

‘Major Mistake’ at Cost of Lebanese Sovereignty

PM Nawaf Salam acts purely based on US orders to disarm Hezbollah



House speaker's West Bank visit highlights plan to erase Palestine

By Matin Jamshidi

TEHRAN – Mike Johnson, the Republican U.S. House speaker, visited an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank on Monday. His visit came just weeks after the Israeli Knesset passed a resolution supporting the annexation of the West Bank and amid an escalation of violence against the Palestinians by Israeli forces and settlers.

Johnson's visit to the Ariel settlement near Ramallah was reportedly part of a private trip to Israel organized by the pro-Israel advocacy group, the U.S. Israel Education Association, according to Axios.

The visit makes him the most senior U.S. politician to visit an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank.

Settlements are illegal under international law. However, Johnson, a senior lawmaker, is openly and shamelessly violating international law.

In preparation to endorse the annexation, Johnson used a fake name for the West Bank.

Relief or ruse: US-Israeli scheme masking military agendas in Gaza

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN — An alleged humanitarian aid initiative backed by the United States and Israel — the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) — is drawing sharp criticism from UN human rights experts, who say the program conceals military and political objectives beneath a false veneer of relief.

Launched in late May amid Israel's ongoing siege of the Gaza Strip, the GHF was promoted by Washington and Tel Aviv as a lifeline for Palestinians facing catastrophic hunger. UN experts, however, argue that the facts on the ground reveal a far more disturbing reality.

Since the GHF's inception, more than 1,500 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces while attempting to access desperately needed aid, reinforcing claims that the scheme is a deadly illusion rather than a genuine humanitarian effort.

On Tuesday, UN human rights experts called for the immediate dismantling of the GHF,

Israeli command centers come under attack in Gaza

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Palestinian resistance forces carry out attacks in Gaza, striking the Israeli command and control centers.

The Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, announced they have shelled an Israeli command and control site near Dar al-Arqam School in the al-Tuffah neighborhood, eastern Gaza City, using multiple mortar shells.

In southern Gaza, near Khan Younis, the al-Qassam Brigades targeted another occupation regime's command site in the Morag axis, using heavy-caliber mortar shells.

The resistance continues to confront Israeli occupation forces (IOF) that have invaded various parts of Gaza, launching strategic operations that have resulted in both human and material losses for the regime.

In the al-Zannah area northeast of Khan Younis, al-Qassam forces attacked an IOF armored personnel carrier with a powerful barrel bomb, reportedly killing and injuring its crew.

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Defense Council to bolster Iran's military coordination, say lawmakers

TEHRAN – Two senior members of Iran's Parliament have welcomed the formation of the National Defense Council, describing it as a timely and strategic move to strengthen decision-making and accelerate military responses amid ongoing wartime conditions.

The council was approved on Sunday, August 3, by the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) under Article 176 of the Constitution. It will operate under the chairmanship of the President and include the heads of the three branches of government, top military commanders, and several key ministers. Its primary mandate is to review defense strategies and coordinate efforts to enhance the operational readiness of the Armed Forces. ► Page 3

Iran taps knowledge-based firms to boost clean energy production

TEHRAN – Iran is turning to knowledge-based companies to help tackle its growing energy imbalance by promoting clean power generation, according to the head of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO).

Speaking at a contract signing ceremony between a high-tech Iranian firm and an industrial manufacturer, Farshad Moqimi, Chairman of IDRO's Executive Board, emphasized the strategic role of knowledge-based enterprises in developing innovative solutions such as expansion turbines for clean electricity generation. ► Page 4

The theater of grievance and ruined monarchist fantasies in postwar Iran

By Kurosh Alyani

TEHRAN – F kills his wife based on vague, unverified suspicions of infidelity. He cites religious law as justification, treating hearsay and jurisprudence as equal to civil legislation.

Though personally irreligious, he identifies as Zoroastrian. He views clerics as illegitimate rulers and hopes for foreign intervention—specifically from the U.S. and Israel—to “liberate” Iran.

He believes civil war is necessary for free elections, arguing current ones lack legitimacy under clerical rule. ► Page 2

Young minds, big ideas: Bazista empowers next generation of game designers

By Mohamadreza Seyedagha

TEHRAN – The closing ceremony of the first national game-scriptwriting event “Baazista” was held on August 4, at the Art Bureau in Tehran, with the announcement of the event's winners.

Although the initial purpose of Baazista was to focus on game scripts, the enthusiasm shown by the participants changed the course of the event and led to creation of several boardgames, environmental games, and escape rooms.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Mohammadreza Emamgholi, secretary of the event, gave a report on the event's proceedings and said: ► Page 8



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Over a million cross Iran into Iraq ahead of Arba'een

TEHRAN – In anticipation of Arba'een, which marks the 40th day after the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hossein (AS), over a million Iranian pilgrims have traveled to neighboring Iraq.

During this period, Shia Muslims from across the globe converge on Karbala to honor Imam Hossein, whose tomb is located in the Iraqi city where he was martyred fighting against the tyrannical ruler Yazid.

Imam Hossein is widely revered as a symbol of resistance and dignity, particularly within the Shia Muslim community.

The Arba'een pilgrimage is widely recognized as the world's largest annual public gathering.

Pakistan-Iran tie-up for growth and stability

By Muhammad Zamir Assadi

ISLAMABAD – Exploration of expansion in bilateral opportunities, an anticipated trade volume of \$10 billion and a review of connecting linkages between Iran and Pakistan have been the key strategic outputs of the recent state visit of Iranian President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian to Pakistan.

The visit is not only significant in terms of strategic relationship between the two brotherly Islamic nations but serves as a launchpad to a joint future in the context of regional dynamics, economic instability and the ever-changing geopolitical situation around the world. The political and national determination of both the nations came under the spotlight during the visit where 12 bilateral agreements were signed as a testament to the bilateral commitment to a long and strong economic and brotherly partnership. ► Page 3

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

The ability to neutralize Israel's "temptation of power"

In a note, Khorasan discussed the importance and power of Iran in the war with Israel in June. It wrote: The 12-day war showed that the only factor that can create security is deterrence. Nothing stops Israel from attacks except having the ability to deter. It was not easy for Israel to attack a country like Iran, as it could lead to a war of attrition. Israel only gave up continuing the war when Iran was able to inflict damages deep inside Israel. This means that any enemy Arab country that cannot deter an Israeli attack may be the target of a possible Israeli attack, and any country that can deter will be resistant to such operations. The war revealed the importance of offensive drones and ballistic missiles in affecting the enemy's infrastructure. It also highlighted once again the importance of having strong air defense systems and being prepared for long-term conflicts.

Etemad: Is diplomacy possible or not?

In an interview with Ali Nasri, a senior expert on international relations, Etemad examined the possible continuation of nuclear negotiations. He said: As our country's Foreign Minister has said, the path of diplomacy has become very narrow, but it is not yet completely closed. We should not forget that the American side targeted our country's territorial integrity during the negotiations, causing great damage to both our nuclear facilities and the principle of diplomacy and negotiations. Diplomacy is a necessity in any case, and even was ultimately end at the negotiating table. But we must find solutions to make sure that first of all no further military actions will take place against our country during the negotiations, and second, that some kind of compensation claim is on our agenda. Third, that our right to enrichment under the NPT be recognized. In this case, given that our nuclear facilities have been damaged and there is currently no possibility of resuming enrichment on a large scale, we can also show some flexibility in this regard.

Ettelaat: Planned IAEA visit to Iran shows Iran is keeping path of diplomacy open

Ettelaat says the planned visit by the IAEA officials to Iran may help revitalize diplomacy between Iran and the West over Tehran's nucle-

ar program. It said: Iranian officials have long stated that despite compensatory measures in the nuclear program, they have kept the path of diplomacy open. The visit of the IAEA officials to Iran could also be part of this strategy. This is a strategy according to which Tehran is trying to both show resistance and take advantage of its negotiating capacities. Despite the propaganda campaigns and media pressure, evidence suggests that both Iran and the West are seeking to maintain a window for dialogue. Of course, this window is very narrow and fragile. Israeli interference, lack of political will in Washington, and lack of coherence in Iran's domestic policies are factors that could destroy this opportunity. In such circumstances, the IAEA delegation can play a key role if its mission will not be limited to reporting alone and take steps to facilitate talks. Of course, it remains to be seen with what level of transparency and initiative Iran will come forward and whether the U.S. and Europe are ready to replace pressure with diplomacy.

Jam-e-Jam: The fruit of 47 years of Iranian struggle

In a commentary, Jam-e-Jam discussed Iran's support for the axis of resistance against Israel and wrote: The developments that have followed the October 7 incident have proved to the world the degree of atrocities being committed by Israel. These carnages have convinced public opinion that Iran's opposition to Israel was based on lofty human values such as justice and freedom. According to Western media reports, the new generation of Europeans, who has grown up with anti-colonial concepts, sees Iran as a symbol of resistance to oppression. This acknowledgement is the result of decades of Iranian efforts to expose the apartheid nature of Israel through diplomacy, media, and support for the axis of resistance. Meanwhile, some symbols of resistance, which indirectly refer to Iran and the discourse of resistance to oppression, indicate a wider recognition of the Palestinian cause as a global issue. This support shows that traditional Zionist narratives that had portrayed Israel as a victim and the Palestinians as a threat no longer have value among Western people.

Iranian court uncovers MEK role in coordinated attacks with Israel during recent war



TEHRAN – During ongoing legal proceedings against the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK), Tehran's Criminal Court heard new evidence linking the terrorist group to Israeli attacks during the recent 12-day war—including the targeting of a civilian hospital.

At the 36th public session of the trial, held Tuesday, at Branch 11 of Tehran Province's Criminal Court One, presiding Judge Hojjatoleslam Amir-Reza Dehqani announced that MEK operatives had coordinated with Israeli intelligence by gathering data on traffic flow near Kerman-shah's Farabi Hospital and passing it on to the regime in Tel Aviv. The intelligence was used to carry out a deadly strike on the hospital.

Judge Dehqani opened the hearing by condemning Israel's actions and praising the Iranian Armed Forces for defending national sovereignty in the face of foreign-sponsored terrorism. He also expressed condolences to the families of those killed in the recent war, declaring:

"We are witnessing a new phase of hegemonic aggression aimed at destabilizing independent nations by assassinating their intellectual and scientific leaders. These acts are designed

to uphold an unjust global order maintained by arrogant powers."

Daughter of martyred scientist demands justice

Zohreh Abbasi Davani, daughter of late nuclear scientist Dr. Fereydown Abbasi Davani—killed in the recent Israeli-led assault—testified in court, calling for accountability in a prior 2010 assassination attempt on her father.

"The second attack claimed my father's life, re-injured my mother, and killed a neighbor. Twenty-eight families were displaced. My father was not a military figure—he was a university professor devoted to the country's scientific progress."

Following her statement, Judge Dehqani revealed that new documents and testimony submitted by the second defendant showed active cooperation between MEK members and Israeli operatives, particularly in identifying and targeting Iranian nuclear scientists. He said the evidence would be reviewed in full and, if warranted, referred back to the Prosecutor's Office.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Pezeshkian pays tribute to child victims of Israel's war at Tehran ceremony



TEHRAN – President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday attended a ceremony at the Ameneh Welfare and Nursery Complex in Tehran to honor the memory of children killed during the recent 12-day Israeli assault.

The commemoration was held to pay tribute to the young martyrs of the Zionist regime's aggression, including infants and toddlers who lost their lives in the attacks. According to official figures, 47 of the victims were children and adolescents, the youngest of whom was just 2 years and 9 months old.

Addressing a group of children cared for at the facility, President Pezeshkian said: "These children are like my own grandchildren. We are committed to doing everything we can to provide a better future for them."

Israel launched a surprise attack on June 13, killing at least 1,064 people in the country, including military commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary civilians.

Tehran responded hours later with a large-scale missile and drone campaign under the operation True Promise III.



On June 22, the United States formally entered the conflict, launching airstrikes on Iran's nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan using bunker-buster munitions—an act Tehran condemned as a violation of international law.

In response, Iran targeted the U.S. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar with ballistic missiles, demonstrating its readiness to escalate if necessary.

Amid growing casualties, internal unrest, and concerns about further Iranian retaliation, Israel accepted a unilateral ceasefire on June 24, effectively ending the 12-day conflict.

Mossad spy hanged in Iran after contribution to nuclear scientist's assassination

TEHRAN – Iran has carried out the death sentence of Roozbeh Vadi, who was convicted of spying for Israel and providing critical information to Mossad that led to the assassination of an Iranian nuclear scientist. The execution, confirmed by the Iranian Judiciary, took place on Wednesday following a Supreme Court affirmation of his guilt and sentence.

Vadi, according to court documents and his own admissions, was fully aware that he was working with the Israeli intelligence agency. He held a sensitive position within a key Iranian organization, making him a valuable target for Mossad.

Recruited online, Vadi underwent multiple evaluations by Mossad officers. After his access level was verified, an agent known as Alex expedited his recruitment. Subsequently, another agent named Kevin became Vadi's handler, initiating his formal collaboration with Mossad. Instead of traditional rewards, Vadi requested and received monthly payments deposited into a digital currency wallet.

Mossad provided Vadi with technical training and secure communication devices, enabling him to extract and transmit sensitive information. He traveled to Vienna for five secret meet-

ings with Mossad operatives, operating under strict security protocols. During these meetings, he received detailed instructions before returning to Tehran to execute his missions.

Vadi was tasked with providing weekly reports on internal developments and intelligence. He received payment after responding to technical inquiries from the intelligence agency. He is also accused of providing information that led to the martyrdom of an Iranian nuclear scientist during the 12-war Israel initiated against Iran in June.

Iranian security forces monitored Vadi's activities and arrested him after confirming his connections to Mossad. He was indicted for espionage, collaboration with the Zionist regime, and accepting payment for his actions.

The court sentenced Vadi to death under the "Law Against Hostile Acts of the Zionist Regime" and several articles of Iran's Islamic Penal Code, citing his actions as a severe threat to national security and public order.

Reports indicate that over 700 Mossad-linked spies have been apprehended in Iran amidst the latest tensions with Tel Aviv. Previously, three men who smuggled bombs and demolition



Roozbeh Vadi sent intel to Mossad in exchange for cryptocurrency

charges into Iran to assassinate distinguished Iranian figures were executed in West Azerbaijan Province.

Furthermore, Iranian security agencies report to have uncovered and dismantled numerous clandestine drone facilities operated by Mossad agents in Tehran and other cities in recent months.

The theater of grievance and ruined monarchist fantasies in postwar Iran

From page 1 ► Paradoxically, he supports monarchy while rejecting democracy as a corrupt Western construct serving global conspirators. His case reflects a volatile mix of personal belief, ideology, and cultural tension. It shows how fragmented narratives and conflicting identities drive extreme actions when law, faith, and politics blur in public imagination.

Under persistent failure, fascism emerges not from strength but grievance. It offers limitless repression as a cure for humiliation. Nazi Germany rose from Versailles's ashes, framing defeat as betrayal and purging dissent in the name of rebirth. Mussolini exploited Italy's postwar instability to justify authoritarian control. In each case, failure wasn't hidden—it was mythologized. Fascism reframes collapse as proof that compromise is treason and moderation a threat. Violence becomes sacred, law a weapon, and domination is sold as redemption. This logic adapts to local narratives, feeding on disillusionment and fractured identity. It doesn't copy foreign regimes—it reinvents repression through familiar myths. The appeal lies not in order itself, but in the fantasy that only force can restore what was lost.

Fascism thrives on a deceptively simple diagnosis of failure—one that ignores structural complexity and offers seductive clarity. This clarity enables construction of a utopia that feels not only possible but imminent. In Iran, the devastating impact of sanctions and

global hierarchies on purchasing power is routinely erased from the narrative. Instead, the existing order—legal, political, and cultural—is cast as the root of all suffering. Law becomes tyranny, culture becomes contamination.

The fascist imagination depends on this inversion: it must turn reality into the enemy to justify its fantasy. By rejecting nuance, it replaces analysis with moral absolutism. The promise is not reform but rupture. And in that rupture, it finds purity—not through understanding, but through destruction. It is a politics of grievance masquerading as salvation.

Fascism seeks not to debate rationality but to dissolve it. It targets institutions of limitation—academia, democracy—not through argument, but erasure. It promotes mental rupture in individuals, where coherence is dismissed as corruption and intellectual structure replaced by erratic impulses. Thought no longer forms systems; scattered assertions dominate, disconnected and contradictory. Logic isn't suppressed—it's rendered obsolete. What remains is mission: not philosophical or epistemic pursuit, but raw, weaponized will. This mission doesn't emerge from understanding—it emerges from desire, from utopian fantasy armed against reality. Fascism doesn't build minds—it breaks them, then mobilizes the fragments. It thrives on disorientation, bypassing resistance and converting confusion into obedience.

When full-blown fascism cannot

dominate the public sphere, it mutates into microfascism—a diluted form infiltrating semi-private spaces like families and social circles. Unable to seize the streets, it colonizes living rooms. The household becomes a miniature state, where authority mimics political repression in intimate settings. Males become enforcers, wives and children subjects, and ideology seeps into rituals. Microfascism doesn't need mass rallies; it thrives in quiet coercion, in control disguised as tradition. It reconstructs utopia in miniature—through rigid roles, symbolic objects, and moral surveillance. The family is no longer a refuge from power; it becomes its proxy. In this domestic theater, fascism rehearses ambitions, embedding hierarchy and obedience where resistance is least expected. It's not a failure of fascism—it's its wishful evolution.

Microfascism follows a historical trajectory of emergence. It begins by rejecting rational and democratic constraints under the guise of entertainment, freedom, and national pride. This paves the way for a fragmented, impulsive mode of living detached from reason. Symbols of anti-rationality—weed, alcohol, defiance of law—are elevated as lifestyle markers. Nostalgic mythmaking replaces civic identity: archaic masculinities are glorified, current national identity denied in favor of a fictitious ancient one, and both misogyny and aggressive femininity weaponized against social order. The shift from self-destructive insular lifestyles with inflated self-importance

leads to calls for action, spawning fascist movements marked by hatred of women, migrants, police, and intellectuals. Eventually, Orwellian language takes hold: the foreign invader is seen as kin, while the native government is cast as occupier. National identity is redefined through fractured criteria—accepting monarchy becomes proof of genetic purity, rejecting it signals illegitimacy and moral decay.

Under identical conditions, a narrow yet loud fascist faction emerged in Iran, amplified by hostile Persian-language media, often cloaked in monarchist nostalgia. This movement idolized American Trumpism—resentful, theatrical, myth-driven. It was misogynistic while claiming to defend women. It rejected religion yet promoted Zoroastrianism as cultural purity. It attacked Islam but weaponized Islamic sexual invective against dissenters. These contradictions were tactical. Each borrowed symbol fractured civic identity and replaced it with volatile pride and aggression. The movement didn't seek coherence; it thrived on emotional spectacle and symbolic inversion. Its strength lay in mimicking legitimacy while eroding it, creating an echo chamber where confusion passed as authenticity and hostility masqueraded as heritage. It wasn't grassroots—it was a curated performance of rage and exclusion, designed to destabilize, not liberate.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Defense Council to bolster Iran’s military coordination, say lawmakers

From Page 1 ► Established with the approval of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Aya-tollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the council is designed to act as a centralized command body in the event of war or any attack on the nation's territorial integrity.

In interviews with IRNA, veteran parliamentarian Alaeddin Boroujerdi and Esmaeil Kowsari, both members of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, offered their perspectives on the council's significance.

Alaeddin Boroujerdi said the SNSC is constitutionally authorized to establish specialized councils in response to national needs, especially during times of crisis.

“Given the aggressive military posture of the United States and the Zionist regime, it was essential to form a dedicated body to assess defense-related developments,” he said.

He stressed that the council would benefit from the experience of senior wartime commanders and bring greater focus to military policy and planning.

“With the current state of war



and the possibility of future escalation, the creation of a body solely focused on defense matters was both necessary and timely,” Boroujerdi added. “The SNSC handles a wide array of security and foreign policy issues, so this new council fills a critical gap by concentrating solely on military affairs.”

‘Defense Council to streamline decision-making during crisis’

Boroujerdi noted that the presence of high-ranking Armed

Forces commanders in the council would strengthen its effectiveness and ensure that urgent defense decisions can be made quickly and coherently.

“The concentration of military authority in this council will enhance unity and coordination in both decision-making and execution during times of crisis,” he stated.

Esmaeil Kowsari, another senior lawmaker, emphasized the importance of swift and decisive

action in wartime conditions.

“In war, speed is everything. There must be a command structure that allows for rapid, resolute decisions. This council was created in direct response to a critical need on the battlefield,” he said.

Kowsari noted that during the eight-year Iran–Iraq war, known in Iran as the Sacred Defense, a similar Supreme Defense Council had overseen wartime operations.

Islamic solidarity vital to end Gaza genocide, Pezeshkian tells Malaysian PM



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim

TEHRAN – Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim jointly called for urgent collective action by Muslim nations to stop Israel’s genocidal campaign in Gaza during a phone conversation on Wednesday.

President Pezeshkian emphasized the critical need for Islamic unity, stating: “The atrocities committed by the Zionist regime in Gaza are unacceptable to any free human being.”

He urged Muslim countries to employ “active diplomacy and diplomatic pressure” to prevent further crimes, adding that collective efforts would prove “highly effective in confronting the crimes of the Zionist regime in Gaza.”

The Iranian President reiterated Tehran’s consistent position: “The Islamic Republic of Iran has always defended the rights of the oppressed Palestinian nation, and other Islamic countries

should adopt a stronger and more active stance to support the oppressed people of Palestine and Gaza.”

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim strongly aligned with this position, detailing Malaysia’s response: “The Malaysian government has issued a strong statement condemning Israel’s crimes in Gaza and is conducting extensive diplomatic efforts to stop the genocide.” He expressed hope that “through cooperation with other Islamic countries, we can prevent these crimes.”

The leaders also discussed enhancing bilateral relations, building upon robust economic foundations. Recent data shows bilateral trade reached RM2.6 billion (USD 570 million) in 2024 – a 24.6% increase from 2023.

Iran remains Malaysia’s 7th largest trading partner in West Asia, with cooperation expanding in medical tourism, agriculture, and defense technology. Furthermore, Malaysia is Iran’s largest trading partner among ASEAN (Association of Southeast

Asian Nations) member states.

The leaders’ urgent call comes amid an overwhelming humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Since October 2023, the Israeli regime has killed over 60,000 Palestinians, including over 25,000 children.

Famine has claimed the lives of more than 180 individuals, 93 of whom were children. The conflict has displaced around 85% of Gaza’s population, leaving families and communities fractured and vulnerable. Meanwhile, the Israeli regime continues to block aid convoys and systematically dismantle healthcare infrastructure, further exacerbating the suffering and impeding relief efforts.

UN experts confirm Tel Aviv’s “intentional starvation tactics” constitute a war crime, with famine conditions deliberately engineered through aid restrictions. Recent “humanitarian corridor” operations have resulted in mass civilian casualties, including the killing of 1,400 Palestinians at aid distribution points since May.

Pakistan-Iran tie-up for growth and stability

From Page 1 ► Cultural roots and mutual regional dependence serve as the backbone to the development. For both Iran and Pakistan, the trade volume of \$10 billion is a modest representation of what both countries plan to accomplish together through a wave of transformative change that is mutually beneficial and globally aligned. The current trade volume between Pakistan and Iran is quite limited, primarily due to global sanctions, limited banking channels, infrastructure issues at the border and logistical challenges. However, with the recent bilateral commitments both countries plan to revive barter trade, enhance customs coordination for better trade clearance and establish a joint trade facilitation system to achieve a larger and more stable trade volume. Iran’s exports to Pakistan could be focused on the much-needed oil, gas and electricity sector whereas Pakistan can offer Iran with its world-renowned textile, pharmaceuticals, agricultural goods and the budding industrial products.

In private sector business interactions, both governments can offer engagement opportunities to trade and business bodies like the Chambers of Commerce, the business councils and SME networks. These bodies can explore opportunities for investment and development in key sectors like agriculture, petrochemicals, tourism and information technology. Iran’s interest in joining the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) during the visit is perhaps the most significant regional trade

development seen in decades. Through this anticipated partnership, Iran can not only propose itself as a partner in the revolutionary, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) but can also provide Pakistan with an opportunity to serve as a logistical and commercial bridge between China and Iran, creating the strongest tri-national corridor of trade and energy in the Global South.

Beyond the significant potential for increased bilateral trade, Pakistan can serve as a commercial bridge connecting Iran and China

Pakistan’s modernized road and rail networks developed under BRI and CPEC can help Iran export to and from China creating a strong, protected and economically viable supply chain. Trade through Gwadar Port could help reduce dependence on expensive sea routes and in exchange Pakistan could gain transit revenues, infrastructure development and further geopolitical stability in the region.

The bilateral trade and partnership between Iran and Pakistan are the revival of centuries old routes that could cater Central Asia by linking Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan

and Uzbekistan into a broader regional trade chain. The anticipated routes would not only revolutionize regional trade but would also help bring the regional powers together in a vision of regional peace and stability.

The leadership of Pakistan and Iran realizes the futuristics potential of Gwadar and Chabahar port that complement each other and can play a vital role in expanding maritime connections in the region. The ideas of a joint maritime cooperation framework could prove mutually beneficial as both ports can be connected through roads and rail helping increase cargo, creating employment and push forward economic activity across Baluchistan and Sistan-Baluchistan regions. The Gwadar-Chabahar cooperation model is crucial to guide other regional port cities that can help blue economy growth in South Asia and the Middle East and landlocked Central Asia.

During the visit, Iran and Pakistan have also jointly agreed to upgrade the Quetta-Zahedan railway line and revive interest in the long-stalled Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) rail project. The modernized project would not only help with timelines and cargo but would also help integrate infrastructure based on trust between the two nations. Since travel volume between both countries is always on a rise, better rail and road links will not only reduce travel time but would also cut down transport costs and the risks associated with sea routes.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Nikkhah Bahrami, a legacy built on brilliance: FIBA

TEHRAN – Some legends change the game through size and power. Others do it with skill so precise that every move, every shot feels inevitable. In a golden era for Iranian basketball, one player who provided the kind of quality and rhythm that made it all come together: Samad Nikkhah Bahrami.

For a full decade, the 198cm/6’6” forward was Team Melli’s answer whenever the FIBA Asia Cup lights shone brightest. Throughout six FIBA Asia Cup tournaments, three gold medals, and two All-Star Five selections, he showcased a style of play that made him one of the continent’s most respected stars.

Bahrami first stepped on FIBA Asia Cup soil in 2005, as Iran’s national team was still searching for a breakthrough. Two years later, in Tokushima 2007, that breakthrough came, and Samad was right in the middle of it. Playing as a versatile wing, he blended scoring and playmaking as Iran stormed to its first-ever FIBA Asia Cup title. That victory began a run that would define both a generation and his career, fiba.basketball reported.

By 2009 in Tianjin, Bahrami was no longer a rising star. Now a full-fledged leader alongside Hamed Haddadi, he helped Iran defend its title with an undefeated run, earning his first place among the tournament’s elite players. He averaged 18.0 points, 4.4 rebounds, 1.9 three-pointers and a tournament-leading 4.8 assists per game. His ability to orchestrate Team Melli’s offense, score off the dribble and hit the outside shot made him a nightmare for defenses. Iran’s offense flowed through him just as much as through Haddadi, their towering center.

In 2011, as Iran adjusted to being the hunted rather than the hunters, Bahrami’s steady hand stood out. His numbers reflected all-around brilliance, and when the dust settled, he collected his first All-Star Five Team honor, putting up 11.2 points, 3.4 rebounds and 1.8 assists per contest. Though Iran missed the podium that year, Samad’s composure and consistency underscored why he was indispensable.

The golden moments returned in 2013 in Manila, where Bahrami added a third Asia Cup gold to his résumé. Iran’s seamless balance of power and skill once again dominated Asia, and Bahrami’s play on the wing was its perfect complement: scoring when needed, orchestrating when the game slowed down and guarding the region’s toughest perimeter threats.

Even as he entered his mid-30s, Bahrami never stopped producing. In 2015, he earned another All-Star Five selection, a testament to his longevity and basketball IQ. In his final FIBA Asia Cup appearance, Bahrami registered 13.8 points, 4.0 rebounds, 1.6 assists, 1.3 steals and 2.3 three-pointers per game. Few players could boast such a sustained level of excellence over six FIBA Asia Cups.

Not surprisingly, Bahrami FIBA Asia Cup record places him among the most decorated and consistent players in the competition’s modern history.

He was more than a scorer or a playmaker. He was the glue of Iran’s golden generation and a reminder that greatness often lies in the players who make everyone else better. As the FIBA Asia Cup 2025 approaches, Samad Nikkhah Bahrami’s indelible print on Asian hoops cannot be overlooked.

Besiktas hope to sign Mehdi Taremi

TEHRAN – Turkish heavyweights Besiktas are still hoping to sign Inter Milan flop Mehdi Taremi despite growing interest from Brazil.

According to Gazzetta dello Sport, the Istanbul club would ideally land the 33-year-old on loan.

New Inter boss Cristian Chivu has put Taremi on the chopping block. Indeed, after a terrible first season at San Siro, the Iranian international is ready to pack his bags. However, he would preferably stay in Europe. Despite drawing interest from Brazil, Taremi is not enthusiastic about moving to South America. Therefore, he has already turned down moves to both Botafogo and Flamengo.

Meanwhile, the former Porto center-forward is waiting for offers from the Premier League. Although Fulham and Nottingham Forest are reportedly keen on Taremi, they haven’t submitted formal offers. That leaves the door open for

Besiktas to swoop and steal the veteran striker. However, the Turks are gunning for a loan deal. On the other hand, Inter and the player prefer a permanent transfer.

Super Cup to be held at Naghsh-e Jahan

TEHRAN – The match between Esteghlal and Tractor in the 2025 Super Cup will be held in Isfahan’s Naghsh-e Jahan Stadium.

The Super Cup is scheduled for August 11.

This high-profile match will see Tractor, the reigning champion of the Iran Professional League, face off against Esteghlal, the Hazfi Cup winner.

Historically, Persepolis is the most successful team in Super Cup, having won the title five times.

Iran beat Malaysia in AFC U20 Women’s Asian Cup Qualifiers

TEHRAN – Iran started their AFC U20 Women’s Asian Cup Thailand 2026 Qualifiers Group F campaign with a 3-0 win over Malaysia on Wednesday.

Iran joined Japan on three points. Japan had defeated Guam 5-0 earlier in the day.

The Central Asian side’s early pressure paid dividends in the 14th minute, with Maryam Dini netting the opener.

Malaysia tried to mount a fightback but found themselves further behind in the 29th minute, with Dini again applying the finishing touch.

Iran continued to set the pace after the break but had to wait till the second minute of time added on for their third, with Asal Ghajarian delivering.

Iran are scheduled to meet Guam on Friday, while Japan face Malaysia.

Antonio Adan joins Esteghlal

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football club completed the signing of Spanish goalkeeper Antonio Adan on Wednesday.

Adan, 38, has penned a one-year deal with Esteghlal for an undisclosed fee.

Esteghlal had been also linked with Cameroonian goalkeeper Joseph Fabrice Ondoa Ebogo.

Ricardo Sá Pinto’s Esteghlal will open the 2025/26 Iran Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) with a match against defending champions Tractor.

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

Alexis Guendouz Joins MC Alger

TEHRAN – MC Alger has confirmed the signing of goalkeeper Alexis Guendouz.

Guendouz has joined the Algerian team on a two-year deal.

The 29-year-old Algerian has previously played for Saint-Étienne, Pau FC, USM Alger, CR Belouizdad, and Persepolis. Despite a successful season on a personal level, Guendouz played 37 matches, including 15 clean sheets for Persepolis.

He was part of Algeria’s squad that finished as runner-up at the 2022 CHAN tournament.

Brazilian winger Costa signs for Mes Rafsanjan

TEHRAN – Mes Rafsanjan football club has officially announced the signing of Brazilian winger Matheus Costa.

The 26-year-old talent has committed to a two-year contract with the Iranian club.

Costa joins Mes Kerman from Brazilian side Volta Redonda, marking his first experience playing abroad.

Mes Rafsanjan, headed by Rasoul Khatibi, was struggling in the 2024-25 Iran Professional League (IPL) but the team has strengthened itself for the new season.

NPC eyes \$100b investment to expand petrochemical sector



TEHRAN – Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) is seeking to attract \$100 billion in domestic and foreign investment to complete semi-finished projects and expand the country's petrochemical value chain, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Hamidreza Ajami, NPC's investment director, said the 144 licensed projects in the sector require nearly \$100 billion in capital, adding that the exclusive reliance on domestic financing has limited growth and undermined Iran's global competitiveness.

"Petrochemicals account for 25 percent of Iran's non-oil exports and 19 percent of the country's industrial value-added," he said. "Developing this sector plays a critical role in economic, social, and national security."

According to Ajami, around \$87 billion has been invested in Iran's petrochemical industry from 1979 to 2022, with 19 percent of that originating from foreign sources and over 11 percent financed through the National Development Fund and other internal and external resources.

Under the country's seventh development plan, an additional \$22 billion in investment is envisioned, he said, noting that while some projects have already come online, others are still in progress.

According to Ajami current projects in this

Iran, Kazakhstan pledge closer transport ties via INSTC

TEHRAN – Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh and Kazakhstan's Minister of Transport Nurlan Sauranbayev have agreed to strengthen transportation cooperation and jointly draft a roadmap focused on boosting transit through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Awaza, Turkmenistan, where both ministers stressed the need for infrastructure coordination and swift implementation of earlier multilateral agreements signed between Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan.

Sadegh called for accelerated execution of the eastern branch of the INSTC, emphasizing Kazakhstan's central role.

She also proposed a comprehensive five-year agreement covering all modes of transport, a suggestion welcomed by the Kazakh side.

The two sides reviewed opportunities to enhance multimodal connectivity, including rail, road, maritime, and air transport.

Sauranbayev emphasized that Kazakhstan imposes no restrictions on Iranian flights and expressed interest in collaborative infrastructure development, particularly a Caspian Sea initiative akin to the "Caspian Bridge" project being developed with Azerbaijan.

The ministers agreed to assess the full potential of Caspian Sea routes for a "leap" in logistics cooperation, aiming to diversify transit paths to and from Iranian ports.

As part of a broader goal to increase bilateral trade to \$3 billion, discussions included expanding port capacity, streamlining customs, and organizing multilateral logistics meetings with neighboring countries—especially targeting routes toward the Caucasus and Europe.

In a forward-looking move, both sides agreed to form a joint technical committee tasked with drafting cooperation documents and a detailed roadmap prior to the upcoming state visit by the Iranian president to Astana.

They also agreed to hold regular virtual meetings to ensure continued progress.

sector include 20 projects worth \$11 billion with over 70 percent physical progress, 32 projects worth \$22 billion which are between 20 and 70 percent complete, and 92 projects worth \$67 billion that are below 20 percent completion.

He underscored the importance of foreign investment, citing a recent agreement with Iran's Organization for Investment Economic and Technical Assistance aimed at more actively promoting the sector to international investors. Ajami also noted Iran is pursuing increased cooperation through the BRICS group and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Despite international sanctions, Ajami said the petrochemical sector has managed to withstand external pressures by utilizing domestic funding and foreign credit lines. Several projects are slated to be inaugurated this year.

He cited Iran's large domestic and regional markets, access to open waters, skilled labor, and legal and policy incentives as key advantages for investors. He also pointed to the growing role of knowledge-based firms and advanced technologies.

In 2024, Iranian banks issued \$210 million in Islamic foreign exchange-based bonds (Mura-baha Sukuk), and plans are underway to issue an additional 130 trillion rials (approximately \$2.6 billion) this year. The NPC also aims to mobilize financing through project funds, public participation initiatives, educational outreach, and expert forums.

Ajami highlighted the company's investment priorities, including the completion of unfinished projects, development of mid- and downstream units, flared gas recovery, and increasing hard currency revenues. He emphasized leveraging both domestic and foreign experiences, citing joint projects with the Philippines as well as partnerships with Ariasasoul and Karoun Petrochemical Company.

These developments align with Iran's strategy to position itself as a critical transit hub linking Central Asia to global markets via the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.

The 20th session of the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Committee was held in Astana, in mid-June, with the participation of Gholamreza Nouri Ghezeli, Iran's Minister of Agriculture and head of the Iranian delegation.

Nouri thanked the Kazakh government, particularly Trade and Integration Minister Arman Shakkaliyev, for hosting the meeting, and expressed hope that the session would help advance the strategic partnership between the two countries.

Referring to the committee's previous 19 sessions, Nouri said the continued meetings reflect both sides' firm commitment to expanding bilateral ties.

Nouri announced that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is expected to visit Astana soon at the official invitation of his Kazakh counterpart.

Documents finalized during the committee's latest session will be prepared for signing during the visit.

During the meeting, the two countries agreed on several initiatives to boost economic cooperation and facilitate trade. These include the formation of a joint Iran-Kazakhstan investment working group to examine shared investment opportunities; enhanced trade and business engagement through the establishment of trade centers and co-hosted exhibitions; and the finalization of a mutual recognition agreement for Authorized Economic Operators to streamline customs procedures.

Both sides also agreed to hold a joint meeting on oil, gas, refining, and petrochemicals in the third quarter of 2025, and to explore the resumption of oil swap operations. Cooperation in agriculture will continue through joint committee meetings, with a focus on plant and animal health. The two sides also discussed expanding collaboration in the health sector, including knowledge transfer in pharmaceutical and medical equipment production, and the formation of a joint health task force.

Tehran, Baku urge acceleration of joint border projects

TEHRAN – Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev have stressed the need to accelerate the implementation of joint border projects, including the Astara border terminal and under-construction bridges along the frontier.

According to a statement from Iran's Transport Ministry, the two officials—who co-chair the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Cooperation Committee—met to discuss expanding economic and operational ties, with a particular focus on cross-border infrastructure projects.

It was also agreed that Mustafayev will visit the Iranian city of Astara in the near future to inspect the progress of ongoing joint ventures. The both sides reviewed bilateral economic matters under the committee's framework and held talks on how to advance the projects and resolve any potential obstacles.

In a recent meeting, Sadegh and Mustafayev had reaffirmed their commitment to accelerating joint border infrastructure projects.

Significant progress has already been made with the Astarachay (Astara-Astara) bridge, inaugurated on December 31, 2023.

Spanning 89 meters in length and over 30 meters in width, the bridge features four lanes for vehicles and separate pedestrian walkways.

Built at a cost of around €5.8 million, it runs parallel to the Baku-Astara freeway and seamlessly connects Iranian and Azerbaijani transport corridors, enhancing transit between Iran and CIS and Eastern European countries.

Officials at the inauguration noted that bilateral trade had grown substantially—trade volume increased by nearly 46 percent and transit activity surged by 45 percent—underscoring the bridge's importance as part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Looking ahead, one of the most transformative projects under discussion is the Astara-Rasht-Qazvin railway link, a key segment of INSTC. With the Astara dual-gauge rail connection completed in March 2017 and a test train running in early 2018, the ongoing Rasht-Astara leg (approximately 162 km with 8 stations, 56 bridges, and 35 overpasses) is expected to be finalized in the coming years.

As of mid-2025, project plans and financing—including a €1.6 billion Russian backed loan—have been secured. When complete, this rail corridor will dramatically boost both Iran's regional connectivity and export capacity.

Supporting infrastructure initiatives such as the Aghband



automobile bridge over the Aras River are also under active development. Construction began in 2022, with a target completion timeline of 18 months—intended to link Nakhchivan with mainland Azerbaijan via Iranian territory.

These joint ventures reinforce not only economic integration but also broader regional connectivity.

Overall, Iran and Azerbaijan see these projects as strategic linchpins in strengthening transit, trade, and energy cooperation. Both sides emphasize that accelerating execution, aligning customs procedures, and mobilizing joint financing will be critical to unlocking the full potential of this deepening bilateral relationship.

In mid-May, senior officials from Iran and Azerbaijan stressed the need to expedite the construction of key transit routes during a high-level meeting in Tehran, highlighting the strategic importance of enhancing connectivity between the neighboring countries.

Ali Akbar Ahmadian, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, met with Hikmet Farhad oglu Hajiye, foreign policy advisor to the President of Azerbaijan to discuss advancing bilateral cooperation, particularly in the transport and infrastructure sectors.

Ahmadian said the historical ties and geographic proximity between Iran and Azerbaijan necessitate the elevation of economic and political relations to their highest potential. Referring to the recent visit by Iran's president to Baku, he noted that Tehran is committed to fully implementing the agreements made during that trip as well as previous bilateral accords.

"Accelerating the development of transit routes between our countries is a strategic necessity," Ahmadian said, adding that these projects must be pursued at the highest levels to overcome existing obstacles to economic and trade cooperation.

Hajiye echoed the sentiment, stating that the Iranian president's visit to Baku opened a new chapter in bilateral relations. He noted that the signed cooperation documents between Tehran and

Baku reflect a growing dynamism in their ties that is expected to continue.

Hajiye also underscored the strategic value of transit corridors passing through Iran, expressing Azerbaijan's strong commitment to expanding trade, banking cooperation, and joint energy field development with its southern neighbor.

Trade relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan have seen remarkable growth in recent years. By leveraging their cultural, historical, and geographical commonalities, the two countries have worked to expand their economic cooperation through joint projects, border trade exchanges, and the development of transit corridors.

The Republic of Azerbaijan holds an important position in Iran's neighborly policies. Beyond the bonds of neighborhood and historical connections, the two nations share familial ties.

Fortunately, a new chapter has been opened in the relations between the two countries, which is promising for both nations. There are numerous opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation ahead of them.

The agreements reached and the joint projects currently underway between Iran and Azerbaijan in the fields of trade, energy, and transportation, as well as the continuation and strengthening of these collaborations, will transform Iran and Azerbaijan into strategic partners for one another.

Iran and Azerbaijan signed Persian and Azeri versions of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on April 8 during the 16th Joint Economic Committee meeting, co-chaired by Iran's minister of transport and urban development and Azerbaijan's deputy prime minister.

The meeting between Iranian Minister Farzaneh Sadegh and Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev focused on reviewing bilateral projects and cooperation in economic, transport, trade, energy, and banking sectors.

The signed Persian and Azeri texts of the memorandum were

appended to the English version of the MOU, which had been previously signed in Tehran in February 2025.

As part of her official visit, Minister Sadegh also inspected joint transport infrastructure projects between the two countries.

Sadegh, who also chairs the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee, also met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku to discuss bilateral ties and economic cooperation. The meeting focused on expanding joint projects across key sectors including transportation, customs, water and energy, oil and gas, and preferential trade.

At the beginning of the meeting, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev appreciated the recent reciprocal visits of high-level delegations from Azerbaijan and Iran, noting that these visits provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen friendship between the two countries and promote bilateral cooperation.

He mentioned the holding of the meeting of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Economic Committee and emphasized that the meeting's agenda includes important projects aimed at expanding cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, energy, and transportation.

The Iranian minister, for her part, emphasized her country's interest in developing relations with Azerbaijan in all areas, and pointed to the strong historical, cultural, and religious ties between the two nations.

Sadegh led a high-level Iranian delegation to Azerbaijan from April 7 to 10 to review progress on past agreements, remove barriers to joint ventures, and lay the groundwork for an upcoming visit by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his accompanying delegation to Baku (on Monday, April 28).

Amin Tarafo, advisor to the minister and head of the ministry's international affairs office, said the trip was made at the formal invitation of Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev.

In a previous meeting between Mustafayev and Iran's Former Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Abdolnaser Hemmati, the Iranian side said the country is determined to expand its trade ties with neighboring Azerbaijan.

Hemmati said the size of trade between Iran and Azerbaijan, which is around \$400 million per year, is very low and does not match the state of relations between the two countries.

After the meeting, the official said that he and Mustafayev had agreed in their meeting that communication between the banking and insurance institutions of Iran and Azerbaijan should expand to allow an increase in trade relations between the two countries.

Iran taps knowledge-based firms to boost clean energy production

TEHRAN – Iran is turning to knowledge-based companies to help tackle its growing energy imbalance by promoting clean power generation, according to the head of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO).

Speaking at a contract signing ceremony between a high-tech Iranian firm and an indus-

trial manufacturer, Farshad Moqimi, Chairman of IDRO's Executive Board, emphasized the strategic role of knowledge-based enterprises in developing innovative solutions such as expansion turbines for clean electricity generation.

"This is more than a contract—it symbolizes a smart shift in direction and a major step

toward building a knowledge-based economy while addressing one of Iran's most urgent challenges: the energy deficit," Moqimi said.

The agreement involves the design, construction, installation, and commissioning of an expansion turbine system—technology capable of converting excess gas pressure into electricity, reducing both waste and emissions.

Iran's intl. distribution industry expo opens with strong private sector presence

TEHRAN – The 7th International Exhibition and Conference on Iran's Distribution Industry opened Tuesday afternoon, August 5, with the participation of Tehran Chamber of Commerce Head Mahmoud Najafi Arab and a broad presence from the private sector.

Held at the Iran Mall Exhibition and Convention Center, the four-

day event brings together key players in the country's distribution and logistics sectors.

More than 120 private companies are taking part, with over 30 specialized sessions covering fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), pharmaceuticals, food, hygiene products, and logistics.

The Tehran Chamber of Com-

merce is hosting a dedicated pavilion at the exhibition, featuring advisors, experts, and representatives from several private sector associations based in the capital.

Najafi Arab, accompanied by Sohrab Karegar, president of the National Association of Distribution Industry and deputy head of the Chamber's Transport Com-

mission, toured the venue and engaged in discussions with exhibitors and industry operators.

The event aims to foster dialogue, showcase innovations, and explore solutions to strengthen the country's supply and distribution networks. It will run daily from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. until Friday, August 8.

‘Major mistake’ at cost of Lebanese sovereignty

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — Amid the turmoil surrounding what the Lebanese government concealed on Tuesday after more than five hours of “extraordinary” consultations, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam succeeded in sabotaging President Joseph Aoun’s agreement with Hezbollah.

Salam came out to announce the decision to task the army with developing an implementation plan to limit weapons, bypassing promises to rely on dialogue as a means to reach a consensus on Hezbollah arms.

Salam, who appeared pleased, announced the decision, saying, “The Council has decided to continue discussing the American paper in a government session on August 7 (Thursday), and to task the army with developing a plan to contain weapons by the end of this year and presenting it to the Council of Ministers before the 31st of this month.”

Following the decision, Hezbollah issued a statement saying, “We will deal with this decision as if it doesn’t exist.” Analysts say the decision will put the Lebanese army on a potential course to clash with Hezbollah, which could lead to a civil war.

Hezbollah said the decision is dictated by the US and only serves Israel’s interests.

“This decision topples the sovereignty of Lebanon and releases the hand of Israel to ravage its security, geography, politics and future existence,” the group said.

Hezbollah added that it would be willing to discuss a defence strategy to end “Israeli aggression” in Lebanon, liberate its land, free the country’s captives in Israel and build a Lebanese state, but not while under Israel’s attacks.

It said Israel must first adhere to the ceasefire agreement reached in November of

last year.

Observers believe such way of disarming Hezbollah is part of a broader plan for the entire region and it will not be limited to Lebanon or Hezbollah.



The current situation in Syria shows that even complete surrender does not stop Israeli aggression. They continue until the total destruction of a country’s military and defense capabilities.

The U.S. has been seeking to pit governments and segments of the population against resistance movements in various countries, aiming to achieve its goals through internal strife (for example, Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq) — goals that are, of course, American-Israeli in nature.

However, analysts argue, resistance groups in the region didn’t ask for U.S. permission to take up arms, so they won’t lay down their weapons under U.S. pressure either.

Hezbollah and Amal ministers refuse to endorse cabinet decision

President Aoun had met with Hezbollah officials, during which he emphasized that the session would not be provocative to any sectarian component, and that the priority was to reach a consensual decision, without setting a timeframe, even if it required holding several sessions.

These positive signals prompted Hezbollah and the Amal Movement to attend the session, but Nawaf Salam informed Aoun that he was subject to external pressure, insisting on approving American envoy Thomas Barrack’s proposal within a specific timetable.

This prompted Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to suggest that ministers from the Shiite Hezbollah and Amal Movement abstain from voting

on any such resolution.

However, Hezbollah preferred to withdraw from the session, threatening to withdraw completely from the government. Thus, the withdrawal option was agreed upon.

Before the session, reports indicated the possibility of reaching a compromise. But political tension was evident, especially upon insistence by ministers from the Lebanese Forces and Kataeb Party adamant on escalating tension.

The ministers in the “neutral” camp were wary of being dragged into a vote to avoid exposing Lebanon to political and sectarian upheavals, as happened in 2005.

However, Aoun succumbed to the pressure, even though he could have adjourned the session and postponed discussion of the item until Thursday’s session, but he did not.

Sources close to President Aoun justified his failure to adjourn the session by claiming he did not want to engage in a clash with the prime minister.

The reality is that Aoun does not attach great importance to Salam’s opinion, but is unwilling to oppose Washington and Riyadh.

During the session, Hezbollah Minister Rakan Nasser al-Din questioned the reason for the haste in taking the decision, saying, “What are we discussing now? Is it a draft agreement, or is there Israeli approval of this paper? Is there an American decision to guarantee its implementation on the Israeli side?” Who will bear the brunt of the Israeli

attacks, Lebanon’s exposure to the Israeli enemy, and its occupation of the Lebanese territory?”

The government decided to set a deadline for arms confiscation without setting a deadline for ending the occupation of southern territories, halting Israeli attacks, releasing prisoners, and beginning the reconstruction process.

While the ministers of the Lebanese Forces and the Kataeb Movement touted a major victory in the government, consultations began between the Shiite duo to decide on Thursday’s session and how to respond to this decision.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem, in a speech delivered simultaneously with the government session, emphasized his refusal to commit to any timetable as long as the Israeli aggression continues, and without discussing a national defense strategy.

“We cannot agree to any timetable proposed for implementation under the shadow of Israeli aggression, because a timetable means committing to something while the aggression continues,” Qassem stated.

The Hezbollah Secretary-General emphasized that handing over weapons without discussing a defense strategy is “wrong because we cannot accept that Lebanon commits to gradually relinquishing its power while all its cards of power remain in the hands of the Israeli enemy.”

What happened before, during, and after the cabinet session was not an ordinary event.

The danger does not lie in the characterization of the action itself, but in what it reveals about the path Lebanon is heading toward from now on. Those who agreed to proceed with the decision to disarm Hezbollah will not heed the sentiments of the vast majority of the people who are allied to the resistance movement when they decided to squander Lebanon’s strength, bringing the security and military institutions under direct subordination to American tutelage, which operates exclusively in the service of the Israeli enemy.

House speaker’s West Bank visit highlights plan to erase Palestine

Mike Johnson’s visit incites more crimes against West Bankers



From page 1 ► He used a so-called biblical name “Judea and Samaria” for the Palestinian territory. According to the Jerusalem Post, Johnson even said he would work to promote the use of the term “Judea and Samaria” at the federal level.

His visit to the occupied West Bank and use of bogus name for the West Bank emboldens Israeli regime in its annexing the remaining Palestinian lands. The trip is also an invitation for more land grabs and harsher violence against Palestinians by settlers and Israeli forces.

According to a UN report published in December 2024The Israeli human rights group B’Tselem and the United Nations office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs documented more than 1,200 incidents of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in 2024 alone, an average of three attacks per day. Now both the settlers, occupation forces and the Israeli regime feel more emboldened to wipe out Palestinians from the constantly shrinking lands.

Johnson’s visit to the occupied West Bank also carries an important message as Israel is completing its project of depopulating the Gaza Strip through indescribable crimes, including starvation and other forms of collective punishment.

While people in the world are angry with Israel’s barbaric behavior in the West Bank and even Israel’s allies in the West are under pressure at

home to recognize the Palestinian State, the Johnso visit to the occupied territories and his provocative remarks raise eyebrows.

The world is wondering what message does Johnson’s visit to the occupied West Bank convey, given that for over twenty-five years U.S. policy, supported by both Republican and Democratic administrations, has purportedly advocated resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-state solution?

This shows nothing except U.S. duplicity and hypocrisy toward the agonies of the Palestinians.

Johnson’s trip won the praise of Israel’s military chief Israel Katz, who is a war criminal like his predecessor Yoav Gallant. It was mostly during his leadership of the military that Israel started mass starvation in Gaza.

According to Middle East Eye, in a post on X, Katz said Johnson’s trip is evidence of “unwavering support and moral clarity in standing with Israel against its enemies.”

Regrettably, it is indisputable that Washington’s support for Israel is unwavering but that this support is “moral” is an insult to people’s intelligence in the world.

Johnson’s visit may be a prelude to gradually turn the West Bank into another Gaza in a different way.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Guardian: Gaza – ‘A wasteland of rubble, dust, and graves’ seen from the sky

Gaza has been transformed into a graveyard by Israel’s deliberate war crimes: indiscriminate bombings, targeting of civilians, destruction of homes, and the use of starvation as a weapon.

This calculated brutality has led to the massacre of tens of thousands and left a population trapped in a living hell. The world’s silence only enables this ongoing massacre.

This is The Guardian’s report revealing the full scale of the horrific devastation:

Seen from the air, Gaza looks like the ruins of an ancient civilization, brought to light after centuries of darkness. A patchwork of concrete shapes and shattered walls, neighborhoods scattered with craters, rubble and roads that lead nowhere. The remnants of cities wiped out.

But here, there has been no natural disaster and

no slow passage of time.

Gaza was a bustling, living place until less than two years ago, for all the challenges its residents endured even then. Its markets were crowded, its streets were full of children. That Gaza is gone – not buried under volcanic ash, not erased by history, but razed by an Israeli military campaign that has left behind a place that looks like the aftermath of an apocalypse.

The Guardian was granted permission on Tuesday to travel onboard a Jordanian military aircraft providing aid. Israel announced last week that it had resumed coordinated humanitarian airdrops over Gaza, following mounting international pressure over severe shortages of food and medical supplies, which has reached such a crisis point that a famine is now unfolding there.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Trump raises India tariffs to 50% over Russian oil purchases

The White House announced Wednesday that it is imposing an additional 25% tariff on India, bringing the total levies against the major United States trading partner to 50%, CNBC reported.

“I find that the Government of India is currently directly or indirectly importing Russian Federation oil,” President Donald Trump said in an executive order.

“Accordingly, and as consistent with applicable law, articles of India imported into the customs territory of the United States shall be subject to an additional ad valorem rate of duty of 25 percent,” the executive order reads.

The new tariffs are set to go into effect in 21 days, according to the order, while the previously announced 25% tariffs are set to take effect on Thursday.

Trump’s new tariff rate on India is now among the highest levies on any of the United States’ trading partners.

It’s the latest sign that Trump is following through on his threat to punish countries that buy Russian oil, as he’s increased his rhetoric in recent weeks over President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine.

India said that it is “extremely unfortunate that the US should choose to impose additional tariffs on India for actions that several other countries are also taking in their own national interest,” according to a statement in response to the new levies.

“We have already made clear our position on these issues, including the fact that our imports are based on market factors and done with the overall objective of ensuring the energy security of 1.4 billion people of India,” an official spokesperson for India’s Ministry of External Affairs said.

“We reiterate that these actions are unfair, unjustified and unreasonable,” the statement continued.

Relief or ruse: US-Israeli scheme masking military agendas in Gaza



From page 1 ► calling it a “disturbing example” of how humanitarian operations can be weaponized for covert military and geopolitical gain.

“The GHF, a nongovernmental organization created by Israel in February 2025 with US support, to allegedly distribute aid in Gaza, is an

utterly disturbing example of how humanitarian relief can be exploited for covert military and geopolitical agendas,” the experts said in a statement released by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

They condemned the foundation’s

“humanitarian” label, describing it as part of Israel’s “humanitarian camouflage” — a tactic, they said, that erodes trust in international relief standards and the broader humanitarian enterprise.

The experts also urged the international community to impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, suspend any trade or investment agreements that could contribute to Palestinian suffering, and hold corporations accountable for complicity in human rights violations.

Earlier this month, Human Rights Watch described GHF aid sites as “death traps”, citing recurring “bloodbaths” at distribution points rather than protection or relief for desperate civilians.

Israel has faced growing global

condemnation for weaponizing starvation in its war on Gaza. Since the military assault began in October 2023, over 61,000 Palestinians have been killed, with more than 150,000 injured. Additionally, nearly 200 people — half of them children — have died from hunger and malnutrition.

Critics argue that the GHF’s creation is a calculated move to distract from Israel’s deliberate starvation policy and its acts of genocide in Gaza. At the same time, it allows the United States to maintain political cover for its continued support of Israeli military operations — projecting an image of aid while enabling destruction.

In truth, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation does not represent relief — it represents a smokescreen, shielding a deeper agenda of occupation, oppression and impunity.

Israeli command centers come under attack in Gaza

From page 1 ► The IOF has acknowledged injuries to soldiers including one in serious condition.

Al-Qassam also stated that, in coordination with the al-Quds Brigades, (the armed wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad) and al-Nasser Salah al-Din Brigades (the armed wing of the Popular Resistance Committees), they jointly shelled a gathering of IOF soldiers and military vehicles north of Khan Younis, using heavy mortar fire.

The al-Quds Brigades, in collaboration with the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades (armed wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), released footage of a joint operation that destroyed an IOF military vehicle.

They also shared video of an attack targeting IOF soldiers with mortar fire, carried out in co-

operation with the Ansar Brigades in the eastern Shujaiya neighborhood near Gaza City.

In a separate announcement, the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades confirmed that one of their units successfully destroyed an IOF military vehicle using a pre-planted anti-armor explosive device. The operation took place in eastern Shujaiya and reportedly caused casualties among the IOF crew.

Meanwhile, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for targeting a group of IOF soldiers and military vehicles with mortar shells east of al-Qarara, northeast of Khan Younis.

In response to these developments, the Israeli military confirmed that one of its officers was also wounded in southern Gaza.

Haj Bektash Vali Hill, symbol of Iran's mystical history and culture



TEHRAN--Haj Bektash Vali Hill in Neyshabur, Khorasan Razavi province, is a prominent symbol of Iran's mystical history and culture, which has the potential to attract domestic and foreign tourists, an archaeologist said.

In an interview with ISNA, Abolfazl Zahedi stated that Haj Bektash Vali Hill is one of the most important cultural and historical monuments in Iran, adding that this place is the birthplace of Haj Bektash Vali, the great mystic and founder of the Bektashi sect, and has attracted a lot of attention due to its profound cultural and spiritual influences.

Referring to the history of the hill, he stated that Haj Bektash Vali was born in Neyshabur in the 7th century AH and is known as one of the prominent mystical figures. He has had a profound impact on Sufism in Iran and various mystical sects, he added.

Stating that Haj Bektash Vali Hill, as his burial and memorial site, has always been of interest to his followers and those interested in mysticism, he discussed the cultural impact of Haj Bektash Vali on the society of that time. "His teachings spread not only in Iran, but also throughout Central Asia and Turkey. As a mystic and teacher, he emphasized the concepts of love, humanity, and unity, and this attracted many followers to him."

Zahedi also discussed the spiritual importance of this place, saying: "Haj Bektash Vali Hill is valuable not only for followers of the Bektashi sect, but also for all those interested in Islamic history and culture."

He added that Haj Bektash Vali is a transnational figure, known not only among Iranians, but also among Turks and other nations.

Referring to the tourism potential of this place, he said that Haj Bektash Valley Hill can be recognized as an important tourist attraction in Neyshabur. The rich and spiritual history of this place has made it an attractive destination for domestic and foreign tourists, especially those interested in history and mystical culture can visit this place, he added.

He mentioned Neyshabur as one of the historical cities of Iran that has many cultural and natural attractions and noted that Haj Bektash Vali Hill, as a central point in this regard, can help attract tourists.

Zahedi continued that the Fushenjan site, which is the birthplace of Haj Bektash Vali, was registered under number 24383 on National Heritage List on January 13, 2008.

He stated that the national registration of this monument has helped to protect and maintain it and has increased public awareness about the history and culture of this important figure.

The archaeologist also emphasized the importance of protecting this place, adding that the protection of historical monuments should

be prioritized.

Haj Bektash Vali Hill is a valuable cultural heritage and requires special attention and care so that future generations can also benefit from it, he mentioned.

Zahedi went on to point out the challenges that may exist in the path of preserving and developing tourism at this site, saying: "One of the main challenges is the lack of financial resources and the lack of sufficient attention to this site. To preserve and maintain this monument, we need appropriate planning and investment."

He stated that the historical and cultural importance of Haj Bektash Vali Hill and its potential for developing tourism in Neyshabur are very important, adding "Haj Bektash Vali Hill should be preserved as a source of inspiration for future generations."

Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Musa al-Khorasani, a Shia mystic of the 7th century AH, is known in Turkey as Haj Bektash Vali. He was born in Fushenjan, Neyshabur, and migrated to Asia Minor at the age of about 40. Haj Bektash Vali died at the age of 62. His followers, known as Alawites, are scattered throughout Turkey, the Balkans, Albania, and Germany.

In ancient times, Neyshabur was home to many great men of science, art, and culture and today it hosts tourists who go to visit the relics of that period.

Situated some 70 km west of Mashhad, Neyshabur was founded around the third century CE. Narratives say the town derived its name from its alleged founder, the Sassanid king Shapur I.

It grew to prominence in the eighth century and was ruined by invasions and earthquakes in the thirteenth century. After that time, a much smaller settlement was established just north of the ancient town, and the once-bustling metropolis lay underground—until a team of excavators from the Metropolitan Museum arrived in the mid-twentieth century.

The ancient city underwent rounds of excavation as of 1935 by experts from the Department of Near Eastern Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. According to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, its affiliated archaeologists worked at Neyshabur between 1935 and 1940, returning for a final season in the winter of 1947–48.

The excavators had been drawn to the city due to its fame in the medieval period as a regional capital and it was home to many religious scholars. It was also known as an economic center.

Neyshabur was once situated on the famed Silk Roads, which ran from China to the Mediterranean Sea, crossing Central Asia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey along the way.

Greater Neyshabur has more than 500 identified historical monuments and sites, including the tombs of great personalities such as Khayyam, Attar, the tomb of Kamal ol-Molk, the historical caravanserais of Shah Abbas, and Qadamgah Razavi. In addition, the largest historical site in the country, covering an area of more than 4,500 hectares, is located in Neyshabur.

The ancient Iranian city of Neyshabur holds considerable potential to become a destination for international sightseers.

Iranian consul-general: 507 Iranian Mookebs operate in Najaf

TEHRAN-- Iranian Consul-General in Najaf Seyyed Saeed Seyyedein gave news of launching 507 Iranian Mookebs--service centers with a religious nature where Shia Muslims come together and conduct religious rituals during Arbaeen—in Najaf with coordination of Iraqi delegations.

According to ISNA, he said that the Arbaeen pilgrimage demonstrates the depth of the bond of faith and solidarity between people of the same faith and religion. This is a unique global occasion, and Iraqis have proven themselves to be the most qualified to serve the pilgrims, he mentioned.

He added that a number of government and public delegations in Iran and the municipalities of Tehran and Mashhad are proudly cooperating with the Iraqi parties to provide the best services to the pilgrims. In Najaf province alone, there are 507 Iranian Mookebs that operate in coordination with Iraqi



delegations, he pointed out.

Seyyedein continued that Iranian Mookebs distribute about 50,000 votive meals a day in the old city of Najaf. Also, 80 Mookebs have been established for medical services under the supervision of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), in which more than 1,000 Iranian doctors and nurses work, he added.

He emphasized that about 80,000 ice cubes have been distributed in cooperation with Ira-

nian Mookebs, and 30 schools in Najaf have been allocated for these Mookebs in coordination with the Ministry of Education. The municipalities of Mashhad and Tehran have sent more than 1,000 volunteer servants and 30 service vehicles, including municipal and fire trucks, he said. Also, 60 ambulances have been deployed in Najaf by IRCS, he added.

Iranian consul-general also announced the provision of suitable conditions for connecting the Irani-

an Railway Network from Shalamchah to Basra and from there to Karbala, and the existence of bilateral negotiations to build railway lines in the common border areas between the two countries.

Arbaeen, one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, marks the end of a 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS) and his companions at the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE.

Each year, millions of Shia Muslims from around the globe undertake this pilgrimage to Karbala, walking hundreds of kilometers as an expression of their faith and devotion.

The Arbaeen ceremony is unique in that it is the largest gathering with the presence of people from different nationalities from across the world. This has become a transnational and global event. It ignites the sparks of Ashura, turning it into a movement.

Gilan among top provinces in tourism field

TEHRAN—Gilan province is among top provinces in tourism field, said a senior tourism official, Javad Vahedi.

Speaking at the introduction ceremony of head of Gilan Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department on Tuesday, Vahedi added that Gilan with its great potentials in historical, cultural and tourism fields hosts many domestic and foreign tourists annually, Miras Arya (CHTN) reported.

"Expectations from Gilan province are very high, considering its existing potential and capacities, and we hope to witness further development and infrastructural development of this province by addressing the existing deficiencies."

Given that Gilan province is the country's tourism pilot, it should pay special attention to attracting investors and creating tourism infrastructure, he pointed out.

Stressing that there is a national consensus



to create tourism infrastructure in Iran, he said that recently, Iranian parliament (Majlis) passed a resolution in the budget law that five percent of the assets acquired will be allocated to the provinces, and with the coordination of other agencies, Gilan's tourism infrastructure is no exception to this First Gelij carpet of Mazandaran province woven rule.

Pointing to the entrance of six million visi-

tors to Gilan province following start of 12-day Israeli war against Iran, he said that fortunately, with the cooperation and support of the people and the measures taken by the officials, no special problem arose and the province was able to provide the best services in the field of security, order and meeting the needs of the visitors.

Appreciating and thanking all the managers of the tourism sector's facilities in Gilan province, he said that the private sector created an epic in this war and, in an unprecedented move, opened the doors of residences, hotels and eco-lodges to the people and provided services with discounts of up to 90 percent and in some cases even free accommodation.

Gilan province in northern Iran has experienced a considerable boost in tourism industry. Among the province's most visited locations are the picturesque village of Masuleh, the ancient Rudkhan Castle (aka Qale Rudkhan), and the Gilan Rural Heritage Museum.

First Gelij carpet of Mazandaran province woven

TEHRAN--For the first time in Mazandaran province, an authentic carpet with a "Gelij" design and inspired by ancient motifs from the Sassanid period was created entirely by hand: a luxurious work that revives a connection between the ancient art of northern carpet weaving and the aesthetics of historical architecture in a new format.

According to IRIB, Kobra and Zahra Baqeri, two artist sisters from Dodangeh in Sari, designed and wove the first Mazandaran handwoven carpet with authentic Gelij pattern.

The pattern, inspired by the "bird's foot" motif from the Sassanid period, which, with more than 40 days of continuous and thoughtful effort, showcases a unique combination of traditional symbols, the visual heritage of the ancient pottery, and native carpet weaving.

Zahra Baqeri emphasized the innovative nature of this design in the field of carpet weaving in the region and said: "Gelij pattern is implemented in Mazandaran carpet weaving for the first time. We have been weaving carpets with our mother since we were children, but we were always thinking about creating something new; a design that was both true to the roots and eye-catching."

Kobra Baqeri, who was responsible for the color composition and arrangement of the patterns in this work, said: "Gelij, with its regular geometric structure, is both pleasing to the eye and a symbol of our inner order and cultural continuity. We wanted to weave something that would attract the gaze of every viewer to the authenticity and traditional beauty of Iran."

With emphasis on the potential

of Gelij art and the other traditional Mazandaran motifs, these artists called for targeted support, facilitating the process of registering works, providing facilities to equip the workshops, and providing a suitable platform for their presence in domestic and international markets.

This 1.5 x 1-meter Gelij carpet, woven using plant-based yarns, in addition to its artistic aspect, carries a story of the connection of generations and the revival of a forgotten heritage. This work is among the noble works of Mazandaran handicrafts and is undergoing the preliminary stages for provincial registration.

More than a work of art, the Gelij carpet is a symbol of the cultural ecosystem of Mazandaran; a story of female creativity, reliance on native memory, and the effort to

preserve heritage in the path of development. This work is the initiator of a new trend in the art of carpet weaving in the north of the country.

Carpet weaving is widespread in cities and provinces across Iran, with some cities like Tabriz, Isfahan, and Kashan being particularly well-known.

Iran's handmade carpet exports have experienced approximately a four-percent growth in value in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), after two decades of decline, according to Zahra Kamani, the head of Iran National Carpet Center.

Putting the value of the exported handmade carpets at \$39.7 million in the past year, she said that the Iranian carpets were exported to 65 countries around the world.

Copenhagen's guide to sustainable tourism

Every destination city can easily come up with its own innovative ideas to draw visitors who bring a helping hand as well as their cash, Elisabeth Braw, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, and the author of the award-winning "Goodbye Globalization" and a regular columnist for POLITICO wrote.

For many locals the world over, this summer — just like every summer and, indeed, every month — tourism brings misery rather than enjoyment. In Barcelona, locals fed up with overtourism took to the streets in protest. In Genoa, Lisbon and the Canary Islands, they did the same. And in Venice, locals were enraged their city had to play backdrop to tech billionaire Jeff Bezos's wedding party.

Copenhagen, however, has turned the tourism curse on its head, inviting visitors to do good deeds for the city and be rewarded for it in return. And it's time other cities got similarly creative.

"During 2024, the Spanish tourism sector experienced its best year since 2019. Its contribution to GDP rose by almost 8% to €248.7 billion, or 15.6% of the economy. It also employed 3 million people, nearly 14% of the country's total jobs," the World Travel & Tourism Council reported in May. For many Spaniards, though, this hardly feels like good news. In fact, it's quite the opposite. To them — and to locals in many other cities

tourists like to visit — what it actually means is overcrowding, lack of housing and constant littering.

It's a cursed bargain, tourism: It brings in cash and jobs, but the more tourism you get, the more locals' discomfort turns to misery. These days, even the trails leading up to the Himalayas are tainted by litter — and don't even mention Instagram tourism.

But tourism doesn't need to be this destructive. Switzerland, for example, has begun giving rail discounts to those who book a stay at sustainable hotels, and it charges anyone visiting the Lake Brienz pier, which was made famous by the Korean drama "Crash Landing on You," 5 Swiss francs. The proceeds are then invested in local infrastructure.

Copenhagen's approach is even more innovative. Last year, the Danish capital launched CopenPay, a scheme that invites tourists to do good deeds for the city — and get rewarded. "All you need to do is, for instance, bike instead of drive, help maintain the city, work in an urban garden or take the train to Copenhagen instead of flying, stay longer at the destination," CopenPay explains.

The initiative was launched as a four-week pilot program last year, and this summer it expanded to nine weeks, with 100 attractions participating — a fourfold increase.

For instance, as part of CopenPay, there are currently

15 different opportunities to clean up litter across the city, one of which is to "Clean the harbor with GreenKayak and enjoy a free non-alcoholic drink."

While I can't speak for everyone, to me, cleaning the harbor in central Copenhagen by kayak certainly sounds like an exciting undertaking I'd do for free — though I'd also happily claim the beverage. And if that doesn't quite strike your fancy, you can help clean the harbor by self-sailing boat too.

And picking up litter is just the beginning. If you bike or use public transport to get to the National Museum, you get a free ice cream with your entry ticket. If you arrive in Copenhagen by train or electric car, you get similarly rewarded. There are free bike rentals, free yoga sessions, free guided tours, all waiting to be claimed. Visitors arriving by train from abroad can even get free surplus meals at Copenhagen Central Station.

You get the idea: Be a good citizen while you visit, and good things will come your way. And hopefully the impact of CopenPay — and other similar initiatives currently in the works — won't stop there. Imagine if participants start thinking differently about their role as tourists. Once you take part in city maintenance as a temporary sanitation worker, perhaps you start viewing your surroundings less as an Instagram commodity and more as a local community worth protecting.

**AUCTION SJSCO.
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Sirjan Jahan Steel Company is pleased to announce the sale and export of 20,000 MT Pellet Fines on basis of FAS at the Buyer's

warehouse in Bandar Abbas, IRAN according to INCOTERMS 2020. We invite interested bidders to obtain tender documents by sending an email sales@sjsco.ir

All documentation will be provided electronically. All bids on conformity to tender instruction should be submitted no later than Monday, August 11, 2025.

For further inquiries, please contact us at:

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‘20 Asiatic cheetahs spotted in Iran’s wildlife reserves’

TEHRAN – Twenty Asiatic cheetahs have so far been spotted in wildlife reserves across the country, an official with the Department of Environment (DOE) has said.

According to the latest report, the number of Asiatic cheetahs in the country stands at 26, with 20 individuals living in the wild, and six in captivity, IRNA quoted Hamid Zohrabi as saying.

Cheetah conservation is among the top priorities of the DOE, he added.

Highlighting the need for a change of approach in environmental policies, the official said environmental experts have developed one-year, five-year, and twenty-year conservation plans. The DOE has also resumed the plans after a six-year hiatus, Zohrabi stressed.

In May, the head of the DOE, Shina Ansari, expressed hope yet worry about the cheetah’s survival in the country, being pushed to the brink of extinction.

“The extinction of the world’s rarest cat has become a symbol of our challenges and responsibilities towards Iran’s nature,” IRIB quoted Ansari as saying.



Referring to the low population of cheetahs in Asia, the official said, “Once roaming through vast plains from West Asia into India, the Asiatic cheetah only exists in Iran now, with a population of less than 30 individuals. Since 2001, around 85 cheetahs have died because of human-related factors, indicating we have posed a greater threat to their survival than nature.”

The DOE makes its best efforts to preserve endangered animals not just in words but by taking action in nature. However, the goal will be fulfilled only by the participation and involvement of people, media, responsible institutions, and nature lovers.

“Preserving cheetahs is not merely an environmental concern. It reflects our attitude towards development, foresight, and national responsibility. It is a symbol of the country’s ecosystem’s health, a life-balance preserver. Preserving cheetah means ensuring the right to life for people and nature,” the official highlighted.

Conservation efforts

Relocating domestic animals from habitats of cheetahs, fencing the Tehran-Mashhad road, which is one of the most dangerous areas, and breeding in

captivity are among the most recent measures the DOE has been taking to preserve cheetahs,” IRNA quoted Zohrabi as saying in January.

These plans mainly focus on threat removal. During these years, domestic animals have been removed from an area of 150,000 hectares, including Golestan National Park as well as the wildlife sanctuary in the area, Zohrabi added.

The DOE is following up on the allocation of two trillion rials (around 2.4 million dollars) to decrease mortalities on the Tehran-Mashhad road through enhancing road lighting, reducing vehicle speeds, and fencing.

Drones and other wildlife monitoring tools can also be used to conserve cheetahs in the area. However, more needs to be done to reach a favorable result, the official further noted.

“We do our best to safeguard cheetahs’ habitats, but to increase their population, the plan to breed in captivity is going on. We have already taken measures to standardize their breeding site in captivity with the help of the private sector, Zohrabi stressed.

Biotechnology plays key role in 60% of sustainable development goals

TEHRAN – Biotechnology, as one of the highly promising scientific fields, plays a key role in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs), as it holds a 60 percent share of the goals related to life sciences and their applications directly or indirectly.

Sustainable development highlights practical ways to live in a healthier, more sustainable, and just world. Sustainable development means creating a balance between economic progress, social welfare, and environmental conservation, in a way that would meet the needs of the present generation while preserving resources for future generations.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 sustainable development goals, which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership, according to the UN website.

They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

Biotechnology offers innovative solutions to help address environmental challenges and improve human life quality.

Using diagnostic kits for early detection of



diseases, environmental pollution, producing non-pesticide pests, and effective, affordable medicines and vaccines to improve public health, purifying contaminated water with the help of bacteria to ensure access to safe water, and making biodegradable packaging, which is eco-friendly are among the applications of biotechnology for sustainable development.

Achieving sustainable goals is not merely the responsibility of governments or companies; individuals also play a crucial role by making smart choices and changing their habits. In laboratories, these choices include separating biological, chemical, and general waste, utilizing recyclable and compostable laboratory kits and materials, using cellular or biocomputational methods instead of animal experiments, and designing experiments with minimal raw materials and waste generation.

Sustainable development means living smarter not harder, and taking small steps to make a brighter future.

Iranian biotech products target 35 countries

Over the past Iranian year (March 2024 – March 2025), biotechnology products were exported to 35 countries worldwide, an increase from 33 countries the previous year.

The pharmaceutical biotechnology industry saves some two billion dollars in foreign currency annually, covering 60 percent of the country’s pharmaceutical exports, IRNA quoted Hossein Amirazodi, the secretary general of the association of pharmaceutical biotechnology producers and exporters, as saying.

The official made the remarks addressing the 4th International Conference and Exhibition on Iranian Medical Biotech Products and Related Industries (Iran Bio) being held from February 4 to 6 at the Olympic Hotel in Tehran, IRNA reported.

Currently, the country produces 40 out of 150 pharmaceutical biotechnology products that are manufactured in the world, he said, adding that the achievement has been made over the course of 30 years.

Iran Bio aims to feature the capabilities and potentials of the national biotechnology industries, provide an opportunity for information and technology transfer, increasing synergy among researchers, experts and active members, showcase the latest achievements in biotechnology, and support domestic manufacturers by expanding markets and export opportunities.

SOCIETY

AUGUST 7, 2025

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

7

Persian medicine experts to provide health services during Arbaeen

TEHRAN – The health ministry has dispatched a team of Persian medicine experts to provide health services to pilgrims during the Arbaeen pilgrimage.

The team includes physicians, masseurs, nurses, and translators, the health ministry’s website reported.

The Arbaeen 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 flocks to Karbala, where the holy shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) is located, to perform mourning rituals. This year it falls on August 14.

To improve the quality of services, the Iranian Traditional Medicine Association has held specialized training courses for the health staff. These include learning the Arabic language to facilitate communication, and pain management using massage and acupuncture.

The team will distribute some 5,000 health

packages, involving ointments, oils, and sachets of herbs, among pilgrims to help them avoid common health problems during the walk.

Intl. Congress on “Health in Arbaeen”

The 5th International Congress on “Health in Arbaeen” was held in Tehran from May 26 to 27 with the participation of six countries.

This year’s event brought together participants as well as 24 international lecturers from Italy, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, IRNA reported.

“The main goal of the congress is to make physicians familiar with the issues of health care and treatment during the Arbaeen pilgrimage. It mainly focuses on endemic diseases that may spread by Afghan and Pakistani pilgrims who pass Iran on their way to Iraq,” IRNA quoted Abdolreza Pazoki, an official with the health ministry, as saying.

They also discussed guidelines for treating skin, musculoskeletal, and other diseases, as well as needed medicines and medical equipment.

The same as previous years, medical universities on the borders will monitor infectious diseases by taking preventive measures.

Some 850,000 Iranians donated blood in 4 months

TEHRAN – Around 850,000 Iranians donated blood in the first four months of the current Iranian year, which started on March 21, according to an official with the Blood Transfusion Organization.

Supplying about 15 percent of the total donated blood, Tehran province made the largest contribution, followed by Fars and Khorasan Razavi provinces, accounting for seven percent of the whole blood donation, ibto.ir quoted Shahram Mirzaei as saying.

During the same period, the highest blood donation growth was recorded in the provinces of Zanjan, North Khorasan, and Fars provinces with 19, 17, and 15 percent, respectively.

The official went on to say that about 53 percent of blood donations come from regular blood donors. The provinces of Semnan (around 67 percent), Yazd (more than 64 percent), and Golestan (over 63 percent) hold the highest rates for continuous blood donation, respectively.

Currently, women’s share of blood donation in the country is above five percent, Mirzaei said.

WHO lauds IBTO’s achievements

In January, the World Health Organization representative, Jaffar Hussain, admired the Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization’s (IBTO) leadership in blood safety and transfusion services, and highlighted their remarkable achievement of a 100 percent voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation system, a testament to the principles of universal health coverage in action.

He also thanked the blood donors, whose selflessness serves as an inspiration to all.

Admiring the IBTO’s efforts and expertise in providing services to patients with rare blood types, the official underscored Iran’s capacity to serve as a model for other nations in the realm of blood transfusion and rare blood management.

Addressing National Rare Blood Day on January 22, the official praised the country’s steadfast commitment to equitable healthcare access, ensuring that no one is left behind, regardless of their blood type.

The official commended the country’s unwavering dedication to tackling the unique challenges surrounding rare blood, emphasizing the critical importance of collaboration, innovation, and unwavering determination in this global endeavor, the WHO website announced in a press release on January 27.

He lauded the Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization’s (IBTO) leadership in blood safety and transfusion services, highlighting their remarkable achievement of a 100 percent voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation system, a testament to the principles of universal health coverage in action. He also thanked the blood donors, whose selflessness serves as an inspiration to all.

Blood donation rises by 1.5% yr/yr

Some 2.36 million Iranians donated blood over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2024–March 2025), representing a 1.5 percent increase compared to the previous year.

Tehran and Fars, Khorasan Razavi, Isfahan, Mazandaran, and Khuzestan provinces made the largest contributions, IRIB reported.

Over the past (Iranian) year, some four million blood units, including blood products, were transferred to medical centers, IRIB quoted Haji-Beigi, as saying.

Men made up 95 percent of blood donors, while women’s contribution amounted to five percent. Women in Lorestan province, North Khorasan, and Sistan-Baluchestan had the highest share, he added.

Highlighting the need for negative blood types, the official said 90 percent of donors had positive blood.



Children martyred in 12-day war commemorated

A ceremony was held on Tuesday, August 5, at Ameneh Nursery in Tehran to commemorate children who were killed during the 12-day Israeli aggression against the country.

Between June 13 and June 24, Israeli attacks claimed the lives of 1,100 innocent civilians, including 132 women and 45 children.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

System to be set up for monitoring, forecasting agricultural drought

A system will be launched to monitor, forecast and report the agricultural lands being hit by drought, Amir Qaderi, an official with Disaster Management Organization has announced.

Over a meeting of a special working group for addressing drought and risks threatening agricultural sector, a plan for establishing a system for monitoring and forecasting agricultural drought in the country was approved and submitted to the Disaster Management Organization for review, he explained.

“Following the study of other countries’ experiences and existing global methods, the necessity of establishing a domestic system to recognize the lands prone to agricultural drought was emphasized,” he noted.

سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران ایجاد می‌شود

معاون امور بازسازی و بازتوانی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور از ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران خبر داد. به گزارش پایگاه اطلاع رسانی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور، امیر قادری روز یکشنبه با اعلام این خبر گفت: طرح ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران طی جلسه‌ای با حضور مدیران و کارشناسان سازمان مدیریت بحران و وزارت جهاد کشاورزی بررسی شد.

وی ادامه داد: پس از بررسی تجارب داخلی و روش‌های موجود جهانی، ضرورت استقرار نمونه بومی پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی مورد تأکید قرار گرفت و با مشارکت مراکز پژوهشی سازمان هواشناسی کشور و پژوهشکده حفاظت خاک و آبخیزداری طرح ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران پیشنهاد شد.



AUGUST 7, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Allah will cover up on the day of resurrection the defects (faults) of the one who covers up the faults of the others in this world.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times Noon:12:10 Evening: 19:23 Dawn: 3:42 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:17 (tomorrow)

Story of Standing media festival to celebrate resilience during 12-day war

TEHRAN- The Story of Standing media festival has officially been launched by the City Journalists' House, emphasizing the vital role of media narratives in strengthening social unity and national resilience.

The event is dedicated to honoring the influential efforts of journalists, broadcasters, and content creators who documented the resilience and sacrifices of the Iranian people during the 12-day war initiated by the Zionist regime against Iranian soil.

With the slogan "Every Stand Has a Story," the festival underscores the importance of media in shaping public perception during times of crisis. It aims to evaluate and celebrate the professional performance of those who narrated and recorded the resistance, serving as models of committed media activism. The event also seeks to bolster organizational resilience within media outlets, document valuable media experiences, and promote a resilient national discourse that enhances social cohesion amid hybrid and psychological warfare strategies.

The festival emphasizes supporting media personnel and storytellers in creating inspiring content that fosters resistance and resilience. Additionally, the event aims to identify and empower crisis narrators capable of contributing to national resilience and to improve the quality of media productions in confronting cultural and security threats. Deepening public engagement with media narratives and fostering strategic collaborations between media and cultural institutions are also key goals, with the aim of institutionalizing the discourse of resistance and resilience within national media policies.

The festival is structured around three main categories. The first encompasses print media and news agencies, including newspapers, journals, and online news platforms that have published content in text, photography, or multimedia formats depicting the resilience and sacrifices of the Iranian people during the war.

The second category highlights visual and audio media, including works produced by radio and television networks at the national and regional levels, as well as online video-on-demand services and radio stations, which utilize sound and visual capacities to deliver impactful, documentary-style stories of resistance.

The third category focuses on social media content, recognizing innovative and authentic narratives shared across platforms by individuals and user-generated sources. This includes social media posts, podcasts, blogs, and other digital content in various formats such as text, images, or multimedia.

The call for submissions for the Story of Standing has recently been announced, inviting journalists, media activists, visual and audio producers, social media influencers, and writers to participate. Entries are open until August 8. Participants are encouraged to submit works that reflect themes of resilience and resistance, created and published after the conclusion of the 12-day conflict.

The festival will recognize outstanding works through a series of awards. Besides trophies, certificates of appreciation, and cash prizes, four special awards will be granted based on quality and impact.

Cartoon of Day



Death and Hunger in Gaza

Cartoonist: Fares Garabet from Germany

Young minds, big ideas: Baazista empowers next generation of game designers

By Mohamadreza Seyedagha

TEHRAN – The closing ceremony of the first national game-scriptwriting event "Baazista" was held on August 4, at the Art Bureau in Tehran, with the announcement of the event's winners.

Although the initial purpose of Baazista was to focus on game scripts, the enthusiasm shown by the participants changed the course of the event and led to creation of several boardgames, environmental games, and escape rooms.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Mohammadreza Emamgholi, secretary of the event, gave a report on the event's proceedings and said: "The presence of nearly 3,800 participants from all over Iran and the submission of around 3,000 entries showed the high energy and enthusiasm surrounding this event. In total, 444 teams registered for Baazista. Of the submitted entries, 249 game designs entered the judging stage, and eventually 15 board games and 9 environmental games and escape rooms made it to the final stage."

Appreciating the judges and mentors' efforts, he said: "Without their cooperation, it wouldn't have been possible to complete this two-year journey. This first edition is not the end of the road, and we hope that with the support of officials, such events will continue."



A two-day exhibition of the finalist games is held at the Art Bureau in Tehran, August 3-4, 2025.

Later, Hamed Taammoli, one of the judges of Baazista, said: "During the two days of judging, we truly enjoyed the quality of the games. I hope you, the participants, continue to develop your games into marketable products with thought and motivation."

Also speaking at the ceremony, Seyyed Amir Javid, Deputy Head of the Art Bureau for International Affairs, addressed the attending youth and said: "Your work was excellent and truly uplifting for us. I honestly felt regret that I didn't have such opportunities when I was a teenager."

"Teenagers may think their work has no impact on major issues like war, but you should know that what you're doing in Baazista can actually help untangle critical challenges in future conflicts. The scenarios of future wars will require impactful games—ones that can prepare decision-makers to handle various situations. You are the real heroes who, with your thoughts and big ideas, can shape the country's future and make a difference," he added.

Ali Janbaz, Director of the Children and Adolescents Department at the Art Bureau, also spoke during the closing ceremony and said: "At the Children and Adolescents Department of the Art Bureau, serious efforts are being made to give special attention to the topic of games. Board games are a valuable form of entertainment that can drive us forward."

"We already have solid technical infrastructure in this field, and we have a strong international standing in graphic design and printing. We also have good



potential for exporting games to regional countries and, compared to some regional competitors, we are ahead. We can develop collaborations and exchanges with other countries," he noted.

"If serious work is done in the field of games and entertainment, it can yield significant and impactful results. This generation is very pragmatic. And let's not forget—it wasn't just the teenagers who accomplished all this. Much of this success is the result of the dedication of passionate mentors who taught you how to learn and grow. We must all join forces to solve the challenge of entertainment in Iran," he emphasized.

In the last part of the closing ceremony, the winners of various categories received their awards. The finalists came from 10 provinces, including Qazvin, Yazd, Gilan, Qom, Hamedan, Khorasan Razavi, Isfahan, Fars, Semnan, and Tehran.

At the end of the ceremony, the poster for the second edition of the event was unveiled. It is set to start in September across Iran.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Ali Janbaz, spoke about choosing the fields of board games, environmental games, and escape rooms for the national Baazista event.

"At first, we planned to hold this event solely in the field of game scriptwriting. We thought we could expand this emerging industry in Iran starting from stories and narratives, believing that children and teenagers—with their complex yet playful minds—could greatly contribute. But the efforts and activities of the participants led us from stories to final products," he said.

"I also believe that intellectual games are more effective in our country compared to other types such as computer, mobile, or online games. These games are family-oriented and promote cohesion within the family, moving children away from individualism. Board games offer a collective entertainment experience in real life, which is an important aspect," he added.

"In terms of domestic capabilities, we also have a competitive edge in this field in the region. While we may not be highly advanced in the video game industry, when it comes to board games, Iran is well-known in the region for its printing industry, has world-class illustration and graphic design, and possesses rich ancient narratives and stories. These strengths give us the potential to move toward exporting such games," Janbaz asserted.

"Baazista is a starting point for growth and empowerment, which could lead, in ten years' time, to the formation of a professional community of game

designers," he underlined.

Regarding support for games designed by teenagers, he said: "At the Children and Adolescents Department at the Art Bureau and the Omid Innovation Center, affiliate with the Art Bureau, we are working on establishing a Fund for Games and Entertainment. Last year, we supported 20 games designed by adults and provided funding for them."

"In terms of distribution, we are working on expanding our regional connections. We also support games by teenagers so they can be seen. Mass production opportunities for some of these games are facilitated by other organizations. For the rest, as long as they meet quality standards, we try to help provide the conditions for production and market entry," he explained.

On the issue of the limited audience for such games in the country, Janbaz said: "Promoting the use of these games can be done through schools." He also announced the launch of the Baazista Games League next year, where each participant in the current event can act as an ambassador to help expand the field."

Speaking to the Tehran Times, Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei, one of the event's judges and mentors, commented on the quality of the submissions and the challenges of judging. "One of our challenges was the high quality of the games. Thanks to a continuous mentorship process over the past two years—where participants could ask questions from mentors online and, where possible, attend in-person sessions—the final games reached a high level of quality."

"The addition of several graphic designers to the event also elevated the visual quality of the games. These factors made it difficult to choose the best ones. We've participated in similar events before, and I can say the level of this event was higher than others. Even games that didn't win here could have won in other competitions," he added.

About the ideas and first prototypes from participants, he said: "All participants were students, and for most of them, this was their first experience designing a game, so naturally, there were flaws. The key point is that the mentors didn't excessively intervene; they just pointed out some aspects, and the students themselves tried to improve their work through effort, research, playing other games, and seeking advice."

"Game design, aside from its knowledge component, is a creative endeavor. Kids might actually have more creativity than older age groups. The positive transformation occurred when this creativity merged with knowledge, resulting in games

that are now ready for production. I believe all of them could enter the market within the next six months," he concluded.

Hossein Beigi, an 18-year-old student from Qazvin and the winner of the Most Creative Board Game award for his game "Hegmataneh," spoke to the Tehran Times about his game: "It is a two-player strategic war game based on the conflict between the Medes and the Assyrians."

Hossein is one of the few participants in the event with more experience in game design. He was introduced to board games at the age of seven, developed an interest in designing them, and has since designed several games. "Hegmataneh" is the second of his games to be presented as a finalized product.

On choosing the name "Hegmataneh" for his game, he said: "I'm planning a series of games under the title 'Persian Empire,' starting from the earliest dynasties of Iran, with each game focusing on a theme characteristic of that dynasty."



Hossein Beigi wins the Most Creative Board Game award at the 1st Baazista, August 4, 2025.

"A major historical event during the Median era was the establishment of a central government, which was founded in the city of Hegmataneh—considered the beginning of Iranian civilization. That's why I chose it as the name," he stated.

Regarding his next game in development, Hossein said: "Immortal Guard is the name of my next game, and the prototype has been designed. It focuses on the Achaemenid army."

Baazista events are held with the aim of teaching game design, promoting non-digital games, and taking action on historical and national concepts. The jury for the first edition of the event included Fatemeh Alaeddin, Hamed Taammoli, Seyyed Ali Tabatabaei, and Ali Edriszadeh.

In the first edition of the Baazista, in addition to the virtual sessions, 3 in-person events were also held in the provinces of Qazvin, Gilan, and Yazd.