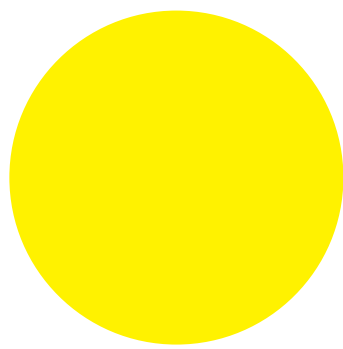


Tehran auto parts exhibit hosts 700 domestic, foreign companies



Iran plays down speculation on 'imminent' US deal

Staying out of FATF works against Iran's interests

By Reza Sepahvand
Iranian lawmaker

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

Recently, the speaker of the Iranian Parliament sent off a letter to President Masoud Pezeshkian, officially notifying the government to implement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, known as the Palermo Convention. This means the president is now tasked with signing Iran's accession to the Palermo Convention and handing it over to the relevant authorities for enforcement.

While the Palermo Convention is not part of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) conventions, FATF lays down joining it as a prerequisite for membership. In other words, FATF calls on countries to incorporate the Palermo Convention into their legal frameworks for combating financial crimes. This helps FATF make sure nations are living up to international standards in fighting money laundering and terrorism financing.

Despite some domestic factions claiming that such treaties would put the country under foreign control, it is argued that agreements like Palermo and FATF actually help clean up global financial flows. The fact that Palermo's ratification has taken almost a decade is regrettable, as it should not have dragged on for so long.

The delay—where a bill approved by the Parliament and the Guardian Council sat on the shelf at the Expediency Council for eight years—is the result of political maneuvering by a specific group. However, the concerns raised by this group are unfounded, because the country can always pull out of the treaty if it no longer serves national interests.

There is no need for certain parties to freak out over the idea that joining such treaties would tie Iran's hands indefinitely. If Palermo turns out to be against Iran's interests, the country can walk away. Unfounded fears should not hold back the country from joining and risk landing on FATF's blacklist, which would essentially open the door to more sanctions.

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VP: Drafting free trade regulations necessary for ECO

Iran, Tajikistan to form joint committee on Persian literature and civilization
Tehran urges greater regional cooperation on water security



Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref addresses an international conference on preserving glaciers in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on May 30. fjpresident.ir

Fallout of triggering snapback mechanism

INTERVIEW



Iran takes positive view of Oman's nuclear proposal

OPINION



Asian Athletics Championships: Mobini etches name into history books as Iran grabs double golds



Mostofi House restoration sets a model for sustainable heritage management



Iran eyes tourism pacts with UAE, Mexico, Ghana, UNWTO support

VP: Drafting free trade regulations necessary for ECO

International Desk

Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said that drawing up of free trade regulations is a necessity for the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), based on which the member states should conduct their trade. The Iranian official made the remarks in a meeting with the ECO Secretary General Asad Majid Khan on the sidelines of the International Conference on Glaciers Preservation in Tajikistan's capital, Dushanbe. Aref called free trade regulations, transportation, and advanced technologies as three key areas for expansion of cooperation between the member states. Iran's first vice president referred to some ECO member countries being landlocked, saying that Iran is ready to increase and facilitate member states' access to high seas. Aref also said that Iran has made re-

markable achievements in the field of advanced technologies in recent years and is ready to generously share them with the organizations' member states. Highlighting the importance of cyberspace in modern world, the Iranian official said that the ECO members are vulnerable to cybersecurity threats and are exposed to cyberattacks. "We can pass on our experience in enhancing cybersecurity to the member countries," the vice president said. Aref said a broad agenda aimed at convergence and solidarity of member states, and resolution of their existing disputes should be taken into consideration. "We believe that member countries should have a serious and friendly presence, not a competitive one, in order to attain ECO's goals. "The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to host expert and specialized ministerial meetings of the Economic Cooperation

Organization," he added. For his part, Khan pointed to Iran's emphasis on the principle of good neighborliness among the ECO members and the importance of inspiring member states to strive for the welfare of regional governments and nations. "Iran, as one of the founders of ECO, plays a prominent role in strengthening convergence and solidarity among its member countries," he stated. The ECO, whose members are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan, promotes regional trade and economic development. Iran's vice president also held separate meetings with Tajikistan's officials, including President Emomali Rahmon and signed four cooperation agreements. During the meeting with Tajikistan's president, Aref said that there is no obstacle for further expansion of Teh-



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (R) shakes hands with Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Asad Majid Khan in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on May 30, 2025.
● fvpresident.ir

ran-Dushanbe relations. Rahmon expressed his satisfaction with the growing relations between the two

nations and emphasized the importance of swiftly implementing agreements signed between the two countries.

Iran urges explanation from Austria over 'fake' report on nuclear program

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei on Friday termed as "fake" an Austrian intelligence report that said Tehran is seeking atomic weapons, demanding an explanation from the Austrian government. In its annual report on global threats, Austria's domestic intelligence service (DSN) said Monday that Iran's "nuclear weapons development program is well advanced." "All efforts to prevent Iran's armament through sanctions and agreements have so far proved ineffective," the Austrian report claimed. Baqaei condemned "the fake information" disseminated in the report and demanded an explanation from the Austrian government. He said the report is solely produced to create "media hype" against Iran and thus it "lacks any validity or credibility." The Foreign Ministry spokesman also urged the Austrian

government to explain the "irresponsible, provocative, and destructive" behavior of the DSN, which is spreading lies about Iran. He further highlighted Iran's membership of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), saying the country's nuclear program has been subject to the heaviest scrutiny by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Austria's anti-Iran intelligence report undermines the credibility of the IAEA, the UN's nuclear agency, the spokesman noted. He also said, "Austria and some other European countries are deceitfully silent about the arming of the Zionist regime with all kinds of weapons of mass destruction and prevent the realization of a West Asia free from WMDs through their all-out support for the genocidal and occupying [Israeli] regime." However, Iran as a "staunch opponent of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, is a founder and steadfast supporter of the



Esmail Baqaei
● IRNA

idea of freeing the region from weapons of mass destruction, Baqaei added. The Iranian Foreign Ministry also summoned Austria's chargé d'affaires to convey Tehran's protest to Vienna over the hostile move. The United States, Israel and other Western countries have repeatedly accused Iran of seeking to acquire a nuclear weapon. Iran has categorically denied the claims, instead arguing that it is pursuing a nuclear program for civilian purposes alone.

Iran manifested the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with six world powers in 2015. The landmark deal was derailed in 2018 by the US, which unilaterally walked out of the accord and launched its so-called campaign of maximum pressure against Iran. Since April 12, Iran and the US have begun new negotiations to reach a deal on Tehran's nuclear program. Both countries have described the talks as "positive and constructive."

Iran plays down speculation on 'imminent' US deal

National Desk

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stressed Iran's commitment to diplomacy, slamming media disinformation aimed at derailing the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the United States over Iran's nuclear program. Araghchi made the remarks in a post on his X account on Thursday, responding to growing media speculation about an alleged imminent agreement between Tehran and Washington, Press TV reported. "Media is speculating about an imminent Iran-US deal. Not sure if we are there yet. Iran is sincere about a diplomatic solution that will serve the interests of all sides. But getting there requires an agreement that will fully terminate all sanctions and uphold Iran's nuclear rights—including enrichment," he said. Araghchi reiterated that meaningful progress can only be achieved through negotiations, not media narratives, in response to a report by FOX News. The report cited a new intelligence assessment claiming that Iran is continuing its active nuclear weapons program and that the program could be used to launch long-range missiles. However, FOX News acknowledged that the so-called new intelligence contradicts the statement made by US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, who told the Senate Intelligence Committee in March that the American intelligence community "continues to assess that Iran is not building a nucle-



Abbas Araghchi

ar weapon." Araghchi also condemned what he described as disinformation aimed at derailing diplomacy, criticizing Israel for using Iran as a tool to discredit American critics, calling such tactics "low," even by Israel's standards, warning that they undermine genuine efforts to resolve tensions through dialogue. "Path to a deal goes through the negotiating table and not the media. As for the latest fake news against Iran-U.S. diplomacy: using Iran to attack American critics is low, even for Israel," he added. The US and Iran have held five rounds of nuclear talks since April 12 and are expected to meet again for negotiations aimed at reaching a new agreement. The two countries have been at odds over the level of uranium enrichment. US President Donald Trump said Wednesday he had personally warned Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to disrupt the talks.

'100 percent' of Gazans at risk of famine: UN

Gaza is "the hungriest place on Earth", the United Nations said Friday, warning that the Palestinian territory's entire population was now at risk of famine. Negotiations to end nearly 20 months of war have so far failed to achieve a breakthrough, with Israel resuming operations in Gaza in March, ending a six-week truce, AFP reported. "Gaza is the hungriest place on Earth," said Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA. "It's the only defined area – a country or defined territory within a country – where you have the entire population at risk of famine. 100 percent of the population at risk of famine," he said, rejecting claims to the contrary by Israeli authorities. At a press briefing in Geneva, Laerke detailed the difficulties faced by the United Nations in delivering humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. In recent days, Israel has partially eased a total aid blockade on the Palestinian territory that it imposed on March 2, leading to severe shortages of food and medicine. Laerke said 900 trucks of humanitarian aid had been authorized by Israel to enter the Strip since the blockade was partially lifted. But so far only 600 trucks have been off-loaded on the Gaza side of the border, and a smaller number of truckloads have then been picked up, due to multiple security considerations.

Laerke said the mission to deliver aid was "in an operational strait-jacket that makes it one of the most obstructed aid operations not only in the world today, but in recent history." Once truckloads enter Gaza, they are often "swarmed by desperate people", Laerke said. "I don't blame them, for one second, for taking the aid that essentially is already theirs – but it's not distributed in the way we want." French President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday that European countries should "harden the collective position" against Israel if it does not respond appropriately to the humanitarian situation in Gaza. "There is no humanitarian blockade. That is a blatant lie," Israel's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on X, defending its efforts to allow in aid. During a visit to Singapore on Friday, Macron also asserted that recognition of a Palestinian state, with some conditions, was "not only a moral duty, but a political necessity". The French president later told a top defense forum in Singapore that abandoning war-torn Gaza to its own fate and giving Israel a "free pass" would kill the West's credibility with the rest of the world. Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz vowed on Friday to build a "Jewish Israeli state" in the occupied West Bank, a day after the cabinet announced the creation of 22 new



A displaced Palestinian ferries a bag of food aid on his shoulders after people stormed a World Food Programme warehouse in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on May 28, 2025.
● EYAD BABA/AFP

settlements in the Palestinian territory. He said the move was a "clear message" to French president, whom Israel's foreign ministry accused of carrying out a crusade against Israel. Israeli settlements in the West Bank, seen as a major obstacle to lasting peace, are regularly condemned by the United Nations as illegal under international law, and Thursday's announcement drew sharp foreign criticism. "It is also a clear message to Macron and his associates: they will recognize a Palestinian state on paper – but we will build the Jewish Israeli state here on the ground," he added.



Tehran auto parts exhibit hosts 700 domestic, foreign companies

Economy Desk

The 20th International Auto Parts Exhibition opened in Tehran on Thursday, with over 700 domestic and international companies from eight countries in attendance.

At the four-day international exhibit of automotive parts, accessories, and assemblies, the companies present their latest achievements, services, and products in the fields of light and heavy vehicle parts and accessories to visitors, specialists, and professionals in the industry, IRNA reported.

Featuring over 700 domestic and international companies from eight countries — China, Turkey, Germany, Switzerland, India, Japan, South Korea, and the UAE — the 20th International Auto Parts Exhibition 2025 in Iran/Tehran (IAPEX) is considered the most significant, specialized gathering of the country's auto parts manufacturing industry. The event serves as a platform for consolidating capacities, networking among val-

ue chain players, and facilitating innovation and cooperation.

Major domestic parts manufacturing companies, which supply a large portion of the needs of domestic automakers, participated in the showcase.

According to IRNA, unlike previous editions, this year's exhibition is not merely a commercial space, but rather represents a coordinated initiative for industry transformation, technology enhancement, and the development of domestic and international markets.

For this edition, a four-year structure has been defined, with its first phase commencing with a focus on assembling the automotive parts industry value chain. The participation of knowledge-based companies, the design of innovative side events, and the visual representation of the value chain are among the new features of this edition.

IRNA said the significant turnout of domestic companies, particularly in the advanced and export-oriented parts sector,

alongside the participation of various countries, underscores the exhibition's regional importance as special emphasis has been placed on establishing export linkages and attracting partners within the regional supply chain.

Among the special programs of the IAPEX are business interaction centers, including B2B meetings, industrial, tax and insurance consultations, holding reverse pitch events for automakers, and an innovation stage for knowledge-based companies.

Presidential Economic Advisor Masoumeh Aqapour, during a visit to the exhibition, criticized the serious disconnections in the production and value chain domain, emphasizing, "This year's auto parts exhibition can largely succeed in connecting the automotive and parts manufacturing industry chains; acting as an intermediary link between small, medium, and even larger industrial players."

Aqapour considered one of the valuable achievements of this



event to be the creation of synergy among various industry players and the avoidance of insular decision-making.

She emphasized, "The government intends, in a three-year step, to only play a supervisory role and delegate development

to the private sector; incentives have been foreseen along this path which will be realized soon."

Iran at EAG meeting calls on FATF to take trust-building steps



Economy Desk

The Iranian deputy economy minister at the 42nd meeting of the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (EAG) called on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to take confidence-building steps towards Iran. Elaborating on Iran's actions at the Friday plenary session, Head of Iran's Financial Intelligence Unit (IRFIU) Hadi Khani expressed Iran's expectation that, "The FATF will take confidence-building steps in response to the set of the country's actions in the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing, including the ratification of the Palermo Convention," as reported by IRNA.

Khani presented a report on Iran's software and intelligent infrastructure for processing Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs), as well as the actions of the country's police in combating money laundering and

terrorist financing.

Referring to Iran's actions as prerequisites for suspending FATF countermeasures, he emphasized, "Recently, aiming to align with international treaties and normalize relations with FATF within the (Eurasian) Group's framework, Iran has ratified the Palermo Convention – a stated prerequisite for suspending countermeasures. This document is now enacted law."

Khani added, "Furthermore, reviewing the CFT Convention and amending domestic AML/CFT (Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Financing of Terrorism) laws to maximally cover international standards are now priorities. Efforts are underway to implement necessary regulatory alignment amendments swiftly, within Iran's constitutional and legal frameworks."

Outlining Iran's expectations from FATF, he said, "It is expected that FATF views Iran's decision and the country's extensive efforts in pre-



Iranian Deputy Economy Minister Hadi Khani (c) attends the 42nd meeting of the EAG in Moscow, Russia, on May 30, 2025.

● IRNA

senting actions, submitting progress reports on the action plan, and other actions in the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing with a different perspective than before, takes note of them, and takes steps towards mutual confidence-building and the improvement of bilateral interactions." The deputy economy minister also called on aligned countries who are principal members of FATF and regional groups, especially the Eurasian group and the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), to provide necessary assistance to Iran "for further confidence-building and Iran's exit from the list of non-cooperative countries." He announced Iran's readiness to hold bilateral and multilateral meetings to this end.

He also invited members of the EAG and MENAFATF regional groups to travel to Iran and observe its "actions in combating money laundering and terrorist financing," in order to redefine cooperation in managing challenges related to FATF recommendations and standards.

Petrochem accounts for 19% of national added value: NPC

Economy Desk

Iran's petrochemical industry, while consuming at most 8% of the country's hydrocarbon resources, accounts for 19% of the industrial sector's added value, said the investment manager of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC).

Hamidreza Ajami emphasized the necessity of developing complementary industries to complete the petrochemical value chain, stating, "The petrochemical industry accounts for 19% of the industrial sector's value-added," IRNA reported.

"Despite accounting for only 25% of the country's export share, this industry has managed to supply half of the country's foreign exchange needs in recent years," Ajami said.

Stressing the imperative of developing complementary industries to complete this industry's value chain, he added, "Without financing and attracting investment, realizing development projects will not be feasible, and the path for developing petrochemical industries and downstream chains must be smoothed through facilitation and support from governing bodies and related institutions."

According to the deputy head of the National Development Fund's executive board, "An amount of \$200 million will be allocated to finance at least 20 complementary projects of petrochemical industry."

Referring to future plans in the petrochemical sector, Mostafa Seyyed Hash-



emi stated on Friday, "Based on what is foreseen in the Seventh Development Plan, annual petrochemical production should increase by 40%, from 96 million tons to over 130 million tons. This leap requires two main components: first, supplying feedstock, and second, financing – in this path, the Fund is ready to cooperate."

Meanwhile, the investment manager of the NPC, also said, "Currently, 75 petrochemical complexes are active in the country, with a production capacity exceeding 96 million tons per year. Of this amount, about 46 million tons are produced in the Asaluyeh region, about 25 million tons in Mahshahr, and the rest in complexes located in other parts of the country."

Ajami added, "The mixed product of these complexes is categorized based on product type, exports, and domestic sales. A major portion of the output from these complexes is sold for export, while another portion is sold to meet domestic needs, and the average annual export revenue of the petrochemical industry in past years has been around \$13 billion."

Iran seeking \$25b foreign investment in telecoms: ICT minister

Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Sattar Hashemi, during a meeting with his Malaysian counterpart in Tokyo, emphasized his country's readiness to attract foreign investment in the high-tech sector up to \$20 to \$25 billion. Hashemi held talks with his Malaysian counterpart, Ahmad Fahmi bin Mohamed Fadzil, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) Min-

isterial Meeting in Tokyo. The session was held to explore bilateral cooperation capacities in the field of communications and information technology, as reported by IRNA.

The two sides emphasized the development of bilateral technological cooperation, including in the fields of cybersecurity, smart government, artificial intelligence, and space telecommunications, and announced their readiness to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and undertake

joint investment.

Hashemi also called for expanded cooperation in the fields of cybersecurity, smart government, artificial intelligence, fixed communication services, and space technology. He further invited his Malaysian counterpart for an official visit to Tehran.

Expressing satisfaction with the expansion of interactions with Malaysia in the field of communications and information technology and underscoring the shared technological common-

alities between the two countries, the Iranian minister announced the readiness of the Islamic Republic to sign a cooperation memo with Malaysia.



Iran's Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Sattar Hashemi (r), and his Malaysian counterpart, Ahmad Fahmi bin Mohamed Fadzil, shake hands on the sidelines of a meeting in Tokyo, Japan, on May 30, 2025.

● ict.gov.ir



Fallout of triggering snapback mechanism

INTERVIEW

Europe's approach to the Iran-US nuclear talks, the Islamic Republic's nuclear dossier, the Ukraine war, and its relationship with the US has been shaped by Europe's self-imposed isolation. The continent — especially Germany, the UK, and France — has opted to tear down rather than talk through this isolation. To dig into the consequences, causes, and how Europe might break out of this isolation, Morteza Makki, an expert on European affairs, gave the following interview.

It seems Europe is very worried about being sidelined in the nuclear talks with Iran and has chosen to break out of this isolation by threatening Iran with the snapback mechanism. Could this choice serve Europe's interests?

MAKKI: Europe's discontent over being left out of the Iran-US nuclear talks is real. Over the past 20 years, Iran-Europe relations have gone through various mediations, culminating in the P5+1 group, where Europe tried to play a pivotal role in reaching a nuclear agreement with Iran. But Europe's frustration goes beyond just being sidelined. To get to the bottom of this dissatisfaction, one must look back three years to the Ukraine war, which led Europe to paint Iran as siding with Russia against Ukraine and itself. From Europe's perspective, any country backing Russia's attack is a security threat.

On the other hand, the events of the summer and autumn of 2022 also added to tensions between Iran and Europe. Unlike previous talks — whether nuclear negotiations or discussions on human rights and terrorism — these issues never escalated to security challenges. Now, Iran is viewed as a security threat by Europe. That's why Europeans have held back from serious talks or setting up regular, agenda-driven dialogues to ease tensions over the past four to five months.

Given this, Europe is trying to use the tools at its disposal to counter Iran. The snapback mechanism is one such tool for clamping down on Iran. Europeans believe that threatening to pull the trigger on snapback will force Iran to back off from its nuclear activities and other issues without offering any concessions.

The Iran-Europe relationship runs far deeper than mere participation in nuclear talks. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi recently stated on Iranian TV that Europe is not a priority in Iran's foreign policy. Several rounds of talks may have shown that Europe's intent is to call the shots from a position of strength. While Iran remains open to dialogue, recent talks show Europe won't solve any of Iran's foreign policy problems or relieve sanctions.

If, however, Iran and the US reach an agreement, Europe is unlikely to go ahead with snapback because most sanctions are American. If the US lifts them post-agreement, Europe loses leverage over Iran. Still, the snapback mechanism hangs over Iran-US talks like a shadow. It seems Iran has now reached a crossroads in deciding its future with Europe.

If Europeans want to follow through on snapback threats, they must start preparing reports on Iran's non-cooperation under the JCPOA and UN Reso-



French President Emmanuel Macron (2nd-L), UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer (2nd-R), German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (R), and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speak to US President Donald Trump by phone, in Tirana, Albania, on May 16, 2025.

● STEFFEN KUGLER/BUNDESREGIERUNG

lution 2231 from June 2025, get the IAEA's approval, and bring it to the Joint Commission. This process will take about two months, leading up to October 2025, when Resolution 2231 expires. This will be a make-or-break month in Iran-Europe relations, and all eyes will be on how Iran-US talks pan out.

In the coming weeks, the IAEA director general is expected to present a comprehensive report on Iran's nuclear activities. How might European pressure influence this report? Grossi must report back to the Board of Governors on Iran's nuclear program and disputes. This report will be decisive. Grossi is certainly keeping tabs on Iran-US talks, and a positive outcome will be reflected in his report. If talks fail and parties walk away without an agreement, Grossi's report will likely mirror that fall-

out, pushing the US and Europe closer to pulling the snapback trigger.

The current situation is very sensitive and worrying. Europeans may try to throw a wrench in the US dialogue process. However, Europe itself is vulnerable to snapback's consequences. If Europe pushes ahead with snapback, Iran's countermeasures will be unpredictable. Though costly for Iran, the fallout won't stay within Iran's borders. Considering Arab countries' concerns about escalating Iran-West tensions, Europe must weigh up these repercussions carefully in its decision-making.

Among the European troika, France seems to be the most vocal against Iran, raising various accusations. Has Paris returned to its "bad cop" role from the JCPOA era?

Iran-France relations have been

fraught for 40 years. Despite hosting revolutionary leaders briefly before Iran's Islamic Revolution, France became a refuge for anti-Iran groups, providing political and other support to undermine Iran. These facts cannot be swept under the rug when examining bilateral ties. During JCPOA talks, then-French foreign minister Laurent Fabius tried to throw a spanner in the works under the influence of powerful pro-Israel lobbies deeply embedded in French politics and economy. France continues this stance in recent talks, exemplified by the foreign minister's hostile remarks and legal actions related to French spies imprisoned in Iran. This signals France's serious agenda against Iran and its likely role as Europe's "bad cop". Despite France's prominent role, it should be remembered that Europe is more than just France.

Morteza Makki

Germany takes a more cautious approach, and the UK quietly pursues its goals, recently designating the IRGC as a terrorist group.

We are in a tense phase with Europe and must pull out all the stops diplomatically to ease tensions. Although recent European moves and Iran's foreign minister's statements suggest no major shift in EU stance is expected in the next four months, public diplomacy can help smooth over tensions.

Europe is currently being sidelined in the Iran nuclear dossier, and this is mirrored in other cases like the Ukraine war. Moreover, the continent no longer holds onto its former stature in the Middle East. How did Europe end up here, and how can it break out of this predicament?

Europe has always tried to leverage its normative power



If, however, Iran and the US reach an agreement, Europe is unlikely to go ahead with snapback because most sanctions are American. If the US lifts them post-agreement, Europe loses leverage over Iran. Still, the snapback mechanism hangs over Iran-US talks like a shadow. It seems Iran has now reached a crossroads in deciding its future with Europe.



International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi (C) visits an exhibition of Iran's nuclear achievements, in Tehran, Iran, on April 17, 2025.

● AEOI

to carve out a role in global and regional developments, using this strength to push forward its political and economic goals. However, Russia's attack on Ukraine dealt a heavy blow to Europe's standing and position, effectively undermining the normative power and the defense of human rights and democracy that Europeans had consistently put at the forefront of their foreign and security priorities.

Europeans had a different view of Russia compared to the US, which believed Russia should be kept in check beyond its borders; Europe thought Russia should be contained within its own borders and Moscow's political developments should be influenced. The issue of Ukraine and Georgia's NATO membership and NATO's expansion near Russia, which the US supported, was a major point of disagree-

ment with Europe. Due to its stance on Russia, Europe had very strong economic and trade ties with Russia. Before the Ukraine war, Europe's trade volume with Russia stood at €370 billion, while US-Russia trade was only \$26 billion. But Russia's attack on Ukraine turned Europe's security paradigm upside down and dealt a severe blow to it. Prior to this attack, Europe had been operat-

ing under NATO and US security umbrellas to advance its goals, but after the attack, it lost its foothold and is now trying to play its role in security either without or alongside the US. Europe, especially France, had tried in recent years to step up and play an active role in the Middle East, but Israel's devastating attacks on Gaza and Europe's passive stance in the face of these assaults seriously

tarnished its credibility in the region. France had previously claimed to wield influence in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, but this time it fell short. Alongside these developments, Arab countries, despite their convergence with the West as a main strategy, after the 2019 attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities (Aramco), came to realize they cannot rely solely on the West and Europe and must strike a

balance by building ties with other powers like China and Russia. This shift in approach has further weakened Europe's position in the region. Moreover, Arab countries, unlike before, no longer back European policies against Tehran, which is another factor that has dented Europe's influence in the Middle East.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

Iran takes positive view of Oman's nuclear proposal

 **By Mohsen Pakaein**
Former Iranian ambassador to Azerbaijan

OPINION

Two distinct approaches have come to light in the ongoing indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States. On one hand, there are the two delegations, sitting down at the table under Oman's mediation, where talks have been marked by mutual respect, professionalism, and a willingness to put forward reasonable requests and consider both parties' interests. On the other hand, outside the negotiating room, US officials have trotted out positions and attitudes that run directly counter to what is being discussed inside. They bring up unreasonable demands and seem intent on pushing for purely American interests, with little regard for Iran's. Such maneuvers naturally hamper the talks, raising doubts about the true intentions of US officials in entering these negotiations. It is clear from the proceedings that the negotiations have been professional and respectful, and a decision has been made to car-

ry on. This is a positive sign, indicating that both sides remain keen to stick with diplomacy over confrontation, and are striving to work through their differences peacefully at the negotiating table. The Iranian side has laid its cards on the table with complete transparency, insisting on its logical and immutable principles, especially the right to nuclear energy, which is not up for negotiation or compromise. Iran has made it clear — and has stated so forcefully — that it will not head down the path of building a nuclear bomb, and is intent on seeing the sanctions imposed against it lifted. These principles have been spelled out by Iran, but unfortunately, the American side does not sing from the same hymn sheet. Inside the negotiations, they nod along with Iran's positions and show respect, but outside, they call for a complete halt to Iran's nuclear program and remain silent on the lifting of sanctions. If the talks are to bear fruit, the Americans must take on board Iran's fundamental and unchangeable positions. If their aim is truly to ensure Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons, this is not a tall order. Iran can put in

place the necessary safeguards, and the Americans, for their part, should scrap the sanctions. As for the details of Oman's proposal, which came up in the fifth round of talks, there is no news to report, and speculation is not warranted. What is clear is that the way both Iran and the US have reacted to Oman's initiative suggests that Iran is taking a positive view, while the Americans are set to go back and forth with their own capital. For now, the proposal remains in limbo. Regarding the meeting between US top negotiator Steve Witkoff and the Mossad chief just before the fifth round of talks, several points about Israel's role must be considered. Israel now finds itself in its weakest political position, with its global standing taking a hit and public revulsion toward the regime on the rise. Never since the creation of this fake regime has it been so beleaguered. Beyond the attacks from Yemen, Israel's decision to send the Mossad chief to meet Witkoff in person only highlights its weakness. If Israel had real clout, it could have phoned in its opinions from Tel Aviv, and Witkoff could have, as in the JCPOA era, toed the Israeli



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) talks with his Omani counterpart, Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi, in Oman's capital minutes before the third round of Iran-US talks on April 26, 2025.
● IRNA

line without fuss. The presence of the Israeli regime in Rome and at the talks, and the publicizing of this fact, is a sign of weakness for both Israel and the United States, as it shows Washington is hand-

ing over the reins to Tel Aviv at this juncture. It also underscores Israel's desperation, as it rushes into Rome in such a flustered manner. Given Israel's current vulnerability, the Americans would do well to seize the

moment; if they are genuinely intent on a breakthrough, they must start making independent decisions.

The article first appeared in Persian on ILNA.

Take the deal, President Trump

 **By Ron Paul**
Former Republican congressman

OPINION

Deal-making is said to be President Trump's specialty, yet after five rounds of indirect talks with Iran — most recently just days ago — we seem as far away from an agreement as ever. The fifth round ended last Friday with no breakthrough, but at least no breakdown. However, each day that passes without a document signed on the table is another day for the neocons to maneuver the US president toward an attack on Iran. One way the war party does this is to continuously move the goalposts and change the rules of the game. Trump envoy Steve Witkoff, under great pressure from the neocons, has himself signaled at least three position shifts: from no enrichment at all, to low-level enrichment for civilian uses, back to no enrichment at all. The neocons know that Iran will not give up its right to the civilian use of nuclear power and that is why they are applying maximum pressure to force Trump to officially adopt that position. They know if that becomes the US "red

line," then they will win and they will get their war. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, in league with US neocons, has been warning us for 20 years that Iran is "months away" from a nuclear weapon — even though our own Intelligence Community recently reaffirmed that Iran is not working on a nuclear weapon at all.

Of course, this is the same Netanyahu who promised Congress in 2002 that if the US would just invade Iraq, peace and prosperity would break out in the Middle East. "If you take out Saddam, Saddam's regime," he told Congress in March of that year, "I guarantee you that it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region."

We know how that worked out. Poll after poll shows that the American people are tired of intervention and tired of Middle East wars. President Trump himself recognized this in his scathing rebuke of neocons and interventionists during a recent speech in Saudi Arabia. But rebuke in a speech is not enough. President Trump must

actively turn away from the neocons — many of whom are prominent in his own administration. The recent US debacle in Yemen — where billions were wasted, civilians killed, and US military equipment destroyed — is just a taste of what the US would be in for if the neocons get their way and take us to war with Iran. The Iranian foreign minister laid down in the simplest terms how the impasse could be solved, posting on X that, "Zero nuclear weapons = we DO have a deal; Zero enrichment = we do NOT have a deal." My own preference is non-intervention and I do not believe Iran has the desire to militarily harm the United States. I share President Trump's view that it would be far better to re-establish relations with Iran and begin mutually beneficial trade with the country. But if a mutually acceptable nuclear deal is the best way to take the neocon war with Iran off the table, then a deal is worth supporting. President Trump should make his position clear to his negotiators: no more waffling or contradictions, get this agreement signed, and put one in the "win" column.

The article first appeared on The Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity.



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Asian Athletics Championships:

Mobini etches name into history books as Iran grabs double golds



Reihaneh Mobini celebrates with the Iranian flag after winning a historic women's long jump gold medal at the Asian Athletics Championships in Gumi, South Korea, on May 29, 2025.

● iranathletics.ir

Sports Desk

Reihaneh Mobini made history by becoming the first Iranian girl to win a gold medal in the 26th edition of the Asian Athletics Championships, walking away with the ultimate prize of the long jump event in Gumi, South Korea, on Thursday.

There was further glory for the country on Day 3 of the continental showpiece, as Mohammadreza Tayyebi grabbed the gold in the men's shot put contest.

Having registered a second-best qualification effort of 6.33m on the preceding day, Mobini saved her best for the final showdown as she jumped 6.40m with her second attempt to clinch a historic medal for the country. Indian duo Ancy Sojan Edappilly (6.33m) and Shaili Singh (6.30m) settled for the silver and bronze medals, respectively.

Japan's Sumire Hata, who had set a championship record for the gold in the previous edition in 2023, missed out on the podium in Gumi, finishing fourth with 6.20m, despite a best qualification display with 6.35m.

In the men's shot put showdown, Tayyebi was the only contestant to exceed the 20m-mark at the Gumi Civic Stadium.

Ranked third in the 15-man table after three rounds, the Iranian unleashed a 20.27m throw on his fourth attempt and then registered 20.32m to beat China's Xing Jialiang (19.97m) to the gold medal.

Saudi Mohammed Tolu – a silver medalist in the latest Asian Games – took the bronze with a best effort of 19.92m.

Last-gasp winner seals Hazfi Cup glory for Esteghlal

Sports Desk

Rouzbah Cheshmi scored a 120th-minute winner as Esteghlal edged out Malavan FC 1-0 to win the Iranian Hazfi Cup title in Arak on Thursday.

There was little to separate the two sides at the Imam Khomeini Stadium, before Cheshmi's low drive from inside the box found the bottom corner right at the death to lead Esteghlal to a record eighth domestic cup trophy. Thursday's triumph put a lid on a dreadful season for the Tehran Blues, who had matched an all-time low in the Persian Gulf

Pro League table earlier in May, finishing ninth with seven wins and 10 defeats in 30 games.

The victory also secured continental action for Esteghlal, as the club will be part of the group stage at the AFC Champions League Two next season.

The cup glory was a fitting finale to interim head coach Mojtaba Jabbari's six-game spell on the Esteghlal bench, though club chairman Ali Nazari Jouybari stated after the match that the former Blues midfielder "is on the club's shortlist of candidates for the permanent role."

Meanwhile, Malavan, which

overcame several tough top-flight opponents to reach the final, was left feeling hard done by after a decisive refereeing decision went against the northern Iranian club.

Malavan striker Mohammad Omri, racing toward a one-on-one with Esteghlal keeper Hossein Hosseini, was brought down by Blues defender Armin Sohrabi-an on the edge of the box in first-half stoppage time. However, referee Mo'oud Bonyadifar and the VAR team did not deem the incident a foul, let alone a denial of a clear goalscoring opportunity.



Seyyed Hossein Hosseini lifts the trophy as Esteghlal players celebrate winning the Iranian Hazfi Cup title at the Imam Khomeini Stadium, Arak, Iran, on May 29, 2025.

● MOHAMMAD-HASSAN ZARIFMANEH/FARS

UWW Ranking Series:

Iran's Sohrabi wins Greco-Roman gold at Ulaanbaatar Open

Sports Desk

Greco-Roman wrestler gave Iran a flying start at the Ulaanbaatar Open, by grabbing the gold medal of the 72kg contests at the third UWW Ranking Series event of the season in the Mongolian capital.

The reigning Asian champion, who will be in the Iranian squad for September's World Championships in Zagreb, defeated the host's Zandambat Batsaikhan by technical superiority (8-0) before outclassing Yrskeldi Khamzaev of Kyrgyzstan 10-1.

The Iranian continued his

emphatic run with a fall victory over Indian Ankit Gulia and then capped off the round-robin contests with a 3-1 win against Turkey's Mehmet Mustafa Sahin. Meanwhile, Iranian Mohammad Keshtkar missed out on the podium in the 63kg weight class.

Keshtkar, who won an Asian silver in March, beat Aref Mohammadi of Qatar, and India's Chetan Chetan to reach the semifinals. A last-four 2-1 loss to South Korean Hanjae Chung sent Keshtkar into the third-place bout, where he was beaten 6-1 in a rematch against Iranian-born Mohammadi.



● IAWFIR

WTT Youth Contender:

Faraji beats Lorestani in all-Iranian U17 final

Sports Desk

Table tennis prodigy Benjamin Faraji defeated Arshia Lorestani to win the boys' under-17 trophy at the latest WTT Youth Contender event in

Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Having beaten opponents from Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, and the host country to reach Thursday's final, Faraji came out on top against his fellow-Iranian 3-1 (11-4, 12-14, 11-9,

11-5) to walk away with the ultimate prize. There was further glory for Iran in the girls' competitions at the Humo Arena, as Setayesh Il-loukhani settled for the runner-up trophy in the under-17 class.

The Iranian girl overcame players from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and India en route to the final showpiece, before falling to a loss to the host's Aruja Kamalova in straight games (12-10, 11-7, 11-9).



Mostofi House restoration sets a model for sustainable heritage management

Iranica Desk

Restoring a historical monument is merely the beginning of a long-term process and not the final achievement. Over time, historic buildings are subject to natural erosion, climate fluctuations, and structural damages. Without regular monitoring and continuous maintenance, the initial restoration efforts tend to lose their effectiveness.

Alireza Sadr, a professional working in the field of cultural heritage in Shushtar, a city in Khuzestan Province, elaborates that the comprehensive restoration of the Mostofi House took nearly a year.

Having been involved in both the restoration and operation of this historic residence, he emphasized, "Our primary focus was on infrastructure; the electrical, gas, water, and sewage systems were entirely reconstructed. Particularly concerning the wastewater disposal system, the previous routes close to the walls were removed, and new routes were carefully designed to keep a safe distance from the building, thus preventing moisture infiltration."

Sadr also highlighted that Shushtar, with its striking natural scenery and unique architecture, has a significant voice to contribute in the culinary domain. From local dairy products and cow's milk to greasy bread, plum stew, and Shushtari cookies, there exists a real potential to create a nationally recognized regional food brand, chn.ir wrote.

"At the Mostofi House, the restoration team made every effort to ensure that all installations strictly adhered to heritage conservation regulations. On



visitiran.ir

the roof of the complex, periodic restorations with traditional clay plastering are carried out every two to three years. The most recent phase was completed in November, involving approximately 700 square meters. The employment of local labor has not only helped preserve the technical authenticity of the site but also reinforced residents' sense of ownership and pride in the project," he explained.

He further detailed that since the beginning of the restoration process, efforts were made to foster a respectful and transparent relationship with local res-

idents. The house is situated in an area renowned for its well-educated families, which contributed to the project avoiding resistance or significant opposition from the community.

Sadr underlined that if restoration projects are conducted without ongoing operational planning and continuous monitoring, their benefits quickly diminish. Therefore, throughout the implementation of the Mostofi House project, every operational decision was made in close collaboration with technical experts and the project's operational team. Despite the project's success so far, expanding it or

pursuing further phases faces challenges under the current economic climate. Fluctuations in the prices of building materials, raw supplies, and services have made project planning more unpredictable.

He called for government and regulatory bodies to develop more agile frameworks for engaging with the private sector. The slower and more bureaucratic the procedures, the less likely genuine investors will be to participate. He also stressed that supportive and facilitative policies, rather than overly controlling ones, are essential for attracting investment.

Sadr stated that every detail — ranging from architectural elements to the visual identity of the complex — has been thoroughly coordinated with Shushtar's cultural context. Graphic design, logos, color schemes for the spaces, and the musical ambiance in accommodations and restaurants were all created in consultation with local designers and inspired by the region's rich cultural heritage.

Sadr pointed out that Shushtar, with its more than 300 registered historic houses, 14 nationally and internationally recognized sites, and a distinctive river and urban fabric,

offers one of Iran's most comprehensive tourism packages. However, the current infrastructure — including accommodation facilities, tourism services, and promotional activities — does not yet fully match this potential.

He noted that successful initiatives like the revival of Mostofi House can serve as valuable models for other property owners and investors. Nonetheless, to expand this success, efforts should be made to streamline processes by facilitating permit issuance, developing incentive-based leasing models, and encouraging closer cooperation with govern-

mental agencies.

Given the intense heat experienced during Khuzestan's summer, Sadr suggested shifting part of the city's tourism activities toward nighttime. Night hours provide an excellent opportunity for cultural festivals, food fairs, folk performances, and city tours. With proper planning, creating a vibrant nocturnal scene not only aligns with local culture but can also boost quality of life and the city's economic vitality. He estimated that about 25% of the city's night-time capacity can be effectively harnessed through improved infrastructure, security, and planning — simple measures like adequate lighting, safe pedestrian pathways, low-cost entertainment options, or spaces designated for families to gather in the evening.

In addition to its natural beauty and architecture, Sadr stressed that Shushtar also holds significant potential in the culinary sector. From traditional dairy products and cow's milk to greasy bread, plum stew, and regional cookies, there is great scope for developing a nationally recognized food brand. Over the past two years, two festivals dedicated to local foods and dairy products at the Mostofi House successfully drew widespread positive attention from both the public and media.

He emphasized that the national registration of local foods and establishing institutional frameworks for their promotion are among the most critical strategies for fostering sustainable tourism. Food remains one of the most tangible representations of culture for every traveler.

Gisoom; where dense forest meets beautiful Caspian Sea



safarzon.com

Gisoom is a captivating forest characterized by tall, dense trees that stretch along the expansive Caspian Sea, creating one of the most beautiful and serene spots near the coast. Located just 18 kilometers from the Anzali-Talesh road, this area welcomes visitors

into a lush, green corridor formed by intertwined towering trees. The trees here seem to embrace each other, forming a leafy tunnel where only narrow rays of sunlight penetrate through the dense canopy, illuminating the forest floor.

This place feels like a slice

of paradise — the mingling scents of the trees and humid earth create an enchanting atmosphere. Venturing deeper into the forest allows you to immerse yourself in the pristine nature of Gisoom, touching the spirit of the trees and listening to the melodies

of singing birds. If you're fortunate, you might even hear the footsteps of horses, encountering a group of beautiful horses that seem to embody the heart of nature itself, visitiran.ir wrote. Gisoom is one of Iran's few coastal jungles where forest and sea converge, offering



visitiran.ir

one of the most stunning Caspian Sea coastlines. To reach this region, simply

breathtaking scene. The area offers numerous recreational and accom-

modation options. After passing through the dense jungle, you'll arrive in the rural region of Gisoom, situated along the coast. Here, you can rent villas or suits, or try camping — though it requires skill and proper equipment. Facilities such as restaurants, shops, and buffets are available, and water sports like swimming and jet skiing are popular activities.

Close to Gisoom are attractions like Qal'eh Rud Khan and Visadar Waterfall, which you might consider adding to your itinerary. Rich in plant and animal diversity, Gisoom remains one of Iran's most pristine regions in the north. Like other northern areas of Iran, Gisoom Forest is beautiful year-round, but its splendors are especially heightened during spring and early autumn.

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Vol. 7845 ● Saturday, May 31, 2025 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages

Iran eyes tourism pacts with UAE, Mexico, Ghana, UNWTO support



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's deputy tourism chief held a series of high-level meetings on Thursday on the sidelines of the 49th Executive Council session of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), discussing deeper cooperation with officials from the United Arab Emirates, Mexico, and Ghana. Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpei, deputy minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, led Iran's delegation during the sessions in Segovia, pushing to strengthen "people-to-people ties" and expand cultural and tourism diplomacy, IRNA reported. In a sit-down with UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy, both sides underscored the importance of shared cultural roots and "close geography" in shaping regional con-

nectivity. Bandpei floated joint projects in health tourism, ecotourism, and arts-based travel, proposing tailor-made packages and cultural exchanges. The Emirati side welcomed the ideas, calling tourism a "strategic necessity" and expressed hope for a "clear jump" in bilateral ties through "practical planning." Toward the end of the meeting, Al Hashimy requested Iran's backing for the UAE-supported candidate in the race for UNWTO Secretary-General. Iran responded that it would make its final decision based on "professional standards," qualifications, and national interests, after reviewing all candidates' full documentation. Later, in talks with Mexican officials, including the country's tourism minister, discussions turned to training, branding, and cross-border travel promotion. The Mexican delegation

offered to share expertise and sought Iran's support for its own candidate in the UNWTO leadership race. Bandpei pointed to shared civilizational heritage as fertile ground for deeper diplomatic and cultural engagement. "Cultural and tourism cooperation is the missing link," he said, stressing the long-term potential of sustained cultural initiatives. In another meeting, Iran and Ghana explored partnerships in medical tourism and ecotourism. Ghana's foreign and tourism ministers both welcomed Iranian proposals and echoed calls for deeper technical collaboration. A Ghanaian candidate also laid out reform plans for the UNWTO post, calling for equitable hiring across member states and a shift away from what he described as "political bias" in the organization's approach to global disputes.

Iran, Tajikistan to form joint committee on Persian literature, civilization

Tehran urges greater regional cooperation on water security

Arts & Culture Desk

A high-level joint committee on Persian language, literature, and cultural heritage between Iran and Tajikistan was proposed on May 29 in Dushanbe, as Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref called for stronger academic and cultural collaboration to preserve "shared identity" and deepen historical ties.

In meetings held May 29 and 30 in Dushanbe, Aref emphasized the nations' "deep cultural, historical, and linguistic connections" and called for the formation of a joint committee on Persian language, literature, and civilization, fvpresident.ir reported.

The proposal was welcomed by Tajik officials during a series of high-level talks.

Calling Tajikistan "a second homeland for Iranians," Aref described the two countries as neighbors "within a single civilizational zone," adding that cultural affinity had helped strengthen bilateral ties over the past three decades.

The two sides also discussed deepening scientific and academic exchange, including student and faculty cooperation, and expanding partnerships in technology and engineering.

"We're ready to share the progress Iran has made in science and technology with friendly nations," Aref told Tajik leaders.

Prime Minister Qohir Rasolzoda said the two peoples were "tied together by shared cultural and historical val-



ues" that can drive economic and social growth.

Cultural diplomacy wasn't the only focus. Aref represented Iran at the International Conference on Glaciers Preservation in Dushanbe on Friday. The conference, held May 29-31, centers on climate resilience and water security.

Addressing global warming and its threat to freshwater reserves, Aref said, "Glaciers are a hidden treasure" and warned that their melting could lead to floods, soil erosion, and the destruction of infrastructure.

He noted that Iran, with its long history of water management in arid regions, has managed to bridge "traditional systems and modern technology."

Iran's experience with qanats—underground aqueducts designed to prevent evaporation—was presented as an example of sustainable innovation.

"We believe the world needs creative

and fair solutions," Aref said, emphasizing the importance of joint efforts to turn environmental "challenges into opportunities."

The visa waiver between the two countries was also credited for a sharp uptick in tourism and private-sector engagement. Officials said the 17th session of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Commission in Shiraz had yielded "solid agreements," including 13 new cooperation documents worth over \$450 million.

Both sides pointed to growing trade and called for continued efforts to remove barriers. "There's no obstacle to moving our ties forward," Aref remarked after his meeting with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon.

The Tajik president, in turn, stressed the importance of preserving the two nations' "shared heritage and customs" and expressed support for cultural projects.

Tehran launches Balkan Iran Cultural Institute to bridge Balkans, Middle East



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian officials and academics on Thursday unveiled the Balkan Iran Cultural and Media Institute at a ceremony in Tehran's Milad Tower, calling it a "shared home" for Iran and the Balkans aimed at fostering regional dialogue through culture and media.

Among the attendees were Mohammad Hossein Ranjbaran, senior advisor to Iran's foreign minister, former ambassador to Yugoslavia Mohammad Javad Asayesh, and Eastern Europe director Alizadeh from the foreign ministry, Mehr News Agency reported.

The founder and CEO of the new institute, Mohsen Sohani, told the audience the project was more than a virtual space. "We are not just launching a cultural-media platform," he said. "We are building a living bridge—a bridge of words that have echoed for

centuries in Balkan books, mosques, churches, and streets."

Sohani described the Balkans as a region where the "call to prayer and church bells meet," and emphasized its shared history with Iran.

He called the new institute a step toward telling stories rather than receiving them. "Let's not be passive recipients. Let's create the narrative—with our pens, our cameras, and our voices," he urged.

The institute's focus will include cultural exchange, public diplomacy, and promoting Persian language and literature across the Balkans.

The event also featured a live theatrical performance by Iranian actor and playwright Ayoub Aghakhani, drawing strong applause from the audience.

"The 20th century knew the Balkans through war," Sohani said in closing. "Let's make its 21st century about poetry, peace, and dignity."

Staying out of FATF ...

Only North Korea, Iran, and Myanmar are on FATF's blacklist. The question is why Iran should be lumped in with these countries. Iran is a nation with a rich civilization, culture, significant global standing, and vast economic potential. It borders 15 countries, boasts huge oil, gas, and mineral reserves, and has

access to both northern and southern seas. A country with such assets should not be placed alongside those nations. Staying out of these treaties makes it difficult to repatriate foreign currency, and freezes up state assets abroad, and forces Iran to import non-essential goods just to make up for blocked funds. Moreover, non-membership takes a toll

on money transfers for Iranian students and deters foreign investment. Today, many Iranians abroad are eager to invest in their homeland, and major foreign firms are willing to enter the market, but the lack of FATF membership puts the brakes on these opportunities. The biggest hurdle to foreign investment in Iran right now is precisely

this non-membership. The biggest hurdle to foreign investment in Iran right now is precisely this non-membership. When a country is labeled high-risk, it scares off foreign capital. For investors, staying out of FATF sends the message that doing business here is too risky—so they hold back. Consequently, millions of dollars in na-

tional interests have been left on the table due to FATF non-membership. Now that the Expediency Council has come around, swift action must be taken. With Palermo on its way to implementation, hopes are high that the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) bill will soon follow, paving the way for Iran's full FATF membership.