



US President Donald Trump (C) flanked by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev (L), and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (R) during the signing ceremony at the White House on August 8, 2025.

## Israel’s Gaza decision sparks global outrage

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - The Israeli cabinet’s approval to expand its genocide in the Gaza Strip by invading and occupying Gaza City faces mounting global anger and condemnation.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres denounced the move, calling it a dangerous escalation that risks deepening the already catastrophic consequences for millions of Palestinians.

His spokesperson said the decision will result in additional forced displacement, killings, and massive destruction, compounding the unimaginable suffering of the Palestinian population in Gaza.

Guterres also posted a statement on social media, saying: “I’m gravely alarmed by the decision of the Israeli Government to take control of Gaza City.”

## Lebanon on the verge of repeating a historic mistake

By Minoo Khaleghi  
Jurist and political analyst

TEHRAN - Lebanon, small in size yet strategically pivotal in the heart of West Asia, has long stood at the crossroads of regional and international interests and conflicts. Its land borders with Syria and the occupied Palestinian territories, together with access to the Mediterranean, have made it a critical focal point in security and geopolitical calculations. Despite its limited territory, Lebanon has repeatedly been the target of political ambitions and military interventions by extra-regional powers and hostile neighbors.

Over the past half-century, two words have become inseparable from Lebanon: resistance and aggression.

## How did Nawaf Salam violate Lebanon’s National Accord?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT - In parallel with the rapid transformations taking place in West Asia, Lebanon’s political history is witnessing one of its most dangerous periods as Nawaf Salam’s government has acquiesced to the U.S.-Israeli desire to legitimize the dismantling of the national resistance movement’s military arsenal.

This dangerous step indeed amounts to existential challenge. Lebanon stands at a dangerous crossroads. It is indeed on the brink of collapse if Nawaf Salam’s government does not rectify its grave mistake.

The Lebanese National Accord Document (aka the Taif Agreement) clearly states that Lebanon has the right to take any action to liberate the occupied territories from Israeli occupation,

## Global protests erupt over Israel’s seizure of Gaza City and starvation campaign

By staff writer

TEHRAN Israel’s plan to seize Gaza City, coupled with the regime’s deliberate starvation campaign in the Gaza Strip, has fueled growing global anger and protests.

On Saturday, pro-Palestine activists staged demonstrations in London in support of Gaza and Palestine Action, a group banned by the British government last month. Hundreds of supporters gathered at Parliament Square, opposite the Palace of Westminster.

Carrying Palestinian flags, many protesters prepared signs reading: “Stop Genocide Now,” “Stop Starving Gaza,” and “Stop Supplying Weapons to Israel.” They chanted slogans such as “Freedom for Palestine.” Police cracked down on protesters and made arrests.

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## Iran resumes direct talks with FATF after 6-year hiatus

TEHRAN The Financial Intelligence Center said the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has formally invited Iran to direct negotiations for the first time in six years, as the country moves to normalize its status with the global watchdog.

According to the center, the invitation follows Iran’s recent measures against money laundering and terrorism financing, including progress reported to FATF’s regional body over the past two years and the approval of the Palermo Convention by the Expediency Council.

The talks, to be held in Madrid, aim to advance Iran’s case for suspending counter-measures and removing it from FATF’s high-risk blacklist.

Iran’s parliament passed the law joining the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2017, but the measure was delayed due to objections from the Guardian Council.

The Expediency Council finally ratified it in May 2025, and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi signed the instrument of ratification on July 30, 2025.

The document was formally sent to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on August 5, 2025, by Iran’s UN envoy Saeed Iravani. ► Page 4

## Iran secures four medals at intl. Olympiad in AI

TEHRAN The Iranian team, consisting of four high-school students, grabbed two silver medals and two bronze medals at the International Olympiad in Artificial Intelligence (IOAI), held from August 2 to 9 in Beijing, China.

Hosted by Beijing National Day School under the patronage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the competition brought together 310 students, forming 80 teams, from 63 countries and territories including Poland, France, Iran, Australia, Brazil, Hungary, China, Mexico, the United Arab Emirates, India, Serbia, Russia, Japan, Singapore, the United States, and Sweden.

Arash Yousefnejad, and Ali Shayan claimed the silver medals, while Parsa Golestani, and Radin Rahmani-Nodehi won the Bronze medals, IRIB reported.

IOAI is the International Science Olympiad in Artificial Intelligence for high school students. It aims to inspire young people globally in science, focusing on AI. The competition provides a platform for top AI students selected through national competitions to compete, exchange ideas, and build connections, fostering a dialogue on AI’s opportunities and ethical challenges among students and the community. ► Page 7

## The Supreme National Security Council in Iran

By Xavier Villar

MADRID The Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) stands as one of the most central and strategic bodies in Iranian politics and governance. Its creation and development reflect the institutional adaptation of the Iranian state to face internal and external challenges, while maintaining autonomy and stability in a context historically marked by regional tensions and international pressures.

**Origin, History, and constitutional framework**

The SNSC was established in 1989 by Article 176 of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Constitution and has its roots in the accumulated challenges during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), a conflict that was not only a military trial but also an organizational and political test for the young revolutionary state. This context compelled Iranian authorities to create a mechanism capable of coordinating national defense, security, and crisis management in the face of complex and persistent threats.

According to the Constitution, the SNSC is the supreme body responsible for formulating and supervising national security and defense policy, with the mission of protecting the vital interests of the revolution and the territorial integrity of Iran. ► Page 2

## Celebrated Iranian master Mahmoud Farshchian passes away

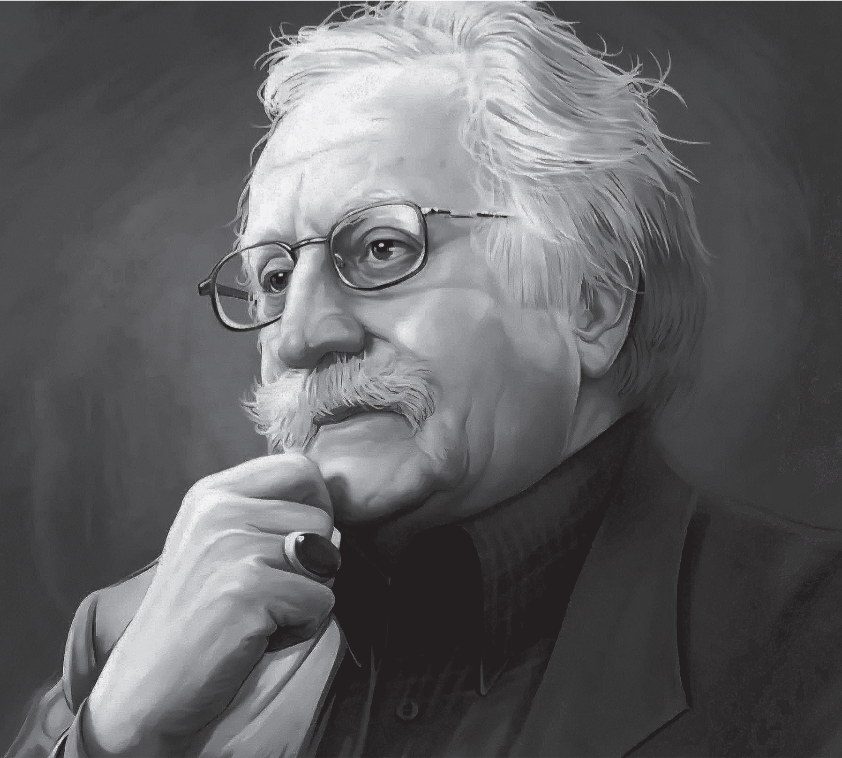
TEHRAN- Mahmoud Farshchian, the renowned Iranian miniaturist and painter, passed away on Saturday in a hospital in New Jersey, the U.S. at the age of 96, Persian media reported.

Farshchian left this world, leaving behind a rich legacy that has shaped Iran’s cultural and artistic landscape.

Born in 1930, in Isfahan, he was celebrated as one of the most prominent figures in contemporary Iranian art, known for his exquisite works inspired by Persian literature and religious texts.

Farshchian’s journey into the world of art was marked from a young age by exceptional talent and unwavering devotion. His father, a prominent figure in Isfahan’s carpet industry, recognized his son’s extraordinary gift and took him to the workshop of Mirza Aqa Emami, where the young artist’s potential was first discovered. From that moment, a lifelong pursuit of excellence and spiritual expression through art began.

After training under prominent masters and graduating from the School of Fine Arts in Isfahan, Farshchian traveled to Europe to further study Western art in museums. He was known for immersing himself in art collections with a passion, often carrying a bag full of books and tools, and staying until closing time. ► Page 8



## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## Why is Zangezur important?

Kayhan analyzed the goals behind the establishment of the Zangezur corridor following the signing of an agreement on Friday between the president of Azerbaijan and the prime minister of Armenia in the White House at the presence of Donald Trump. It wrote: The Zangezur corridor, which connects the Republic of Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan and Turkish territory, is on the surface a development-oriented and transit project, but inwardly, it carries strategic messages that directly target the transit economies of Iran, Russia, and China. Iran's traditional role as a safe and cheap passage for the transit of energy and goods between Central Asia, China, the Caucasus, and Europe has always been a key component of its regional position. With the completion of Zangezur, this role will be greatly reduced because direct communication between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkey and beyond, with Europe, will be possible without the need to pass through Iranian territory. From an economic point of view, the most important consequence of this project is the reduction in transit revenues and the weakening of Iran's position in projects such as China's Belt and Road Initiative. This corridor, by removing Iran from the pipeline and rail network, will weaken its bargaining power in the regional market. Zangezur is a project with broad geopolitical goals that seeks to strengthen NATO and Western influence in the South Caucasus and weaken Iran, Russia, and China.

### Iran: Iran will not stop supporting Lebanon

Ahmad Dastmalchian, the former Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, told the Iran newspaper that Iran will not stop to help stabilize Lebanon as the government has voted to disarm Hezbollah. He said: The decision that the Lebanese government has taken regarding Hezbollah's disarmament is not unrelated to the interventions of trans-regional actors such as the United States and France. Naturally, Iran's view is based on warnings about the consequences of this intervention and its damage to the interests of Lebanon and regional actors linked to the country. All Lebanese communal groups are somehow related to their beneficiary countries. Iran is no exception to this rule. Lebanon's multi-religious and diverse political character has led Iran to always emphasize intradialogue and maintaining internal balance. Iran has long taken pride in supporting the Resistance and has always defended the Lebanese people against the cruel evils and aggressions of the Zionist regime, and it has continued and will continue to do so to the best of its ability.

### Farhikhtegan: Nobel Peace laureate defends the aggressor

In a commentary, Farhikhtegan addressed a speech by Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges

Mohammadi to a conference celebrating fellow Nobel laureate Nihon Hidankyo's campaigning against nuclear weapons via video link from Iran on the anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The paper said: Narges Mohammadi was supposed to emphasize peace at the conference, but it turned out the opposite. Instead of condemning the bombers (aggressors), she accused the Iranian people. Instead of condemning Israel and the United States for decades of nuclear threats, sanctions, assassination of scientists, and attacks on Iranian infrastructure, she introduced Iran as responsible for all problems with a kind of language uttered by Western think tanks. Not only was the speech not in the spirit of peace, but it seemed to be a continuation of the same language that she used in her 12-day war declaration, undermining Iran's sovereignty and legitimizing foreign aggression. This ceremony should have been a forum for condemning the government that carried out this nuclear bombing; however, the laureate winner condemned Iran instead of condemning the United States. The Nobel Peace Prize, which was supposed to be a symbol of struggle for peace and justice, has now become a tool for advancing Western policies and a loudspeaker for repeating the West's hostile position against Iran.

### Donya-e-Eqtesad: "Trump Route" on the Caucasus Road

In an analysis, Donya-e-Eqtesad addressed the consequences of the signing of an agreement between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia that links mainland Azerbaijan to the autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan through the Armenian land. It wrote: Baku and Yerevan were guests of the White House for a "historic peace meeting" called "Trump Route". Holding such a meeting is considered a pivot in their foreign policy towards the West. However, this process is not without consequences for Iran, while emphasizing its neighborhood policy, it has opposed any changes to the northern borders adjacent to the South Caucasus region. This corridor provides free movement of people and goods between Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan and from there to Central Asia, without the need to pass through Iranian or Russian territory. Iran and Russia oppose this project, while Turkey strongly supports it. Although both countries are former Soviet republics, their relations with Moscow have been strained in recent years. According to a U.S. official, opening the route would bring billions of dollars in new trade to the U.S. annually and reduce the influence of Russia, Iran, and China in the region.

## Iran slams US interventionism after increased bounty on Venezuela's president

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Ministry has strongly criticized the United States' actions towards Venezuela, specifically the increased reward offered for information that could help the U.S. government take President Nicolas Maduro captive.

"The interventionist behavior and rhetoric of U.S. officials in the internal affairs of sovereign States, including Venezuela, have unprecedentedly been undermining the fundamental principles of the UN Charter and international law," the Foreign Ministry wrote in a post on its X account on Friday.

The U.S.'s justification for the bounty – framed as part of its ongoing efforts to combat international drug trafficking – has been dismissed by Caracas as a blatant political stunt. Iran echoed this sentiment, accusing the U.S. of employing "militant unilateralism and unlawful coercive measures" in pursuit of its "illegitimate foreign policy objectives."

The ministry stressed that no responsible nation can afford to remain indifferent to this dangerous trend, which targets "the collective normative and ethical foundations of the United Nations."

This latest escalation comes against a backdrop of sustained U.S. pressure on Venezuela. For over a decade, successive U.S. administrations have openly backed defeated



File photo of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro

opposition figures, even recognized parallel governments, and imposed crippling sanctions aimed at toppling Maduro's government.

The reward for Maduro's capture has seen a dramatic increase over recent years. Initially set at \$15 million under the Trump administration, it was later raised to \$25 million by the Biden administration, matching the reward once offered for Osama bin Laden. The current \$50 million bounty, announced just weeks after the Trump administration negotiated a prisoner exchange with Venezuela, is seen as a telling sign of the increasingly hostile, interventionist, and illegal stance Washington has adopted.

# 'Espionage epidemic': Western media says increasing number of disillusioned Israelis aiding Iran

TEHRAN – More than a month has passed since the halt in fighting that followed the U.S.-Israeli 12-day aggression against Iran, and American media outlets are now reporting an unprecedented surge in ordinary Israelis allegedly spying for the Islamic Republic.

According to an Air Mail report on August 2, the Israeli regime faces "an epidemic of espionage" by its "most dangerous enemy," with citizens from all walks of life—neighbors, businessmen, even former soldiers—choosing to collaborate with Iranian intelligence.

Their motives range from financial desperation to moral disillusionment with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's divisive leadership and the Gaza war's genocidal brutality.

Shin Bet, the regime's security apparatus, admits more than 60 citizens are being prosecuted for espionage, with over 1,000 suspected of contacting Iranian handlers. Prosecutions reveal shocking cases:

– Moti Maman, a 74-year-old businessman, was allegedly lured by Iranian intelligence during a trip to Turkey, the regime claims. After "lavish" treatment in Iran, he reportedly agreed to assassinate Israeli mayors for payment, though he balked at targeting top officials like Netanyahu.

– An unnamed shoe store owner, an Iranian Jewish immigrant,



Moti Maman (C), 74, was sentenced to 10 years in prison after accepting a plea deal for alleged collaboration with Iranian intelligence.

allegedly supplied critical intelligence on Israeli drone routes during the regime's June aggression "after his Iranian lover introduced him to handlers."

The Air Mail's report also claims that the Iranian recruiters operate openly via social media (Telegram, WhatsApp, Instagram), dropping earlier "false flag" tactics once Israelis showed "enthusiasm without guilt or moral hesitation."

Tasks escalate from petty vandalism to photographing military bases or officials' residences, with payments via untraceable cryptocurrencies.

Shin Bet's public ad campaign—"Easy Money, Harsh Punishment"—betrays its panic as treason moves "from the fringes of society into its mainstream center."

## The Supreme National Security Council in Iran A look at the body's history, functions, and strategic leadership

From page 1 ► Its composition is broad and robust: it includes top leaders from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; key ministers such as Defense, Intelligence, Interior, and Foreign Affairs; senior military commanders; and direct delegates from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

The latter, as the highest political authority, plays a decisive role in the strategic guidance of the Council.

This configuration reflects Iran's intention to balance different centers of power within the state—military, political, religious, and technocratic. The result is an institutional architecture capable of adapting and avoiding critical internal fractures, endowing the system with cohesion and flexibility that have been vital to its resilience in the face of sanctions, crises, and military conflicts.

### Functions and strategic role

In practice, the SNSC is neither a static body nor limited to mere technical management. It plays a crucial role as a space for strategic deliberation and political laboratory, constantly calibrating the "red lines" that define national sovereignty, defense, internal security, and Iran's regional projection. This is where state responses to instability in the Persian Gulf, technological threats, international pressure, and social and economic challenges are designed.

A sign of this institutional flexibility is the recent approval of the National Defense Council as a subsidiary body of the SNSC. Its function is to centrally review and strengthen defense plans and military capabilities in response to new scenarios of hybrid warfare, cybersecurity, and technological modernization, reflecting the state's capacity to adapt its structures amid evolving threats.

The SNSC has also served as a space to negotiate rapid responses to critical situations, preserving the decisional autonomy of the Iranian state and avoiding

external dependencies that could compromise the system's coherence and continuity.

### A resilient and dynamic institution

The SNSC's institutional resilience should be understood as a sophisticated form of adaptability. Far from weakening the system, this multipolar design strengthens Iran's ability to respond to cycles of pressure and sanctions, conflicts with regional and global powers, and technological or social crises. The collegiate architecture that integrates military, political, religious, and technocratic actors has proven effective in crisis management and in maintaining national sovereignty and stability.

### Under Larijani, the SNSC is expected to play a crucial role in consolidating internal cohesion and articulating integrated responses to external pressure

Beyond simplistic readings that dominate external perceptions of Iranian politics, the SNSC embodies the state's will to maintain strategic autonomy and coordination capacity in highly demanding scenarios. The Iranian state has turned this space into a permanent negotiation forum, where the foundational elements of the Islamic revolution coexist and balance with the pragmatic needs of contemporary administration.

Ali Larijani is institutionally valued for his management skills, strategic vision, and ability to coordinate policies in the most sensitive areas of the Iranian state. Under his leadership, the SNSC is expected to play a crucial role in consolidating internal cohesion, protecting national sovereignty, and articulating integrated re-

understatement."

The cache reportedly included blueprints of nuclear facilities, U.S. and European collusion evidence, and data to "boost Iran's offensive power." Its transfer required meticulous operational security, delaying public revelation until materials reached "secure locations" inside Iran.

Contextualizing these developments, the Israeli regime's internal decay seems undeniable:

– Gaza genocide fallout: Shin Bet links the espionage surge to eroding patriotism and reserve soldiers refusing deployment. As Air Mail notes, "The Gaza war is the worst crisis for the Jewish people since the Holocaust," fracturing national unity.

– Ethnic exploitation: The Israeli regime's reliance on immigrant labor backfires. Shin Bet alleges that the "Azeri Seven," Jewish settlers from Azerbaijan, conducted 600 missions for Iran over two years, exposing lax vetting of diaspora recruits.

– Military incompetence: Israel dissolved its "Strategy and Third-Circle Directorate" in March—a body tasked with countering Iran—amid a 400% spike in Iranian-linked espionage cases.

As Yoram Peri, an Israeli analyst, concedes: "Israeli society has disintegrated to the level that people think only of themselves."



sponses amid changing international dynamics.

This appointment is not a mere administrative replacement. It represents, within the Iranian political system, a commitment to professionalization and efficiency at a time when the regional and global environment demands constant coordination and adaptation. Larijani's oversight of the new Defense Council and the security apparatus underscores the state's intent to strengthen its reaction capacity, centralize strategic planning, and guarantee institutional continuity amid potential cycles of confrontation.

### The SNSC as a pillar of Iranian political autonomy

Understanding the SNSC's role is essential for a deeper analysis of political dynamics in Iran. The Council does not only act as a crisis manager or advisory space, but as the backbone of the national security and defense system. Its function includes articulating foreign policy and defense, ensuring that national sovereignty is preserved against external impositions and internal manipulations. In an international environment marked by fluctuations, sanctions, and antagonism, the SNSC represents Iran's will to maintain strategic autonomy and state cohesion.

The SNSC's strategic design and evolutionary capacity grant the Iranian system a unique strength, often misunderstood from outside. The combination of ideological firmness and political

pragmatism has proven effective in facing cycles of crisis and sanctions, allowing Iran to maintain state cohesion and operational capacity even in the most critical moments.

In sum, Iran's Supreme National Security Council stands as a fundamental institution for the country's stability and strategic development. Its history, structure, and functioning reflect the effort to harmonize the founding principles of the revolution with a flexible administration capable of adapting and reinventing itself amid contemporary challenges.

The appointment of Larijani, with his experience and institutional recognition, reinforces Iran's commitment to an efficient, coordinated management model focused on protecting sovereignty and state continuity. Beyond external perceptions and political-media simplifications, the SNSC embodies the deep logic of a state that prioritizes autonomy, resilience, and adaptability in an increasingly demanding global environment.

Through its SNSC, Iran projects a model where internal cohesion, strategic responsiveness, and leadership professionalization are central elements to face present and future challenges. Thus, the SNSC stands as a vital core of national sovereignty and an example of institutional governance in a system subjected to constant challenges, sustained by the firm will to preserve autonomy and stability.

# Leader’s aide warns against so-called ‘Trump Corridor’: “Iran will act, with or without Russia”

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – Senior Adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on International Affairs, Ali Akbar Velayati, has reaffirmed that the Islamic Republic will act decisively to protect the stability and security of the South Caucasus — with or without Russia — in the wake of a U.S.-brokered peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The deal, signed on Friday in the presence of the U.S. President Donald Trump, follows decades of conflict over Karabakh and comes after Azerbaijan's swift recapture of the region in September 2023. While the agreement's full text has not been made public, it reportedly centers on the creation of a trade and transit route — dubbed the “Trump Corridor” — connecting Azerbaijan to its Nakhchivan exclave through Armenian territory.

Under the arrangement, Washington would gain exclusive development rights over the corridor, which the White House claims will boost regional energy exports. Velayati, however, warned that the so-called Trump Corridor would redraw borders, isolate Armenia, and severely restrict Iran's own access to the Caucasus — leaving it connected to Turkey alone.

“Is the South Caucasus some ownerless land for Trump to lease?” Velayati told Tasnim. “This is one of the most sensitive regions in the world. Such a passage will not become Trump's property — it will become a graveyard for his mercenaries.”

He described Trump's remarks



US President Donald Trump (C), Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev (L), and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (R) hold up agreement signed during a ceremony in the State Dining Room of the White House on August 8, 2025, in Washington, DC.

as “naïve” and “hollow,” likening them to “someone here deciding to lease the Panama Canal.” The veteran diplomat stressed that the plan was not a commercial project but a geopolitical conspiracy, one that would bring NATO forces — through Turkey and other members — dangerously close to Iran's northern borders.

“Just as President Putin warned about NATO encroaching on Russia through Ukraine, we will not allow NATO to approach Iran,” Velayati said. “Prevention is better than cure.”

Recalling past Iranian military readiness, Velayati noted that under the late Lieutenant General Mohammad Bagheri, the Armed Forces held multiple drills in northwest Iran to signal Tehran's determination to block the project. He also pointed to Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's earlier visit to Tehran, during which the Armenian

leader reportedly acknowledged the corridor's “conspiratorial” nature and voiced agreement with Iran's opposition.

On U.S. claims that the route would transport Caspian energy, Velayati reiterated that the sea belongs solely to its littoral states and that any transit requires their collective consent. Joint Iran–Russia naval drills in recent weeks, he said, were meant to deliver a clear warning to foreign actors.

Velayati further stressed that linking Nakhchivan to mainland Azerbaijan does not require such a corridor, as the connection can be made through Iranian territory. “The geopolitical balance here is not just about Azerbaijan and Armenia — any change affects Iran's borders, and we will defend our interests with full force,” he asserted.

He concluded by praising the vigilance of Iran's northern provinces — from West and East

Azerbaijan to Mazandaran and Khorasan — in resisting foreign plots throughout history, vowing that they will again stand firm against any designs on the region.

Also in a separate statement, the Iranian Foreign Ministry welcomed the Armenia–Azerbaijan peace deal as “an important step toward lasting stability” while warning of the dangers of foreign interference.

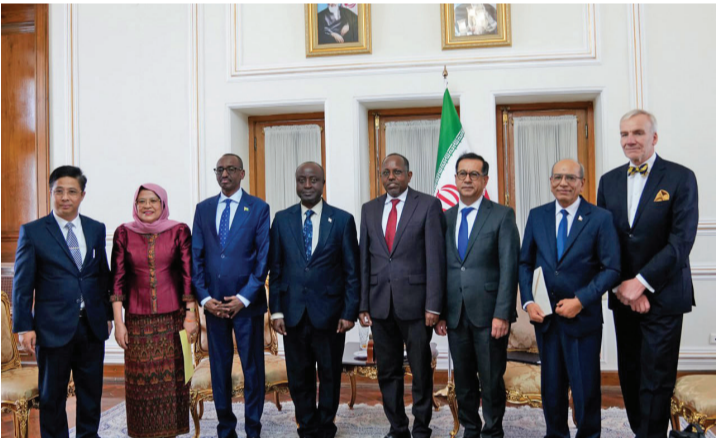
The ministry said Iran supports regional connectivity projects that respect national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and it reaffirmed readiness to work with both Baku and Yerevan through mechanisms such as the 3+3 Regional Cooperation Platform.

Tehran also underscored its awareness of longstanding Western ambitions to extend influence from the Caucasus into Central Asia — a strategy aimed at isolating Iran and Russia while dominating smaller regional states.

In remarks delivered on Saturday, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova also stressed the need for normalization of relations between the two countries based on mutual interests and without interference from outside powers.

Zakharova said the Russian Federation seeks to create “a stable and prosperous region” in the South Caucasus, and considers one of the main conditions for this goal to be “comprehensive normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, taking into account the interests of the peoples of both countries.”

## Nine new envoys present credentials to Iran’s foreign minister



TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi received copies of credentials from the newly accredited ambassadors of Ethiopia, Estonia, Djibouti, Laos, Cambodia, Burundi, Latvia, Myanmar, and Nepal in a Saturday ceremony, signaling Tehran's continued engagement across Africa, Asia, and Europe.

The diplomats presenting their credentials included Faisal Ali Ibrahim (Ethiopia), Väino Reinart (Estonia), Tayib Dubad Robleh (Djibouti), Bunmy Vanmany (Laos), Ruth Many (Cambodia),

Didake Nturuika (Burundi), Bahtjors Hasans (Latvia), U Zaw Oo (Myanmar), and Paudel Ramesh Chandra (Nepal).

No remarks from the credential ceremony were released, but the lineup reflects Iran's priority on balanced, multi-vector diplomacy under President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Diplomats from Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Burundi highlight Tehran's renewed Africa track, where Iran has sought partnerships in health, agriculture, and technology transfer.



Engagements with Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Nepal align with Tehran's expanding Asian outreach, including trade facilitation and cultural exchanges.

The presence of envoys from Estonia and Latvia is believed to indicate Iran's openness to practical channels with European states despite broader political headwinds.

The accreditations come as Iran consolidates its role in multilateral platforms, following its entry into intergovernmental organizations such as BRICS

and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), alongside continued participation in regional frameworks. These developments position Tehran to expand economic linkages beyond traditional corridors and reinforce its pivot toward diversified, sanctions-resilient partnerships.

Recent years have seen Iranian diplomacy stress connectivity, energy cooperation, and sanctions-resilient trade mechanisms—areas where African and Asian partners have shown growing interest.

## Gaza: A test of conscience dividing the West, uniting the East

By Muhammad Akmal Khan

ISLAMABAD – From Tehran to Islamabad, the positions on Gaza are defined by moral clarity and historical consistency.

On 22 July 2025, Iran's Foreign Ministry denounced “the horrific crimes committed by the Zionist regime in the Gaza Strip,” warning that 90 percent of the territory was now uninhabitable, with over one million people facing starvation. It condemned Israeli plans for Gaza City as acts of ethnic cleansing and called for an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Pakistan's stance is equally firm. From the earliest days of the state, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah rejected Israel outright, calling it “an unlawful state, created by usurping the land of Palestinian Muslims,” and famously declaring: “Our souls are not for sale.” Every government since has upheld this position, refusing recognition until Palestinians achieve self-determination with East Jerusalem as their capital. For both Iran and Pakistan, the Palestinian cause is not a distant diplomatic file but a litmus test of the

Muslim world's commitment to justice.

If defeating Hamas were truly the aim, the destruction of Gaza's homes, hospitals, schools, and water systems would be inexcusable. This is not collateral damage; it is deliberate policy. Much of it unfolded under the cover of the Iran–Israel clashes, when the world's attention was elsewhere. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, as the Iran–Israel war raged in June 2025, Palestinian deaths had already surpassed 55,637, with more than 129,000 injured. By the end of July, the toll had risen to 60,785 — including 217 journalists, 120 academics, and 224 humanitarian workers, among them 179 UNRWA staff. At least 80 percent of the victims were civilians; 70 percent of residential-area fatalities were women and children. These figures make plain that after the Iran–Israel war, the killing in Gaza not only continued — it escalated.

The willingness of Western voices to use the word “genocide” is significant not merely for validating Palestinian testimony, but for shattering a decades-old architecture of denial. When Jewish scholars, Israeli experts,

UN officials, and international courts converge on this language, the space for evasion collapses. For citizens from Melbourne to Montreal, this convergence has given moral legitimacy to what the streets have been saying for months: that Gaza's struggle is humanity's struggle.

Yet moral clarity without political action is mere theatre. Sachs and Albanese have both argued that ending complicity requires cutting off arms, imposing sanctions, and prosecuting those responsible. Anything less is an admission of guilt.

Which brings us back to where we began: to a West divided against itself, its conscience laid bare. Gaza's cry has breached the lecture halls, the courtrooms, and the city streets; whether it can penetrate the seats of power will decide how this age is remembered. The Qur'anic tradition holds that the cry of the oppressed is not a lament, but a summons. History will ask whether, when the West faltered, the East stood firm and whether those who heard the word “genocide” acted before it became only an epitaph.

## Iran discover rivals at AFC U17 Women’s Asian Cup 2026

TEHRAN – The 27 teams vying for places in the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup China 2026 discovered their challengers following the Qualifiers Draw at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Thursday.

The sides were divided into eight groups – three of four teams each and five of three — to contest a single round-robin centralized league format from October 13 to 17, 2025.

The eight group winners will progress to the 10th edition of the Finals, where they will be joined by the four AFC representatives from the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup Morocco 2025 who have automatically qualified, namely DPR Korea, Japan, Korea Republic and China PR, to form a 12-strong line-up — four more than the previous edition.

The Finals will be contested from April 30 to May 17, 2026.

Draw Result

**Group A:** Philippines, Malaysia, Tajikistan (H), Syria

**Group B:** Iran, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia (H)

**Group C:** Indonesia, Myanmar (H), Mongolia, Macau

**Group D:** Vietnam (H), Hong Kong, China, Guam

**Group E:** Australia, Singapore (H), Northern Mariana Islands

**Group F:** Thailand (H), Nepal, Turkmenistan

**Group G:** India, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic (H)

**Group H:** Bangladesh, Chinese Taipei, Jordan (H)

## Sina Vahedi feels different in Asia Cup

TEHRAN – Sina Vahedi has already played on some of basketball's biggest stages—the FIBA Basketball World Cup and the Olympics among them. Somehow, though, this one still feels different.

“This is my first FIBA Asia Cup,” Vahedi told fiba.basketball with a smile. “I’m so happy to be here.”

It's not just another stop for the 24-year-old guard. This time, he's one of the leaders. A guiding presence for a new-look squad trying to write the next chapter in Iranian basketball.

Vahedi was calm and composed in his FIBA Asia Cup debut, notching 15 points, 2 assists and a three-pointer in their win over Guam on Day 2. His backcourt poise and pace stood out in a team still learning its rhythm.

“We have a young team,” he said. “But everyone's doing a good job. The chemistry is coming together. We just have to keep playing hard.”

For a guard who's been the understudy in past tournaments, the spotlight is now squarely on Vahedi. And with Team Melli's knockout rounds positioning hanging in the balance, he's ready to seize the moment and make it count.

## Leeds favorites to land Inter Milan striker Taremi

TEHRAN – Leeds United are closing on a deal for Inter Milan striker Mehdi Taremi.

The Iran international is in advanced talks to move to Elland Road, says Il Corriere dello Sport.

West Ham, Fulham, and Nottingham Forest are also interested in Taremi, but Leeds are now on the brink of clinching a deal for the center-forward.

The 33-year-old also had offers from Botafogo and Flamengo, but declined as he wants to continue his career in Europe.

For now, Taremi's fee hasn't been disclosed, but Inter expects to sell for cash terms, having taken him for a free transfer from Porto.

## Iran stay focused on Syria: Arsalan Kazemi

TEHRAN – Iran basketball team captain Arsalan Kazemi says that they will stay focused on match against Syria.

Team Melli took down powerhouse Japan 78-70, a victory built not on one star performance, but on a collective effort from a young and fearless group. With the win, Iran remains in control of its own destiny. If the team beats Syria next, it marches straight into the FIBA Asia Cup 2025 Quarter-Finals.

“Nobody expects us to do anything, and we continue to play hard. It was a hard-fought game, but it means nothing unless we stay focused. Next up is Syria,” said Kazemi.

“Again, there are some young guys that probably nobody heard of. Any of them they can come and drop 30 points any night,” Kazemi said. “So that's what we need. We need like two, three of them to step up big every game and I think we're going to be fine.”

It was the kind of win that sends a clear message—this Iran side may be young, but they're not intimidated by reputations or rankings. They believe that as long as they go all-in on their team-first mindset, anything can happen.

## Sepahan midfielder Nzonzi returns to Stoke

TEHRAN – Stoke City football club has re-signed veteran midfielder Steven Nzonzi on a one-year deal.

The 36-year-old first joined the Potters in 2012 when they were in the Premier League before moving to Sevilla in 2015. He most recently played for Sepahan but parted ways with the Iranian team at the end of last season.

The former France international has been training with the club since last month but is not expected to be fit until the end of August.

Nzonzi said: “I have played football for some huge clubs in my career, but the best relationship I had with supporters was at Stoke City.

“I will, of course, be a different player to 10 years ago, but I know I have lots to give to the team.”

## Karate athlete Abazari seizes bronze in 2025 World Games

TEHRAN – Iran's Saleh Abazari won a bronze medal in the 2025 World Games on Saturday.

Abazari, who had lost to Ukraine's Ryzvan Talibov 4-0 in the men's kumite +84 kg semifinals, defeated Egyptian Taha Mahmoud 6-4 in bronze medal match.

Iran's Sara Bahmanyar had won a gold medal in the women's kumite 50 kg on Friday.

The 12th edition of The World Games take place from Aug. 7-17 in Chengdu, China.

## Iran–Russia friendly match confirmed

TEHRAN – The friendly match between Russia and Iran, slated for October 10, will be held at the Volgograd Arena.

Iran will meet the Russian team as part of preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Russia sits 35th in the FIFA rankings, while Iran is 20th in the latest world rankings.

Last week, the Iran basketball team traveled to Moscow to play two friendly matches with Russia in preparation for the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup.

Iran's futsal team is also scheduled to face its Russian counterpart in October.

## Iran resumes direct talks with FATF after 6-year hiatus

From Page 1 ► The Palermo Convention is one of four international agreements FATF requires its members to join.

Iran has already acceded to two of the others, while the process to approve the CFT (Convention on the Suppression of the Finan-

ing of Terrorism) remains ongoing.

Experts say completing the fourth convention could significantly improve Iran's financial transparency credentials and open the way for greater economic engagement with the world.

## TPO aims to normalize commercial event schedule after war disruption

TEHRAN - Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) is working to restore the normal schedule of trade fairs and commercial events disrupted by a recent 12-day conflict, a senior official said.

Amir Roshanbakhsh, TPO's deputy for the development of international businesses, told a specialized webinar on upcoming trade events that the organization is implementing measures to make up for delays in the exhibi-

tion calendar.

He said trade fairs are vital tools for expanding commerce, and their effective management is of high importance. During the conflict, the TPO sought to ensure events faced minimal disruption through policy and planning adjustments.

Roshanbakhsh added that the private sector also stepped in to help manage trade events, but all exhibitions were suspended until late July, when conditions normalized.

## Overhaul of 16 South Pars gas platforms completed

TEHRAN - Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) has completed major maintenance on 16 of the 35 offshore gas platforms scheduled for overhaul this year in the giant South Pars field, a senior oil official said.

Sepahdar Abbaszadeh, deputy for operations and support at POGC, told the oil ministry's news agency Shana that overhauls are carried out in the first half of the year to prepare for peak winter demand.

The company supplies more than 70 percent of the country's natural gas and over 40 percent of its gasoline.

He said one platform is currently undergoing maintenance and the remaining 18 will be completed by late October.

So far, 6,150 work orders have been executed, requiring 54,759 man-hours.

The tasks include replacing 32-inch bends, repairing 15-ton valves, inspecting high-pressure tanks, testing control systems, servicing flare ignition systems, and calibrating safety valves.

Abbaszadeh said gas output continues during maintenance, with only two to four platforms offline at any time.

Operations take place in harsh summer conditions in the Persian Gulf, he added.

Addressing the impact of sanctions, he said more than 90 percent of required parts are



now produced domestically, with Iranian companies reverse-engineering and manufacturing items previously imported.

All unavailable foreign parts have been replaced with high-quality local products, ensuring uninterrupted production.

He added that even during a recent 12-day conflict, repairs and production continued without interruption, despite logistical challenges such as the suspension of helicopter flights.

Personnel and equipment were transported by vessel, and some workers travelled up to 48 hours by land to reach the field on the Iran-Qatar maritime border.

Abbaszadeh praised the resilience of oil and gas workers, noting that almost all households in Iran now have access to natural gas, and the ministry aims to further strengthen supply in coming years.

## TEDPIX gains 16,000 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 16,248 points to 2.571 million on Saturday, which is the first day of the Iranian calendar week.

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

On July 27, the head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) said that the capital market has entered a phase of stabilizing equilibrium.

"We were able to manage the market after the imposed 12-day war, Hojatollah Seyedi noted, adding: "Now the stage of balancing the capital market has ended and we have entered the stage of stabilizing the balance."

"When the imposed war began, we were surprised at the stock market, but we didn't say what to do now, and we finalized our plan at the same day when the first attacks occurred", the official highlighted.

He recalled that in certain circumstances, the most important concern of stock exchanges in the world is to preserve shareholder assets, and stated: "During the days of war, shareholders were concerned about preserving their capital, and for this reason, stock trading was suspended; the next stage was liquidity because companies wanted to pay their employees."

The SEO head further emphasized that there

is no place for the market to be 100 percent green, and that a market with 50 percent green and red is balanced, adding: "In the post-war situation, publishers helped, the Central Bank intervened, and investment funds contributed greatly to the market balance. Now, the fourth stage, which is stabilization, is underway, and we will soon enter the fifth stage of the market, which is the boom stage."

On July 7, the TSE head said that Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization is rolling out a revamped stabilization package aimed at improving liquidity and investor confidence following recent market volatility.

Mahamoud Goudarzi said a series of coordination meetings between regulators, stakeholders, and capital market institutions have paved the way for a gradual market recovery. The updated plan includes continued direct support for listed stocks, enhanced fund and portfolio management, the use of derivatives such as put options and futures, and regulatory reforms.

"This package is part of our efforts to shift the market from volatility toward a phase of equilibrium and ultimately growth," Goudarzi told IRNA, adding that in recent sessions, the market showed signs of stabilization after a turbulent 12-day period marked by geopolitical tensions.

Goudarzi explained that the market's priorities have evolved from asset protection during the crisis to enhancing liquidity last week, and now to reinforcing price stability.

# Drilling technical services grows 17.5% in 4 months on year

TEHRAN- The deputy managing director of the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) for technical affairs announced that 2,326 specialized drilling operations were carried out for client companies in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22), marking a 17.5-percent increase compared to the same period last year.

Jahangir Shojaei noted that the NIDC Technical Affairs Office oversees drilling technical services, special services, IT and communications, as well as the refurbishment and modernization of drilling equipment.

He added: "The majority of the company's drilling rigs are operational in five oil and gas production subsidiaries of the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC). Out of the total services provided during this period, 1,154 operations were performed on oil and gas wells—either under drilling or production."

As previously announced by Hamidreza Shafiei Makvandi, the deputy head of operations at NIDC, the company has drilled and completed 48 oil and gas wells across onshore and offshore regions during the first four months of the current Iranian year, marking a year-on-year increase of 17 wells.

He said the wells included 11 development and appraisal wells and 37 workover and completion wells, Shana reported.

Of the total, 40 wells were drilled in the operational zone of the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), two in the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC), two by the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), one by the Central Iranian Oil Fields Company (CIOFC), and three as part of drilling projects.

Makvandi expressed appreciation for operational crews working under extreme heat and said total drilling depth during the period reached 41,573 meters. He added that 18 of the company's 64 active drilling rigs are currently being relocated to new operational sites.

Iran, which holds some of the world's largest proven oil and gas reserves, has been ramping up drilling activities to boost production capacity despite ongoing international sanctions. The increase in the number of drilled wells reflects the country's strategy to maintain energy output and offset natural declines in aging oil fields.

National Iranian Drilling Company, a subsidiary of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), is a key player in Iran's oil and gas industry, responsible for drilling operations.

The company that conducts exploration, development, and drilling of oil and gas wells, as well as repair and maintenance services, and has been actively involved in both onshore and offshore drilling projects, is now ready to play a more prominent role in the region.

The deputy managing director of the company has announced the implementation of a comprehensive program to modernize the drilling fleet, widely localize equipment, manufacture a national drilling engine, and set a goal of repairing and completing 150 wells by the end of this year,



emphasizing: "Based on decades of experience, this company is ready to play a more prominent role at the regional level."

Regarding the most important challenges of the NIDC due to sanctions, Masoud Afshar has stated: "Domestic production of many equipment has reduced dependence on foreign countries, but in the engine sector, we had challenges that are being resolved with the new contract. The production of SCR, cables, and tanks are other successful examples of self-sufficiency."

"Our experts are currently involved in international projects, and the successful drilling experience in Turkmenistan will be a basis for expanding activities in other neighboring countries", the official has underlined.

Afshar has emphasized that with the development of technology, self-sufficiency in equipment, and the benefit of efficient human resources, the National Drilling Company is firmly on the path of sustainable development and is ready to play a more effective role in the regional arena.

Meanwhile, the managing director of the company has explained the outlook for the development of the drilling industry in the country, and said: "The most important global indicator in the field of drilling is the reduction of unproductive times; so, we have reduced this indicator from 21 percent to about 9.6 percent and set a goal to reach below three percent."

Mehran Makvandi said that in the five-year outlook, the modernization of the onshore and offshore drilling fleet, the development of offshore drilling in the Persian Gulf oil fields, and the upgrading of technical service equipment and their integration are priorities.

Regarding digital developments in the company, he stated: "Digitalization of drilling processes, from design and monitoring to operation analysis and well data management, is one of the main axes of the company's future vision; this approach will lead to reduced errors, faster decision-making, economic savings, and greater safety."

In addition to upgrading equipment, strengthening cooperation with scientific centers and knowledge-based companies, developing human resources, and increasing competitiveness in the international market are also among the company's strategic priorities in the 5-year outlook, the official added.

The NIDC managing director has also referred to the company's move towards domestic production of the equipment, and said: "One of the strategic priorities of the National Iranian Drilling Company is to increase the share

of domestic manufacturing."

"In this regard, cooperation has been developed with companies such as Fajr Shiraz Complex, which has experience in manufacturing key components of drilling rigs. The project to build the third drilling rig in the country with a savings of seven million dollars is an example of these measures", Makvandi added.

According to him, prioritization is based on the operational needs of the fields, the type of projects, and domestic capacity, although the lack of some technical infrastructure, the need for technology transfer, and the timely supply of quality parts are some of the challenges on the localization path. However, the company is determined to strengthen domestic manufacturing and reduce dependence.

Makvandi further referred to the NIDC's contracts with knowledge-based companies and added: "Nine one-megawatt generator motors and four drilling fluid purification centrifuges, which were previously imported, will be manufactured inside the country, and the first samples will be delivered by the end of the [current Iranian] year (March 20, 2026)."

He also noted: "A specific roadmap has been developed for utilizing these technologies, which includes continuous cooperation with science and technology parks, universities, knowledge-based companies, and the formation of specialized working groups to evaluate and implement technologies in field operations."

The NIDC managing director has also stated that purchasing 15 new drilling rigs for the oil and gas industry is on the agenda.

Makvandi said that a plan to purchase 15 onshore drilling rigs with different capacities and a value of over \$800 million has been prepared, which is being implemented with the support of the Ministry of Oil and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

Pointing out that last year, the company was able to drill, repair, and complete 100 oil and gas wells using 62 active drilling rigs and the return of two more rigs to operational lines, he added: "Of this number, 24 were development and explanatory wells and 76 were dedicated to repair and completion operations."

He attributed this success to careful planning, interdepartmental coordination, increased operational efficiency, and strengthened integrated technical services, and noted: "This performance is a significant leap compared to previous years, given the economic and sanctions conditions."

Makvandi stated that the re-activation of idle rigs played an effective role in this success,

adding: "Increasing productivity, reducing unproductive times, and relying on domestic capacity are the main pillars of this achievement."

The managing director of the NIDC further emphasized: "These rigs are designed for descriptive and exploratory purposes and will be equipped with the latest technologies. Specialized technical service equipment including high-pressure pumps, and well testing are also on the purchase list."

He continued: "The convergence of this equipment with the current fleet and the integrated planning management of the National Iranian Oil Company is underway in the form of a joint supervisory working group and in coordination with the Ministry of Oil."

Makvandi has said the company's primary mission is to provide drilling services and specialized operations for oil and gas producers, describing drilling as "the front line of production" and a vital step in preserving and boosting output.

Of the 100 wells completed in the past year, 24 were development wells and 76 were workovers. A total of 74 wells—14 development and 60 workover wells—were handed over to the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), he said.

The official added that 11 wells were drilled in fields managed by the Central Oil Fields Company, three by the Iranian Offshore Oil Company, seven under development projects run by the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company, and five were completed on a project basis.

He emphasized the strategic role of the National Drilling Company as one of the upstream arms of the National Iranian Oil Company, contributing to hydrocarbon supply and helping reduce Iran's energy imbalance. A portion of the company's resources is currently allocated to drilling gas wells, he said.

The total drilling footage reached 113,520 meters in 1403, up by 28,863 meters from the previous year, which Makvandi attributed to a more than five-fold increase in development well drilling. During the same period, the company carried out 4,538 technical service operations and 1,473 special service operations across more than 20 specialized service categories—marking a significant rise compared to the previous year.

Makvandi also noted that 17 drilling rigs were relocated across operational zones. Of the company's 74 land and offshore rigs, 64 are currently active in 10 provinces, engaged in development, appraisal, exploration, and repair-completion projects.

Looking ahead, Makvandi said the company aims to accelerate drilling operations and fulfill the strategic plans issued by NIOC in the Iranian year 1404 (starting March 21, 2025). This includes the continuation of equipment modernization efforts that began in 1403.

"With the strengthening of our fleet, rig upgrades, and the adoption of new technologies, we expect to see a major leap in productivity, reduced drilling downtime, improved efficiency, and increased revenue," he said.

## Government aims to cut average customs clearance to 3 days

TEHRAN - Iran plans to reduce the average time for customs clearance to three days through major reforms in the sector, the economy minister said.

Seyed Ali Madanizadeh said customs reform is one of his top priorities, with measures to ensure faster clearance and remove foreign cur-

rency allocation as an obstacle for importers.

The plan includes improving coordination among agencies involved in customs procedures and advancing automation and digitalization of the customs system.

Madanizadeh said the government is in-

troducing a new program to resolve currency allocation delays so that it no longer hinders goods clearance.

"I have made it a personal commitment, and asked colleagues at the Customs Administration, to bring the average clearance time down to three days," he said.

# Disarming Hezbollah: An American prescription for Lebanon’s fragmentation

By **Fatemeh Kavand**

TEHRAN - In 2025, both internal and international pressures for the disarmament of Hezbollah have significantly intensified, to the extent that the Lebanese President, Joseph Aoun, has officially voiced this demand.

Ostensibly, the plan is promoted under the guise of strengthening state sovereignty and centralizing national security. However, a deeper examination reveals a far more strategic project: weakening the axis of resistance and paving the way for expanded Western and Zionist intervention. Lebanon's political, economic, and social structure has become increasingly vulnerable due to a multitude of challenges—among them, Israel's aggression and attacks on its territory, the brutal assassination of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and many Hezbollah commanders, the martyrdom of numerous civilians, the destruction of infrastructure, and widespread devastation. Lebanon, like many other countries in the region, has not been immune to Israeli aggression. Foreign interventions, a paralyzing financial crisis, and the fragility of state institutions have all contributed to this vulnerability. Accepting a vague and dangerous plan such as Hezbollah's disarmament could lead to the total collapse of the country.

Hezbollah's deterrent role since its 2006 victory cannot be denied. Since the 33-day war



against Israel in 2006, Hezbollah has evolved into a military force with undeniable regional influence. In that war, the group successfully halted the Western-equipped Israeli military and imposed a new balance of power—one Israel has failed to break or ignore. That conflict transformed Hezbollah from a militia into a critical actor in Lebanon's national security and regional dynamics, establishing it as a unique pillar in the country's strategic deterrence architecture. At a time when Lebanon remains in a fragile state and Israel continues to threaten the very existence of countries in the region, disarming Hezbollah would effectively eliminate the only robust deterrent Lebanon has—one that has, through years of effort and sacrifice, ensured the country is no longer easily subdued by Israeli aggression.

Historical precedents from Iraq, Libya, and other West Asian

nations offer sobering warnings. In the post-2003 Iraq, Paul Bremer's decision to dissolve the army and disband non-state actors pushed the country into chaos, enabling the rise of ISIS and leading to practical disintegration. Similarly, Libya plunged into an era of disorder and instability following Gaddafi's fall and the dismantling of state security forces. Lebanon, with its sectarian-based power-sharing, fragile financial reliance on the West, and institutional weaknesses, is ill-equipped to endure such a scenario. Disarming Hezbollah without a viable replacement will only pave the way for foreign invasions, internal collapse, and the unraveling of the nation—an all-too-familiar outcome seen in neighboring states.

This project of disarmament is not merely symbolic; it is a tool of structural fragmentation. The call for Hezbollah's disarmament is accompanied by a combined

strategy of diplomatic, financial, and military pressure. The U.S.-led negotiation model includes preconditions such as a halt to Israeli attacks, Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, and in return, Hezbollah's surrender of arms. Yet historical experience teaches us that negotiations under duress rarely lead to fair compromise.

The media and political campaign to legitimize this agenda must also be scrutinized. Pressures from Washington, Tel Aviv, and their Persian Gulf Arab allies are driven by a clear political goal: to dominate Lebanon. The language used to frame this objective—state sovereignty, peace, reform—is rhetorical cover for the actual aim: to eliminate the resistance, neutralize Lebanon's top deterrent force, and open space for dependency and fragmentation. A major challenge to this plan is the Lebanese army's inability to replace Hezbollah. Beyond limited resources and financial dependency, nearly half of the Lebanese armed forces are Shia, many of whom sympathize with Hezbollah. Any serious attempt at disarmament could fracture the army itself, transforming it into an insecure and ineffective political actor.

Furthermore, Hezbollah has consistently expressed willingness for dialogue since 2005 without ever agreeing to surrender its weapons. It has even considered integration into the army.

## Lebanon on the verge of repeating a historic mistake

From page 1 ▶ From the 1982 Israeli invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon to the widespread bombardments of 2006, from repeated air and drone strikes on Lebanese soil to violations of its maritime and airspace, Israel has consistently breached ceasefire agreements. According to United Nations and other international reports, in the last two decades alone, Israel has violated formal ceasefires dozens of times, carrying out direct military operations that have infringed upon Lebanon's sovereignty. These acts of aggression have not only devastated infrastructure and undermined economic stability but have also claimed thousands of innocent lives and triggered successive waves of displacement and migration.

Within this context, Hezbollah's role as the central pillar of resistance has been both undeniable and decisive. Born out of the realities of occupation and the abandonment of southern Lebanon's population, the movement has, over five decades, succeeded in altering the region's security equation. The 33-day war of 2006 stands as a stark example. While it was destructive, it demonstrated

that Israel's military machine could indeed be halted. The charismatic leadership of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the movement's organizational cohesion, and its broad popular support have turned Hezbollah into a strategic bulwark for preserving Lebanon's territorial integrity.

Today, however, the Lebanese government's decision to advance a plan that would effectively disarm Hezbollah is tantamount to opening the country's gates to external threats. The history of the region has repeatedly shown that reliance on the security guarantees of foreign powers is an illusion. Syria offers a sobering precedent. When certain factions distanced themselves from the resistance in the hope of assurances from Tel Aviv and Washington, the result was an escalation, not a reduction, of Israeli aggression.

In recent years, Israel has violated agreed ceasefires unprecedentedly. From repeated attacks on border villages in southern Lebanon to deep drone incursions into its territory, these actions have often gone unanswered by the central government. Such silence has only emboldened Israel, under-

mining the delicate balance of deterrence.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Abbas Araghchi, recently underscored with clarity and analytical precision that the push to disarm Hezbollah is driven not by concern for Lebanon's well-being but by apprehension over the effectiveness and operational capability of this resistance force. The sharp reaction of Lebanon's Foreign Ministry, framing his remarks as interference in domestic affairs, may appear at first glance to be a defense of political independence, yet in practice it risks disregarding the very backbone of the nation's security.

A responsible government, before making any strategic decision, must place the security of all its citizens and the defense of its territorial integrity above all else. Weakening or dismantling a force that has time and again succeeded in containing enemy aggression is akin to removing the country's defensive shield.

Lebanon now stands at a critical juncture in its history, where a single misguided choice could exact an unbearable price.

## How did Nawaf Salam violate Lebanon’s National Accord?

From page 1 ▶ whether through armed struggle or diplomacy. However, diplomacy is worthless and futile without military might of the army or the popular resistance, or both.

The National Accord, ratified by Parliament on November 5, 1989, serves as the foundational blueprint for Lebanon's post-war civil peace and national consensus following a 15-year civil war.

It states: "Lebanon is a sovereign, free, and independent nation, the ultimate homeland for all its citizens... The people are the source of authority and the possessor of sovereignty, exercising it through constitutional institutions... No authority that contradicts the Covenant of Co-existence has legitimacy."

Therefore, this popular resistance is a national, political, constitutional, and national choice based on international law, which guarantees the legitimate right to self-defense and confronting external aggression.

Despite the objection of the Shiite ministers (both from Hez-

bollah and Amal Movement), the Lebanese government gave in to the American conditions in a reckless manner. Undoubtedly, it was a political coup.

This is not the first time Lebanon has witnessed such blatant foreign interference that the sole purpose of which is to drag the country toward a security and sectarian strife under the pressure of popular discontent.

Obviously, Nawaf Salam has succeeded, in a delicate and sensitive period, in shifting the Lebanese-Israeli conflict to another context: one that may draw the army into a confrontation with the resistance movement in an unprecedented escalation that would—God forbid—push Lebanon into the abyss of civil war.

This raises the hypothesis that Israel—or potentially another actor—might carry out an assassination that would further inflame tensions, reminiscent of the impact following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Besides, security sources are

expressing serious concerns, fearing any change in Syria, which remains fragile and unstable.

Washington is rushing to complete what it considers a "victory" achieved after Hezbollah suffered a severe blow last year. It thinks Hezbollah will receive the decisive blow that would ensure its final defeat now that that government has voted to disarm it.

Washington considers Hezbollah the backbone of the Axis of Resistance, and restricting its movement and disrupting its military and organizational structure constitutes a prelude to "final and complete victory," which can only be achieved by fully disarming it.

By remaining armed, regardless of anticipated changes in Syria, Hezbollah positions itself to regroup and reclaim its former strength.

Thus, security sources warn that the Israeli enemy, now approximately 20 kilometers from the Lebanese-Syrian border, may

## Israel’s Gaza decision sparks global outrage

From page 1 ▶ This marks a dangerous escalation & risks deepening the already catastrophic consequences for millions of Palestinians. It could further endanger more lives, including of the remaining hostages. I reiterate my urgent appeal for a permanent ceasefire, unimpeded humanitarian access across Gaza & the immediate & unconditional release of all hostages."

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk stated that "the Israeli government's plan for a complete military takeover of the occupied Gaza Strip must be immediately halted."

He added: "It runs contrary to the ruling of the International Court of Justice that Israel must bring its occupation to an end as soon as possible, to the realization of the agreed two-state solution and to the right of Palestinians to self-determination."

China has also expressed "serious concerns" over the plan and called on the Israeli government to "immediately cease its dangerous actions."

"Gaza belongs to the Palestinian people and is an inseparable part of Palestinian territory," a foreign ministry spokesperson told AFP.

"The correct way to ease the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and to secure the release of hostages is an immediate ceasefire. A complete resolution to the Gaza conflict hinges on a ceasefire; only then can a path to de-escalation be paved and regional security en-

sured," it added.

Beijing said it was "willing to work together with the international community to help end the fighting in Gaza as soon as possible."

European Council President Antonio Costa stated the Israeli decision "must have consequences for EU-Israel relations."

"This will be assessed by the Council," he added, urging the Israeli government to reconsider.

"Not only [does the decision] violate the agreement with the EU announced by the High Representative on July 19 but also undermines fundamental principles of international law and universal values," Costa said.

Scotland's First Minister John Swinney called the decision "completely and utterly unacceptable," saying it would "create even more human suffering for the Palestinian people and further escalate the conflict."

"The international community must stop Israel and secure a ceasefire," he posted on social media.

Jeremy Corbyn, the former British Labour Party leader who is now an independent member of Parliament, stated that the UK is "complicit in genocide".

"If the government was truly horrified by Israel's occupation of Gaza, it would stop supplying them with the weapons they need to carry it out," Corbyn said.

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

## Global protests erupt over Israel’s seizure of Gaza City and starvation campaign



British police arrest pro-Palestine protesters in London

From page 1 ▶ At the same time, thousands of people held a rally in solidarity with Palestine near the residence of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

In Malaysia, regular demonstrations have been held since the Israeli war on Gaza began in October 2023. Attendance has varied, but Israel's recent decision to seize Gaza City has injected fresh momentum into the movement. In Kuala Lumpur, a solidarity rally was organized in support of Palestinians in Gaza, bringing together 20 NGOs and enjoying cross-party political backing.

Similar protests were held across other

parts of the world, condemning Israel's war and the starvation of Palestinians in Gaza.

On Friday, people in the German city of Essen staged a protest against Israel's actions in Gaza. The demonstrators denounced Israel's starvation policy and its plan to take full control over the territory.

Israel has killed more than 61,000 Palestinians during its 22-month war on Gaza. This includes over 200 people who have died from hunger amid Israel's ongoing siege, which has led to mass starvation and pushed the enclave to the brink of famine.



Protesters in the German city of Essen condemn Israel’s starvation policy in Gaza

## Cultural heritage minister visits Nodoushan historical texture in central Iran

TEHRAN—Minister of Cultural Heritage Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri visited the 50-hectare historical texture of Nodoushan district in Meybod county, Yazd province, on Saturday.

He also paid a visit to the White Castle in Nodoushan, which pertains to the Afsharid and Zand eras in central Iran, ISNA reported.

During this visit, it was suggested that a team representing the Council for the Registration of Works of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage be deployed in this historical city to review the national registration files in the province.

The structure of the city of Nodoushan dates back to the Ilkhanid era and is in the form of a castle enclosed in a brick tower and rampart. According to the existing evidence such as the pulpit of the Nodoushan Jame' Mosque, it flourished in the fifth and sixth centuries AH.

Based on the historical texts, the current structure of Nodoushan dates back to the time of the presence of Al-e Mozaffar family in Meybod, and the aforementioned changes to the structure were also made by this family.

The minister also visited Nodoushan Jame' Mosque which pertains to the eighth century AH. The mosque has a 20-meter-high minaret that was added during the Safavid period.

This 60-step minaret with a brick facade and a glazed brick spire with a shaking minaret similar to the shaking minaret of Isfahan is a masterpiece.

Salehi Amiri also visited the historic house of Dr. Mohammad-Ali Eslami Nodoushan, who was an Iranian literary critic, translator and poet, and one of the most celebrated contemporary writers on culture and literature in Iran.

Nodoushan's academic journey began in Yazd, where he graduated from high school before earning his BA in law from the University of Tehran. He then moved to Paris to pursue his MA and Ph.D. Upon returning to Iran, he began teaching literature and law at the University of Tehran, quickly becoming one of its prominent professors and one of Iran's renowned writers.

His fame extends beyond Iran, reaching thinkers, writers, and scholars around the world. Nodoushan's magnificent works have significantly contributed to promoting the Persian language and literature.

Nodoushan's tireless efforts to familiarize people worldwide with Iranian literature and his deep sense of patriotism are truly commendable and will continue to inspire future generations.

He spent his life studying the scientific and literary works of Iranian writers and translating books by the world's great writers, all of which have been published in over 50 books.

"Iran's Conscience: Ferdowsi, Rumi, Sadi, Hafez" is one of his wonderful books. This book covers a series of lectures he gave at the Book City Institute in Tehran in the late 1990s.

His studies on Persian poet Hafez are among the most useful sources of information for Persian literature scholars. Among them are "Endless Story of Hafez" and "Contemplation on Hafez".

Some of his massive studies on the Shahnameh (The Book of Kings), the epic masterpiece of the Persian poet Abolqasem Ferdowsi, are contained in the books "The Story of Stories: Rustam and Esfandiar in the Shahnameh" and "Heroes' Death and Life in the Shahnameh".

## Sassanid-era Vigol fire temple undergoes restoration



TEHRAN – Restoration work has commenced on the Vigol fire temple, a rare archaeological site from the Sassanid era located in the central province of Isfahan, the provincial tourism chief said on Saturday.

Amir Karamzadeh said on Saturday that the project started due to the need to reinforce the internal spaces and walls of the ancient structure, which is located near Aran-Bidgol.

"The restoration was initiated following scheduled planning and in response to the condition of the structure, which required stabilization," Karamzadeh said.

The fire temple, discovered in 2010, lies within the 120-hectare Vigol archaeological zone, approximately 10 kilometers north of Aran-Bidgol and near the central Iranian city of Kashan. The site has been continuously inhabited or used from pre-Islamic times through the early Islamic centuries.

According to Iranian archaeologist Mohsen

Javari, who led the original excavation, the central section of the Sassanid fire temple was unearthed with its bedding fireplace still relatively intact. He noted that evidence pointed to the existence of a religious center in the area during the Sassanid period.

The Sassanid dynasty ruled Persia from 224 to 651 CE, a period marked by cultural, artistic, and architectural development. Scholars have described the era as a renaissance of Iranian civilization, with advancements in urban planning, metalwork, and the state-supported translation of foreign texts into Pahlavi.

Javari's excavation team included experts from the universities of Isfahan, Tehran, and Kashan, who began archaeological work at Vigol in 2005. The site is considered one of the few remaining examples of Sassanid religious architecture in the region.

In 2018, UNESCO designated the "Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region" in southern Iran as a World Heritage site, recognizing the influence of Sassanid architecture on subsequent Islamic construction. The listing includes fortified structures, palaces, and city plans in areas such as Firuzabad and Sarvestan.

The Sassanid dynasty ended in the mid-7th century following the Arab conquests. Zoroastrianism, the state religion under Sassanid rule, gradually gave way to Islam, though archaeological remains like Vigol continue to shed light on the period's cultural and religious landscape.

## Khuzestan province becoming Iran's coastal and river tourism hub

TEHRAN—Khuzestan province is becoming Iran's coastal and river tourism hub, said Seyyed Mohammadreza Mavalizadeh, the province's governor-general.

According to Miras Arya (CHTN), speaking at a coastal tourism session which was held with participation of Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, Mavalizadeh divided the province's climate into three parts: mountainous, plain, and maritime.

"Each of these areas has unique potential for tourism development; the province's rich historical and cultural background in the Zagros mountainous regions, the existence of the ancient civilizations of Susa and Ilam, and the cultural diversity of different ethnic groups are among the advantages of Khuzestan's tourism. In addition, the Karun River from Dezful and Shushtar to Ahvaz has unique potential for tourism development."

Referring to the President's recent visit to the Karun River, the Khuzestan governor-general stated: "The proposal to establish hotels, restaurants, and recreational facilities such as jet skiing in this area is under consideration. The Karun River bank can become the central core of Ahvaz's tourism."

Pointing to the challenges regarding the river privacy, he said, "In coordination with relevant agencies, we must redefine the boundaries of riverbeds to enable tourism development."

"In the current situation, we must use the opportunity to develop tourism on the banks of the rivers. Creating recreational facilities, holding cultural and artistic programs, and developing water games can turn the banks of the Karun River in Ahvaz into a tourism hub, the positive effects of which will spread to the entire province."

# Over 2.6 million Arbaeen pilgrims exit Iran via land borders; Mehran most crowded

TEHRAN – More than 2.6 million pilgrims crossed Iran's six land borders to enter Iraq for Arbaeen between July 26 and August 8, Iranian road management officials reported on Saturday.

Iman Mehrabinia, head of the operations hall at Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, told ISNA news agency that 2,643,343 pilgrims exited Iran through the six land border crossings during the first to the 14th of the Islamic month of Safar. The figures exclude those traveling by air.

Mehran border was the busiest crossing, accounting for 47% of all pilgrim traffic, followed by Shalamcheh (28%), Khosravi (14%), Chazabeh (8%), Tamarchin (2%), and Bashmaq (1%).

Traffic was heavy on the Ilam-Sarableh route toward Mehran before and after the Azadi Tunnel, as well as on the Khorramshahr-Shalamcheh route. However, the Qasr-e Shirin, Khosravi, and Bostan-Chazabeh routes experienced smooth traffic flow.

No traffic congestion was reported at the Bashmaq and Ta-



File photo depicts Shia Muslim pilgrims marching toward the holy city of Karbala, ahead of the Arbaeen religious ceremony. Each year, pilgrims converge in large numbers to the holy Iraqi cities of Najaf and Karbala ahead of Arbaeen, which marks the 40th day after Ashura, commemorating the seventh century martyrdom of Prophet Mohammed's grandson Imam Hussein (AS).

marchin borders, the official noted.

Mehrabi Nia also stated that 828,323 pilgrims had returned to Iran during the same period.

"Compared with last year, the number of pilgrims exiting Iran

increased by 2%."

He added that 511,000 pilgrims left Iran via public transportation services during this timeframe.

Arbaeen marks the end of a 40-day mourning period commem-

orating the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE. Millions of Shia Muslims participate annually in this pilgrimage, many walking long distances to reach Karbala in Iraq.

## Traditional attire of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari women: a unique expression of Iranian art



TEHRAN — The traditional costumes of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari women, predominantly from the Bakhtiari and Qashqai tribes, as well as those from the urban and rural areas of Chaharmahal, showcase some of the most beautiful expressions of Iranian art and culture.

These garments are distinguished by their vibrant use of colors such as pink, green, red, orange, purple, blue, yellow, and white.

This unique type of clothing of Lor, Turk, and Fars women in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province has been used as formal clothing in various wedding ceremonies, mourning ceremonies, and other formal and informal programs since the Safavid era, and according to many experts and scholars,

has always been used as everyday clothing in various formal and informal programs, Miras Arya (CHTN) reported.

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari women still wear local costumes and clothing, especially in the Bakhtiari and Qashqai nomadic areas, the cities of Shahr-e Kord and Farrokhsahr, and the villages of this province.

Of course, along with Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari women, men in this province also wear local costumes and clothing.

The interest of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari people, especially women to traditional clothes is so great that in spite of current conditions of sanctions and high prices, the use of this type of local clothing has not decreased among them, but it also continues to enjoy

a special and special prosperity.

The local clothes and clothing of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari women and men, especially among women, have always enjoyed public interest at the national and international levels.

Currently, the market for the production of local clothes and clothing of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari women is booming and has many fans in other provinces of the country and the world.

The production of local clothes and clothing of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari women has not experienced a recession today, and there is no decrease in the customers of this art and industry.

The use of local clothes and costumes by Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari women is currently popular and thriving among various age groups of Bakhtiari, Qashqai, and local areas of Chaharmahal, villages, and cities of this province.

Local clothes and costumes are used in these areas with the aim of preserving the identity and authenticity of the people of this region.

Of course, the use of local clothes and costumes by Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari women is increasing in nomadic and rural areas and is becoming more colorful for today's generation.

The local attire of Chaharma-

hal-Bakhtiari women is majorly used in cities of Lordegan, Khanmirza, Koohrang, Ardal, Farsan, and Borujen.

The boom in the production of local women's and men's clothing in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province has been so favorable that even in some cities of the province, large production workshops are currently active in this field.

The price of each piece of local clothing in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province is determined in proportion to the variety, fabric size, and quality of the raw materials used in its production.

The increase in the price of gold, as one of the main and most important raw materials, has a direct impact on the production of local women's clothing in the province.

Gold is used in the production of 'Lachak' of Bakhtiari clothing and 'Taj' of Qashqai clothing for women. The high cost of raw materials and gold has caused reduction in production of 'Lachak' of Bakhtiari clothing and 'Taj' of Qashqai clothing for women.

The local clothing of Bakhtiari men includes a felt hat, loose trousers, chogha, givoh, shawl and slippers, and the local clothing of Bakhtiari women includes pants, yal (short coat), joveh (shirt), vest, lachak (hat) and meyna (headscarf).

## Ancient qanats are still a lesser-known tourism charm

TEHRAN -Experts in the field of qanats believe that such ancient underground water networks are still among the lesser-known tourism charms in Kerman province.

They believe that a qanat is an important agricultural heritage in Iran and even the world, which traces the history of coexistence and human dependence on water to the beginning of human civilization.

"Iranians' efforts in engineering and exploiting the surface water, managing and directing it to the farms and fields by digging qanats have been very admirable. A heritage that we benefit from less today despite the climate crisis."

Mohammad Barshan, director of the Qanat Center of Kerman province and a qanat expert in Iran, told ILNA that qanat is not just a technology for accessing water resources, but is a heritage that the economic, cultural and social life of a large part of the country has depended on for several millennia.

He said qanat is adaptable to the ecological law and has helped the ecological resistance of every region.

Barshan continued that Kerman province is the original origin of the qanat in human history and according to historians; the first qanats were formed within the boundaries of this land.

If there were no qanats, cities such as Kerman, Sirjan, Bam, Ravar, Kuhbanan, Zarand and Shahr-e Babak and other cities of the province would not have been formed. "Therefore, the people who were responsible for managing the qanats were proud of this work and considered their profession more sacred than other professions. They believed that betrayal in qanat affairs would lead to the drying up."

The tourism sector in the qanat civilization becomes effective when, along with the increase in the level of awareness of tourists about the importance of the qanat, its importance for tourism is also taken into account, he pointed out.

"Approaches such as empowering the qanats in a structure of job creation, localizing the actuality of tourism, and preventing the drying up of the qanats can be very useful. Also, paying attention to sustainability in the human and natural dimensions as a restraint on capitalism intertwined with tourism can be effective in optimizing the qanat tourism."

Barshan emphasized that qanats are part of history and culture of nations. Their loss is not only the disappearance and destruction of a method of water extraction or a type of water exploitation, but also the disappearance of a cultural characteristic and identity, he pointed

out.

According to this expert, given the recent numerous droughts and the decrease in rainfall and the lowering of water in underground aquifers, the importance of qanats has become more apparent than ever, and efforts to register qanats nationally and globally and pay attention to qanat tourism will be effective in continuing activities and efficiency.

Barshan continued that qanats are one of the environmental and man-made attractions and technical innovations of ancient Iran about 3,000 years ago for the exploitation of groundwater on the surface of the earth, which can be of interest to tourists. So that tourists are very interested in the experiences they gain as a cultural experience at the tourist destination, he added.

He said: One of the socio-cultural dimensions of qanats in Iran is the beliefs that the Iranian people have had throughout history about this important phenomenon, which includes specific customs and traditions regarding qanat.

The Iranian people believed in the male and female nature of qanat waters and chose spouses for them, and qanat wedding ceremonies were held like normal weddings and sacrifices were made for them, and many qanats were considered sacred.

# Iran secures four medals at intl. Olympiad in AI



From page 1 ► This year's IOAI featured two main modules: the Team Challenge and Individual Contest, designed to comprehensively assess students' AI innovation capabilities.

The Team Challenge was themed 'Future Factory' and integrates simulation with real-world deployment.

The Individual Contest includes a pre-event online warm-up and an on-site competition; students solved six problems (six hours per day), covering machine learning, natural language processing, and computer vision.

Thanks to the Iranian delegation's efforts, the country is placed ahead of impressive opponents from the UK, South Korea, France, and Malaysia,

ranking 16 up from 18 in 2024.

Iran grabbed a bronze medal in Bulgaria, 2024. The Iranian team delivered the best solution among 41 participating teams from 32 countries.

The IOAI 2024 focused on Machine Learning, Natural Language Processing, and Computer Vision.

The 3rd edition of IOAI will be held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in 2026.

## 'Iran Digital' program

The first phase of the Iran Digital initiative, a national free artificial intelligence (AI) training program, has been launched, targeting two million junior high school students and one thousand teachers.

Having completed the introductory

courses, students will learn different functional areas of AI and carry out practical projects, IRNA quoted Abdolhossein Bahrami, an official with the Vice Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy, as saying.

## \*Recent achievements

Iran won two silver medals and two bronze medals at the Eighth International Economics Olympiad (IEO) 2025, which was held from July 20 to 29, in Baku, Azerbaijan. This year, 68 countries participated in the IEO.

Four Iranian students clinched three gold medals and a silver medal at the 36th International Biology Olympiad (IBO 2025), which was held from July 19 to 27 in Quezon City, Philippines, ranking second among 81 countries, up from third in 2024.

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

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

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

The event attracted more than 600 high school students from 112 countries.

Attending the second International Mathematics Olympiad for high school students in Turkmenistan, Iranian students managed to win seven bronze medals. The event was held from April 21 to 26.

## The Olympiad in Artificial Intelligence provides a platform for top students to foster a dialogue on AI's opportunities.

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

## Iran advances in AI scientific research index: official

TEHRAN – According to Nature index, the country's ranking in scientific production in Artificial Intelligence (AI) has improved from 33 to 30, placing the country among the top 50 leaders, Hossein Afshin, an official with the vice-presidency of science and technology, has said.

Iran's ranking in the region fluctuates between 14 to 17, which is mainly due to focusing on quality, he said, adding, "We're optimistic to improve the country's scientific position within the next two years," IRNA reported.

The official went on to say that the country is following up on developing AI infrastructure, including the AI platform and the AI assistant, in the near future.



vices, Iran ranks 91st among 188 countries, moving up three positions compared to 94th in 2023.

AI has a key role to play –not just in governing the technology, but in helping governments perform better.

The Government AI Readiness Index has become a trusted resource for policymakers, adopted as an official benchmark by national governments.

In this year's edition, the AI readiness of 188 countries is examined at a time of growing complexity, where governments face evolving citizen needs and challenges like economic uncertainty, climate risks, and rising inequalities.

The 2024 index examines 40 indicators across three pillars: Government, Technology Sector, and Data & Infrastructure.

It highlights progress, identifies gaps, and

provides actionable insights for policymakers working to integrate AI into public service delivery.

At its core, the index asks, 'how ready are governments to implement AI in the delivery of public services?'

By answering this question, it aims to offer a practical tool that supports evidence-based decision-making and helps policymakers unlock AI's potential to serve citizens better worldwide.

According to the index, the country's best ranking is in the Data and Infrastructure pillar, 66.29, which has improved compared to 55.88 last year.

It includes infrastructure (70), data availability (43), and data representativeness (121) indicators.

The country's score in the Technology pillar is 38.82, it was 38.77 in 2023. It includes human capital (54), innovation capacity (62), and maturity (82) indicators.

Iran's lowest score is in the Government pillar, 26.54, which has decreased compared to 31.56 in 2023.

It includes vision (84), governance and ethics (145), digital capacity (92), and adaptability (177).

According to this year's report, Iran's ranking in the region has improved by one position, rising from 17 in 2023 to 16 in 2024.

## Iran's government readiness for implementing AI in public services has improved to 91st in 2024, compared to 94th in 2023.

### Government AI Readiness

According to the latest report by Oxford Insights index, which measures government readiness for implementing AI in public ser-

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Ministries ink MOU on out-of-school children

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare have signed a memorandum of understanding aiming to bring out-of-school children back to school.

The memorandum of understanding will pave the way for future steps, ISNA news agency quoted Education Minister Mohammad Bat'haei as saying on Sunday.

He made the remarks over the 8th session of council meeting for improving educational standards in underprivileged and underdeveloped areas at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare."The meeting is aiming to live up to educational standards, however, the current conditions are unjustifiable, and we should move faster," he added.

## تفاهم وزراء برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل به مدارس

وزارت آموزش و پرورش تفاهم نامه مشترکی با وزارت رفاه برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل امضا کردند.

به گزارش روز یکشنبه ایسنا، محمد بطحایی وزیر آموزش و پرورش گفت: امروز تفاهم نامهای امضا می‌شود که نقشه کار برای ادامه مسیر کاملاً مشخص شود.

بطحایی در هشتمین جلسه شورای هماهنگی بهبود و ارتقای شاخص‌های آموزشی و پرورشی مناطق محروم و کمتر توسعه یافته که در وزارت رفاه برگزار شد گفت: هدف اصلی این برنامه و شورای هماهنگی ارتقای شاخص‌ها بود، هرچند این روند قابل قبول نیست و باید با سرعت بیشتری حرکت کنیم.

# SOCIETY

AUGUST 10, 2025

Straight Truth

TEHRAN TIMES

7

## Over 680,000 medical, educational services offered to Arbadeen pilgrims

TEHRAN –Since the beginning of the Arbadeen pilgrimage on July 26 till August 9, the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Organization has offered 682,278 educational and healthcare services to the pilgrims.

The Arbadeen pilgrimage, which is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, comes 40 days after Ashura, the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of Shia Muslims, and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).Each year, a huge crowd of people flocks to Karbala, where the holy shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) is located, to perform mourning rituals. This year it falls on August 14.

The EMS Organization has provided medical and prehospital care to 50,468 individuals, preventive health services to 555,849 people, and educational services to 75,961 others so far, IRNA reported.

During the same period, EMS experts also visited 40,974 injured pilgrims and patients, transferring 1,997 to medical centers and treating 38,977 others at their places.

Health teams are providing services at 9 border terminals; they monitor environmental health, sanitation, safe water, food, and communicable diseases, as well. The services are scheduled to run till August 24. This year, the health ministry has dispatched a team of Persian medicine experts to provide health services to people during the Arbadeen pilgrimage.The team includes physicians, masseurs, nurses, and translators, the health ministry's website reported.

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 Arbadeen"

The 5th International Congress on "Health in Arbadeen" 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 Arbadeen 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.

## DOE to review Clean Air Law

TEHRAN –The Department of Environment (DOE) is planning to review the Clean Air Law, enacted in July 2017, evaluating its effectiveness in meeting the desired goals.

Eight years after the law's enactment, not only has the pollution not decreased, but it also gets worse in the cold season, ISNA quoted Sediqeh Torabi, an official with DOE, as saying.

The DOE is currently monitoring the implementation of the law to identify challenges and figure out if there are defects in its enforceability or the inefficiency of responsible organizations. Accordingly, the DOE will decide on the measures to be taken as well as the issues to be put on the agenda.

Air pollution is the second leading risk factor for death, causing around 8.1 million premature deaths annually from conditions such as stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections.

As the biggest environmental health risk of the time, it also exacerbates climate change, causes economic losses, and reduces agricultural productivity. It knows no borders – everyone has a responsibility to protect our atmosphere and ensure healthy air for all.

In August 2024, Shina Ansari, head of the DOE, stressed that adopting proper policies and mon-

itoring their implementation is the main responsibility of the Department of Environment to deal with air pollution. "Decommissioning of worn-out cars, improving the quality of fuels and vehicles, developing public transportation, providing resources, and reducing industrial emissions are among the key factors to deal with air pollution," Ansari highlighted.

However, air pollution as a major challenge in large and industrial cities cannot be tackled in a short time, she added.

## Clean Air Law

Air pollution is one of the main concerns of the government; Therefore, all organizations are obliged to act based on the Clean Air Law.

The Clean Air Law was supposed to be a solution to ease air pollution across the country. Still, the air is severely polluted, as the responsible bodies neglect their legal duties to implement the law.

The law has defined responsibilities for the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Oil, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Environment, the police, the municipality, the National TV, and some other organizations.



## Wheat harvest underway in northwest Iran

Some one thousand hectares of land in the northwestern city of Maragheh is cultivated with wheat, and the crop is being harvested by farmers.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Iran produced over 13 million tons of wheat in 2022 and 13.5 million tons in 2023.



AUGUST 10, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Patience is of two kinds: patience over what pains you, and patience against what you covet.*  
**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times » Noon:12:10 Evening: 19:19 Dawn: 3:47 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:20 (tomorrow)

## Toronto International Film Festival selects Houman Seyyedi's "The Savage" for Primetime program

TEHRAN – The Iranian series "The Savage" directed by Houman Seyyedi will have its international premiere at the 50th Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), set to be held in Toronto, Canada, from September 4 to 14.

"The Savage" has been selected to be shown at the Primetime program of the TIFF and is the only representative from West Asia in the section, ILNA reported.

TIFF's 2025 Primetime program celebrates 10 years of championing serialized storytelling from across the globe.

Other than Iran, this year welcomes stand-out series from Austria, Canada, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Norway, Rwanda, the UK, Senegal, the U.S., and South Africa.

TIFF is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its Primetime program, spotlighting exceptional international series and boundary-pushing episodic storytelling. Since launching in 2015, Primetime has offered audiences a first look at prestige series and auteur-driven television from around the world, recognizing the medium's creative power and cultural impact.

In this gripping miniseries from Seyyedi (World War III), a devastating tragedy puts a laborer on a collision course with the authorities.

The series stands out for its honest portrayal of working-class struggles and urban marginalization. Its gray tones, heavy silence, and somber visuals speak louder than the dialogue, painting a reality that reflects the lives of countless forgotten people.

What makes "The Savage" deeply impactful is that it doesn't seek to manipulate emotions. There are no theatrical meltdowns or sentimental tricks. Instead, the weight of life itself — silent, slow, and suffocating — becomes the central character. The emotional tension builds quietly, rooted in realism.

The cast includes Javad Ezati, Negar Javaherian, Ehsan Mansoori, Danial Faraji, Zahra Madadi, and Ehsan Amani among others.

Houman Seyyedi, 44, is an Iranian actor, director, screenwriter, and editor. He has received various accolades, including six Crystal Simorghs, making him the only director to have three wins in Special Jury Prize category, two Hafez Awards, five Iran's Film Critics and Writers Association Awards, a NETPAC Award and an Asian New Talent Award. His sixth film "World War III" (2022) won the Orizzonti Award for Best Film at the 79th Venice International Film Festival.

The Toronto International Film Festival ranks among the most prestigious international film festivals in the world. For 11 days, film lovers, filmmakers, industry professionals, and media watch the best in new cinema, from established auteurs to new talent. As one of the world's most important cultural events, the festival consistently strives to set the standard for excellence in film programming. Films are selected on the basis of quality and originality. Preference is given to premieres.

The TIFF also promotes contact between industry professionals to assist in the development of the Canadian motion-picture industry. The level of engagement the festival sustains from year to year is unique. Enthusiastic audiences and filmmakers have unprecedented levels of access to one another as they exchange ideas about the art and business of filmmaking.

Film buyers and other industry professionals can choose from screenings and specialized industry programming that empowers them to make informed business decisions. The festival also provides excellent resources and networking opportunities for film industry professionals.

# Celebrated Iranian master Mahmoud Farshchian passes away

TEHRAN- Mahmoud Farshchian, the renowned Iranian miniaturist and painter, passed away on Saturday in a hospital in New Jersey, the U.S. at the age of 96, Persian media reported.

Farshchian left this world, leaving behind a rich legacy that has shaped Iran's cultural and artistic landscape.

Born in 1930, in Isfahan, he was celebrated as one of the most prominent figures in contemporary Iranian art, known for his exquisite works inspired by Persian literature and religious texts.

Farshchian's journey into the world of art was marked from a young age by exceptional talent and unwavering devotion. His father, a prominent figure in Isfahan's carpet industry, recognized his son's extraordinary gift and took him to the workshop of Mirza Aqa Emami, where the young artist's potential was first discovered. From that moment, a lifelong pursuit of excellence and spiritual expression through art began.

After training under prominent masters and graduating from the School of Fine Arts in Isfahan, Farshchian traveled to Europe to further study Western art in museums. He was known for immersing himself in art collections with a passion, often carrying a bag full of books and tools, and staying until closing time.



"The Evening of Ashura" by Mahmoud Farshchian.

Upon returning to Iran, Farshchian began working at the Tehran Fine Arts Department and later served as the director and professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran. He resided in New Jersey, but maintained regular visits to Iran, continuing his artistic pursuits.

Farshchian's work is renowned for its intricate craftsmanship, blending traditional Persian miniature techniques with innovative elements that breathe new life



into classical themes. His art vividly captures the soul of Persian poetry, religious stories, and spiritual symbolism, creating compositions that are both visually stunning and deeply meaningful. His mastery lies in the delicate balance of tradition and innovation—crafting vibrant, flowing lines, circular motifs, and dynamic colors that evoke emotion and transcend cultural boundaries.

Throughout his illustrious career, Farshchian's artworks have traveled the globe, exhibited in

"The Standard-Bearer of Truth," transcending mere illustration, capturing the spiritual sorrow, sacrifice, and steadfastness of Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions.

With intricate details, dynamic compositions, and a masterful use of color and symbolism, Farshchian transforms the canvas into a sacred space where grief and hope intertwine. These paintings not only preserve the historical memory of Karbala but also evoke timeless lessons of faith, justice, and resistance against oppression.

Farshchian's influence extended beyond his brush. He served as a professor and director at Iran's University of Tehran's Faculty of Fine Arts, shaping generations of artists who continue to carry forward his artistic vision. His works are housed in the Mahmoud Farshchian Museum at Sadabad Palace, inaugurated in 2001, which showcases over 50 of his masterpieces—testaments to a lifetime dedicated to the pursuit of beauty and spirituality.

In 1955, he married Niyadokht Qavami, with whom he had three children: Ali Morad, a physician; Leila, a psychologist; and Fatemeh.

Despite his international recognition, Farshchian remained rooted in his Iranian identity. His art drew inspiration from Persian poetry, the Quran, and sacred texts of Christianity and Judaism, creating a universal language of spiritual artistry. His ability to fuse tradition with modernity has earned him worldwide admiration, with scholars like Umberto Baldi-

ni, Italian art historian, describing him as a "phenomenon and a pivotal point in Iranian art."

He significantly contributed to promoting Iranian art internationally, often invited to speak at universities and cultural institutions worldwide. Several books and scholarly articles have been published about his works, cementing his legacy as a master artist.

His name has been registered on Britain's list of 2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st century, and collectors feel it a great honor to possess one of his creations.

Farshchian was among the 40 Iranian artists honored by the National Library and Archives of Iran for their outstanding works created about the tragedy of Ashura over the past century.

The news of his passing has cast a shadow of sorrow over Iran's cultural community. Many have expressed their grief, emphasizing that the loss of such a luminous figure leaves an irreplaceable void. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, along with numerous cultural institutions, have paid tribute to his monumental contributions, calling him a symbol of Iranian resilience, spirituality, and artistic brilliance.

As Iran bids farewell to one of its most cherished artists, the legacy of Mahmoud Farshchian continues to inspire. His art—rich with symbolism, spirituality, and timeless beauty—remains a beacon of Iran's cultural identity, illuminating the path for future generations.

## German artists demand Chancellor Merz take action to prevent Israeli atrocities in Gaza

Over 350 leading German actors, musicians and cultural workers have issued an appeal, urging German Chancellor Friedrich Merz to intervene to prevent mass starvation in Gaza.

For the first two years of the Israeli war against Palestinians, German media and television outlets restricted imagery of what was taking place in occupied Gaza and the West Bank. More recently, faced with the daily pictures of atrocities emerging on social media, the media in Germany has begun publishing and broadcasting limited reports indicating the spread of starvation across Gaza, the World Socialist Web Site reported.

The urgent appeal by actors and cultural workers begins as follows: "Children, emaciated to the bone, their eyes empty, their wrists thin. Babies too weak from hunger to cry. Old, weak, and sick people who don't receive adequate care. Dying in Gaza. Day after day ... Children who are not part of this war—and yet bear its full burden. More than 17,000 have already been killed. Hundreds of thousands are injured, traumatized, displaced, and starving".

The appeal calls upon Chancellor Merz to: "Immediately stop all German arms exports to Israel. Support the suspension of the Association Agreement between the EU and Israel. Strongly demand an immediate ceasefire and unhindered access for humanitarian aid".

Refuting the main argument used by successive German governments, that uncon-

ditional support for Israel—i.e., for its war crimes and its genocide—is part of German Staatsräson (reason of state), the appeal notes: "Continuing to fully support the Israeli government while Gaza is starved and detention camps for hundreds of thousands of people are planned has absolutely nothing to do with German Staatsräson".

The list of signees includes some of Germany's best-known actors, such as Daniel Brühl, Sandra Hüller, Peter Lohmeyer, Benno Fühmann, Heike Makatsch, Anna Thalbach, Meret Becker, Jürgen Vogel, and Armin Rohde, film directors Fatih Akin and Ari Folman and many more. Musicians include Joy Denalane, Yvonne Catterfeld and the bands Blond, Mighty Oaks, and Querbeat.

The appeal by cultural workers follows on the heels of other expressions of public opposition against the genocide in Gaza, including a protest at the Salzburger Festspiele in Austria at the end of July. An open letter by 100 Israeli academics warned that the continuing failure by Germany to put pressure on Israel "threatens to enable new atrocities—and undermines the lessons learnt from its own history."

The academics addressed their letter to two senior Social Democrats (SPD) Rolf Muetzenich and Adis Ahmetovic. The SPD is currently part of the government, a coalition with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU), led by Merz (CDU).

The artists' appeal and open letter undoubtedly reflect the shock and horror of millions in Germany and layers of society in Israel.

After the administration of Donald Trump, the German government has been the chief enabler of Israel as it moves to the next stage of its goal of establishing a "Greater Israel" on the bones of the Palestinian people. Germany, as well as Britain and France, has continued normal trading relations with Israel, most notably supplying the country with all the weapons it needs to continue its illegal, homicidal war.

Germany is Israel's second-largest arms supplier after the US. Between 2019 and 2023, around 30 percent of Israel's heavy conventional arms imports came from Germany, including corvettes, submarines, tank components and missiles.

On June 2, a report to the Bundestag (German parliament) revealed that the country had provided Israel with nearly half a billion euros' worth of arms since the genocide in Gaza began. The report indicated that from October 7, 2023, to May 13, 2025, individual export licenses for the final export of military equipment to Israel with a total value of US\$564 million were issued. The deliveries included, among other things, firearms, ammunition, weapon parts, special equipment for the army and navy, electronic equipment, and special armored vehicles.

## Cartoon of Day



Besieged Gaza

Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria