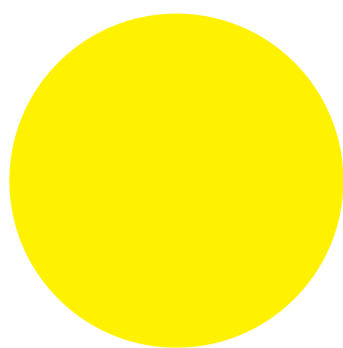


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A Palestinian woman reacts as she checks the bodies of people killed in Israeli strikes on Jabalia, at the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip on May 14, 2025.
● BASHAR TALEB/AFP

Iran, China enhance ties in AI, smart industries, comms infrastructure

Economy Desk

The communications ministers of Iran and China stressed expanding bilateral cooperation, particularly in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), industrial smart technologies, communication infrastructure, and workforce training during a meeting in Beijing. Iran's Minister of Communications and Information Technology Sattar Hashemi, who traveled to Beijing at the official invitation of Chinese counterpart Li Licheng, discussed strengthening technological collaboration between the two nations, as reported by IRNA.

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Araghchi: Trump's anti-Iran speech in Riyadh 'deceptive'

US president upbeat as talks 'going to work out'

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday rejected US president's claims about lack of progress in Iran as "deceptive," blaming Washington's decades of sanctions for Iran's economic problems. Speaking at an investment summit in the Saudi capital Riyadh on Tuesday, the US President Donald Trump contrasted Iran's economic situation with that of Saudi Arabia. "While you have been constructing the world's tallest skyscrapers in Jeddah and Dubai, Tehran's 1979 landmarks are collapsing into rubble and they had it going for a little while under a much different system but those buildings are largely falling apart" Trump claimed. "Iran's decades of neglect and mismanagement have left the country plagued by rolling blackouts lasting for hours a day ... While your skill has turned dry deserts into fertile farmland, Iran's leaders have managed to turn green farmland into dry deserts as their corrupt water mafia ... causes droughts and empty river beds." Araghchi said what Trump "stated about the desire of the countries of the region to enjoy a path of progress and prosperity is, in fact, the same path that the Iranian people chose

with their revolution and took it to have an independent, democratic, free, prosperous, and advanced country".

"It is the US that has prevented the progress of the Iranian nation through its own sanctions over the past forty-odd years, with its own pressures, and with military and civilian threats. Araghchi touched on Trump's renewed threat "to inflict massive maximum pressure" on Iran and portraying it as a "source of insecurity" in his address to the Saudi-American investment forum in Riyadh.

Reversal of source of threats

"The US president has ignored all of Israel's crimes in the region and is seeking to portray Iran as a threat; this is pure deception and a reversal of the source of threats," he said. "Who has caused this much destruction in Gaza? Which regime attacks the areas surrounding Palestine, including Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen? The extent of the occupation carried out by the Zionist regime in Syria in recent months is greater than the entire area of Gaza," Araghchi said. Trump's rhetoric came as Iran and the US have launched negotiations to settle a decades-old dispute on Iran's nuclear program.

The have held four rounds of talks

mediated by Oman.

Iran's foreign minister said the fourth round of Iran-US talks held on May 11 was "difficult" as they focused on the issue of enrichment, adding he hoped the US side would come with "more realistic positions" after gaining a better understanding of Iran's fundamental positions.

Next round of talks

A fifth round of talks is to be announced by Oman's Foreign Ministry, which has acted as a mediator since the start of the talks in April. Iran's top diplomat also explained that his recent trip to Saudi Arabia and Qatar was related to the nuclear negotiations, saying Tehran keeps its neighbors informed and seeks a regional understanding regarding a potential agreement with the US. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud said on Wednesday that Riyadh fully supports the nuclear talks and hopes for positive results. Donald Trump, who is on a four-day trip in the Persian Gulf region, voiced hope on Wednesday that diplomatic efforts for a nuclear deal with Iran would succeed, after he held talks with Qatar's emir. "I have a feeling it's going to work out," Trump said in Doha.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi talks with reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting in Tehran on May 14, 2025.
IRNA

Regional partnership to enrich uranium

Meanwhile a report by The Guardian said that Iran has floated the idea of a consortium of Middle Eastern countries – including Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – to enrich uranium, in an effort to overcome US objections to its continued enrichment program. Tehran views the proposal as a concession, since it would be giving neighboring states access to its technological knowledge and making them stakehold-

ers in the process.

The consortium idea was first proposed by former Iranian nuclear negotiator Seyed Hossein Mousavian and Princeton physicist Frank von Hippel long before the current Tehran-Washington talks, in a widely read October 2023 article in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. The US has demanded that Iran end enrichment and dismantle all its nuclear facilities.

Iran has repeatedly announced that the issue of uranium enrichment is absolutely non-negotiable.

Iran to hold talks with Europeans on Friday: *FM spox*

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Wednesday that Iran will hold a fresh round of nuclear talks with European powers in Turkey later this week. The talks with Britain, France and Germany would be held in Istanbul on Friday, Baqaei said. French diplomatic sources gave the same information, but there was still no word from Berlin or London on the meeting which was originally slated for earlier this month but postponed. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the talks would be held "at the level of deputy foreign ministers." The European nations – known as the E3 – were among the world powers that negotiated the landmark 2015 Iran nuclear deal along with China, Russia and the United States. Donald Trump, in his first term as president, effectively torpedoed

the accord in 2018 by unilaterally withdrawing the United States. Since returning to office in January, Trump has revived his "maximum pressure" campaign on Tehran, backing nuclear diplomacy but warning of military action if it fails. Iran has held several meetings on the nuclear issue with the E3 since late last year – most recently in February in Geneva – ahead of indirect negotiations with Washington that began on April 12. "While we continue the dialogue with the United States, we are also ready to talk with the Europeans," Araghchi said. "Unfortunately, the Europeans themselves have become somewhat isolated in these negotiations with their own policies," he added. "We do not want such a situation and that's why we have continued our negotiations" with them, he said. Friday's meeting will follow the latest round of Oman-mediated Iran-US talks on Sunday, which Tehran

described as "difficult but useful" while a US official said Washington was "encouraged." European governments have recently threatened to trigger the "snapback" mechanism under the 2015 deal, which would reinstate UN sanctions in response to Iranian non-compliance – an option that expires in October. 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. Iran's foreign minister in an article published by French weekly Le Point said the snapback mechanism had designed as a last-resort dispute tool and now wielded as diplomatic leverage. "This strategy of confrontation risks provoking a global nuclear proliferation crisis that would primarily affect Europeans themselves," Araghchi warned the European countries.

Israeli airstrikes kill 80 people in Gaza

International Desk

Israeli airstrikes pounded northern and southern Gaza on Wednesday, killing at least 80 people, including almost two dozen children a day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said there was "no way" he would halt Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territory before Hamas is defeated. Nearly 60 people, including 22 children, were killed in strikes around Jabaliya in northern Gaza alone, according to hospitals and Gaza's Health Ministry. Israel's military refused to comment on the strikes. It warned Jabaliya residents to evacuate late Tuesday, claiming militant infrastructure in the area, including rocket launchers. In comments released by Netanyahu's office Tuesday, the prime minister said Israeli forces were days away from a promised escalation of force and would enter Gaza "with great strength to complete the mission ... It means destroying Hamas." Israeli media reported that one target in a strike on a hospital in Khan Younis on Tuesday was Mohammed Sinwar, younger brother of the late Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, who was killed by Israeli forces last October. Mohammed Sinwar is believed to be Hamas' top military leader in Gaza. Israel has tried to assassinate him multiple times over the past

decades.

International food security experts warned earlier this week that Gaza will likely fall into famine if Israel doesn't lift its blockade and stop its military campaign. Nearly half a million Palestinians are facing possible starvation while 1 million others can barely get enough food, according to findings by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a leading international authority on the severity of hunger crises. French President Emmanuel Macron strongly denounced Netanyahu's decision to block aid as "a disgrace" that has caused a major humanitarian crisis. "I say it forcefully, what Benjamin Netanyahu's government is doing today is unacceptable," Macron said Tuesday evening on TF1 national television. "There's no medicine. We can't get the wounded out. Doctors can't get in." Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni also said Wednesday the humanitarian situation in Gaza was "ever more dramatic and unjustifiable," stressing she had repeatedly urged Israel to find a way to end the conflict. Doctors Without Borders slammed Israel Wednesday for creating a "deliberate humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza and accused it of trying to make aid conditional on forced displacement of Palestinians.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

Iran to sue Google over fake misnomer for Persian Gulf

The National Virtual Space Center will take legal action against Google and other international platforms over the distortion of the historical name of the Persian Gulf, the center's spokesman said. Hossein Dalirian said that the issue will be followed up through international legal channels, describing it as a deliberate falsification of a well-established geographical and historical fact, IRNA reported. Dalirian emphasized that "Persian Gulf" has been consistently used for thousands of years in historical doc-

uments, maps, and treaties, and recognized by authoritative institutions such as the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names under UN ECOSOC Resolution 715. He further said that Iran considers the use of fake names a violation of its national identity and a breach of Article 19(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The center will soon host a legal consultation session to assess the issue with legal experts and representatives from relevant government bodies, he added.



The move has drawn strong reactions from the Iranian public, officials and even some international figures.



Expediency Council conditionally approves Palermo bill: *Spox*

Economy Desk

The spokesperson of Iran's Expediency Council announced that the legislative body has conditionally approved Iran's accession to the Palermo Convention following three general council sessions and five joint commission meetings. In a post on his personal X account, Mohsen Dehnavi stated, "Prior to this, the Guardian Council had also approved the bill."

He added, "Iran has ratified this convention within the framework of its constitution and domestic laws." Dehnavi further noted, "Reviewing accession to the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) Convention will be on the agenda for the Expediency Council's subsequent sessions."

The Financial Action Task

Force (FATF) file has been under review in Iran's Expediency Council, and certain aspects have been approved by the relevant commissions, including Iran's Parliament.

But two conventions including the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) are on hold in the Expediency Council, which is a legislative body with supervisory powers over all branches of government. These two conventions have been under discussion in the council for six years.

On December 31, 2024, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei agreed to re-examine Iran's accession to the Palermo and CFT conventions.

Iran's accession to these two conventions remains the sole obstacle to the country's membership in the FATF. Resolving this issue would enable Iran to soon exit the FATF's "black-list," which outlines recommendations for combating financial crimes, including terrorism financing and money laundering.

With one bill now approved, the council's decision on the second bill (CFT) must be finalized to remove remaining barriers to Iran's FATF membership.

Since 2009, when Iran began preliminary steps to join FATF, its economy has endured 16 turbulent years. Even at the height of oil and banking sanctions due to non-membership, Iran incurred significant costs in financial, banking, and trade transactions.



ict.gov.ir

Iran, China enhance ...

During the meeting, Hashemi described the People's Republic of China as a "strategic partner and ally" of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Referencing the recent meeting of the two countries' presidents in Kazan, Russia, he emphasized the importance of deepening bilateral relations.

Noting the 25-year Iran-China Strategic Cooperation Agreement (signed in March, 2021), Hashemi expressed hope that "with a fresh, goal-oriented approach to these agreements, their implementation — especially in the field of information and communication technology (ICT)

— will accelerate."

The exchange of expertise in e-government and smart services, as well as educational collaboration and training specialized human resources, were additional topics raised and underscored by Iran's communications minister.

Li, for his part, highlighted the historical and friendly ties between the two nations, calling Iran "one of Beijing's key regional partners" and advocating for expanded practical cooperation in technological fields.

Pointing to Iran's vast potential in ICT, AI, and communication infrastructure, he reaffirmed China's readiness to deepen

bilateral collaboration and implement the provisions of the 25-year strategic cooperation document.

"Advancing technological cooperation will not only serve the national interests of both countries but also play a significant role in enhancing regional technological engagement," Li added.

Hashemi invited for SCO ministerial summit

During this constructive meeting, the Chinese minister invited Hashemi to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Communications Ministers' Summit in autumn.



Iran's Minister of Communications and Information Technology Sattar Hashemi (R) meets Chinese counterpart Li Licheng (2nd L) in Beijing, China on May 14, 2025.
● IRNA

The Iranian communications minister's visit to China aligns with the strategic policies of the current government to develop technology-driven relations with friendly nations under the framework of its "Technology Diplomacy" initiative.

During the trip, the minister's agenda includes delivering a speech to students at Beihang University — China's largest institution specializing in ad-



vanced technologies — meeting with senior Chinese officials, holding specialized discus-

sions with executives of major technology firms, and visiting scientific and research centers.

Deputy Minister: Pharma embodies knowledge-based economy success



Economy Desk

A senior official of Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade highlighted the pharmaceutical sector's pivotal role in advancing Iran's knowledge-based economy, saying, "Today, we are witnessing one of the successful examples of collaboration between a new generation of industrial management and professional frameworks."

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of a pharmaceutical production company in Alborz Province on Wednesday, the deputy minister of public industries at the ministry, Ebrahim Sheikh added, "This project symbolizes a proper transition from traditional family management to a capable, specialized, and forward-looking second generation — one that will secure the future of the nation's industry," IRNA reported.

Addressing infrastructure challenges facing industries, particularly in energy, Sheikh

noted, "Today, our industries face threats such as electricity shortages. I urge the Energy Ministry that, if power cuts are unavoidable, they must be implemented through meticulous planning and balanced coordination with other consumer sectors to avoid harming the industrial sector, which is the backbone of the national economy."

He further emphasized, "Under the Seventh Development Plan, we are tasked with achieving 8% growth in production and 23% growth in exports. Last year, the industrial sector saw approximately 17% export growth, reflecting serious efforts to reduce imports and boost domestic production. However, sustaining these advancements will be impossible without securing energy infrastructure and providing comprehensive support to the production sector."

The deputy minister stressed the necessity of synergy among government bodies, the private sector, and universities, saying, "The pharmaceutical industry is a strategic sector that not only safeguards public health but also plays an irreplaceable role in advancing the knowledge-based economy, creating youth employment, and strengthening national sovereignty. Comprehensive support for this sector is an undeniable imperative." Alborz Province is home to approximately 4,000 industrial and production units.

Iran oil minister rejects US max pressure as 'failed' policy

Economy Desk

In response to recent US sanctions targeting Iran's oil export network, Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad stated that the policy of "maximum pressure" is a "repetitive slogan from the US and a failed experiment."

Speaking on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting, Paknejad emphasized that "necessary plans to neutralize sanctions have been devised," adding, "Sufficient diversification in the country's crude oil sales portfolio has now been incorporated, though I will refrain from disclosing certain details here," as reported by the news service Shana.

On the Joint Economic Cooperation Commission between Iran and Russia, held in Moscow in April, Paknejad said, "A series of expert meetings took place over several days, culminating in the signing of a final document with Russia's energy minister. This document covers various sectors, paving the way for expanded Iran-Russia collaboration in oil and gas, transportation, finance, banking, trade, and other fields."

Regarding the International Oil, Gas, Refining, and Petrochemical Exhibition, the minister noted, "The unprecedented reception of this exhibition demonstrates that we can meet the needs of advancing this industry by utilizing domestic expertise."

The US Treasury Department on Tuesday imposed sanctions on more than 20 companies in a network that it claimed has long sent Iranian oil to China, Reuters reported. The sanctions came just days after negotiators from Iran and the United States concluded a fourth round of nuclear talks aimed at working out a deal that can remove US sanctions from Iran in return for curbs on Tehran's nuclear



program.

The Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said in a statement that the new sanctions target companies, buyers, and facilitators that work with Iran's Armed Forces General Staff and what it described as the force's main commercial affiliate, Sepehr Energy.

OFAC said the sanctions are the 19th such action taken by the US government against Iran since February 4, when US President Donald Trump signed a presidential memorandum ordering a campaign of 'maximum pressure' on the country.

The talks between Iran and the US began in early April under Oman's mediation. Both sides have described their indirect meetings as generally positive.

The new designations announced by OFAC included companies based in Singapore, Hong Kong, China, and Seychelles, two tankers, and an Iranian individual claimed to be a financial inspector of Sepehr Energy. The Trump administration earlier in the year had imposed sanctions on China's independent "teapot" oil refineries for processing Iranian oil. The sanctions block US assets of those designated and prevent Americans from doing business with them.

Terminology of public diplomacy

Trojan Horse of power



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) talks to the people during a visit to the shrine of Lady Masoumeh (PBUH) in Qom, central Iran, on May 5, 2025.
● [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)



In today's world, power is no longer just about technology, the economy, or military might; more than anything, it boils down to winning hearts and minds. It's about being liked by people around the globe — not making them fear you, nor merely earning their respect, but rather making them want to follow in your footsteps. This is precisely the essence and function of public diplomacy: building up a human, cultural, and inspiring image of national identity in the eyes of outsiders.

up a positive image of the country

- Musical diplomacy: expressing identity through music
- Cinema and entertainment diplomacy: film, series, video games
- 3. Exchange and people-to-people diplomacies
- Educational diplomacy: student exchange, scientific cooperation
- Exchange diplomacy: travel, festivals, workshops, events
- Sports diplomacy: global competitions, national athletes
- Urban diplomacy: city-to-city interaction
- Tourism diplomacy: attracting tourists to get across culture
- 4. Developmental and technological diplomacies
- Scientific diplomacy: research and technological collaboration
- Technological diplomacy: exporting technology, startups
- Environmental diplomacy: climate and green cooperation
- Health diplomacy: sending doctors, vaccines, and medical services
- Infrastructure diplomacy: building projects in target countries
- 5. Crisis and humanitarian diplomacies
- Humanitarian diplomacy: disaster relief, global aid
- Migration and diaspora diplomacy: engaging with Iranians abroad

Public diplomacy is not a cultural luxury; it is a security necessity. In a world where narrative trumps reality, countries cash in on storytelling and image-making to buy themselves economic clout, influence, and even peace. In this arena, if you don't get your story out, others will put their own spin on it — often with hostility and distortion. If nations want to be beloved, powerful, and secure in tomorrow's world, they must step onto the public diplomacy stage today — not just to be heard, but to make an impact. In this journey, nation-branding is a main artery: it's the story a country tells the world about itself. If told right, that story can open the door to countless opportunities.

By Mohsen Sohani
Interdisciplinary researcher

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

The land of us Iranians, with our ancient civilizations and traditions, is a cradle of wisdom and mysticism, steeped in stories and legends, renowned for its poetry and literature, and possesses millennia of experience to draw on. For this reason, the realm of public diplomacy stands out as a golden opportunity for us. But what exactly does this buzzword mean? In today's world, power is no longer just about technology, the economy, or military might; more than anything, it boils down to winning hearts and minds. It's about being liked by people around the globe — not making them fear you, nor merely earning their respect,

but rather making them want to follow in your footsteps. This is precisely the essence and function of public diplomacy: building up a human, cultural, and inspiring image of national identity in the eyes of outsiders. This is not achieved by rolling out official statements or grand speeches, but by showcasing tangible and appealing experiences — from film, cuisine, and music, to conversation, interaction, academia, media, tweets, poetry, and friendship. Ancient tales recount how the Greeks, after years of military setbacks, came up with a wooden horse, packed it with soldiers, and handed it over to Troy as a peace offering. The Trojans fell for it and brought the alluring statue inside their walls. Once night fell, the soldiers slipped out of the horse and took over the city without a fuss — a silent, yet decisive and clever as-

sault. This, in a nutshell, is what today's soft war is all about. Public diplomacy — the modern-day Trojan Horse — has turned into one of the most powerful tools for gaining influence and pulling off bloodless victories. The term was first coined in the 1960s by Edmund Gullion, a distinguished diplomat and professor at Tufts University. He realized that official diplomacy alone didn't cut it when it came to influencing other countries; one had to make use of culture, media, and communication sciences as well. In the 1990s, Joseph Nye picked up the baton and tied this idea to the concept of soft power. According to him, public diplomacy is about shaping the identity and choices of people in other countries through values and culture, not threats or force. In other words, it's a kind of

voluntary surrender and compliance. A broad classification of public diplomacy includes the following branches:

1. Cultural and identity diplomacies
 - Cultural diplomacy: art, literature, language, traditions
 - Culinary diplomacy: food, cooking, table etiquette
 - Religious diplomacy: inter-faith dialogue, spiritual coexistence
 - Memory diplomacy: leveraging history, heritage, and luminaries
 - Fashion and design diplomacy: fashion as a visual language of culture
2. Communication and media diplomacies
 - Media diplomacy: storytelling through media
 - Digital diplomacy: social networks and cyberspace
 - National branding: building



People pose for a picture next to a mural depicting Qasem Soleimani, the slain Iranian commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, in Caracas, Venezuela, on January 6, 2024.
● [AL MUSTAFA NEWS AGENCY](https://www.al-mustafa-news.com)



Iranian Culture Minister Abbas Salehi (2nd-L) and his Iraqi counterpart, Ahmed Fakak Al-Badrani (3rd-L), pose for a photo at Iraq's special pavilion at the 36th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) on May 10, 2025.
● [MEHR](https://www.mehr.ir)

Why campaigns succeed or fall flat

What brings people on board?



Children stand beside a mascot of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) as they are being introduced into a campaign to help regulate gas consumption at home, in Alborz Province, Iran.

IRNA

“

Sociologist Nader Sadeghian argued that social media can, for a time, shape public opinion and bolster a culture of criticism. However, he warned that these platforms often stir up polarization and, unless official media change tack and allow for criticism, overall trust will continue to ebb away.

act with these initiatives.”

“While authorities have tried to tap into campaigns to patch up social rifts and rally the public, opposition groups have also seized on these tools for their own ends. These opposition campaigns typically center around shared grievances or clear goals for change, which fire up motivation and visibility.”

Sarafraz added that opposition groups make the most of social media to get around the limits of official channels and get their message across to a wider audience. The appeal of protest content, international support, and media coverage, as well as a focus on government shortcomings, all help boost the visibility of opposition campaigns. In contrast, state campaigns often struggle to catch on due to public distrust, vague goals, reliance on restricted official media, and a lack of authentic engagement.

Spontaneous campaign model

Sarafraz identified a sense of urgency to solve a real problem as the core driver behind successful campaigns. She argued that people only get behind a campaign when it speaks to their concerns and needs.

She maintained that the ability to reach out to a broad audience is crucial for any campaign’s success. The message must be clear, visually engaging, and delivered on popular platforms to strike a chord with people’s daily lives and foster empathy.

Sarafraz pointed to the success of grassroots campaigns during crises as a blueprint for earning public trust in official institutions. “Such campaigns show trust is only won over when honesty, efficiency, and genuine participation are at play,” she concluded, stressing that official bodies must take a leaf out of these campaigns’ book and overhaul their own approach.

The full article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

ANALYSIS

The call for the public to cut back on water, electricity, and gas consumption has been a fixture in official media programming for years, cropping up in everything from music videos and news bulletins to children’s shows and subtle cues in TV series. Yet, a culture of responsible consumption has yet to take root in Iranian society at large.

At times, various governments have turned to the public for support, often coming up against mixed results. One of the most telling episodes unfolded when senior officials of the Hassan Rouhani government urged citizens who did not need subsidies to voluntarily opt out of receiving them. Despite the administration’s strong social capital during the fever pitch of nuclear negotiations — an era dubbed “Thank You, Rouhani” — only a small fraction went along with the request.

New wave of campaigns underway

One of the latest efforts to drum up public participation was the “Two Degrees Lower” campaign. According to IRNA, after the president, in late 2024, released a video urging everyone to turn down their heaters by two degrees as temperatures dropped — citing air pollution and its adverse effects on the society’s health — other officials, business leaders, and civil society groups quickly came on board through their own video messages or practical actions.

Shortly after, the “No to Accidents” campaign kicked off. Its impact sparked debate, but when the Nowruz travel season wrapped up in early

April 2025, the campaign’s spokesperson announced an 8.5% drop in road fatalities compared to the previous year, calling the initiative “a significant step towards cutting down on road deaths”.

Factors behind success or failure of campaigns

Iranian sociologist Nader Sadeghian stressed the need to break down the reasons for public response to campaigns. Structurally and politically, he pointed to two key factors: First, a weak culture of participation, which paves the way for widespread distrust. Second, a lack of political development directly chips away at social trust.

Looking at the long haul, Sadeghian argued that the persistence of poor structures throughout history has bred deep-seated distrust. Failing to set up real opportunities for participation leaves people feeling powerless.

On the media front, Sadeghian noted that unless state media shake up their approach and open the door to criticism and engagement, trust cannot be rebuilt. The gulf between the concerns and language of the younger generation and what official bodies put out only drives a wedge between youth and institutions.

“How authorities deal with society — how transparent, accountable, and respectful they are, and whether they make room for genuine participation — are decisive factors,” he stressed.

Role of social media, generational shifts

Sadeghian argued that social media can, for a time, shape

public opinion and bolster a culture of criticism. However, he warned that these platforms often stir up polarization and, unless official media change tack and allow for criticism, overall trust will continue to ebb away.

“The younger generation’s sources of information and reference groups stand apart from those of their elders. The lack of reflection of young people’s mindset and language in official media has widened the gap and eroded their trust” in state-led campaigns.

Campaigns at odds with civil solidarity

Social researcher Somayeh Sarafraz, offering a complementary perspective, emphasized the importance of social and media analysis in understanding the fate of state-led campaigns. She argued that modern campaigns are a relatively new phenomenon, and that social change, cultural shifts, and the role of various media outlets weigh heavily on their outcomes. “Case studies from recent decades,” she said, “shed light on how people inter-



Gazan children hold up aid food donated by millions of Iranians within a national campaign, titled “Iran Hamdel”. The campaign was launched on October 5, 2025, in response to the Iranian Leader’s call and gained unprecedented support from Iranians for the people of Gaza.

TASNIM

AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup:

Iran must raise the bar in ultimate test against Japan

Sports Desk

Iranian girls will be facing their toughest challenge yet at the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup when they take on Japan in the semifinals in Hohhot, China, today.

Far from convincing in its past four games in the tournament, the two-time defending champion will have to rise to the occasion against the Japanese if it is to reach the final and, more importantly, secure a spot in the inaugural Women's World Cup in the Philippines in November.

Having finished runner-up to Vietnam in Group B, Forouzan Soleimani's team had to work hard for a 3-1 extra-time victory over the Chinese Taipei in the quarterfinals on Tuesday.

Maral Torkaman gave Iran a second-minute lead from the spot – after Mahtab Banaei was brought down in the area by goalkeeper Chu Fang-Yi – only to see her goal canceled out by Liu Wen Ling through a well-worked kick-in routine in the 18th minute.

Iranians dug deep for a second goal after the break but their efforts were either tame or off target as the contest went into extra time.

Just when the two sides looked to be heading for the shootout, Fereshteh Khosravi restored the lead for Team Melli, before goalkeeper Farzaneh Tavassoli's smart long ball from her own area found the back of the opposition net seconds before the final buzzer as Iran set a last-four date with Japan – a repeat of the previous two final showdowns in the competition.

Just as the match seemed destined for a shootout, Iran struck twice in quick succession through Fereshteh Khosravi and goalkeeper Farzaneh Tavassoli



Iranian players celebrate after a 3-1 victory over the Chinese Taipei in the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup in Hohhot, China, on May 13, 2025.

● FFIRI

li – whose brilliant long-range lob from her own area found the back of an empty net seconds before the final buzzer – to set a last-four date with Japan, re-igniting their rivalry after two consecutive final meetings in the tournament.

"We came here to win a third successive title, but we know it won't be easy as all teams are out there to give their absolute best," Soleimani said after the hard-fought victory.

When asked about her team's chances against Japan, the Iranian head coach responded: "The winning team will be the one that is more clinical and

mentally prepared and plays with greater determination. Our players will be highly motivated as they are determined to bring the joy to their fellow-Iranians."

Iran, which was on a 10-game winning run in the Asian Cup prior to this year's edition, got off to an unimpressive start to its campaign in Hohhot, edging out the Philippines 1-0 in their opener, before beating Hong Kong 3-1 to secure a knockout spot.

The embarrassment came in the final group game on Sunday, when Iran deliberately played for a goalless draw against Vietnam, tanking the match to finish

second and avoid Japan until the final. The cynical approach, however, backfired as Japan's shock defeat to Thailand later in the day forced the two powerhouses into the same half of the knockout bracket.

'Experience' driving Iran forward

While other contenders may possess more youth, Iran captain Tavassoli believes that their collective experience is an advantage in the Central Asians' quest to collect a third straight title.

"I think that in a tough situation, that experience that we have

keeps us going on and getting through," Tavassoli told the AFC official website.

The Iranian skipper has also been around long enough to notice that the gap between the top teams and others in the region has narrowed considerably in recent years, pointing to how Chinese Taipei gave them a close run as well as the other results in Hohhot.

"Maybe for the two previous editions, it was just Japan and Thailand who were our main rivals. But now, all teams are very, very strong and have developed a lot. We know that we have a lot of hard work to do if we

want to win," added Tavassoli, who is one of five players alongside Fereshteh Karimi, Nasimeh Gholami, Sara Shirbeigi and Tahereh Mahdipour in the Iranian squad at Hohhot who have been involved in all three editions of the continental showpiece.

Tavassoli is looking forward to accomplishing another feat with the national team: qualifying for the Women's World Cup later this year.

"I think it is a pity for our generation that the inaugural World Cup for women's futsal has come only now, but I am happy that I still have a chance to participate in it, and I am also very happy for the future generations who can play regularly at the Asian Cup and also the World Cup," she said. When asked whether reaching the global stage would be a perfect career swansong, Tavassoli admitted that she would be lost without futsal and instead aims to play on for as long as she can.

"Actually, futsal is my life because when I was very young, maybe six or seven years old, I played football in the streets with my cousins and with boys, and from then on I fell in love with the ball," she smiled. "And one of my concerns is how to say goodbye, because it's my life; I cannot even imagine what would happen to me after that."

"I hope that if we can win this Asian Cup and go to the World Cup, maybe the vision (future) will be different for women's football and futsal in Iran, and we can improve more."

Iran to face Oman for Asian beach handball crown

Sports Desk

Iran will be looking to round off an impressive Asian Men's Beach Handball Championship campaign in style when facing Oman in today's final showdown in Muscat.

Mahdi Qashaqei's men defeated Pakistan 2-0 (15-9, 16-12) in the semifinals on Tuesday to secure qualification for the 2026 IHF World Championships, while the home side came out on top in both periods (19-8, 12-10) against Jordan.

Ali Heidaeri was the Iranian

top scorer on Tuesday with 13 goals.

Vahid Arabzadeh added six for Iran, with Alireza Pirzadeh and Amin Kazemi finishing on four apiece, while Pakistan's Hussain Muzammal chipped in a game-high 15.

This was Iran's sixth straight win in Muscat.

A 2022 Asian champion on home soil, Iran had also beaten Pakistan 2-0 in their Group B opener before defeating India, Jordan, and the Philippines to progress to the knockouts as the group winner.

Heidari then scored 14 to lead Iran to a 2-0 (14-8, 32-15) win against Maldives in the quarterfinals.

Today's showdown at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex will be a repeat of the last-four battle in the previous edition two years ago, when Oman came out victorious but settled for a runner-up finish after a final loss to Qatar.

"We had set our sights on reaching the final and qualifying for the World Championships since the first day of the event here. Pakistan was a truly tough oppo-

nent and cost us all sorts of trouble in both games," Iran coach Qashaqei said after the last-four victory, adding: "The final will be a much different occasion as Oman is the host and a nine-time finalist, but we are not done yet and will definitely go out there to win the title."



Iran's Mohammad Heidarianpour (10) makes an effort during a last-four victory over Pakistan at the Asian Men's Beach Handball Championship in Muscat, Oman, on May 13, 2025.

● IRIHF



Pacers escape 19-point hole, KO Cavaliers in Game 5

REUTERS – Tyrese Haliburton scored 31 points and dished out eight assists as the Indiana Pacers eliminated the host Cleveland Cavaliers with a 114-105 decision in Game 5 of the NBA Eastern Conference semifinals on Tuesday. Pascal Siakam put up 21 points for fourth-seeded Indiana, which closed the best-of-seven series with consecutive wins.

Indiana has qualified for back-to-back trips to the Eastern finals for the first time since 2013-2014, when it lost to the Miami Heat twice. The Pacers were beaten by the eventual champion Boston Celtics last season. Donovan Mitchell posted 35 points and nine rebounds while playing with a sprained left ankle and sore calf for top-seeded Cleveland,

which blew a 19-point lead on Tuesday and lost all three home games in the series.

Elsewhere, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander finished with 31 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder rallied late for a 112-105 home win over the Denver Nuggets in Game 5 of the Western Conference semifinals on Tuesday. Down by nine with 8 1/2 minutes to go, the Thunder wound up out-

scoring the Nuggets 34-19 in the fourth quarter to take a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven series.



Oklahoma City, which overcame a monster game from Nuggets center Nikola Jokic (44 points, 15 rebounds), would advance to the Western Conference finals with a win on Thursday in Denver.

● KEN BLAZE/IMAGN IMAGES

Saving Asiatic cheetah and its ecosystem

The Asiatic cheetah is a unique subspecies of the cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), renowned as the fastest land animal in the world. These remarkable predators were historically found across Asia's arid and semi-arid regions, including parts of the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. Unfortunately, their population has drastically declined due to various human-induced factors, and today, they are confined to small numbers in the deserts of Iran, leading to their classification as an endangered species.

Distinct characteristics

The Asiatic cheetah shares similarities with its African counterparts but has several distinct features. Generally smaller and lighter, males weigh between 34kg to 55kg, while females are slightly smaller. Their head and body length ranges from 112cm to 135cm, with tails measuring 66cm to 84cm. Their coat exhibits the typical cheetah spots but is paler and has a more defined pattern. A notable feature is the "tear mark," a patch of coarse black fur extending from the eyes to the mouth, which helps reduce glare and enhances vision while hunting. The Iranian cheetah is particularly known for its exceptional speed, capable of reaching up to 65 miles per hour (104 km/h) in short bursts and covering distances up to 1,500 feet. Its body is specially adapted for sprinting, characterized by long legs, a lightweight frame, and a flexible spine for extended strides. Unlike other big cats, cheetahs are typically solitary or form small groups, with males often hunting in bands while females hunt alone with their cubs, destinationiran.com wrote.

Geographic range and habitat

Historically, the Asiatic cheetah roamed a vast territory from the Indian subcontinent to the Middle East, including the Arabian Peninsula and parts of Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. However, habitat destruction and poaching have drastically reduced their range. Currently, the Iranian cheetah is limited to the arid and semi-arid desert regions of Iran, where conservation efforts are underway. Key protected areas include:

- Kavir National Park
- Touran National Park
- Bafq Protected Area
- Dar-e Anjir Wildlife Range
- Naybandan wildlife reserve

These habitats typically consist of dry grasslands, scrublands, and semi-deserts that provide adequate cover for stalking and hunting prey. They also support smaller herbivores like gazelles and hares, which are essential to the cheetah's



diet. Unfortunately, urban expansion and aggressive agricultural practices have led to significant habitat fragmentation, posing severe risks to their survival.

Population decline

The population of Asiatic cheetahs has plummeted over the last century. Once numbering in the thousands, fewer than 50 individuals are estimated to remain in the wild in Iran. The main factors contributing to this decline include habitat loss, poaching, reduced prey populations, and human-wildlife conflict. Habitat loss primarily stems from agricultural expansion, urban development, and infrastructure projects that encroach on natural landscapes, disrupting the cheetah's hunting grounds. Poaching, while not primarily driven by the demand for fur, remains a significant threat, as livestock herders sometimes kill cheetahs in retaliation for predation on their herds.

The decline in prey populations,

particularly smaller herbivores, has intensified competition among remaining cheetahs and other predators in the Iranian deserts. With a shrinking prey base, cheetahs struggle to find sufficient food, leading to malnutrition and decreased reproductive success. This creates a downward spiral for the Iranian cheetah, making recovery increasingly challenging.

Conservation efforts

The Asiatic cheetah is classified as Critically Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, primarily due to its limited population and range. Recognizing the urgent need for conservation, various organizations and governments have initiated programs aimed at protecting this iconic subspecies. In Iran, conservation strategies focus on habitat restoration, anti-poaching measures, and community engagement. The Iranian government, in collaboration with international conservation organizations, has been working to establish protected areas for the cheetah. Reserves like the Touran Protected Area have been crucial, providing safe habitats where the remaining cheetah population can thrive.

Several campaigns have been launched to involve local and international communities in conservation initiatives. By promoting ecotourism and educating the public about biodiversity's importance, conservationists aim to foster a sense of stewardship among Iranians.

Role of Asiatic cheetahs in ecosystem

Cheetahs are recognized as apex predators in their habitat, playing a vital role in managing populations of smaller

herbivores, such as gazelles, hares, wild sheep, goats, and chinkara. If left unchecked, these herbivores can overgraze vegetation, leading to widespread desertification. By hunting these animals, Asiatic cheetahs help maintain biodiversity and support healthy ecosystems. The decline of the Asiatic cheetah raises concerns about ecological imbalances, as their absence could lead to overpopulation of prey species. This could result in negative repercussions for the habitat, including vegetation degradation and shifts in other animal populations. Preserving the cheetah is crucial not only for its survival but also for maintaining the health of its ecosystem.

Challenges in conservation

Conservation efforts for the Asiatic cheetah face several significant challenges. A persistent threat is human-wildlife conflict, particularly in areas with increased agricultural activities. Farmers often view cheetahs as threats to their livestock, leading to retaliatory killings. Addressing these conflicts through effective management strategies is a primary focus of conservation initiatives. Another challenge is the lack of genetic diversity within the remaining cheetah population. With such a limited gene pool, inbreeding can lead to serious genetic issues, resulting in decreased fertility and increased vulnerability to diseases. Conservationists are exploring options to enhance genetic diversity, including potential relocation or cross-breeding initiatives, though these efforts come with complications and ethical considerations. Securing funding for long-term conservation programs is also essential. Many organizations rely on grants and donations, and shifts in political and economic priorities can impact these initiatives. Ongoing commitment from local and

international supporters is vital for sustainable conservation funding.

International and national legal frameworks

Numerous international agreements and national regulations aim to protect endangered species, including the Asiatic cheetah. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) plays a crucial role in regulating international trade of cheetah skins and body parts, contributing to their protection. On a national level, Iran has implemented several laws aimed at wildlife conservation and habitat protection. These laws strive to combat illegal poaching and preserve natural habitats critical for the cheetah's survival. Collaborative efforts between governmental bodies, domestic NGOs, and local communities are essential for effective enforcement of these laws.

Cultural significance and symbolism

Asiatic cheetahs hold significant cultural value across different societies, often symbolizing grace, speed, and vitality. In ancient Persian culture, cheetahs were respected hunters, frequently used by royalty during hunting trips. This historical association continues to resonate, adding cultural depth to conservation efforts. Educating communities about the ecological role of the Asiatic cheetah and the benefits of preserving these predators can help reduce human-wildlife conflict and foster coexistence. In recent years, the Iranian national soccer team has featured the cheetah on their official jerseys to raise awareness about this endangered species. Moreover, cheetahs are central to contemporary wildlife conservation discussions, inspiring broader awareness of environmental issues and the importance of biodiversity. These discussions encourage public involvement in wildlife protection. Through art, literature, and education, the image of the Iranian cheetah symbolizes the fragile balance of ecosystems.

How to help

Individuals looking to support Iranian cheetah conservation can take several steps. First, raising awareness about the challenges these animals face is essential. Informing friends, family, and communities through social media about the cheetah's endangered status can create a ripple effect, furthering advocacy efforts for wildlife protection. Contributing donations to reputable conservation organizations focused on cheetah preservation is another effective way to help. Donations can fund initiatives aimed at habitat restoration, anti-poaching efforts, and community education programs. Many organizations also offer volunteer opportunities, allowing individuals to contribute their time and skills to conservation efforts.





Leader hails Iran's aid workers as 'embodiment of humanitarian values'



Social Desk

Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei met with members of the organizing committee for the National Conference in Commemoration of Martyred Aid Workers on Monday in Tehran. Describing aid workers as the "embodiment of humanitarian values," Khamenei called on the nation to preserve and promote a spirit of selflessness and compassion. "This culture must be cultivated," he said, urging continued efforts to showcase the sacrifices made by Iran's medical and relief personnel during conflict, khamenei.ir reported.

The meeting, held two days prior to the conference and publicized on May 12, centered on efforts to honor those who died in service. Khamenei linked the spirit of Iranian aid workers—who he said risked their lives "under rain of bullets" to save others—with the broader Islamic and human duty to oppose violence.

He drew a sharp contrast between these values and what he called "the savage behavior" of Israel in Gaza.

He condemned attacks on ambulances, hospitals, and civilians, referring to Israel's ongoing military actions as the acts of "inhuman beasts."

He admonished Western governments for supporting these "crimes," calling global silence a shared moral failure.

"It is a universal duty to oppose such bloodshed," he said. "The Islamic Republic will never remain silent in the face of such cruelty."

Tajikistan to honor Hafez at UNESCO, showcases over 500 titles at Tehran Int'l Book Fair



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

Tajikistan will mark the 700th anniversary of Persian poet Hafez with a special event at UNESCO headquarters in Paris this June, featuring literary programs and two book launches, a senior cultural official said during the 36th Tehran International Book Fair.

Abdulrahman Zadeh Abdoli, Tajikistan's Ministry of Culture representative and director of the country's stand at the fair, said the commemoration will include the unveiling of 'Selected Ghazals of Hafez Shirazi' and 'A Cry from the Heavens,' a critical work on Hafez's poetry.

Speaking with Iran Daily on the sidelines of the fair, Abdoli called Persian literature "invaluable" and said its reach has expanded across borders. "Our literature has conquered the

world," he said, adding that its timeless themes are resonating globally. He emphasized that today, the world "needs this rich literature more than ever," especially the moral and spiritual depth found in the works of classical poets like Rudaki, Rumi, Jami, Sa'adi, and Hafez.

Tajikistan, he said, is committed to introducing Persian-language poets and their ideas to global audiences. Last year, the country hosted an event at UNESCO in Paris to honor Rumi, where 'Jaam-e Jaan' and a selection of Rumi's ghazals were distributed. "The reception was warm," he noted.

He praised the high level of cultural and literary relations between Tajikistan and Iran, saying cultural exchange plays a vital role in strengthening "friendship and brotherhood" between the two nations. "This book fair is an excellent platform for enhancing bilateral cooperation in literature and culture," he said.

Tajikistan is participating in this

year's fair with over 500 book titles across various fields, including science, literature, history, and encyclopedias. "There's been strong interest in our publications," Abdoli said, adding that ongoing talks with Iranian publishers may pave the way for deeper cooperation in the publishing sector.

He pointed to continued state support for literature in Tajikistan. "Every year, the government allocates a substantial budget to print and distribute literary works both at home and abroad." One major project is the Stars of Literature series — a 50-volume collection featuring the works of Persian-speaking poets from Rudaki to contemporary voices.

In 2024, Tajikistan also published a historical and cultural study by the late scholar Babajan Gafurov. "A copy was given to every Tajik household," Abdoli said. In 2025, the government plans to publish a



Visitors browse books on display at the 36th Tehran International Book Fair, held on May 13, 2025.
● IRNA



two-volume edition of Ferdowsi's 'Shahnameh,' again distributing it free to households to promote awareness of the nation's cultural heritage. Abdoli highlighted the deep connection Tajiks have with Persian literature. "Tajik families have a profound love for poetry," he said. "Many

mothers place books like Sa'adi's 'Golestan,' Rumi's 'Mathnavi,' or Hafez's 'Divan' under their children's pillows. It's how they grow up with our literary legacy." The 36th Tehran International Book Fair began on May 7 and runs through May 17, under the slogan "Read for Iran."

Tourism, pilgrimage, handicrafts take center stage at Khorasan Razavi expo



By Leila Imeni
Staff writer

The 18th International Tourism and Handicraft Exhibition of Khorasan Razavi Province officially opened on Wednesday at the Permanent International Exhibition Center in Mashhad, with the presence of numerous national, provincial officials, and some consul generals. Spanning approximately 12,000 square meters, the expo features representatives from several Iranian provinces and will run until May 17.

This event results from extensive collaboration between the Provincial Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization and various trade associations. It offers a unique platform to showcase the tourism

attractions, sites, and facilities of different regions, alongside displays of local handicrafts and tourist services.

Participating countries include Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Oman. A total of 490 companies and organizations from across Iran — such as travel agencies, health tourism operators, hotel equipment manufacturers, accommodation providers, handicraft producers, and souvenir vendors — are part of the expo. Their participation highlights the event's importance as a hub for knowledge exchange, networking, and promoting sustainable development in the tourism sector. Speaking in an interview with Iran Daily, Deputy Head of Khorasan Razavi Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization for Tourism Affairs, Yousef

Bidkhor, emphasized that this year's exhibition focuses more on tourism and hospitality topics. "Given the sector's significance, we deemed it essential to hold the event at a specific time each year for better planning and optimal results," he said.

Thanks to recent collaborations with expatriate who are active in tourism sector in Mashhad, many foreign companies are participating, aiming to foster international connections and expand cooperation. The foreign participants mainly operate in pilgrimage and health tourism. Countries like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and Afghanistan send visitors for pilgrimage or medical treatment — highlighting the importance of tourist exchanges between Iran and these countries.

"Currently, about half of the foreign tourists



● IRAN DAILY

in Mashhad come from Persian Gulf nations, primarily Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain. Additionally, visitors from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Mongolia seek medical treatment, contributing to the growing demand for health services in the region," Bidkhor noted.

Iran urges cultural strategy to drive regional tourism

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Wednesday called for a "new architecture" of cultural cooperation among Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) nations, saying sustainable regional development hinges on shared identity and political resolve.

Speaking at the Regional Tourism Market Symposium held on Kish Island, Reza Salehi Amiri said the region must rethink its ties through "civilizational links" rather than surface-level diplomacy, IRNA reported.

He urged leaders to "move beyond symbolism" and turn historical, linguistic and religious common ground into real, people-centered collaboration.

"The ECO needs a redefined cultural framework," Salehi Amiri told delegates. That, he stressed, requires dialogue, relaxed visa rules, and shared tourism strategies. He suggested a summit of ECO cultural elites in Tehran to deepen "mutual understanding" and boost cohesion.

Salehi Amiri pointed to visas as a major sticking point. "Removing visa barriers should be top of the list," he said, noting that Iran had

already taken "meaningful steps" and now expects ECO's secretariat to help speed up the process.

Iran is also pushing for joint tourism fairs, including expanded participation in Tehran International Tourism and Related Industries Exhibition. "This is how we showcase cultural assets to each other — and the world," the minister said.

He offered state media resources to help promote ECO countries' tourist attractions in Iran. Each year, roughly 10 million Iranians travel abroad. "A major portion of this can be directed to ECO states," he said, if tourism infrastructure and cultural pathways are improved.

Highlighting ongoing projects, he revealed that Iran has more than 2,700 tourism initiatives underway. Kish Island alone accounts for around 10% of the country's tourism capacity, with 57 hotels in operation and another 52 being built. In a separate press briefing, Salehi Amiri pushed back on negative portrayals of Iran in Western media, calling "Iranophobia" a deliberate narrative spun by hostile outlets. "These stories don't match the reality on the ground," he said.

"The lived experience of visitors is one of peace and splendor," he said. He pointed to the recent international expo in Tehran, where



● IRNA

over 2,700 foreign guests attended. "They didn't just see Iran. They understood it — and became storytellers of a different kind."

Kish, he argued, could serve as a strategic hub for rewriting Iran's global tourism image. But infrastructure remains a challenge. "Over 80% of travel to the island is by air," he said. Talks are underway to reinforce air routes and designate Kish Air as a core carrier. Three airlines have already agreed to invest in hotels on the island. "This synergy between air travel and hospitality builds a stable future for tourism," he said.

Salehi Amiri called for a sustained campaign of persuasion — both at home and abroad. "With truth on our side, smart diplomacy, and private sector buy-in, we see a bright future for Kish — and for Iran's global tourism standing."

Iran's 'Infinite Realms' joins global digital stage in Japan

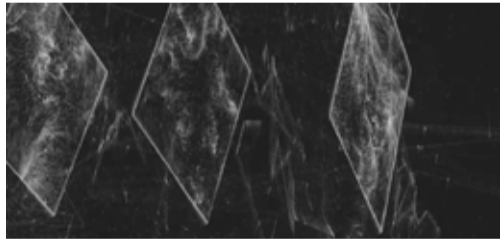
Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's digital art collective Platform 101 has been selected to present 'Infinite Realms,' a large-scale projection mapping work, at Expo 2025 Osaka.

The group, led by director Mohammad Ali Famori, is the only digital art team from Iran and West Asia featured in the projection program. Their work appears alongside global names such as Maxin10sity and Michiyuki Ishita, IRNA reported.

Platform 101 confirmed its participation after responding to an open call under the expo's main theme, Designing Future Society for Our Lives. "Infinite Realms" is now scheduled for repeated showings during the Expo, from April 13 to July 14, at the iconic "Shining Hat" structure on Osaka's Yumeshima Island. The work, a collaboration between Famori, creative coder Arash Masoum, and sound designers Ehsan Masoudian and Reza Famori, uses generative art, immersive sound, and real-time mapping to explore what the team calls "parallel dimensions" through fractal geometry. It was fully created using TouchDesigner software.

"This piece opens a new chapter for Iranian art in the digital space," said Famori. "We're stepping onto a global stage, using code and sound as our language." Platform 101 has positioned itself as a pioneer in digital and immersive art since its founding in 2018. Famori, originally known for his solo exhibition 'Hypnotic Zone' in 2016, said he turned to building a platform after finding "no infrastructure" for digital art in Iran. Their first touring exhibition launched that same year, focusing on digital photography. By 2019, the group introduced glitch art and video art to international audiences through the 'Glitch: Pixel Language' manifesto, which shaped multiple exhibitions across Europe and



the Americas.

In 2020, the group organized Iran's first glitch group show. A year later, it expanded into 'The Aesthetics of the Pixel' at the Pejman Foundation. The platform began researching fractal-based visual structures in 2022, leading to a landmark 2023 video art exhibition at Ivan Gallery, described by Art News as "Iran's largest group video art show."

In fall 2024, Platform 101 staged a fifth exhibition, 'Fractal Soundscapes,' blending sound and image. The latest show, 'Hidden Geometry and Glitch Art,' ran from December 2024 through April 2025 at Gallery Rische 29, featuring 21 video artists from 11 countries including Japan, the US, France, and Brazil. Famori described it as "Iran's longest-running video art exhibition."

While a few Iranian galleries promote contemporary art abroad, Famori noted that many remain focused on traditional forms like painting and sculpture. "Digital art is rarely supported, partly because there's no financial model for it in the gallery system," he said. "But that doesn't mean it lacks value."

He sees the Expo as a rare opportunity. "We're not just exporting an artwork," he said. "We're sharing a process, a system that has evolved inside Iran and can speak to global audiences."