



International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi speaks after the IAEA Board of Governors meeting, Vienna, 16 November 2022

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## Project Esther: Trump’s blueprint to crush Palestine advocacy

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN- A subtle yet pervasive campaign that jeopardizes the foundation of free speech and democratic dissent has emerged in the shadow of America’s political theater. Project Esther is more than just a policy initiative. It was designed by the Heritage Foundation and is now a part of the Trump administration’s second term.

Under the guise of combating antisemitism, it is a planned attack on the pro-Palestine movement that aims to criminalize advocacy and silence critics.

The far-right’s larger Project 2025 agenda, which aims to reshape American governance under a nationalist, authoritarian vision, served as the foundation for Project Esther, which was unveiled in the tense political environment of late 2024 rather than in response to an increase in antisemitic violence.

## Ortagus’s successor, another ugly face of Washington

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Israel’s Channel 14 reported on Sunday that Morgan Ortagus, Deputy Special Presidential Envoy for West Asia, would soon leave her post. The news channel said this move “is not good news as Ortagus was a strong supporter of Israel and worked decisively on the issue of disarming Hezbollah.”

Since U.S. President Donald Trump assumed the presidency, Ortagus has visited Lebanon several times as part of Washington’s pressure on Lebanon amid an atmosphere of threats and hints of aggressive steps against Lebanon.

During the recent Qatar Economic Forum, Ortagus stated, “Lebanon still has a lot to do to disarm Hezbollah,” claiming that Lebanese officials “have accomplished more in the past six months than they probably have in the past fifteen years.”

Reportedly, President Joseph Aoun was invited, a month ago, to hold a live Zoom interview with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy;

## Massacre at Gaza starvation camp

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The Israeli occupation regime kills and injures scores of starving civilians at a “failed” U.S. aid distribution center.

The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) carried out a major attack on Palestinians as they approached a designated aid distribution site operated by an American company in the Mawasi area of Rafah, southern Gaza Strip.

Medics say at least 31 starving Palestinian civilians were killed, and more than 200 others were injured as a result of Israeli gunfire.

The victims had gathered at what was supposed to be a humanitarian aid point, yet were targeted despite their desperate need for food after being deliberately starved by the Israeli regime.

In response, the Gaza government media office condemned such aid zones as “collective death traps, not humanitarian relief points.”

## Araghchi to pursue diplomatic coordination on Gaza in visits to Egypt, Lebanon

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi left Tehran Sunday evening to begin a two-day diplomatic mission to Egypt and Lebanon, where he is expected to hold high-level meetings, according to Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei.

Speaking to reporters in Tehran, Baghaei said the meetings will focus on a broad spectrum of bilateral issues, as well as key developments in the region and beyond.

According to Baghaei, the trip reflects Iran’s growing emphasis on strengthening ties and coordinating more closely with regional partners at a time of heightened tensions and strategic realignments.

“The foreign minister’s visit is part of Iran’s ongoing efforts to deepen regional dialogue,” Baghaei said, adding that the agenda includes bilateral relations, regional consultations, and coordination on pressing international developments, with particular attention to the situation in occupied Palestine.

The spokesman noted that Iran seeks to engage in “serious and constructive” discussions with Cairo and Beirut on how to confront the escalating crisis in Gaza, the broader implications of Israeli aggression, and the pursuit of regional stability through diplomacy. ▶ Page 2

## 21 Iranian officers deployed to peace missions in Africa: top commander

TEHRAN – In a ceremony held on Sunday, Brigadier General Kioumars Heidari, Commander of the Iranian Army Ground Forces, announced the deployment of 21 Iranian military officers to international peacekeeping missions in four African nations—Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Mali.

General Heidari revealed that these officers were dispatched as part of Iran’s dedicated peacekeeping unit, which has been trained and equipped in line with the latest UN protocols.

“We have established peacekeeping units furnished with the latest standards in training, equipment, and operational procedures,” he said, highlighting the military’s commitment to professionalism in multilateral operations.

In addition to the current deployments, the commander announced that 40 elite officers from the Army Ground Force have successfully completed advanced peacekeeping courses in Switzerland, Italy, Turkey, and India. These programs, designed to meet UN standards, are part of a broader strategy to prepare Iranian forces for expanded participation in international missions. ▶ Page 2

## Family Physician Program to kick off in mid-June

TEHRAN – The health ministry is planning to start the Family Physician Program in cities and villages with a population of less than 20,000 individuals on June 22, the first day of summer.

The program will gradually target other parts of the country as well, ISNA quoted Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi as saying.

In April, Zafarqandi said the Family Physician Program will kick off in the current Iranian year that started on March 21.

“It is a large-scale program based on social behavior change. Designing new patient pathways, reforming the referral pattern, and improving the healthcare network system requires careful coordination between the

Health Ministry, governors, and other relevant institutions at the provincial level,” IRIB quoted Zafarqandi as saying.

So, it is absolutely essential to develop a national headquarters headed by the President to oversee the overall management of the program, he added. ▶ Page 7



## Seyed Ali Madanizadeh proposed as new economy minister

TEHRAN- Spokesman for Majlis (the Iranian Parliament)’s presiding board announced the government’s introduction of the proposed economy minister to this board on Sunday.

Abbas Goudarzi said that Seyed Ali Madanizadeh was introduced to the parliament as the government’s proposed candidate for the position of minister of economy, and the letter of acceptance will be placed on the agenda of the Majlis open session next week.

According to the internal regulations of the parliament, the letter of introduction of the minister of economy will be announced in the first session, which is next Sunday, and the specialized committee will have one week to present its report for reading in the parliament. ▶ Page 4



## Iran parliament speaker begins strategic Latin America tour with official visit to Venezuela

TEHRAN – Speaker of Iran’s parliament Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf arrived in Caracas on Sunday, leading a high-level parliamentary delegation.

This visit initiates a strategic multi-nation tour across Latin America, with subsequent stops planned in Cuba and Brazil.

Upon landing at Caracas airport, Qalibaf received an official welcome from Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil Pinto, Transport Minister Ramón Velázquez, heads of the Iran-Venezuela Joint Commission, members of Venezuela’s National Assembly, and Iranian Ambassador Hojjatollah Soltani. ▶ Page 2



## TEHRAN PAPERS

*In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in yesterday's Iranian newspapers.*

## Agreement is within reach

Etemad examined a possible nuclear agreement between Iran and the United States and the obstacles ahead in an interview with reformist political activist Ali Bagheri. He said: The parties to these negotiations are seeking to reach a common point of understanding and stability in mutual relations for different reasons. Therefore, despite all the differences between the parties, the path towards an agreement will eventually open. For different reasons, there is a will for an agreement by both the Iranian and American sides. The foreign policy in Iran indicates a change. Trump also needs an important foreign policy achievement in the first four months of his presidency. Trump has not succeeded in ending the Russia-Ukraine and Gaza-Israel wars. In the meantime, the Iran case can be face-saving for Trump. There is good news about an imminent agreement. Both parties, given global and regional conditions, need an accord, and it will eventually be achieved.

### Ettelaat: Fateful moves against Iran in the IAEA board

In a commentary, Ettelaat addressed the fateful moves against Iran in the IAEA Board of Governors and wrote: Western diplomats have claimed that Western powers are seeking to pressure countries on the IAEA Board of Governors to take action against Iran at the upcoming quarterly meeting of this international body. This move is likely to anger Tehran and complicate negotiations between the United States and Iran on sanctions and addressing concerns about the country's nuclear program. Iran has always rejected the claims of the Zionist regime and Western countries about its nuclear program, emphasizing that its nuclear technology is only intended for peaceful purposes. The immediate impact of this resolution is likely to be on Tehran's negotiations with the United States and Iran's subsequent actions regarding its nuclear program. Russia and China are the only countries that have consistently opposed such resolutions. Iran has typically reacted sharply to resolutions and criticisms by the IAEA Board of Governors, taking actions such as accelerating and expanding its uranium enrichment program or preventing the presence of senior IAEA inspectors.

## Araghchi to pursue diplomatic coordination on Gaza in visits to Egypt, Lebanon



From page 1 ▶ Israel has launched relentless air and ground attacks on Gaza, including hospitals, residences, and houses of worship, since Palestinian Resistance movements launched their surprise attack, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, against the regime on October 7, 2023. The attack was in response to decades of Israeli crimes in occupied Palestine.

According to the Health Ministry of Gaza, at least 54,381 Palestinians have been killed—mostly women and children—and over 124,381 injured in the brutal Israeli military onslaught since the war began nearly eight months ago.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has

### Sobh-e-No: America seeking dual plan toward Iran

Sobh-e-No wrote about the negotiations and a possible nuclear agreement: The Americans have apparently entered the negotiations with two parallel plans: Plan 1 is based on media pressure, promoting an idea that an agreement is within reach and attempting to impose a zero-enrichment condition; a condition that is unacceptable to Iran and fundamentally conflicts with the Islamic Republic's principled positions. Plan 2 is based on recognizing Iran's right to uranium enrichment, with proposals such as forming an international consortium to monitor and participate in enrichment activities. This plan, which was apparently proposed by one of the Persian Gulf Arab countries, has not met with opposition from Iran and remains on the table as one of the possible options. In this regard, the recent visit of Pezeshkian to Oman also carried specific messages within the framework of the second plan. Reportedly, during the visit, Iran insisted on receiving serious guarantees to protect its nuclear rights, and some progress has been made. Informed sources say that credible executive guarantees were among the key issues in the Oman talks.

### Sazandegi: Dual creation

In an article, Sazandegi dealt with Trump's psychological operations against Iran and said: If we analyze Trump's statements carefully, we clearly see that he is trying to convey the message that an agreement is within reach, but they (Iran) cannot have access to nuclear weapons. Regarding this issue, it should be noted that our country's negotiating team basically believes that the United States is playing with words through the media and injecting some information. The U.S. negotiating team uses disinformation at different times against the negotiations, an issue that the head of our country's diplomatic service has criticized many times. Given all these interpretations, it should be noted that the continuation of this process by the United States could trigger a kind of psychological front against Iranian public opinion as well as our country's negotiating team. Even in this regard, the commentary and news by European media can complicate the process and increase its psychological, media, and political costs.

# Iran parliament speaker begins strategic Latin America tour with official visit to Venezuela

From page 1 ▶ Demonstrating historical solidarity, the Iranian parliamentary leader paid immediate tribute to South American liberator Simon Bolivar, laying a wreath at his mausoleum to honor the freedom fighter's legacy.

Qalibaf's agenda in Venezuela centers on high-level meetings with government officials and joint business forums aimed at addressing obstacles to trade development between the two nations.

Following his reception of the Iranian official, the Venezuelan Foreign Minister emphasized Iran's geopolitical significance, stating that "Iran guarantees peace in the region and is a source of goodwill."

Highlighting that all nations deserve the right to technological development, preservation of national sovereignty, and achieving peace and stability, he emphasized that "without Iran's presence, achieving peace would be impossible."

The visit advances implementation of the comprehensive cooperation pact signed in May



*Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf and Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil Pinto (L) paying tribute to South American liberator Simon Bolivar during the Iranian official's visit to Caracas on June 1, 2025.*

2022 when Venezuela's president visited Tehran.

Venezuela serves as a critical conduit for Iran's raw material needs, particularly alumina, iron ore, and rare earth metals.

Additionally, the country offers substantial potential for Iranian-led offshore farming projects and refinery development. Bilateral trade reached \$3.6 billion in 2022, with both nations committed to further expansion.

Qalibaf's Latin American

mission also reflects Tehran's strategic priority to deepen ties with the region despite external pressures.

As Abolfazl Amouei, Special Assistant to the Iranian Parliament Speaker for International Affairs, explained: "Latin America offers valuable opportunities for the Islamic Republic of Iran to expand commercial and economic partnerships."

He identified economic cooperation and development as the tour's primary objective, partic-

ularly amid global geopolitical realignments.

The delegation will next travel to Cuba, where Amouei noted the country represents "a focal point for justice-oriented approaches in Latin America."

The tour concludes in Brazil, where Iran participates in the BRICS Parliamentary Forum—a significant platform for international dialogue and cooperation.

The Tehran-Caracas partnership, solidified under former President Hugo Chavez, has evolved into a multifaceted alliance.

Venezuela's vast energy reserves complement Iran's technical expertise, manifesting in refinery modernization projects and industrial collaborations like tractor manufacturing.

Both nations share a demonstrated resilience against sanctions, exemplified by Iran's 2020 fuel shipments that alleviated Venezuelan shortages.

Beyond Venezuela, Iran views Latin America as a vital sphere for diplomatic and economic outreach.

## 21 Iranian officers deployed to peace missions in Africa: top commander



From page 1 ▶ "So far, 21 officers have been deployed and have taken part in field operations across Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Mali," General Heidari noted. "They have performed their duties with discipline and competence, reflecting the capabilities of the Iranian military on the international stage."

He further emphasized that Iran's peacekeeping contingent is not only capable of participating in missions as individuals but is also prepared to deploy as an organized battalion if requested by the United Nations.

"Our peacekeeping forces are ready for deployment to designated countries, whether as single officers or as a cohesive operational unit," he said.

Expanding on Iran's strategic

posture, General Heidari emphasized that the Army Ground Force, as a professional, trained, and committed branch, is fully prepared to participate in peacekeeping missions within the framework of international law and upon receiving the proper command authorization.

He stressed that NEZAJA (Iranian Army Ground Force) considers itself deeply committed to establishing sustainable peace, regional security, and adherence to the UN Charter.

"Our view of peace is not merely the absence of war," he said, "but the promotion of stability, justice, and prosperity for all nations."

"A professional and people-oriented army can help establish

a form of peace that is strong, ethical, and effective," he said. "NEZAJA, guided by religious teachings, the Constitution, and Iran's defensive doctrine, sees itself as a guardian of national security and a proponent of regional peace and stability."

Heidari further underscored that true, lasting peace is only possible through justice, respect for national sovereignty, and resistance to aggression and domination. "Peace must not mean surrender or passivity in the face of threats," he asserted, "but rather active efforts to eliminate the roots of insecurity, fight extremism and terrorism, support oppressed nations, and strengthen legitimate national institutions in troubled regions."

The commander noted that Iran's contribution to peacekeeping can include combat troops, humanitarian and medical teams, trainers, drone operators, and technical experts—all committed to restoring order in war-torn areas.

He also pointed out that such active participation allows Iran's armed forces to share expertise, improve operational readiness, and present a realistic and humane image of its military to

the international community.

"Our presence in this arena," Heidari said, "should not be seen solely in military terms. It also offers a cultural, moral, and humanitarian example of peace and friendship backed by strength."

Declaring that the Army Ground Force views itself as part of the global community, Heidari said it embraces any cooperation that advances fair, balanced, and sustainable peace as both a moral obligation and a professional duty.

In closing, he announced that NEZAJA has officially communicated its readiness to host the second International Peacekeeping Course in Iran, with the participation of military representatives from various countries.

"This proposal has been submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after receiving the necessary approvals from the Army and the General Staff of the Armed Forces," he said.

Heidari expressed hope that the planned event—backed by the Iranian military—will mark a major step forward in defense diplomacy and the expansion of international cooperation in peacekeeping training.

## Self-orientalization of Iranian cinema: the mirror the West wants to see

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – Iranian director Jafar Panahi recently added another international accolade to his name by winning the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival with *It Was Just an Accident*.

This award reaffirms his prominent position within contemporary Iranian cinema, which for decades has managed to carve out a space on the global stage. Yet, alongside the celebration arises an uncomfortable question: to what extent do these films, praised in the West, perpetuate an orientalist vision that caters to Western audiences' expectations and stereotypes about Iran?

Iranian cinema and Western stereotypes

Iranian cinema has become a cultural phenomenon that transcends borders and accumulates prestigious awards. However, Iran—as a Muslim country and part of West Asia—remains subject to simplified and reductive portrayals, especially in Western media. This often negative and monolithic image finds repetition of its own prejudices in certain awarded productions.

Directors like Panahi, Asghar Farhadi—who won an Oscar in 2017 for *The Salesman*—



and the late Abbas Kiarostami have been internationally celebrated as the foremost voices of Iranian cinema. However, many of their films seem, consciously or not, to respond to an expected narrative: one of social drama, oppression, and cultural contradiction. This formula, while recognizable and powerful, risks confining Iranian reality within a limited framework tailored to Western tastes.

Regardless of the directors' intentions, the result is a partial representation that obstructs the plurality of voices within Iran. This phenomenon opens a crucial debate about the limits of cultural representation in a globalized world, where media power

circuits and dominant ideologies shape which stories are told—and how.

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall shed light on this issue by analyzing how media constructs meaning within political and ideological contexts. According to Hall, messages do not hold fixed truths; they are encoded and decoded under the conditions of dominant power and culture. Thus, ideology guides both the production and consumption of meaning, shaping representations that tend to favor hegemonic interests.

In this context, the recognition of Panahi and other Iranian filmmakers in the West reveals a profound contradiction: while their artistic talent is lauded, their works often legitimize a fragmented and biased vision that aligns more with Western political and cultural interests than with Iranian reality. Far from offering a faithful and pluralistic representation, these films reinforce simplistic stereotypes that distort Iran's social and political complexity, inadvertently aligning with an external discourse that seeks to perpetuate the image of the country as a conflict-ridden and backward space.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](https://tehrantimes.com))



# IAEA’s old playbook may lead to different consequences this time

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – Western states have long used the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as a tool of pressure against Iran, recycling discredited Israeli intelligence and crying “non-compliance” whenever diplomatic progress fails to yield them concessions from Iran. But after years of this tired strategy – and despite Iranians’ continued good-faith cooperation – Tehran may finally be ready to reset the equation.

Such a move would serve as a long-overdue reckoning for an IAEA that has consistently allowed itself to be politicized, and for Western powers that have mistaken patience for weakness.

According to reports originating from Western media, the IAEA claimed in a confidential report to member states that Iran has failed to report its nuclear activities at three undeclared locations and raised concerns about the country’s stockpile of uranium enriched up to 60% purity. Capitalizing on these claims, the U.S., UK, Germany, and France are preparing a draft resolution for adoption at the IAEA Board’s June 9 meeting. If passed, this would mark Iran’s first formal non-compliance designation in nearly two decades.

### The tale of Iran’s nuclear program

Iran’s nuclear program began before the Islamic Revolution and during the Shah’s regime. It gained momentum a while after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, and has been under Western scrutiny ever since, which turned to debilitating sanctions during the Obama administration to force limitations on it.

Iran agreed to sit at the negoti-



IAEA chief Rafael Grossi (center-left) touring Iran’s nuclear facilities in November 2024

ating table during the 2010s. After years of intense negotiations, Tehran and the 5+1 group of countries (U.S., UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany) signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, a deal that imposed caps on Iran’s nuclear activities in exchange for the termination of sanctions.

Western states began badgering Iran again after U.S. President Donald Trump left the pact in 2018 and re-instated sanctions against the country. The economic blockade grew even more baleful as Washington expanded it to include secondary sanctions, effectively threatening third-party countries doing business with Tehran.

European signatories to the deal initially said they were opposed to Trump’s decision, and that they wanted to salvage the deal. But they dropped the act after a more European-aligned president – Joe Biden – came into office. Over time, the E3 (UK, France, and Germany) introduced their own sanctions while hypocritically demanding that Iran continue adhering to its JCPOA obligations—even as the deal itself lay

in ruins.

### Iranians have historically been patient—until they are not

Even though Iran got played by the West all these years, the country decided to give diplomacy one more chance. Iran began indirect talks with the U.S. this April, and even proceeded to fill in the E3 on the talks separately, despite Washington, their ally, having rejected Europe’s presence in the discussions themselves.

Yet even as Iran seeks diplomatic engagement, Western states continue their relentless pressure campaign. The latest IAEA report regurgitates tired allegations, but its true significance lies in providing the West with justification to trigger the so-called snapback mechanism before its October expiration deadline. This mechanism, which would automatically reimpose all UN sanctions on Iran, can only be invoked if JCPOA signatories declare Iran non-compliant. While the U.S. lost its snapback authority after abandoning the deal in 2018, European signatories have repeatedly

threatened to exercise this option themselves.

The goal, analysts believe, is to force Iran to give up its uranium enrichment capabilities as part of a new deal with Washington. Iranians, however, have reiterated time and time again that they would never cease uranium enrichment, and that they would maintain the right, given to them under the NPT, with or without a deal.

What Iran might do next was made clear by Kazem Gharibabadi, a senior diplomat and part of the team involved in talks with the U.S., in a statement published on Sunday.

“Iran is neither pursuing nuclear weapons nor does it possess any undeclared nuclear materials or activities. Iran has hitherto remained committed to all of its obligations. The cost that Iran has borne has been for the sake of preserving its dignity, honor, progress, and steadfastness in the face of coercion and the hegemonic ambitions of certain powers,” he wrote.

“Should these states choose to abuse Iran’s patience and persist in their erroneous path, Iran will be compelled—commensurate with the evolving circumstances and actions of the other parties—to adopt and implement appropriate decisions, the responsibility, consequences, and ramifications of which shall rest entirely with those states.”

The deputy foreign minister did not specify the potential actions Iran might take if the West pursues more destructive measures. But he had previously said Iran would consider leaving the NPT, a treaty restricting non-nuclear states from developing nuclear weapons, if snapback is activated.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Donald Trump participate in a signing ceremony for the Abraham Accords on the South Lawn of the White House on Sept. 15, 2020.

economic ties across multiple industries. This partnership extends beyond traditional defense contracts, increasingly encompassing AI-driven military technologies and energy exports.

### Post-Gaza War fallout: Diplomatic criticism without consequences

Following Israel’s war on Gaza, Western allies have voiced concerns about Tel Aviv’s military actions, yet tangible policy shifts remain limited. Germany, the UK, and the U.S. have each issued formal condemnations, signaling diplomatic discontent over civilian casualties and the scale of Israeli offensives. However, while some countries have initiated temporary sanctions and trade reviews, core military aid flows remain unaffected, highlighting the enduring nature of Israel’s security ties with Western nations.

Despite heightened scrutiny, these criticisms appear largely symbolic, lacking substantive measures that would alter the trajectory of U.S.-Israel defense cooperation or economic partnerships. Western nations, including the U.S., are increasingly caught in a delicate balancing act as they attempt to maintain their longstanding alliance with Israel while addressing growing Arab concerns over the war in Gaza. This diplomatic tightrope is shaped by

strategic economic interests, public opinion, and regional stability, forcing Western policymakers to keep their strong ties with Israel without alienating key Arab partners.

Saudi Arabia’s pause on normalization talks with Israel has signaled that Tel Aviv’s actions in Gaza could jeopardize broader regional alliances. The UAE and Bahrain, both signatories of the Abraham Accords, face domestic pressure to reassess their ties with Israel, complicating Western efforts to expand normalization agreements. Arab-led advocacy has meanwhile intensified Western public scrutiny, fueling protests across Europe and North America and increasing pressure on governments to reassess their unconditional support for Israel.

The future of U.S.-Israel relations may depend on how effectively Washington navigates these competing interests, ensuring that its alliance with Tel Aviv remains intact without alienating key Arab partners. While Western criticism of Israel has intensified and Trump first visited Arab nations, not Israel, substantive policy shifts remain unlikely, as strategic interests continue to override temporary economic benefits. However, the influence of Arab states can still direct Western narratives in a way that challenges Israel’s long-term ties with the West.

## Iran’s Tabiat learn fate in BCL Asia 2025

TEHRAN – Tabiat basketball team of Iran have been drawn in Group A of the Basketball Champions League Asia (BCL Asia) 2025.

The FIBA Regional Office-Asia has confirmed the groupings for the BCL Asia 2025 following a draw conducted Saturday at the UG Palace in Mongolia.

Tabiat are pitted against Ulaanbaatar Xac Broncos of Mongolia and China’s Zhejiang Guangsha Lions.

Group B consists of Japan B. League champion Utsunomiya Brex, Meralco Bolts, the defending Philippine Cup champion of the Philippine Basketball Association, and Shabab Al Ahli of the UAE.

Al Riyadi of Lebanon, Taoyuan Pauian Pilots of the Chinese Taipei, and Korean Basketball League titlist Changwon LG Sakers are in Group C.

The four winners in the Quarter-Finals will qualify for the Semi-Finals. The Semi-Finals victors will then advance to the one-game Final, while the losing sides will compete in the Third-Place Game.

The champion by the end of the week-long tournament will also earn the right to represent Asia in the FIBA Intercontinental Cup 2025 in Singapore, FIBA’s most prestigious club competition.

The Basketball Champions League Asia 2025 is set on June 7-13 in Dubai. The Group Phase will be played at the Sheikh Saeed Bin Maktoum Sports Hall, with the Coca-Cola Arena to play host to the Final Phase.

## Iran fall short to Italy in VNL preperation

TEHRAN – Reigning world champions Italy ended their preparations for the Volleyball Nations League (VNL) 2025 on a high note as the Europeans swept Iran in their third and last friendly match of the season, held in Padova, on Saturday.

Before topping the Asians in front of almost 3,000 of their home fans, the Italians had downed Germany in the tie-breaker a week ago in Munich and lost to Iran also in five sets on Friday, in Cavalese.

Saturday’s match in Padova was entirely dominated by the Italians, who displayed improved chemistry to top the Iranians 3-0 (25-22, 25-23, 25-19). Italian outside hitter Luca Porro was the match MVP and scored a team-high 15 points – opposite Kamil Rychlicki added 13 and outside hitter Mattia Bottolo, 11. On the Iranian side, outside hitter Poriya Hossein Khanzadeh was the most productive, with nine points.

Following the preparation matches, Italy will head to Quebec to start their VNL campaign from June 11-15 – hosts Canada, Bulgaria, Argentina, France and Germany are the other teams in the pool. Iran will be in Rio de Janeiro, alongside hosts Brazil, the U.S., Ukraine, Slovenia and Cuba.

## Iran victorious over India in 2025 IIHF Women’s Asia Cup

TEHRAN – Iran’s women’s hockey defeated India 5-1 in the 2025 IIHF Women’s Asia Cup on Sunday.

Iran had defeated the UAE 4-1 in their opening match.

The Iranian team, who have participated in the event with youth team, will meet Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday.

The Persians will play 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 being held in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates from May 31 to June 6.

## Vahid Amiri on verge of joining Tractor: report

TEHRAN – Former Persepolis captain Vahid Amiri is close to signing with Tractor football team.

The 37-year-old midfielder has been linked with a move to Iran’s reigning champion after being deemed surplus to requirements at Persepolis.

Kheybar Khoramabad has also expressed interest in signing Amiri.

Having joined Persepolis from Naft Tehran in 2016, Amiri missed a significant part of the 2024-25 Iran Professional League season due to injury.

## Iran’s women’s football team to play two friendlies against Iraq

TEHRAN – Iran’s women’s football team will face Iraq in two friendly matches in Tehran.

The matches are scheduled for June 10 and 12.

In late April, Marziyeh Jafari was appointed as the new head coach of Iran’s women’s national team.

Team Melli also prepare for the upcoming 2026 AFC Women’s Asian Cup qualifiers, which begin on June 26.

Iran are pitted against Jordan, Bhutan, Singapore, and Lebanon in Group A.

Iran will meet Singapore in their opener.

## Iran squad for FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifiers against Qatar, North Korea

TEHRAN – Iran national football team head coach Amir Ghalenoei announced his 28-man team for two matches against Qatar and North Korea in the 2026 World Cup qualification.

Currently sitting first in their group with 20 points, Team Melli will meet Qatar at Lusail Stadium in Doha on June 5.

They will host the Korean team in Tehran five days later and it will be their final fixture of the third round of Asian qualifying for the FIFA World Cup.

Iran have already secured their place in the 2026 World Cup.

### Squad

#### Goalkeepers:

Alireza Beiranvand (Tractor), Payam Nia-zmand (Persepolis), Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal), Mohammad Khalifeh (Aluminum)

#### Defenders:

Ali Nemati (Foolad), Shoja Khalilzadeh (Tractor), Mohammadamin Hazbavi (Sepahan), Saleh Hardani (Esteghlal), Omid Noorafkan (Malavan), Milad Mohammadi (Persepolis), Sadegh Moharrami (Dynamo Zagreb), Morteza Pouraliganji (Persepolis), Aref Aghasi (Tractor)

#### Midfielders:

Saeid Ezatollahi (Shabab Al Ahli), Mohammad Karimi (Sepahan), Mohammad Ghorbani (Orenburg), Saman Ghoddos (Al Ittihad Kalba), Mohammad Mohebbi (Rostov), Mehdi Ghaedi (Al Ittihad Kalba), Mehdi Hashemnezhad (Tractor), Rouzbeh Cheshmi (Esteghlal), Mohammad Razzaghnia (Gol Gohar), Aria Yousefi (Sepahan)

#### Strikers:

Mehdi Taremi (Inter Milan), Shahriar Moghanlou (Al Ittihad Kalba), Mohammad-javad Hosseinejad (Dinamo Makhachkala), Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (Tractor), Ali Ali-pour (Persepolis)



## Tehran hosting 13th ECO transport ministers meeting



TEHRAN - The 13th meeting of transport officials from member states of the Economic Coop-

eration Organization (ECO) kicked off on Sunday in Tehran, chaired by the Minister of Transport and Urban Development.

This two-day summit, attended by transport ministers from ECO member countries, aims to strengthen regional cooperation in transport and transit sectors, IRIB reported.

Seyed Mohsen Tarafo', Head of the International Affairs Center at Iran's Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, told the state broadcaster that senior transport officials from ECO countries are gathering on the first day to finalize documents and proposals, which will be reviewed and adopted during the ministerial session on Monday.

## Seyed Ali Madanizadeh proposed as new economy minister

From Page 1 ► In the same session, the competence and vote of confidence in the relevant minister will be held, he added.

Madanizadeh, born in 1982 in Iran, is one of the most prominent figures in economics in recent years.

He holds a master's degree in electrical engineering from Sharif University of Technology, a master's degree in computational mathematics from Stanford University, and a doctorate in economics from the University of Chicago.

Madanizadeh is the president of Sharif University of Technology. His areas of expertise include macroeconomics, monetary and fiscal policies, international trade, and industrial structures, topics that play a central role in both his teaching and

research.

His executive background is also extensive and diverse. Among the most important of them are:

- Head of the Modeling Group at the Monetary and Banking Research Institute of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI)
- Economic advisor at Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO)
- Member of the Executive Board of the Information Technology Organization of Iran
- Member of the CBI Liquidity Committee
- Member of the Monetary and Credit Council Commission
- Director of the major projects for reforming the budget structure and the CBI law

## Amirabad port complex: Iran's northern gateway to Eurasia

TEHRAN- Amirabad Port Complex, also referred to locally as Imam Khomeini Port, is a principal maritime gateway in northern Iran.

Strategically located on the southern coast of the Caspian Sea in Mazandaran province, Behshahr county, the port is situated just 330 kilometers from Tehran and 55 kilometers from Sari, the provincial capital.

This advantageous position provides the port with direct access to major urban centers and facilitates its role as a vital conduit for trade between Iran and its northern neighbors, including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eastern Europe, Iran's Port and Maritime Organization (PMO) published on its website.

### Strategic Transit Position

Amirabad Port is a principal node on the INSTC, facilitating cargo transit from Scandinavia, the Caucasus, and CIS countries to the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The port is also located on the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), enhancing its role as an international logistics center.

### Access and Connectivity

Amirabad is directly connected to the national railway network, with five rail lines serving both eastern and western berths. The port is close to Sari International Airport, supporting rapid movement of goods and personnel. The port also provides roll-on/roll-off services for trucks, facilitating efficient vehicle and cargo transfers.

### Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Benefits

As a designated SEZ, Amirabad offers tax breaks, streamlined customs, and other legal advantages for investors and operators. The port encourages investment in industries related to steel, wood, paper, minerals, fuel products, stor-



age facilities, grain silos, and manufacturing/service units.

### Advanced Infrastructure

The port is equipped with advanced machinery for loading and unloading containers, general, and bulk cargo. Berths are fitted with discharge showers for cooking oil, diesel, heavy fuel oil, and gasoline. A container freight station with a 30,000 m² area supports efficient container handling and logistics.

### Role in Regional and International Trade

Amirabad Port Complex is a key element of Iran's northern trade infrastructure, providing Access to a vast consumer market of around 300 million people in the CIS and Eastern Europe. As well as Efficient links to Europe, the Caucasus, and Asia, supporting Iran's integration into global supply chains.

Amirabad Port Complex stands as Iran's most advanced and strategically located northern port. With its multimodal connectivity, robust infrastructure, and integration into international transit corridors, it is a linchpin for trade between Iran, the CIS, and beyond. Its ongoing expansion and investor-friendly environment ensure that it will continue to play a pivotal role in the country's economic development and regional connectivity.

## Power generation capacity nears 95,000 MW in Iran

TEHRAN - Iran's nominal electricity generation capacity reached 94,649 megawatts by the end of the first months of the current Iranian calendar year (late April 2025), nearing the 95,000-megawatt threshold, according to official figures.

A total of 16 megawatts of new capacity from renewable power plants was added during the first month of the current Iranian year, contributing to the overall growth in ca-

capacity.

Gas-fired power plants account for 24,988 megawatts, or 26.4 percent of the nominal capacity. Steam power units contribute 15,789 megawatts, or 16.7 percent, while combined-cycle power plants hold the largest share at 35,970 megawatts, representing 38 percent of the country's nominal power generation capacity.

# Iranian, Japanese private sector officials discuss boosting economic ties

TEHRAN - Makhmoud Najafi-Arab, Head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) met with Maekawa Nobutaka, Executive Vice President of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), to explore avenues for strengthening trade and economic relations between Iran and Japan, with a focus on the private sector.

The TCCIMA head also emphasized the importance of leveraging Japanese companies' expertise and technical and managerial know-how.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed potential areas of collaboration and discussed the broader outlook for joint efforts to enhance bilateral economic relations.

According to a statement by the TCCIMA, Najafi-Arab acknowledged the longstanding history of positive economic and investment cooperation between Iran and Japan. However, he noted that international sanctions have led Japanese companies to act more cautiously in their trade engagements with Iran, which in turn has slowed economic ties in recent years.

He stressed that the current situation is temporary and suggested that Japanese firms could begin positioning themselves to expand their role in Iran's economy. He proposed continuous engagement between the Tehran Chamber and JETRO's Tehran office to identify shared economic opportunities.

Najafi-Arab announced the Tehran Chamber's readiness to sign a cooperation agreement with JETRO and underlined prom-



ising sectors for bilateral engagement, including pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, automotive manufacturing, education, and startups. He also proposed establishing formal ties between the Tehran Chamber and the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce.

Also, in another meeting between Maekawa Nobutaka, and the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) on May 26, both sides reaffirmed their interest in enhancing bilateral trade relations.

In the meeting, TPO, Head Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi congratulated Maekawa Nobutaka 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.

Dehnavi, who also serves as deputy minister of Industry, Mining and Trade, added that Iran seeks to draw on Japan's experience in product promotion and supportive trade mechanisms.

Highlighting the Iranian market's appreciation for Japanese

quality, Dehnavi said Iran would welcome JETRO technical experts to help facilitate knowledge exchange.

Nobutaka, the JETRO special envoy, acknowledged the longstanding friendship between the two nations but expressed concern over the impact of sanctions on trade relations.

"We are truly disheartened by the current state of our economic ties and are seeking to revise our approach in Iran to achieve more promising outcomes," he said.

He reaffirmed Japan's continued interest in investing in Iran, saying the country's motivation to pursue investment opportunities remains unchanged.

Nobutaka also stressed the commitment of both the Japanese government and private sector to engage with Iran, noting that JETRO's presence in the country would be maintained to support Japanese companies interested in doing business there.

Also present at the meeting, Amir Roshanbakhsh, the deputy for international business development at the TPO, said Iranians have already benefited from Japan's industrial expertise.

"We've built significant capacity in technical and engineering services. Training and technology transfer fall outside the scope of sanctions, which has allowed us to preserve and consolidate this potential within the country," he added.

Meanwhile, during a meeting with senior Iranian officials on May 29, Japanese ambassador to Iran said his country is interested in enhancing bilateral cooperation with Iran, particularly in maritime-based economic 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.

## PTA, one of main documents signed by Iran, Oman recently

TEHRAN- Abdolamir Rabihavi, the director general for West Asia at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), referred to the details of trade documents and agreements recently signed between Iran and Oman, and mentioned preferential trade agreement (PTA) as one of the most important documents in this due.

Referring to the achievements of President Pezeshkian's visit to Oman, he said: "Oman is one of the countries that are politically and economically aligned with Iran, and it seems that this trip was carried out in line with the development of economic cooperation; 18 documents were signed by both sides during this visit, four of which belonged to the Ministry of Industry, mining and Trade; the documents that were under the purview of this ministry include cooperation in the field of geology and mineral exploration, development of exhibition cooperation and industrial parks, and finally a preferential trade agreement."

Iran and Oman signed 18 memoranda of understanding in various fields during the official two-day visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Muscat.

The agreements, signed on the sidelines of the Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee meeting on May 27, aim to deepen ties in multiple sectors, including legal, economic, political, cultural, educational, health, defense, media, technology, energy, and mining.

In a symbolic gesture highlighting cultural and historical bonds, officials from both nations also unveiled a commemorative joint postage stamp.

President Pezeshkian arrived in Muscat on May 27 at the official invitation of Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Following a formal welcoming ceremony at Muscat International Airport, Pezeshkian held a meeting with Oman's Sultan. The visit continued

with a joint session between high-ranking delegations from both countries.

During the meeting, Pezeshkian said that Iran is ready to boost cooperation with Oman in all fields, adding that the two countries possess capabilities that can be employed for the well-being and progress of the two nations as well as that of other regional nations.

"We are ready to do whatever is within our capability for the dignity and greatness of Muslims. Each of us has capacities that can be employed for the well-being and progress of one another and of other nations in the region," Pezeshkian said.

Sultan Haitham also welcomed closer ties, saying that he agrees that if the avenues for business activities are opened, the two countries "will witness a significant leap in the bilateral relations."

"The relations between Iranian and Omani ports must be developed, and the rail capacity from northern to southern Iran is of great commercial importance to us," he said, adding that more support is needed for cooperation in the energy sector.

During an Iran-Oman Business Forum in Muscat on May 28, President Pezeshkian said that the value of trade between Iran and Oman can reach \$20 billion-\$30 billion.

Emphasizing the position of Iran and Oman in connecting regional markets, the president said: "We can jointly establish strategic ties with important markets in the region and the world by using our geopolitical capacity."

Referring to his talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq the previous day and the agreements reached in these talks, the president stated: "What is most important today is to create infrastructure to strengthen the connection of land, sea and air routes between the two countries, because only in such a context can commercial,

scientific, industrial and economic cooperation be deepened."

Iran and Oman discussed ways to boost banking ties during a meeting between the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion.

According to Oman's state news agency, Qais bin Mohammed al-Yousef held talks on May 27 with Mohammadreza Farzin in Muscat. The meeting took place as part of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's official visit to Oman aimed at strengthening bilateral economic and financial relations.

The two sides reviewed measures to enhance cooperation in trade and investment, ease financial transactions, and streamline trade procedures between the two countries. Discussions also focused on initiatives to support joint economic projects, stimulate bilateral trade, and facilitate private sector exchanges.

Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to continued coordination and cooperation in areas of mutual interest, with a shared goal of strengthening bilateral relations and promoting sustainable economic growth.

The official visit to Oman marks a significant step in the Iranian government's ongoing efforts to strengthen regional ties and deepen bilateral relations with Muscat.

Meanwhile, Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Samad Hassanzadeh, who traveled to Muscat at the head of a trade delegation, attended a conference to review trade opportunities between Iran and Oman and presented seven proposals to deepen Iran-Oman relations in the economic field. He believes that moving towards defining joint investment projects is a suitable solution in this direction.

## Iran's annual GDP growth reaches 3%, led by industry, mining: SCI

TEHRAN - Iran's economy grew by three percent in the last Iranian year ending March 2025, driven primarily by gains in the industry and mining sector, according to figures published by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI).

The industry and mining sector recorded a 3.4 percent increase, with

oil and gas extraction expanding by 6.2 percent. The GDP at constant 2021 prices reached 10.026 quadrillion rials, or around \$200.5 billion using an exchange rate of 500,000 rials per dollar, up from 9.73 quadrillion rials, or \$194.6 billion, a year earlier.

Excluding oil, the GDP reached 7.614 quadrillion rials, or \$152.3

billion, marking a 2.1 percent rise compared to 7.458 quadrillion rials, or \$149.2 billion, the previous year. Growth in the agriculture sector was reported at 3.2 percent. Other components of the industry and mining group included a 0.5 percent rise in other mining activities, 1.6 percent growth in manufacturing, 0.5 per-

cent in gas distribution, 2.4 percent in water and electricity supply, and 0.5 percent in construction. The services sector expanded by 2.5 percent year-on-year.

The data points to a moderate economic recovery, with oil exports providing the strongest boost, while gains in non-oil sectors were more subdued.



# Massacre at Gaza starvation camp

From page 1 ▶ It asserted that this represents a “systematic and malicious use of aid as a weapon of war, used to blackmail starving civilians and force them into exposed killing zones.”

The media office further stressed that these areas are “managed and monitored by the occupation army, and politically and financially backed by both the Israeli occupation and the U.S. administration, which bears full moral and legal responsibility for these crimes.”

It also cited eyewitness accounts, field data, and international inquiries to argue that the “aid through buffer zones” initiative is a “failed and dangerous scheme.”

According to the statement, this initiative “serves only to support the occupation’s military and security strategies, disguising them as humanitarian efforts while official crossings remain shut and genuine aid from neutral international bod-



*Palestinians push a cart with bodies after people were hit by Israeli fire near a food distribution centre in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on June 1, 2025 [AFP]*

ies is blocked.”

The so-called U.S.-supported Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) in Rafah has faced strong criticism from the United Nations and various international organizations, which have labeled it a “failed” operation.

Aid groups have accused the foundation of using food as a weapon in Gaza.

The mechanism, they argue, lacks both the capacity and experience to provide effective humanitarian assistance, prompting growing demands for the UN and other

credible organizations to resume aid distributions following months of total Israeli blockade on the Strip.

This prolonged siege has plunged the entire population into famine, and the urgent need for limited supplies has led to several deadly incidents over the past week.

This latest attack is the deadliest so far.

To reach these so-called aid hubs, Palestinians must pass through multiple Israeli military checkpoints.

Many, including the elderly and those suffering health problems from the Israeli blockade, are unable to make the journey on foot.

In light of this massacre, the U.S.-backed Gaza aid initiative is increasingly seen as an Israeli public relations move, which fails to provide any genuine relief to the Gazans while further exacerbating their suffering.

Mahmoud Khalil highlight the erosion of constitutional protections under Project Esther’s framework. Civil liberties advocates warn that these measures echo historical political repression, undermining the First Amendment and due process rights. The administration’s aggressive use of immigration law to silence dissent sets a dangerous precedent for all political activism.

Pro-Palestinian activism has become more resilient in the face of repression, with a variety of coalitions organizing demonstrations, sit-ins, and legal challenges. In support of free speech and human rights, progressive Jewish organizations have teamed up with Palestinian activists, highlighting the interwoven fight against authoritarianism.

Project Esther is not just a set of policies; it is a model for authoritarian rule that stifles pro-Palestine activism and wider dissent by using the war on antisemitism as a pretext. Under the pretext of national security, its incorporation into Trump’s second-term agenda demonstrates a conscious attempt to increase executive authority, restrict civil liberties, and silence dissenting opinions.

The ramifications reach further than the Palestine solidarity movement and pose a threat to the foundations of American democracy. Countering Project Esther requires a united resistance, collective solidarity, legal defenses and educating the public to protect free speech, academic freedom, and the right to political advocacy. Given that the Trump administration is currently implementing the recommendations of Project Esther, the stakes for democracy and human rights in the United States have never been more urgent.

## Project Esther: Trump’s blueprint to crush Palestine advocacy

From page 1 ▶ The administration has enthusiastically embraced and operationalized this narrative since Trump’s return to the White House in January 2025, and it signals a purposeful conflation of Palestinian rights activism with terrorism.

### Weaponizing antisemitism to suppress dissent

Project Esther’s rhetoric characterizes the pro-Palestine movement as a security threat dressed up as activism. Activists and organizations are labelled as part of a “ Hamas Support Network,” and the plan justifies the use of laws and immigration policies designed to silence critics of Israel under the guise of anti-terrorism measures. This conflation uncomfortably undermines the distinction between legitimate political speech and terrorism, which facilitates the revocation of visas, deportation processes, and criminal investigations against people exercising First Amendment protections.

While antisemitism is a real concern that deserves attention, Project Esther weaponizes this issue to suppress dissenting voices. Its approach disproportionately targets Muslim, Arab, and left-leaning Jewish groups, reinforcing Islamophobic and anti-Arab biases. The project’s evangelical Christian authors, with minimal input from Jewish communities, further politicize antisemitism to advance a pro-Israel, nationalist agenda that undermines nuanced debate.

### Legal and financial harassment as tools of repression

Project Esther focuses on a strategy called “lawfare”, which means using legal tactics to pressure, financially hurt, and break down groups supporting Palestine. Since early 2025, the Trump administration has canceled the

visas of foreign students advocating for Palestine, arrested activists like Columbia grad Mahmoud Khalil, and pushed universities to get rid of any faculty or courses that support Palestinian views.

Institutions accused of harboring “antisemitism,” a charge frequently thrown at pro-Palestinian demonstrations and academic initiatives, have had their federal funding withheld. Additionally, in order to undermine due process protections, the administration is advocating for increased executive authority to deport immigrants with fewer judicial checks. By severing its institutional and financial support, these strategies seek to weaken and isolate the Palestine solidarity movement.

### Project Esther within Trump’s authoritarian agenda

Project Esther is a subset of the broader Project 2025 agenda, which seeks to consolidate executive power, suppress progressive movements, and impose an ultraconservative social order. The crackdown on pro-Palestine activism exemplifies this authoritarian shift, where national security rhetoric is exploited to justify sweeping restrictions on civil liberties, free speech, and academic freedom.

Universities have become key battlegrounds with pressure to limit campus protests. Social media censorship efforts target content critical of Israel, while public officials label pro-Palestine members of Congress as terrorists. This campaign deepens political polarization and fractures communities, including within the Jewish population, where debates over Israel and free speech intensify.

### Erosion of democratic principles and free speech

The arrest and deportation of activists like

## Ortagus’s successor, another ugly face of Washington



From page 1 ▶ however, Aoun’s political advisors warned about the negative repercussions of such a move, especially since WINEP is considered the most important pro-Israel think tank, directed by David Schenker, the Taube Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Linda and Tony Rubin Program on Arab Politics who served as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

Meanwhile, Wafiq Safa, head of Hezbollah’s Liaison and Coordination Unit, met with Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon, and discussed developments along the Blue Line, the repeated Zionist attacks on Lebanon, the risks of potential escalation, and the need to adhere to and comply with UN Resolution 1701.

### Hezbollah is the heavy rock on Washington’s chest

Anyone observing developments in West Asia is well aware that the defeat suffered by the ongoing U.S.-

led Israeli aggression has pushed Tel Aviv and Washington to resort to different tactics.

In a session assessing the situation in northern occupied Palestine, Eyal Zamir, the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Offensive Forces, acknowledged that “the battle against Hezbollah is not over yet, and we will continue to pursue and weaken it until it collapses.”

Nevertheless, this is an unattainable goal. Hezbollah’s righteous resistance is a vivid expression of the concerns of its popular base in the South, the Southern Suburbs, the Bekaa, and other Lebanese regions.

This popular base believes in a religious-political doctrine that complicates Washington’s mission. It is, in any case, an integral part of Velayat-e Faqih doctrine initiated by Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, more than four decades ago.

Eliminating Hezbollah means disappointing those people who, despite threats of bombing and harsh weather conditions, widely take part in the historical funeral procession of martyrs Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine, and massively participated in the municipal elections in favor of the Resistance.

Hezbollah is a flexible and decentralized organization intertwined with an exemplary society, which, despite massive and unexpected

blows, reappears day after day and cannot be silenced.

### Handing Syria to al-Julani to ensure Israel’s security

Eyal Zamir’s impossible goal is merely to reassure the northern colonial settlers. Yet, it is also consistent with the historic strategic shift witnessed in West Asia after the U.S.-sponsored fall of Syria.

Since December 2024, the HTS regime has not hidden its intention to adopt Washington’s strategic imperial priorities, foremost among which is protecting the security of the Israeli regime.

In an interview with Jewish Journal, Syria’s self-appointed president Abu Muhammad al-Julani (currently known as Ahmed al-Sharaa) stated that “the era of mutual bombardment between Syria and Israel must end.”

“Syria and Israel have common enemies, and we can play a major role in regional security,” he said, expressing his desire to return to the disengagement agreement, signed in 1974, “as a basic guarantee of mutual restraint between Syria and Israel and the protection of civilians.”

It’s worth noting that the Jewish Journal is considered one of the most prominent Jewish media outlets in the United States, covering the affairs of the Jewish community in Los Angeles.

Since the fall of Syria, al-Julani has

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## Gaza doctor who lost nine children in Israeli airstrike dies from wounds



A Palestinian father who had lost nine of his 10 children in an Israeli airstrike has died from wounds sustained in the same attack, local health officials have said.

Hamdi al-Najjar, 40, a doctor at Nasser hospital, was critically injured when Israeli forces bombed the family house in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis on 23 May, killing nine of his children. He had just returned home after accompanying his wife Alaa, a paediatrician at the Nasser medical complex, to work when the building was struck. He had initially survived alongside his son Adam, 11, who is still in hospital.

Even by the terrible standards of the Gaza conflict, their deaths had shocked the international community.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](https://tehrantimes.com))

## Saudi FM says Israel blocking Ramallah meeting proof of ‘extremism’

The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, says the Israeli government’s refusal to allow a delegation of Arab ministers to the occupied West Bank showed its “extremism and rejection of peace”, Al Jazeera reported.

His statements came during a joint news conference with counterparts from Jordan, Egypt and Bahrain in Amman.

On Saturday, Israel said it would not allow a planned meeting on Sunday in the Palestinian administrative capital of Ramallah to go ahead.

## Iraq, Lebanon leaders call for urgent intervention to ‘save the people of Gaza’

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani and visiting Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on Sunday called for an immediate in-

tervention to “save the people of Gaza” and denounced the continued Israeli assault on the enclave amid “suspicious international silence”.

Al-Sudani also expressed Iraq’s full support for political consensus within Lebanon and condemned the “ongoing aggression by the Zionist [Israeli] entity on Lebanese territory”.

He also reaffirmed Iraq’s support for Syria and the preservation of its territorial unity, Al Jazeera reported.

## Israeli soldiers open fire when crowds grow at aid points: Charity chief

Bassam Zaqout, director of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society, has described the chaotic scenes at aid distribution points following the deadly Israeli attack in Rafah.

“People walk for miles from early morning, trying to reach the limited aid points, now just four across Gaza ... and all surrounded by Israeli soldiers. When they sense the crowds grow and are not controllable, soldiers open fire on those waiting for supplies,” Zaqout told Al Jazeera from Gaza City.

Zaqout added that the healthcare system in Gaza was overwhelmed.

“The hospitals are operating with extremely limited resources. Medical staff are forced to focus only on life-saving procedures for the wounded... those patients with non-critical or mild injuries receive basic treatment so they can recover,” he said.

“But those with severe injuries who require more advanced treatments ... doctors work with them to put them in a stabilisation situation ... and some of them will go on a waiting list with other thousands of wounded people to reach the health assistance outside Gaza Strip.”

## Israel committed ‘full-fledged war crime’ by killing aid seekers: PFLP

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) has condemned “the new massacre of the starving people in Rafah”, in which at least 30 people were killed when Israeli forces opened fire on Palestinians approaching a U.S.-backed aid point, saying it was “a genocide with international complicity and American participation”.

“What happened constitutes a full-fledged war crime,” said the leftist group, which warned Palestinians several days ago that the aid distribution points set up by Israel and the U.S. were “death traps”.

“We demand urgent international and Arab intervention to stop this ongoing massacre and impose strict accountability mechanisms on the criminal occupation, in addition to immediately breaking the siege,” the PFLP said.

## photo of the day



Palestinian rescuers evacuate injured people in an ambulance at the Bureij refugee camp after an Israeli drone reportedly opened fire on civilian gatherings near an aid distribution point not far from the so-called Netzarim Corridor, in the central Gaza Strip, on June 1, 2025 [Eyad Baba/AFP]



## Isfahan City Council supports suspension of Barcelona's cooperation with Tel Aviv



TEHRAN--The spokesperson for the Islamic City Council of Isfahan said: The Isfahan City Council supports the suspension of Barcelona's cooperation with Tel Aviv.

According to the Isfahan Municipality's Media Communications Department, on June 1, in response to the severance of ties between Barcelona, Isfahan's sister city, and Tel Aviv, Ali Salehi

wrote on his social media page: "The Isfahan City Council supports the courageous and humane action of the Barcelona City Council (Isfahan's sister city) in suspending cooperation with Tel Aviv."

This important step, and making it conditional on respecting the rights of the Palestinian people and human principles, is a symbol of commitment to human rights and justice, he said.

"I hope that global solidarity with the Palestinian people against the crime of genocide will be strengthened," he added.

It should be noted that Barcelona is the second city in the northeast of Spain to become a sister city of Isfahan according to an agreement signed on January 14, 1999.

Isfahan has now 10 sister cities including Florence in Italy, St. Petersburg in Russia, Xi'an in China, Lasi in Romania, Yerevan in Armenia, Havana in Cuba, Freiburg in Germany, Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, Barcelona in Spain and the city of Kuwait.

## Iran desert gold tourism flourishes after UNESCO recognition



TEHRAN--With the global registration of Yazd's traditional goldsmithing art by UNESCO, this desert city is emerging as a unique destination for tourism, where gold, heritage, and desert landscapes offer visitors a unique experience.

The shimmering beauty of gold in Yazd is not just in the precious metal itself, but in the skillful hands that shape it into fine art, Mehr news agency wrote. With deep historical roots, Yazd's goldsmithing has now earned international recognition, as UNESCO has inscribed the traditional goldsmithing of Yazd on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Yazd's gold is more than an industry; it reflects a deeply rooted cultural identity, passed down from generation to generation in the city's famed gold bazaar. This recognition adds a new chapter to Iran's cultural pride and positions Yazd as a rising star in art tourism.

Gold jewelry and ornaments have long been crafted in various Iranian cities, but Yazd gold stands out for its unique design, brightness, alloy quality, and intricate workmanship.

Archaeologists have traced the city's gold making back to Parthian times, identifying Yazd as one of the oldest centers of gold art in Iran.

Over the past 2,000 years, Yazdi artisans have crafted gold for kings and nobles, cementing the city's reputation in the national and regional jewelry trade.

### Unique features

**High purity:** Most Yazd gold items are made with 20-karat purity, regarded as among the highest in the Iranian market.

**Physical qualities:** These items are known for their softness, flexibility, resistance to corrosion and discoloration, and elegant shine.

**Cultural value:** Every piece tells a story. Beyond mere adornment, Yazd gold reflects centuries of tradition and identity, now globally recognized as cultural heritage. While gold in most parts of Iran is made with 18-karat purity, regions like Yazd, and parts of the south, prefer higher-karat gold (20-22), influenced by local tastes.

In Yazd, shiny, artistically designed gold is highly popular, often crafted with traditional, handmade patterns by master goldsmiths.

This artistry has earned national cultural heritage status in Iran, and now, with UNESCO recognition, Yazd is poised to become a global symbol of artisanal elegance in the heart of the desert.

## Eskelim waterfall, a gem in the heart of Savadkuh forests



TEHRAN--Eskelim waterfall, which is also known as Galesh Kola waterfall, is located in the heart of the dense forests of Savadkuh in Mazandaran province. This waterfall, with a height of about 30 meters and a width of 10 meters, is made of limestone and has healing properties due to the mineral salts in the water. The path to reach the Eskelim waterfall passes through thick and green forests and presents beautiful natural scenery. Passing

this route will be a pleasant and memorable experience for every tourist.

### Tourist attractions

**Water pools:** Under the waterfall, there are natural water pools that are suitable for swimming and bathing.

**Eskelim cave:** Near the waterfall, there is a cave called Eskelim cave, which will be attractive for those interested in cave climbing.

**Lefur forest:** Lefur forest, which is known as the land of waterfalls, is located near Eskelim waterfall and has numerous spectacular waterfalls. Extended over 200,000 hectares, the forest has incredible biodiversity, hosting 84 rare plant species and animal species such as the deer and the ibex, and these divine blessings add to the pleasure of traveling deep into the Hyrcanian forests.

The best time to travel to Skelim waterfall is spring and summer. In these seasons, the weather of Savadkuh is cool and pleasant, and the nature of the region is in its most beautiful state.

To access the Eskelim waterfall, you need to go from Haraz Road to Shirgah city. After passing through the Shirgah, go towards Lefur village and reach the waterfall through the dirt road.

# Lalejin pottery donated to South Korean ambassador

TEHRAN—Managing Director of Ali Sadr Travel Company Mehran Hajian donated a symbolic gift to South Korean Ambassador in Iran Kim Junpyo following his visit from Ali Sadr Cave in Hamedan province. With donation of exquisite pottery made by Lalejin artisans to South Korean ambassador, Hajian said, "This precious gift is the result of the taste and skill of Lalejini pottery artisans. It is a symbol of ancient heritage, cultural identity and handicrafts of Hamedan people," Miras Arya (CHTN) reported.

He said that the gift is in line with promoting cultural collaborations and introducing tourism and artistic potentials of Hamedan province, adding that Lalejin is known as global pottery city in international level.

Hajian explained that the city is one of the main pottery production hubs in Iran and world. The works of its artists showcase a combination of tradition, authenticity, and artistic taste of the people of this region, he said.

South Korean ambassador said Ali Sadr was a unique cave. He expressed satisfaction over the quality of services offered to the



tourists.

Appreciating the precious gift, he emphasized on importance of promoting mutual ties in tourism sector and cultural exchange between Iran and South Korea.

He expressed the hope that with promotion of cultural ties and introduction of capacities of provinces such as Hamedan, the grounds are prepared for visit of more South Korean tourists to Iran.

This meeting and symbolic donation of Lalejin pottery can be considered an important step in line of cultural diplomacy and

promoting cultural and people-to-people ties between two nations.

Lalejin, a small town in west-central Iran, has magnificently carved a niche for itself as a world-renowned hub for pottery and potters, making it a must-visit destination for any lover of art and culture.

It draws vacationers from all corners of the globe who seek to witness the magic of pottery firsthand. Its crafters have grasped the ancestral art of crafting beautiful and diverse pottery items, ranging from del-

icate decorative pieces to functional kitchenware.

Visitors to Lalejin may be immediately engulfed in a vibrant atmosphere of creativity and craftsmanship where every street, square, and even narrow alleyways are lined with workshops and galleries, each showcasing arrays of exquisite pieces of clay pottery.

Lalejin is registered by the World Crafts Council as a world-scale earthen hub. Visiting the town, you see craftspeople who skillfully mold clay into elegant shapes, carefully paint intricate designs, and fire the pieces in kilns, resulting in stunning creations that reflect the rich cultural heritage of the region.

Some say, from shaping the clay on the potter's wheel to applying the glaze, every step in the creation of a ceramic piece is a testament to the passion and dedication of these artisans.

In addition to admiring the craftsmanship, you may also try your hand at pottery making. Under the supervision of experienced potters, you can unleash your creativity and leave with a personal memento from Lalejin.

## Lahijan Lake, shining gem in northern Iran

TEHRAN – Known for its natural beauty and tranquil surroundings, Lahijan Lake, is a gem in the heart of Iran's northern region, famed for its tea plantations and lush greenery.

Lahijan Lake, nestled in the verdant landscapes of Lahijan, a city in the Gilan province of Iran, stands as a serene and picturesque destination.

Known for its natural beauty and tranquil surroundings, the lake is a gem in the heart of Iran's northern region, famed for its tea plantations and lush greenery, Mehr news agency reported.

This man-made lake, created as a reservoir for agricultural purposes, has evolved into a popular spot for both locals and tourists seeking relaxation and a connection with nature.

The mirror-like waters of the lake, set against the backdrop of the Alborz mountain range, create a mesmerizing and peaceful atmosphere.

The significance of Lahijan Lake extends beyond its scenic beauty. It is a testament to the harmonious blend of nature and human ingenuity, showcasing how such projects can enhance the appeal of a region.

The lake area is well-maintained and equipped with walking paths, making it an ideal spot for leisurely strolls, picnics, and family outings.

The serene environment of the lake is perfect for those looking to escape the hustle and bustle of city life and immerse themselves in the tranquility of nature.

Moreover, Lahijan Lake serves



as a cultural and recreational center in Lahijan. The area around the lake is dotted with traditional tea houses and cafes where visitors can sample local delicacies and the famous Lahijan tea.

The lake becomes particularly enchanting in the evenings when

the surrounding area is lit up, offering a charming ambiance.

Whether you're seeking a peaceful retreat, a romantic getaway, or a family excursion, Lahijan Lake is a must-see destination that captivates with its natural beauty and relaxing environment.

## World tourism soars: International tourist arrivals up 5% in 2025



World tourism is on the rise in 2025, with international tourist arrivals being up 5 percent in the first three months of the year compared to the same time period in 2024, as per a recent United Nations (UN) Tourism report.

Arrivals of international tourists rose 5 percent in the first quarter of 2025, UN Tourism's World Tourism Barometer data for May 2025 showed, boosting world tourism, unwto.org reported.

In terms of international tourist arrivals, between January and March of this year, over 300 million international tourists took trips across the world. This means 14 million more tourists took international trips this year, between January and March, compared to last year. These numbers also show around a 3 percent growth from the pre-pandemic international tourist levels in 2019, as per the UN report.

"In every global region, tourism

stands out as a major services sector, supporting millions of jobs and businesses of all sizes. The continued good performance in international arrivals combined with stronger visitor spending in many destinations highlights the resilience of the sector in the face of numerous challenges and is good news for economies and workers everywhere."

While the popular tourist hotspot Europe welcomed 125 million tourists in the first quarter of 2025, Africa recorded a whopping 9 percent growth from Q1 2024, exceeding its pre-pandemic tourist levels by 16 percent, trending as another tourist hotspot.

Global tourist arrivals grew 2 percent in Southern Mediterranean Europe as demand for off-season travel to certain destinations rose. Tourism to the Balkans showed promising trends as Central and Eastern European tourism re-

bounded, rising 8 percent over 2024.

Tourists showed a preference for South America, with global tourist arrivals showing a 13 percent growth in the region compared to overall tourist growth in the Americas at 2 percent.

As tourist arrivals displayed a modest one percent growth in the Middle East, overall arrivals in the region rose a whopping 44 percent above pre-pandemic levels this first quarter of the year. Asia and the Pacific global tourist numbers were up 12 percent, managing to reach 92 percent of their pre-pandemic levels. Global tourists preferred North-East Asia, as the sub-regions showed maximum growth among world sub-regions at 23 percent in Q1 2025.

Travel is on the rebound as a recent report from the IATA also showed global passenger growth at 8 percent between January and March 2025.

The report also tracked tourists' spending trends over the time period. It tracked top travel destinations 2025 with respect to tourism earnings, with Spain reporting a 9 percent growth in tourism earnings. In terms of top travel destinations for 2025 pertaining to tourist spending, the United States, which is the highest earner from world tourism, reported a modest 3 percent growth in its tourism earnings.

Tourists also spent more in Tur-

key (up 7 percent) and Greece, Italy and Portugal where tourist spending was up 4 percent across the board.

Tourists spent 6 percent more in France compared to the same time period last year, while spending in Norway and Denmark was up 20 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

Japan was a major earner in Asia and the Pacific, where tourist receipts were up 34 percent. Nepal displayed 18 percent growth in tourism earnings, while the Republic of Korea and Mongolia both saw a 14 percent rise in tourism earnings.

The report, citing its latest Panel of Tourism Experts survey, said that there was optimism for future travels despite geopolitical and economic headwinds. Major challenges affecting international tourism moving forward include a slower economic growth, growing travel costs and the impact of the recent Trump tariffs.

The report cautioned that travel confidence could dwindle due to uncertainty arising from "geopolitical and trade tensions"

Though tourists would continue to travel. But it is possible that people would prefer taking shorter trips closer to home to get value for their money. Travel demand is expected to remain resilient, and international tourist arrivals are expected to grow this year.



# Venezuela receives 2.4m doses of Iranian-made polio, hepatitis B vaccines

TEHRAN – Venezuela has received a total of 2.4 million doses of Iranian-made vaccines, including 1,905 million doses of polio vaccine and 502,000 doses of hepatitis B vaccine.

Venezuela's Deputy Health Minister, Jesús Miguel Osteicochea, received the shipment at Simón Bolívar International Airport in Maiquetía.

It is the second consignment of vaccines received from Iran as part of the two countries' joint health initiative.

"These vaccines are critical to avoid preventable diseases and strengthen the national immunization program," IRIB quoted Osteicochea as saying.

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that attacks the liver and can cause both acute and chronic disease. The best and most effective way to prevent hepatitis B is to get vaccinated.

The consignment includes the first shipment of oral polio vaccine delivered to Venezuela by Iran's Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute.

Polio is a highly infectious viral disease that largely affects children under 5 years of age.

The virus is transmitted by person-to-person spread mainly through the fecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (for example contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and cause paralysis.



It can be prevented through immunization. The development of effective vaccines to prevent paralytic polio was one of the major medical breakthroughs of the 20th century.

The Polio vaccine, given multiple times, almost always protects a child for life.

Ali Es'haqi, director general of Razi Institute, said on Saturday that there is a shortage of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) in the world, with countries such as Venezuela facing further restrictions due to international sanctions, Press TV reported.

He described the shipment as a step toward developing international cooperation and broadening the institute's export markets.

He emphasized that the institute maintained strict adherence to technical standards and international shipping protocols throughout the process.

The vaccine was transported un-

der carefully controlled conditions, with all procedures in place to preserve the cold chain at -20°C, ensuring efficacy during shipment, the official noted.

The official noted that the delivery of the vaccine was not only a response to the need of a friendly country in a critical health situation but also opened a new chapter in Razi Institute's exports to South America.

He described the export of this important product to Venezuela as "another step in the path of health diplomacy and the expansion of scientific and technological interactions with friendly countries."

It would also promote the position of the institute as one of the reputable vaccine production centers in the region and the world, he said.

The Iranian official further expressed hope that the move will pave the way for a more effective

presence of the institute's products across Latin America, Eurasia, Africa, and the neighboring countries.

On May 9, Pasteur Institute of Iran exported more than 700,000 doses of Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine to Venezuela.

The BCG vaccine has a documented protective effect against meningitis and disseminated tuberculosis in children.

Highlighting the significance of boosting science diplomacy, Ehsan Mostafavi, president of Pasteur Institute of Iran, said this is a successful example of health-based international interactions, which can be recognized as a model for the expansion of Iran's scientific and technological impacts in the global health sector, ILNA reported.

Pasteur Institute of Iran has been developing the BCG vaccine since 1947. It is one of the strategic products with international standards manufactured in the institute, the official noted.

By recognizing the international capacities and identifying the health needs of other countries, the institute is planning to develop a variety of vaccines to export, Mostafavi added.

The global vaccine market serves as a good opportunity to enhance Iran's role in the global health chain. Pasteur Institute of Iran intends to play a more active role in promoting public health in the country as well as in developing countries, in line with its historical mission.

## Iran chairs Asia-Pacific Telecommunity Ministerial Meeting



TEHRAN – The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Minister, Sattar Hashemi, has chaired a specialized session on Sustainable Digital Infrastructure and Accessibility at the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity Ministerial Meeting (APT-MM), held in Japan.

The event, held from May 30 to 31 in Tokyo, brought together some 38 ministers from member states; it served as a platform for sharing expertise among member states in the ICT sector, IRIB reported.

The ICT minister expounded on the infrastructure's status in the country, as well as the plans for the expansion of modern technologies such as the fifth generation of the internet (5G) and artificial intelligence (AI).

During the two-day event, Hashemi held meet-

ings with his counterparts from Japan, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, and other countries.

The APT Ministerial Meeting, convened every five years, provides a premier platform for ministers from the Asia-Pacific region to address emerging policy challenges and opportunities, discuss shared visions, and foster regional and international collaboration.

The meeting culminated in the unanimous adoption of the 'Tokyo Statement', which sets the direction for regional digital cooperation over the next five years.

Six Strategic Priorities of the Tokyo Statement include digital connectivity, digital innovation and entrepreneurship, trust and safety, digital inclusion and capacity building, sustainability, as well as partnership and collaboration.

### 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.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## ‘Climate change impact on Iran doubles world average’

The effects of climate change on Iran has more than doubled on average compared to other parts of the world, while southern provinces of the country are more likely to bear the consequences, secretary of environmental policy at the center for strategic studies affiliated to the presidential office has said.

"The Hoomand-Absard station in Damavand county in northeast of Tehran experienced a temperature increase of 2.7 °C over the past 50 years, while over the past 100 years, the temperature rise was about 0.76 °C," ISNA quoted Mohammad Darvish as saying on Tuesday.

Climate change impact is increasing in southern part of the country, among which Yazd province's condition has raised concern.

## تغییرات اقلیمی در ایران دو تا سه برابر جهان

محمد درویش، دبیر سیاست محیط‌زیست مرکز بررسی‌های استراتژیک نهاد ریاست جمهوری گفته، ایران با تأثیرات تغییر اقلیمی دو تا سه برابر بیشتر از تأثیرات ایجاد شده در کره زمین روبرو شده است.

محمد درویش، در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایسنا با اشاره به گزارش‌های منتشر شده توسط سازمان هواشناسی، وزارت نیرو و سازمان آب، اظهار کرد: ایستگاه هومند آسرد در دامنه‌های کوه دماوند طی نیم قرن اخیر افزایش دمایی حدود ۲.۷ درجه سلیوس را نشان می‌دهد و این مسئله در حالی رخ داده است که در ۱۰۰ سال گذشته، حدود ۰.۷۶ درجه سلسیوس افزایش دما داشته‌ایم.

وی اضافه کرد: هر چقدر به شهرهای جنوبی‌تر کشورمان نزدیک می‌شویم، تغییرات اقلیمی هم بیشتر می‌شود به طوری که از این میان یزد وضعیت نگران‌کننده‌ای دارد.

## Family Physician Program to kick off in mid-June



TEHRAN – The health ministry is planning to start the Family Physician Program in cities and villages with a population of less than 20,000 individuals on June 22, the first day of spring.

The program will gradually target other parts of the country as well, ISNA quoted Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi as saying.

In April, Zafarqandi said the Family Physician Program will kick off in the current Iranian year that started on March 21.

"It is a large-scale program based on social behavior change. Designing new patient pathways, reforming the referral pattern, and improving the healthcare network system requires careful coordination between the

Health Ministry, governors, and other relevant institutions at the provincial level," IRIB quoted Zafarqandi as saying.

## TORANJ program to promote adolescent, youth well-being

TEHRAN – Launched by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Sport and Youth, TORANJ Adolescent and Youth Empowerment Program aims to support adolescent and young people, focusing on skills development, education, and life readiness.

As part of ongoing efforts to support adolescent and youth development in Iran, the initiative aims to empower 15-24 years old adolescents and youth, harness the potential of Iran's young population, UNICEF announced in a press release on Sunday.

Addressing the challenges faced in the areas of employment, skills development, and education is among the main goals of the program.

The program was introduced at a high-level event attended by key representatives from the government, civil society, and partner organizations.

The TORANJ program, grounded in evidence-based practices and international expertise, currently operates in Kermanshah, Isfahan, Shahrood, Qom, and Qeshm.

The launch ceremony featured powerful testimonials from young participants whose lives have been positively transformed through the TORANJ programme. They shared experiences of increased confidence, self-esteem, skill development, empowerment, stronger engagement in education, and clearer pathways to future employment. Their stories vividly reflected the programme's vision of supporting every young person to reach their full potential.

Alireza Rahimi, Deputy of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Sport and Youth, stated, "The main goal of TORANJ initiative is to create sustainable employment for young people whose voices are less heard and who are in greatest need of support. Gender equality, equal access to education, and leveraging local capacities through the collaboration of various institutions are central pillars of this program."

"Iran is home to a vibrant and youthful population, with over 11 million adolescents and nearly half of the population under the age of 30," said Monika Nielsen, UNICEF Representative a.i. in Iran. "This demographic represents extraordinary potential for innovation, growth, and transformation. But potential alone is not enough. It must be actively nurtured through inclusive policies, responsive services, and meaningful opportunities that empower young people to shape their future – and the future of their country. This is precisely what the TORANJ program seeks to achieve."

The event concluded with a call to action urging all sectors to collaborate in expanding TORANJ's reach. This cross-sectoral commitment is essential to ensure the programme's sustainability and to create real, long-term opportunities for Iran's next generation.

The TORANJ initiative reflects UNICEF Iran's

So, it is absolutely essential to develop a national headquarters headed by the President to oversee the overall management of the program, he added.

"We have already reached agreements on ten key issues such as financial resources, location, implementation stages, and public information. Moreover, the chancellors of medical sciences universities will hold a meeting this week to finalize the implementation model for the program," Zafarqandi noted.

The rural family physician program started in 2005. Back then, it also targeted villages and cities inhabited by fewer than twenty thousand individuals to make treatment referrals more concentrated and provide more convenient access to health services, ISNA reported.

Periodic examinations and monitoring of people's health status, easy and round-the-clock access to basic services and primary care, and frequent visits to doctors are the characteristics of a family physician.

Medical, dental, mental, midwifery, nutrition, laboratory, pharmaceutical, and medical imaging are among the offered services by the program.

Based on the Family Physician Program, a physician and a midwife offer services in rural areas, every 3,300 villagers have a physician, and there is a midwife per 5,200 people in villages.

broader commitment to adolescent and youth well-being, ensuring that young people across the country are equipped with the tools they need to thrive in an evolving world.

### Recent program on empowering adolescents

UNICEF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME) and the Ministry of Education (MoE), organized a comprehensive training workshop on "Adolescent Positive Parenting" in Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province, to ensure adolescents in vulnerable areas would benefit from a supportive environment.

This intensive eight-day training, conducted in two four-day rounds in December, brought together 90 psychologists, counselors, and mental health practitioners from Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs), schools, and community centres. The programme, funded by EU Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), the UNICEF website announced in a press release on December 23.

The workshop aimed to enhance their knowledge, skills, and technical expertise in delivering positive parenting programmes tailored specifically for parents of adolescents.

As part of a UNICEF-supported initiative, parents of adolescents in vulnerable districts are empowered with hands-on training in positive parenting skills.

The goal is to establish supportive and nurturing environments for adolescents in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

The "Adolescent Positive Parenting" package, developed with UNICEF's support, includes three detailed manuals and workbooks for trainers, parents, and adolescents. It also features 17 educational films for trainers, five videos for parents, and five motion graphics designed to enhance learning and engagement.

To conduct the workshop, the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), Provincial Drug Coordination Council (DCCC), Iranian Academy for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and a local non-governmental organization collaborated with UNICEF, as well.

In the initial phase, the trained professionals would reach out to at least 1,600 parents in Khorasan Razavi Province, offering them practical training on positive parenting skills.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to scale up adolescent parenting programmes initially launched in Qom Province for vulnerable parents.

Over 4,000 parents of adolescents in marginalised areas of Qom participated in at least eight sessions of parenting training, demonstrating the program's success in fostering stronger family relationships and adolescent well-being.

By collaborating with key governmental and non-governmental organisations, UNICEF continues to expand its reach, ensuring that adolescents and their families in vulnerable districts receive the essential support and guidance they need for a brighter future.





JUNE 2, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Keep yourself far from envy; because it eats up and takes away good actions, like a fire eats up and burn woods.*

**Prophet Muhammad (S)**

**Prayer Times** › Noon:12:02    Evening: 19:35    Dawn: 3:06 (tomorrow)    Sunrise: 4:50 (tomorrow)

## TMoCA screens Fernando Colomo’s “Picasso’s Gang”

TEHRAN – Concurrent with the “Picasso in Tehran” exhibition, which is underway at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA), the 2012 Spanish movie “Picasso’s Gang” directed by Fernando Colomo was screened at the cinematheque of the museum on Sunday.

A thriller film, it centers on Picasso and other real-life painters in Paris in the early 1910s. The film is a depiction of real events associated with the 1911 robbery of the “Mona Lisa” and the fact that the French police suspected the involvement of the Spanish painter, Mehr reported.

In 1911 Paris, the “Mona Lisa,” the best-known work of the most prominent painter of the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci, was mysteriously stolen from the Louvre along with a number of Iberian sculptures.

While authorities have taken Pablo Picasso and his poet friend Apollinaire under custody as suspects, the entire city is swept by the rumor that a gang is about to strike all the museums in France. Inspired by the most famous theft in the history of art, the film is an entertaining period comedy which captures the bohemian life of Paris.

“Picasso in Tehran” presents a narrative of Picasso’s life and the artistic periods he traversed. It features 66 works by the renowned Spanish painter and sculptor from the collection of the TMoCA. It will be open daily (except Mondays) until June 3.

Among these, 26 aquatint prints from the renowned series “La Tauromaquia” (The Art of Bullfighting)—which have never been exhibited in Iran before—will be a highlight.

This collection is one of his most celebrated works in the realm of printmaking, showcasing his deep fascination with Spanish culture, particularly the dramatic and ritualistic spectacle of

bullfighting.

The series was inspired by José Delgado’s 18th-century book “La Tauromaquia o arte de torear” (Tauromachia, or The Art of Bullfighting), which detailed the history and techniques of bullfighting. José Delgado, known as Pepe Illo, was a famous matador, and his book became a significant reference in Spain’s bullfighting tradition. Picasso, who was passionate about bullfighting since childhood, visually reinterpreted these historical accounts through his unique artistic style.

Picasso employed the aquatint technique, a printmaking process that allows for rich tonal variations, giving the images a dramatic, almost painterly effect. The works are minimalist yet expressive, featuring bold black-and-white contrasts that emphasize movement, tension, and the raw energy of the bullfight.

Through swift, gestural lines and fluid compositions, Picasso captures the essence of the bullfight—the grace of the matador, the power of the bull, and the tension of the confrontation. His depictions are not merely literal illustrations but abstract and emotionally charged representations of the spectacle.

“La Tauromaquia” reflects Picasso’s lifelong fascination with bulls and bullfighting, themes that appear frequently in his work, from early sketches to his masterpiece “Guernica” (1937).

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) was a Spanish painter, sculptor, printmaker, ceramicist, and theater designer who spent most of his adult life in France. One of the most influential artists of the 20th century, he is known for co-founding the Cubist movement, the invention of constructed sculpture, the co-invention of collage, and the wide variety of styles that he helped develop and explore.

# Harry Potter film concert in Tehran extended for two more performances

TEHRAN – For the first time in Iran, a special concert of music from the Harry Potter films was held at the Espinas Palace Hotel in Tehran on Saturday night with more than 6,000 people in attendance in two performances.

Due to the huge reception by the audience, it was extended for two more performances, which will be held next Saturday, ILNA reported.

The Harry Potter film concert is a unique and immersive experience that combines the magic of film with the enchanting power of live music.

It features the most memorable and key scenes from the eight beloved Harry Potter films projected on a giant screen while a live symphony orchestra performs the unforgettable score composed by the legendary John Williams and later by Patrick Doyle, Nicholas Hooper, and Alexandre Desplat.

Audiences of all ages can relive the adventures of Harry, Ron, and Hermione in a whole new way, as the live music adds a new dimension to the beloved story.

The orchestra was conducted by Sina Kheirabadi, conductor and lecturer at Tehran University of Art and Music Conservatory, and comprised more than 100 musicians and a choir.

The show, which had previously been performed in 37 countries around the world, made Iran the 38th destination for this musical-cinematic experience.

An hour before the show began, fans were dressed in Hogwarts uniforms: black robes with the insignia of the four Houses, scarves in the red and gold of Gryffindor, yellow and black of Hufflepuff, blue



and silver of Ravenclaw, and green and silver of Slytherin.

The program began with the iconic “Hedwig’s Theme” by John Williams. The melody, reminiscent of Harry’s first moments in the wizarding world, was perfectly synchronized with the on-screen images of “Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone,” and evoked a wave of emotions.

The delicate notes of the violins and the grandeur of the wind instruments seemed to transport the audience from Tehran to Diagon Alley and the Great Hall of Hogwarts.

Each piece, from John Williams’s works in the first three films to the emotional melodies of Patrick Doyle in “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,” Nicholas Hooper in “Order of the Phoenix,” and Alexandre Desplat in “Deathly Hallows,” was played live and in sync with the relevant sequences.

The epic battle of Hogwarts se-

quences in “Deathly Hallows – Part 2” culminated in a live performance of Desplat’s “Statues” and “Court-yard Apocalypse.”

At the moment of the Patronus Charm in “Prisoner of Azkaban,” the sound of the choir and string instruments made Harry’s silver stag look so real that a wave of applause and excited shouts echoed in the hall.

The performance of the piece “Obliviate” along with the sequence of Harry, Hermione, and Ron escaping from the Death Eaters took the audience to the tense and emotional atmosphere of “Deathly Hallows.”

Patrick Doyle’s melodies in “Goblet of Fire” with their energetic and dramatic rhythms revived the sense of competition and danger.

Nicholas Hooper’s music in “Order of the Phoenix” with its darker and deeper themes reflected the atmosphere of the fight against darkness well.

Finally, Alexandre Desplat’s works in “Deathly Hallows” with their emotional depth and rhythmic variety brought the story to its epic and emotional climax.

Harry Potter is a film series based on the Harry Potter series of novels by J. K. Rowling. They chronicle the lives of a young wizard, Harry Potter, and his friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, all of whom are students at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

The main story arc concerns Harry’s conflict with Lord Voldemort, a dark wizard who intends to become immortal, overthrow the wizard governing body known as the Ministry of Magic, and subjugate all wizards and Muggles (non-magical people).

As of February 2023, the books have sold more than 600 million copies worldwide, making them the best-selling book series in history, available in dozens of languages.

## Iran National Orchestra to perform in memory of Homayoun Khorram



*Prominent Iranian composer and conductor Homayoun Khorram in an undated photo*

TEHRAN- The Iran National Music Orchestra will perform a concert titled “Remaining with a Gaze” in tribute to the late composer and conductor Homayoun Khorram.

The orchestra will go on stage at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on June 8, under the baton of Homayoun Rahimian, honoring the memory of the legendary Homayoun Khorram, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The concert marks the second tribute performance by the Iran National Music Orchestra dedicated to eminent figures of Persian music. Renowned singer Mohammad Abdolhosseini will accompany the orchestra.

Earlier this year, in the first performance of 2025, the orchestra staged “A Memory with Me” in homage to veteran musician Mo-

hammad Sarir.

Homayoun Khorram (1930–2013) was a renowned Iranian violinist, composer, musician, and conductor who made significant contributions to Persian music. He was also a member of the Supreme Council of the Iranian House of Music, reflecting his influential role in Iran’s musical culture.

Khorram’s early exposure to Iranian classical music was fostered by his mother, a passionate lover of traditional Persian music, who named him Homayoun after the musical mode. He began his formal musical education at the age of 10-11 under the tutelage of the legendary composer and violinist Abolhassan Saba. By the age of 14, he was performing solo on radio, showcasing his prodigious talent.

Khorram was a master of harmony, influenced by Fereydooun Farzaneh and the Sarli style, with a compositional approach inspired by Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninoff. His collaborations

with prominent Iranian singers produced timeless songs such as “Goghayeh Setaregan,” “Rosvaye Zamaneh,” “To Ey Pari Kojayi,” and “Shahzadeh Roya.” His works span compositions, arrangements, and innovative improvisations, establishing a rich repertoire that continues to influence Iranian musicians.

After the Islamic Revolution, he focused more on teaching violin and conducting research about Iranian music, contributing to academic and cultural institutions worldwide, including lectures at UCLA and various Iranian universities.

Khorram’s legacy is preserved through his compositions, scholarly writings, and recordings. He passed away at age 82 due to cancer, leaving behind a profound impact on Iranian music and culture. His contributions remain celebrated, and he is remembered as one of Iran’s most talented and influential musicians.

## “The Thin Man” at Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN – “The Thin Man” by American writer Samuel Dashiell Hammett has been published in Persian by Now Publications in Tehran.

Ahmad Miralai is the translator of the book first released in 1933.

“The Thin Man” is a classic detective novel. Its popularity led to a successful film series featuring the iconic characters Nick and Nora Charles, with Hammett himself hired to write the screenplays for the first two films.

Set during the Christmas season of 1932 in New York City, amid the waning days of Prohibition, the novel introduces readers to Nick Charles, a retired private detective, and his glamorous wife, Nora. Nick, who is of Greek descent, now spends much of his time managing his late father-in-law’s businesses in San Francisco, often indulging in heavy drinking. Their peaceful lives are disrupted when Nick visits a speakeasy in New York and encounters Dorothy Wynant, the grown daughter of Clyde Wynant, an eccentric inventor. Dorothy claims she is trying to reconnect with her elusive father, whom

she has not seen since her parents’ divorce.

Soon after, a murder shocks the city: Julia Wolf, Wynant’s secretary and former mistress, is found shot dead. The investigation is led by Lieutenant John Guild, who suspects Julia’s new lover, gangster Shep Morelli, of the crime. Morelli, desperate to clear his name, breaks into Nick’s hotel room to protest his innocence but is quickly subdued by the police, thanks to Nick’s quick thinking. Recognized from past cases, Nick is reluctant but eventually drawn into the investigation, especially when his old army friend Herbert Macaulay, Wynant’s attorney, asks for help in locating the missing inventor, who is rumored to be working on a groundbreaking invention in secret.

As the story unfolds, Nick digs deeper into the lives of the characters involved, visiting speakeasies and questioning suspects like Arthur Nunheim, a former burglar and police informant. The plot thickens when Nunheim is found murdered with the same gun used to kill Julia Wolf. New suspects emerge, including Christian Jorgenson, who is later revealed to

be Victor Rosewater, Wynant’s former associate with a vendetta against him. Meanwhile, Mimi Jorgenson, Wynant’s ex-wife, arrives from abroad seeking more money, and her son Gilbert produces a letter from Wynant, hinting at financial dealings.

The climax reveals that Wynant’s body was hidden beneath a cemented floor, disguised to appear as a thin man’s remains. Nick deduces that Clyde Wynant was murdered by Herbert Macaulay, who had been swindling him and was responsible for multiple murders, including those of Julia Wolf and Nunheim. When Mimi realizes she’s been deceived and that Macaulay has been orchestrating the crimes, Nick intervenes, knocking him out and turning him over to the police.

The novel’s characters each adding depth to this intricate tale. The narrative was initially conceived as a more serious, San Francisco-based story, but Hammett shifted to a comedic, New York setting, introducing a wealthy amateur detective, which changed the tone of the novel.

### Cartoon of Day



Gaza's Scream

**Cartoonist:** Muzaffar Yulchiboev from Uzbekistan