



The French, British, German, and EU foreign policy chiefs meet on an outdoor terrace at the German honorary consulate in Geneva on June 20, 2025, during a European foreign ministers' gathering.

Europe's Own Goal

Europe is cunningly seeking to absolve itself from the current situation surrounding the Iran nuclear issue

David's Sling, Goliath's Fall

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN – The tale of Prophet Dawud (David) toppling the giant Jalut (Goliath) with a single stone echoes in understated tones through the 12-Day War in June.

Iran's missile campaign in self-defense, Operation True Promise III's 22 waves of strikes, challenged the advanced David's Sling and other U.S.-Israeli air defense systems, revealing not an invincible shield but a fragile, costly facade.

The war forces a stark reassessment of military superiority, exposing vulnerabilities that Iran exploited with precision and persistence.

Iran's missile strategy during the 12-Day War showcased adaptability and ingenuity. Tehran launched over 500 ballistic missiles, overwhelming defenses with volume and tactical variation. ▶ Page 2

Leader's aide warns of US-Israeli backed Zangezur corridor plan aimed to isolate Iran

TEHRAN – Senior foreign policy advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ali Akbar Velayati, has warned that the proposed Zangezur Corridor is part of a broader geopolitical scheme by the United States and Israel aimed at isolating Iran and Russia.

In a message read at a ceremony honoring Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili, Velayati described the corridor project as a façade for "larger geopolitical plans" designed to undermine the Axis of Resistance, cut Iran's land connection to the Caucasus, and enforce a regional encirclement of Iran and Russia. ▶ Page 3

Iran's decision to pursue negotiations stemmed from strength: FM Araghchi

Iran entered talks from a position of strength, not weakness, after forcing Israel to request a ceasefire

TEHRAN – In a detailed Sunday interview recounting the recent 12-day war between Iran and Israel, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi emphasized that Iran's decision to enter a pause and pursue negotiations stemmed from strength, unity, and strategic calculation—not weakness or submission.

Reflecting on the events that began with a surprise Israeli offensive on June 13, Araghchi said that Iran's armed forces and government had been prepared for all scenarios. "Negotiation is a strategic choice," he stated, "taken when a nation has proven its resilience and deterrent power on the global stage."

Araghchi revealed that the decision to accept a pause was made under the direction of Iran's Supreme National Security Council. He clarified that the truce was not the product of external pressure, but rather a calculated national decision, triggered only after "the enemy"—referring to the Zionist regime—requested an unconditional end to hostilities.

"This was not a misjudgment by the Foreign Ministry," Araghchi stressed. "It was a united directive

from the country's top leadership. The truce was approved only after the Zionist side initiated the request—an outcome that highlights the effectiveness of Iran's resistance strategy."

The 12-day war saw significant military escalation, including the June 22 U.S. airstrikes on Iran's nuclear facilities at Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan. In swift response, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) launched Operation True Promise III, striking Israeli military

and intelligence centers in the occupied territories with 22 rounds of missiles. Iran also targeted al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar—the largest U.S. base in West Asia—sending a clear signal that further aggression would come at a steep cost. The war came to a halt on June 24.

According to Araghchi, Iran's decision to match military resistance with diplomatic engagement is what prevented the war from spiraling into a wider regional catastrophe. "We were on the brink of full-scale

war at least three times in recent years—after the martyrdom of Haniyeh, during Promise II, and following the fall of Syria. But it was diplomacy, not just arms, that pulled us back."

In his remarks, Araghchi also criticized the European trio—France, the UK, and Germany—for their "blatant hypocrisy." On July 26, the three countries issued an ultimatum threatening to trigger the JCPOA's snapback mechanism by August 31 unless Iran returned to talks with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). ▶ Page 2

Agriculture sector grows 3.2% in a year, trade balance improves by \$3b

TEHRAN – Iran's agriculture sector recorded a 3.2 percent growth in the Iranian calendar year ending March 2025, with agricultural exports rising by 32 percent and the sector's trade balance improving by \$3.0 billion, Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljah said.

According to the Agriculture Ministry, Nouri emphasized the importance of domestic food production and food security, particularly during times of crisis.

He cited the recent 12-day war involving Israel as a reminder of the strategic importance of self-sufficiency in food, noting that Iran's population was able to remain calm throughout the conflict. ▶ Page 4

Farewell Ziad Rahbani, icon of resistance art

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — On Saturday, the son of the venerable Rahbani school of art, the revolutionary artist Ziad Rahbani, died at the age of 69 after a bitter struggle with illness.

Ziad Rahbani was born in January 1956 to artist parents Assi Rahbani and Fairuz.

The late Rahbani combined musical and theatrical genius, boldly addressing themes of identity, politics, and resistance. His first literary work was published at the age of 12 in the late 1970s.

He worked as a radio broadcaster, presenting satirical programs critical of politics, society, and corruption. He was also a journalist, writing for newspapers such as Al-Nidaa, An-Nahar, and Al-Akhbar, where he was known for his leftist pro-Resistance stances and his absolute and intense love for Hezbollah's martyr Secretary General Sayyed Hassan. ▶ Page 5

From Trojan dock to airdrop drama: US and Israel's Gaza deception

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN — Israel has resorted to public relations stunts in a bid to distract global attention from its brutal siege of the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in "mass starvation" in the Palestinian territory.

Since launching its war on Gaza in October 2023, the Israeli army has killed nearly 60,000 Palestinians and largely restricted the flow of essentials such as food into the enclave. In recent months, Israel's almost total siege of Gaza has plunged the territory into deeper famine.

According to the Health Ministry in Gaza, more than 130 people — most of them children — have died from malnutrition and hunger. Recently, more than 100 NGOs warned that "mass starvation" is spreading in Gaza. ▶ Page 5



A YouTube livestream shows armed Israeli personnel intercepting the Handala aid ship en route to Gaza. Freedom Flotilla Coalition.

Israel intercepts Gaza-bound activist boat carrying food aid

The anti-Gaza war Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC) says Israeli troops boarded a boat that was trying to bring food aid to the Gaza Strip by sea, BBC reported.

It said the Handala vessel was intercepted in international waters.

Video footage purportedly showed activists on board with their hands up as several armed soldiers took control of the vessel. ▶ Page 5

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Silence, claim of human rights, or political game?

In an analysis, Khorasan commented on the recent terrorist attack on the courthouse in Zahedan (the capital of the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan) and said: The attack was not simply a security incident; rather, it is a sign that the enemy has entered a new phase of the war. The incident is part of a larger project that has been engineered in Western and Zionist think tanks in recent months and has now entered implementation phase. The project is structured around three pillars: creating public fear and panic; creating a platform for separatist groups to mobilize; and instilling an alleged image of fragility of internal security. While Western media outlets always run headlines claiming support for Iranian people and defending human rights, they have now adopted a meaningful silence in the face of the attack on the courthouse of Zahedan. This silence not only shows their double standards, but also reveals that the concept of human rights is only a political tool for them rather than a human value. If the West truly defends humanity, it must condemn this attack and identify its perpetrators as terrorists, otherwise their slogans about anti-terrorism are nothing more than mere publicity.

Ettelaat: European troika threatens Iran again

In a note, Ettelaat addressed the European troika's renewed threat to invoke the snapback mechanism that would return the UN sanctions against Iran that had been lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal officially called the JCPOA. It wrote: The leaders of the three European countries, Britain, France, and Germany, have once again threatened Iran to activate the snapback mechanism. Their threat against Iran comes at as Iran and Europe resumed their negotiations on Friday. The European troika's call for "Iran to return to diplomacy" comes at a time while two months of indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States, which were being conducted with the mediation of Oman, were aborted as the Zionist regime launched an act of aggression against Iran and later and the United States joined the invading regime by bombing Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran has announced it is firm to find a diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue, but insists that any negotiations require guarantees that aggressive attacks against Iran will not be repeated. European countries threaten to invoke the snapback mechanism and thereby reinstate all UN sanctions against Iran. Many analysts believe that the legal basis for this action lacks legitimacy,

but some technical and diplomatic moves are also underway that could transform the future of Iran-Europe relations.

Kayhan: The superiority of missile power

Kayhan devoted its editorial to Iran's missile power in the June war with Israel. It wrote: In the 12-day war, Iran proved its capability to strike the enemy. Before that, the enemy had concluded that it was capable of striking Iran without Iran being able to respond effectively. Israeli sources recently revealed that two weeks before the start of the war, Netanyahu had told Donald Trump during a visit to the United States, "We will strike Iran so hard that after 24 hours, it will not be able to fire a missile at Israel for decades." Following the 12-day conflict, Israel and the United States—despite being the initiators—called for a ceasefire. It has become clear to them that they are unable to establish effective deterrence against Iran. They now recognize Iran's ability to endure attacks and deliver powerful retaliatory blows, even under simultaneous pressure from both nations and despite the advanced weaponry possessed by the occupying regime.

Iran: Europe's sinister goal

In an interview with Seyyed Jalal Dehghani Firoozabadi, a professor of international relations, the Iran newspaper sought Europe's main goal in proposing to extend the snapback mechanism. He said: Europe's important goal in proposing to extend the snapback is to obtain more accurate information about the status of Iran's nuclear facilities and the level of its highly enriched uranium reserves. Even in the event of a possible restart of negotiations between Iran and the U.S., Europe will try to maintain its independent role and pursue its demands by using the leverage of the snapback. As a result, it must be acknowledged that the extension of the snapback mechanism was not intended to resolve the crisis, but rather to buy time and maintain the means of pressure on Iran. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran must clarify its position on the snapback issue in the remaining short time until the expiration of Resolution 2231, because in the next six months, it seems unlikely that Europe will back down from its decision to activate it. Otherwise, this European position will simply pave the way for blaming Iran and may even serve as an excuse for Trump to return to the maximum pressure campaign or justify renewed Israeli attacks.

Funeral ceremony held for martyrs of terrorist attack in Zahedan



People hold a funeral procession on July 27, 2025 for the victims of a terrorist attack on a courthouse in the city of Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, a day earlier.

TEHRAN – The funeral procession for the six martyrs of the recent terrorist attack on the Zahedan Judiciary was held on Sunday with the participation of a broad spectrum of the Sunni and Shia communities of Sistan and Baluchestan, alongside families of the fallen and provincial officials.

The massive turnout from both Sunni and Shia residents reflected the unwavering solidarity and vigilance of the people of Sistan and Baluchestan against the forces of terror.

The ceremony began at Shohada Square and proceeded towards the Zahedan Martyrs' Cemetery, where Lieutenant Hossein Rafiei Nasab was laid to rest.

The bodies of other martyrs, including

Lieutenant Hossein Ali Nouri, and soldiers Neema Karimi and Ahmad Abdollahi, were transferred to their hometowns for burial.

Among the victims of this brutal attack was a six-month-old infant, whose martyrdom further intensified the grief of the community.

The Saturday assault in Zahedan resulted in at least six fatalities and 22 injuries, with three assailants killed during clashes with security personnel.

Sistan and Baluchestan province, bordering Pakistan, has been a persistent target of terrorist activities orchestrated by groups linked to foreign intelligence agencies aiming to destabilize Iran's southeastern and southwestern regions.

Iran's decision to pursue negotiations stemmed from strength: FM Araghchi

From page 1 ▶ "These same governments who ignored months of brutal Israeli bombardment in Gaza now issue ultimatums to Iran for defending itself," Araghchi said. "While over 120 countries condemned the attacks on Iran, Europe chose to repeat U.S. talking points instead of upholding the JCPOA they claim to support."

He further criticized the Europeans for remaining silent during the U.S. "maximum pressure" campaign and Trump's direct threats. "They didn't oppose sabotage against our nuclear facilities or the assassination of our scientists, yet they pretend to safeguard nonproliferation. That's not diplomacy—it's legal blackmail."

On the nuclear issue, Araghchi reiterated Iran's longstanding position: that Tehran has never sought nuclear weapons and that the JCPOA was built on temporary confidence-building



measures, not permanent restrictions. He described the U.S. approach under Donald Trump—alternating between overt threats and vague proposals—as a trap that Iran wisely navigated.

"When Trump offered a war-or-talks ultimatum, Iran opted for indirect negotiations—not from weakness, but from strategic foresight," he said.

Araghchi rejected proposals like a multinational fuel consortium as violations of Iran's sovereignty. He reiterated that Iran's right to peaceful nuclear technology is non-negotiable and warned that pushing Iran too far could force it to reconsider its participation in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The Foreign Minister praised

the Iranian people for their unity during the crisis. "The strong cohesion among Iranians reflected their deep trust in the state's efforts to avoid war while defending the nation's dignity."

According to Araghchi, Iran's response—militarily and diplomatically—sent a powerful message: "We are not isolated. We are not intimidated. And we do not enter negotiations unless our flag is raised in victory."

He concluded by warning regional actors hosting U.S. military bases to consider the risks of involvement in a future conflict. "If Iran is forced to defend itself, no hostile base will be spared," he warned.

With the pause in effect and diplomatic activity continuing, Iran's leadership sees the latest conflict not as an end, but as a turning point—one where Iran's deterrent capability and diplomatic resilience reinforced its regional and global standing.

David's Sling, Goliath's Fall

How Iran's missiles exposed the fragility of US-Israeli air defenses

From page 1 ▶ The initial strikes methodically tested vulnerabilities, paving the way for later salvos to fine-tune timing and scale to exploit exposed gaps. As the conflict progressed, Iran's precision improved, and its success rate climbed steadily.

The Fattah-1 hypersonic missiles, with unpredictable trajectories and high maneuverability, outpaced THAAD systems, which were designed for conventional ballistic threats.

Coordinated drone swarms and decoys disrupted radar, allowing ballistic missiles to breach defenses.

Economic hemorrhage

The U.S.-Israeli defense effort bled resources at an alarming rate. The U.S. fired over 150 THAAD interceptors, each costing \$12.7 million, depleting nearly 25% of its global stockpile, per the Wall Street Journal.

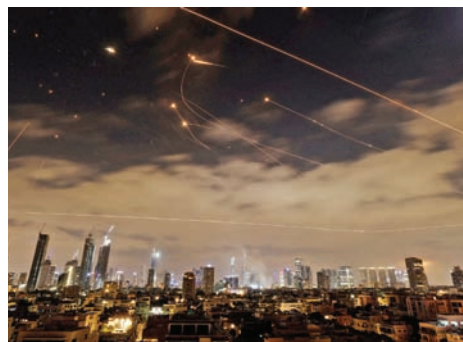
The Journal also reported that Navy destroyers launched 80 SM-3s at up to \$25 million each, while the Israeli regime exhausted hundreds of Arrow-3, David's Sling, and Iron Dome interceptors.

A report by the Washington, D.C.-based neoconservative Israel lobby group and think tank, the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA), highlighted a stark example: the U.S. military launched 30 Patriot missiles—at a cost of \$111 million—to intercept just 14 Iranian ballistic missiles targeting Al Udeid Air Base, underscoring the stark economic asymmetry.

Replenishment poses a dire challenge for Washington. According to the Wall Street Journal, Lockheed Martin produces only about 100 THAAD interceptors annually, meaning recovery could take 3–8 years.

When the Pentagon sought Saudi Arabia's THAAD reserves mid-conflict, per the Middle East Eye, the refusal exposed the scarcity and desperation.

Iran's low-cost offensive overwhelmed a financially unsustainable defense model, proving



that even "advanced" systems crumble under persistent pressure.

Breaches that shook the foundation

The Israeli regime's initial claim of a 90–95% interception rate eroded under scrutiny. Post-war analysis suggests the actual percentage is likely much lower, with satellite radar footage—published weeks after the halt in fighting—confirming Iranian missiles struck five military sites.

The JINSA report detailed 57 hits within built-up areas and 316 landings in undeveloped zones out of 574 launches.

Notable penetrations included a missile near the regime's military headquarters in Tel Aviv, causing extensive damage and panic.

Even more significantly, Iran delivered a precision strike on the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot on June 15. This was no random target; the Institute, often presented as a civilian research center, is deeply integrated with the Israeli military and its clandestine nuclear program, serving as a vital hub for advanced weapons technology and strategic research. The strike, which caused widespread devastation and destroyed irreplaceable research, exposed a critical vulnerability at the heart of Israel's military-scientific complex.

Another bypass the U.S. media and military had to swallow was the strike on Al Udeid Air Base, where Patriot batteries failed to stop Iran's June 23 barrage of 14 ballistic missiles, matching the warheads Washington used two days earlier

on Iran's nuclear sites. Trump insisted 13 were intercepted and one landed harmlessly, but distant Qatari footage showed multiple impacts, and Ali Larjani, an advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, later said six missiles struck the base directly.

Iran's saturation tactics—using decoys and massed launches—overwhelmed systems like THAAD and SM-3, which struggled against hypersonic and low-altitude threats.

On June 18, barrages over Tel Aviv exhausted interceptor batteries with non-critical targets, per analyst accounts. These breaches shattered the myth of invincibility, delivering a psychological and strategic blow to U.S.-Israeli confidence.

Over-reliance on U.S. support

The recent conflict vividly exposed the extent to which the Israeli regime's defense architecture is fundamentally tethered to American military assets.

Far from a robust, independent defense, it functions as a costly extension of U.S. power projection in the region.

The JINSA report, despite its pro-Israeli stance, inadvertently highlighted this critical vulnerability: THAAD interceptors, operated by U.S. personnel, accounted for nearly half of all successful interceptions. This staggering proportion unequivocally demonstrates that Israel's so-called indigenous Arrow systems, despite decades of development and immense investment, were demonstrably insufficient to stand alone against Iran's missile might.

Newsweek's emphasis on the "significant portion" of U.S. THAAD deployed to bolster Israel further deepens this understanding, laying bare not a balanced partnership but a profound, almost existential, dependency.

This reliance underscores a critical and strategic weakness: without continuous and substantial U.S. support, Israel's much-vaunted multi-layered defenses would undoubtedly falter.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran's new ambassador to China presents credentials to President Xi

TEHRAN – Iran's newly appointed ambassador to China, Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, officially presented his letter of credence to Chinese President Xi Jinping during a formal ceremony held Friday in Beijing.

The event, which brought together newly arrived envoys from various countries, marked the official start of Rahmani Fazli's diplomatic mission in China.

In remarks following the ceremony, President Xi welcomed the new ambassadors and encouraged them to extend their best wishes to the leaders and people of their home countries. He expressed hope that the diplomats, through a deep and comprehensive understanding of China, would play a constructive role in deepening bilateral ties and expanding China's global engagement.

Highlighting China's commitment to international cooperation, President Xi said Beijing is ready to pursue broad-based collaboration with other nations based on mutual respect, equality, and shared interests. He added that China seeks to enhance exchanges across various fields, open its vast domestic market to the world, and contribute to global economic growth.



Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani inspected the surface and subsurface naval units of the force and reviewed the security of shipping lanes in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf on July 27, 2025.

Europe's Own Goal

Europe is cunningly seeking to absolve itself from the current situation surrounding the Iran nuclear issue

TEHRAN — On July 26, 2025, leaders of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany issued a joint threatening Iran to invoke the so-called “snapback mechanism” by August 31, 2025.

If put into action, the measure would restore all UN Security Council sanctions that were in place before 2015, the year JCPOA was finalized. To Iran, the move comes as yet another instance of Europe utilizing international law to further Western strategic interests.

The threat was issued following a conference call held the same day between UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, during which the trio discussed a range of international developments—including Iran's nuclear program which is based on the Safeguards Agreement.

Europe's policy of pressure

One should not and cannot ignore the timing of this threat came just one day after the European Union and Iran resumed diplomatic discussions on July 25. The meeting was their first communication since the U.S.-Israeli airstrikes targeted Iran's nuclear facilities in mid-June 2025. Those strikes, which impacted sites in Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan, were widely denounced in Iran as blatant violations of international law. Following the unprovoked war, Tehran has maintained that any return to negotiations must include assurances that such aggressive actions will not be re-



peated.

Rather than addressing these security issues, European leaders have gone for exerting pressure on Iran despite their own failure to comply with the JCPOA following the U.S. withdrawal in May 2018. The current European stance comes to Iranian officials not as a diplomatic overture but as a coercion disguised in the rhetoric of an international responsibility.

Europe's double standards on nuclear compliance

Iran has repeatedly demonstrated it is ready to participate in discussions but asserts that they must be fair and based on reciprocal respect. Authorities in Tehran highlight that, though Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its nuclear activities are consistently being monitored by the IAEA, Israel, an unrecognized nuclear weapons nation excluded from the NPT, faces no examination. Iran argues that this major inconsistency un-

dermines the credibility of the global non-proliferation framework.

Conversely, European nations insist on complete Iranian adherence to the JCPOA, despite their inability to fulfill commitments made under the agreement. Tehran adhered to the pact's requirements for a full year, despite facing harsh U.S. sanctions throughout that period. This commitment was repeatedly confirmed by the IAEA. Europe's efforts to bypass those sanctions through the INSTEX mechanism ultimately did not provide Iran with any shred of economic gains.

In contrast, Israel has not encountered consequences for multiple acts of sabotage targeting Iranian nuclear sites and the assassination of nuclear scientists, which took place with tacit Western approval or indifference. Iranian officials say that the selective enforcement of international standards reinforces the belief that Western powers are

more invested in preserving regional dominance than genuinely upholding non-proliferation principles.

Tehran argues that penalizing Iran for its fully-monitored nuclear program, while allowing Israel to remain outside the NPT without consequence, undermines Europe's commitment to the global non-proliferation regime.

The threat to trigger the snapback mechanism, particularly by a bloc strongly aligned with U.S. policy, makes Tehran question Europe's independence and sincerity as a diplomatic actor.

Iran weighs exit from NPT

The latest developments have prompted serious debate within Iran's legislative bodies. In Iran's Parliament, the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee is drafting a legislation that would require the government to withdraw from the NPT if the snapback mechanism is activated. The committee spokesperson confirmed that the majority supports the draft, arguing that Iran cannot remain bound to a treaty when coercion is used to reimpose sanctions unilaterally.

This growing disillusionment is shared by Iran's top security figure. For example, on July 27, IRGC intelligence chief Majid Khademi issued a pointed warning during remarks at a ceremony in Tehran, saying, “If European powers proceed with hostile actions, we have countermeasures ready—and the main losers will be the Europeans themselves.”

Leader's aide warns of US-Israeli backed Zangezur corridor plan aimed to isolate Iran

TEHRAN – Senior foreign policy advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ali Akbar Velayati, has warned that the proposed Zangezur Corridor is part of a broader geopolitical scheme by the United States and Israel aimed at isolating Iran and Russia.

In a message read at a ceremony honoring Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili, Velayati described the corridor project as a façade for “larger geopolitical plans” designed to undermine the Axis of Resistance, cut Iran's land connection to the Caucasus, and enforce a regional encirclement of Iran and Russia.

“The Zangezur Corridor is part of Washington's agenda to shift its pressure campaign from Ukraine to the Caucasus,” he said.

Velayati emphasized that Iran has already taken a firm stand against the project, noting the country's deterrent military deployments and exercises along its borders. He stressed



that the Islamic Republic has adopted a policy of “active prevention” rather than passive reaction when it comes to defending its national interests.

The idea of a “Zangezur corridor,” a term originating with Azerbaijan and Turkey, en-

visions a pathway through Armenia's Syunik province. This area has historically bordered Iran for centuries. However, the Zangezur corridor, if established, would not function as a standard transport route. It would necessitate Armenia relinquishing control of the passage to Baku and its main patron Ankara.

The project emerged following the most recent war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, two nations with a history of territorial disagreements. Throughout 2023 and a significant part of 2024, Baku and Ankara actively promoted the development of this corridor. Iran has consistently expressed its disapproval of the plan, underscoring its dedication to upholding the integrity of its historical boundaries and safeguarding geopolitical balance in the surrounding area.

The American suggestion has once again alarmed Iranians, who recently ended a deadly war with Israel and the United States.

Two MKO operatives behind urban terror campaign executed: Judiciary

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran's judiciary executed two operational members of the terrorist Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) on Sunday, for “manufacturing mortars and launching indiscriminate attacks against civilians, residential areas, and service facilities.”

According to the Iranian Judiciary's Media Center, Mehdi Hassani (alias “Fardin”) and Behrouz Ehsani Eslamlou (alias “Behzad”) were hanged after the Supreme Court upheld their death sentences following legal proceedings.

The Judiciary detailed that Hassani joined the MKO years ago and maintained contact with the group's operational intermediaries.

Ehsani Eslamlou had been a member since the 1980s and resumed his terrorist activities after an early prison release.

The two had rented a safe house in Tehran where they “manufactured launchers and hand-made mortars,” which they used to target “citizens, homes, administra-

tive and service centers, educational institutions, and charities” with the explicit aim of “disrupting social order and endangering innocent civilians,” the Judiciary said.

Their operations also included intelligence gathering, filming terrorist acts, and disseminating propaganda via MKO-linked networks.

The terrorists were apprehended in 2022 following a months-long security operation. Ehsani Eslamlou was identified and arrested by intelligence forces while attempting to cross into Turkey. During their capture, authorities seized firearms, ammunition, mortar-making equipment, and tools for altering appearances.

Their activities included orchestrating a mortar attack on the Ministry of Communications in autumn 2022, for which the MKO claimed responsibility.

Ehsani Eslamlou had previously benefited from Iran's pardon-oriented clemency system after receiving a 15-year sentence in the 1980s for supporting MKO terror cells. His sentence was reduced



to 18 months, after which he resumed terrorist activities under orders from the MKO.

The executions occur against the backdrop of the MKO's four-decade campaign of violence against Iran.

The group collaborated with Iraq's Saddam Hussein during his aggression against Iran during the 1980s, participating in chemical attacks against Iranian civilians and suppressing Iraqi Kurdish and Shia uprisings.

Iran designates the MKO as a

terrorist entity responsible for over 17,000 Iranian deaths since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Currently based in Albania, the MKO faces mounting international scrutiny. Albanian authorities recently raided their Ashraf-3 camp, seizing computers and charging six leaders with incitement to war and cybercrimes.

Iran's judiciary reiterated that Hassani and Ehsani Eslamlou were tried in the presence of their lawyers, and the Supreme Court rejected all appeals.

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SPORTS

Piazza revived Iran volleyball's fighting spirit: Hossein Khanzadeh

TEHRAN – Poriya Hossein Khanzadeh, the outside hitter of Iran's volleyball team, has praised Roberto Piazza for restoring the fighting spirit and confidence to Team Melli.

Iran narrowly missed qualifying for the Finals of the 2025 Volleyball Nations League (VNL). However, Khanzadeh was one of the standout players for Iran during the competition.

“Our coaching staff gave us confidence. The team had been lacking self-assurance over the past two years. We are a young team, and it was tough to compete against the stronger teams, but we managed to do it. We owe this newfound confidence to the coaching staff, who brought it back to us,” Khanzadeh said.

“The support this year has been incredible and significantly contributed to our strong performances. Even when we didn't qualify, many believed we deserved more. The fact that the people are happy despite the circumstances—that truly satisfies us,” he added.

“Mr. Piazza is a very skilled tactician, and we saw his exceptional performance firsthand. More importantly, he restored the fighting spirit and confidence within our team. He genuinely cared about us and worked tirelessly to boost our morale. Bringing the team back together under such difficult conditions was no easy task—perhaps no one else could have done it,” Khanzadeh stated.

Iran will participate in the 2025 FIVB Men's Volleyball World Championship, where Team Melli are drawn in Pool A against the Philippines, Tunisia, and Egypt.

“We need to maintain this momentum. Teams come to the World Championship prepared to achieve strong results, and we are moving forward with that goal,” Khanzadeh concluded.

Vafaei, Sarkhosh to compete at 2025 British Open

TEHRAN – Iranian snookers players Hossein Vafaei and Amir Sarkhosh will compete at the 2025 British Open.

The British Open will be held at the Centaur Venue in Cheltenham, England from September 22 to 28.

Vafaei will face English player Gary Wilson in his first match.

The winner of the event will receive £100,000 from a total prize fund of £502,000.

Uzbek defender Eshmurodov on Sepahan's radar

TEHRAN – Uzbekistan international center-back Umar Eshmurodov has been linked with a move to Sepahan football club.

The 32-year-old player currently plays in Nasaf.

Eshmurodov is a member of Uzbekistan national football team since 2020.

Under the management of Moharram Navidkia, Sepahan will face Al Duhail in the 2025-26 AFC Champions League Elite Play-off.

Esteghlal eye Albanian forward Asani

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team have reportedly set their sight on signing Albanian striker Jasir Fadil Asani.

Asani, 30, played for South Korean club Gwangju FC last season.

He has represented Albania football team

23 times and scored five goals.

Asani began his professional career with Macedonian club Vardar.

Iran basketball to play friendlies with Russia

TEHRAN – Iran national basketball team will play two friendly matches with Russia in their training camp in the European country.

Team Melli will meet Russia on Monday and Wednesday.

The friendlies will be held as part of preparation for the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup.

Led by Greek coach Sotiris Manolopoulos, Iran is drawn into Group B, alongside Japan, Syria, and Guam.

Iran Super Cup to be held on Aug. 11

TEHRAN – The Iran Football League Organization has announced that the 2025 Super Cup will be played on August 11.

The match will take place at the Naghsh-e Jahan Stadium in Isfahan.

Tractor, the winner of the Iran Professional League, will face Esteghlal, the Hazfi Cup champion, in the Super Cup.

Persepolis is the most decorated team in the history of the Super Cup, having won the title five times.

Persepolis complete signing of Abarghouei

TEHRAN – Iran Persepolis football club have completed the signing of center-back Hossein Abarghouei from Kheybar.

The club recently parted ways with Giorgi Gvelesiani and Farshad Faraji and were in search of a new defender to strengthen their backline.

The 29-year-old defender began his professional career with Gostaresh Foolad in 2017 and has also played for Machine Sazi, Oghab, and Shams Azar.

Abarghouei has signed a three-year contract with Persepolis for an undisclosed fee.

“My dream has come true. I have been a Persepolis fan since I was a child, and I am here to help my beloved team,” Abarghouei said.

2025/26 PGPL draw ceremony held

TEHRAN – Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) champions Tractor will meet Esteghlal in the opening match of the 2025/26 season.

The draw ceremony for the 24th edition of new season was held on Sunday.

Tractor and Esteghlal will also play in 2025 Iran's Super Cup a week earlier on Aug. 11.

Persepolis stand out as the most successful club in history of PGPL, having claimed nine titles in the 23 editions held so far.

A total of 16 teams will participate in the upcoming season. Tractor are the defending champions, while Fajr Sepasi and Paykan are the newly promoted teams, having secured their spots last season. Havadar and Nassaji were relegated from the PGPL to the First Division.

Gameweek 1 Fixtures:

*Zob Ahan vs Paykan

*Chadormalu vs Foolad

*Esteghlal Khuzestan vs Shams Azar

*Persepolis vs Fajr Sepasi

*Gol Gohar vs Aluminum

*Kheybar vs Mes Rafsanjan

*Tractor vs Esteghlal

*Malavan vs Sepahan

Financing for advanced industries sees 15% growth in Q1



TEHRAN - Iran saw a 15 percent year-on-year increase in financing for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the advanced industries sector during the first quarter of the current Iranian year, ending June 20, 2025, the head of the country's Fund for Supporting Research and Development in Advanced Industries said.

Speaking to state media, Mohsen Naderi Manesh said the fund's top priority for 2025 is to support small-scale private and cooperative enterprises in advanced industries and help them scale up to medium-sized businesses.

"In the first quarter of the year, the number of supported firms grew by 15 percent compared to the same period last year. Loan disbursement rose by about five percent, and the issuance of bank guarantees exceeded our

projections by around 20 percent," he said.

Naderi Manesh expressed hope that by the end of the year, up to 20 percent of small firms will have grown into mid-sized businesses through financial assistance from the fund.

The fund currently provides an average of one trillion rials (roughly \$2.0 million) in financing to firms each month, translating to 12 trillion rials (approximately \$24 million) annually.

Naderi Manesh noted that demand typically rises toward the end of the year, while the early months see less activity.

"In the first quarter alone, more than 1.2 trillion rials (\$2.4 million) in financing was disbursed, marking a seven percent increase over the same period last year," he added.

He projected 3.0 trillion rials (\$6.0 million) in financing for the second quarter, 3.5 trillion rials (\$7.0 million) for the third quarter, and over 4.0 trillion rials (\$8.0 million) in the final quarter of the year.

Naderi Manesh also highlighted upcoming support for artificial intelligence, stating that the fund is set to allocate 3.50 trillion rials (\$7.0 million) to AI initiatives in collaboration with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

"In addition to our own resources, we're working with the Industry Ministry, banks, and the capital market to mobilize more than twice that amount for AI-focused enterprises," he said.

Agriculture Ministry aims to implement smart irrigation on 20,000 hectares by Mar. 2026

TEHRAN - Iran's Ministry of Agriculture plans to roll out smart irrigation systems across nearly 20,000 hectares of farmland this year, pending budget approval, a senior official said, as the country intensifies efforts to boost water efficiency in the face of ongoing drought conditions.

Fariborz Abbasi, director of the modern irrigation systems program at the Ministry's Water and Soil Department, said the target hinges on funding allocations and final coordination with the national Planning and Budget Organization.

"We've projected smart irrigation implementation on about 20,000 hectares of agricultural land in the current year, provided that the necessary funds are secured," he said, according to a statement by the ministry carried by IRNA.

Abbasi noted that over the past four years, the ministry has partnered with certified research centers and knowledge-based firms to develop smart irrigation technologies.

During this period, more than 100 pilot projects were carried out across various provinces to raise awareness among farmers and test the system's effectiveness.

"The results of these pilot projects show that smart irrigation can reduce water use by around 20 percent, increase crop yields by 20 to 30 percent, and improve overall efficiency by 40 to 50 percent," he said.

Abbasi stressed that wider adoption of smart irrigation systems will require significant financial backing. "We are committed to scaling up these technologies, but expansion will depend on adequate funding support," he said.

TEDPIX loses 13,700 points on Sunday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 13,796 points to 2.811 million on Sunday, which is the second day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

The head of the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has said that the capital market's share in the national financing system is going to increase to 50 percent over the next five years, positioning it as a key engine of economic activity, employment, and industrial growth.

Hojatollah Seyedi said the organization's 14th development plan includes targeted measures to stimulate production, starting with fiscal incentives embedded in the na-

tional budget.

He outlined two additional pillars of the government's production strategy: implementation of the Law on Supporting Production and a five-part economic development plan currently being drafted by the Planning and Budget Organization (PBO).

Seyedi said new investment funds have been created within the capital market to support production, including Murabaha bonds aimed at financing small- and medium-sized enterprises.

He said the Securities and Exchange Organization is targeting a "50-50" financing model, balancing bank loans and capital market resources, over a four- to five-year horizon.

"Initial public offerings in project-based companies have already begun, and infrastructure for Murabaha bond issuance is in place," he said, noting a surge in applications from producers seeking bond issuance licenses.

Netherlands exports non-oil products worth \$340m to Iran in 3 months

TEHRAN- The Netherlands exported non-oil products worth \$340 million to Iran during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Foroud Asgari said that the Netherlands was Iran's seventh source of non-oil imports during the three-month period.

According to the official, Iran's total non-oil trade during the first quarter reached 43.489

million tons, valued at \$24.684 billion.

Imports accounted for 9.013 million tons of that volume, worth \$13.029 billion—down 4.35 percent in weight and 11.73 percent in value year-on-year, the IRICA head stated.

The average value of imported goods was \$1,446 per ton, reflecting a 7.7 percent decline, the official said.

Key import items included unrefined gold at \$965 million, animal feed corn at \$883 million, rice at \$500 million, sunflower seed oil at

Agriculture sector grows 3.2% in a year, trade balance improves by \$3b

TEHRAN - Iran's agriculture sector recorded a 3.2 percent growth in the Iranian calendar year ending March 2025, with agricultural exports rising by 32 percent and the sector's trade balance improving by \$3.0 billion, Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljah said.

According to the Agriculture Ministry, Nouri emphasized the importance of domestic food production and food security, particularly during times of crisis.

He cited the recent 12-day war involving Israel as a reminder of the strategic importance of self-sufficiency in food, noting that Iran's population was able to remain calm throughout the conflict.

Referring to food shortages in Gaza caused by Israeli military operations, Nouri said such crises highlight the risks of dependence on foreign supply chains.

"The idea that there is an abundance of food globally is nothing



but an illusion. Every country today must work toward securing its own food supply," he said.

The minister also addressed Iran's water crisis, identifying the provision of potable water as the country's top priority.

He urged government organizations across provinces to collaborate at local levels to ensure water access and emphasized the need to reduce consumption in

both administrative and personal settings.

Acknowledging criticism over water use in agriculture, Nouri said efforts are underway to improve efficiency in the sector.

"While some of the criticism is valid, we must also recognize that agriculture plays a key role in securing the nation's food supply and should not be blamed for all existing problems," he said.

He called on ministry officials to provide accurate, technical reports to relevant bodies and defend domestic production against unqualified criticism, especially amid challenges such as climate change and falling rainfall.

Nouri noted that agriculture's share in Iran's broader economy rose from 6.7 percent to over 7.0 percent, representing a 5.6 percent increase.

He reiterated the 3.2 percent growth in the sector by the end of the Iranian year and the 32 percent surge in exports, which contributed to a \$3.0 billion improvement in the agricultural trade balance.

"Our duty is to ensure that the achievements of the agriculture sector are not overshadowed by broader national crises. While some advocate for increased imports and foreign dependence, our focus remains on ensuring food security through domestic production," he said.

Requests to build industrial power plants surge to 30,000MW as self-supply mandate expands



TEHRAN - Demand from Iranian heavy industries to build self-supplied power plants has reached 30,000 megawatts, a senior official at state-run Tavanir said, amid a nationwide push to ease pressure on the national electricity grid and address fuel constraints.

Mehdi Moghimizadeh, director of the industrial power plant construction program at Iran's Power Generation, Distribution, and Transmission Company (known as Tavanir), said the government has so far issued preliminary approvals for 19,357 megawatts of capacity.

Of this, about 6,000 megawatts are expected to be connected to the national grid by the end of the Iranian year 1405 (March 2027).

An additional 9,596 megawatts of new capacity has been requested by industrial applicants, bringing the total proposed generation

to around 30,000 megawatts, he added.

Of this total, some 8,080 megawatts are under development or already operational, with 2,320 megawatts fully commissioned and 3,570 megawatts nearing the start of construction. Once these plants enter the execution phase, the total active capacity under the industrial self-supply scheme will reach roughly 11,500 megawatts.

Moghimizadeh noted that the Oil Ministry has committed to supplying fuel for only 11,500 megawatts of thermal capacity, due to supply limitations. As a result, further expansion will rely on upgrading existing combined-cycle plants by adding steam units—an approach that could generate 6,000 to 7,000 megawatts of electricity without additional fuel consumption.

According to current plans, 1,763 megawatts of new capacity are expected to go online by the end of 2025, with an additional 2,000 megawatts by March 2027.

This would bring the total synchronized capacity from industrial power plants to 6,000 megawatts, significantly easing pressure on the national grid in coming years.

Under the 2022 "Electricity Industry Development Facilitation Law," energy-intensive industries are required to develop at least 9,000

megawatts of high-efficiency thermal power capacity (minimum 55 percent efficiency) and 1,000 megawatts of renewable power. Implementation must proceed in coordination with the Energy Ministry, the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, and the Environment Department.

So far, however, only 151 megawatts of the renewable target has materialized: 120 megawatts by Mobarakeh Steel, 30 megawatts by the National Iranian Copper Industries Co., and 1.0 megawatt by West Asia Steel.

Moghimizadeh warned that progress in the renewables sector remains too slow and called for an urgent acceleration of efforts.

Under the law, industrial firms that fulfill their commitments to build power plants and meet their own electricity needs will be exempt from power restrictions during peak demand periods—up to the amount of energy they generate.

Conversely, those that fail to meet their obligations will face prioritization in scheduled power cuts. According to Article 4 of the law, energy-intensive sectors such as steel, copper, petrochemicals, aluminum, and refineries are obligated to invest in self-supplied power generation and contribute to stabilizing the national grid.

Loading, unloading of goods up 13% at west Hormozgan ports

Iranian calendar year.

Of the total volume, non-oil cargo throughput accounted for 34 million tons, while oil cargo amounted to 19 million tons.

In the same period, unloading of oil and non-oil cargo totaled 16.7 million tons. This included 13.3 million tons of non-oil goods and 3.4 million tons of oil cargo.

Total cargo loadings during this period reached 36 million tons. Non-oil goods made up 20.8 million tons, while oil exports accounted for 15.2 million tons.

Container handling at Iranian ports reached 750,000 TEUs in the first quarter of the year, underscoring the ports' continued role in regional maritime logistics.

The reported volumes include activity across all state-owned and sovereign ports managed by the PMO, highlighting the organization's operational capacity across oil terminals and general cargo ports nationwide.

As previously reported by the PMO, Iran's ports handled a total of 234.8 million tons of

goods in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20).

Of this total, 82.3 million tons were unloaded and 152.5 million tons were loaded at the country's northern and southern ports. Oil products accounted for 103 million tons of the total, while non-oil goods made up nearly 131.8 million tons.

Oil cargo unloading amounted to 28.4 million tons, and non-oil cargo unloading stood at 53.9 million tons.

On the export side, 74.7 million tons of oil products and 77.9 million tons of non-oil goods were loaded at ports.

Container handling also saw a notable uptick, with 3.08 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) processed in 2024—a 13 percent increase from the 2.73 million TEUs recorded in the previous year.

The figures reflect the ongoing expansion of Iran's port infrastructure and logistics capacity, despite international sanctions and logistical challenges.

value compared to the same period last year, the official stated.

The average customs value of exported goods was \$338 per ton, down 5.6 percent year-on-year, he added.

Petrochemical exports during the quarter totaled 11.133 million tons, valued at \$4.684 billion, which marks a 28.7 percent decline in weight and a 24.5 percent decrease in value from the year before, Asgari stated.

He said that the top non-oil export items

were liquefied propane at \$874 million, liquefied butane at \$611 million, methanol at \$576 million, petroleum bitumen at \$574 million, and natural gas at \$456 million.

China was Iran's largest export destination with purchases totaling \$3.511 billion. It was followed by Iraq at \$1.905 billion, the United Arab Emirates at \$1.592 billion, Turkey at \$937 million, Afghanistan at \$510 million, Oman at \$437 million, and Pakistan at \$420 million, according to the IRICA head.

From Trojan dock to airdrop drama: US and Israel’s Gaza deception



Israel is accused of using platforms like YouTube to deflect blame for the starvation and killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza

From page 1 ▶ Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the head of the World Health Organization, also said Gaza is suffering from man-made mass starvation caused by the blockade of aid into the territory.

Despite growing international pressure, Israel continued to block key food items, bombed aid convoys, and targeted displaced people near distribution points.

Israel has attempted to suggest that there is no hunger in Gaza, or that if hunger does exist, it is not Israel's fault — instead blaming Hamas, the UN, and aid organizations for problems with aid distribution. It has also used platforms such as YouTube to remove itself from blame for the starvation and killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

But the comments made by Amichay Eliyahu, a lawmaker who leads Israel's Heritage Ministry, have contradicted the regime's narrative.

"The government is racing ahead for Gaza to be wiped out... Thank God, we are wiping out this evil. We are pushing this population that has been educated on 'Mein Kampf,'" Eliyahu said last week.

In an apparent attempt to de-

flect attention from its starvation campaign, the Israeli military on Sunday began a daily "tactical pause" of its operations in parts of Gaza and established new aid corridors. It also resumed aid airdrops in northern Gaza — a move that has drawn strong backlash.

Nearly a dozen Palestinians were injured by an aid airdrop in northern Gaza when one of the pallets fell directly on tents where displaced people are living, according to medical sources.

Aid officials describe airdrops as inefficient and unsafe. Philippe Lazzarini, the head of UNRWA, warned: "Airdrops are a last resort. They're expensive, random, and dangerous. The only serious solution is to allow aid trucks in at scale."

The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor strongly condemned the airdrops, calling them "humiliating and ineffective" in addressing the deepening starvation in Gaza. It stressed that only the opening of land corridors in sufficient quantities can meet the needs of the besieged population.

The group described the airdrops as: "Another layer of Palestinian humiliation and a tool of engineered starvation" designed



In June 2024, Israeli forces reportedly hid inside a humanitarian truck from a US-built port to raid Nuseirat camp, killing nearly 300 Palestinians

to serve Israel's political and military goals.

"We warn against using these drops as a distraction to deflect rising international pressure," the Monitor added.

Hamas echoed the criticism, saying it considers Israel's airdrop operations and limited humanitarian corridors in Gaza a "symbolic, deceptive move aimed at whitewashing its image before the world."

In a statement on Sunday, Hamas said: "Israel is deflecting international demands to lift the siege and end the starvation campaign against Palestinians," calling it part of "a calculated policy to manage famine, impose coercive realities, and subject civilians to danger and humiliation."

"The arrival of food and medicine to Gaza is not a favor, it is a natural right and an urgent necessity to stop the catastrophe imposed by the Nazi-like occupation."

Observers say Israel's resort to aid airdrops is an effort to obscure its growing international isolation. The United States — accused of enabling Israel's genocide in Gaza — employed the same tactic last year to cover

up its complicity in the conflict.

In March 2024, the administration of former President Joe Biden announced the construction of a temporary pier on Gaza's coastline to allow humanitarian aid to enter the territory. The move immediately raised suspicions about Washington's ulterior motives.

These suspicions deepened in June 2024, when an Israeli raid on the Nuseirat refugee camp killed nearly 300 Palestinians, ostensibly to free four Israeli captives. Reports suggest Israeli ground forces hid inside a truck used for the delivery of humanitarian aid to infiltrate the camp. That truck had come from the American-built port.

In effect, the aid truck that left the US-built port acted as a Trojan Horse — enabling Israel to massacre Palestinians under the guise of humanitarian relief.

Both Israel and the United States have acknowledged that they want to depopulate Gaza and pave the way for settlers to move in. Aid airdrops and similar tactics are just part of their broader strategy to distract the world from what many now describe as a campaign of engineered starvation and ethnic cleansing.

For his part, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said, "The melody is sad, the lyrics are heartbreaking, and a black curtain has fallen on a Rahbani-led, humane chapter that never dies."

Ziad Rahbani lived as a tributary of honorable, loyal fighters. He did not exploit his art and fame to climb on the shoulders of his people and comrades. He foresaw a future of imperialist and Zionist subservience, as he was an astute reader of a changing world in an age of decadent art.

The late artist revealed he had repeatedly declined invitations from the U.S. Embassy in Beirut.

He was the Lebanese internationalist who believed until his last breath that "liberating Palestine is possible, even if it takes a very long time."

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine mourned the artist, noting that he "was a living national conscience and an intellectual engaged with the causes of his people, siding with the poor and rejecting injustice."

Rahbani lived as an icon of cultural rebellion and a genius of satirical political theater. Lebanon lost a stubborn and bold creator who was the voice of the poor and the embodiment of the memory of a nation riddled with wounds. He was one of the most venerable icons of Lebanese art, thought, and humanist philosophy. He refused to compromise his principles for the dirhams offered by the Persian Gulf's anti-Resistance media empire.

Israel intercepts Gaza-bound activist boat carrying food aid

The Israeli foreign ministry claimed that its navy stopped the boat "from illegally entering the maritime zone of the coast of Gaza" and breaking the blockade there.

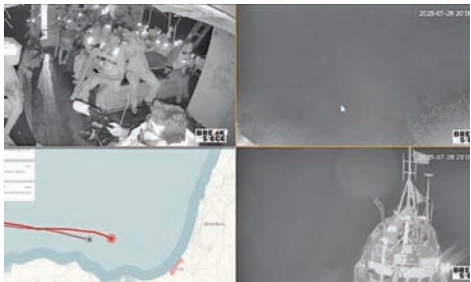
Meanwhile, the FFC said Handala's crew of 19 activists and two journalists from various countries - including Australia, France, the UK and the US - had been "kidnapped" by Israeli soldiers.

The group also posted a number of videos with crew members urging people around the world to put pressure on their respective governments to "sanction" Israel.

The boat was carrying baby formula to Gaza, one of the FFC activists said in a post on social media.

In June, a yacht with 12 activists on board - including Sweden's Greta Thunberg - was intercepted by the Israeli military about 185km (115 miles) west of Gaza.

That expedition, also organized by the FFC, had been aiming to deliver aid to Gaza in defiance of Israel's blockade and to highlight the humanitarian crisis there.



At the time, the Israeli foreign ministry claimed it was a "selfie yacht" carrying "less than a single truckload of aid".

Israel stopped all deliveries of humanitarian aid and commercial supplies to Gaza on March 2 and resumed its military offensive two weeks later, collapsing a two-month ceasefire with Hamas.

Israel has since been prioritizing aid distribution through the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which is backed by the US.

The UN and other aid groups are refusing to co-operate with the new system, saying it contravenes the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

More Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Israeli occupation regime suffers mounting casualties as Palestinian resistance intensifies.

Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) have admitted the deaths of more soldiers in the totally blockaded Gaza Strip.

In one major incident a maintenance and technology officer and a soldier from the elite Golani Brigade died following an attack by Palestinian resistance fighters.

The fighters detonated an explosive device targeting a Namer armored personnel carrier (APC) in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip.

According to the regime's newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth, members of al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, had attached the explosive device to the APC, causing it to catch fire.

Further details reported by Hebrew media indicate that armed fighters emerged from a tunnel near the Golani unit's deployment area in Khan Younis.

They approached the Namer APC and planted the explosive device directly onto it. Initial investigations reveal that three soldiers inside the vehicle were injured in the blast. Two of them died at the scene, while the third received field treatment and was later airlifted to the hospital by an IOF military helicopter.

Hebrew media indicate the number of fatalities and injured soldiers from the attack is higher than what is being officially announced.

Separately, the IOF confirmed the death of another soldier who succumbed to wounds sustained earlier when an explosive device targeted a military vehicle in Gaza.

Hebrew media further reported a new "security incident" in Khan Younis, with five IOF soldiers injured, including a brigade commander.

Earlier, the IOF also confirmed the death of a soldier from Ashkelon.

These announcements come amid ongoing operations by Palestinian resistance forces, who continue to carry out ambushes and attacks against the IOF across multiple fronts in the Gaza Strip, inflicting both human and material losses.

The al-Qassam Brigades reported that they carried out a complex ambush targeting three IOF armored personnel carriers east of Khan Younis, southern Gaza.

According to their statement, the resistance fighters detonated two "Fedayeen-type" explosive devices that had been pre-planted inside the command compartments of two APCs, causing them to burn completely along with their crews.

A third APC was struck by a guided missile of the "Yassin 105" type in the area of eastern Abasan, also near Khan Younis.

The statement added that al-Qassam resistance fighters later observed an IOF military bulldozer attempting to bury the damaged vehicles to extinguish the flames. IOF helicopters were seen landing at the site to evacuate personnel.

In a separate statement, the al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, announced that their resistance fighters had successfully destroyed an IOF military bulldozer (D9 model) using a high-powered "Thaqib" explosive device. The attack took place east of Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza.

Al-Quds Brigades also released footage showing the detonation of a minefield using high-explosive devices targeting IOF military vehicles advancing east of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza.

Farewell Ziad Rahbani, icon of resistance art

From page 1 ▶ Ziad Rahbani's last words were: "Living without Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah is hell. If I die, it will be out of grief over his loss, not from illness."

Rahbani met Sayyed Nasrallah twice. During their first meeting, he described himself as very shy, filled with feelings of astonishment, embarrassment, and shock.

During their second meeting, he said in a harsh southern accent, "I came today and I want to stay with you. I don't want to leave. I want to live with you. If you want, I can pray and fast like you (Shiite Muslims). Please, let me stay with you."

Sayyed Nasrallah smiled, telling him, "The world loves you because you are not Shiite. We are people destined for injustice. Stay Christian so you remain popular. It is enough for you that you are with the Resistance and a genuine artist."

In one of his interviews, he said that his mother, Fairuz, loves Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, asserting that "attacking Fairuz for cherishing Sayyed Nasrallah is in favor of Israel," emphasizing, "If Fairuz had not been with the Resistance, there would have been a problem between us, and I would not have composed her songs."

"I support Hezbollah's choices, even if it goes to fight in the farthest reaches of the world (referring to defending Syria 2011–2018 in the face of takfiri militants)" wondering, "How could Hezbollah not go to Syria, when it is thus defending the en-



tire region against the attack it is facing?"

The late Rahbani believed that the fate of Syria and Lebanon is common, and that there can be no crisis in Syria without Lebanon being affected. Rahbani predicted that there would be further destruction in Syria, but that there would be an end.

Hezbollah mourned the death of Rahbani. It said: "Through his art and his stances, he embodied a model of purposeful art in the service of the nation and humanity."

Hezbollah noted that Rahbani "painted on his stage the true image of the homeland that every person dreams of—a homeland of unity, dignity, and coexistence. He became a source of inspiration for all free people in defending just causes."

Hezbollah affirmed that Rahbani "with his immortal legacy, will remain a beacon of hope

for future generations, drawing from the wellspring of his art and thought to build a free and resilient homeland."

Many officials and political, social, and artistic figures mourned his death. President Joseph Aoun said Rahbani "was not just an artist, but a complete intellectual and cultural figure." The president added, "More than that, he was a living conscience, a rebellious voice against injustice, and an honest mirror for the suffering and marginalized. He wrote about people's pain and played on the strings of truth, without equivocation."

Prime Minister Nawaf Salam stated that "with the passing of Ziad Rahbani, Lebanon loses an exceptionally creative artist and a free voice who remained loyal to the values of justice and dignity and embodied a profound commitment to human and national issues."

Photo of the day



Protesters gathered in the Australian city of Sydney to rally against the Israeli invasion and siege of Gaza, following Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's statement that his government would not recognize Palestinian statehood "imminently." [Dean Lewins/EPA]

Iran seeks to facilitate travel for its expatriates



TEHRAN - Seyyed Zia Hashemi, Cultural Deputy to the First Vice President of Iran, has announced efforts by the government and parliament to ease travel procedures for millions of Iranians living abroad who wish to visit their homeland.

Speaking on Saturday at a quarterly meeting of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in Tehran, he emphasized the strong interest among expatriates to travel to Iran.

Earlier this year, the deputy tourism minister,

Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey, highlighted that around eight to nine million Iranians live abroad.

He stressed the importance of adopting a strategic and trust-building approach to attract them for tourism or extended stays. Available data suggests that some 7.3 million foreign tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the past Persian year 1403, which ended on March 20, 2025.

As mentioned by, Mohseni-Bandpey, the data is based on internationally recognized definitions of tourism, which classify any individual who stays at least one night in a destination as a traveler, whether Iranian expatriates or foreign nationals.

The deputy minister noted that the ministry maintains detailed and disaggregated data regarding the origin countries of the visitors, the number of arrivals, and their destinations within Iran. The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots, such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 29 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Discover Qeshm, the largest island of the Persian Gulf

TEHRAN - Qeshm Island, the largest island in the Persian Gulf, is where natural wonders, strategic geography, and ancient culture intersect.

Covering 1,491 square kilometers, Qeshm is larger than many countries, including Bahrain and Singapore. Located opposite the coast of Hormozgan province in southern Iran and about 22 kilometers from Bandar Abbas, the island sits at the entrance of the Strait of Hormuz—one of the world's most crucial maritime trade routes.

Beyond its strategic location, Qeshm is celebrated for its rich biodiversity. The island hosts the Hara Forests, an extensive mangrove ecosystem spanning over 8,000 hectares.

Recognized by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve, these forests provide vital breeding grounds for migratory birds, fish, and reptiles, playing a key role in maintaining the ecological balance of the Persian Gulf.

Qeshm is also home to 26 geosites that form the Qeshm Island Geopark—the Middle East's first UNESCO Global Geopark, registered in 2006, briefly removed, and reinstated in 2017 following improved conservation efforts.

Often described as a "natural geology museum," Qeshm features a variety of spectacular rock formations and landscapes.

The Valley of the Stars is among its most iconic sites -- a labyrinth of narrow canyons and towering formations carved over millennia by wind and rain. Local legends say a star once fell here, lending the valley its name and mystical reputation.

Another highlight is Chahkooh Canyon, a natural marvel etched into salt-limestone mountains by centuries of water erosion. With vertical cliffs and tight gorges, Chahkooh offers both tourists and geologists an unforgettable experience.



Qeshm also hosts the Namakdan (Salt) Cave, one of the world's longest salt caves, stretching over six kilometers. The cave features salt stalactites and ancient crystal formations estimated to be over 500 million years old, as well as underground salt rivers. Its salt is known for medicinal properties, especially in treating respiratory ailments.

Qeshm is home to diverse ethnic groups preserving a wealth of cultural traditions. Traditional crafts such as Lenj-building (wooden dhow shipbuilding), Bandari embroidery, and mat weaving remain vibrant, keeping centuries-old maritime and cultural heritage alive. Women on the island often wear distinctive face masks, or "burqas," a local tradition with both cultural and practical origins.

Qeshm Island is one of Iran's best-kept secrets, where myths and minerals, culture and commerce, nature and narrative converge. As Iran seeks to expand tourism and diversify its economy, Qeshm stands out as a model of balancing natural beauty with strategic development.

For travelers, scientists, investors, and policymakers alike, Qeshm offers a unique destination rich with history, geology, and human resilience, waiting to be explored, studied, and preserved.

Continuous human settlement in Hamedan confirmed from Achaemenid era to Present

TEHRAN - Archaeologists conducting excavations at the Baba Taher pedestrian pathway in Hamedan have uncovered evidence of continuous human settlement in the area dating from the Achaemenid period (circa 550–330 BC) to the present day, according to local experts.

The excavation, which began in May last year during municipal infrastructure work, aimed to prepare the site for the country's first open-air museum along Baba Taher Street. However, the project has stalled, and the uncovered area has suffered damage from rainfall and improper use as a waste disposal site.

"We focused initially on stratigraphic analysis of this part of Hamedan, followed by archaeological excavation to support the transformation of the pedestrian way into a site museum," said the lead archaeologist of the project, Hossein Shabani.

During the dig, the team discovered architectural remains dating back to the Islamic Middle Ages, specifically the Seljuk and Timurid periods (11th to 15th centuries). Among these was a residential building with a water supply system using a small canal, which remained in use until the Qajar era (1789–1925).

"The archaeological structures include multiple rooms with distinct uses and kitchen hearths inside," Shabani said. "This provides a comprehensive example of Islamic architectural styles in Hamedan spanning several centuries."

The site also yielded artifacts from the Ilkhanid period (13th–14th centuries), featuring a building constructed from river stones and slabs.

"The excavations confirmed a continuous sequence of human habitation here from the Achaemenid era through Islamic periods to modern times," Shabani added.



Historically known as Ecbatana, Hamedan was the capital of the ancient Median Empire and served as a summer residence for Achaemenid kings who ruled Persia from 553 to 330 BC.

Ancient Greek historians such as Xenophon and Polybius describe the city's palace complex as richly decorated with cedar and cypress wood plated with gold and silver.

Despite its historical significance, little remains visible from antiquity, and much of the city center has been subjected to archaeological digs. Early excavations began in the early 20th century by French and German-American archaeologists.

The team plans to complete the open-air museum project by the end of summer 2025, pending preservation of the site.

Ecbatana is widely believed to be once a mysterious capital of Medes. According to ancient Greek writers, the city was founded in about 678 BC by Deioces, who was the first king of the Medes.

French Assyriologist Charles

Fossey (1869 – 1946) directed the first excavation in Tepe Hegmateneh for six months in 1913. Erich Friedrich Schmidt (1897 – 1964), who was a German and American-naturalized archaeologist, took some aerial photos from Hamedan between 1935 and 1937.

According to the Greek historian Xenophon of Athens (c.430–c.355), Ecbatana became the summer residence of the Achaemenid kings. Their palace is described by the Greek historian Polybius of Megalopolis.

He writes that the city was richer and more beautiful than all other cities in the world; although it had no wall, the palace, built on an artificial terrace, according to Livius, a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

Furthermore, an inscription unearthed in 2000 indicates that Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404–358) built a terrace with columns in Ecbatana. Some twelve kilometers southwest of

Hamedan is Ganjnameh, where Darius I and his son Xerxes had inscriptions cut into the rock.

Polybius, a Greek historian of the Hellenistic period noted for his work The Histories, tells that the builders used cedar and cypress wood, which was covered with silver and gold.

The roof tiles, columns, and ceilings were plated with silver and gold. He adds that the palace was stripped of its precious metals in the invasion of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great and that the rest was seized during the reigns of Antigonus and Seleucus.

Later, Ecbatana was one of the capitals of the Seleucid and the Parthian Empires, sometimes called Epiphaneia.

Around 1220, Hamedan was destroyed by the Mongol invaders. In 1386, it was sacked by Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, and the inhabitants were massacred. It was partly restored in the 17th century and subsequently changed hands often between Iranian ruling houses and the Ottomans.

Centuries-old qanats in Ardakan undergo restoration



TEHRAN - Restoration and rehabilitation work has begun on a series of historic qanats located in the old urban fabric of Ardakan, Yazd province, as part of a preservation initiative for the region's ancient water infrastructure, local officials said.

The restoration program, announced on Sunday by cultural heritage authorities in

Yazd, includes several interventions designed to preserve the structural integrity and traditional function of the qanats.

Major pillars of the restoration plan include disconnecting wastewater lines that have been illegally connected to the qanat paths, removing accumulated wastewater, trimming and reshaping the qanat tunnel walls, and reinforcing the vertical water access shafts.

The project also involves repairing staircases of the Qanats, along with pointing and plastering to improve both safety and durability.

The initiative aims to prevent tunnel collapses, maintain the original underground architecture, and support potential tourism uses of the qanat infrastructure.

Qanats are ancient subterranean water channels that transport groundwater from

aquifers to the surface using gravity. The system, developed over 2,000 years ago, supports agriculture and settlement in Iran's arid regions. Ardakan, a historical city in central Iran, relies heavily on this traditional water distribution method.

Each qanat typically includes a gently sloped tunnel extending for kilometers underground, with vertical shafts constructed at regular intervals to remove excavated material and allow airflow. These shafts are visible from the surface and often mark the line of the qanat.

The water drawn from the underground aquifer is distributed through a network of open-air channels and is shared by multiple stakeholders through a long-standing communal management system. Many qanats also include auxiliary structures such as reservoirs, public bathhouses, rest areas, and watermills.

Second Announcement



N.I.S.O.C

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 08-21-0240002

The National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) is seeking to procure the specified goods listed in the table below through a Qualitative Evaluation Call for conducting a public tender via the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD). All stages of the tender process including the receipt of tender documents, submission of bidders' proposals, and the opening of bid envelopes, shall be carried out exclusively through the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD) portal at www.setadiran.ir. Bidders who have not previously registered must complete the registration process on the aforementioned portal and obtain an Electronic Signature certificate to participate in the tender.

Item	Material Description	Quantity
1	TUBING 1.5 IN., API GRADE L-80, SEAMLESS/"HYDRIL CS" THREAD, R-2, PSL: 2, 4.19 PPF	4,000LE

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 83,387/86 EURO or 65,682,450,800 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS CFR, BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.A.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran Tel. No.: 061 34 12 4644 Fax No.: 061 34 45 74 37
Public Relations www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir <http://iets.mporg.ir>

Second Announcement



N.I.S.O.C

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 08-38-0340004

The National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) is seeking to procure the specified goods listed in the table below through a Qualitative Evaluation Call for conducting a public tender via the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD). All stages of the tender process including the receipt of tender documents, submission of bidders' proposals, and the opening of bid envelopes, shall be carried out exclusively through the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD) portal at www.setadiran.ir. Bidders who have not previously registered must complete the registration process on the aforementioned portal and obtain an Electronic Signature certificate to participate in the tender.

Item	Material Description	Quantity
3	POLYCRYSTALLIN DIAMOND COMPACT(PDC) 4-1/8 IN. TYPE AS SPECIFIED LEVEL OF INSPECTION: 2 (L.O.I.: 2) THE BIT 4-1/8 X 2-3/8 IN. NOZZLES SIZE 11/32 IN. & 13/32 IN.	70NO 72NO

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 27,728/91 EURO or 21,456,660,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS CFR, BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.A.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

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Iran ranks second at International Biology Olympiad

TEHRAN – Four Iranian students clinched three gold medals and a silver medal at the 36th International Biology Olympiad (IBO 2025), ranking second among 81 countries, up from third in 2024.

Siavash Pezeshpour, Ali Soleiman-zadeh Kalahrudi, and Ali-Akbar Nourollahi won the gold medals, while Radin Bayani secured the silver medal at the competition which was held from July 19 to 27 in Quezon City, Philippines, PANA reported.

IBO is the world's premier biology competition for secondary school students. This year, the competition brought together 81 delegations from 81 countries and territories (including 3 observer delegations), and a total of 298 contestants, who competed in a series of theoretical and practical examinations in the field of biology.

The Theoretical Exams of the IBO test the competitors' understanding, processing, and application of biological knowledge. There are two exams, each with a duration of three hours.

The Practical Exams of the IBO consist of tasks that evaluate the competitors' ability to solve biological problems using skills and methods commonly used in biological laboratories. There are four exams, each with a duration of one (1) hour and 30 minutes.

The 35th edition of IBO had been held in Astana, Kazakhstan, from July 7 to 14, 2024. Iranian students succeeded in winning two gold medals and two silver medals.

Recent achievements

Five Iranian students secured silver medals at the 55th International Physics Olympiad, ranking 11th globally.

Held from July 18 to 24 in Paris, the IPHO 2025 brought together 440 candidates from over 90 countries.

Mohammad-Hassan Sadeqinejad Simaki, Arya Zarabi, Ilya Qashae, Mohammah-Hassan Golabdar, and Milad Mohammadi won silver medals, IRIB reported.



The primary goal of IPHO is to examine, to the highest level, the knowledge, analytical skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in theoretical and experimental physics.

Two five-hour tests, drawn up by the host country and amended by the leaders of the teams involved, are open to candidates competing individually. The first is experimental, using equipment supplied to the candidates. The second is theoretical, focusing on phenomena and their modeling.

The 54th edition of the IPHO was hosted by Isfahan University of Technology, Iran. Iranian students who attended the 54th IPHO managed to win a gold medal and four silver medals.

Iran grabbed two gold medals, three silver medals, and a bronze medal at the 66th International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO 2025), held from July 10-20 in Australia.

Hosted by the Australian Maths Trust, the event attracted more than 600 high school students from 112 countries.

The competition represents the culmination of many years of mathematical endeavour and hundreds of attempts at solving problems.

Bardia Khosh-Eqbal and Mehdi Aqajanloo grabbed gold medals, Mohammad-Reza Attaranzadeh, Mohammad-Sajad Memari, and Amir-Hossein Zarei secured silver medals, while Parsa Tajallaei won a bronze.

The IMO is the largest and most prestigious of all the international Olympiads, having grown from seven countries to over a hundred each year. IMO brings the brightest young minds from around the world and represents the culmination of many years of mathematical endeavour and hundreds of attempts at solving problems. Australia has participated since 1981 and has hosted only once before (Canberra, 1988).

The team had ranked second in the 3rd International Mathematics Summer Camp (IMSC) held in Beijing, China, from June 20 to July 12, 2025.

Bardia Khosh-Eqbal grabbed a gold medal, Mehdi Aqajanloo, Parsa Tajallaei, Mohammad-Reza Attaranzadeh, and Mohammad-Sajad Memari won silver medals, and Amir-Hossein Zarei won a bronze medal, IRIB reported.

It was a three-week training program designed to strengthen students' problem-solving skills in elementary mathematical fields, including algebra, geometry, number theory, combinatorics, and to enrich their analytic thinking, fostering a passion for math.

IMSC 2025 brought together over 300 people, including students and lecturers, from 32 countries such as Belarus, Belgium, Cameroon, Germany, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, the United States, Romania, Poland, and Uzbekistan.

The 65th IMO was held from

July 11 to 22, 2024, in Bath, United Kingdom. Some 108 countries and 609 students competed. The Iranian team scored 137 points, earning 19th place.

Attending the second International Mathematics Olympiad for high school students in Turkmenistan, Iranian students managed to win seven bronze medals.

Hosted by Ashgabat specialised General Education School, the event was held from April 21 to 26.

More than 230 talented students from 15 countries, including Russia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Iran, Armenia, Bulgaria, Nepal, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Qatar, and Turkmenistan, took part in the competition.

Thirty-one students from North Khorasan represented Iran in the second Olympiad. Mohammad-Javad Kamali Kalati, Arya Mohammadi Razi, Mahsa Abron, Sajjad Azizi, Mahyar Forooghifar, Yalda Mesrzadeh, and Setayesh Rahimi won bronze medals, Tasnim news agency reported.

Iranian students won two silver and two bronze medals, ranking fourth at the Turkic International Mathematics Olympiad (TIMO) held from April 17 to 22, in Antalya.

TIMO is an international event that is open to students from grades 3 to 12. The competition is held in two rounds, including the preliminary and global rounds.

In the preliminary round, over 27,350 students from 35 countries competed against each other online in December. The offline qualifying exam had 25 multiple-choice questions, administered for 60 minutes.

In the Global round, which was held paper-based, 1,500 selected participants attended the event.

Parnian Heydarian and Anusha Abdi grabbed silver medals and won the world star awards, while Fatemeh Mazini and Ava Dejagah won bronze medals.

SOCIETY

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

7

Tehran, Baghdad to boost counter-narcotics ties during Arbadeen

TEHRAN – Iran and Iraq counter-narcotics police have discussed ways to enhance their cooperation in the fight against narcotics, particularly during the Arbadeen pilgrimage.

In a meeting held on Saturday at the Mehran border point, the closest Iranian border city to Baghdad, Iran's anti-narcotics police chief, Iraj Kakavand, and his Iraqi counterpart, Ahmed Al-Zarkani, highlighted the significance of strengthening counter-narcotics collaborations between the two neighboring countries.

The Arbadeen pilgrimage, which is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, comes 40 days after Ashura, the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of Shia Muslims, and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Each year, a huge crowd of people floods to Karbala, where the holy shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) is located, to perform mourning rituals. This year it falls on August 14.

combating drug smuggling

In January, Al-Zarkani, highlighted the need to enhance joint activities on combating drug smuggling and sharing expertise between the two countries.

Lauding Iran's efforts in the war against narcotics, Al-Zarkani said, "We welcome boosting joint activities with Iran's anti-narcotics police and look forward to expanding cooperation on other drug-related issues," ISNA reported.

The official made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran with Kakavand. The Iraqi official highlighted the significance of exchanging information on drug traffickers, as well.



"Targeted, comprehensive fight against anti-narcotics requires a lot of efforts and goes beyond the national borders of the two countries; by fostering cooperation, we will be able to adopt appropriate measures to deal more decisively with drug trafficking," Al-Zarkani noted.

The Iranian official, for his part, underscored the need to intensify the fight against armed drug traffickers on the joint borders.

Controlling the borders and drug traffickers who buy and sell weapons in exchange for drug trafficking on joint borders will lower the opportunity for any criminal activities by the armed drug smugglers at the borders, Kakavand stressed.

Following formerly signed memorandums of understanding, Iran's anti-narcotics police is willing to boost collaborations on simultaneous border patrols, learning about the drug smuggling methods and transit routes, establishing a specialized team to deal with specific cases, and exchanging information on smugglers and those arrested.

Health minister calls for intervention of global community to save civilians in Gaza

TEHRAN – Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi has called on the global community to make immediate intervention to end humanitarian crises in Gaza and help rescue civilians.

In an open letter addressing international bodies, Zafarqandi expressed deep sorrow over the catastrophic situation in Gaza, highlighting that the scope of violence, which is primarily targeting women and children, has gone beyond critical levels, IRNA reported.

Referring to the collapse of the public health system in Gaza, he described the situation as 'the deliberate destruction of the very essence of human life' and called on the global community to respond immediately and effectively to what he called 'ongoing collective punishment, ethnic cleansing, and genocide'.

The official went on to say that infants are dying in their mothers' arms from hunger and thirst; according to the latest reports, more than thirty-two percent of children under the age of two are suffering from severe malnutrition.

Condemning Zionist regime's measures, Zafarqandi asked international community to take prompt actions such as establishing field hospitals, dispatching relief teams to address food crisis in cooperation with their international partners, lifting blockade and paving the way for the delivery of the UN humanitarian aid including food and medicines, as well as allocating emergency financial and logistic resources within the next 48 hours to end the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

This is not a request letter, but a human, ethical, and professional responsibility, the official said, underlining that any hour delay costs innocent lives.

Erasing Gaza via starvation

Israel's relentless military assault on Gaza continues to leave a trail of death, destruction, and starvation, as the international community remains largely passive in the face of what many now describe as a deliberate campaign of extermination.

On Monday (July 21) alone, Israeli strikes killed dozens more Palestinians, according to medical sources. Just a day earlier, Israeli troops slaughtered more than 100 Palestinians across the besieged strip — including 92



unarmed civilians who were shot dead while desperately seeking food near the Zikim crossing in northern Gaza and at aid distribution points in Rafah and Khan Younis.

The humanitarian crisis has reached catastrophic levels under Israel's suffocating siege, which has pushed Gaza to the edge of famine. With vital crossings sealed and aid severely restricted, Gaza's 2.3 million residents face starvation in real time.

The UNRWA has sounded the alarm, revealing it is receiving "desperate messages of starvation" from inside Gaza — including from its own staff. In a post on X, the agency wrote: "Food prices have increased 40-fold. Meanwhile, just outside Gaza, stockpiled in warehouses UNRWA has enough food for the entire population for over three months."

Calling the crisis "manmade," UNRWA demanded urgent intervention: "The suffering in Gaza is manmade and must be stopped. Lift the siege and let aid in safely and at scale."

The WFP echoed these warnings. Antoine Renard, WFP's representative for Palestine, told Al Jazeera from occupied East Jerusalem (al-Quds): "You have a level of despair that people are ready to risk their lives just to reach any of the assistance actually coming into Gaza. Just to give you an idea, [the price of] 1kg of flour is currently \$100."

Renard added that many families are going days without food, surviving on meals every third day. He noted that only a "very limited" number of charity kitchens are still operating, with malnutrition soaring and fainting among civilians becoming increasingly common.

"[There's a] soaring number of people facing malnutrition, and we can really see that the situation is really getting to levels that we've never seen ever before."

Some 125 earthquakes shake Iran in a week

TEHRAN – A total of 123 earthquakes were recorded across the country in a week from June 19 to July 25, according to the seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Statistically, 110 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3; 11 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4; one earthquake with a magnitude between 4 and 5, and one with a magnitude between 5 and 6 have occurred in the country, IRNA reported.

Of the total quakes, one had a magnitude of 5.1 on the Richter scale, which occurred on June 20 in Semnan province.

Among the provinces of the country, Sem-

nan, with 24, experienced the highest number of earthquakes, followed by Khorasan Razavi and Isfahan with 16 and 12 earthquakes, respectively.

During the same period, one earthquake hit Tehran province. No earthquakes were recorded in East Azarbaijan, Ardabil, Ilam, Zanjan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Qazvin, Kordestan, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, and Gilan provinces.

A total of 6,272 earthquakes were recorded across the country over the past calendar year (March 2024 –March 2025) according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Out of registered earthquakes, 150 were more than 4 on the Richter scale; at least five earthquakes with a magnitude of more than 4.5 occurred monthly in the country.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes in the world occur in Iran, but more than 6 percent of the victims of the world's earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Excessive use of renewable water in Kerman 'worrisome'

Excessive withdrawal of renewable water, equaling 123 percent of the current volume, in the southeastern province of Kerman, has raised great concerns while posing a serious threat to the life of residents and region's biodiversity.

"Currently, there are 5.5 billion cubic meters of renewable water in Kerman province, but 6.8 billion cubic meters equivalent to 123 percent of renewable water resources is being used," IRNA quoted Reza Jazinizadeh, the head of Kerman province's department of environment, as saying on Thursday.

In the [13]40s (falling on 1960s), concurrent with the establishment of the Ministry of Energy, renewable water resources measured at 90 million cubic meters, and some 50 million cubic meters out of this amount was withdrawn, Jazinizadeh explained.

برداشت بیش از حد آبهای تجدیدپذیر در کرمان نگران کننده است

مدیرکل حفاظت محیط زیست استان کرمان گفت: برداشت ۱۲۳ درصد از آبهای تجدیدپذیر در این استان که حیات انسانی و جانوری را با تهدید جدی مواجه کرده، نگران کننده است.

وی تصریح کرد: در حال حاضر در استان کرمان ۵.۵ میلیارد متر مکعب آب تجدیدپذیر داریم که ۶.۸ میلیارد مترمکعب معادل ۱۲۳درصد آبهای تجدید پذیر برداشت و مورد استفاده قرار می گیرد. رضا جزینی زاده روز پنجشنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: در دهه ۱۳۴۰ با تشکیل وزارت نیرو در کشور میزان برداشت آب از سفره های زیرزمینی مورد بررسی قرار گرفت و مشخص شد که در کشور ۹۰ میلیون مترمکعب آب تجدید پذیر وجود دارد و از این میزان ۵۰ میلیون مترمکعب برداشت می شود.

TEHRAN TIMES



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JULY 28, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*The mind of a wise man is the safest custody of secrets;
cheerfulness is the key to friendship; patience and forbearance
will conceal many defects.*

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times ➤ Noon:12:11 Evening: 19:32 Dawn: 3:32 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:10 (tomorrow)

Iran’s “Confusion” on stage at Georgian theater festival

TEHRAN – Iran’s renowned theater group Amitis will present its acclaimed production “Confusion,” written and directed by Mohammad Amin Saadi, as Iran’s official representative at the International Festival of Regional Theaters currently underway in Poti, Georgia.

Having completed over 70 performances across Tehran, “Confusion” is now competing at the festival, which will continue until August 1.

The festival features eleven theater groups from France, Romania, Iran, Georgia, and Lithuania.

“Confusion,” which previously received nominations at the Fajr International Theater Festival in categories including directing, acting, costume design, and makeup, continues to garner recognition for its artistic excellence.

The play is a loose adaptation of French writer and screenwriter Joël Egloff’s novel “L’Etourdissement,” translated into Persian by Asghar Nouri. It explores themes of identity and resilience through a compelling narrative.

“Confusion” is a poetic novel that explores the life of a young man working in an unlikely and bleak setting—the slaughterhouse nestled between an airport, a supermarket, and a landfill. Living alone with his irritable grandmother, the narrator’s existence is marked by monotony and a sense of stagnation. He

reflects on his job, describing it as a bleeding wound that has persisted for so long it leaves him dizzy, embodying a metaphor for his emotional and existential fatigue.

Amidst this routine, subtle hints of love and longing emerge. During breaks, he observes girls and dreams of a schoolteacher he has glimpsed but fears to approach, revealing his deep-seated yearning for connection and meaning. His friendships with a few companions spark plans for fleeting trips and adventures, moments of escapism from his monotonous reality.

Despite its seemingly mundane and absurd surface, the novel masterfully paints a portrait of life that is both bleak and beautifully poetic. The author weaves a narrative filled with quirky characters, surprising and humorous scenes, all set within an atmosphere reminiscent of a generous fairy tale—one imbued with hope, humanity, and the complex beauty of ordinary life.

The cast includes Fardin Rahmanpour and Sahar Qasemi, who bring to life the characters through innovative performance techniques such as shadow play.

The International Festival of Regional Theaters is held annually in July in the city of Poti, uniting theater companies from various countries to showcase performances, foster connections, and build friendships.

English actor Michael Caine joins call to end child starvation in Gaza

Veteran English actor Michael Caine has spoken out on social media about the worsening humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, voicing deep sympathy for children suffering under the ongoing “Israeli” siege.

In a pair of emotional posts shared on X, the 91-year-old actor wrote:

“Feed the Children of Gaza, no child should be starving.”

Followed by: “Cannot look at children in Gaza begging for food. Geldof, feed kids.

Want to allow the innocent a life.”

Caine’s rare public comments have been widely praised across social media platforms, with users thanking him for using his voice and demanding others do the same.

One post read: “No more Israel starving to death babies and children. No more ‘Israel’ carrying out its genocide. Thank you, Michael Caine.”

Another user added: “Michael Caine is a class act. Feed the children of Palestine.”

Cartoon of Day



Pain of Gaza

Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

8 Iranian films to attend 24th DokuFest

TEHRAN – Eight films from Iran will participate in the 24th DokuFest, International Documentary and Short Film Festival, in Kosovo from August 1 to 9.

The Iranian participants include short and feature films as well as animated movies, some of which are joint productions with other countries, Honaron-line reported.

“Bug” written and directed by Ali Masoumi, “Cutting Through Rocks” by Mohammadreza Eyni and Sara Khaki, “DonkeyBat” by Mostafa Ghorbanpour, “FearISH” by Soheila Madadi, “One of Them” by Mostafa Vaziri, “Punishment” by Puya Mofid, “Razeh Del” by Maryam Tafakory, and “The Sacrificed Meat” by Hojat Jolodar are the Iranian films taking part in the upcoming edition of the festival.

A production of 2024, “Bug” is a short animation, running for six minutes. Produced by the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), “Bug” examines the enduring influence of parents’ behaviors and responses on their children’s development, tracing the long-term effects of these interactions from early childhood to adulthood,

The animation depicts a family of three that has recently moved in, and the little girl inspects the new home with curiosity, when a small cricket finds its way into their home as a surprise visitor. But with the father’s unexpected reaction, the child’s perspective begins to shift, turning a simple encounter into something far more unsettling.

The documentary “Cutting Through Rocks” tells the story of Sara Shahverdi, the first elected councilwoman of her village, who aims to break long-held patriarchal traditions by training teenage girls to ride motorcycles and stopping child marriages. When

A scene from “The Sacrificed Meat”

accusations arise questioning Sara’s intentions to empower the girls, her identity is put in turmoil.

A joint production of Iran, Germany, the U.S., Qatar, Netherlands, Chile, and Canada, the 95-minute movie was the winner of the World Cinema Documentary Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

“DonkeyBat,” made in 2024, is a nine-minute animation about a man who neglects his children and forgets the promise to take them to a kite festival in Spain. He spends all his time at work, ignoring his family and their dog.

One day, the children go to the festival on their own. In a story he once told them, anyone who neglects their family turns into a donkeybat. The dad turns into one at work and flies to the festival, where he helps his children and turns back into a human.

A 2024 production, the 4-minute “FearISH” depicts a hungry fish that searches for food in its aquarium, but its world is suddenly disrupted when it is struck by something unexpected.

A 14-minute film made in

2025, “One of Them” deals with a few teen and youthful protesters in Iran, who after being arrested by the police, are offered forced labor in lieu of imprisonment. They go on a terrifying mission in the dark of night.

The short film “Punishment,” produced in 2025 and running for 17 minutes, takes place in an elementary school. After a teacher severely punishes a Black student, the student develops a severe stutter and speech impairment. Doctors diagnose the issue as a result of psychological trauma.

“Razeh Del” is a joint production of Iran, Italy, and the UK. The 2024 film, 27 minutes, is about two girls who sent a letter to the first-ever women’s newspaper in Iran, titled “Zan,” in 1998. While they waited to get published, they considered making an impossible film. Using citations and image intervention, “Razeh Del” journeys through parallel histories of war on images of women.

A 2025 production, “The Sacrificed Meat,” 29 minutes, shows members of a family who go to their parent’s house to perform

their father’s annual tradition on Eid al-Adha. After sacrificing a sheep, they distribute the meat among neighbors and acquaintances. Everything goes on as normal until the mother of the family, for whom this day is very important, notices an urgent problem.

The largest film festival in Kosovo and recognized as one of the top film and music events in SouthEast Europe, DokuFest is an EFA nominating festival for short films, as well as a BAFTA qualifying festival for shorts.

In August, it fills the cinemas and improvised screening venues around historic city center of Prizren with a selection of more than 200 handpicked films from around the world, while at the same time bringing top international and local music acts to perform at DokuNights, its popular music strand.

Documentary photo exhibitions, debates, master classes, and lively atmosphere in the city all add to the charm of the festival, making it a must attend event at this part of the world.

“Iranian Cinema for the Homeland” program kicks off in Tehran

TEHRAN – The “Iranian Cinema for the Homeland” initiative was inaugurated on Saturday with a screening of a restored version of Abbas Kiarostami’s acclaimed film “Where Is the Friend’s House?”.

The event was attended by renowned Iranian figures including cinematographer and screenwriter Mahmoud Kalari and author Abdoljabar Kakai, ISNA reported.

The event, launched by the Cinema Organization of Iran (COI), aims to showcase five iconic and classic Iranian films, restored by the Iran National Film Archive. The initiative seeks to honor the rich cinematic heritage of Iran through a series of screenings and discussions, the report added.

Raed Fereidzadeh, Head of the COI, announced that the program, which commenced at the Cinema Museum, will continue across various cinemas nationwide.

The opening day featured the restored version of “Where Is the Friend’s House?”, directed and written by the late Abbas Kiarostami. The screening was followed by a panel discussion with participation from Mahmoud Kalari and Abdoljabar Kakai, moderated by Hamid Reza Modaqeq.

Produced in 1987, “Where is Friend’s House?” follows Ahmad, an eight-year-old boy living in a village in Iran who accidentally takes his friend’s notebook home. Ahmad must return the notebook to his friend’s home before the next day, or his friend will be expelled from school.

The story may seem simple, but Kiarostami’s subtle storytelling techniques, masterful use of landscape, and understated performances elevate the film to

a touching and poetic experience.

The film has received high praise from many critics and is considered one of Kiarostami’s most beloved works. It is also recognized as a significant member of Iran’s New Wave, a movement in Iranian cinema that rejected the commercialism of earlier Iranian cinema in favor of a more artistic and socially conscious approach to filmmaking.

Kiarostami’s “Where is Friend’s House?” captures the essence of Iranian village life through the lens of an innocent and charming story that is contemplative and sensitive. The film is a masterpiece that showcases Kiarostami’s deep understanding of human emotions, modest filmmaking, and observation of intricate social and personal moments that go unnoticed by the world at large. The movie’s simplicity is its strength and provides its viewers with a thoughtful and touching perspective of life.

“Where is Friend’s House?” has won several awards since its release, including the Bronze Leopard at the Locarno International Film Festival in Switzerland. The film also received the Critics’ Prize at the Sao Paulo International Film Festival and the Pasinetti Award at the Venice Film Festival.

The program will proceed in the coming days with screenings of “The Stone Lion” by Masoud Jafari Jozani, “Gilaneh” by Rakhshan Bani-E’temad and Mohsen Abdolvahab, “Land of the Sun” by Ahmadreza Darvish, and “Captain Khorshid” by Nasser Taqvai, each accompanied by Q&A sessions. Started from Saturday, simultaneous screenings of these films will be held in Tehran and several other cities.

“The Stone Lion” revolves

A scene from Abbas Kiarostami’s “Where Is the Friend’s House?”

around the mysterious death of an Englishman, whose body is discovered in the Bakhtiari region, murdered with a scythe. Khoda Morad, a local craftsman known for creating stone lions, and his companion Kohyar, bury the victim’s body to conceal the crime.

As the investigation unfolds, Officer A’meri, accompanied by an English diplomat, arrives to uncover the truth behind the murder. Their inquiries lead to the arrest of Kohyar, accused of the killing. This accusation sparks tension and disputes among the villagers.

“Gilehaneh” tells the story set against the backdrop of New Year’s Eve during the Iran-Iraq war, as Tehran faces relentless missile attacks. The film follows Gilaneh, a solitary middle-aged villager, who faces the harsh realities of war by sending her son to the frontlines. Simultaneously, she embarks on a journey with her daughter to Tehran in search of her son-in-law, who has illegally deserted his military service.

Set against the backdrop of the Iran-Iraq War, “Land of the

Sun” depicts the harrowing chaos at a hospital in Khorramshahr, surrounded and attacked from land and air by Iraqi forces. Led by the young and determined Jahan Ara, efforts are made to evacuate the injured, women, and medical staff via ambulance. However, during the escape, they face continuous attacks, resulting in casualties and the scattering of survivors across the city. Among them are the ambulance driver, Dr. Kasra—a widower contemplating surrender for safety and financial reasons—a nurse named Hanieh who is accompanied by two infants, a captain, and an Iraqi officer who has been taken prisoner.

“Captain Khorshid” tells the story of a one-handed sailor who, facing harsh living conditions in his village, is coerced into smuggling exiled criminals out of the area. Initially reluctant, Khorshid agrees to the dangerous mission. However, the journey takes a dark turn when the criminals commit murder, steal the funds, and turn against him. In a fierce confrontation, Khorshid single-handedly defeats the criminals but succumbs to his injuries.