

'France lacks moral authority' to lecture Iran: *FM*

8 >



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Leader hopes for settlement of India-Pakistan disputes

Sharif: Islamabad upholds Tehran's right to peaceful nuclear energy 2 >



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (r) holds talks with visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (c) during a meeting also attended by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in Tehran on May 26, 2025.

● khamenei.ir

Iran, Oman set stage for stronger ties



By Emad Abshenas
Middle East affairs expert

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian's trip to Oman, which begins today, is an official visit directly tied to bilateral relations between the two nations; a visit, which according to Oman's Foreign Ministry, reflects the longstanding friendly relations between the two countries. It comes as a follow-up to an earlier trip made by the Sultan of Oman to Iran. Given current regional and global developments, bolstering ties between Iran and Oman has been pushed to the top of the agenda. Pezeshkian's visit includes in-depth discussions aimed at fleshing out opportunities for strengthening relations, with a series of agreements and memoranda of understanding expected to be signed. Oman has long maintained an am-

icable relationship with Iran. The people of Oman share deep cultural and historical connections with the Iranian people, and a portion of Omani citizens are of Iranian descent. Historically, in times when no formal borders existed between the two nations, Omanis and Iranians moved back and forth freely. This longstanding bond could arguably be described as Iran's oldest historical relationship with any regional country. Over the past years, Iran and Oman have elevated their political relations to a high level. However, as officials from both countries have previously stated, there is a pressing need for economic and tourism ties to catch up with the depth of their political relationship as well. Iran currently maintains strong economic and tourism relations with countries like the UAE, and there is considerable potential for Iran and Oman to step up their cooperation in these areas as well.

Page 2 >



Mobarakeh Steel Group pioneering smart industrial ecosystem

3 >



Diplomatic distance doesn't mean diplomacy stops

OPINION

4 >



Prodigy vs. Veteran: Iran's 86kg world spot on the line in Tehran showdown

6 >

Pakistan reaffirms commitment to regional cooperation



By Almas Haider Naqvi
Executive director,
Regional Rapport

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

Against the backdrop of rising tensions between Pakistan and India, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Tehran can be seen as part of a broader diplomatic push to carve out a new regional role for Islamabad amid ongoing developments. The trip is a key stop on Sharif's regional tour of friendly nations, which, according to Pakistan's Foreign Ministry, aims to hash out bilateral, regional, and international issues. Yet, beyond the official rhetoric, the diplomatic move carries strategic messages, with Tehran as one of its main audiences.

Page 8 >

Leader hopes for settlement of India-Pakistan disputes

Sharif: Islamabad upholds Tehran's right to peaceful nuclear energy

International Desk

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Monday expressed hope for the settlement of differences between Pakistan and India, which once again bubbled up following a recent military conflict between the two neighboring countries. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Tehran – the second leg of his four-nation tour which began with Turkey and will take him to Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. The Leader expressed his satisfaction with the end of the military conflict between Pakistan and India, which was triggered by an April 22 attack in Indian-controlled Kashmir, in which 26 tourists were killed. India blamed Pakistan for the attack and launched an operation on its neighbor, which provoked Islamabad's retaliation. More than 70 people were killed during the clashes that began on May 7 and lasted for four days. However, both sides reached

a cease-fire agreement on May 10 following the brief period of hostilities. Earlier in the day, the Pakistani prime minister in a joint press conference with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian underlined that Islamabad wants peace. "We pursue peace through dialogue; we are willing to resolve issues such as Kashmir through dialogue and in accordance with the resolutions of the (UN) Security Council." He also appreciated Pezeshkian's expression of concern at the height of the recent military confrontation between Pakistan and India. "I appreciate your brotherly feelings towards the people of Pakistan," Sharif told Pezeshkian. During the joint press conference on Monday, Pezeshkian said Tehran welcomes the establishment of the cease-fire and peace between Pakistan and India. "Undoubtedly, resolving disputes through dialogue and peaceful ways is a prerequisite for sustainable development and guarantees security at the national, re-

gional, and international levels" Pezeshkian said.

Iran's peaceful nuclear energy

The Pakistani prime minister also said on Monday that Islamabad fully supports Iran's right to use peaceful nuclear energy, as the Islamic Republic is engaged in negotiations with the US on its nuclear program. He also described as "constructive" a joint meeting earlier held between the high-ranking Iranian and Pakistani delegations, saying that, "We are seeking to reach agreements in the field of trade and economic cooperation with our neighboring country, Iran." Pezeshkian also referred to the joint meeting, saying that Iran and Pakistan emphasized the expansion of political, economic, cultural, and international cooperation in the meeting. The Iranian president also strongly condemned the continuation of the Israel's crimes against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the silence of some Western



countries on the issue and their support for the Israeli regime. "We call on all Islamic countries to adopt

a unified and decisive position in full support of the oppressed people of Palestine and Gaza," he said.

No interim nuclear deal with US on agenda: Foreign Ministry

Pezeshkian asserts Iran's survival despite possible failure of talks

International Desk

Iran ruled out media reports that it has agreed with an interim nuclear deal and suspension of uranium enrichment for three years to reach an agreement with the US on its nuclear program. Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei dismissed in his weekly press conference that a provisional agreement was being considered as a temporary step towards a final deal during the latest round of negotiations, which was held in Italy on Friday. Asked about reports that Iran could freeze enrichment for three years, Baqaei said, "Iran will never accept that." Iran is waiting for further details from mediator Oman regarding the timing of the sixth round of talks, he said. "If there is goodwill from the American side, we are also optimistic, but if negotiations are aimed at curbing Iran's rights, then talks will get nowhere," he added. The uranium enrichment has come into focus in recent weeks, with Iran staunchly defending its right to enrich uranium as part of its civilian nuclear program, while the United States wants it to stop. US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, who is leading the talks for Washington, said the United States "could not authorize even one percent" of enrichment by Iran. Iran insists it has the right to a civilian

nuclear program, including for energy, and considers the US demand a red line that violates the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which it is a signatory. The negotiations, which began in April, are the highest-level contact between the two sides since the United States quit a landmark 2015 nuclear accord during US President Donald Trump's first term. Since returning to office, Trump has revived his "maximum pressure" campaign on the Islamic republic, backing diplomacy but warning of military action if it fails. Following the latest round of Omani-mediated talks in Rome, Iran's foreign minister and lead negotiator Abbas Araghchi downplayed the progress, stressing, "The negotiations are too complicated to be resolved in two or three meetings."

'Very, very good' talks

But on Sunday Trump said the ongoing discussions had been "very, very good." "I think we could have some good news on the Iran front," he said, adding that an announcement could come "over the next two days." "I don't know if I'll be telling you anything good or bad over the next two days, but I have a feeling I might be telling you something good," he said. No date has yet been set for the next talks, according to Iran's Foreign Ministry. Abbas Araghchi on Sunday described



the negotiations as a "battle of wills," saying that the talks will yield results once the rights of the Iranian people are secured. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a meeting with the members of Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, the Iranian foreign minister said Tehran is neither in any rush to reach an agreement with the US nor causing delays in the talks. However, he said that the officials will do their utmost to lift sanctions as soon as possible but not at the expense of Iranians' rights. President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday that Iran would be able to survive if negotiations fail to secure a deal. "It's not like we will die of hunger if they refuse to negotiate with us or impose sanctions," Pezeshkian said. "We will find a way to survive." Pezeshkian said Iran is "more powerful than ever" thanks to its scientists and elites, adding that if the Islamic Republic is sanctioned instead of engaged in diplomacy, it has "hundreds" of effective alternatives ready.

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill over 50 in school-turned-shelter, home

Iran: Attacks on refugee camps clear example of war crime

International Desk

Israeli attacks on northern Gaza killed more than 50 people on Monday as attacks on civilian infrastructure are rising amid the regime's intensified offensive on the Palestinian territory. Among the targets hit was a school sheltering displaced people in Gaza City and a family home in Jabalia, according to Palestinian Civil Defense officials. At least 33 people were killed in an attack in the middle of the night on the Fahmi al-Jarjawi school in the Daraj neighborhood of Gaza City, Civil Defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal told the AFP news agency. The school had been sheltering "hundreds" of people, Bassal said, adding that those killed were mostly children and women. Dozens were injured, he added. The Israeli military claimed on Monday that the target of the attack had been a Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad control center. In a separate attack on a residence in the town of Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip, 19 members of the Abd Rabbo family were killed, according to Bassal. A nearby tent camp in Gaza City was also targeted, according to unconfirmed reports, killing six people. The attacks came days after an Israeli air strike hit the home of a doctor and killed nine of her 10 children. Nasser hospital said one of Dr Alaa al-Najjar's children and her husband were injured, but survived. Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Monday that the regime's attacks on refugee camps is a clear example of a war crime and in line with the genocide of the Palestinian people. Baqaei said that Israel has intensified its crimes against defenseless Palestinians on a daily basis



due to the silence and lack of effective international action and knows no boundaries in its brutality and violation of international norms. Despite mounting international pressure, which has pushed Israel to lift a blockade on aid supplies in the face of warnings of looming famine, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated last week that Israel would carry out an intensified military campaign until it controls the whole of Gaza. International humanitarian law forbids attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools. But Israel has repeatedly bombed schools, mostly being used as shelter by displaced people, throughout its 19-month war in Gaza. The Israeli attacks have triggered international criticism, with European and Arab leaders meeting in Spain calling for an end to the "inhumane" and "senseless" war. In Germany, Chancellor Friedrich Merz voiced unusually strong criticism of Israel, saying, "I no longer understand what the Israeli army is now doing in the Gaza Strip, with what goal." The impact on Gazan civilians "can no longer be justified," he added. Nevertheless, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said Berlin would continue selling weapons to Tel Aviv.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran, Oman set...

Iran and Oman remain in close contact regarding regional affairs and unfolding developments. The Islamic Republic has consistently welcomed Oman's role as a mediator, viewing Muscat's decades-long policy of neutrality as a stabilizing force in regional and international diplomacy. Oman has stuck to its neutral stance and has managed to pull it off with notable success, often stepping in when tensions flare up between regional players. This has included disputes between Iran and Saudi Arabia, between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, between the UAE and Yemen. Oman also waded into rifts involving Arab states and Qatar, which ended in 2021. Neutrality and diplomatic skills

have made Oman a go-to player in resolving high-stakes regional disputes, something has always been welcomed by Iran. Oman's reputation as a skilled mediator has grown further, as it plays a key role in mediating indirect nuclear negotiations between Iran and the United States. President Pezeshkian's trip follows contacts between top Iranian and Omani officials, who have remained in touch amid tensions in West Asia, which have been escalating since the onset of the Gaza war in early October 2023. The Israeli aggression against in the Palestinian territory has been one of the main topics raised in talks between Iranian and Omani officials.

While Muscat has kept a neutral posture in many international crises, it is natural that both the Omani public and leadership, like much of the world, are deeply disturbed by the suffering of the Palestinian people because of Israeli atrocities. Iran, Oman, and numerous other countries have been calling for a cease-fire, but the main obstacle remains the refusal of the Israeli regime to halt its military campaign. Moreover, Israel has outright dismissed the notion of third-party mediation, largely due to the protective umbrella extended by the United States. Such backing has shielded Israel from pressure, giving it the sense that it is immune to international calls for de-escalation.

Iran using advanced tech for new field discoveries: Deputy oil minister

Economy Desk

Iran's deputy oil minister announced that the country is ahead of its scheduled exploration targets, expressing hope that leveraging advanced technologies will enable access to new oil fields. Speaking at a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of Iran's first oil discovery, Hamid Bovard voiced optimism that by utilizing modern technologies, "we can access new fields (albeit smaller) and create opportunities for the private sector to participate through Iran Petroleum Contract (IPC) contracts or other contractual models." The head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) emphasized the need to prioritize shale and unconventional

oil resources, stating, "Lorestan shale oil must be seriously addressed." He noted that while accessing large fields has become more challenging, a significant number of oil fields remain undeveloped across the country.

Commercializing shale oil output

Meanwhile, Mohieddin Jafari, exploration director of the NIOC, highlighted ongoing efforts in shale oil development, saying, "Research initiatives in this field have enabled us to extract up to two barrels of oil per ton of shale rock in certain areas." "With adequate funding, plans to commercialize these resources will be prioritized," he said. During the commemoration event, Jafari referred to the southwestern city

of Masjed Soleyman as the birthplace of Iran's oil industry, saying, "117 years ago today (May 26), the Middle East's first oil discovery occurred here, paving the way for global energy giants to emerge. The world's oil industry owes its legacy to Masjed Soleyman." Jafari went on to say that, "Our focus is on harnessing new hydrocarbon potentials, particularly through shale oil research. We've achieved extraction rates of two barrels per ton of shale in select regions, and with financial support, we aim to transition toward commercial-scale production." Expressing optimism about future discoveries, he concluded, "Finding massive oil and gas fields — even on the scale of South Pars — remains within reach."



IRNA

IMIDRO: Foreign investment deals guarantee machinery manufacturing



IRNA

Economy Desk

The head of the Iranian Mines & Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) placed a premium on ongoing negotiations and agreements with foreign companies aimed at securing financing and foreign investment. "Foreign investment will be operationalized in the near future through collaboration with domestic contractors," Mohammad Aqajanloo said on Monday, as reported by IRNA. Addressing the National Mining Day commemoration ceremony in Tehran, attended by the minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade, Aqajanloo emphasized, "Foreign partners will prioritize the production of next-generation, high-capacity mining machinery by selecting Iranian contractors." He also highlighted IMIDRO's support for domestic manufacturing and mining equipment over the past two years, adding, "The Mining Activities Insurance Fund has played a significant role in this support, while streamlined import permit approvals have also been facilitated." The deputy minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade addressed the composition of imported machinery, noting, "Over the past two years, both new and used machinery have entered the country, though second-hand equipment has dominated imports." Aqajanloo identified productivity as the key driver behind the mining sector's 13% growth, stating, "45% of the growth stems from productivity gains, partly achievable through modernized equipment. Continuing with outdated machinery or fluctuating fuel prices lacks economic viability."

The deputy minister linked enhanced mining productivity to technological advancement and digital transformation, explaining, "IMIDRO is collaborating with the Ministry of Communications to expand fiber-optic infrastructure and interconnect mining data hubs. Coordination with the vice president for science and technology has also been established." He further announced support for knowledge-based companies and partnerships with universities to identify and develop cutting-edge mining technologies. "Three pilot mines — an open-pit, an underground, and a processing site — have been selected for smart mining integration," he said, adding, "If successful, this model will be expanded to other mines nationwide." The IMIDRO chairman also outlined plans to transfer 270 exploration licenses through regional and provincial packages.

Seven-fold hike in exploration

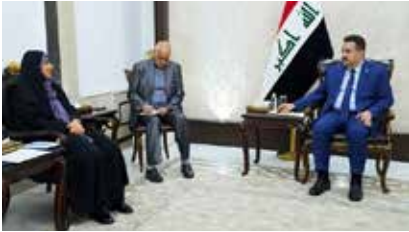
Meanwhile, Dariush Esmaeili, head of the Geological Survey of Iran, announced at the National Mining Day event, "Under the minister's directives, exploration services will expand to 6-7 times historical levels this Iranian calendar year (began on March 20, 2025) through private sector collaboration." "Our strategic focus maximizes private sector capacity in both service delivery and exploration investment, supported by comprehensive planning," he emphasized. Esmaeili added, "Addressing geological risks — including water resources, earthquakes, subsidence, dust storms, and other challenges — remains a core governmental mandate of this organization."

Iran, Iraq underscore completion of Shalamcheh-Basra railway

Economy Desk

Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al-Sudani, during his meeting with Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Farzaneh Sadeq, stressed the expansion of rail and transit cooperation between the two countries and the necessity of completing the Shalamcheh-Basra railway to facilitate the transportation of pilgrims in Arbadeen. Sudani emphasized enhancing rail and transit collaboration, particularly in the development route project, and underscored the urgency of finalizing the Shalamcheh-Basra railway, IRNA reported. He described the project as critical for transporting pilgrims from both countries and Central Asia, especially during the Arbadeen pilgrimage. Arbadeen 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 the Iraqi city of Karbala to mark Arbadeen, where the holy shrine of Imam Hossein is located. Sadeq traveled to Iraq with the aim of developing transportation relations and inspecting the Shalamcheh-Basra railway project. Prior to meeting the Iraqi prime minister, she also held discussions with Razzaq Muhaibis, Iraq's minister of transport, and Abdul Amir al-Shamri, Iraq's minister of interior. During an earlier meeting with Iraq's transport minister, Sadeq stated that transportation cooperation between the two countries is "satisfactory" and stressed, "Iraq must accelerate the construction of the Shalamcheh-Basra railway by handing over demined land." With the completion of demining operations along the Shalamcheh-Basra railway route, the implementation of the critical cross-border project by Iran's Ministry



IRNA
Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al-Sudani (R) meets Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq in Baghdad on May 26, 2025.

of Roads and Urban Development will proceed according to the predetermined schedule. The plan includes three main components, such as constructing the Shalamcheh railway station, building the Shalamcheh passenger terminal and completing the Basra drawbridge.

Mobarakeh Steel Group pioneering smart industrial ecosystem

Economy Desk

A trilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) for joint collaboration in advancing research, technology, and innovation across Iran's steel industry value chain and related infrastructure was signed on Monday by Iranian Minister of Science, Research, and Technology Hossein Simaei Sarraf, Vice President for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy Hossein Afshin, and CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Group Saeed Zarandi. During the meeting, Zarandi said Mobarakeh Steel Group's focus is "on producing high value-added products," adding that, "In the first half of this year (began on March 20, 2025), we will prioritize the production of electrical and stainless steels as key projects, with their revenue potential exceeding fivefold that of other products." Our orientation towards producing high value-added products stems from our desire to advance innovation, Zarandi underlined. Mobarakeh Steel Group is transitioning from being merely a production-focused industrial enterprise to leading an intelligent and sustainable industrial ecosystem, with an emphasis on technological innovation, transparency in the supply chain, and value creation. We strive to continue the measures taken in this field centered on the innovation environment and leveraging advancements in artificial intelligence and digital transformation, the steel group's head said.



Zarandi highlighted energy costs as a critical concern, saying, "Unfortunately, Mobarakeh Steel Group's energy expenses will rise from 26 trillion tomans (≈ \$317.07 million USD) in last Iranian calendar year – 1403 (began on March 20, 2024) to 52 trillion tomans (\$634.15 million USD) this year. We are activating smart technology companies to reduce at least 10% of these costs through innovative energy solutions. Producing high value-added goods remains a national priority." Stressing the need to compete globally in high value-added sectors, he noted, "Global markets are segmented based on complex product manufacturing. We must ensure we remain aligned with cutting-edge technologies." Zarandi stated, "The process of implementing the law of leap in knowledge-based production has not been done as it should, and if the knowledge-based production leap law is implemented correctly, it can be a good

stimulus for the country's industries." Detailing collaborations with academia, he said, "Last year (1403), Mobarakeh Steel Group signed 320 billion tomans (≈ \$3.9 million USD) in joint contracts with 120 university research centers and pursued 160 research projects. We also organized industrial tours for 1,550 university elites." He stressed that the group has invested "250 billion tomans (≈ \$3.05 million USD) in university research infrastructure and science parks, and 600 billion tomans (≈ \$7.32 million USD) in tech park companies." The trilateral agreement, he concluded, aims to generate greater added value by leveraging capacities within top universities, research institutes, and science/technology parks, aligning with national science/technology policies and fostering innovation in Iran's steel value chain. It also seeks to strengthen academia-industry ties under the framework of the "knowledge-based production leap law."

Diplomatic distance doesn't mean diplomacy stops



By Sasan Karimi
Expert on int'l affairs

OPINION

The fifth round of indirect talks between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States concluded on May 23, 2025, in Rome, Italy. Like the previous four rounds, this session was hosted by Oman, with the Omani foreign minister acting as mediator. The two negotiating teams were led by Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Steve Witkoff, the US president's special envoy. So far, none of the rounds have resembled the previous ones or been even remotely predictable.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (front) departs a consultation session with his team.

● MIZAN

Negotiation does not equal agreement

Recently, within Iran, there has been a misconception that merely engaging in negotiations is some kind of achievement or a sign of inching closer to an agreement; Whereas, "negotiation" does not necessarily mean an agreement is at hand. Countries even hammer out deals during wartime. Therefore, dialogue does not automatically add up to an agreement. It is crucial to distinguish between "negotiation" and the "result of negotiation".

The gap in positions, or even unrealistic views — from either the American side or Iran's frustration with those views — is no reason to call off talks. The act of negotiating alone is also not a sign that the atmosphere or conditions are positive. Hence, simply holding talks cannot be interpreted as either positive or negative. What matters is the content of what is said during the discussions. Otherwise, just negotiating by itself doesn't carry much weight.

Reports paint rosier picture

Given that certain disagreements are real, especially on the core issue of enrichment, it is unlikely there is much difference between the media narrative and the substance inside the negotiation room. In the first to third rounds, differences were less pronounced due to a focus on generalities, political will, and initial frameworks. So, the gap between public statements and private talks was narrower. But once the discussion moved to more sensitive topics like enrichment, sanctions, enriched materials, and other details, these differences surfaced equally in both the talks and media coverage. It seems that the reports released about the negotiations sometimes paint a picture more positive than the reality inside the room.

Assessing three-phase cycle of talks

There has been a recurring three-phase cycle of pre-negotiations, negotiations, and post-negotiations across all rounds: Initially, both sides hold back

and appear to be consulting and deciding. Then, especially the American side turns up the heat by adopting tougher stances, pushing maximalist positions, and putting out public messages and media posturing to create psychological pressure and gear up Iran for the next round.

Once formal talks begin, their tone becomes more measured and realistic, although the core content — such as insisting on zero enrichment — remains unchanged. The only difference might be in how proposals and ideas are presented, which tends to be more precise and calculated.

In the end, although no concrete result is reached, both sides agree that the negotiation process has not ground to a halt, and neither side issues negative reports. This overall pattern has been observed in the last four rounds. However, how closely this image aligns with reality is a question not easily answered.

Proposed options far from Iran's views

Among the possible ideas floated are

concepts like a "temporary freeze on enrichment," which seem impractical. Other plans include forming a consortium. Iran opposes removing enriched material from the country and believes that if enrichment is done abroad, it cannot replace domestic enrichment. However, proposals such as establishing a consortium near the Persian Gulf but on Iranian soil might be among the ideas put forward. These proposals, if implemented, must satisfy the Americans and align with Iran's positions as well. It seems there is a long way to bridge the gap and reach such a balance point.

Baseless expectations play into opponent's hands

Society should brace itself for the possibility that no agreement will materialize. Such baseless expectations will, in practice, play into the hands of the opposing side and America's allies, and becoming conditioned in this way also negatively affect the market. Therefore, we must face reality and gear

ourselves up for new circumstances as it is unlikely a deal will be reached in the short or even medium term that significantly impacts the country's economic and social situation. Consequently, the market and internal structures must line up with the existing conditions.

We are at the start of a challenging and obstacle-filled path, still grappling with the first major hurdle — enrichment. Even if we get past this stage, challenges like the speed and manner of lifting sanctions, which sanctions will be lifted, the US president's authority to remove them, and preventing the re-imposition of sanctions under new guises remain critical. US law requires congressional cooperation for these actions, so the president's hands are not entirely free. Therefore, even if we navigate through the "enrichment bend," the road ahead will not be straightforward.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) meets with his Omani counterpart, Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, during the fifth round of discussions with the US.

● OMANI FOREIGN MINISTRY

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Trump’s fallout with Netanyahu

Strategic shift in US-Israel relations

OPINION

News, analyses, and various speculations about the ties between Tel Aviv and Donald Trump’s second administration have recently caught on with many news circles and media audiences. In one of the latest developments, the refusal of Trump’s deputy to visit the occupied territories stood out. Amid escalating tensions between Trump’s government and Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of the Israeli regime, it was announced recently that US Vice President J.D. Vance will not travel to the occupied territories. On Monday local time, he stated that after his trip to Rome, he had the option to visit the occupied lands but pulled out citing logistical and security obstacles as the reasons. Trump’s first presidential term (2017–2021) is known as a period of unprecedented US support for the Israeli regime. Actions such as relocating the US embassy to Jerusalem, recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and cutting financial aid to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees highlighted the depth of this backing. Alongside bolstering American support for the regime, Netanyahu became one of Trump’s staunchest global allies. However, with Trump’s return to the White House in 2025, signs of a turnaround in the previous situation have come to light. This piece examines the reasons and points of contention between Trump and Netanyahu, the factors shaping this transformation, and its consequences for the Israeli regime and the Middle East.

Trump’s deep discontent with Gaza war

A key factor driving a wedge between Trump and Netanyahu is their differing approaches to the ongoing Gaza war. During his first term, Trump firmly backed Israel’s military operations and even justified actions like the assassination of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani as part of a maximum pressure policy on the Resistance Axis. However, in 2025, Trump has made it clear he is dissatisfied with the continuation of the Gaza conflict, which began in October 2023. On May 12, The Guardian reported that the White House is deeply fed up with the human toll, infrastructure destruction, and international pressure caused by the conflict. Trump has even leveraged the \$4 billion annual US aid to Israel as a bargaining chip to pressure Netanyahu, stating that Israel’s ongoing wars do not serve Washington’s interests. He is calling for a political solution to end the war and rebuild Gaza. Trump believes the ongoing fighting not only fails to advance US strategic goals in the region but also gets in the way of diplomatic priorities like freeing captives and reaching economic deals with Arab countries. US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, in a meeting with families of Israeli captives in Gaza, bluntly said, “Israel is prolonging it — despite the fact that we don’t see where else we can go and that an agreement must be reached.” These remarks underline a deep rift between Washington and Tel Aviv. In contrast, Netanyahu, under pressure from his right-wing coalition, especially ministers like Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir, insists on continuing military operations aimed at the “complete destruction of Hamas”. Politically, Netanyahu appears to need the war to keep his fragile coalition intact and shield himself from domestic judicial and political pressures. Thus, the clash in priorities is one of the main sticking points between Tel Aviv and Washington.

Washington’s strategic pivot toward Arab states

In his second term, Trump has redefined



US President Donald Trump (L) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

● SOCIAL MEDIA

his foreign policy around the “America First” slogan and economic interests. Unlike before, when Israel was the centerpiece of US Middle East policy, Trump now seeks to shore up ties with Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE. During his recent Middle East trip, Trump skipped over Israel and instead met regional leaders in Riyadh. This trip resulted in defense and technology deals worth around \$600 billion with Saudi Arabia, including AI technology transfer and advanced military equipment. Moreover, the lifting of sanctions on Damascus and Trump’s meeting with Ahmed al-Sharaa, head of Syria’s transitional government, have raised concerns in Israel. According to Dennis Citrinowicz, former head of the Iran Branch for Israel’s military intelligence, Netanyahu’s stubbornness against US diplomacy, especially on Iran, has led to the US granting concessions to Saudi Arabia, not considering Israeli interests. This strategic pivot has pushed Israel to the sidelines. For instance, Trump removed the condition for civilian nuclear cooperation with Riyadh that Saudi Arabia must normalize relations with Israel, unlike the Biden administration’s policy tying cooperation to a diplomatic agreement with Israel. This decision shows Trump no longer puts Israel front and center in regional decision-making. Kim Ghattas wrote in the Financial Times that Trump is no longer interested in unconditional support for Israel but rather in major economic

contracts that benefit the US and himself.

Negotiations with Iran

One of Netanyahu’s most sensitive issues is Washington’s indirect talks with Tehran over Iran’s nuclear program, conducted without coordinating with Israel. Tel Aviv has always viewed any US-Iran dialogue as a security threat. Netanyahu has repeatedly opposed the nuclear deal (JCPOA) in past years. Yet Trump, who withdrew from the JCPOA in his first term, is now seeking diplomatic solutions to ease tensions with Iran.

Trump family’s economic interests

A less highlighted but influential factor is the Trump family’s economic interests in Arab countries. Media reports, including from The Washington Post, reveal that Arab partners, especially in Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar, have given the Trump family significant economic perks like private jets and investments in family businesses. These interests have steered Trump’s decisions toward closer ties with Gulf countries, sidelining Israel. This raises questions about Trump’s true foreign policy motives, with some analysts believing personal gain increasingly weighs in on his policies.

Personal grudges, strains

Trump and Netanyahu’s personal relations have been rocky. In 2020, Netanyahu’s premature congratulations to Joe Biden after the US election set off Trump’s anger. The failure of the Middle

East peace plan (Deal of the Century) and disputes over West Bank annexation during Trump’s first term further cooled relations. In 2025, Netanyahu’s reaction to the release of Edan Alexander, an American-Israeli captive in Gaza, who credited Israeli military pressure rather than Trump’s diplomatic efforts, fired up the White House again. This behavior highlights the lack of coordination between Netanyahu and Trump, fueling existing tensions.

Dual domestic pressures on Netanyahu

Netanyahu faces multiple domestic challenges, intensified by his rift with Trump. On one side, families of Israeli captives push for an immediate end to the war and the start of negotiations with Hamas. Meanwhile, right-wing allies like Smotrich and Ben-Gvir view any retreat or cease-fire as a betrayal of Israel’s goals. This puts Netanyahu in a tight spot politically. Discontent within the Likud party also adds to Netanyahu’s pressure. Senior Likud members like Yuli Edelstein criticize Netanyahu’s overreliance on Trump’s personal support. They argue that neglecting multilateral diplomacy has left Israel vulnerable to shifts in US policy. This dissatisfaction could spark leadership challenges within Likud. Opposition leaders Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz exploit this divide to attack Netanyahu, blaming him for failing to maintain US support and causing Israel’s dip-



US President Donald Trump (L) talks with Vice President JD Vance after a White House event.

● REUTERS

lomatic isolation. These criticisms could set the stage for early elections.

Regional, int’l consequences of US-Israel rift

The cooling of US-Israel relations will have multiple regional and international repercussions. For Israel, consequences include diplomatic isolation, strategic shifts, and increased self-reliance. Reduced US backing will leave Israel exposed to international pressures such as UN resolutions and International Court of Justice rulings. Israel may be forced to pivot from military policies toward regional diplomacy, engaging with non-Western powers like India and Asian countries as part of this strategy. Moreover, cuts in US military and political aid will compel Israel to lean on its internal defense and diplomatic capabilities. Regionally, this could boost Arab countries’ standing, ease pressure on Iran, and exclude Israel from diplomatic processes. Major US deals with Saudi Arabia and rapprochement with Syria will raise these countries’ diplomatic weight, potentially shifting the balance of power against Israel.

Nuclear negotiations and easing tensions with the Resistance Axis will give more wiggle room to Iran and its allies. Regional cease-fires (e.g., Gaza and Yemen) might bring about relative stability, but without Israel’s involvement, the regime risks being left out of diplomatic developments. For the US, consequences include optimized economic interests but intensified diplomatic challenges. Large contracts with Arab states will strengthen America’s economic position but may spark domestic criticism, such as corruption allegations against the Trump family. Distancing from Israel could also complicate relations with Congress and pro-Israel lobbies, though traditional Republican support for Israel remains strong.

Way forward

It appears that US-Israel relations have entered a new chapter no longer based on unconditional support. For now, Netanyahu is facing pressure to accept an end to the Gaza war and align with Trump’s diplomacy, but his right-wing coalition’s resistance is throwing a wrench in this process. In the long run, Israel must reassess its foreign policy, embrace multilateral diplomacy, and reduce dependence on the US. Netanyahu’s agreement with ending the war and embracing diplomacy could patch up relations with the US but weaken his domestic standing, potentially leading to the victory of the opposition in Israeli elections. Analysts suggest more moderate leaders like Gantz or Naftali Bennett could mend fences with the US and strengthen regional diplomacy. Some foresee the war continuing, believing insistence on military policies could isolate Israel and minimize US financial and military support. The core issue between Trump and Netanyahu is the clash between America’s economic and diplomatic priorities and Israel’s militaristic policies in Gaza. Trump, no longer interested in endless wars, has written off Netanyahu for resisting diplomacy (such as talks with Hamas and Iran) and focused on signing major contracts in Arab countries. This split has left Netanyahu in a bind, losing US support while facing intense domestic pressures. For Israel, these developments are a warning to rethink its foreign policy. The year 2025 will be pivotal for Netanyahu and Israel, shaping not only US relations but the political future of the region.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

Prodigy vs. Veteran: Iran's 86kg world spot on the line in Tehran showdown

Sports Desk

The Iranian freestyle 86kg slot for September's Wrestling World Championships will be up for grabs today, as international superstar Kamran Qasempour and teenage prodigy Abolfazl Rahmani lock horns in a head-to-head showdown in Tehran. For two-time world 92kg champion Qasempour, today's bout marks the beginning of a long road toward the Los Angeles Olympics in three years, while Rahmani aims to build on his Asian title-winning campaign in March to secure his debut at the UWW Worlds in Zagreb. Qasempour, who missed out on a 97kg slot for the Paris Games last year, finishing behind Amir-Ali Azarpira in the pecking order, has again switched weight class in a bid to add the Olympic glory to his illustrious medal haul. A top-spot finish at the International Takhti Cup in May, which also served as part of the Iranian world trials, would have secured the 86kg spot for Qasempour, but a COVID-19 infection on the eve of the competition derailed his quest for a third world gold medal.

However, Iranian Wrestling Federation justified his absence, granting him a second chance to fight for his ticket to Zagreb. A world U20 bronze medalist last year, Rahmani made the most of Qasempour's absence by cruising to the 86kg gold in Isfahan to emerge as a contend-



● IAWF

er for a place in the Croatian capital.

Ulaanbaatar deciders

Meanwhile, Iranian head coach Pejman Dorostkar hopes the debate over four remaining weight classes is settled when his squad competes at the Ulaanbaatar Open – starting Thursday in the Mongolian capital. Mohammad-Ali Amouzad and

Ali-Akbar Fazli will be the Iranian 70kg contestants at the third UWW Ranking Series event of the season, where the wrestler with a better result will stay in the mix for the world spot alongside Asian bronze medalists Sina Khalili and Abbas Ebrahimzadeh, who have been ruled out of action with injuries. Two-time world silver medalist Amir-Mohammad Yazdani and

Younes Emami – a winner of two world bronzes, who fell to Yazdani in the Takhti Cup final – will be joined by former Asian bronze winner Hossein Abouzari in the 74kg contests, and the national team coaching staff will evaluate their results and performances to decide on the Iranian representative in Zagreb. Takhti Cup champion Fariborz Babaei will compete in the 79kg

event and a gold medal will keep him in contention for the world spot along with Asian champion Mahdi Yousefi – beaten by Babaei in Isfahan – and 2024 world bronze winner Mohammad Nokhodi, who was back in training last week following a knee surgery following last October. Ahmad Bazri, who won the 97kg gold at the Takhti Cup, will

hope to repeat the success in the Mongolian capital to earn a shot at the Zagreb ticket against Amir-Ali Azarpira.

Olympic bronze medalist Azarpira had also been sidelined for months with a torn ligament injury before making his long-awaited return to training last week.

Five freestyle wrestlers have already booked their places in the Iranian 10-man squad for September's world event.

Reigning world champion and Olympic silver medalist Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) and Ali Mo'meni (57kg) won the gold medal in their respective events at the Takhti Cup to secure the world spot.

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

Iranian girls learn fate in AVC Nations Cup



● NAZANIN REZAADEH/volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

Iran was drawn in Pool B of the AVC Women's Volleyball Nations Cup – starting June 7 in Hanoi, Vietnam. The draw for the rebranded event took place at the Asian Volleyball Confederation headquarters in Bangkok on Sunday, where 11 teams were split into two groups. Joining Iran in Pool B are Kazakhstan, Indonesia, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Mongolia.

Vietnam, Australia, India, Hong Kong, and the Chinese Taipei complete the lineup in Pool A. The fixtures schedule of the competition is yet to be announced by the continental governing body of the sport. The top two of each group will progress to the semifinals, with the final showpiece set to be staged on June 14. The champion of the event will qualify for the Asian Women's Volleyball Championship next year.

Nourollahi at the double as Al Wahda secures ACL Elite spot

Sports Desk

Al Wahda skipper Ahmad Nourollahi scored twice to lead his team to a 3-1 away victory over Al Bataeh on the final day of the UAE ADNOC Pro League. The vital victory helped Al Wahda finish third in the Emirati top-flight table with 48 points – two clear of fourth-placed Al Wasl – and join top-two Shabab Al Ahli and Sharjah in securing a place in the league stage of the West region in next season's AFC Champions League Elite. The Iranian midfielder opened the scoring in the 11th minute with a stunning strike from the edge of the penalty area, before



● alwahda-sc.com

Syrian striker Omar Khribin doubled the lead from the spot

midway through the first half. Al Bataeh managed to pull one

back just four minutes later through Brazilian forward Álvaro de Oliveira, but Nourollahi restored the two-goal cushion from close range in the 43rd minute. Sunday's performance rounded off an impressive campaign for the Iranian midfielder, who bagged six goals and assists in 26 league appearances. Al Bataeh, meanwhile, finished the season in the 11th place of the 14-team table with 27 points – 11 clear the relegation zone. This could still be considered a decent outcome for Iranian head coach Farhad Majidi, whose team was in serious danger of relegation when he took charge in mid-January.

Nadal touched by presence of great rivals during French Open tribute

REUTERS – Rafa Nadal said the presence of his friends and rivals Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray during a celebration of his glorious career at the French Open made an emotional Sunday evening all the more special. Thousands of fans including defending men's and women's champions Carlos Alcaraz and Iga Swiatek wore brick-red 'Merci Rafa' shirts before 14-times Roland Garros champion Nadal was immortalised on Court Philippe Chatrier with a plaque. The loudest cheers, however, came when Federer, Djokovic and Murray stepped onto the hallowed clay court to share a few words and laughs with Nad-

al after the Spaniard had welled up watching a video of his greatest moments. "I didn't know, but I imagined they would come. The agendas of people sometimes are difficult. But of course, they knew that they were going to make the day very special," Nadal told a packed press conference. "Novak is playing here, so it's easier. But Andy and Roger coming meant a lot to me because they represent a very important part of my tennis career. In some ways we pushed each other to the limits. That's the truth. "We were four of the best rivals. In some way when you're only two, you can lose a bit the motivation because the other starts



● REUTERS

losing or gets injured. Here, you never had to imagine, because always one of the four was winning the tournament. "We achieved our dreams. And probably because of that kind

of rivalry we raised the numbers of the history of tennis to the next level. That helps to the next generation to try to improve them. I'm sure that's going to happen."

Allure of South Khorasan Province's deserts, religious sites, historic villages

Iranica Desk

South Khorasan Province, one of Iran's expansive eastern regions, is renowned for its deep historical roots and rich cultural heritage, hosting a multitude of notable tourist attractions within its extensive borders. Its distinctive geographic positioning, coupled with a diverse climate and an exceptional array of historical and cultural sites, has established it as one of Iran's premier travel destinations. The province is affectionately known as "the Land of Sunshine" and is characterized by its vast, endless deserts.

Nature

Amidst these arid landscapes, visitors can witness some of the most authentic and untouched expressions of the land's natural beauty. Deserts like Lut, with their breathtaking vistas, profound silence, and soothing tranquility, offer travelers a truly unique experience during the scorching days and chilly nights. These deserts are not only ideal for nature enthusiasts and those seeking serenity but also attract astronomy lovers and star gazers. At night, the desert's star-studded sky transforms into a spectacular celestial display, creating memories that last a lifetime for all who witness it. Moreover, natural springs like Morteza Ali Spring, located near Boshruyeh, along with other high-altitude water sources, add to the region's natural allure, drawing many tourists alongside visitors to its religious sites, chtn.ir wrote.

Climate

A remarkable feature of



Lut Desert
destinationiran.com



Dehsalm village
eligasht.com

South Khorasan Province is its four-season climate, allowing visitors to enjoy distinctive attractions throughout the entire year. From hot, dry summers to cold, snowy winters, each season highlights different facets of the province's natural and historical allure. However, the most captivating time is autumn. During this season, the saffron and barberry farms — less common elsewhere — burst into vibrant, shining colors. In this period, South

Khorasan Province transforms into a vibrant mosaic of autumn hues, drawing tourists from around the world eager to experience its seasonal beauty.

Historical sites

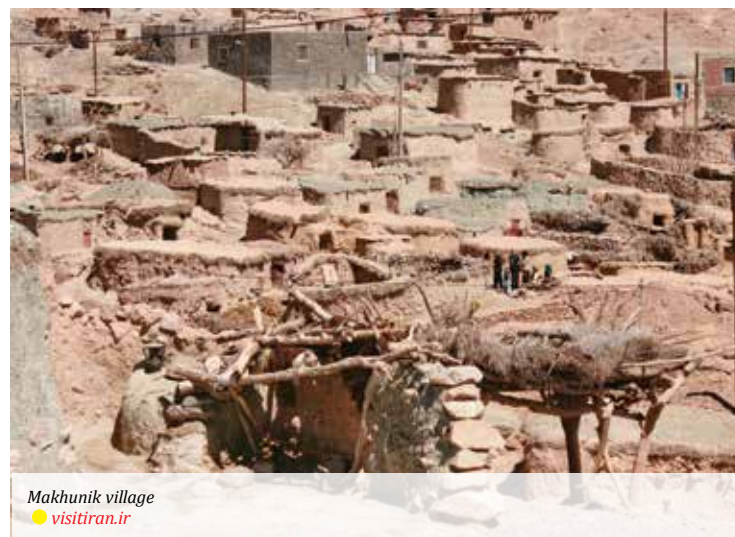
Beyond its spectacular natural scenery, South Khorasan Province is rich with historic and cultural sites, each serving as a compelling reason for exploration and scholarly interest. With more than a thousand registered sites on the national

heritage list, it ranks among Iran's most significant tourism hubs. These sites encompass architectural complexes, mosques, tombs, castles, and archaeological remains that vividly reflect the region's storied past and cultural wealth.

Among the most famous attractions are its ancient castles, built in the heart of the desert. Kuh Qaen Castle, for instance, stands out as a historical marvel, with its distinctive architecture symbolizing the resilience



Kuh Qaen Castle
IRNA



Makhunik village
visitiran.ir

and aesthetic grandeur of ancient Iranian craftsmanship. This centuries-old fortress continues to be a defining emblem of the province's historical legacy. Along the ancient route of Boshruyeh, visitors can explore preserved architectural remnants such as traditional adobe houses and the grand mosque, exemplifying Iran's indigenous architectural style, which remains remarkably well-preserved amid the desert's harsh environment.

Religious sites

Religious and spiritual sites also feature prominently in South Khorasan Province's tourism landscape. One of the most significant is the mausoleum of Hossein bin Musa al-Kadhim (PBUH) in Boshruyeh. Situated in the desert's heart, this shrine is revered for its spiritual importance and attracts numerous pilgrims and visitors. Its exquisite architecture, combined with lush land-

scaping, makes it one of the province's major tourist draws.

Historic villages

South Khorasan is also blessed with a wealth of historic villages and natural landscapes, each maintaining a distinct identity. Villages such as Esfahak, Chensht, Makhunik, and others are not only scenic destinations but also repositories of cultural significance. These villages showcase unique architectural styles, intricate wall carvings, and lifestyles that preserve ancient traditions and customs.

Dehsalm village, another gem in the province, is a striking village that serves as a gateway to the Lut Desert. With its lush date palm groves, green trees, and tranquil, inviting atmosphere, it provides a serene escape for those looking to experience authentic desert life. Its strategic location makes it one of the foremost desert tourism centers in Iran, attracting numerous domestic and international visitors each year.

South Khorasan Province, with its diverse landscapes and cultural richness, stands as a vital component of Iran's tourism industry. It offers travelers an extraordinary opportunity to explore a land full of natural wonders, historic treasures, and vibrant cultures — each corner revealing new stories and unforgettable experiences. From awe-inspiring deserts to historic gardens, from spiritual shrines to sleepy villages, every aspect of this province is a testament to Iran's deep history and natural beauty, deserving of deeper discovery and appreciation.

Strengthening culinary heritage to support economic growth

Iranica Desk

The director of the Tourism Institute of the Municipalities Cooperation Organization of Khorasan Razavi Province stated that "One of the key pathways to prolong tourist stays is to enter attractive and high-potential sectors such as culinary tourism."

Majid Ejtemaei, in an interview with ISNA, explained, "Developing the tourism industry in Khorasan Razavi Province, particularly by strengthening its infrastructure, plays a crucial role in economic growth and improving the quality of life for citizens."

He added, "One of the main goals of the institute is to increase the length of stay for travelers in the province, as this directly contributes to economic growth and provides greater benefits for citizens from tourism."

He continued, "One of the effective ways to achieve this goal is to venture into attractive and high-potential sectors like culinary tourism."

Ejtemaei noted that "Khorasan Razavi Province, es-

pecially the city of Mashhad, owing to its religious and historical significance, boasts a rich and authentic culinary culture. This valuable heritage, through offering cultural and delicious experiences, can

serve as a significant catalyst for increasing tourist stays and boosting the province's economic prosperity."

He expressed, "We believe that by offering food tours, cooking workshops, in-

troducing traditional and modern restaurants, and organizing related events, we can create an engaging and memorable experience for tourists."

He emphasized, "This approach not only increases

local income but also helps introduce and revitalize the region's authentic culinary traditions. Currently, plans are underway to establish a culinary tourism route in Mashhad and to showcase indigenous re-

gional cuisines."

Ejtemaei, referring to the signing of an agreement with the Food Industry Research Institute, added, "This agreement aims to foster scientific and operational cooperation for investment in culinary tourism. Our main goal is to develop this capacity for a promising future."

He noted that "This collaboration seeks to attract investors for food tourism projects, provide consultation and planning for establishing a specialized culinary museum, improve the quality of services in this sector, and create projects rooted in cultural authenticity with economic benefits."

He concluded, "The Food Industry Research Institute is an academic organization with a scholarly perspective on this subject and will participate actively in this memorandum."



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While Gaza burns, your silence speaks loudest, Mr. Barrot

By Jafar Mohammadi
Iranian journalist

OPINION

Before anything else—setting aside the surrounding controversies, the film’s subject, differing interpretations, and opposing views—we extend our congratulations to Jafar Panahi for receiving one of the most prestigious awards in world cinema. France’s Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot tweeted in reference to Jafar Panahi’s win at the Cannes Film Festival, saying the prize which was “a gesture of resistance against the oppression” of the Islamic Republic “rekindled hope for all those who fight for freedom around the globe.” However, in regard to Barrot’s post on X, let it be stated clearly and unequivocally: Even the most ardent pro-Western individuals—those who for years romanticized your Europe—if they possess so much as a trace of human decency, have by now come to recognize that all the lofty rhetoric you and your peers have offered over the years—about freedom, human rights, women’s rights, children’s rights, and so forth—has amounted to little more than a theatrical performance. For you, “humanity” applies only to the West, and the scope of “human rights” is confined to Western borders.

Mr. Minister, over the past 20 months, there has scarcely been a crime your close ally [Israel] has not committed in a place called Gaza. Under the pretext of fighting Hamas, Israel has relentlessly bombed homes, schools, hospitals, universities, mosques, churches, bakeries, farms, water sources, food and medicine warehouses, and every piece of infrastructure serving two million defenseless people—flattening it all around the clock. To date, at least 54,000 people have been killed and 40,000 children orphaned. Starvation has been weaponized, leading to the deaths of countless people—many of them children—from malnutrition.

Now tell us: in the face of this genocide—this holocaust of the 21st century—what have you done, other than remain silent or complicit? Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the Islamic Republic is the “tyrannical regime” you claim it to be. What, then, shall we call your ally Israel, which murders an average of 40 children and 50 civilians each day and tortures survivors with hunger, disease, and displacement?

And you—so passionately concerned with justice, oppression, and freedom—what precisely have you done to stop these horrifying atrocities that wound the conscience of every decent human being?

No, Mr. minister, your record on crimes against humanity is not tucked away in history books—it is unfolding before our very eyes. By the way, since you posted that bold, freedom-loving tweet, how many more children in Gaza have been blown to pieces by the bombs of your so-called civilized West? Those innocent souls—alive just yesterday.

The article was first published in Persian on Asriran.

‘France lacks moral authority’ to lecture Iran: *FM*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi condemned recent anti-Iranian remarks by his French counterpart, Jean-Noël Barrot.

Araghchi said on Sunday that French officials “have no moral authority” whatsoever to lecture Iranians on human rights, Press TV reported.

The top diplomat criticized France’s own human rights records, saying Paris has made many violations in this area, which undermine its credibility as a human rights advocate.

He added that no example illustrates this hypocrisy more clearly than France’s stance on Israel and its war crimes.

Araghchi’s comments came after the Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned the French envoy in protest at Barrot’s remarks earlier on Sunday.

The French chargé d’affaires to Tehran was summoned after an Iranian filmmaker won a prize at the Cannes Film Festival,



and Barrot described the movie as a gesture of resistance against oppression.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry also condemned the French government’s exploitation of the cinematic event to advance its own political objectives against Iran.

It said the French government used the

film festival to promote its political agenda against the Islamic Republic.

Iranian Director Jafar Panahi’s film, ‘It Was Just an Accident,’ was awarded the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival on Saturday.

In an interfering comment, the French for-

eign minister said in a French post on his X account that the film would reignite “hope for freedom fighters around the world.”

‘It Was Just an Accident’ marks the second Palme d’Or for an Iranian film, following Abbas Kiarostami’s ‘Taste of Cherry’ in 1997.

Iranian art exhibit on peace held in Yerevan



Arts & Culture Desk

A group exhibition of Iranian artworks was held at the Armenian

Union of Artists Gallery in Yerevan, after running for three days to commemorate Armenia’s Victory and Peace Day, the Iranian Cultural Center in Armenia said.

The show, which opened on May 21, featured dozens of pieces by Iranian artists and focused on the cultural ties between Iran and Armenia.

Organized by Iran’s cultural Center in Armenia in partnership with the Daya Cultural and Artistic Center and the Nasr Iranian Cultural Institute, the exhibit showcased

paintings, calligraphy, photography, illustration, digital art, sculpture, doll-making and handicrafts.

The opening ceremony brought together Mohammad Asadi-Movahed, cultural counselor at Iran’s Embassy in Yerevan; Safarian, head of the Armenian Union of Artists; Serineh Rostamloo, a representative of the Bishop Ardak Manoukian Museum in Tehran; and a number of artists and cultural officials from both countries.

Artists explored themes such as

shared architecture, traditional garments, Armenian national symbols, and historic moments like the 1992 liberation of Shushi.

In his remarks, Safarian stressed the value of continued cultural exchange and described Iran as a nation with deep artistic roots.

Asadi-Movahed called the exhibition a meaningful step in strengthening mutual understanding through the universal language of art.

Mojdeh Moshafi Tavana curated the exhibit, which concluded on May 23.

Iran, Thailand plan joint Qur’an manuscript preservation program

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Thailand held a high-level cultural meeting in Bangkok, aiming to expand cooperation in the preservation and digital archiving of rare Qur’anic manuscripts and Islamic heritage.

According to Iran’s Cultural Center and Thailand’s Southern Border Provinces Development Command, the joint session brought together Iranian diplomats, Thai cultural officials, and manuscript restoration experts from both countries. The focus was to

organize an expert-level visit to Iran later this year.

The Thai delegation was led by Chakraphong Apimahahtam, who emphasized Thailand’s commitment to safeguarding Islamic manuscripts, especially in the southern provinces.

He confirmed the Royal Thai Navy’s support for sending a team of restoration and cultural experts to Iran.

Mehdi Zare’ Bieib, Iran’s Cultural Counselor in Thailand, praised Thailand’s care for historical Qurans and highlighted Iran’s leading role in manuscript conservation. He

announced that a 10-day intensive training course would be held in Iran’s top restoration centers in Tehran, Qom, Isfahan, and Mashhad.

Iran’s Ambassador to Thailand, Reza Heidari, noted that the project had been months in the making and described it as “a key step toward deepening Islamic cultural ties.”

Workshops will cover traditional and modern repair techniques, paper microbiology, historical script analysis, and digital cataloging. Participants will also tour major libraries and archives.



A senior official at Thailand’s civil development agency, said this partnership could become

a model for other Southeast Asian countries with similar preservation needs.

Pakistan reaffirms commitment ...

Islamabad’s engagement with Tehran is, in essence, a pledge of

allegiance to regional cooperation and an effort to shore up security, economic, and energy ties with a neighbor that is both a partner and a geopolitical rival in certain arenas. Shared challenges along the turbulent Afghan border, terrorist threats, and the need to get

a grip on cross-border management are set to take center stage in security talks—especially at a time when both countries face mounting dangers from militant groups and trafficking networks.

On the energy front, the long-stalled Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, which has languished under the weight of sanctions for years, has now climbed back onto the

negotiating table. Pakistan, grappling with a chronic energy crisis, is seeking US sanctions waivers as it signals its renewed commitment to reviving this strategic project.

In parallel, cooperation in electricity, renewables, and cross-border power trade is being actively explored; a path which, if seen through, could cut Pakistan’s depen-

dence on energy imports from other routes.

Economically, both sides have set an ambitious target to ramp up bilateral trade to \$10 billion in five years. Plans to activate border markets, expand free economic zones, and open new trade corridors all feed into this bold vision—an approach that promises to lift border communities’ livelihoods and

clamp down on smuggling. Strategically, linking up infrastructure through expanded rail and road networks and tying them into major projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will only cement Iran and Pakistan’s geostrategic standing as a vital bridge between South and Central Asia.