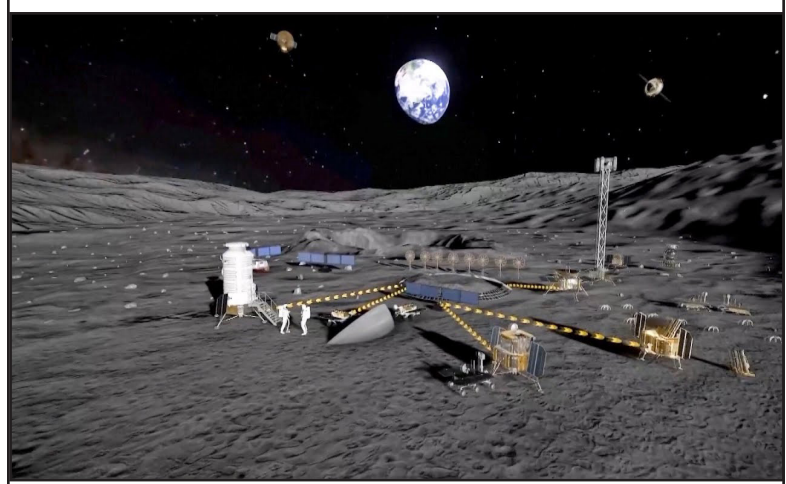


Iran Officially Joins China's Lunar Exploration Program



TEHRAN -- Iran has officially joined China's lunar exploration program, with plans to send a scientific payload aboard the upcoming Chang'e-8 mission.

The mission is part of the China-led International Lunar Research Station (ILRS), a major global effort also involving Russia and other nations. Iranian officials hope this marks the beginning of deeper involvement in lunar and planetary resource projects.

Iran's participation in the Chang'e-8 mission reflects a growing ambition to establish a credible and cooperative presence in the global space sector.

As part of Iran's 10-year national space roadmap, one of the key priorities is advancing space science and exploration. Among its top agenda data-x-items are the development of biological capsules and the exploration and eventual utilization of extra-terrestrial resources.

Two major global initiatives are currently underway in the realm of lunar resource utilization. The U.S.-led Artemis program, supported by Western and some Eastern countries, and the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS), spearheaded by China and Russia, both recognized as space superpowers.

The ILRS initiative includes contributions from several nations and focuses on the sustainable exploration and exploitation of lunar resources.

China's Chang'e program is a core

component of the ILRS and represents a significant effort in lunar surface research. Following extensive technical consultations, Chinese space authorities have expressed confidence in Iranian scientists and researchers, leading to Iran's formal inclusion in the Chang'e-8 mission.

As part of this mission, a scientific payload developed by an Iranian academic and research institute will be placed on the lunar surface.

The Iranian contribution is a static electric potential measurement instrument designed to study the uneven distribution of electric charge on the Moon's surface. This type of data is considered critical for planning future lunar activities and resource utilization.

China has chosen payloads from a range of international partners to fly on the country's Chang'e-8 lunar south pole mission, expanding its space diplomacy.

The China National Space Administration (CNSA) officially announced the selection April 24 of cooperation projects for the Chang'e-8 mission, scheduled to launch in 2028 or 2029, selecting 10 projects from 11 different countries, regions and one international organization.

It follows a 2023 announcement of opportunities to collaborate in Chang'e-8, in which 200 kilograms of payload resources were made available.

Iranians Celebrate Birth of Imam Reza (AS)

TEHRAN -- Friday marked the birth of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam, whose sanctuary in Mashhad filled with angelic praises and the joy of countless pilgrims while other major cities across Iran including the capital celebrated the occasion with elaborate ceremonies.

The streets leading to the holy shrine in Mashhad were adorned with colorful lights and decorations, making the day even more special.

Pilgrims, often overwhelmed by devotion, gathered in the courtyard of the shrine, engaging in prayer, songs of praise, and celebration of the Imam's birth.

The festivities were held on the last day of the ten-day Keramat (dignity) event.

The shrine's surrounding areas were decorated with vibrant flowers, flags, and banners commemorating the event, creating a festive atmosphere.

In addition to the spiritual celebrations, the Imam Reza Shrine and surrounding areas offered social services.



On the occasion of the birth of Imam Reza (AS), a ceremony is held to change flowers at his holy shrine in Mashhad.

Sobh Film Market Held for First Time



TEHRAN -- The 3rd Sobh International Media Festival has marked a milestone this year with the introduction of its newest segment, the Sobh Film Market.

Launched for the first time in 2025, the market quickly became a centerpiece of international engagement and industry

interest.

Welcoming a diverse array of film and television professionals from around the world, the inaugural market drew representatives from countries such as Turkey, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, India, South Korea, and

Indonesia.

Among the notable international companies present were Namarasana Cultural and Artistic Institute (Afghanistan), Ghuddi OTT Platform (Bangladesh), Radio and Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Beijing Shangyi Film and Television (China), Sunnyway Films (China), Yunnan Film Studio (China), Flock Studio (OTT VOD, India), and TVRI (Indonesia).

Iranian participation was equally strong, with a significant presence from both independent distribution companies and state-affiliated media outlets.

Companies such as Aria Industry of Imagination, Bahr Films Group, Farabi Cinema Foundation, and Namava, alongside major institutions like the

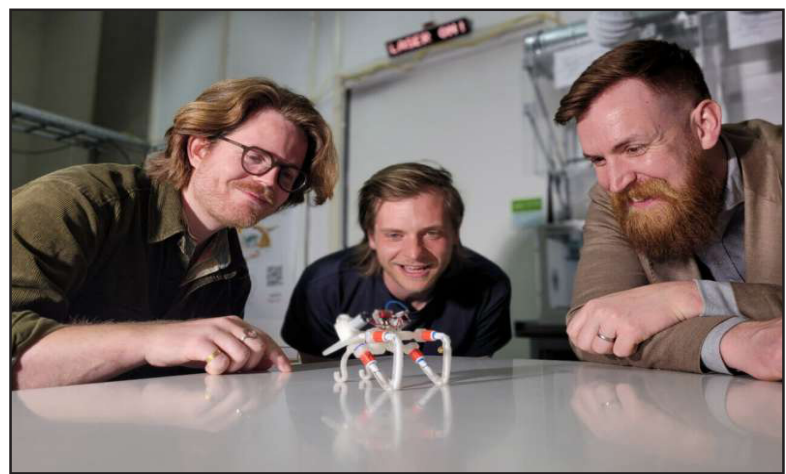
Iranian Youth Cinema Society (IYCS) and Soureh Cinema Organization, contributed to the vibrant marketplace atmosphere.

Key television networks under the IRI umbrella — including Alalam, Press TV, Hispan TV, Sahar TV, and others — also took part, further underscoring the national commitment to promoting Iranian media abroad.

Festival organizers reported that the film market was “warmly received”, with several meetings between producers, distributors, and network executives resulting in signed cooperation agreements and future project development plans.

The success of this inaugural edition is expected to pave the way for an expanded market in future editions of the Sobh Festival.

Soft Robot Thinks With its Legs



AMSTERDAM (AMOLF) -- A research team from AMOLF in Amsterdam has created a soft robot that walks, hops, and swims—all without a brain, electronics, or AI. Just soft tubes, air, and some clever physics.

The study published in Science describes one of the fastest soft robots yet, and one of the simplest. It has no computer, no software, and no sensors. And still, it moves with surprising coordination and autonomy, simply because of its body and how it interacts with the world.

So, what's really driving it? Underneath the movement is a principle you've probably seen, though maybe overlooked. Think of those wobbly, inflatable tube dancers flailing around in front of gas stations. The same physics that makes them wiggle could hold the key to the next generation of autonomous robots.

Powered by a continuous stream of air alone, each of the robot's soft, tubular legs begins to oscillate—not unlike those tube dancers. On its own, each leg waves around randomly. But when many are coupled together, something unexpected happens: their

motions quickly synchronize, falling into rhythmic locomotion gaits.

“Suddenly, order emerges from chaos,” says first author Alberto Comoretto. “There's no code, no instructions. The legs simply fall into sync spontaneously, and the robot takes off.” As with fireflies flashing in synchrony or heart cells pulsating in unison, complex collective motions arise from simple interactions.

And it's fast. When a flow of air is given as input, the robot hits 30 body lengths per second. Relatively speaking, a Ferrari reaches “only” 20 lengths per second. This speed is orders of magnitude faster than other air-powered robots, which typically require centralized control.

Even more surprising: the synchronization adapts. If the robot runs into an obstacle, it reorients itself. When it moves from land to water, the gait spontaneously shifts from an in-phase hopping pattern to a swimming freestyle. These transitions happen without any central processor or control logic. Instead, movement emerges from the tight coupling between body and environment.

“In biology, we often see similar decentralized intelligence,” explains co-author Mannus Schomaker. “Sea stars, for example, coordinate hundreds of tube feet using local feedback and body dynamics, not a centralized brain.”

The research challenges the conventional idea that robots need complicated control systems to realize lifelike behavior. “Simple objects, like tubes, can give rise to complex and functional behavior, provided we understand how to harness the underlying physics,” says principal investigator Bas Overvelde. In fact, Overvelde prefers not to call it a robot at all.

“There is no brain, no computer. Essentially, it's a machine. But when properly designed, it can outperform many robotic systems and behave like an artificial creature.”

Possible future applications range from smart pills to space tech. Safe microrobots without microelectronics that can be swallowed and release drugs after autonomously reaching the target tissue. Robotic wearable exosuits that sync to the walking steps without processors—reducing their power consumption while enhancing human strength.

Autonomous mechanical machines are suited for extreme environments like space, where traditional electronics may fail. More broadly, these examples illustrate how this research opens doors to mechanical systems that behave as if they had a computer, without actually needing one.

With this work, the team hopes to inspire new ways of thinking about robotic design: simpler systems that are more adaptive and robust. Not through computation and AI, but through physics.

Acclaimed Author Passes Away at 64

TEHRAN -- Shiva Arastouei, acclaimed Iranian author, translator, and poetess, passed away late Wednesday, at the age of 64.

Her family confirmed the news on Thursday, though the cause of death was not disclosed.

Born in 1961 in Tehran, Arastouei was known for her distinct voice in contemporary Iranian literature.

Among her notable works are the novels Aftaab Mahtaab, I Became

Beautiful When I Saw Him, and Bibi Shahrzad, as well as the acclaimed short story collection I Had Come to Drink Tea with My Daughter, which explores women's issues with a unique narrative sensitivity.

In addition to her writing, Arastouei had a diverse artistic career, including roles as a film consultant and appearances in several short films. She also taught fiction writing at the University of the Arts in Tehran.

Arastouei's early experiences as a young volunteer during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s deeply shaped her worldview and writing.

In the 1990s, during a wave of popular romance literature among youth, she took a different path by incorporating feminist themes into her fiction.

Her 1994 poetry collection Lost and her feminist storytelling style made her a prominent voice among female Iranian authors.

Picture of the Day



In the heart of soaring mountains, the village of Dehdeli in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province throbs with life far from the madding crowd of urbanity.

Photo by ISNA