquil pools, fountains, water channels, and ornate domed entrances. Its architecture and layout exemplify the classical Persian garden style, which has earned recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage site, emblematic of traditional Persian landscape architecture. This style generally falls into two categories: garden-pavilion and garden-mauso-

leum. The Deh Vanak’s garden belongs to the garden-pavilion category, historically built as a summer retreat or residence for royalty, tribal chieftains, or influential families. The design centers around a main pavilion, with all waterways, qanats, and pathways converging toward it, often situated on an elevation that grants commanding views of the entire garden. For instance, in gardens like Shazdeh Mahan, the central pavilion is built atop higher ground, emphasizing its prominence. In the Deh Vanak’s Bagh-e Irani, the pavilion resides on the northern side, designed with inspiration from traditional Persian pavilions. Its architecture highlights a substantial porch on the first floor, with walls constructed from yellow and brown bricks, blending harmoniously with the surrounding landscape. The water channels and pathways converge here, symbolizing the garden’s layout and aesthetic unity.

Libraries and key features

Within the garden premises, there are two libraries — one for men and one for women. The men’s library is integrated into the main pavilion building, while the women’s library stands in the garden’s northern section, slightly apart. Their hours are from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., in line with the garden’s operation, but both close on holidays. A must-see feature in the garden is the central arch, located in its middle. Designed inspired by traditional Iranian architecture and ancient arches, it faces the main pavilion and is situated adjacent to the main pools. This arch is a favorite spot for photography, capturing the harmonious blend of structure and natural beauty. The water features — pools and channels — are decorated with turquoise mosaic tiles, adding a touch of elegance. These channels are vital — they not only en-

hance the garden’s beauty but also help cool the air during hot months, creating a refreshing environment. The largest pool, positioned directly opposite the main pavilion, underscores the arrangement where all water flow ultimately consolidates, emphasizing the pavilion’s central role in the garden’s design. Strolling along the water channels, admiring the lush trees, fragrant flowers, and the fresh air are among the garden’s greatest pleasures. Whether alone — reading a book or listening to music — and enjoying the tranquility, or with family and friends in picnics under the pergolas and benches, the garden offers something for everyone. And don’t forget to take photos everywhere — these captures will keep your memories alive long after your visit.

Optimal visiting seasons

If experiencing the garden’s greatest beauty is your goal, spring — particularly April and May — is the ideal time to visit. This period sees the tulips in full bloom and the entire garden alive with vibrant colors and sweet smells. Thousands of visitors flock here during this period, eager to enjoy the spectacle. May, in particular, hosts the Annual Tulip Festival, which raises awareness of these native flowers — belonging to the lily family with 109 species — and celebrates their beauty. Autumn, too, offers its own unique allure, with fallen leaves in warm hues creating a picturesque landscape. Beyond tulips, this lush garden also supports a rich diversity of plants — including mulberry, jujube, sweetgum, myrtle, rose, and dogwood — adding to its botanical richness. Whether you are a plant enthusiast or simply seeking serenity amid nature’s beauty, this garden offers an immersive experience in natural harmony and cultural heritage.



● TASNIM



● IRNA



● IRNA



● TASNIM



● TASNIM



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Tehran International Book Fair

Books to lead Iran-Turkey cultural year planned for 2025

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Iran and Turkey are gearing up for a year of cultural exchange in 2025, with literature set to play a central role in the joint agenda. Speaking to Iran Daily at the Tehran International Book Fair, Nizar Kara of Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism said books and literary programs are a "significant part" of this plan. The announcement follows a bilateral agreement between Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization and Turkey's culture ministry to expand cultural ties

next year. Kara, who heads the Turkish publishing delegation, said Turkey is present at this year's fair with eight publishers, six authors, and some 1,500 titles. "We've also arranged a series of literary events," he said. He noted that eight more Turkish publishers will soon arrive in Tehran to join the fair's First Tehran Fellowship Program, which aims to foster copyright exchange and literary partnerships. "Altogether, about 20 Turkish publishers will take part." Turkish publishers, he explained, are participating under TEDA—a government initiative that supports the promotion of Turkish literature abroad. "We give Irani-

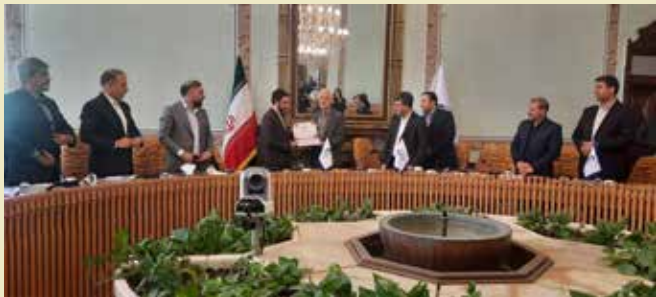
an publishers the rights to translate and publish Turkish works in Persian." Iran, in turn, has a similar project called Grant, which backs the translation and distribution of Iranian books in foreign markets. Kara said these programs could help bring more Persian literature to Turkish readers. So far, 238 Turkish titles—mostly literary and cultural—have been translated into Persian under TEDA. Kara, who also attended the fair two years ago, said this year's event is "bigger and better" than before. Asked about Turkish readers' familiarity with Persian literature, he said classical poets such as Sa'adi, Hafez, and Rumi are well

known. But awareness of contemporary authors on both sides remains low. "Through events like this, we hope to introduce modern literature from both countries." He described Rumi as a cultural link. "Although his poems are in Persian, Rumi's spiritual and literary legacy is deeply rooted in Turkish tradition." Kara noted that Rumi's tomb in Konya continues to draw visitors from Iran and across Turkey. His descendants, he added, are recognized Turkish poets who wrote in Turkish. The 36th Tehran International Book Fair opened on May 7 at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla.



Running through May 17, the event brings together more than 2,300 publishers under the theme "Let's Read for Iran."

Isfahan named Asian Capital of Urban Tourism for 2025



Isfahan Mayor Ali Ghasemzadeh (5th L) and Secretary of the Asian Mayors Forum Hamidreza Gholamzadeh (4th L), attend a ceremony announcing Isfahan as the Asian Capital of Urban Tourism for 2025, in Isfahan, Iran, May 11, 2025.

● IRIB

Arts & Culture Desk

The city of Isfahan was officially designated as the Asian Capital of Urban Tourism for 2025 by the Asian Mayors Forum (AMF),

in recognition of its rich cultural heritage, vibrant tourism offerings, and active engagement in international urban cooperation. The announcement was made during a formal ceremony held on Sunday at the historic Bagh-e

Zereshk mansion in Isfahan. The event was attended by a number of local officials, international guests, and members of the Asian Mayors Forum. The city, with its deep cultural roots, stood out for its "remarkable" heritage and international engagement, IRIB reported. Officials say the designation marks a major step forward in

connecting Isfahan to a broader Asian tourism network. Mayor Ali Ghasemzadeh highlighted the city's historic depth. Out of 24,000 hectares, 1,600 are made up of historic fabric dating back to the Buyid, Seljuk, and Safavid periods. He called it "a valuable core" that makes Isfahan a distinct destination for urban tourism. Beyond its monuments, Isfahan has hosted major cultural events such as the International Children's Film Festival and the Children's Painting Festival. These festivals, Ghasemzadeh noted, offer "strong potential" for expanding tourism outreach across Asia. The Asian Mayors Forum, which

includes over 120 member cities, spearheaded the selection. Secretary of the Asian Mayors Forum, Hamidreza Gholamzadeh, said Isfahan's focus on cultural and historical initiatives tipped the scales. "Following careful evaluations," the city was chosen for its stand-out performance, he said. Other cities also earned honors: Kerman was named cultural capital, while Antalya and Tabriz received environmental titles. Gholamzadeh praised the active cooperation between the AMF and Isfahan's municipality over the past three years, which has led to significant progress in various fields.

Tourism adviser to the Isfahan Governor, Masoud Nikaein, said the city's tourism model could "set a global example." He proposed that Isfahan host the 2025 Asian Tour Operators Summit to further boost its regional leadership. Councilman Mostafa Nabati-Nejad urged planners not to see this as a "local affair." With its new international convention center, Isfahan is poised to handle major global events. Kamal Heidari, who leads the 2025 tourism secretariat, called the announcement a "flagship" moment for the city and urged authorities to elevate it into one of Asia's top international tourism showcases.

Iran literary, artistic heritage on display in Doha

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran opened its national booth at the 34th Doha International Book Fair, joining more than 500 publishers from 43 countries at Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC). The booth, set up with support from Iran's Book House Institute and Al-Mustafa International University, offers a wide range of titles in Persian, Arabic, and English, ILNA reported. The exhibition opened on May 8 at the DECC and will continue until May 17. Visitors are introduced to Iran's "classic literature," Islamic studies, and arts through the works of poets like Hafez, Saadi, Rumi, and Ferdowsi. The event's slogan this year, "From Script to Writing,"



inspired one of the booth's standout features — a Persian calligraphy workshop. Run by master calligrapher Abbasi, the workshop gives visitors a chance to try their hand at Nasta'liq, a traditional Persian script. Alongside live demonstrations, books and guides on calligraphy are on display. A live oil painting performance by a Tehran-based artist also drew crowds, adding what one organizer

described as a "special atmosphere" to the space. Iran's cultural attaché in Qatar, Ali Bakhtiari, called the participation an important opportunity to "highlight authentic Iranian culture and art." He said the booth had seen strong interest from the public since opening day. This year's fair is the largest in its history, with 522 publishers attending. Palestinian publishers are featured as special guests.

Iranian poet Abdolmalekian wins Italy's Ceppo literary prize

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian poet Garous Abdolmalekian has taken home the 69th Ceppo international literary prize, an award recognizing excellence in poetry and fiction. The award ceremony wrapped up in the main hall of Florence's regional government building. Abdolmalekian was named this year's laureate for his "emotional sincerity" and "poetic force," according to a statement from the prize jury, IRNA reported. Each year, the Ceppo honors a poet or author whose work has been translated into Italian. Past winners include Mario Vargas Llosa, Mohamed Bennis, and Antonio Carvajal. The 2025 jury, made up of 35 Italian poets and writers, called Abdolmalekian's voice "fresh" and "deeply moving." His poetry, the statement read, begins from a "personal lens" but



stretches outward to reflect "the current conditions of Iran and the Middle East." "He writes with an aesthetic power that transforms social concerns into striking language," the panel noted, calling his work a "continuation" of Persian poetry's rich heritage. During the three-day festival, the Ceppo Academy hosted readings, talks, and discussions with Abdol-

malekian in multiple venues across Florence. A new essay by the poet, titled 'Poetry, the Shelter of the Contemporary Human,' was also launched during the event as part of a collected volume on poetry. Several of Abdolmalekian's books have been translated into Italian over the past few years by Faezeh Mardani and Francesco Occhetto.