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Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (3rd L) speaks at a meeting with the members of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee in the Iranian legislative chamber in Tehran, Iran on May 25, 2025.
● IRNA

Sharif's regional tour well-thought-out diplomatic initiative



By Mashallah Shakeri
Iran's former ambassador to Pakistan

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The ongoing visits of Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan carries significant strategic weight. The decision by Islamabad to include all these four nations in a single diplomatic tour, led by the highest executive authority, signals a calculated move.

Sherif's tour marks Pakistan's first high-level visit since tensions escalated with India in the past few weeks over an attack on tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir. The trip appears to be a well-thought-out diplomatic initiative as the destination countries, particularly Iran, played some role in defusing those tensions.

While others' contributions may vary, Iran stood out for employing a dynamic diplomacy in the face of its broader regional responsibilities despite major diplomatic engagements it is currently involved in. Regardless of how this effort was taken on board by others, Iran acted based on its regional obligation and tried to put out the flames of a conflict that could have spiraled into a broader regional crisis. Prime Minister Sharif's visit may, in part, be a gesture of appreciation, a diplomatic thank-you to Iran for its efforts during that tense period.

Since gaining independence in 1947, Pakistan has shared a strong historical bond with Iran that was among the first countries to recognize its sovereignty. High-level exchanges date back to the early days of Pakistan's statehood, with ties going beyond geopolitics into the realm of civilizational and cultural connection.

In today's interconnected world cultural affinities and shared heritage, along with trade and economic interactions, play a vital role in strengthening ties between any two countries.

In case of Pakistan and Iran, while cultural exchanges are in great shape, their economic relations need to be strengthened further. Currently, trade between Iran and Pakistan hovers around \$1 to 2 billion, which is far below the envisioned target of \$5 billion. Of course, that is a goal both sides agree is within reach, given the complementary nature of their economies. Iran produces goods that are in high demand in Pakistan, while Pakistan manufactures items that enjoy popularity and market potential in Iran.

Iran's medical tourism combines quality healthcare with rich cultural, religious experiences

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Spain calls for sanctions on Israel to end war in Gaza

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Deal demands running into red lines, hard stances: Former envoy

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Asian Karate Championship: Golshadnejad wins kumite gold as Iran finishes with seven medals

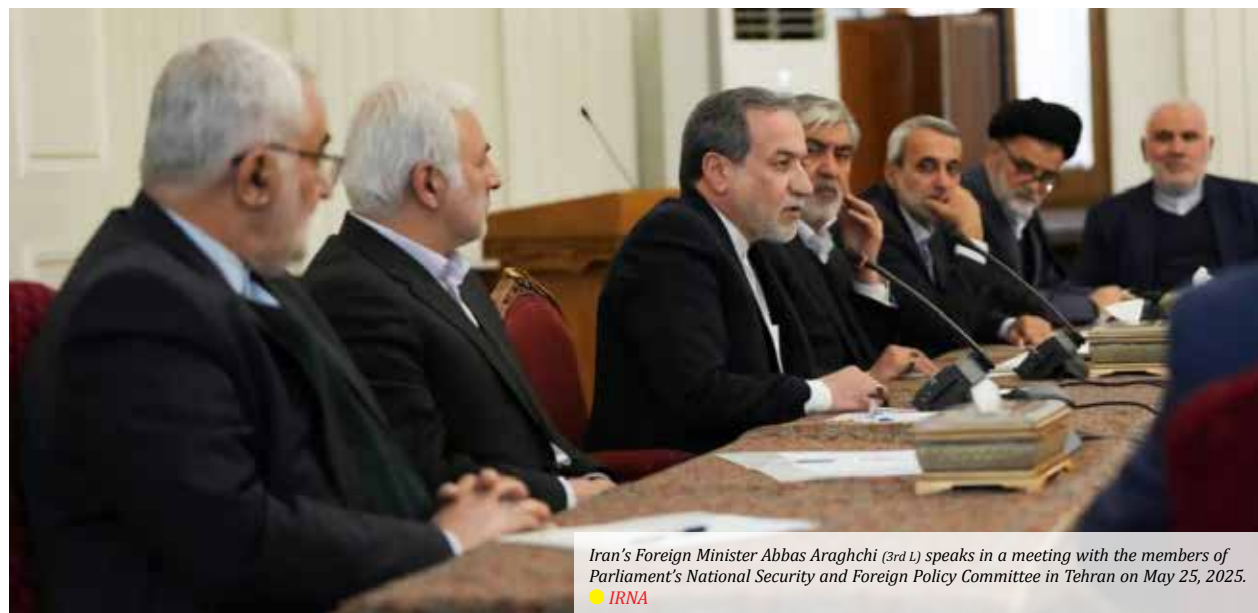
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Iran, US engaged in 'battle of wills'

**FM: Talks will yield results only if
Iranians' rights secured**

Araghchi warns of 'harsh' response over triggering snapback mechanism



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (3rd L) speaks in a meeting with the members of Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee in Tehran on May 25, 2025.
● IRNA

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Sunday described the ongoing nuclear negotiations between Tehran and Washington as a "battle of wills," say-

ing that the talks would yield results once the rights of the Iranian people were secured. Speaking to reporters after a meeting with the members of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy

Committee, Araghchi said Tehran was "neither in any rush to reach an agreement with the US nor causing delays in the talks." However, he said that the officials would do their utmost to lift sanctions

as soon as possible but not at the expense of Iranians' rights.

"Therefore, we negotiate with patience and we will not back down on the people's rights, including the issue of [uranium] enrichment," said Araghchi who leads the Iranian negotiating team in the talks mediated by Oman.

Since April 12, Iran and the US have held five rounds of negotiations in Oman and Italy to settle a decades-long dispute on Iran's nuclear program. Both sides have so far described the talks as constructive. But disagreement over uranium enrichment in Iran has hindered progress in the negotiations.

US top negotiator Steve Witkoff has said Washington "could not authorize even one percent" enrichment—a position Tehran called a red line, citing its rights under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Snapback mechanism

Ebrahim Rezaei, the spokesman of the Parliamentary panel said Araghchi also warned of "harsh" response if the European countries invoked the so-called snapback mechanism to re-

impose the United Nations sanctions on Iran.

The UK, France, and Germany—three European parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal—have recently threatened to trigger the mechanism, which would bring back a broad range of international sanctions on Iran that had been suspended under the tattered nuclear pact.

The lawmaker quoted Araghchi as saying that Iran would continue to pursue its "wise and clear nuclear policy," which he said was not subject to pressure, threats, or enticements.

Pointing to proposals drawn up in the fifth round of talks which were held in Italy's capital Rome, Araghchi said Iran welcomed the establishment of a regional enrichment center, according to the MP.

However, the minister clarified that enrichment activities would continue inside Iran, Rezaei explained. Also on Sunday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei dismissed media reports about the timing and location of the next round of the negotiations, saying that the date for the next round of talks had not yet been set.

Israeli forces in control of 77% of Gaza**International Desk**

The Israeli military now in effect controls 77 percent of the total geographical area of the Gaza Strip, according to the Gaza's Government Media Office.

"This is achieved through direct ground incursions and the deployment of occupation forces within residential and civilian areas, through heavy fire control that prevents Palestinian citizens from accessing their homes, areas, lands, and property, or through unjust forced eviction policies," it said in a statement.

The office called on the UN and the international community to take action to stop the Israeli expansion.

"The continued genocide, ethnic cleansing, colonialism, aggression, and occupation control over the vast majority of the Gaza Strip reflects an Israeli political will to impose a 'final solution' by force, in blatant defiance of all international laws and norms," the statement said.

Since the beginning of its war on Gaza in October 2023, the Israeli military have repeatedly displaced Palestinians and has restricted their access to more than 70 percent of Gaza, either by declaring large areas

as no-go zones or issuing forced displacement orders.

The Israeli attacks have so far claimed the lives of nearly 54,000 Palestinians – mostly women and children. At least 22 Palestinians were killed in Israeli attacks across Gaza since on Sunday.

Ramy Abdu, chairman of the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, said on Sunday that the Geneva-based organization has verified the killing of thousands of Palestinian families in Gaza by the Israeli military.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has called for an end to "indiscriminate attacks" against Gaza's children, 950 of whom have reportedly been killed in the past two months.

Since the beginning of Israel's onslaught on Gaza, cities across the world have been the scene of protests in support of Palestinians.

On Saturday, thousands of people gathered in Stockholm, Paris, and Berlin to protest their governments' silence on Israel's occupation and ongoing military offensives in the Gaza Strip, calling for immediate international intervention and sanctions against Tel Aviv.

In Stockholm, hundreds of people gathered at Odenplan Square in



● AFP

response to calls from various civil society organizations urging the Swedish government to take a stand against Israel's ongoing war crimes in Gaza.

In Paris, Palestinian supporters gathered at Bourse Square to demand sanctions against Israel and unhindered passage of humanitarian aid convoys into Gaza.

Demonstrators highlighted the dire food shortage by banging empty pots and pans and chanting slogans such as "Israel is a murderer, Macron is an accomplice" and "There is genocide in Gaza, we will not remain silent."

In Berlin, around 1,000 people gathered at Oranienplatz to protest Israel's attacks on Gaza.

Protesters chanted slogans such as "Freedom for Palestine," "Germany finances, Israel bombs," "Israel is a terrorist state," and "Stop the genocide."

Spain calls for sanctions on Israel to end war in Gaza**International Desk**

The international community should look to sanction Israel to stop the war in Gaza, Spain's foreign minister said, ahead of a Madrid meeting of European and Arab nations on Sunday to urge a halt to its offensive.

Countries Israel had long counted on as allies have been adding their voices to growing international pressure after it expanded military operations in Gaza, AFP reported.

A two-month aid blockade has worsened shortages of food, water, fuel and medicine in the Palestinian territory, sparking fears of famine.

Aid organizations say the trickle of supplies Israel allowed to enter in recent days falls far short of needs.

Madrid hosted 20 countries as well as international organizations on Sunday with the aim of "stopping this war, which no longer has any goal", Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares told France Info radio. Humanitarian aid must enter Gaza "massively, unimpeded, neutrally, so that it is not Israel who decides who can eat and who cannot", he said.



Jose Manuel Albares
● AFP

On May 14, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called Israel a "genocidal state." He has imposed an arms embargo on Israel and recognized a Palestinian state.

A previous such gathering in Madrid last year brought together countries including Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey as well as European nations such as Ireland and Norway that have recognized a Palestinian state.

After the European Union decided this week to review its cooperation deal with Israel, Albares said "we must consider sanctions, we must do everything, consider everything to stop this war".

Israel's offensive has killed almost 54,000 people, mostly civilians, according to the Gaza's health ministry.

Sharif's regional tour ...

As part of measures to facilitate trade, the two sides can rev up border mar-

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kets, and boost connectivity through rail, maritime, and air transport. As far as border markets are concerned, security becomes an important issue, which can be addressed through bringing economic prosperity. In fact, economic development brings about security, and the two are somehow inter-related. If local populations in border regions benefit from legitimate economic opportunities, the appeal of groups working to sabotage

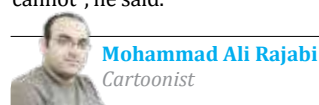
security will dry up.

Of course, regional diplomacy has its own challenges. Some nations may feel threatened by bilateral ties between neighboring states and may attempt to muscle in or undercut existing arrangements. Nevertheless, in case of Pakistan and Iran, the political will in both Islamabad and Tehran is so strong that it rises above such maneuvering.

When it comes to the issues of the Islamic world, the cooperation between Iran and Pakistan proves to be fruitful as well. Both are key members of the

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and share common concerns on the most pressing issue of the Muslim world, which is Palestine, and particularly Gaza, where the Israeli war has been ongoing for nearly 19 months now.

Tehran-Islamabad cooperation on Gaza can set an example for other countries, and can be inspiring for other aligned countries to amplify their collective voice against aggressive policies of Israel in order to bring an end to them and stop the suffering of the Palestinian people.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Roads minister in Iraq highlights completion of Shalamcheh-Basra railway

Economy Desk

Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq called for strengthening bilateral transport cooperation between Iran and Iraq, underscoring the need for the completion of the 32-kilometer railroad connecting the Iranian border town of Shalamcheh to the Iraqi city of Basra.

Sadeq made the call in a visit to the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, where she held meetings with the neighboring country's high-ranking officials to hash out the current status of bilateral transportation ties, progress on the strategic Shalamcheh-Basra railway link, and preparations for the mass Arbæen march, with a focus on maximizing logistical and infrastructural support for Iranian pilgrims.

"Today, discussions were held between the two countries on topics in the fields of road, rail, sea, and air transport, as well as issues related to Arbæen and the measures that both governments should consider to facilitate the movement of Karbala pilgrims," Sadeq said on the sidelines of a meeting with Iraqi Minister of Transport, Razzaq Muhaybis al-Saadawi.

"Iraq can access the Caucasus, Cen-

tral Asia, and Russia, both by rail and road, through the development of Iran's transportation infrastructure, thereby transforming its trade with those regions. Iran, in turn, can establish land, rail, and road connections to the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf via Iraq. This reciprocal connection is in line with the key and strategic interests of both countries and enables joint participation in transit corridors," she added. Regarding transport cooperation between the two countries, the Iranian minister said the most important issue is the rail connections between Iran and Iraq, including border affairs and the Shalamcheh-Basra railway link, underlining that, "Over the past months, with serious actions by Iran and support from Iraq, we have witnessed significant progress in this project."

Sadeq said the demining of most of the Shalamcheh-Basra railway has been completed, and through support from the Iraqi government, the route will be operational before Arbæen next year. Pointing to the Khosravi-Khannaqin border, Sadeq said, "It was decided that a joint meeting between the railway authorities of the two countries would be held to accelerate the executive operations between these two borders."



Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq meets Iraq's Deputy Transport Minister Seyyed Hazem Razi in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on May 24, 2025.
● IRNA

The Iranian minister of roads and urban development also said increasing the number of pilgrims in air travel and facilitating movement through air transport, as well as sea transport during Arbæen, were other topics discussed.

Sadeq was welcomed on Saturday night by Iraq's Deputy Transport Minister Seyyed Hazem Razi and Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Mohammad-Kazem Al-e Sadeq upon her arrival in Baghdad. In her first stop, she visited the site, where Iran's top anti-terror commander General Qassem Soleimani, Iraqi resistance commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, and their companions were assassinated by the US near Baghdad's International Airport in January 2020. Sadeq is also expected to meet with Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani as well as the country's minister of interior.

Sadeq had previously visited Iraq in September of last year alongside Pres-



ident Masoud Pezeshkian to push forward the Shalamcheh-Basra railway initiative. That three-day visit resulted in the signing of 14 cooperation documents across various sectors, including transport.

Arbæen marks the 40th day since the

martyrdom of Imam Hossein, the third Shia imam and the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Every year, Muslim pilgrims from across the world, including from Iran, flock to Iraqi city of Karbala to mark Arbæen, where the holy shrine of Imam Hossein is located.

CAO says welcomes public investments to renovate air fleet



Economy Desk

The head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) said the agency is capable of offering multiple investment packages in various fields, including the purchase of wide-body and light aircraft, and welcomes the presence of investors, especially small public investments, in such areas.

Hossein Pourfarzaneh was cited by IRNA as saying that to transition from govern-

ment investment to attracting public and small-scale capital, several methods are used globally, including directing capital towards the stock market, bonds, and bank investments. Pourfarzaneh underlined that such methods in Iran face risks, and especially in the stock market, people invest their capital with doubt and hesitation.

"Another method we have adopted is to receive small investments from the public

and involve them in the investment, so that they themselves can be stakeholders. In this regard, we encouraged collective investment funds and provided the necessary groundwork for them to participate and be present in the aviation sector," the official said.

"We also invited investors who were previously active in the housing sector to co-operate and participate. In this regard, we encouraged and persuaded three groups of these investors, who were mass housing developers, to enter the aviation industry," he added.

Pourfarzaneh expressed hope that through the said method and the use of people-centered systems, there would be a quantitative and qualitative improvement in the country's air fleet by the end of the year, and investments that were sometimes idle and unproductive would be funneled into the country's productive aviation cycle.

Removal of output barriers, int'l sanctions spawns constructive competition: Official

Economy Desk

The secretary-general of Iran's Home Appliances Manufacturers Association said the removal of production barriers and international sanctions leads to constructive and equal competition between domestic and foreign products.

"If sanctions are lifted and supportive policies are implemented to remove obstacles, additional costs will certainly be removed from production, and competition will become meaningful," Omid Fazelinia was quoted as saying by IRNA.

Fazelinia termed the issue of smuggled goods as detrimental to the Iranian economy and an impediment to the sound rivalry between domestic and foreign products.

"Now that we are under sanctions and economic pressures, although the entry points for similar imported goods were closed, we witnessed the entry of smuggled goods that were offered in the market without equal competition with domestic production," he said.

"Smuggled goods are sold in the



market at a lower price than Iranian goods without paying customs duties, tariffs, taxes, and current production costs," he added. "This competition, because it is not on an equal footing, is detrimental to production and the country's economy. However, with the lifting of sanctions, the import of goods will take place under equal conditions and with the payment of legal costs. No one is against competition under equal conditions."

Pointing to the woes faced by manufacturers in growing production costs, Fazelinia said, "Now, with the imbalance in energy, industrial sector investment in electricity, lack of working capital, currency fluctuations, delays in currency allocation, lack of export markets, etc., pro-

duction costs have increased."

The secretary-general of Iran's Home Appliances Manufacturers Association emphasized that the lifting of sanctions would lead to foreign investment in the country.

"With the development and strengthening of international relations and the existence of domestic capacities, we can benefit from foreign investment and the transfer of technologies in our country," Fazelinia said.

"Iran's presence in international markets and exhibitions can create conditions for introducing products and utilizing the knowledge of other countries, and provide the groundwork for improving the quantitative and qualitative aspects of production."

Iranian delegation departs Tehran to attend EAG summit in Russia

Economy Desk

An Iranian delegation on Sunday departed for Russia to participate in the 42nd meeting of the Eurasian Group (EAG) on Combating Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism.

Led by Deputy Minister of Economy and Head of the Financial Intelligence Unit, Hadi Khani, the delegation left Tehran for Russia to participate in the international gathering, which is slated to be held from May 26 to 30 and will bring together regional and international experts to enhance cooperation on financial security.

Holding the 4th meeting of parliaments of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member countries, a joint meeting of supervisory and

private sector's authorities entitled "Middle East North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF) under the theme of "Risk Management in Age of New Technologies", a specialized meeting on "Current Issues of Financial Security Coverage in the Eurasian Region", as well as a meeting of the Caspian Sea Neighboring Countries Working Group are among the most important programs of the EAG meeting.

"Increasing the level of regional and international interactions in the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing, enhancing our country's position among the countries in the region and members of this institution, being aware of the latest measures and developments in

the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing at the global level, and defending our country's effective positions and actions in combating money laundering and terrorist financing, are among the objectives of this trip," Khani said.

"At the main meeting and working groups, our country's actions and achievements in the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing will be reported, and our country's determination in this fight will be shown to all."

Referring to the expansion of Iran's regional and international cooperation with member countries of the summit, Khani said, "The Iranian delegation will participate in the meeting of the Council of Heads of Financial

Intelligence Units of Central Asian countries, as well as the working group of Caspian Sea littoral states, and will consult on the exchange of experiences."

Pointing to the fourth forum of parliamentary representatives from Eurasian Economic Union member states held at this summit, he said, "Strengthening parliamentary cooperation in combating money laundering, terrorist financing, and the financing of weapons proliferation, and focusing on legislative coordination, exchange of experiences, and supporting regional policies to enhance financial security are among the most important topics of this forum."

Back on December 1, 2024, the EAG had welcomed Iran's efforts to im-



prove its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing systems. Established in 2004, the EAG is a FATF-style regional body comprising the nine countries of Belarus, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, with Iran being an observer member.

Deal demands running into red lines, hard stances: *Former envoy*

INTERVIEW

The fifth round of indirect negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States concluded in Rome, Italy's capital, on May 23, 2025. These talks once again took place under the roof of the Omani ambassador's residence, with the Omani Foreign Minister acting as mediator. The backdrop featured the US officials' insistence on halting enrichment inside Iran, the imposition of a new wave of Washington sanctions on Tehran, and Iran's warnings against potential Israeli military strikes on its nuclear facilities. These developments, both on the surface and behind the scenes, carried a weight that can still heavily influence the trajectory of talks between Tehran and Washington. Mostafa Alaei, former Iranian ambassador to Venezuela and the country's Geneva representative, shared his insights on these negotiations and the challenges facing the Iranian and American negotiating teams.



Mostafa Alaei

We witnessed the fifth round of talks between Iran and the US start with a more pessimistic atmosphere than previous rounds. What factors have thrown a wrench in the negotiation process?

ALAEI: The Iran-US talks are truly different compared to other international negotiations. The two countries have deeply rooted and complex disputes dating back 47 or 48 years. These entrenched differences make building bridges anything but straightforward. Negotiations naturally have their ups and downs. A hard stance from one side doesn't necessarily mean talks have hit a dead end. This is especially true for Iran-US talks, which tend to go through peaks and valleys and depend on various factors.

One key factor is the internal political climate in the US. There is no consensus on Iran there. So, to cater to different factions — whether moderate or hardline — figures like Witkoff or Trump may throw out tough positions that seem stringent from our perspective.

Israel's situation also throws a spanner in the works. The Gaza conflict and pressures from Israeli lobby groups on the Trump administration restrict any softening of stance. These pressures may come directly from Netanyahu or stem from the ongoing Gaza situation, forcing their hand toward a tougher line.

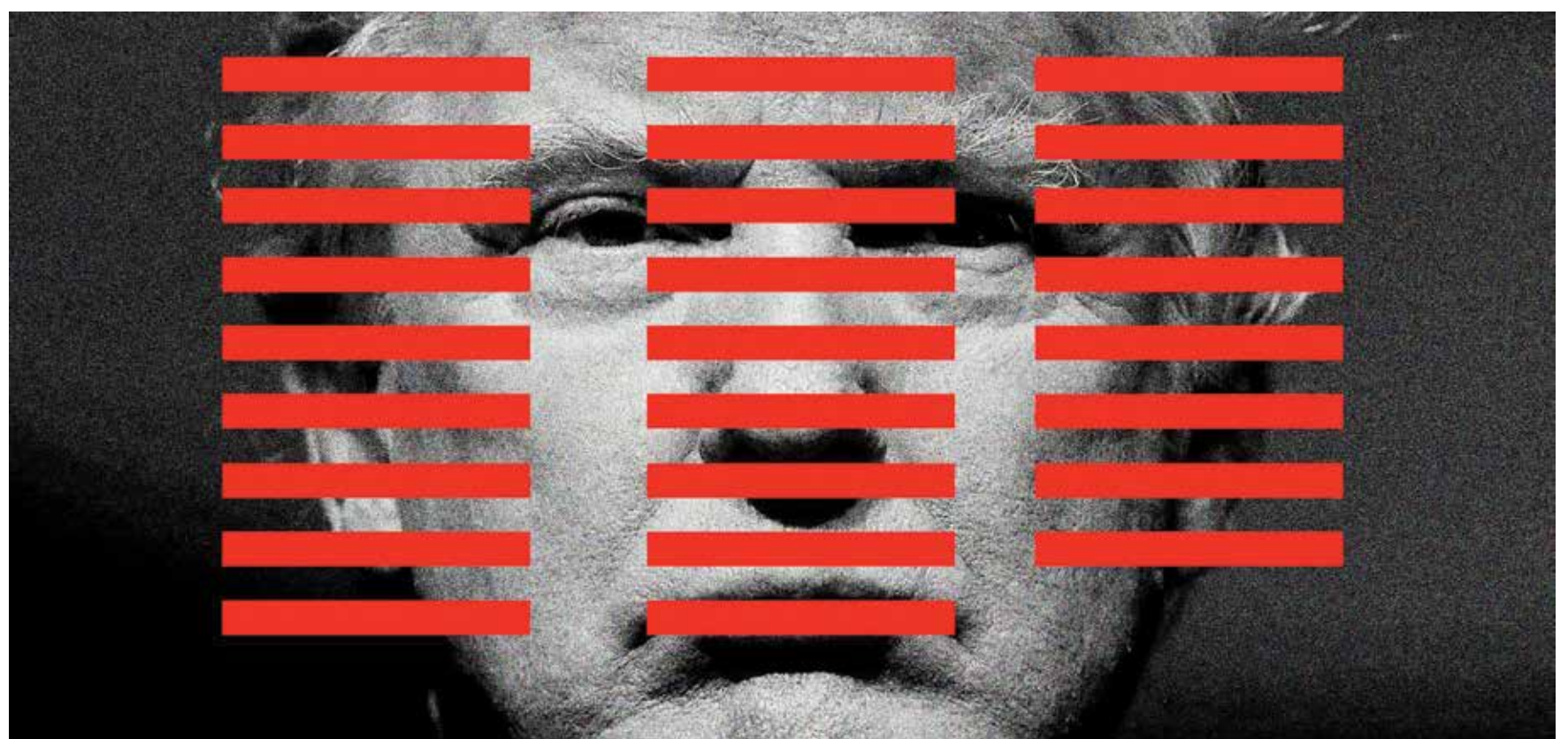
In sum, negotiations are naturally volatile, and drawing red lines doesn't always mean a final stubborn stance. Sometimes these lines are put on the table to gain leverage, not to call off the talks.

The US government insists on zero enrichment inside Iran, previously described as a maximalist position outside the negotiation room, but Witkoff's team seems to double down on this. Could this stance stall the talks?

Every country has its own playbook in negotiations. Whether bilateral or multilateral, countries usually kick off with their highest demands. The goal is to lay down a broad claim so that they can later scale back and reach an agreement.

Reaching a deal always means running into red lines and tough positions, which can be worked through if the atmosphere allows for give and take. Each side tries to strike a balance — giving something to get something in return — toward a final agreement. So, Witkoff's announcement of a red line doesn't necessarily mean the talks are at an impasse.

Both sides seem to want a deal for different reasons. The US aims to put a lid on China's growing influence in the Middle East, especially the Persian Gulf, which China is trying to muscle into. Trump



THE ATLANTIC

wants to cut off China's hand in the region by controlling the situation, which requires a deal with Iran.

Iran also wants a deal, partly due to internal pressures, to lift sanctions while preserving its principles and improving the country's economic and political situation.

Persian Gulf Arab states, while not wanting to fan the flames of Iran-US tensions, have stated during Trump's Saudi visit that enrichment should be either allowed for every country in the region or not all for Iran as well. Could a regional nuclear consortium be a middle ground, and what is Iran's view?

The consortium idea is highly technical and requires expert input. What is certain is that Iran doesn't want to buy into handing over its enrichment equipment, skills, or technology to other countries or removing them from Iranian soil.

A workable model might allow Iran to keep its equipment and expertise domestically while collaborating with others on operation, construction, or sales. This could be hammered out in talks. But if the consortium means Iran loses control over these capabilities, it's unlikely Iran will sign off on it.

Other paths exist for enrichment agreements. The demand to "zero out" enrichment needs clarification. One option might be suspension — a temporary halt, not a full stop, which Iran has done before.

Suspension could be a step if matched by sanction relief. So, "zeroing out" could mean a condi-

tional, temporary suspension implemented step by step. However, Iran's foreign minister recently shot down this option, emphasizing enrichment will continue.

Iran's team and foreign minister have expressed doubts about the US side's seriousness and willpower. Does Trump's team genuinely want a deal, or are they just playing for time to justify other options later?

It doesn't seem Trump views these talks merely as a time-buying tactic or a public relations move to prepare for other options including military action.

Given Trump's recent trip to Riyadh and meetings with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, his

active regional presence aims to put a shine on economic and commercial ties. He wants to turn the Middle East into a platform for growth, trade, and profit.

Profit, investment, and economic development don't jive with war or military conflict. So, Trump is unlikely to use the talks as a smokescreen for future military options.

Europeans appear unhappy with being sidelined in Iran nuclear talks, and their pace with Iran doesn't match Iran-US talks. Will Europe become a stumbling block, and how can they be brought on board?

Europeans are upset about being left out in the cold by Trump on

major global issues like Ukraine and Gaza. They don't want to be sidelined on sanctions and the nuclear issue, which is crucial to their security.

For Europe, Iran's nuclear file is as important as Ukraine's file, and they want a seat at the table. Though sidelined so far, they hold a key lever — the "snapback" mechanism — the expiration time for which is rapidly approaching.

Using snapback has consequences for Iran. So, Iran could turn the tables by looping in Europe as indirect partners in the talks — not direct participants, which wouldn't be wise — but by keeping them in the loop on outcomes and impacts.



Negotiations are naturally volatile, and drawing red lines doesn't always mean a final stubborn stance. Sometimes these lines are put on the table to gain leverage, not to call off the talks. Every country has its own playbook in negotiations. Whether bilateral or multilateral, countries usually kick off with their highest demands. The goal is to lay down a broad claim so that they can later scale back and reach an agreement.



US President Donald Trump (L) holds up a pen given by Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on May 14, 2025.
ALEX BRANDON/AP

The foreign minister can keep the ball rolling with European visits and effective communication so Europe feels included and influential. This “shuttle diplomacy” can smooth things over and convince Europe they are indirectly involved. Europe’s role is critical due to snapback and US sanctions compliance. So, keeping them on side is essential.

How serious is the rift between the US and Israel on Iran?

The rift is real and unprecendented. The US has often centered its Middle East policy on Israel. However, now, the focus has shifted gears toward Riyadh and Persian Gulf states, largely sidelining Israel. This shift is a major opportunity for Iran to capitalize on the momentum and cement it. If Israel is kept out of the current Middle East tensions, Iran can widen the scope of talks beyond sanctions and enrichment to areas like energy, industry, and investment. With Israel out of the picture for now, Iran can broaden the agenda. This could make enrichment less of a sticking point as shared interests between Iran and the US take center stage. Such mutual interests could lead the US to back off on enrichment demands, especially if trust-building between the two countries gets off the ground. This trust could take the heat off enrichment as the main negotiation focus.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

Better to keep talks going: Former ambassador

INTERVIEW Negotiations between Iran and the United States briefly hit a snag due to recent statements by Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump’s special envoy for Middle East affairs, and the US officials’ insistence on a complete halt to Iran’s enrichment activities. Abbas Araghchi, Iran’s foreign minister, shot down this demand immediately, emphasizing that enrichment is a non-negotiable right of Iran and stating that no written proposals have been received from the US. Majid Takht-Ravanchi, deputy foreign minister, also warned that America’s insistence on zero enrichment would drive the talks into a dead end. These tough stances have cast a shadow over the success of the negotiations. Meanwhile, a fresh round of talks between Iran and three European countries took place in Istanbul, with both sides doubling down on diplomacy. Despite the cancellation of previous talks in Rome, these discussions point to Europe’s willingness to keep diplomacy alive, although some Iranian officials have flagged concerns about Europe potentially triggering the snapback mechanism. Ali-Akbar Farazi, Iran’s former ambassador to Romania, Hungary, and Cyprus, shed light on what these developments could mean for the future of the talks.



Ali-Akbar Farazi



Members of the Iranian delegation leave the Omani embassy, where the fifth round of US-Iran talks took place, in Rome, Italy, on May 23, 2025. ● GUGLIELMO MANGIAPANE/REUTERS

Although ups and downs in Iran-US talks were expected, Witkoff’s recent hardline remarks and repeating the non-negotiable “zero enrichment” stance have thrown a wrench into the process. So much so that Araghchi at first expressed Tehran’s hesitation to participate in the fifth round of talks. What’s your take on this, and how do you see the road ahead?

FARAZI: The path of negotiations, whether bilateral or multilateral, is rarely smooth or linear and is often fraught with fluctuations. Unfortunately, the American side has repeatedly fallen prey to external reports and pressures. Witkoff, who had previously shown up as a well-intentioned figure, this time came out swinging by questioning the very principle of enrichment on Iranian soil. This position, unlike earlier ones, echoes the views of hardliners who believe the Libya model could be applied to Iran. But the reality is that Iran’s conditions and current situation are worlds apart from those options being floated. In my view, both parties must lay their cards on the table during negotiations. One issue with recent talks was the American side frequently airing their views through the media. The media should be a place to report on negotiation outcomes, not a tool to broadcast positions. Putting your

cards on the table in the media before talks undercuts the other side’s hand. I firmly believe Iran will stand its ground on its fundamental red lines, especially regarding enrichment at the internationally accepted level (3.67%), which is Iran’s natural right. Of course, there are ways to bridge the gap and accommodate the other side’s concerns, but this requires hammering out differences at the negotiation table.

If the US sticks to its guns on rejecting enrichment, naturally Iran will double down on its right to normal-level enrichment. It’s important to note that unlike the countries mentioned by the US secretary of state, Iran has decades of experience in enrichment knowledge and is by no means willing to throw away this expertise. However, the enrichment level can be tweaked to reassure both sides and avoid giving the other

side any excuse. Iran’s scientific achievements, including the production of advanced medicines using nuclear energy, underscore the importance of this knowledge. I doubt the US can pull the rug out from under Iran’s peaceful nuclear energy program. Military use of this technology is out of the question for Iran and could serve as a common ground in talks. Ultimately, I believe that negotiation, even under the toughest conditions, is far better

than calling off dialogue. I hope neither side ever throws in the towel on talks.

Regarding Iran-Europe talks, the latest round in Istanbul saw both sides double down on diplomacy. Deputy Takht-Ravanchi recently noted apparent divisions within Europe. What’s your take? Do Europeans, proud of their role in the JCPOA, lack the will to regain their diplomatic footing?

Europe showed it couldn’t step up to the plate when Donald Trump walked away from the JCPOA. Now, by raising the snapback mechanism, it thinks it can cash in on rights beyond its legal limits. Europe must realize that our diplomatic ties shouldn’t be misused by others. Iran-US talks are moving forward on their own track, and Europe should jump on the bandwagon and seize this opportunity. Pushing talks with Europe could pave the way for expanded economic, trade, and even security ties with the continent. Europe must not sacrifice its own long-term interests in Iran because of internal disputes or party shifts. Iran-Europe historical relations, which have been beneficial in trade, economics, and security for both sides, need revamping and rebuilding. This depends on Europe’s foresight and prioritizing mutual interests.

You mentioned the snapback threat. It has been repeatedly brought up by European officials in Iran-Europe talks. Iran has responded that it has options and may reconsider its NPT membership if this mechanism is triggered. Isn’t Europe worried about losing its negotiation leverage with Iran?

Europe’s approach to snapback has been inconsistent. They think raising it can give them leverage to score concessions. But if these concessions aren’t met, any country, including Iran, may rethink its NPT participation. Hopefully, it won’t come to that. Europe must understand that using snapback won’t pay off. Instead, by fast-tracking trade and economic talks, they can open up vast opportunities that make snapback unnecessary. For this to happen, both Iran and Europe must step up the pace of negotiations. Iran is ready, and I hope Europe can get its act together. Success here could even send a positive signal to accelerate Iran-US talks.

“If the US sticks to its guns on rejecting enrichment, naturally Iran will double down on its right to normal-level enrichment. It’s important to note that unlike the countries mentioned by the US secretary of state, Iran has decades of experience in enrichment knowledge and is by no means willing to throw away this expertise.”



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi talks to reporters about the progress in talks with the US. ● IRNA

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

Asian Karate Championship:

Golshadnejad wins kumite gold as Iran finishes with seven medals



Iran's Atousa Golshadnejad (R) won the women's kumite -61kg gold at the Asian Karate Championship in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. ● IJF

Sports Desk

Iranian girl Atousa Golshadnejad won her third individual medal in as many years at the Asian Karate Championship, grabbing the gold in the kumite contests in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on Sunday. Having beaten opponents from India, China, and Japan en route to the final showpiece, Golshadnejad – Asian champion in 2023 – came out victorious against the host's Sevinch Otaboyeva to walk away with the ultimate prize of the -61kg weight class. This was a second medal in Tashkent for Golshadnejad, who was part of the Iranian bronze-winning kumite team. The Iranian team suffered a last-four setback against Kazakhstan, but bounced back to defeat the Chinese Taipei 2-1 in the third-place bout, with Golshadnejad and Ma'soumeh Mohsenian victorious against their opponents. Meanwhile, Fatemeh Sa'adati set-

tled for a silver medal in the women's -55kg event after a 5-0 loss to defending champion Hoang Thi My Tam of Vietnam – a second Asian medal for the Iranian girl following her bronze in 2023. Sara Bahmanyar (-50kg) had won a first female kumite medal for Iran in the Uzbek capital, beating Chan Hsin-Yu of the Chinese Taipei 4-3 in the third-place bout to take her personal tally to three Asian bronzes since 2022. The men's event, meanwhile, was one to forget for Iran as the country could only manage to collect a couple of silver medals, plus a team kata bronze, across nine categories. Morteza Ne'mati enjoyed an impressive run to reach the -75kg final, only to suffer a 5-3 loss to Kazakhstan's Nurkanat Azhikanov and take the silver. The Iranian kumite team – five-time Asian champion over the past eight years – also finished its campaign with a silver medal fol-

lowing a 3-2 defeat against Jordan. Ne'mati and Esmaeil Mo'tamedi came out on top against their Jordanian opponents, but Mahdi A'ashouri, Saleh Abazari, and Mahmoud Ne'mati lost their bouts. The Iranian trio of Abolfazl Shahrjerdi, Milad Farazmehr, and Ali Zand had won a joint bronze – alongside Hong Kong – in the team kata event thanks to a victory over Vietnam in the third-place playoff. A haul of one gold, as well as three silver and bronze medals apiece, saw Iran finish fifth in the overall team standings. Kazakhstan collected four golds, one silver, and five bronze medals to top the table, with Japan (three golds), Vietnam (three), and Jordan (two) in the following spots. Meanwhile, the Iranian para karate squad claimed the team title in Tashkent, thanks to a remarkable seven medals – including double golds Ma'soumeh Iji and Farzad Safari.

Iranian Hazfi Cup:

Esteghlal beats San'at to set final date with Malavan

Sports Desk

Bijan Koushki and Masoud Juma scored in each half as Esteghlal defeated San'at Naft Abadan 2-0 at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Saturday to progress to the Iranian Hazfi Cup final.

Desperate to end a dreadful campaign with a piece the silverware, the Capital Blues started right on the front foot against their second-tier opponent but had to wait until the 44th minute to break the deadlock, when Koushki's bouncing header found the far corner of the net.

Kenyan Juma headed home Ramin Rezaeian's corner-kick at the near post just before the hour mark to put clear daylight between the Blues and the visitors, who missed out on a top-flight place last week after finishing fourth in the Iranian second division table.

Interim coach Mojtaba Jabbari, the sixth coach in charge of the Esteghlal bench this season, was thrilled to see his players "enjoy their football again, while the fans were pleased by their team's performance."

"We have skilled and talented players in the final third, which is why we are good with creating

chances. The players remained patient throughout the first half, as they knew that if they scored the first goal, more opportunities would come their way," added the former Blues midfielder. Standing between Esteghlal and a record eighth domestic cup crown in Thursday's final is three-time champion Malavan FC.

Malavan booked a place in the showdown on the preceding night, thanks to a 1-0 victory at Golgozar Sirjan – courtesy of a

Reza Ja'fari's strike 15 minutes from normal time.

As if Malavan and Esteghlal – seventh and ninth in the newly-finished Persian Gulf Pro League season, respectively – needed more reason to go all out for glory on Thursday, the winner of the game will secure a spot at next season's AFC Champions League Two.

Last time the two sides met in the final showpiece, Malavan came out victorious in the shootout to lift the trophy in March 1991.



Esteghlal striker Masoud Juma (C) celebrates his goal with teammates during a 2-0 victory over San'at Naft Abadan in the Iranian Hazfi Cup semifinals at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on May 24, 2025. ● MOJTABA SALEH/MIZAN

Asian Belt Wrestling Alysh Championships:

Iran grabs six FS medals to claim women's team title



● IAWF

Sports Desk

Iranian girls finished their campaign at the Asian Belt Wrestling Alysh Championships on a high, grabbing six freestyle medals on Saturday to claim the team title in New Delhi.

Mobina Mirzapour (70kg), and Sahar Ghanizadeh (75kg) walked away with the ultimate prize of their respective freestyle classes on the penultimate day of the event to make

a clean sweep of double golds in the Indian capital.

Roqayeh Mahmoudabadi – a classic champion on the preceding night – had to settle for a runner-up finish in the 65kg contests, while Marzieh Khandan collected her second silver medal in the 55kg weight class. Fatemeh Fattahi (60kg) and Ez-zat Qorbani-Sani (+75kg), who won a silver and bronze medal in the classic competitions, respectively, added a couple bronzes to Iran's medal haul as

the country tallied 120 points to finish runner-up to Kyrgyzstan (130 points) in the women's freestyle standings, with Kazakhstan (107pts) and India (75) in the following spots.

However, Iranian girls still managed to win the overall team crown with 250 points, having lifted the classic trophy on Friday.

Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan followed Iran in the table with 235 and 217 points, respectively.

Timberwolves thrash Thunder to cut deficit in West finals

BBC – The Minnesota Timberwolves thrashed the Oklahoma City Thunder 143-101 to claim their first win of the NBA Western Conference play-off finals.

Anthony Edwards scored 30 points and Julius Randle 24 at Target Center in Minneapolis as the Timberwolves set a club record for points scored in a play-off game.

They trail 2-1 in the best-of-seven series, which continues at the same venue on Tuesday at 01:30 BST.

"I was super happy about the physicality and energy we brought," Edwards said. "Being down 2-0, it's all about bringing energy, and we brought high energy."

Oklahoma's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, who was this week

named the NBA's Most Valuable Player (MVP) and who scored a combined 69 points in the first two games, managed only 14.

"We got punched in the mouth," he said.

"We just didn't have it. They had the sense of urgency knowing if they go down 3-0 it's going to be pretty tough. "It's about getting back up; it's about responding. That's

what the next challenge is." The Timberwolves have lost only one of their past 11 games at Target Center.



Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards (5) shoots during a win against the Oklahoma City Thunder in the NBA Western Conference play-off finals in Minneapolis, MN, US, on May 24, 2025. ● ABBIE PARR/AP



Iran's medical tourism combines quality healthcare with rich cultural, religious experiences



By Leila Imeni
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

Medical tourism refers to the travel of individuals to other countries to receive medical, dental, or health services. This sector has become one of the fastest-growing parts of the global tourism industry, driven by increasing treatment costs in developed countries and advancements in medical technologies in developing nations. Beyond enhancing individual health, medical tourism also contributes significantly to the economy of the host country.

Iran, with its team of experienced doctors, advanced medical equipment, and cost-effective healthcare services, has secured a prominent position in the global health tourism landscape. The country has become a popular destination for patients seeking high-quality medical treatments at lower costs compared to Western countries.

With the development of specialized treatment centers offering a wide range of services across various medical fields, Iran is recognized as a leading health tourism hub regionally and worldwide. Iranian medical and healthcare facilities operate in areas such as cosmetic surgery, dentistry, ophthalmology, cardiology, organ transplants, and infertility treatments, providing a comprehensive spectrum of medical services.

This diversity attracts patients from around the world with different needs who wish to benefit from treatments tailored to their specific requirements. One of the most significant advantages of medical tourism in Iran is its affordability; many procedures that are prohibitively expensive elsewhere are offered here at much more accessible rates. This economic benefit has made Iran an appealing destination for those seeking high-quality healthcare at lower costs.



Dr. Farzaneh Ghasemzadeh



Furthermore, Iranian healthcare providers and hospitals adhere to international standards, employing trained specialists and delivering reliable, high-quality services. This commitment to quality has earned the trust of both domestic and international patients, establishing Iran as a top destination in medical tourism. Another key point is Iran's utilization of modern medical technologies. Digital equipment and innovative treatment methods keep the country competitive on the international stage and attract patients seeking advanced treatments.

In addition to healthcare, Iran offers rich cultural, historical, and religious attractions, including renowned pilgrimage sites. Patients have the opportunity to enjoy a blend of medical care and cultural

and religious experiences during their stay, making Iran a unique and attractive destination for health tourism.

In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Dr. Farzaneh Ghasemzadeh, chairperson of an eye hospital in Mashhad, said that the health tourists visiting the hospital come from many countries around the world, including Europe and Arab countries. Europeans are divided into two groups: first, Iranians living in Europe, and second, native Europeans who are in Mashhad for various reasons. Additionally, some of these patients are dual nationals from Afghanistan, coming from Germany or other European countries.

She emphasized that most health tourists in Mashhad are from Persian Gulf countries, Arab nations, as well as Turkmenistan, Ta-

jikistan, and Afghanistan. Ghasemzadeh continued that the specialized ophthalmology hospital under his management is one of the most equipped hospitals in the eastern part of the country. However, the fees charged to patients are lower than many countries, including private hospitals in Iraq. She also mentioned that the quality of services and the human resources currently working in this field in Iran, especially in Mashhad, are unmatched anywhere else in the world.

The ophthalmologist spoke about how to attract foreign health tourists to Mashhad, saying that this is usually done through tour leaders and interpreters coordinating travel tours. The system in Iran has not yet been developed enough for travel agencies to actively and extensively attract tourists in this sector. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of patients come through tour leaders and interpreters, while the remaining 10 to 20 percent are those who speak English themselves.

"In fact, most of the patients coming to Mashhad are Shia Muslims traveling for both pilgrimage and treatment."

Dr. Ghasemzadeh discussed the issues and challenges that need to be addressed to increase the number of tourists seeking treatment in Iran. She said, "Medical tourism is itself a science and an independent field. When implementing medical tourism, all stages must be managed from start to finish. It's not just about

the medical aspect; other factors are also important." "For example, Turkey currently leads the world in medical tourism because for example after heart surgeries, patients can stay on beautiful islands there, find hotels, and these places are recognized as rehabilitation and relaxation hubs. The main issue is having a comprehensive medical tourism package that includes flights, accommodation, pre- and post-treatment proce-

Even flight bookings and appointment scheduling are managed by them.

"After providing medical services to the tourists, when they leave, if they are able to return, we follow up with them. If they can come back after some time, that's excellent — the return time depends on the type of illness and the services they received. If they cannot return, we provide all their documents and also send an explanation to their doctor, saying they should definitely consult a physician in their home country with these documents."

"We have a long way to go," she emphasized, noting that the ministries of foreign affairs and health must cooperate and coordinate with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Ministry in this field. Because, if managed properly, medical tourism can bring immense wealth to the country if it is given the proper attention," she concluded.

Deputy Head of Khorasan Razavi Province's Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization for Tourism Affairs, Yousef Bidkhori, said earlier that



dures, post-surgery care, and even conditions for being in a healthy and suitable environment so patients do not get infected and maintain their health."

She said that in Iran, most of these activities are carried out in a traditional and unorganized manner. For example, there are no specific or comprehensive packages. Instead, tour leaders handle these tasks. Some leaders, with limited training, arrange packages such as hotel reservations, hiring drivers, and selecting doctors.

59 hospitals and medical centers in Mashhad have received IPD permits (licenses granted to establish an International Patient Department) from the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, to accept medical tourists.

He added that the Tourism Department of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts has issued medical tourism permits to various travel agencies and service providers. These agencies, many of which are based abroad — par-



ticularly in Afghanistan — help facilitate the process for medical tourists. Patients can register with these companies, book appointments, follow their treatment plans, and receive care at authorized hospitals. Post-treatment services are also available if needed.

Bidkhori noted, "A plan to develop and implement a software system for managing medical tourism — initially piloted in Khorasan Razavi Province — will be expanded at the national level in the near future."

He emphasized that "delegating hospital coordination to private sector providers while maintaining regulatory oversight would ensure patients

leave satisfied and can easily pursue follow-up care in their home countries, thereby significantly improving healthcare quality."

Mashhad, hosting the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), is not only a religious tourism hub but also a prominent center for medical tourism. The city boasts highly capable specialized hospitals offering a wide range of services — from heart surgery and complex medical treatments to cosmetic procedures and infertility treatments. Several private hospitals excel in ophthalmology with advanced facilities, making Mashhad a key destination for diverse medical needs.





Three Iranian shorts head to London's Rainbow International Film Festival

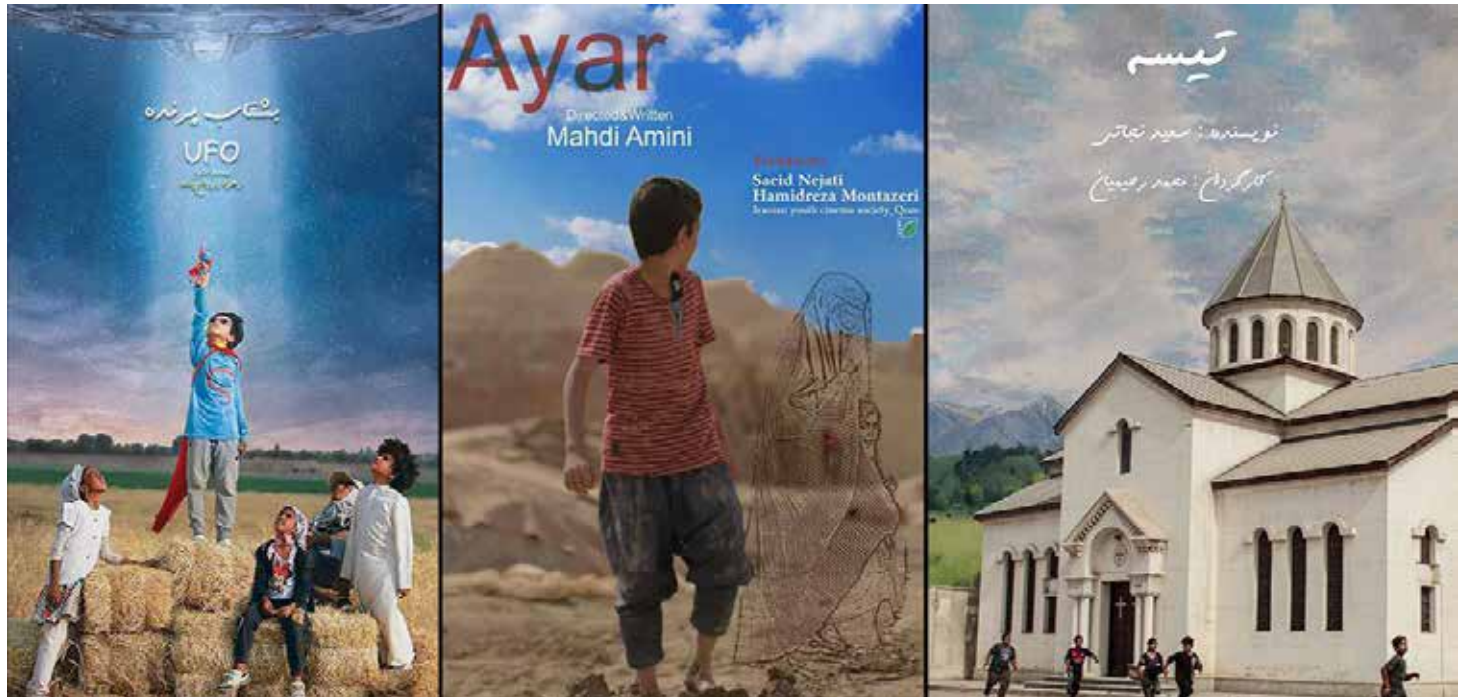
Arts & Culture Desk

Three Iranian short films will compete at the 26th Rainbow International Film Festival in London, organizers said. The films 'Ayar', 'UFO', and 'Tiseh' are all focused on children and young audiences and will be shown in the short film section of the festival, which runs from May 25 to June 1, IRNA reported.

'Ayar', written and directed by Mehdi Amini and produced by Hamidreza Montazeri and Saeid Nejati, has already picked up international attention. The film previously won a special award at the 35th International Children's Film Festival in Iran. 'UFO', directed by Zahra Yazdanpanah and also produced by Montazeri and Nejati, is a co-production between Iran's Sacred Defense Cinema Association and the Foundation of Cultural Narratives. The project involved regional backing from the Kerman Province department of veterans' affairs.

'Tiseh', directed by Mohammad Rahimian and co-produced by the Abadan Youth Cinema Association and Nejati, rounds out the trio. Like the others, it also screened at the 53rd Roshd International Film Festival earlier this year.

The Rainbow International Film Festival is closely affiliated with the Dhaka International Film Festival and is known for showcasing emerging voices and independent films. This year's edition features 14 shorts and 22 features from across the globe.



ECO Cultural Institute to open Iranian art show on environment

Arts & Culture Desk

Self-taught Iranian artists will open a major cultural event at the ECO Cultural Institute in Tehran on June 1, launching the Ninth National Exhibition that merges art with a call for environmental awareness. "This is more than just a display—it's a celebration of raw talent and responsibility," said Saad S. Khan, President of the ECO Cultural Institute, during a press conference on May 25, Mehr News Agency reported. The show, featuring works by 31 artists

in sculpture, carpet weaving, and painting, highlights the creativity of individuals with no formal training. But its broader mission is to use art as a tool for cultural exchange and ecological advocacy.

"We want this exhibition to travel across ECO member states," ECI head said. "It's a platform to share values and strengthen artistic bonds between our nations."

Ali Ezzati, founder of the Iranian Self-Taught Artists Association, called the event a milestone. "This ninth edition uncovers hidden layers of innovation in self-taught art," he said. "It's a new narrative in our art history."

Psychologist Shiva Dolatabadi praised the inner drive of these artists. "True art springs from within,"

she said. "Their passion carries the power to inspire and endure." Ecologist Hayedeh Shirzadi, who founded an environmental NGO in 1998, underlined the show's ecological focus. "We ignored social ecology—and now we're facing a crisis," she said. "Artists can help restore that balance."

Shirzadi emphasized the importance of environmental education and stronger laws. "Waste is one of Iran's biggest pollutants," she said. "Without a national waste management law, we can't move forward."

Behnam Zangi, head of the Saba Cultural Institute, said the exhibition reflects shared duty. "Art has a social role. These voices matter," he said. The exhibit runs June 1 to 6 at the ECO Cultural Institute in Tehran.

Iran launches national plan to protect endangered Caspian seals

Social Desk

Iran has rolled out a national action plan to protect the endangered Caspian seal, following the discovery of 18 dead seals along the country's northern coastline over the past two months, local environmental authorities said.

Mohammadreza Kanani, acting head of the Mazandaran Department of Environment, told Iran's state-run IRNA on May 25 that the plan was being implemented in partnership with Tarbiat Modares University's Noor campus and the Caspian Seal Rescue Center.

The Caspian seal, *Pusa caspica*, is the only marine mammal native to the world's largest enclosed inland body of water and is now listed as "endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Once found in the tens of thousands, the population has dropped drastically in recent decades.

"The discovery of 18 carcasses since

late March is alarming," Kanani said. "We are taking this seriously. The species faces threats from habitat loss, pollution, climate change, and viral infections."

He said many of the bodies had washed ashore days after death, making autopsy difficult due to decomposition. Daily shoreline monitoring, veterinary coordination for sampling, and joint marine patrols are now underway.

The national plan includes the establishment of a permanent secretariat at Tarbiat Modares University in Noor and the upgrade of three regional rescue centers in the coastal cities of Behshahr, Babolsar, and Tonekabon.

Ruhollah Esmaeili, deputy head of biodiversity and wildlife in the Mazandaran environment office, said the latest seal carcasses were found along the shores of Miankaleh, Juybar, and Abbasabad. "All were badly decomposed," he said, "and it was not possible to determine exact causes of death."

He urged the public — especially fish-

ers and beachgoers — to report sightings of seals or carcasses to local environment offices or via the national hotline.

Caspian seals, which have no external ears, migrate seasonally, often coming to Iran's southern Caspian waters in warmer months and breeding on the ice-covered northern shores in winter. They are considered a key indicator of the Caspian Sea's ecological health.

Iran's only seal rescue center was established in 2010 on Ashuradeh Island near Bandar Torkaman. Between its founding and early 2018, the facility treated and released more than 80 seals. Its mission also includes training, public awareness, and cross-border conservation work.

"The Caspian Sea doesn't belong to one nation," Kanani said. "We need coordinated action with Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan to safeguard this species."

The Caspian Sea is highly vulnerable to environmental pressures due to its



closed nature. Pollution from oil, agriculture, and industry has intensified in recent years, impacting fish stocks and wildlife.

Iranian officials stressed that the effort to save the Caspian seal is not just a provincial duty, but a national and international commitment.