

Exclusive

Mother tells heart-wrenching story of a 24-year search for her only son

How the MEK Abducted My Son – and Albania Looked Away’



Soraya Abdollahi speaking into a mic outside MEK’s Camp Ashraf in Iraq, where she spent four years between 2009 and 2013, asking to see her son

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Talks, not headlines will deliver results, Iran FM rejects nuclear deal hype

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has reaffirmed Tehran’s commitment to diplomacy amid renewed efforts to revive nuclear negotiations with the United States, denouncing the deliberate media disinformation aimed at undermining the talks.

In a post on his X account on Thursday, Araghchi pushed back against mounting media speculation suggesting a breakthrough in Iran-U.S. negotiations was imminent. “Media is speculating about an imminent Iran-U.S. deal. Not sure if we are there yet,” he wrote. “Iran is sincere about a diplomatic solution that serves all sides. But that requires an agreement that fully lifts sanctions and guarantees Iran’s nuclear rights—including enrichment.”

His comments came in response to a FOX News report citing a purported intelligence assessment that accused Iran of pursuing a nuclear weapons program with potential missile capabilities. The report, however, appeared to contradict the U.S. intelligence community’s official position, reaffirmed by Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard during a Senate hearing in March, that Iran is not actively developing a nuclear weapon. ► Page 2

US and Israel are not at odds over Iran, they are in sync

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – Since Iran and the U.S. began indirect nuclear negotiations seven weeks ago, Western media outlets have been turning up every now and then to paint Israel as a potential saboteur of the talks, and Washington as their defender.

These reports suggest that the Trump administration wants a deal with Iran. He wants to terminate sanctions in exchange for limitations on Iran’s nuclear program. In the pursuit of this agreement, there are several deadlocks that have kept the two sides from reaching an endpoint. The most important one is uranium enrichment, a right Iran insists it will never give up, and the U.S. wants gone. Western media says if Iran does not agree to stop uranium enrichment as part of a deal with the U.S., then Israel would attack Iran’s nuclear sites on its own, even against Washington’s objections. ► Page 2

BalkanIran Institute launches in Tehran

TEHRAN – During a ceremony attended by a distinguished gathering of researchers, scholars, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, media professionals, and international and regional experts on Thursday, the BalkanIran Cultural and Media Institute was officially unveiled in Tehran.

The event, which was held at the Saadi Hall of Milad Tower in Tehran, was graced by prominent figures including Mohammad Hossein Ranjbaran, Advisor to the Foreign Minister; Mohammad Javad Asayesh, former Iranian ambassador to Yugoslavia; and Abbas Aryazand, former cultural attaché in Balkan countries among others, Mehr reported on Friday.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mohsen Sohani, founder and CEO of the institute, emphasized the significance of the Balkan region as a bridge to the West. “Today, we gather in a forum whose windows open to the gateway of the Western world—Balkans. A land intertwined with diversity, cultural fusion, resilience, and coexistence.”

A geography where the call to prayer echoes alongside church bells, he said and added: “But for us, the Balkans are more than just a region; they are a mirror reflecting our shared history. Today, BalkanIran Cultural and Media Institute emerges as a bridge to connect this rich heritage. We are not merely establishing a virtual cultural and media institution but building a living bridge—one made of words that have shone in Balkan books, echoed in the Tirana’s Naim Frashëri’s poetry, and whispered in Mostar’s monasteries.” ► Page 8

600 days of failure in Gaza

By our staff writer

TEHRAN – May 29 marked the 600th day since Israel has been pounding the Gaza Strip.

However, Israel has scandalously failed to claim victory against resistance fighters whose number does not seem to be large.

All through these long days, that started from October 7, 2023, Israel has failed to defeat a guerrilla force that is surrounded from every corner.

Israel may boast that it has killed the resistance forces’ commanders and leaders, but it has been proven that no movement, either political, social, or military, is dependent on a person or persons. It is the aim that motivates or drives those loyal to a particular movement.

Of course, not every military or paramilitary movement is legal or justified. But the Palestinian resistance movements are fighting against apartheid, cruelty, the illegal annexation of their remaining lands, farms, demolition of their houses, and many other vicious and horrendous acts.

Main goal of Nawaf Salam’s sterile govt. is to undermine Lebanon’s Resistance

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Once again, Nawaf Salam’s government continues its political ineptitude, not least the statement by Foreign Minister Youssef Rajai (or rather, the Lebanese Forces Foreign Minister) that “the [Lebanese] people no longer want the wooden equation,” referring to the national triangle of Army-People-Resistance.

MP Sayyed Ibrahim al-Moussawi, a member of Hezbollah’s Loyalty to the Resistance bloc, urged Rajai to question the Minister of Interior about who these people had recently elected!

Al-Moussawi denounced the government’s anti-Resistance rhetoric, saying: “In vain, we offer them a golden equation while they insist on wooden equations. It seems there is a straw in their eye that prevents them from seeing through this golden equation.”

Yemen strikes back at Tel Aviv

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Yemeni forces have targeted Ben Gurion Airport and vow a response to any Israeli aggression with more operations.

The Yemeni Armed Forces announced on Friday the execution of a military operation targeting Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv and have warned they will continue enforcing an air and maritime blockade unless the siege on Gaza is lifted.

The attack was conducted using a hypersonic ballistic missile.

Brigadier General Yahya Saree, spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces, confirmed that the operation successfully achieved its objectives.

He said it forced “millions of occupying Zionists to flee into shelters and brought air traffic at the airport to a halt.”

Saree emphasized that the operation reaffirms the Yemeni Armed Forces’ ongoing religious, moral, and humanitarian duty toward the Palestinian people.

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‘FATF expected to take confidence-building steps about Iran’

TEHRAN- Iranian deputy minister of finance and economic affairs said that FATF is expected to take confidence-building steps in reply to Iran’s set of measures in the field of combating money laundering and terrorism financing, including the ratification of the Palermo Convention.

Addressing the 42nd meeting of the Eurasian Group (EAG) on Combating Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism, being held from May 26 to 30 in Moscow, Hadi Khani said: “At this meeting, we gave a presentation on software and intelligent infrastructure for handling suspicious transaction reports (STRs), as well as the actions of our country’s police in combating money laundering and terrorist financing, and we tried to share our experiences in these areas with other members.” ► Page 4



Iranian athletes take two gold in 2025 Asian Championships

TEHRAN – Iran’s Reyhaneh Mobini and Mohammadreza Tayebi won two gold medals at the 2025 Asian Athletics Championships Day 3 on Thursday.

In the women’s long jump, Mobini Arani clinched gold with a 6.40m effort.

Indian jumpers Ancy Sojan Edappilly and Shaili Singh won the silver and bronze medals with 6.33m and 6.30m, respectively.

In the men’s shot put, Tayebi took the gold with a throw of 20.32m, China’s Xing Jialiing seized the silver with 19.97m, and the bronze medal went to Mohammed D Tolu from Saudi Arabia with 19.92m. The event is being held in Gumi, South Korea.

TEHRAN PAPERS

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in the Thursday Iranian newspapers.

National cohesion is an essential factor in negotiations

Etemad examined the Iran-U.S. negotiations in an interview with Bijan Abdolkarimi, a philosophy scholar. He said: “The agreement is like a coin, one side of which is an external agreement with the West and the other side is an internal agreement with the people, media, and elites.” According to analysts, excessive attention to the issue of agreement abroad should not lead the political system to neglect the importance of achieving interaction, reconciliation, and internal agreement. Initially, the Iranian government adopted a sound policy and diplomacy with the U.S. because the West and the U.S. aimed to create the impression that Iran was unwilling to negotiate; in reality, by accepting indirect bilateral negotiations with the U.S., Iran disarmed the West and Trump. They hoped that Iran would declare its unwillingness to negotiate, which would allow them to prepare for an attack on Iran. However, the country’s diplomatic system negotiated intelligently. The Iranian government, like the people, must recognize that our challenge with America will not end soon and is long-term. In the long run, we cannot succeed without the support of the people. To gain that support, we need national cohesion. Additionally, the government must understand the necessity of unity with genuine and national forces.

Iran: Strategic partnership between Tehran and Moscow

In a note, the Iran newspaper discussed the strategic partnership between Tehran and Moscow by quoting Mahmoud Shouri, an expert on Russia affairs, who said: The strategic agreement between Iran and Russia is like a constitution that shapes the relations between the two countries and, more importantly, defines the prospects of these relations. Given the current conditions, including U.S. sanctions, international issues, and the alignment between the two countries at the global level, Iran and Russia must take a more serious look at cooperation with each other. The next step is to guard this treaty and take measures that can strengthen the relations between the two countries. What is certain is that Iran and Russia have gradually reached a point in their relations where they are trying not to allow external factors to have a serious impact on their relationship. What is important is that such agreements are supposed to create a platform so that activists interested in expanding cooperation do not face legal obstacles or at least know the limits and boundaries of cooperation based on these agreements.

Farihkheteagan: A trip full of opportunities

Farihkheteagan commented on Pezeshkian’s

trip to Oman and wrote: This trip is of special importance in relations between Iran and Oman. Some may think that Oman, as a Persian Gulf country, is important to Iran only in terms of its role as a mediator in the nuclear negotiations, but this country has a unique position in Tehran’s foreign policy not only because of its role as a mediator in Iran’s international negotiations but also because of its growing economic and cultural relations with Iran. The trip, which was accompanied by the signing of 14 cooperation documents, high-level meetings, and the holding of a business conference, demonstrates the two countries’ determination to expand relations in all political, economic, and cultural fields. Oman, as a reliable political mediator, a growing trading partner, and a new destination for Iranian immigrants, has a special place in Iran’s foreign policy. Unlike some countries in the region that have had tense relations with Iran, Oman has always adopted a balanced and friendly approach towards Tehran. These relations are based on mutual respect, regional cooperation, and avoidance of interference in each other’s internal affairs.

Jam-e-Jam: Retreating in the face of Iranian power

In an article, Jam-e-Jam pointed to London’s retreat after Tehran responded authoritatively to Britain’s call for zero enrichment in Iran. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi delivered a stark warning to the United Kingdom on Tuesday, stating that London’s apparent insistence on «zero enrichment» in Iran renders further dialogue on the nuclear issue futile. The paper wrote: Amid the diplomatic nuclear struggle, the West sought to put new pressure on Iran, which faced Iran’s strong response, with Tehran insisting on its national and legal rights. The pressure started with a threat to trigger the snapback mechanism (that would return the UN sanctions on Iran) and impose zero enrichment on Iran. Since Iran considers these two things as crossing its red lines, the British side was forced to back down. What this diplomatic dispute has made clear is quite important: the language of threats and media pressure cannot disuade the Islamic Republic of Iran from pursuing its legal rights. By relying on legal logic, resistance diplomacy, and domestic support for the nuclear industry, Tehran has been able to consolidate its positions and force Europe to back down from its unilateral claims. London’s retreat is not just a tactical retreat, but a sign of the deeper reality that Iran today is not just a negotiating country, but a powerful and decisive player in the regional and international security and diplomatic equations.

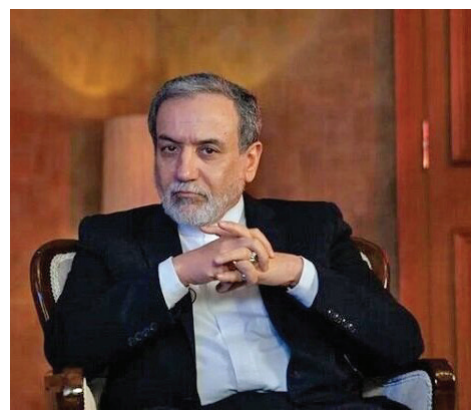
Talks, not headlines will deliver results, Iran FM rejects nuclear deal hype

From page 1 ► Araghchi emphasized that progress would not be achieved through “media narratives,” but through “serious negotiations.” He warned against disinformation campaigns aimed at sabotaging diplomacy, directly criticizing Israel for manipulating the Iran issue to target American political opponents. “Using Iran to attack American critics is low, even for Israel,” he wrote. “The path to a deal runs through the negotiating table—not the headlines.”

Iran showed 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.

The United States and Iran have held five rounds of negotiations since April 12, under the mediation of Oman, and are expected to



reconvene in pursuit of a new agreement. One of the core sticking points remains the level of uranium enrichment Tehran will be allowed under any future deal.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump claimed on Wednesday that he had personally cautioned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu against interfering in the ongoing talks.

Iran demands Austria explain ‘baseless’ nuclear leak amid suspected Austrian-Israeli collusion

TEHRAN – Iran has formally demanded that Austria explain an “irresponsible and provocative” intelligence report alleging Tehran maintains “an active nuclear weapons program,” amid rising suspicions of Vienna’s coordinated effort with Tel Aviv to disrupt Tehran-Washington diplomacy.

The controversy ignited after Austria’s Directorate for State Protection and Intelligence (DS-PIS) reportedly leaked a classified assessment to Western media, directly contradicting U.S. intelligence findings and timed to disrupt delicate Oman-mediated negotiations.

The Fox News article, published on Wednesday, claimed that Tehran “is continuing with its active nuclear weapons program,” adding that “it can be used to launch missiles over long distances.”

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baqaei minced no words in his condemnation on Friday, stating: “The Austrian intelligence body’s claim casting doubt on the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program is a false and baseless allegation manufactured solely for media propaganda against the Islamic Republic, thus devoid of any credibility.”

Baqaei emphasized Iran’s adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and “the most rigorous inspections” by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), warning the report deliberately “undermines the IAEA’s authority.”

In a scathing comparison, he remarked: “Unlike Austria and other European nations that hypocritically remain silent about the Zionist regime’s weapons of mass destruction—and, through their unwavering support for this genocidal, occupying force, hinder efforts to establish a Middle East [West Asia] free of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)—Iran stands as a resolute opponent of nuclear arms and all WMDs, as well as a steadfast advocate for liberating West Asia from such



The headquarters of Austria’s Ministry of the Interior, the overseeing body of the Directorate General for Public Security

weapons.”

Baqaei warned that such “media fabrications” risk permanently damaging Iran-Europe relations, concluding by demanding Vienna’s “official explanation” for the “destructive actions” of its agencies.

Increasing diplomatic pressure, Iran summoned the Austrian Chargé d’Affaires to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday to formally protest the “misleading” intelligence report.

Michaela Pacher, acting in the absence of the ambassador, was met by Alireza Mollaqaadimi, Head of the First Department of Western Europe, who conveyed Tehran’s “strong protest” and demanded an official explanation from Vienna.

Mollaqaadimi rejected the Austrian claims as “baseless,” highlighting their complete contradiction with numerous IAEA reports, and stressed that Iran’s nuclear program fully complies with its legal international obligations under the NPT.

He described the Austrian intelligence agency’s actions as “irresponsible and provocative” for questioning the peaceful nature of Iran’s program without evidence.

Pacher pledged to relay Iran’s concerns and request for an official explanation to her government.

The timing of Fox News’ report is particularly significant. Since

mid-April, five rounds of indirect U.S.-Iran nuclear talks have occurred in Oman, with a sixth pending. Progress hinges on Washington lifting sanctions and respecting Iran’s nuclear rights, including enrichment.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi appeared to associate the DSPIS report with Israeli interference, posting on X: “As for the latest fake news against Iran-U.S. diplomacy: using Iran to attack American critics is low, even for Israel.”

Araghchi’s reference to “American critics” may allude to figures like Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, who told the Senate Intelligence Committee in March 2025 that U.S. agencies “assess Iran is not building a nuclear weapon” and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei “has not authorized” such a program.

The Austrian leak, published by Fox News, explicitly contradicted this, asserting: “Iran’s nuclear weapons development program is well advanced... [and] possesses a growing arsenal of ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads.”

The Austrian-Israeli nexus

Vienna’s actions appear to reflect its strengthening ties with the Israeli regime, undermining its claims of neutrality. As one of Europe’s most pro-Israeli voices, Austria’s stance is particu-

larly consequential given its role as host to the IAEA and multiple United Nations agencies.

After the Israeli regime began its genocidal war on Gaza, where War Minister Yoav Gallant called Palestinians in Gaza “human animals” and ordered a complete siege on the strip, Austria halted all Palestinian aid and twice voted against UN cease-fire resolutions.

Former Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg declared last year: “We have entered a strategic, extremely close relationship with Israel that can’t be reversed.”

In 2022, then-Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid and Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer signed a “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” pledging joint opposition to Iran’s nuclear program and expanded intelligence cooperation. Lapid stressed the need for “international awareness against the Iran agreement” during the signing.

Intelligence collaboration, though shrouded in secrecy, appears to be extensive.

In 2015, Austria’s intelligence agency BVT—the precursor to DSPIS—allegedly worked hand in hand with Mossad to relocate Syrian defector Khaled Halabi to Austria, effectively bypassing French investigations into his suspected war crimes.

During this episode, Mossad is reported to have paid €5,000 per month for his asylum, while Austrian officials manipulated residency procedures to facilitate the move.

This covert operation has had lasting repercussions, with five officials now facing trial in 2025 for abuse of authority; their defense pointing to Mossad’s “strictly confidential” directives.

Moreover, Mossad reportedly leverages a network of approximately 4,000 Austrian sayanim—civilian facilitators who play key roles in logistics, from conducting surveillance to arranging rentals.

US and Israel are not at odds over Iran, they are in sync



President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shake hands in occupied al-Quds on May 23, 2017

From page 1 ► This is simply not true. Israel cannot carry out strikes against Iran’s underground and heavily fortified nuclear facilities, which are protected by advanced air defense systems, without American help, or even lead. Furthermore, recent remarks by Trump indicate that both the U.S. and Israel share the same goal: dismantling Iran’s nuclear program. The difference is that one has chosen to play the role of the bad cop, while the other plays the good cop.

Speaking at the White House

on Wednesday, Trump briefly outlined his vision of a deal that is “very strong, where we can go in with inspectors. We can take whatever we want. We can blow up whatever we want. But nobody getting killed,” he said.

Trump’s vision is essentially that of Israel. The idea is simple: if Iran voluntarily dismantles its nuclear program, there would supposedly be no need for military strikes, avoiding retaliation and the severe repercussions that could follow for both Israel and the U.S.

46 years of economic warfare

A look at how US sanctions regime against Iran started, went on, and still persists today

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – Economic sanctions are punitive measures imposed by one or more countries to pressure a targeted nation into changing its policies. Typically involving trade bans, asset freezes, and financial restrictions, sanctions are framed as a “peaceful” alternative to war. Yet in reality, they inflict severe suffering on ordinary people while often failing to achieve their political goals.

By restricting access to food, medicine, and essential goods, sanctions cripple economies, deepen poverty, and cause preventable deaths. Sanctions are frequently used not for genuine security concerns but as tools of economic warfare to destabilize nations that resist foreign dominance.

The United States first imposed economic sanctions on Iran following the Islamic Revolution and the takeover of the U.S. Embassy by Iranian revolutionary students.

Over the past 46 years, since the 1979 Revolution, Washington has repeatedly expanded its sanctions against Iran under various pretexts. These hostile measures have been justified by a shifting set of accusations, ranging from human rights violations and missile pro-

liferation to allegations of terrorism and, most recently, Iran’s nuclear program.

Carter takes the lead in imposing anti-Iran sanctions

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter launched what would become a long-standing policy of sanctions against the newly formed Islamic Republic of Iran, citing the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran by revolutionary students on November 4, 1979. Initially, his administration tried to rally international support against Iran but soon found itself acting alone. Over time, however, some Western nations joined Washington in imposing sanctions.

On November 14, 1979, Carter signed Executive Order 12170, marking the start of sweeping economic pressure against Iran. By late December, the U.S. pushed for multilateral sanctions at the U.N. Security Council, but the Soviet Union blocked the move. Undeterred, Washington pressed ahead with unilateral sanctions while urging allies to follow suit.

The sanctions initially targeted military and oil trade but quickly escalated to the freezing of Iranian assets. The U.S. seized billions of dollars belonging to Iran, including bank deposits, gold, and other holdings. Executive Or-



der 12170 alone locked up roughly \$8.1 billion in Iranian funds and imposed a full trade embargo. On November 12, 1979, the U.S. halted oil imports from Iran, and two days later, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) froze approximately \$8 billion in Iranian assets.

The embassy takeover placed Carter under tremendous political strain. In a desperate move, he approved Operation Eagle Claw on April 25, 1980—a failed military mission to retrieve the captives. The operation ended in disaster when a sandstorm in Iran’s Tabas Desert grounded U.S. forces, leaving eight commandos dead. As the standoff dragged on, Carter cut diplomatic ties with Iran on April 7, 1980.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

‘How the MEK abducted my son—and Albania looked away’

Mother tells heart-wrenching story of a 24-year search for her only son



Amir Arsalan holding his little sister. He is in his late teens in this picture

By Sheida Sabzehvari

When Soraya Abdollahi was working day and night as a single mother in her 30s to provide for her three young children, she thought the biggest challenge she would face in the future was ensuring her kids received an adequate education and married someone they loved. She never imagined that, at 64 years of age, she and the rest of her family would have already spent over two decades looking for her only son, Amir Arsalan.

Soraya has three children. Arsalan is the second, and the one she felt the closest to. “We led a difficult life financially,” she explained. “I worked at factories and sometimes had to take night shifts. Arsalan helped me with money. After school, he worked at car repair shops, made his own allowance, and helped buy some of the things his sisters needed.”

Arsalan became obsessed with bodybuilding around the age of 16. He liked the sport because it helped him gain strength and could ultimately help him make money. “He had a coach who told him he needed to complete an international course. That way, he would be able to take part in tournaments and also have trainees of his own.”

In the early 2000s, Soraya’s beloved son travelled to Turkey at 20 years old to get the certification. There, he met an Iranian man who owned a factory in Germany. In reality, however, the man was an undercover Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) agent, looking to recruit new members for the terrorist organization.

“Arsalan called me one day, saying he’d changed his plans,” Soraya remembered. “He said he’d met a wealthy factory owner who offered him a well-paying job in Germany. He said the man promised he could bring me and his sisters to Europe after a few years.”

The Istanbul hotel where Arsalan was staying also housed many other Iranians. The MEK agent had strategically placed other group members around the hotel to vouch for the supposed factory owner, portraying him as a generous and philanthropic individual to those he was targeting.

Soraya sent a significant amount of money to Turkey to cover her son’s travel expenses to Germany. “The man who claimed he was taking him to Europe even spoke to me on the phone while Arsalan was still in Turkey,” she recounted. “He said the money I’d sent wasn’t enough, but that he’d still take Arsalan and deduct the remaining amount from his salary.”

Arsalan called his mother shortly after to say goodbye. Then, he vanished.

“I was worried sick every day. I couldn’t believe I had lost contact with my son so easily and had no way of reaching him. It was a living nightmare.”

It took Arsalan three years to contact his mother again. He told Soraya that he had been staying in a refugee camp in Germany where no means of communication existed, but that he was now out and about, living a good life, and training dozens of athletes at a gym he owned.

“He gave me a German number and said we

could now keep in contact regularly,” Soraya stated. The number turned out to be a fake.

Four years outside hell’s gates

It wasn’t until 2008 or 2009 that Soraya discovered the truth about her son. The supposed factory owner Arsalan had met hadn’t taken him to Germany at all; instead, he’d taken him to Iraq. And not just anywhere in Iraq, but to Camp Ashraf: the desolate and secluded headquarters of the MEK, holding over 5,000 individuals. Some had entered the camp willingly, while others, like Arsalan, had been abducted and dragged there.

“I found out about my son’s fate through a distant relative of my sister-in-law, who had left the MEK and returned to Iran. He knew me, so he looked for me and let me know what had happened to Arsalan.”

Back then, Soraya didn’t know much about the MEK. She recalled hearing their name on television in the 1980s when they were carrying out terrorist attacks in Tehran, but at 18, she was too focused on her new married life to pay much attention. Even after learning that Arsalan had been taken by the MEK, she naively imagined they lived relatively normal lives within the general population. The reality of the situation only became clear when an association founded by former MEK members took her and other families whose children had been abducted to Iraq. Their goal was to shout their children’s names outside Camp Ashraf, hoping they would hear them and attempt to escape.

“We crossed into Iraq through the Mehran border in western Iran. I can’t truly describe the emotions I felt when we reached what was essentially a desert. People pointed to these horrifying concrete blocks and said, ‘That is Ashraf.’”

As previously reported by the Tehran Times, those inside the camp were virtually cut off from the outside world. Mobile phones were forbidden, TV watching was restricted, and computer use was limited to assigned tasks. Relationships were tightly controlled as well. The group’s leader, Masoud Rajavi, forced all couples within the camp to divorce, separated children from their parents, and claimed all remaining women as his own wives. He mandated daily sessions where everyone was forced to confess their “sins” and reaffirm their loyalty to Rajavi and his agenda.

Soraya stayed outside Camp Ashraf for four years. She and other families of abductees lived in harsh conditions alongside the Iraqi Army stationed nearby. Food was scarce, clean water was unavailable, and maintaining hygiene was a constant struggle. But Soraya persevered despite the hardships. She and the others would set up loudspeakers around the camp, shouting their children’s names into microphones, hoping to reach them. Of course, none of their children were ever allowed to approach the gates. Occasionally, some of the higher-ranking MEK members would come out to hurl insults, rocks, and pieces of scrap metal at them.

Soraya was eventually forced to return to Iran for surgery after her back got severely injured in one of these attacks. By the time she returned to Iraq, her son had been moved to a new MEK camp in Albania.

“We tried to do the same thing in Albania. Back then, Albania still had an embassy in Iran. I went there with a few other mothers to apply for visas, but we were all denied without any explanation. Every time we tried after that, the result was the same,” she said, tears starting to stream down her face.

According to information obtained by the Tehran Times, the new camp in Albania—set up for the MEK with U.S. coordination—is run under the same harsh and inhumane conditions as the one in Iraq. People there are stripped of their freedom and identity, forced to work long hours every day, and face severe punishments, even death, if they don’t follow orders.

Tirana snapped its diplomatic ties with Tehran in 2022, under the alleged influence of the United States and Israel, the two biggest supporters



Former US Vice President Mike Pence addresses the MEK at the Ashraf-3 camp in Albania on June 23, 2022

of the MEK. Albanian police even raided Iran’s diplomatic premises when the diplomats were not in the building.

Betrayed also by international rights bodies and Western states

After no luck with the Albanian government, Soraya then hoped that involving an international body like the United Nations might help. “All I knew was that the UN was responsible for upholding human rights. So, I went to Geneva in 2016 with several families whose children were also trapped in Albania,” Soraya explained.

In Geneva, she managed to meet with Ahmad Shahid, who was the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran at the time. “I told him my story, and he assured me he would help me meet my son. He invited me to attend a meeting he was having with the MEK at the UN building. But when he saw me at the meeting, he pretended he’d never met or spoken to me before.”

Her experiences with organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) followed a similar pattern. She would initially be promised assistance, only to be ignored indefinitely.

Soraya’s disappointment does not end with international organizations. While she lives every day in pain thinking of her son living in a terrorist jail, Western governments – particularly the US, UK, France, and Germany – promote the terrorist group as freedom fighters striving to bring prosperity to Iran! The MEK is routinely brought to the U.S. Congress as well as European parliaments, honored, and at times awarded.

“I understand that these governments have political goals and are using the MEK to achieve them,” Soraya stated. “But still, how can they call these people democratic? The MEK is torturing its members physically, mentally, and sexually. And now, Albania shelters them while refusing to let mothers like me see our children.”

The future, and what it could look like

An Iranian court is currently conducting public hearings on the crimes committed by the MEK over the past four decades. Since Soraya’s son did not join the group voluntarily, he, along with nearly 2,000 others associated with the organization, is not on the list of defendants. However, Soraya believes that if the doors of the MEK camp in Albania open and people get the chance to leave, even some of those who joined willingly could return to Iran and live there safely. She says she knows many former members who have already come back and are now leading normal lives, just like any other Iranian citizen.

“I doubt any other government would be this forgiving toward people who took up arms and fought against their own country,” she said, referring to the MEK’s alliance with Saddam Hussein during Iraq’s invasion of Iran in the 1980s. “Yet, based on what I’ve learned over the years, Iran’s government has pardoned many of them.”

By the end of our interview, Soraya looked tired and hopeless, a state that also characterized her 24-year search for her son. “I just want to hear my son’s voice one more time. Is that too much for a mother to ask for?”



Individuals walking on the streets of Ashraf-3 camp near Tirana. They are banned from exiting the site or communicating with the outside world



Soraya Abdollahi and some other parents of MEK abductees outside Camp Ashraf in Iraq

Iran beat Turkmenistan at CAVA men’s Nations League

TEHRAN – Iran B volleyball team defeated Turkmenistan 3-1 (28-26, 25-21, 23-25, 29-27) in 2025 CAVA men’s Nations League on Friday.

Team Melli B had defeated India 3-1 in its opening match.

Iran will meet Uzbekistan in Pool A on Saturday.

Pool B has Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

The event began on May 29 and will run until June 4 in Fergana, Uzbekistan.

Mammadov named Iran’s judo coach

TEHRAN – Azerbaijan’s Rashad Mammadov was named as new head coach of Iran’s men’s judo team on Wednesday.

The 50-year-old coach has previously worked as head coach of Azerbaijan national team.

Additionally, Iran judo chief Arash Miresmaeili has named Hossein Qomi as technical director of the team.

Skocic pens two-year extension with Tractor

TEHRAN – Dragan Skocic extended his contract with Tractor football team on Wednesday.

Skocic led Tractor to win 2025/26 Iran’s Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) for the first time ever.

The 57-year-old coach has penned a two-year deal extension with the Tabriz based team.

Tractor will represent Iran at the 2025/26 AFC Champions League Elite.

Mozafar named Iran’s women’s futsal team

TEHRAN – Shahrzad Mozafar has been appointed as head coach of Iran’s women’s futsal team Wednesday night.

Mozafar, 55, is one of the most decorated Iranian futsal coaches. She led Iran to the title in the 2018 AFC Women’s Futsal Championship.

She has won many titles with Iranian futsal clubs.

Mozafar replaced Forouzan Soleymani in the position. Iran football federation parted ways with Soleymani, who finished in third place at the AFC Women’s Futsal Asian Cup China 2025 in mid-May.

Team Melli have advanced to the FIFA Futsal Women’s World Cup Philippines 2025 as one of the top three teams.

Esteghlal edge Malavan to win Hazfi Cup

TEHRAN – Rouzbeh Cheshmi scored a last-gasp goal in Esteghlal’s win over Malavan in the final match of the 2024/25 Hafi Cup.

In the match held in Arak’s Imam Khomeini Stadium, Cheshmi found the back of the net in the 120th minute.

Hazfi Cup is an Iranian knockout football competition held annually by the Iran Football Federation.

Esteghlal are the most decorated football team in the Hazfi Cup, winning the title eight times.

They will represent Iran in the 2025/26 AFC Champions League Two.

Sohrabi seizes gold in Ulaanbaatar Open 2025

TEHRAN – Danial Sohrabi of Iran claimed a gold medal in the third Ranking Series event, Ulaanbaatar Open.

The Greco-Roman wrestler defeated Turkey’s Mustafa Sahin at 72kg final.

Sohrabi gets the par terre and then turn Sahin for a 3-0 lead in his Round 5 bout. He then defends his position from par terre and wins 3-1.

Sohrabi will take home 8,000 ranking points.

The four-day Ulaanbaatar Open Ranking Series kicked off Thursday in Mongolia.

Iranian women head to 2025 IIHF Women’s Asia Cup

TEHRAN – Iran’s women’s hockey team traveled to Al Ain on Thursday to participate in the 2025 IIHF Women’s Asia Cup.

Team Melli will kick off the tournament with a match against the UAE on Saturday, followed by a game against India on Sunday.

They are also scheduled to face Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday, Malaysia on Wednesday, and the Philippines on Friday.

The 2025 IIHF Women’s Asia Cup is an international women’s ice hockey tournament organized by the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF).

The tournament is set to take place from May 31 to June 6 in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates.

Faraji wins gold at WTT Youth Contender Tashkent 2025

TEHRAN – Benyamin Faraji of Iran won the gold medal in the WTT Youth Contender Tashkent 2025 on Thursday.

He defeated his compatriot Arshia Lorestani 3-1 (11-4, 14-12, 11-9, 11-5) in the final of the U-17 Boys Singles.

WTT Youth Contender Tashkent 2025 is being held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from May 28 to 31.

Etemadpour takes gold at QSF 4 PSA Challenger 2025

TEHRAN – Iranian squash player Sepehr Etemadpour won the gold medal in the QSF 4 PSA Challenger 2025.

He defeated his Kuwaiti rival Abdelrahman Abdelkhalek 3-1 (11-6, 6-11, 11-8, 11-7) in the final.

He had defeated opponents from Iraq and Egypt.

The event was held at the Khalifa International Tennis & Squash Complex, Doha, Qatar from Ma6 26 to 29.

Etemadpour won 3,000\$ in cash.

Sepahan complete Signing of Akhbari

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team signed free agent goalkeeper Mohammad Reza Akhbari.

Akhbari most recently played in Gol Gohar football team.

The 32-year-old goalie has joined Sepahan as Payam Niazmand’s replacement.

Niazmand joined Persepolis last week.

Sepahan finished runner-up in the 2024-25 Iran Professional League (IPL) and will have to meet Qatar’s Al Duhail in the 2025-26 AFC Champions League Elite Playoff in August.

ICCIMA head proposes 7 strategies to deepen Iran-Oman economic ties



TEHRAN- The head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) proposed seven strategies to deepen economic ties between Iran and Oman.

Addressing a conference to review trade opportunities between Iran and Oman, in Muscat on May 28, Samad Hassanzadeh proposed those strategies for establishing deep and sustainable relations between the two sides, relying on the potential capacities available in both countries.

He said that the presence of entrepreneurs from Iran and Oman in this valuable conference indicates the serious interest of the private sectors of the two countries in comprehensively deepening relations and promoting bilateral economic cooperation.

Hassanzadeh stated that expanding economic relations with neighboring countries is Iran's strategic priority, adding: "Iran's private sector is very keen to cooperate with Omani companies.

Given the wide variety of cooperation capacities between the two countries, it is necessary to focus on the future of relations so that, by optimally utilizing new opportunities, a suitable roadmap for joint relations and cooperation that includes the interests of both parties can be defined and drawn."

He considered the cultural and historical commonalities, good neighborliness, and excellent political relations in the region as important capacities for deepening economic relations, adding: "In recent years, the value of trade between the two countries has exceeded \$2 billion, and there is a clear prospect of increasing this figure to a much higher level."

The ICCIMA head further emphasized: "Through the regular and continuous exchange of trade delegations between the chambers of commerce, a good understanding of the economic and production capacities has been established among the entrepreneurs of the two countries.

However, there are some points regarding further advancing economic relations between the two sides, relying on some capacities that have not yet been realized, that should be considered."

In the field of trade cooperation and commodity exchanges, Hassanzadeh pointed to numerous areas for exporting goods from Iran to Oman, as well as supplying some items needed by the Iranian market through Oman, and stated: "For long-term and sustainable planning of developing economic relations, it is necessary to move towards joint investments in the two countries.

Iran, China sign MOU on water management, agriculture, environment

TEHRAN - Iran and China have signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding to boost cooperation in water resource management, agriculture, and environmental protection, according to Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO).

The agreement, signed during an official ceremony hosted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), brings together Iran's Planning and Budget Organization, the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Tehran, and the Northwest Institute of Eco-Environment and Resources, a research arm of CAS.

The MOU aims to facilitate joint projects, exchange of expertise, deployment of advanced technologies, and pilot programs in Iran, with a focus on practical and scientific

Therefore, it is appropriate for the private sectors of the two countries to continuously follow up with the two governments to provide all the necessary facilities and amenities for this.

Also, in this regard, it is necessary for the joint chambers of the two countries to identify projects with comparative advantage and plan for their implementation."

Looking at the statistics on "re-exports of Iranian goods through Oman" and "imports of goods from Oman," he said: "These figures indicate the growth of exchanges; however, the development of transit and port cooperation and the use of the capacity and benefits of the two countries' free trade zones are still considered as necessary infrastructure for the development of private sector activities, and in this regard, it is appropriate for the two countries to take complementary and infrastructural measures."

The head of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce continued by pointing out the valuable advances and achievements of Iranian companies in the fields of mining, knowledge-based technologies, IT, and ITC, and suggested that cooperation between Iranian and Omani companies in these fields be considered.

He said that Iran invites the investors in various sectors such as oil, gas, petrochemicals, renewable energy, water supply projects, power plant industry, transportation, mining, agriculture, automotive industry, information technology, tourism industry and hotel construction, and added: "There is the possibility of full investment, independently or with the participation of Iranian investors, in the areas that were raised."

In another part of his speech, the head of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce referred to the tourism industry, especially health tourism, as one of the important areas of cooperation between Iran and Oman, and continued: "The Iranian private sector is ready to cooperate and provide services to health tourists in Oman.

According to estimates, about four million people from Arab countries enter Iran annually for tourism, and about one million of these tourists travel to Iran to benefit from medical and health facilities."

He noted: "The energy sectors, construction and establishment of wind and solar power plants, and water and wastewater facilities, are another new area of ??cooperation in which there is the possibility of utilizing the capabilities and experiences of Iranian companies in this sector."

The Iranian private sector is fully prepared to cooperate in the development and renovation of Oman's infrastructure and industrial and mining sectors, as well as providing technical and engineering services and joint cooperation in various development fields in Oman, such as road construction, railway network construction, dam construction, etc., he further emphasized.

Also, the private sectors of the two countries can cooperate and work together in implementing technical and engineering projects in third countries in the region, within the framework of multilateral and regional cooperation, the ICCIMA head noted.



collaboration.

Speaking at the signing event, Mohammad Ebrahimi, Director of Water, Agriculture, and Environment Affairs at Iran's Plan and Budget Organization, emphasized the importance of building on previous cooperation and called for the swift launch of pilot initiatives and a joint action plan to accelerate implementation.

Over 700 firms join Iran's 20th auto parts expo as industry pushes regional supply chain links

TEHRAN - More than 700 domestic and international companies from eight countries—including China, Turkey, Germany, Switzerland, India, Japan, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates—are showcasing their latest technologies and products at the 20th Iran International Auto Parts Exhibition, which runs through June 1 at Tehran's permanent international fairgrounds.

The exhibition is displaying the latest developments in parts and equipment for both light and heavy vehicles, IRNA reported.

Regarded as Iran's premier auto parts industry gathering, the event serves as a key platform for consolidating industry capabilities, enabling value chain networking, and facilitating innovation and co-operation.

Unlike previous editions, this year's expo positions itself not only as a commercial marketplace but



also as a strategic initiative to drive industrial transformation, enhance technological advancement, and expand access to domestic and international markets.

This year's event marks the first phase of a newly introduced four-year development framework. The 2025 edition focuses on assembling players across the auto parts value

chain.

New features include stronger participation from knowledge-based firms, the launch of innovative side events, and visual representations of the value chain network.

A significant domestic turnout—especially from firms involved in advanced technologies and ex-

port-oriented products—alongside notable foreign participation underscores the exhibition's growing regional importance. Special attention this year is being paid to fostering export partnerships and strengthening Iran's role in the regional supply chain.

Key highlights include a dedicated business interaction hub hosting B2B meetings, advisory sessions on industry regulations, tax, and insurance matters, and reverse pitch events where automakers present their needs to potential suppliers.

An innovation stage for tech firms and knowledge-based companies is also part of the program.

The exhibition also features seven thematic tracks offering expert panels, policy roundtables, training workshops, and investor sessions, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders from across the automotive sector.

Japan interested in expanding maritime economic co-op with Iran, says envoy

TEHRAN - Japan is interested in enhancing bilateral cooperation with Iran, particularly in maritime-based economic development, Tokyo's ambassador to Tehran said during a meeting with senior Iranian officials.

According to Iran's Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, Ambassador Tamaki Tsukada conveyed Japan's interest in maritime investment opportunities during talks with Gholamreza Kazemian, Deputy Minister for Urban Planning and Architecture, and Saeed Rasouli, Deputy Minister and Head of the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO).

Tsukada said the Japanese government would be informed of the proposals presented by Iran,

including potential areas for partnership and investment linked to Iran's maritime economy and the development of the Makran coastal region.

Kazemian outlined two key initiatives: the maritime-oriented development strategy and the Makran coastal development plan, which aim to establish industrial hubs, expand agriculture, enhance transport and infrastructure, and boost population settlements in line with Iran's national spatial planning framework.

He described the maritime strategy as an opportunity to advance trade, economic, and commercial ties and to help bridge regional development gaps.

Also, in a meeting between the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) and a special representative of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), in Tehran on May 26, both sides reaffirmed their interest in enhancing bilateral trade relations.

According to a statement from the TPO, Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi congratulated Nobutaka Maekawa on the 96th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Iran and Japan, and described cooperation between the two trade organizations as effective.

"We are eager to benefit from your expertise in the field of trade," he said.

Economy Ministry hosts OPEC fund simulation talks, issues 1st sovereign guarantee for global bids

TEHRAN - Iran's Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs held a simulation of OPEC Fund ministerial negotiations on Thursday, bringing together top university students for a one-day event aimed at enhancing diplomatic and professional skills through experiential learning.

According to the Ministry's official news outlet, Shada, the simulation was part of a broader three-day program running from May 26 to 28, which also included workshops for contractors and private sector firms. The initiative aimed to introduce participants to investment opportunities, promote exports of technical and engineering services through the OPEC Fund for International Development, and strengthen Iran's international engagement.

Foreign experts from Nigeria and Tunisia joined Iranian academics to share international insights during the sessions, while the closing ceremony of the OPEC Fund educational and scientific summit was scheduled for Thursday evening at the Ministry's conference hall.

The event was jointly organized by the Economy Ministry in collaboration with the Foreign Ministry, which provided diplomatic support, and Iran's Chamber of Commerce, which contributed technical expertise for promoting service exports.

Iran issues 1st sovereign guarantee for international bids

In a message to the closing session of the first OPEC Fund workshop on technical and engineering service exports, Acting Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Seyed Rahmatollah Akrami described the initiative as a strategic step toward generating foreign currency revenues, boosting employment, and elevating Iran's international standing.

"It is a pleasure to welcome distinguished guests from the OPEC Fund, government officials, and especially key players from the private sector who are active in engineering and technical service exports," Akrami said.

He noted that the workshop had been designed to enhance the

knowledge and capacity of Iranian professionals and explore ways to expand service exports to global markets. "The sessions held over the past two days provided a valuable platform to discuss various aspects of cooperation and participation in international development projects," he added.

Highlighting the significance of technical and engineering service exports, Akrami emphasized their role as a non-commodity export stream that relies on human capital and expertise rather than physical production and transport. "Such services are essential for earning foreign exchange, creating jobs, and improving national skills and capabilities," he said.

He underscored Iran's competitive advantages in this field, saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran possesses companies with the knowledge, experience, and capacity to operate in nearly all areas covered by the OPEC Fund. These capabilities must be aligned with practical strategies to enable international participation."

Akrami revealed that his ministry had issued the country's first sovereign guarantee late last year for a capable Iranian company bidding in an international tender—marking a milestone in supporting outbound investment and global contracting.

He stressed the importance of close cooperation between the public and private sectors to streamline the export process and build global business networks. "This collaboration can facilitate experience-sharing and expand commercial opportunities," he said.

Akrami also paid tribute to Iran's pioneering effort in hosting the first-ever OPEC Fund simulation competition, saying such youth-driven initiatives could strengthen international institutions by incorporating fresh perspectives and ideas.

He concluded by thanking all participants, speakers, and supporters of the workshop and extended best wishes to Iranian professionals working in technical and engineering services.

'FATF expected to take confidence-building steps about Iran'

TEHRAN- Iranian deputy minister of finance and economic affairs said that FATF is expected to take confidence-building steps in reply to Iran's set of measures in the field of combating money laundering and terrorism financing, including the ratification of the Palermo Convention.

Addressing the 42nd meeting of the Eurasian Group (EAG) on Combating Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism, being held from May 26 to 30 in Moscow, Hadi Khani said: "At this meeting, we gave a presentation on software and intelligent infrastructure for handling suspicious transaction reports (STRs), as well as the actions of our country's police in combating money laundering and terrorist financing, and we tried to share our experiences in these areas with other members."

Referring to Iran's reports in previous meetings of the EAG, he said: "With the aim of informing friendly and aligned countries, as well as increasing FATF's understanding of the country's actions in combating money laundering and terrorist financing, Iran has put forward its actions on a broader level of the FATF action plan in close cooperation with the Eurasian Anti-Money Laundering Group (EAG), and will continue this practice within

the framework of its internal considerations and standards."

He added that recently, with the aim of complying with international treaties and accelerating and facilitating the process of normalizing relations with FATF, and within the framework of this group's statement on accepting the Palermo and CFT conventions as a basis for suspending countermeasures against the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran has ratified the Palermo Convention, and this document has become an executive law in the country upon the notification of the Iranian president.

Also, the process of reviewing and making decisions regarding the CFT Convention and amending domestic laws and regulations to combat money laundering and terrorist financing with the aim of covering international recommendations and standards to the maximum extent is on the agenda of the relevant authorities within the country. And efforts are being made to implement the necessary reforms within the framework of the country's constitution and domestic laws to bring the country's regulatory infrastructure as close to international standards as possible in the short-

est possible time, the official added.

The deputy finance minister further emphasized that the FATF should view and consider Iran's decision and the country's efforts in presenting measures and submitting progress reports on the Action Plan and other Iranian measures in the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing with a different perspective than before, and take steps to build mutual trust and improve interactions between them.

The five-day EAG summit in Moscow, included several high-level gatherings, such as the Fourth Parliamentary Forum of EAG Member States, a joint conference between regulatory officials and the private sector—supported by EAG and the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF)—under the theme "Risk Management in the Age of New Technologies."

The Eurasian Group (EAG) is a FATF-style regional body established to address money laundering and terrorist financing in the Eurasian region. It was established in 2004 overlooking the Eurasian region and comprises of 9 member-states, being: Belarus, India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

600 days of failure in Gaza

From page 1 ► It is fundamentally wrong to say all those who are resisting the invading Israeli soldiers are driven by ideology. Of course, psychologically speaking, ideology and religion have their own effects, but an important percentage of those who are battling invaders alongside Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters are secular and leftist.

Those who are fighting the occupiers were born many years after the establishment of Israel in their homeland in 1948.

They have resorted to armed struggle as they have lost their hope of international bodies and influential Western countries to enforce a rather acceptable solution to heal the old Palestinian wound.



They are noticing that those Western countries that proclaim support for human rights and pretend as upholders of international law have been instead helping Israel diplomatically and militarily to reinforce its grip over the Palestinian lands and

continue its cruelty.

They are noticing Western countries, including the United States, Germany, France, Britain, and the European Union countries as a whole, say Israel's annexation of the Palestinian lands

in the West Bank is illegal, but are doing nothing to prevent it, and failed to help the Palestinians have their own country after so many years.

Given these facts, branding resistance fighters as terrorists will not help remedy this bleeding wound.

Destruction and death

Now, after 600 days of relentless war on Gaza, Israel's only achievement has been destroying homes, infrastructure, starving, displacing, maiming, orphaning, and killing defenseless citizens in their homes, hiding places, schools, churches, etc.

In one word, Israel has been committing genocide in Gaza, and this is not honorable. Instead, it is a disgrace.

Israel announces expansion of West Bank settlements



Israel announced on Thursday that it would establish 22 settlements in the occupied West Bank, including legalizing outposts built without authorization, DW reported.

The move is likely to further strain ties with allies that have been critical of Israel's actions in Gaza.

Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law, and the UN's top court last year called for construction to stop immediately — a ruling denounced by Israel.

The announcement comes as human rights groups and anti-settlement NGOs say Israel is moving toward at least de facto annexation of the Palestinian territory.

Far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, who is himself a settler, and war minister Israel Katz, who is in charge of managing the communities, made the announcement.

“We have made a historic decision for the development of settlements: 22 new communities in Judea and Samaria, renewing settlement in the north of Samaria, and reinforcing the eastern axis of the State of Israel,” Smotrich said on X, formerly Twitter, using the biblical term for the West Bank employed by the Israeli government.

“Next step: sovereignty!” he added, saying: “We have not taken a foreign land, but the heritage of our ancestors.”

Climate activist Greta Thunberg to join aid ship effort to break Gaza siege



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg and Game of Thrones actor Liam Cunningham will join the next sailing of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC) as it attempts to break Israel's months-long blockade of Gaza.

The “Madleen” is due to disembark from Catania, Sicily, on Sunday with a cargo of humanitarian aid and several high-profile activists on board, including Thunberg, European Member of Parliament Rima Hassan and Palestinian-American lawyer Huwaida Arraf.

Cunningham, an Irish actor best known for his role as Davos Seaworth in the hit HBO series, is a longtime advocate for Palestine and similar causes.

The sailing marks the second attempt in as many months by the FFC, a coalition of humanitarian groups, to reach Gaza.

A mission at the start of May was aborted after another FFC vessel, the “Conscience”, was attacked by two alleged drones while sailing in international waters off the coast of Malta.

The FFC alleges that Israel was responsible for the attack, which severely damaged the front section of the ship.

Brazilian oil trade unions urge Lula to impose energy embargo on Israel

Two of the largest federations of trade unions for oil workers in Brazil have called on the government to impose an energy embargo on Israel.

The National Federation of Oil Workers and the Single Federation of Oil Workers sent a joint letter to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and key ministers in the Brazilian government on Wednesday, urging them to take more concrete action against Israel's “genocide” in Gaza.

In February, President Lula, while he was attending the African Union Summit in Ethiopia, accused Israel of committing “genocide” against Palestinians in Gaza and compared its war on Gaza with Nazi Germany's extermination of Jews.

The letter highlighted that 2.7m barrels of crude oil were exported from Brazil to Israel in 2024 alone, representing a significant portion of Israel's military fuel supply, and Brazil had a global responsibility to avoid complicity in war crimes, as articulated by legal experts and international judicial bodies.

Macron threatens sanctions on Israelis over Gaza aid crisis

French President Emmanuel Macron has warned that his country could “apply sanctions” against Israelis unless the government in Tel Aviv responds to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Al Jazeera reported.

Speaking during a visit to Singapore on Friday, Macron said the international community could not remain passive while Palestinians in Gaza face a deepening hunger crisis. The comments raise further the international pressure building on Israel, which has blockaded the Palestinian enclave for close to three months, with aid agencies warning of famine.

Ireland stands by claim Israel committing genocide in Gaza



Ireland's Tanaiste, or deputy prime minister, Simon Harris, defended the government's position on Thursday that Israel is carrying out a genocide in Gaza, Irish broadcaster RTE reported.

“We are the first government in the European Union (EU) to say what Israel is doing is genocide. It is genocide,” Harris told an opposition lawmaker during a heated exchange in parliament, known as the Dáil.

Catherine Connolly, an independent, accused the government of not doing enough to punish Israel for its 19-month-long war on Gaza, which has killed more than 54,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

“I'm disgusted and sickened, sickened – watching children dying on our television screens and every day I come to work, and work with all the people in here to do our best to show leadership at a time of horrific conflict,” Harris said.

Yemen strikes back at Tel Aviv

From page 1 ► He stated that Yemen will persist in enforcing a blockade on Israeli air navigation to and from Ben Gurion Airport and will respond to any Israeli aggression against Yemen with further military support operations in solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people.

Israeli media had reported detecting a ballistic missile launched from Yemen, which led to the suspension of air traffic at Ben Gurion Airport. This coincided with air raid sirens sounding across wide areas.

Israeli police also reported receiving alerts about fragments from a missile falling in southern Jerusalem (occupied al-Quds) and a nearby settlement.

The government in Sanaa has vowed that

the Israeli aggression will not deter Yemen from its ongoing military operations in support of Gaza.

The leader of the Ansarallah movement, Sayyed Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, also declared that “Israeli aggression on Sanaa International Airport will not stop Yemeni operations in support of the Palestinian people.”

He added that the Yemeni Armed Forces are preparing to escalate their operations in the coming phase to increase their effectiveness and impact on the Israeli enemy.

On Wednesday, Israeli warplanes launched several airstrikes on Sanaa International Airport, only about ten days after it had resumed operations following a previous Israeli attack.

This latest attack by the Yemeni Armed Forces is part of a series of military actions aimed at imposing an aerial blockade on the Israeli occupation regime. The repeated missile attacks have specifically targeted Ben Gurion Airport.

In recent weeks, these operations have led to repeated disruptions in air traffic and prompted several international airlines to suspend flights to and from Tel Aviv.

Yemen maintains that these attacks are being carried out in support of the Palestinians in Gaza and has pledged to continue launching strikes until the U.S.-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza ends and the blockade on the coastal strip is lifted.

Main goal of Nawaf Salam's sterile govt. is to undermine Lebanon's Resistance

From page 1 ► The Hezbollah MP added, “It is shameful and disgraceful for such statements to come from someone entrusted with the responsibility of diplomacy, and the responsibility of condemning the daily Israeli occupation, aggression, and assassinations.”

Nawaf Salam's government is merely a tool for the Washington-Riyadh hostile project.

Literally, it's a company and its ministers are temporary employees whose main mission is attacking the Resistance and appeasing the two Big Brothers, Washington and Riyadh, instead of providing services to citizens and monitoring their affairs!

As for the Salam government's alleged efforts to combat economic, financial, and legal corruption, no reform has been achieved!

Besides, the dilemma of the citizens affected by the Israeli war is not at the top of this sterile government's priorities, because they are: Others!

Severe electricity rationing, especially in Shiite areas, has revived the political oligarchy's sadism of collective sectarian revenge. How could it not be, when Joe Saddy, the Minister of Energy, like the Minister of Electricity, is also the Minister of the Lebanese Forces!

For her part, Rima Karami, the Minister of Education, delegated to Tripoli (the capital of northern



Lebanon, known for its conservative environment and even her birthplace) two AUB's trainers to deliver a workshop urging female students to engage in illicit relationships and push them toward LGBTQ.

Karami did not bother to develop an emergency plan for schools threatened by the ongoing U.S.-led Israeli aggression, and failed to develop action plans that take into account their psycho-social circumstances.

Furthermore, the Minister of Education sought to introduce a subject promoting the fabricated Abrahamic religion, which aims only to prepare students' collective awareness for normalization with Israel.

Meanwhile, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, describing his current relationship with Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, said: “If escalation is desired, we will escalate, and if reason is desired,

we will respond in kind.”

In an interview with the Lebanese newspaper Al-Joumhouria, Berri affirmed his commitment to cooperating with UNIFIL forces in the south “whether oppressor or oppressed,” warning that any quarrel between them and the residents only serves the interests of “the Israeli enemy, which does not want them to remain in the south.”

Berri reiterated his assertion that “with the approaching renewal of the UNIFIL mandate, no mistakes should be made on the ground that could be exploited by those seeking to end its mission in Lebanon or perhaps amend its powers.”

Commenting on the reconstruction of what was destroyed by the ongoing aggression, Berri emphasized that this is a top priority for him, adding: “It is the government's responsibility—whether it likes it or not—to

fulfill its duty in this regard and place the reconstruction issue at the forefront of discussions with brotherly and friendly countries, especially since it has begun strengthening Lebanon's relations abroad.”

Regarding linking reconstruction funding to the withdrawal of Hezbollah's weapons from all of Lebanon, Berri firmly stated: “We have fully implemented what was required of us south of the Litani River under the ceasefire agreement. As for the rest of the regions, the agreement does not provide for this!”

Commenting on the results of the municipal and mayoral elections, the Parliament speaker pointed to the qualitative success of the Shiite duo, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, particularly in the capital, Beirut, the top legislator said, “where we succeeded in raising the Shiite voter turnout from approximately 9,000 to approximately 19,000, compared to the 2016 elections.”

Berri further praised the commitment of the Shiite duo's popular base, which “showed a high sense of responsibility, which allowed for the preservation of [sectarian] parity at this critical stage... as Beirut is the capital of Lebanon and its beating heart, and therefore any division or partition there will be reflected in all of Lebanon and will extend beyond municipal borders to something more dangerous.”

Chaos and deadly gunfire erupt again as starving Palestinians seek food

Chaos erupted again Thursday as tens of thousands of desperate Palestinians in the Gaza Strip tried to collect food from distribution sites run by a new U.S.- and Israeli-backed foundation. Multiple witnesses reported a free-for-all of people grabbing aid, and they said Israeli troops opened fire to control crowds.

In central Gaza, Associated Press video showed smoke bombs arching through the air around a distribution center, and gunfire was audible as an Israeli tank moved nearby. Witnesses said it was Israeli troops who fired the projectiles to clear large crowds of Pal-

estinians after the center ran out of supplies Thursday.

“I came to get a sack of flour ... a sardine tin or anything,” said Mahmoud Ismael, a man on crutches from an earlier leg injury who said he walked for miles to get to the center, only to leave empty-handed.

“There is no food in my house, and I can't get food for my children,” he said.

Turmoil has plagued the aid system launched this week by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which runs three distribution centers in the territory. Israel has slated GHF to take over food distribution in Gaza despite

opposition from the United Nations and most humanitarian groups.

Over the past three days, there have been reports of gunfire at GHF centers, and Gaza health officials have said at least one person has been killed and dozens wounded.

The Israeli military said it has facilitated the entry of nearly 1,000 truckloads of supplies into Gaza recently and accused the UN of failing to distribute the goods. It claimed Hamas was responsible for the crisis by stealing aid and refusing to release the remaining hostages.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Deputy tourism minister meets UAE, Mexican tourism officials



TEHRAN— Within the framework of developing tourism diplomacy and strengthening regional relations, Iran's deputy tourism minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpei has met Mexican and UAE officials on the sidelines of the 49th session of the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization in Segovia, Spain.

He studied the capacities of mutual cooperation of Iran with the UAE and Mexico, IRNA reported on Friday.

During an official meeting with Reem Bint Ibrahim Al Hashemy, UAE's Minister of State for International Cooperation, Mohseni Bandpei studied ways of promoting mutual cooperation in tourism field.

Both sides emphasized civilizational commonalities, cultural and geographical affinities of the two countries, and considered the neighborhood of Iran and the UAE as an important point for developing people-to-people interactions, facilitating tourism, and deepening intercultural communication.

Pointing to the unique potentials of Iran's health tourism, marine tourism and ecotourism as well as traditional and contemporary arts, Mohseni Bandpei announced the country's full readiness to compile joint tourism programs in form of special packages, artistic tours and exchange of cultural groups.

UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation welcomed the initiatives proposed by Islamic Republic of Iran and called promoting tourism ties between the two nations as a strategic necessity and effective measure in enhancing regional links.

Reem Bint Ibrahim Al Hashemy expressed the hope that with adopting operational approach-

Iran's potentials in health tourism welcomed by Ghana

TEHRAN— The deputy tourism minister, Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpei, has emphasized Iran's strategic potential in health tourism and promoted expansion of mutual ties, which was welcomed by the Ghanaian side on the sidelines of the 49th session of the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization in Segovia, Spain.

Tourism officials of Iran and Ghana met with each other in Segovia. Mohseni Bandpei, met with high-ranking officials of Ghana, including the minister of foreign affairs, the tourism minister, and the ambassador, Mehr news agency reported.

Also, both sides studied and discussed fields of cooperation, including ecotourism and exchanging know-how on nature-based tourism.

Based on this discussion, it was decided to prepare the grounds for expert interactions between relevant institutions in the two countries to operationalize these proposals.

Referring to the positive history of bilateral relations and coordinated voting in international forums, the two sides emphasized on continuation of mutual support in multilateral institutions. This political alignment was considered an effective basis for promoting cultural and tourism relations between Iran and Ghana.

One of the members of Ghanaian delegation

es and joint programming, both countries will witness a significant growth in mutual tourism, cultural and economic collaborations.

She presented the plans of her government-backed candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization and urged Iran to support UAE's candidacy.

Also, in a formal meeting between Mexico's high-ranking tourism officials and Iranian delegation, promotion of strategic cooperation in training human force, branding and exchanging tourism were discussed.

The Mexican tourism official urged Iran to support Mexican candidate for the post of UN WTO Secretary General.

Mohseni Bandpei, along with a delegation including Hojjatollah Ayyoubi, who heads Tourism Ministry's Center for International Affairs, Ambassador of Iran in Madrid, visited Mexican tourism minister and high-ranking officials, and studied the prospects for expanding bilateral cooperation in the tourism industry.

During the specialized meeting, both sides emphasized on potential capacities for cooperation in training specialized human force, promoting tourism brand and enhancing tourism market between two nations.

The Mexican side expressed his readiness to transfer knowledge and experience to Iran.

Pointing to historical depth and cultural richness of Iran and Mexico, Mohseni Bandpei said that by relying on the ancient shared civilizational background, it is possible to create strong infrastructures for cultural proximity and strengthening people-to-people and diplomatic ties.

He said cultural and tourism collaboration is a missing link that can open new horizons on mutual ties and establish shared cultural experiences in a sustainable manner.

On the other hand, Mexican tourism minister, praised Islamic Republic of Iran's approach and made his official request to support the Mexican candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization.

The programs proposed by Mexican candidate was initially evaluated by Iranian delegation and it was decided that the programs are studied in upcoming specialized sessions.



who is candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, outlined his proposed programs and approaches.

In response, Mohseni Bandpay and members of the Iranian delegation emphasized the need for transformation in the structure of human resources of the WTO and justice in attracting personnel from various member countries.

He said in case that if he is appointed as WTO Secretary General, he will put on the agenda to attract human resources fairly from the diverse geography of member countries.

Criticizing the political and biased performance of the World Tourism Organization, particularly on some international conflicts, he emphasized that the WTO should prevent meddling in political conflicts.

German ambassador highlights archaeology as a cultural bridge between Tehran and Berlin

TEHRAN – German Ambassador to Iran, Markus Potzel, has described archaeology as a shared language of civilizations and a powerful bridge linking Iran and Germany through science and culture.

In an interview with Miras Arya (CHTN), Ambassador Potzel emphasized the strategic role of archaeological cooperation in deepening intercultural ties and called for expanding such engagement amid new political opportunities.

Reflecting on the long-standing history of archaeological collaboration between the two countries, Potzel said that the German Archaeological Institute has maintained decades of sustained interaction with Iranian research and academic institutions.

This joint civilizational capacity can serve as the cornerstone for broader cultural and scientific relations as we look toward a stable and promising future, he stated.

The German envoy also shared personal insights into the profound effect Iranian culture has had on his life and that of his family.

Iran's deep, authentic, and multilayered heritage has left a lasting impression on us, he said. "My family members, having had the chance to



live in Iran, have come to understand this country not through media narratives, but through lived experience and direct engagement with its cultural heritage," CHTN quoted Potzel as saying on Friday.

The ambassador noted that this exposure has fostered a deeper, more humane, and peace-oriented understanding of Iran.

Touching on recent developments within Iran's domestic political landscape, the top diplomat expressed hope that the current environment could offer a fresh opportunity to

redefine and enhance bilateral relations. He emphasized that cultural and scientific diplomacy can play a decisive role in facilitating meaningful dialogue between nations.

Ambassador Potzel also highlighted his active participation in field archaeology projects in Iran over the past year, stressing that his understanding of Iranian cultural heritage is grounded not in abstract theory but in firsthand experience.

These shared projects are not only scientifically valuable but can also act as a cross-cultural language for

shaping new models of cooperation, he added.

Recognizing Iran's exceptional civilizational legacy, Potzel concluded by urging continued support for joint scientific initiatives.

We believe that archaeology, beyond being a specialized discipline, represents a common language of civilizations and a storyteller of historical memory.

It can serve as the foundation for sustainable, multi-layered, and future-oriented cooperation between our countries, the ambassador said.

He underscored that such collaborations go beyond traditional diplomacy, fostering long-term cultural convergence and mutual understanding between the Iranian and German peoples.

Archaeological collaboration between Iran and Germany dates back more than a century, with landmark projects such as the excavation of Persepolis and the exploration of ancient sites in Fars, Khuzestan, and beyond.

For instance, Ernst Emil Herzfeld (1879 – 1948), was a German archaeologist and Iranologist who helped create a Persian law of antiquities and excavated in the Achaemenid capitals, Pasargadae and Persepolis.

Groundbreaking discovery in northern Persian Gulf sheds new light on early human migration



TEHRAN – A major archaeological discovery in the northern hinterlands of the Persian Gulf is transforming our understanding of early human migration into Asia.

The Dehtal site, located in Hormozgan province, southern Iran, has yielded one of the most substantial Acheulean assemblages ever uncovered on the Iranian Plateau, underscoring the region's significance as a critical corridor for Pleistocene hominin dispersal out of Africa.

Led by archaeologist Sepehr Zarei, the discovery centers on massive stone tools—including giant cores bearing flake scars exceeding

50 centimeters—and a variety of Large Cutting Tools (LCTs), such as handaxes, cleavers, and scrapers.

These lithic artifacts, shaped from locally sourced boulders, reflect sophisticated technological strategies employed by Acheulean toolmakers during the Lower to Middle Pleistocene, possibly more than 400,000 years ago.

"The sheer size and complexity of these tools tell us that Dehtal was not a peripheral site—it was a central hub of early hominin occupation and tool production," said Zarei. "Our findings reveal systematic raw material exploitation and on-site

tool manufacturing at a scale rarely seen in this region."

Situated on an expansive alluvial plain near seasonal water sources and abundant raw materials, Dehtal offered an ideal habitat for early human groups.

Its location supports broader theories that access to freshwater and stone resources played a decisive role in hominin settlement patterns during the Pleistocene.

According to Fereidoun Biglari of the National Museum of Iran, who first surveyed and sampled Dehtal in 2010, the implications extend far beyond the site itself:

"The presence of giant core technology at Dehtal, also found across Arabia and the Indian subcontinent, reflects a widespread Acheulean tradition shared across continents," Biglari noted.

"This reinforces the idea that the northern Persian Gulf—once a dry basin during periods of lowered sea level—acted as a land corridor linking the Levant and Arabian Peninsula with South Asia. With its rich lithic record and strategic position,

Dehtal becomes a key piece in understanding the Acheulean world and the ancient routes our ancestors followed across this part of Eurasia."

Intriguingly, some of the Acheulean cores at Dehtal also bear Holocene-period rock art, suggesting later cultural reuse and adding a complex, layered chronology to the site's significance.

The findings open promising avenues for further research into early hominin behavior, landscape use, and long-distance movement.

As sea levels fluctuated throughout the Pleistocene, areas like the Persian Gulf basin may have alternated between migration routes and refugia, potentially hosting human populations for extended periods.

According to Zarei, more intensive systematic surveys and excavations are planned for the site and will be undertaken in 2025–2026.

The results of the Dehtal investigations were recently published in the Journal of the Iran National Museum.

Tehran to host UN Tourism's forum on urban tourism

TEHRAN – The UN Tourism, in collaboration with Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, will host the UN Tourism Global Forum on Urban Tourism in Tehran from June 24 to 25.

The event is also supported by the Abbasabad Cultural & Tourism Area of Tehran, an affiliate member of UN Tourism.

Held under the theme "The Urban Tourism We Need: Resilient, Smart, and Sustainable," the forum aims to unite policymakers, industry leaders, urban planners, and tourism experts from around the world. The focus will be on developing innovative strategies that ensure urban tourism contributes positively to cities' long-term resilience and sustainability.

The two-day event will serve as a global platform to exchange best practices and explore how tourism can be a key driver in urban transformation and regeneration.

With rapid urbanization impacting cities worldwide, the forum will discuss the need for smarter infrastructure, inclusive growth, and environmentally responsible tourism development.

The upcoming forum comes at a critical time as urban centers globally seek to balance tourism growth with quality of life, environmental protection, and cultural integrity. Cities have increasingly become popular travel destinations, accounting for a large portion of international tourist arrivals. However, this surge in urban tourism has



also posed challenges, including overcrowding, pressure on public services, and the risk of cultural homogenization.

In response, UN Tourism has been advocating for holistic urban tourism models that prioritize

sustainability, smart technology integration, and local community engagement. The Tehran forum is set to spotlight effective initiatives and foster collaboration to shape the cities of tomorrow.

Morocco's Rabat to host Africa's first UN tourism innovation hub

Morocco's Minister of Tourism, Fatim-Zahra Ammor, has signed a financial agreement regarding the establishment of the first UN Tourism Thematic Office on Innovation for Africa in Rabat.

The minister signed the agreement with Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the UN Tourism, on Thursday on the sidelines of the 123rd session of the UN Tourism Executive Council in Madrid, Spain, Hespress reported.

The office seeks to work to support the UN Tourism 2030 Agenda for Africa, to make the sector a driver of development across the continent.

Data from the UNWTO shows that arrivals across Africa recovered 96% of pre-pandemic visitors, noting that North Africa is recording a strong performance at the continental level. Last year, Morocco achieved a milestone by welcoming 17.4 million international tourists, representing a 20%

increase compared to 2023.

This means that Morocco was the most-visited country in all of Africa, according to UN Tourism.

"Over the last five years, Morocco has averaged USD 3.5 billion in FDI annually across all sectors," UN Tourism said, noting that \$2.2 billion was allocated to the sector between 2014 and 2023.

The website quoted UN Tourism Executive Director Na-

talia Bayona, stressing Morocco's regional leadership in the tourism sector.

Morocco's tourism sector has become a key economic driver, contributing 7.3% to GDP by 2023.

The tourism office forecasts that Morocco is prepared to continue its growth with a remarkable 35% increase in international arrivals since 2019 and \$10.5 billion in tourism revenue.

World needs innovative, equitable solutions to ensure water security, Iran suggests

TEHRAN –The world needs innovative and equitable solutions to ensure water security for all and prevent social tensions, forced migration, and livelihood instability by turning challenges into opportunities through fostering global ties, First Vice-President Mohammad-Reza Aref has said.

“Strengthening international collaborations, we can turn the challenge into an opportunity and build a future where sustainable water management supports thriving societies, sustainable food systems, and healthy ecosystems around the world,” IRNA quoted Aref as saying.

The official made the remarks while addressing the High-Level International Conference on ‘Glaciers’ Preservation being held from May 29 to 31 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan, which underlines the vital role of glaciers in maintaining global ecological balance and addressing water-related challenges.

Highlighting climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution as the main triple challenges the world is facing, the official said, “Affecting environmental



procedures, these challenges affect human health and the environment in many different ways.”

Glaciers, as hidden reservoirs of fresh water, are a valuable treasure for Earth’s inhabitants, and their protection will ensure water security, he noted.

Rising global temperatures are threatening these vital freshwater reservoirs.

Their protection requires comprehensive diplomatic, environmental, and social measures, as their melt-

ing will lead to many concerns over floods, soil erosion, and destruction of economic infrastructure, he highlighted.

Referring to Iran’s dry climatic conditions, Aref noted that “Iran’s water resources are highly dependent on water from snowmelt and natural glaciers.

As one of the oldest civilizations in the world, over thousands of years, Iran has developed different strategies for water management, particularly during times of water scarcity. These include the construction of

qanats or underground channels for water transport without evaporation, irrigation networks, and water storage.”

The official went on to say that combining indigenous knowledge with advanced technologies, the country is benefiting from both traditional and modern water management practices.

In addition to preserving historical structures as cultural heritage and usable infrastructure, Iran has implemented extensive development projects such as dam construction, modern irrigation systems with advanced technologies, recirculation technology, and desalination plants.

The vice president expressed optimism that the high level conference results in the expansion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, the exchange of knowledge and expertise among nations, as well as the enhancement of practical measures such as the implementation of effective programs to enhance resilience against drought and floods, and empower local communities against melting glaciers and shrinking water resources.

Tehran seeks to boost ties with Tokyo in AI

TEHRAN – The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister, Sattar Hashemi, in a meeting with the Japanese ambassador, Tamaki Tsukada, has highlighted the significance of fostering cooperation in emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI).

The meeting, held on Wednesday in Tehran, focused on expanding communication infrastructure, enhancing collaborations in advanced technologies such as AI and the Internet of Things (IoT), exchanging expertise in digital policymaking, and conducting joint research projects.

The officials also discussed the potential for developing interactions among universities and research centers of the two countries, Mehr News Agency reported.

Highlighting the scientific and research cooperation between Iran and Japan by establishing the Iranian Telecommunications Research Center (known as the Institute of Communications and Information Technology), Hashemi called for the promotion of interactions in knowledge-based fields, as well.

The official touched on the scientific capabilities of the Iranian universities, saying that “One of the main axes of the cooperation can be centered around sharing knowledge and experiences in the ICT sector, and training specialized human resources. We’re willing to benefit from Japan’s expertise and share the scientific capacities of the country.”

Lauding Iran’s scientific and technological advancements, the Japanese official, for his part, expressed hope that relations between the two nations would be strengthened.

In April, the deputy minister for ICT, Ehsan Chitsaz, and the Japanese vice-minister

for international affairs and communications, Imagawa Takuo, highlighted the need to expand technological cooperation in key sectors, including artificial intelligence (AI), digital economy, and the development of sustainable communications infrastructure.

During a meeting held in Tokyo, the officials explored avenues to further enhance collaborations, IRNA reported.

Establishing the ‘Iran-Japan digital innovation center’, cooperating on policymaking for emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and platform regulation, as well as training experts in the digital economy through holding joint university courses were among the discussed topics.

Takuo, for his part, announced Japan’s readiness to foster digital ties with Iran, saying that Iran is pursuing digital transformation path focusing on local and long-term considerations. Japan supports this approach and is fully prepared to implement cooperation projects by evaluating Iran’s constructive proposals.

The two sides also agreed to establish a joint executive working group to follow up on the implementation of the reached agreements.

ICT status

The combination of talent, data, and innovation makes Iran a key player in the regional AI value chain, capable of driving meaningful cooperation and development. Iran is committed to fostering regional cooperation and building a future where AI drives prosperity and unity, Hashemi said in February.

Emphasizing that Iran is a major stakeholder in the regional digital landscape, Hashemi said that Iran is a major player in AI in the Persian Gulf and that the country is ready to



start cooperation with regional states on this matter.

The official made the remarks while addressing the Iran Corridor 2025 conference held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

He stated that the country’s mobile phone operators, as well as its thriving digital service platforms such as Snapp! And Digikala, each serving more than 30 million users, provides an abundance of multifaceted data — an essential ingredient for AI development, Press TV reported.

Despite facing economic sanctions, Iran has successfully developed a resilient fintech ecosystem that continues to thrive and innovate, Hashemi noted.

“Our country’s academic and research capabilities have propelled us to the forefront of AI advancements. In 2023, Iran ranked second in the region in terms of the number and quality of scientific papers in AI, demonstrating our commitment to cutting-edge research and development,” he added.

“Iran holds the second position in the region for AI developers, highlighting the depth of our skilled workforce, and stands fourth in the region in terms of the number of AI firms, showcasing our dynamic and rapidly growing ecosystem,” the Iranian minister continued.

Iran elected as vice-chair of IOCINDIO-1



TEHRAN – In the first intragovernmental session of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission’s Sub-commission for the Central Indian Ocean (IOCINDIO-1), Maryam Qaemi, an official with the Iranian National Institute for Oceanography and Atmospheric Science, was elected as the Vice-Chair of the sub-commission.

Qaemi also serves as the Integrated Marine Biosphere Research (IMBeR) National Contact for Iran, actively contributing to international ocean research and sustainability efforts.

The IOCINDIO is a regional body established under the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The event was organized in-person at the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, the UAE, from May 21 to 23. Saif AlGhais from the UAE was elected as the Chair, and Balakrishnan Nair TM from India was also elected as a Vice-Chair, the ministry of science, research, and technology reported.

The meeting established a foundational framework for IOCINDIO’s work, strengthening regional cooperation in ocean sciences and supporting progress toward key sustainable development goals. It brought together experts from international organizations specializing in ocean research and marine science who dis-

cussed ways to promote scientific cooperation, sustainable development of seas and oceans, and regional capacity development in the field of ocean sciences.

Attending a workshop on ‘strengthening ocean sustainability’, Iranian experts from the National Institute for Oceanography and Atmospheric Science elaborated on the country’s scientific measures and operations in the region.

In addition to presenting a comprehensive account on the activities and programs of the ‘West Asia Regional Center for Oceanography Education and Research (RCOWA), which has been established under the auspices of UNESCO, Iranian delegation actively participated in all specialized topics including ocean monitoring, sustainable development, marine disaster risk reduction, regional capacity development, and ocean literacy.

During the IOCINDIO-1 session, key issues such as the strategic priorities of the IOC, the implementation of the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), as well as collaboration with international institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and the World Bank were reviewed and discussed.

The meeting addressed several key themes, including the development of joint strategies to conserve marine ecosystems, the enhancement of research and technical capabilities among member states, and the expansion of knowledge in ocean monitoring and marine resource management. It also laid the groundwork for a collaborative framework to tackle shared environmental challenges, such as climate change and ocean pollution.

WFP releases April report on Iran

TEHRAN – The World Food Program (WFP) has released a report, expounding on activities in Iran over the month of April.

In April, WFP food assistance reached 32,233 beneficiaries, which included Afghan and Iraqi refugees as well as Iranian teachers. Refugees are assisted with a staple food basket which includes fortified wheat flour (12 kg per person per month) and vegetable oil (810 ml per person per month).

Under cash-based transfers, following the revision of WFP’s Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) conducted in November 2024, the Centre for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (CAFIA) confirmed adjustments to cash transfer values starting in January.

In April, WFP continued to provide the increased cash transfers to better support essential living costs. The amount doubled from IRR 2.5 million (US\$ 3.6) to IRR 5 million (US\$ 7.3) for men-headed households and from IRR 3 million (US\$ 4.4) to IRR 6 million (US\$ 8.7) for women-headed households.

WFP provided 2,606 refugee girls with a monthly cash incentive of IRR 2 million (US\$ 2.9) transferred to their bank accounts. This is a part of WFP Iran’s efforts to promote education for refugee girls by providing them with cash for each month of regular school attendance.

By April, WFP Iran helped ease the financial burden associated with the gluten-free dietary needs of 52 refugee celiac patients from WFP’s beneficiaries by providing them with an extra cash amount of 9.7 million rials (US\$ 14.19) per person as a replacement for their usual food entitlement.

WFP’s school feeding program, reached 9,239 refugee students and their teachers, in April, with daily snacks consisting of milk, date bars and/or fortified biscuits.

WFP supported 378 refugees with disabilities in April across nine settlements, each receiving an additional monthly cash support of IRR 3 million (US\$ 4.3), on top of their regular aid. In April, assistance covered Kerman, Lorestan, West Azerbaijan, Fars, Khuzestan, Markazi, Khorasan Razavi, and Semnan provinces after initially being introduced to two refugee settlements across two provinces.

To enhance the economic resilience and self-sufficiency of 364 refugees (50 percent women) in April, WFP continued its support for 24 income-generating initiatives across 18 settlements. Activities included welding, tailoring, baking, and farming, among others.

WFP provided 35 home-based bakery ovens to the Jahrom settlement to support house-

hold-level bread production, in response to a request from CAFIA. This intervention was initiated due to the absence of a bakery within the settlement, which limited beneficiaries’ access to bread. As beneficiaries rely on the wheat flour distributed by WFP, access to ovens was essential to help meet their basic food needs.

In 2024, WFP provided a combination of in-kind and cash assistance to address the food needs of over 33,000 vulnerable refugees in Iran. As a result, 70 percent of them were able to consume food at an acceptable level, a figure that remains nearly stable compared to the previous year.

Since August, WFP successfully increased the value of the cash transfer entitlement by 25 percent, actively helping to mitigate the immediate economic challenges reported by refugees.

WFP has maintained a presence in Iran since 1987, primarily focused on addressing the food security needs of refugees mainly from Afghanistan. Iran has hosted refugees for over four decades. Most refugees, along with those in refugee-like conditions, reside in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, often integrated with host communities. However, the most vulnerable refugees living in 20 settlements across 13 provinces, face a precarious food security situation that necessitates continued humanitarian assistance by WFP.

WFP provided food assistance, educational support, and livelihood opportunities through in-kind food distributions, unconditional cash transfers, and capacity-strengthening initiatives to eligible refugees who live in settlements.

Given the economic situation in Iran in recent years, Afghan refugees have also faced many challenges, including reduced income opportunities and diminished purchasing power, which have impacted their food security and well-being, particularly among those in settlements. In response, WFP adjusted its Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP 2023-2027) to align with the need by modifying cash entitlements and food rations, adjusting the number of beneficiaries, and extending the duration of the ICSP by two years to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF 2023–2027), ensuring uninterrupted assistance.

WFP implemented activities under the ICSP to sustain its support to these refugees and address their increasing humanitarian needs. There are around 35,000 most vulnerable documented refugees who live in 20 settlements across 13 provinces in Iran and are benefiting from WFP-provided food assistance.

ENGLISH IN USE

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‘Salt particles in Lake Urmia contained by 80%’

Salt particles raising from the catchment basin of Lake Urmia has been contained by nearly 80 percent, Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the provincial department for the Lake Urmia restoration program at West Azarbaijan has said.

Saplings and shrubs have been planted in the catchment basin of Lake Urmia to slow down the wind giving rise to salt particles since past three years, which cost 600 billion rials (nearly \$14 million), Sarkhosh said.

The major salt particle hotspots in the province include Jabal Kandi village in Urmia County, Saporghah, Urmia, Choopanloo and Miandoab, which are highly contained by planting vegetation.

کنترل ۸۰ درصد ریزگردهای نمکی دریاچه ارومیه

مدیر دفتر استانی ستاد احیای دریاچه ارومیه در آذربایجان غربی گفت: نزدیک به ۸۰ درصد از ریزگردهای نمکی حوضه آبریز دریاچه ارومیه کنترل شده است.

فرهاد سرخوش افزود: خارج از بستر دریاچه ارومیه و در حوضه آبریز با کاشت نهال و درختچه‌ها ریزگردهای نمکی کنترل می‌شود که از سال ۹۳ تا ۹۶ در این راستا ۶۰ میلیارد تومان هزینه شده است. کانون بحرانی ریزگردها در استان شامل منطقه جبل کندی در ۴۵ کیلومتری ارومیه، منطقه سپورغان ارومیه، چوپان لو سلماس، و میاندوآب است که با نهال کاری تا حدود زیادی از این ریزگردها مهار شده‌اند.



A wise man first thinks and then speaks and a fool speaks first and then thinks.

Imam Ali (AS)

What's in Tehran art galleries



Painting

* A collection of paintings by Golnaz Farrokhnia is on view in an exhibition at O Gallery.

The exhibit named "Flowers and Beetles" will be running until June 10 at the gallery, which can be found at 8 Shahin St., Sanai St.

* Hanieh Soltani is putting her latest paintings on view in an exhibition at Bavan Gallery.

The exhibit named "The Time After" will run until June 16 at the gallery located at 7 Abdo off Lareztan St. off Motahhari Ave.



* An exhibition of paintings by Hanieh Mirzakhani is underway at Yafteh Gallery.

The exhibition named "Nothing Goes According to Plan" will run until June 13 at the gallery located at 8 Taleqani Dead End, Yarmohammadi St. in the Darus Neighborhood.



* A collection of paintings by Setareh Zabetian is currently on display in an exhibit at Binesh Gallery.

Named "Amnesia", the exhibition runs until June 13 at the gallery located at 22 Khakzad Alley, Vali-e Asr Ave.



* Kourosh Adim is showcasing his latest paintings in an exhibition at Bostan Gallery.

The exhibit named "Adami" will run until June 10 at No. 71, 22th Alley, Larestan St. off Motahhari Ave.

* A collection of paintings by Javad Qanbarpour is on display in an exhibition at Tarrahan Azad Gallery.

The exhibition named "Shadow and Light" will be running until June 10 at the gallery located at 5 Salmas Square, off Fatemi St.



* Paintings by Leila Pazouki are currently on view in an exhibition at Dastan Basement Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until June 20 at the gallery located at 6 Bidar St., off Fereshteh St.

* Paintings by Abbas Mohammadi are currently on display in an exhibit at Jaleh Gallery.

Entitled "Diahem", the exhibition runs until June 13 at the gallery located at No. 3, Noshahr Alley, Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Ave.



* Ev Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Rouzbeh Dabiri.

The exhibit named "The Invisible Realm" will be running until June 20 at the gallery located at 5 Arabi Alley, North Kheradmand St.

* A collection of paintings by a number of Iranian artists is on display in an exhibition at Sheis Gallery.

The exhibit titled "The Spring" will be running until June 11 at the gallery located at Shirzad Alley, near Daneshju Park.



BalkanIran Institute launched in Tehran

TEHRAN – During a ceremony attended by a distinguished gathering of researchers, scholars, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, media professionals, and international and regional experts on Thursday, the BalkanIran Cultural and Media Institute was officially unveiled in Tehran.

The event, which was held at the Saadi Hall of Milad Tower in Tehran, was graced by prominent figures including Mohammad Hossein Ranjbaran, Advisor to the Foreign Minister; Mohammad Javad Asayesh, former Iranian ambassador to Yugoslavia; and Abbas Aryazand, former cultural attaché in Balkan countries among others, Mehr reported on Friday.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mohsen Sohani, founder and CEO of the institute, emphasized the significance of the Balkan region as a bridge to the West.

"Today, we gather in a forum whose windows open to the gateway of the Western world—Balkans. A land intertwined with diversity, cultural fusion, resilience, and coexistence."

A geography where the call to prayer echoes alongside church bells, he said and added: "But for us, the Balkans are more than just a region; they are a mirror reflecting our shared history. Today, BalkanIran Cultural and Media Institute emerges as a bridge to connect this rich heritage. We are



not merely establishing a virtual cultural and media institution but building a living bridge—one made of words that have shone in Balkan books, echoed in the Tirana's Naim Frashëri's poetry, and whispered in Mostar's monasteries."

"From today, BalkanIran is a home for all of you. To media and communication professionals, I say: let us be storytellers, not just recorders.

To diplomats, I urge: bring diplomacy from behind desks to streets and communities. And to the Balkan peoples, we say: with the media bridge of BalkanIran, let us see, hear, read, and create together for peace, hope, and a brighter future," he mentioned.

Concluding his remarks, Sohani stated, "The 20th century saw the Balkans through the lens of conflict. Let us now dedicate the 21st century to the colors of Hafez, Saadi, and Rumi—culture, peace, and human dignity. Culture will be our weapon of resistance in establishing lasting peace."

Iran and the Balkan region share a long-standing history of cultural, historical, and diplomatic ties rooted in centuries of interaction and mutual influence.

Despite geographical distances, these connections have been reinforced through trade, migration, and shared cultural values. Iran's engagement with Balkan countries has often centered around fostering regional stability,

promoting cultural exchanges, and strengthening diplomatic relationships.

In recent years, Iran has sought to deepen its cooperation with Balkan nations in various fields, including education, media, and regional security, aiming to build bridges of understanding and partnership.

The establishment of initiatives like the BalkanIran Cultural and Media Institute underscores Iran's commitment to enhancing dialogue, friendship, and shared development with the Balkan peoples, reflecting a mutual interest in promoting peace, stability, and cultural richness in the region.

"Hamilton" to be shown at Labkhand Theater Complex

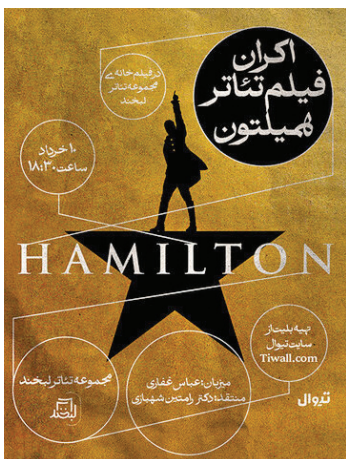
TEHRAN – Labkhand Theater Complex in Tehran will show the recorded stage performance of "Hamilton" on Saturday.

Set for at 6:30 p.m., the film screening will be followed by a review session with Abbas Ghaffari as the host and the theater critic Ramtin Shahbazi, Mehr reported.

"Hamilton" is a 2020 American musical historical drama film consisting of a live stage recording of the Broadway musical, which was inspired by the 2004 biography "Alexander Hamilton" by Ron Chernow.

It was directed by Thomas Kail. Lin-Manuel Miranda, who wrote the music, lyrics, and book, stars as Treasury Secretary and Founding Father Alexander Hamilton,

along with the musical's original Broadway cast, such as Leslie Odom Jr., Phillipa Soo, Christopher Jackson, Renée Elise Goldsberry,



Daveed Diggs, Anthony Ramos, Jasmine Cephas Jones, Okieriete Onaodowan, and Jonathan Groff.

"Hamilton" narrates Alexander Hamilton's extraordinary life in a compelling two-act musical that explores his journey from an orphaned immigrant to a founding father of the United States. The story delves into his role in

the American Revolutionary War, where he serves as an aide-de-camp to General George Washington, demonstrating his strategic mind and unwavering dedication to the revolutionary cause. The musical also highlights his personal life, including his marriage to Eliza Schuyler, which provides emotional depth and insight into his character beyond his political achievements. Additionally, it portrays his influential career as a lawyer and his tenure as the first Secretary of the Treasury, where he established foundational financial systems for the young nation. Throughout the narrative, Hamilton's interactions with Aaron Burr, the main narrator for most of the musical, build tension that ultimately culminates in their infamous duel, which results in Hamilton's tragic death.

Acclaimed by critics for its innovative visuals, dynamic perfor-

mances, and masterful direction, "Hamilton" became one of the most-streamed films of 2020. It garnered recognition from the American Film Institute as one of the best films of that year. The film received numerous award nominations, including Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy and Best Actor for Lin-Manuel Miranda at the 78th Golden Globe Awards. Daveed Diggs also received a SAG Award nomination for Outstanding Male Actor in a Limited Series or Television Movie. Furthermore, "Hamilton" was nominated for 12 Primetime Emmy Awards, winning two, notably for Outstanding Variety Special, solidifying its status as a groundbreaking and culturally significant production.

Labkhand Theater Complex is located at No. 417, Taleqani Street, between Naderi and Vesal-e Shirazi streets.

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones' "Persians: The Age of the Great Kings" available at bookstores

TEHRAN – The Persian translation of the book "Persians: The Age of the Great Kings" written by Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones has been released in the bookstores across Iran.

Shahrbano Saremi has translated the book and Qoqrus Publishing House has brought it out in 390 pages, IRNA reported.

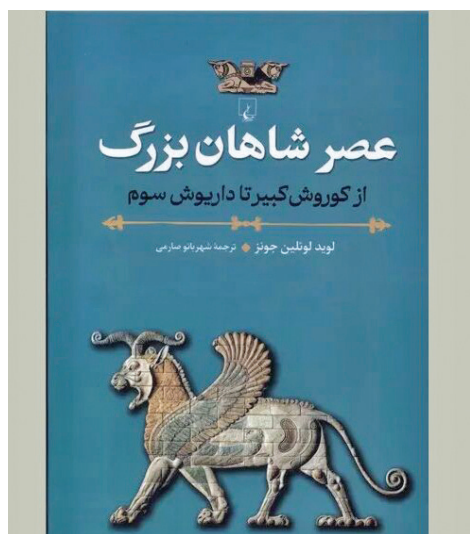
The Achaemenid Persian kings ruled over the largest empire of antiquity, stretching from Libya to the steppes of Asia and from Ethiopia to Pakistan.

From the palace-city of Persepolis, Cyrus the Great, Darius, Xerxes, and their heirs reigned supreme for centuries until the conquests of Alexander of Macedon brought the empire to a swift and unexpected end in the late 330s BCE.

In "Persians: The Age of the Great Kings," originally published in 2022, the historian Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones tells the epic story of this dynasty and the world it ruled.

Drawing on Iranian inscriptions, cuneiform tablets, art, and archaeology, he shows how the Achaemenid Persian Empire was the world's first superpower—one built, despite its imperial ambition, on cooperation and tolerance.

Llewellyn-Jones has successfully dealt with the scarcity of sources on the subject. Despite the abundance of information about the Achaemenids in Greek historians such as Xenophon and Herodotus, he has chosen to



treat their accounts with a touch of skepticism, and rightfully so.

Given the history of the Greco-Persian wars, the Greeks may not have been impartial narrators of the history of Persia.

Llewellyn-Jones has therefore extensively used non-Greek sources to illustrate the origins of the Achaemenids and frequently countered Greek historians on their general representation of Achaemenid kings.

For instance, the author's portrayal of Cambyses, unlike the common portrayal of him as an inept king, depicts him as powerful and resilient, even if not as competent as

Cyrus.

The author has used archaeological findings and non-Greek textual sources such as Babylonian cuneiform tablets extensively in order to avoid a Hellenocentric approach and instead to reconstruct what possibly could be the "Persian version".

The book is the definitive history of the Achaemenid dynasty and its legacies in modern-day Iran. It completely reshapes our understanding of the ancient world.

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones is a Welsh professor of ancient history, with a focus on ancient Iran, in particular the Achaemenid (550–330 BC) period. Before this, he specialized in the study of ancient Greece.

Since 2016, he holds the chair of ancient history at Cardiff University.

Prior to that, he served at the classics department of the University of Edinburgh, where in 2015, he became professor of ancient Greek and Iranian studies.

Llewellyn-Jones is also the director of the ancient Iran program at the behest of the British Institute of Persian Studies.

He regularly contributes to BBC History, History Today, and World History, among others.

He has authored numerous monographs, several books, and has edited and co-edited numerous works.