

# Arbaeen: A Record-Breaking March of Devotion and Unity



*A sociopolitical symbol of resistance*

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – For many outside the region, Arbaeen is unfamiliar. It often surfaces unexpectedly while scrolling through headlines about West Asia accompanied by striking images of massive crowds walking toward Iraqi cities.

These scenes, filled with people offering free food, water, medical aid, and places to rest, evoke a mix of amazement, curiosity, and sometimes skepticism. To some, the scale and spirit appear almost unbelievable. Yet behind this enormous mobilization lies a powerful social and political reality.

*The common language of Arbaeen pilgrims is tears*

By Fatemeh Jahanbakhsh

KARBALA—An eighty-year-old woman sits beneath a bridge, her face deeply lined with wrinkles, an Arabic beauty mark between her brows, strands of white hair peeking from beneath her scarf, and a pair of round glasses perched on her nose. Amid the sea of people, you'd have to look closely to spot her, sitting with a tray of dates on a small stool, waiting to meet your gaze.

When our eyes meet, she offers me a handful of dates. I take one, thank her for her kindness, and merge back into the crowd.

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## Iran coordinating with China, Russia to block 'snapback' sanctions: Araghchi

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says Tehran is working in close coordination with China and Russia to prevent the reactivation of UN sanctions through the so-called "snapback" mechanism, which European powers have recently threatened to invoke.

"We are working with China and Russia to stop it," Araghchi told national television late Thursday. "If this does not work and they apply it, we have tools to respond. We will announce them in due course." ► Page 3

## Foreign interventions in region lead to instability, VP tells Russian official

TEHRAN – Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref has stressed that countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia must resolve their own disputes without outside intervention, warning that foreign involvement undermines regional stability.

Speaking on Friday with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on the sidelines of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Prime Ministers' Summit in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, Aref said Iran's strategic policy rejects the presence of external powers in the region's geopolitics. ► Page 3

## Tehran, Nairobi set \$1b trade goal after joint committee meeting

TEHRAN – Iran and Kenya signed eight cooperation agreements at the close of their seventh Joint Economic Committee meeting, setting a target to raise bilateral trade from the current \$150 million to \$1.0 billion in the near future.

The meeting, hosted by Kenya for the first time in a decade, brought together Iran's Agriculture Minister Mohammad Ali Nouri Ghezeli, who chairs the Iranian side of the commission, and Kenya's Prime Cabinet Secretary and Foreign Minister Musalia Mudavadi, along with more than 100 delegates from government agencies and the private sector. ► Page 6



## ■ When water thieves turn to water diplomacy

■ Iranian backlash turns Netanyahu's water pitch into political misfire

■ Israel's water policy and occupied Palestinian territories

■ Tehran slams Netanyahu's water pitch as political provocation

■ Expert says Israel's water policy is marked by security-driven structure

■ The human cost of Gaza water collapse

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■ Larijani enters Lebanon to warm public welcome, vows unwavering Iranian support

■ Tehran's message delivered via Larijani: Resistance is not alone!

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## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## The new security order in West Asia

Shargh examined disarmament campaign against resistance groups in the region in an interview with Mashallah Shamsol-Vaezin, a senior international expert. He said: In recent months, the course of security developments in the Middle East has moved towards coordinated efforts to disarm non-state actors on several parallel fronts; a move that, although presented by some regional and trans-regional powers as a step towards “stabilization,” is a sign of the formation of complex and multi-layered equations in the new security order in the region. All the new realities of the Middle East follow October 7th event, and the reason for this lies in one sentence: the Islamic Republic of Iran, both in the True Promise I and II operations and during the 12-Day War, gave a decisive and crushing response to the aggressions by Israel and the United States in the clearest possible way. Even if the Islamic Republic of Iran were to lose its strategic military ties with Hezbollah, the Popular Mobilization Forces, Ansarallah, the Islamic Jihad Movement, Hamas, and other regional groups, Tehran’s influence and power would remain undiminished. In other words, we are witnessing the spread of the resistance ideology in the Islamic world, which is the catalyst for this expansion.

**Javan: Regional consortium is a solution to contain US influence in Zangezur**

In a note, Javan proposed solution to contain U.S. influence over the Zangezur corridor. It said: In the negotiations last March, Rubio, Trump’s Secretary of State, took initial steps to bring Azerbaijan closer to Armenia, and last Friday (August 8), Trump announced two peace agreements between the two Caucasian countries and a transit and trade agreement called the “Trump Route”. There is no mention of the corridor, the geopolitical or geographical disconnection between Iran and Armenia. The emphasis is on its commercial and transit nature between Armenia and the American side, or American companies that intend to develop it. The presence of America in this region under any pretext promises crisis, evil, and chaos. Therefore, in a rapid diplomatic movement with the main parties in the region, the issue of a transit and commercial consortium in the geography of Armenia with the presence of Iran, Russia and the countries of the region should be pursued

so that commercial goals can be achieved and the evil American, British and Zionist presence in the region can be prevented.

**Iran: Sustainable stability in the region is essential**

In an analysis, the Iran newspaper discussed Larijani’s visit to Baghdad and Lebanon. It wrote: Larijani’s visit is evaluated based on two main pillars: First, the commitment to fully implement the security agreement and complete the process of clearing the common borders from the presence and influence of terrorist groups; second, the declaration of explicit support for the Iraqi parliament’s resolution to expel American forces from the country. Iran believes that achieving sustainable stability requires regional unity and the simultaneous use of all legitimate tools, including diplomacy. The overall outcome of this trip can be analyzed at three levels: first, consolidating security and operational cooperation between Iran and Iraq to counter common threats. Second, aligning the positions of the two countries in regard to Syria and Lebanon, especially in the face of plans to disarm the resistance forces. Third, establishing comprehensive political and military coordination to prepare for potential conflict scenarios involving the Zionist regime and its allies.

**Arman-e-Emrooz: Washington’s most important goals from Zangezur agreement**

Arman-e-Melli spoke with Dr. Mohsen Jalilvand, a university professor and international relations analyst, to examine America’s goals from the Zangezur agreement. He said: Perhaps if one day Iran wanted to transit energy to Europe, the route that passes through the Zangezur corridor would be a route for Iran to export its oil and gas first to Eastern and then Western Europe. Of course, this situation does not exist in the current situation, and Iran is facing challenges in supplying its energy. The reality is that all countries in the region welcome Iran becoming weaker day by day. This agreement was also in this context. Any action and decision that causes Iran to become weaker will benefit them. The United States and Russia are also more interested in this situation. For this reason, they will follow this approach against Iran with the least cost. The main goal of such agreements is to isolate Iran in the region and the world.

## South Africa’s top general tours special unit in Tehran



TEHRAN – General Rudzani Maphwanya, Commander of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), visited Iran’s elite 65th Rapid Reaction Brigade of the Ground Forces (the NOHED Brigade) on Thursday, praising its capabilities during a tour in Tehran that underscored deepening military ties between the two nations.

Accompanied by Iranian commanders, Maphwanya observed field exercises and tactical demonstrations showcasing the unit’s operational readiness.

The Army’s website reported the general describing the brigade’s capabilities as “exceptional and unique,” adding that he expressed admiration for its “innovative methods” and humanitarian initiatives.

Drawing direct parallels to South Africa’s history, Maphwanya condemned the Israeli regime’s actions in Gaza: “Having endured apartheid, we recognize Israel’s atrocities as a new form of apartheid. In defending the world’s oppressed, we stand alongside you.” He further commended Iran’s armed forces for their “admi-

nable and peace-seeking humanitarian efforts.”

Brigadier General Karim Cheshk, Deputy Commander of the Iranian Army’s Ground Forces, reciprocated the solidarity during the visit.

He highlighted Iran’s cross-border disaster relief operations as examples of “humanitarian conduct beyond national boundaries” and stated: “The Islamic Republic sincerely welcomes military cooperation with friendly nations under international frameworks to advance global peace and stability.”

The 65th Brigade demonstration included live-fire drills and counter-terrorism simulations, underscoring Iran’s focus on rapid-response readiness.

The tour followed high-level talks between Maphwanya and Iranian military leaders during the South African commander’s Tehran visit, including Armed Forces Chief of Staff Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi and Army Chief Major General Amir Hatami.

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

# Larijani enters Lebanon to warm public welcome, vows unwavering Iranian support

TEHRAN – Ali Larijani, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), arrived in Beirut on Wednesday to a fervent public reception, with crowds lining routes to Rafic Hariri International Airport chanting “Labbaik ya Nasrallah” (At your service, O Nasrallah).

Welcomed by Iranian Ambassador Mojtaba Amani and representatives of key Lebanese political factions, Larijani’s visit underscores Tehran’s strategic engagement amid heightened regional tensions and U.S. pressure targeting Lebanese Resistance.

Addressing the Lebanese people upon arrival, Larijani emphasized the profound historical and cultural ties binding Iran and Lebanon.

“Iran and Lebanon, both possessing deep civilizations, have maintained close relations throughout centuries,” he stated.

“The cultural affinity between our nations has forged an emotional bond; when the Lebanese people suffer, the Iranian people feel their pain.”

He declared unequivocally, “Iran will always stand by the nation of Lebanon.”

Larijani’s itinerary featured intensive diplomacy with Lebanon’s highest leadership.

Meeting President Joseph Aoun at the Baabda Palace, the Iranian official reiterated Tehran’s commitment to Lebanon’s sovereignty.

“Iran has not the slightest desire to harm its friendly relations with the Lebanese government and people,” Larijani affirmed, according to Lebanon’s Al-Ahed. “We stand ready to assist Lebanon if requested by Beirut.”

President Aoun, in turn, thanked Iran for its condolences following the martyrdom of six Lebanese soldiers in Wadi Zbeqine and stressed cooperation based on “mutual sovereignty and respect,” according to the Lebanese newspaper.

He asserted that Israel’s threats target all Lebanese, not specific sects, and emphasized the state’s duty to protect all cit-



*Iran’s security chief Larijani (L) meeting Lebanese President Aoun in Beirut on August 13, 2025.*

izens.

Aoun requested that Larijani convey his greetings and wishes for success to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Later, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri hosted Larijani, where the SNSC Secretary underscored Iran’s priorities: “Lebanon’s unity and its future progress and victory matter deeply to us.”

At a press conference following his meeting with Berri, Larijani delivered a pointed message: “Be careful that Israel does not impose on you through other means what it could not achieve through war.”

They want to use propaganda to reverse the roles of friend and enemy.”

He also described the Lebanese Resistance as a “national asset.” “Your enemy is Israel, which attacked you, and your friend is the one who resisted Israel,” Larijani said.

He urged internal Lebanese dialogue to resolve differences, rejecting external dictates by Washington: “The one interfering is the entity giving you plans and timetables from thousands of kilometers away.”

Larijani also met Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, reinforcing the consistent diplomatic outreach.

A poignant moment came when Larijani paid respects at the mausoleum of Hezbollah’s martyred Secretary-General, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

Hailing Nasrallah as a “source

of dignity for the entire Muslim world” and “pride of Islam,” Larijani credited him for Hezbollah’s strength and strategic maturity.

“We may have lost him, but his sons, raised in his school of thought, live on,” he addressed Lebanese youth.

The visit culminated in a meeting with Hezbollah’s current Secretary-General, Sheikh Naim Qassem.

Although no readouts were published, Larijani’s message to Hezbollah was made clear in his speech, when he declared: “We have said that we will always stand by your side and support you,” adding, “Iran does not interfere in the affairs of countries, but we will never abandon our support for the resistance front.”

In a speech on Friday, Hezbollah’s leader said it was important to “thank the Islamic Republic of Iran, which supported us by all means and offered martyrs alongside us — such as [martyred Major General] Hajj Qassem [Soleimani] — solely for the sake of supporting the truth.”

Larijani’s trip occurs against a backdrop of intense U.S. and Israeli efforts to disarm Hezbollah — a move overwhelmingly rejected by the Lebanese populace, as recent polls confirm the majority see Hezbollah’s weapons as essential for national defense against Israeli aggression.

The Lebanese cabinet’s recent endorsement of a U.S. proposal for disarmament was condemned by Hezbollah as a “grave

sin” serving Israeli interests.

Social media campaigns like the trending hashtag #Iran\_Is\_Support\_Not\_Supervisor underscored popular Lebanese rejection of Western narratives painting Iran’s role as interference, instead affirming solidarity. This sentiment was visibly mirrored in the crowds greeting Larijani.

At the press conference in Beirut, Larijani stated that Iran “does not interfere in Lebanon’s internal affairs” and believes “the Lebanese government should hold dialogue with its various sects.”

He added that whatever outcome is reached, Iran will accept it, and “if they ask Iran for support, Iran will provide it.”

Many contend that disarming the resistance would leave Lebanon vulnerable to Israeli expansionism, particularly in light of Tel Aviv’s continued occupation of the Shebaa Farms and, according to Lebanese authorities, more than 3,700 violations of the November 2024 ceasefire agreement.

Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon Mojtaba Amani declared the visit a resounding success, highlighting Larijani’s “good, friendly, and frank” meetings with leaders across Lebanon’s diverse sects — Shia, Sunni, Christian, Druze, and Alawite.

These engagements, Amani stated, played a “key role in clarifying ambiguities” about Iran’s positions.

He expressed gratitude for the Lebanese people’s “enthusiastic welcome and sincere companionship,” evident from the airport arrival to the homage at Martyr Nasrallah’s mausoleum.

Ali Al-Moqdad, a Lebanese MP, told Russian media that the visit demonstrated Iran’s desire for “friendly relations with all Lebanese, not just one specific group,” calling it a “spark of hope,” affirming Lebanon’s true allies.

Larijani departed Beirut on Thursday, having solidified Iran’s message: unwavering support for Lebanese sovereignty, unity, and the right to resist occupation.

## Tehran’s message delivered via Larijani: Resistance is not alone!



**By Sondoss Al Asaad**

Beirut – The visit of Ali Larijani, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, to Beirut coincided with the redrawing of new maps for West Asia, as announced by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Netanyahu spoke of establishing the Talmudic project of “Greater Israel” so that the “chosen people” could return to their alleged “Promised Land.”

Israel’s PM promised his colonial settlers that they would not witness the “third destruction,” claiming that their “state,” which includes all of Palestine and large parts of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt, would last for many years.

Amidst these illegal and unprecedented Israeli threats, Larijani visited Baghdad and Beirut to confirm Iran’s principled position, which is that the country will not falter in supporting the Axis of Resistance.

The Iranian security chief made this position clear during the meetings he held with Lebanese officials.

Larijani stressed during his interactions in Lebanon that Iran will help the region stand and fight against Israel’s new occupation plans supported by Washington, plan many believe that once realize, would also encourage Israel to resume aggression against Iran.

Iran’s envoy emphasized Iran’s absolute

support for all Resistance movements in the region and that it would not allow Lebanon to fall into the “Abrahamic” normalization trap.

Larijani stressed that the Resistance is a strategic force in the region, warning that Washington aims to turn Lebanon into a battleground for civil conflict against Hezbollah by leveraging U.S. envoy Thomas Barrack.

Reports indicate that Riyadh and Washington have been intensely mobilizing to gather as much information as possible about Larijani’s discussions with Lebanese officials regarding Hezbollah. He emphasized that the Resistance would not be left vulnerable to isolation or attack.

### Larijani’s visit came amid new concerns over Israeli expansionism and growing pressure on Hezbollah

Thus, Larijani’s visit served as a warning to those who entertain illusions about dismantling the Resistance.

His stance was echoed by Sayyed Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, leader of Yemen’s Ansarullah movement, who affirmed that “Lebanon’s best interest lies with the Resistance project, which has proven successful over 40 years. It is crucial for Lebanon that the Resistance receives both official and popular backing, rather than being targeted by factions loyal to the Israeli enemy.”

Al-Houthi noted that “Lebanon’s official policies are subservient to Israel and follow its directives.”

He further criticized the Lebanese government’s double standards in dealing with foreign envoys: “What’s striking is the Lebanese government’s hypersensitivity to expressions of solidarity with Lebanon.

It accuses those who support the country militarily and politically of interference, responding with bold defiance — yet it displays humiliating submission in the face of Israeli aggression and crimes.”

He also condemned anti-Resistance factions, stating: “Some Lebanese officials disgrace themselves by embracing Israeli logic and surrendering to its demands, only to posture as sovereign when confronted with solidarity for their own nation.”

Addressing them directly, he said: “You who submit to Israeli dictates and enforce them against your own people — you are not sovereign.”

Al-Houthi added: “The foolish, the ungrateful, and the traitors mislead the people by framing the issue as the weapons of the nation’s free and honorable citizens. True sovereignty lies with those who defend the homeland and resist the aggressor.”

Yemen’s stance reinforced Larijani’s message that the Lebanese, like the people of Palestine, will not be abandoned.

The Iranian-Yemeni position also signals potential material support if circumstances demand it.

Such principled stances are unsurprising—Tehran and Sana’a have never conspired like many Arab and Islamic regimes that remain silent or even complicit in the face of Israeli expansionism. These regimes should know that Israel’s Talmudic hegemonic ambitions will show them no mercy and ultimately spare none of them!



# Foreign interventions in region lead to instability, VP tells Russian official

From Page 1 ▶ “All countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia can coexist in peace, stability, and security without foreign interference,” he stated.

Aref aligned Iran's position with Russia's opposition to US unilateralism, saying regional states are fully capable of resolving their own challenges. He welcomed any initiative aimed at easing tensions and promoting cooperation among neighbors.

On the nuclear issue, Aref said Iran has consistently sought dialogue and confidence-building regarding its peaceful program, but accused Western states of politicizing the matter. He dismissed threats by Britain, France, and Germany to trigger the UN “snapback” mechanism, saying they have no legal right to do so and are effectively endorsing Washington’s “unprincipled” stance in the talks.

The Russian prime minister, for his part, emphasized that trade and economic cooperation between Moscow and Tehran has significantly increased in recent years.

**‘Treaty between Armenia, Azerbaijan a step toward consolidating peace in Caucasus’**

Addressing the prime ministers of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on Friday in the Kyrgyz resort city of Cholpon-Ata, Aref welcomed the August 8 peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, saying it was a step toward consolidating peace and stability in the Caucasus.



*Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (L) shakes hands with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on the sidelines of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Prime Ministers' Summit in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, on August 15, 2025.*

“Iran continues to emphasize solidarity and the preservation of the territorial integrity of countries, and believes that outside interventions will not bring lasting security to the region,” he said.

**‘US-Israeli aggression took place amid UN Security Council's silence’**

Aref condemned the United Nations Security Council for failing to act in response to the joint US-Israeli assault on Iranian territory in June, describing it as a blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter. He praised the bloc’s “constructive and encouraging” positions during what he called the 12-day imposed war against the Islamic Republic.

“This was while we witnessed the inaction of the United Nations Security Council regarding the flagrant

violation of international law and the UN Charter by the Zionist regime and the United States,” Aref said.

He denounced the attack as a grave breach of international norms, citing the assault on Iran’s peaceful nuclear facilities, targeted killings of civilians, and “illegal and criminal operations” against military personnel beyond their mission areas, as well as the assassination of university professors. “The bloodshed of women, children, and ordinary citizens further revealed the Zionist regime’s objective of spreading insecurity in the region,” he added.

On June 13, the Israeli regime—backed by the United States—launched an unprovoked act of aggression, assassinating senior military commanders and nuclear scientists of Iran, and killing hundreds of civilians. The United States

also bombed three Iranian nuclear sites in what Aref called a “grave violation” of international law.

In retaliation, Iran’s Armed Forces struck strategic military and industrial sites across the occupied territories and targeted the Al-Udeid air base in Qatar, the largest American military installation in West Asia. Taken by surprise, Tel Aviv halted its operations on June 24 and accepted a unilateral US-brokered ceasefire.

The assault took place against the backdrop of Israel’s war on Gaza, which since October 2023 has killed thousands of Palestinians—many of them women and children.

**‘Israeli actions in Gaza are crimes against humanity and a continuation of genocide’**

The vice president also highlighted the humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip, accusing Israel of committing crimes against humanity through its ongoing war.

“The world is currently witnessing the actions of the Zionist regime in imposing famine and starvation on the oppressed people of Gaza, and even its decision to fully occupy it,” Aref said. “This is a clear example of a crime against humanity and a continuation of genocide.”

Reaffirming Iran’s firm opposition to such acts, he urged all governments to meet their “shared and collective responsibility” to halt the violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes, and crimes against humanity being committed in Gaza.

## Iran coordinating with China, Russia to block ‘snapback’ sanctions: Araghchi



*Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) is seen in an interview with national television in the Iraqi city of Karbala on August 14, 2025.*

From Page 1 ▶ The snapback provision—embedded in UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA)—allows for the automatic restoration of sanctions lifted under the agreement.

“When the United States unilaterally left the JCPOA in 2018 and reimposed sanctions, we began reducing our nuclear commitments in phases until we returned to pre-agreement conditions,” Araghchi said. He noted that Iran’s nuclear infrastructure was preserved during the JCPOA years, enabling enrichment to 20% and later 60% “in less than 24 hours” once the decision was made.

Araghchi stressed that the legal authority of Britain, France, and Germany to trigger snapback is “highly questionable” under international law, arguing that their recent call for “zero enrichment” violates the JCPOA’s terms, which permit enrichment up to 3.67%. “By rejecting the deal’s framework,

they forfeit the right to use its provisions,” he said.

Tehran has laid out its position in a detailed letter to the UN Security Council, asserting that the three European states are no longer legitimate JCPOA participants. This position is backed by China and Russia, both of which have veto power at the Security Council and have repeatedly opposed Western use of the snapback clause.

“We have held repeated technical and legal discussions with China and Russia over the years,” Araghchi said. “Their support is essential in this legal and political battle.”

Resolution 2231’s snapback clause will automatically expire on October 18, 2025. “Europeans have until the end of October,” Araghchi said. “After that, the mechanism disappears.”

Economically, Araghchi said Iran has little to no fears over the sanctions’ potential impact, noting existing unilateral US measures are “much broader” than what snap-

back would impose. “UN sanctions do not include oil or banking embargoes; they mainly target specific individuals and companies,” he said. “The real damage would be political—reimposing the arms embargo and classifying Iran as a ‘threat to international peace and security’ under Chapter VII.”

**‘IAEA cooperation must be redefined after attacks on nuclear facilities’**

The foreign minister said Iran’s cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) must be based on a new framework after recent attacks on its nuclear facilities. “The IAEA must first explain what the inspection protocol is for a bombed nuclear site. There is no precedent,” he said, citing hazards from unexploded ordnance and radiation. Under a parliamentary law, any future inspections must be approved by the Supreme National Security Council. Araghchi confirmed that preliminary talks with an IAEA delegation have taken place, with an entire day spent on discussions involving the Foreign Ministry and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. “Initial ideas were exchanged and passed to the IAEA for review. It’s not a bad start, but reaching an agreement will take time,” he said.

**Arbaeen reflections: unity and resistance after 12-day war**

Araghchi’s comments also touched on national resilience following the June 13 US-Israeli aggression against Iran, which targeted military and nuclear sites

and killed senior officials, nuclear scientists, and civilians. In response, Iran launched precision missile strikes on Israeli military and industrial infrastructure and on a US base in Qatar. Twelve days later, the Israeli regime accepted a unilateral ceasefire proposed by Washington.

Speaking from Karbala during the annual Arbaeen pilgrimage—one of the largest peaceful gatherings in the world—Araghchi said the steadfastness of the Iranian people “infuriated our enemies.” He dismissed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s claim about solving Iran’s water problems by turning sewage into drinking water as “laughable,” pointing to the severe water crisis in Gaza.

He said Iraqis at Arbaeen expressed pride in Iran’s missile response, describing the procession as a “display of Shia strength” and noting that the ethos of Ashura had inspired Iran’s resistance during the war. “The martyrdom of a commander does not halt the movement—it strengthens it,” he said.

Addressing speculation about another war, Araghchi said he currently sees no signs of imminent conflict, though readiness remains essential. “Our enemies try to impose the psychological effects of war without fighting. We must be alert to such tactics,” he said.

“With nearly 40 years in international affairs, I do not believe war is close. But the Armed Forces must always be prepared—preparedness is the best deterrent.”

that attempts to disarm the Resistance may disrupt regional stability, presenting a dilemma for the U. S. and Israel: adjust their approach or confront a steadfast adversary.

**A crucial visit to Iraq and Lebanon**

Larijani’s recent visits to Iraq and Lebanon underscore Iran’s strategic solidarity with regional Resistance movements. His presence during the Arabeen of Imam Hussein (AS) highlighted parallels between the historical martyrdom of the Prophet’s grandson and the current atrocities in Gaza, reinforcing Iran’s ideological stance against oppression.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

## Iran guard Vahedi feels amazing for coming back against Chinese Taipei

TEHRAN – Sina Vahedi couldn’t be any prouder after Iran pulled off a comeback of epic proportions to disappoint Chinese Taipei and bring itself to the FIBA Asia Cup 2025 Semi-Finals, Wednesday night.

Team Melli appeared to be on the losing end of a massive upset when its East Asian counterpart led by as many as 21 points, but the crew showed steely resolve in the second half and went on to complete the rally.

It is, by far, the biggest comeback by any team in this year’s competition.

“That was a big comeback, you know,” he reflected after the 78-75 win at the King Abdullah Sports Hall. “We were down like 20 points in the first half. I’m proud of everybody – coaches, players. We deserved that.”

Vahedi himself was crucial in the thrilling victory after punching in 21 points, and he himself was composure personified as the crafty playmaker overcame an early adversity to be of help for the three-time champions.

“Man, I don’t know what to say about that because I’m so mad about it. I was on the bench for the whole first half,” recalled the 24-year-old, who had already accumulated his average fouls per game in that one stretch.

He went on to pour 19 points in the second half, serving as the squad’s stabilizing presence – as always – most especially in the dying seconds when he conspired with Mohammad Amini for the finishing blows.

“I was patient on the bench, thinking about defense, offense, everything. And in the second half, we won the game. I’m so happy about that,” expressed Vahedi, who never incurred a foul since coming back.

Vahedi, though, chose to stay in the moment and bask in their accomplishment.

“I’m so proud of everybody. I’m just so happy about that,” he said, smiling. “I feel amazing.”

## Iran to Face Australia in 2025 FIBA Asia Cup SF

TEHRAN – Defending champion Australia will face determined Team Melli in a high-stakes Jeddah showdown in the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup semifinals on Saturday.

By the end of Saturday night, only one will still have a shot at the FIBA Asia Cup 2025 title.

Australia and Iran have taken different routes to get here. The Boomers have been all business, sweeping Group A and cruising past the Philippines in the Quarter-Finals.

Their average winning margin of 25.3 points per game tells the story of a team barely tested, with maybe just one bad half of basketball in the entire tournament.

Iran’s road, however, has been bumpier but no less remarkable. The Group B winner has twice stared down late deficits, first against Japan in the Group Phase, then in the Quarter-Finals against Chinese Taipei, when it came from 21 points down to steal a win.

With a younger, retooled core missing some of Team Melli’s iconic veterans, they arrive in the last four undefeated. However, as seasoned veteran Arsalan Kazemi termed themselves during the course of the competition, “We are the underdogs.”

These two have clashed on the international stage plenty, with Iran even securing a victory over Australia in a FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 Asian Qualifiers meeting.

However, they have only once faced each other at the FIBA Asia Cup, which was a 79-56 Boomers win in the 2017 Final.

For Iran, this is a chance to gain a measure of payback and reach the Final for the first time since that edition. For Australia, it’s about keeping their perfect all-time FIBA Asia Cup record intact and moving one win away from a third straight crown.

With unbeaten records, contrasting styles and a place in the championship game at stake, Saturday’s clash has all the ingredients of a Jeddah classic.

## Iranian teams discover fate at 2025/26 ACL Two

TEHRAN – The stage is set for the AFC Champions League Two 2025-26 following the conclusion of the Group Stage Draw in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Friday.

The 32 teams – 16 each from the East and West Regions – were divided into eight groups, with the competition to kick off on September 16.

The Group Stage is scheduled to conclude on December 24, 2025 before moving into the Round of 16 between February 10-19, 2026. The Quarter-finals and Semi-finals are set for March 3-12 and April 7-15 respectively, with the Final pencilled in for May 16, 2026.

Draw Result

Group A: Al Wasl FC (UAE), Esteghlal FC (IRN), Al Muharraq SC (BHR), Al Wehdat (JOR)

Group B: Al Ahli SC (QAT), PFC Andijon (UZB), FC Arkadag (TKM), Al Khaldiya SC (BHR)

Group C: Sepahan SC (IRN), Al Hussein (JOR), Mohun Bagan Super Giant (IND), Ahal FC (TKM)

Group D: Al Nassr Club (KSA), Al Zawraa SC (IRQ), FC Istiklol (TJK), FC Goa (IND)

Group E: Beijing FC (CHN), Macarthur FC (AUS), Tai Po FC (HKG), Cong An Ha Noi FC (VIE)

Group F: Gamba Osaka (JPN), Nam Dinh FC (VIE), Ratchaburi FC (THA), Eastern FC (HKG)

Group G: Bangkok United (THA), Selangor FC (MAS), Lion City Sailors FC (SGP), Persib Bandung (IDN)

Group H: FC Pohang Steelers (KOR), BG Pathum United (THA), Kaya FC-Iloilo (PHI), Tampines Rovers FC (SGP)

## Tractor learn rivals in 2025/26 ACL Elite

TEHRAN – Tractor football team discovered their opponents in the 2025/26 AFC Champions League Elite.

The draw for the Elite ACL league stage was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Friday.

A total of 24 teams (12 from the East and 12 from the West) will participate in the league stage. The competition will start on Sept. 15 and will last until April 25 of next year.

Tractor will have to battle Qatar’s Al Sadd SC, champions in 2011, Al Shorta (IRQ), Sharjah (UAE), Al Duhail (QAT), Shabab Al Ahli (UAE), Nasaf (UZB), Al Gharafa (QAT) and Al Wahda (UAE), as they look to better last season’s quarter-final finish.

The 2025/26 AFC Champions League Elite (ACL Elite) is the 44th edition of Asia’s premier club football tournament, organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), and the second under the AFC Champions League Elite title.

The finals will be played in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The tournament winners will qualify for the 2026 FIFA Intercontinental Cup and 2029 FIFA Club World Cup. Additionally, the winners will enter the league stage of the 2026/27 AFC Champions League Elite, if they have not already qualified through domestic performance. Saudi Arabia’s Al Ahli are the defending champions.

## Andrew Parsons praises Iran’s NPC achievements

TEHRAN – Iran NPC President Ghafour Kargari met with International Paralympic Committee (IPC) President Andrew Parsons on 12 August during the APC 2025 Conference and General Assembly in Astana.

In a cordial exchange, Parsons commended Iran’s progress in Para sports, saying: “Iran’s Paralympic success is no coincidence. These achievements are the result of precise planning and strong leadership. I congratulate you on your recent accomplishment — being recognized as the world’s leading nation in 2025 for developing women’s Para sports and winning the IPC’s International Women’s Day Recognition Award. This is a great honor for Iran.”

Kargari shared updates on the Iran NPC’s initiatives and outlined the country’s perspectives, priorities, and challenges in developing Paralympic sport.

## Larijani’s visit puts America and Israel in their place

By Ahmed Moustafa, Director of The Asia Centre for Studies and Translation

CAIRO – Dr. Ali Larijani’s visit to Iraq and Lebanon as Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council is significant for regional politics, especially following Israel’s recent military setbacks against Iran.

Iran is strengthening its ties with key groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon and various militias in Iraq, showing resistance to U. S. and Israeli demands to reduce these groups’ power. Iran has historically used this influence to counter Western control, with Hezbollah’s large rocket arsenal acting as a deterrent against Israeli attacks.

Larijani’s diplomatic efforts highlight Iran’s commitment to building a unified front, using Iraq’s political systems and Lebanon’s Resistance groups to resist disarmament pressures.

Moreover, Larijani’s interactions in Baghdad and Beirut illustrate Iran’s long-term plan to maintain a unified front against U. S. and Israeli influence, particularly after Israel’s recent operational failures. The visit comes at a time when Western efforts aim to weaken the Iran-allied groups through initiatives like integrating Iraqi militias or enforcing UN resolutions. However, Iran’s support for these groups, ensures their continued resilience. Larijani’s trip indicates



# When water thieves turn to water diplomacy

## Iranian backlash turns Netanyahu's water pitch into political misfire

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent offer to help Iran alleviate its escalating water crisis, contingent on the overthrow of the regime, has ignited widespread derision and anger across Iranian social media platforms like X.

This complex response reflects deep-rooted mistrust, historical grievances, and national pride amid a tumultuous geopolitical backdrop. Netanyahu's message - which linked Iran's water scarcity to its political leadership and promised cutting-edge Israeli expertise in water recycling and desalination once Iran is "free" - was seen almost universally by Iranian users as hypocritical and manipulative.

Users highlighted that Netanyahu himself is accused of policies leading to water deprivation in Palestinian territories, especially Gaza, where millions suffer severe shortages under Israeli occupation.

Comments mocked his call by pointing out that Israel itself faces serious drought and water management problems, making his offer appear insincere. Several pointed to Iran's ancient water management heritage—thousands of years of adapting to arid climates through qanats and traditional innovations.

They rejected Netanyahu's implicit suggestion that Iranians are helpless, proudly asserting their resilience and ability to manage water scarcity without foreign interference. This deep cultural pride increasingly melds with a rejection of perceived external meddling.

Critics also underscored Netanyahu's history of broken promises, especially his past declarations of "freedom" for Gaza, which remains devastated, indicating that his pledges mask deeper strategic objectives rather than genuine humanitarian concern.

Iranian social media voices condemned the offer as recycled psychological warfare, with phrases and scenarios "reused from eight years ago" aimed at fomenting unrest in Iran, as part of a calculated campaign for regime change. The appeal was widely seen as a political gambit rather than aid: Netanyahu's message was "not a call for help" but a demand wrapped in conditional assistance.

Many Iranians expressed anger at the audacity of a figure accused of war crimes declaring support while Israel remains implicated in Palestinian suffering and environmental exploitation. Further amplifying skepticism were reports revealing severe water crises inside Israel itself, with official audits critiquing Israel's water mismanagement, undermining Netanyahu's credibility as a responsible caretaker of water resources.

In this light, Netanyahu's message is viewed less as a humanitarian outreach and more as a continuation of long-standing antagonism cloaked in opportunistic rhetoric. Iranian social media reactions vividly illustrate the rejection of this narrative, reinforcing a national identity rooted in historical endurance, sovereignty, and defiance against calculated external pressure. The episode highlights how water—a vital resource—is deeply entwined with politics, history, and identity in the fraught Israel-Iran relationship.

## Tehran slams Netanyahu's water pitch as political provocation

Iranian officials have strongly repudiated Benjamin Netanyahu's recent call urging Iranians to protest against the Islamic Republic over shortages of electricity and water. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian dismissed Netanyahu's offer of assistance to address the water crisis as a mere "mirage," implying it is deceptive and unrealistic.

Similarly, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, condemned the Israeli leader's comments, accusing Netanyahu of trying to deceive the Iranian public with "a glass of treated sewage water."

In a forceful statement on social media, Qalibaf drew a stark parallel between the Israeli sabotage of Tehran's water supply infrastructure and the ongoing Israeli blockade and water deprivation inflicted on Palestinians in Gaza.

He called Israel the "world's number one water thief," asserting that thirst has been weaponized as a tool of genocide against Palestinians, according to multiple international organizations.

Further, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi branded Netanyahu and his administration as foolish and repetitive in their tactics, emphasizing that the Iranian people have demonstrated resilience and will not fall prey to such provocations. Araghchi echoed this sentiment, condemning Israel's crimes in Gaza and insisting that Iran possesses the scientific expertise and capability to resolve its water issues internally if economic sanctions are lifted.

The officials emphasized that Iranians will not be swayed by Netanyahu's inflammatory remarks, viewing them as orchestrated political maneuvers rather than genuine offers of help.

Their responses underscore Tehran's rejection of external interference and highlight Iran's commitment to self-sufficiency amid ongoing crises.

## Expert says Israel's water policy is marked by security-driven structure

Hojjat Mianabadi, a researcher specializing in water diplomacy, offers a critical perspective on water governance in the occupied territories, highlighting its deeply ideological and militarized nature. According to him, Israel is among the few regions worldwide where water management is heavily influenced by Zionist ideology.

In this context, water is not merely a natural resource but a crucial tool to realize Zionist goals such as "returning to the land" and "making the desert bloom."

Despite limited data transparency due to military control, estimates show that Israel annually extracts around 2.5 billion cubic meters of water, of which approximately 60% is allocated to agriculture. Drinking water accounts for about 400 million cubic meters, with more than 85% derived from Mediterranean desalination plants—an approach that ironically increases Israel's water security vulnerability.

Scientific reports suggest that Israel's water security primarily hinges on the seizure of shared water resources rather than technological innovation. Over the past 60 years, more than 37 water-related conflicts have emerged globally, with over 30 involving Israel and its neighbors.

Significantly, water use disparities between settlers and Palestinians are stark: official figures show Israelis consume 2.4 billion cubic meters annually versus 300 million cubic meters by Palestinians—a 7:1 ratio. Independent experts argue this gap is understated, estimating actual ratios from 9:1 up to 12:1.

Mianabadi concludes that Israel's proclaimed water security is largely a narrative that conceals the militarized appropriation of water resources, contradicting claims of technological superiority.

## Israel's water policy and occupied Palestinian territories

Israel's handling of water in the occupied Palestinian territories—namely the West Bank and Gaza—has been shaped by a complex interplay of control, disparity, and environmental stress. The longstanding restrictions and policies employed by Israel not only create a stark imbalance in water access but also challenge the country's claims of being able to "solve" water crises elsewhere.

Since the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel has exercised tight control over major shared water sources. The Mountain Aquifer, which lies beneath both Israel and the West Bank, serves as a crucial source of freshwater for Palestinians. However, Israel regulates the extraction quotas, granting itself a significantly larger share while capping Palestinian access. This unequal allocation has led to persistent water shortages for millions of Palestinians.

Numerous reports from the United Nations and NGOs have documented repeated instances where Israeli authorities have destroyed Palestinian wells, cisterns, and pipelines deemed "unauthorized." Such actions are often justified under security or permit laws, but in practice, they serve to deepen Palestinian dependence on water purchased from Israel, even in agricultural villages and communities desperately needing self-sufficiency. In Gaza, the situation is further aggravated by the Israeli-Egyptian blockade, which hampers the import of essential materials for water purification and infrastructure repair. As a result, the majority of Gaza's 2 million residents do not have consistent access to safe drinking water.

The disparity in water consumption is notable. While Israeli settlements in the West Bank enjoy continuous water supply—averaging three to four times the per capita daily usage of neighboring Palestinian areas—many Palestinian towns and villages experience rationing and periodic cutoffs, especially during the hot, dry summer months. These limitations are compounded by restrictions on the development of new wells or infrastructure—permits that are rarely granted to Palestinians but widely available to Israeli settlements.

It is also critical to note that Israel's vaunted water technology—from desalination plants to wastewater recycling—was born of necessity. The country faces its own acute water stress due to chronic droughts and limited natural resources. Desalination now provides roughly two-thirds of Israel's domestic water supply, a technology Israel touts globally with pride but which remains prohibitively expensive and largely inaccessible to Palestinians due to the occupation and blockade policies.

Israel's history of water management with respect to the Palestinian territories exemplifies a policy of control and inequity. The systemic restrictions, infrastructural destruction, and severe limitations on Palestinian access serve not only as a humanitarian issue but as a fundamental obstacle to peace and sustainable development in the region.

## The human cost of Gaza water collapse

Since the Israeli attack on Gaza on October 7, 2023, the water situation has reached catastrophic levels, compounded by Israel's subsequent military operations and blockade.

On October 9, 2023, Israel imposed a total siege on Gaza that included cutting off the three pipelines supplying 13% of Gaza's water. By mid-December 2023, Gaza residents faced an average of just 3 liters of water per person per day—half of which was unsafe for drinking.

This is drastically below the World Health Organization's minimum standards. The blockade significantly limited the fuel needed for the operational water treatment plants and pumping stations, fundamentally crippling the water infrastructure. Bombing caused damage to at least seven water facilities, including reservoirs, in Gaza City, Jabalia, and Rafah. By late October 2023, about 55% of the water infrastructure was in need of repair or rehabilitation. Numerous shutdown desalination plants compounded the crisis.

The ongoing blockade and attacks destroyed sanitation facilities, leading to the use of contaminated water and heightened risk of waterborne diseases. Efforts to provide humanitarian aid have been grossly insufficient, with limited water, food, and medical supplies allowed into Gaza. The power plant ran out of fuel by October 11, 2023, resulting in a complete loss of electricity, and shutting down critical water supply systems. Despite international calls for humanitarian access, water delivery remains severely constrained.

By early 2024 and continuing into 2025, Gaza's water crisis persists as a man-made disaster. The destruction of infrastructure combined with the blockade has created an unprecedented public health emergency.



# Arbaeen: A record-breaking march of devotion and unity

By staff writer

TEHRAN — In a majestic and awe-inspiring display of faith, unity, and devotion, millions of pilgrims from every corner of the globe gathered in the holy Iraqi city of Karbala to commemorate Arba'een — the fortieth day after the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Shia Imam and the revered grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The scale of this annual pilgrimage is unmatched, with participants from diverse nationalities, cultures, and languages, walk side by side with a single purpose: to honor the sacrifice of Imam Hussein, who in 680 AD stood against tyranny and oppression in the Battle of Karbala.

His refusal to pledge allegiance to the unjust Umayyad ruler Yazid cost him and his 72 loyal compan-



People from around the world fill the courtyards at the gravesites of Imam Hussein(AS) and his brother Abbas in Karbala — the final destination of the Arbaeen pilgrimage

devotion and in their rejection of injustice.

One of the most striking features of Arbaeen is the generosity and hospitality that greet pil-

ing Arbaeen the largest peaceful gathering on Earth.

For those unable to travel to Karbala, symbolic Arbaeen marches take place across hundreds of cities worldwide.

In Iran, the campaign “Those Left Behind from Arbaeen” organized massive processions in every province. In Tehran, tens of thousands walked the 13-kilometer route from Imam Hussein Square (downtown Tehran) to the shrine of Shah Abdol-Azim Hasani in Rey (south Tehran), served by over 2,000 moukbes along the way.

Similar events were held in Lebanon, Pakistan, India, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and North America, allowing participants to connect spiritually to Karbala’s message. While Arba’een is deep-



For those unable to travel to Karbala, symbolic Arbaeen marches are held in certain cities across the world. In Iran, the “Those Left Behind from Arbaeen” campaign organized processions in every province.

ions their lives, but it preserved the principles of justice, dignity, and truth for generations to come.

For days and weeks leading up to Arba’een, the roads to Karbala transform into rivers of humanity, stretching from Iraq’s borders and beyond.

Pilgrims travel on foot from cities inside Iraq, as well as from neighboring countries including Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some journey from even farther afield — from Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Australia — driven by love for Imam Hussein’s message.

The sight is breathtaking: endless lines of men, women, and children of all ages walking shoulder to shoulder, their steps in unison as they chant elegies, recite prayers, and carry flags bearing the name of Hussein.

Despite the vast differences in nationality, culture, and language, the pilgrims are united in their

grims along the way. Thousands of moukbes — volunteer-run service stations — line the routes leading to Karbala.

Families, tribes, and charitable groups set up tents and kitchens, offering everything from fresh bread and hot meals to cold water, fruit, and tea. Others provide medical care, rest areas, blankets, massages for tired feet, and even shoe repair.

For many of these volunteers, serving pilgrims is a deeply spiritual act — a way to emulate the compassion and selflessness of Imam Hussein himself. Some save money all year to fund their moukeb, seeing it as the highest form of charity.

According to official figures, over five million pilgrims crossed into Iraq from Iran in the past weeks alone. In total, tens of millions are estimated to have participated worldwide, mak-



In a preliminary toll, Iraq’s Interior Ministry said at least “4.1 million foreign pilgrims, representing 140 different nationalities participated in the Arbaeen pilgrimage.”

ly rooted in Shia tradition, the pilgrimage is far from exclusive. Sunnis, Christians, Yazidis, and people of other faiths are often seen walking alongside Shia Muslims, united by the universal values Imam Hussein stood for.

His call for justice, moral integ-

ity, and defense of the oppressed resonates across religious and cultural boundaries.

This unity is not symbolic alone; it is lively. Pilgrims share food, shelter, and stories along the journey. Barriers of nationality, social class, and language dissolve in the shared rhythm of footsteps toward the shrine of Hussein.

For many pilgrims, the journey to Karbala is a personal turning point. The physical hardships — long distances, hot days, and crowded roads — are embraced as opportunities for spiritual cleansing and self-discipline.

Pilgrims describe Arba’een as a renewal of their moral compass, a reaffirmation of their commitment to justice and compassion in daily life.

The emotional impact is profound. As pilgrims enter Karbala and catch sight of the golden dome of Imam Hussein’s shrine, many are moved to tears.

The air is filled with heartfelt cries of “Labayka Ya Hussein” — “At your service, O Hussein” — a declaration of loyalty that has echoed for fourteen centuries.

Arba’een is not merely a remembrance of a historical event; it is a living, breathing movement. It stands as a reminder that the struggle for justice is a timeless duty, and that unity in the face of oppression can be a powerful force for change.

From the narrow alleyways of

## A sociopolitical symbol of resistance



By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – For many outside the region, Arbaeen is unfamiliar. It often surfaces unexpectedly while scrolling through headlines about West Asia accompanied by striking images of massive crowds walking toward Iraqi cities.

These scenes, filled with people offering free food, water, medical aid, and places to rest, evoke a mix of amazement, curiosity, and sometimes skepticism.

To some, the scale and spirit appear almost unbelievable. Yet behind this enormous mobilization lies a powerful social and political reality.

Arbaeen, which means “forty” in Arabic, marks the fortieth day after Ashura, the day Imam Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, was martyred in the Battle of Karbala over 1,400 years ago.

The pilgrimage commemorates the return of the battle’s survivors, especially the women and children of Hussein’s family, to Karbala to mourn. Their return was both a ritual of grief and a defiant act, ensuring the truth of Karbala would not be forgotten.

Throughout history, tyrants tried to suppress this pilgrimage. During the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, pilgrims were forced to go underground, taking hidden forest routes to avoid persecution.

Under Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist regime, the Arbaeen pilgrimage was violently suppressed, pilgrims were arrested, tortured, and killed. Yet, many continued to make the journey in secret.

Following the fall of Saddam in 2003, Arbaeen experienced a dramatic revival. From two to three million pilgrims in the early years, the numbers quickly grew. By 2013, official Iraqi figures recorded 1.3 million foreign pilgrims among the attendees.

In 2014, an estimated 20 million people participated, making Arbaeen the largest annual gathering on earth, surpassing even the Hajj, which is obligatory but smaller in scale, and second only to the Hindu Kumbh Mela, held once every three years.

Unlike the Hajj, Arbaeen is entirely voluntary. Yet millions walk great distances to Karbala, with the most popular route stretching about 80 kilometers from Najaf. The journey takes about three days on foot. Along the way, volunteers provide food, shelter, and medical care, all free of charge. This generosity is a hallmark of Arbaeen and a profound display of communal solidarity.

Despite the pilgrimage’s revival and unprecedented growth, it continues to face censorship, particularly from imperialist powers and mainstream media, which often distort or ignore its significance.

Some coverage frames Arbaeen as extremist or politically subversive, revealing an effort to undermine what has become a powerful symbol of unity, identity, and resistance for Muslims around the world.

Arbaeen is more than a religious ritual, it is a method of processing grief and injustice. Anthropologists have long observed how collective rituals transmit values, build solidarity, and resist oppression. Arbaeen exemplifies this.

It speaks to the perseverance of a people who have endured repeated efforts to erase their memory, faith, and culture.

Arbaeen also carries deeply political undertones. It symbolizes defiance against global imperialism and colonialism; forces that have long stripped many Muslim nations of their sovereignty, freedom, and voice.

The U.S. occupation of Iraq, much like the Israeli occupation of Palestine, involved not just military force but a cultural assault.

For decades, Palestinian resistance was framed in Western media as synonymous with terrorism. Similarly, the identity and dignity of the Iraqi people were attacked through dehumanizing portrayals.

The deaths of over 300,000 Iraqi civilians during the U.S. war were largely ignored or justified, and the Arab Muslim identity was reduced to caricatures: violent, irrational, fanatical.

This cultural conditioning helped enable atrocities, uranium-based weapons, the torture at Abu Ghraib, illegal detentions at Guantanamo, the killing of civilians by private military contractors.

Political leaders played their part too. Just as Israeli regime officials today refer to Gazans as “human animals,” George W. Bush cast Muslims as spiteful enemies of American values, using language that portrayed them as irrational and inherently destructive.

These narratives laid the groundwork for systemic violence, and continue to shape public opinion. In contrast, Arbaeen challenges these perceptions.

Despite decades of war and underdevelopment in Muslim countries, often due to external intervention, millions cooperate to build a self-sustaining pilgrimage.

The extensive network of volunteers that provide security, food, shelter, transportation and hygiene for over 20 million people, do so with no reported casualties.

Crucially, the stereotype of Muslim societies as oppressive to women is debunked along the Arbaeen route. Women are present in large numbers, walking, volunteering, and receiving equal hospitality. Dedicated spaces ensure their comfort and safety. This contradicts the Western narrative that veiled women are excluded from public life.

Arbaeen also dismantles racial and ethnic barriers. While racial inequality continues to plague Western societies, the pilgrimage promotes a vision of unity that overrides national, sectarian, and racial lines.

One powerful image captures Nigerian cleric Sheikh Zakzaky leading prayers in a tent hosted by Sunni Palestinian scholars, surrounded by Muslims from across the world.

In today’s geopolitical landscape where alliances like the Trump–Netanyahu axis seek to redraw borders and suppress Muslim identity, Arbaeen stands out as a powerful counterforce.

It’s a space where the oppressed can raise their voices. It’s not only a commemoration, but also a social and political statement of collective defiance against marginalization.

Recent years have seen participation grow to an estimated 25 million pilgrims, journeying to Karbala from across Iraq and beyond.

These millions chant the same slogans, pray with the same vision, and commit themselves anew to a shared cause, one that imperialist propaganda seeks to divide and erase.

Arbaeen is an expression of resilience and a bold rejection of the narratives imposed from outside. Local and regional efforts to sustain and grow Arbaeen reflect its profound strategic importance. It must be protected, not just as a religious event, but as a vital platform for resistance, solidarity, and hope.

This year, like in 2024, Gaza was a central theme. Processions carried placards, banners, and chants calling for an end to occupation and oppression while condemning the Israeli regime’s ongoing war crimes.

In a world increasingly divided and surveilled, Arbaeen offers something rare: a public space where millions can come together, in peace, to reaffirm their values, their identity, and their determination to resist injustice.

## The common language of Arbaeen pilgrims is tears



Fatemeh Jahanbakhsh

Karbala—An eighty-year-old woman sits beneath a bridge, her face deeply lined with wrinkles, an Arabic beauty mark between her brows, strands of white hair peeking from beneath her scarf, and a pair of round glasses perched on her nose.

Amid the sea of people, you’d have to look closely to spot her, sitting with a tray of dates on a small stool, waiting to meet your gaze.

When our eyes meet, she offers me a handful of dates. I take one, thank her for her kindness, and merge back into the crowd.

All of us—the elderly woman handing out dates, the group waving the Australian flag as they walk, the young volunteers at the Thai mawkib serving their traditional drinks—seem like an unlikely gathering of people who, under any other circumstances, would never come together.

Yet here we are, on this scorching road between Najaf and Karbala, an 80-kilometer stretch, united by a shared feeling that transcends language. Their smiles say it all, without a single word.

What brings me and millions of others to this road in the peak

of summer is not just a religious event—it is a human triumph.

In this moment, in this place, over 20 million people have gathered, though the world’s media giants may never acknowledge it. We are here to answer a call for freedom that has echoed through history for 1,400 years.

A free man once chose not to submit to oppression, and he stood by that choice until his last breath.

His family and companions—the finest of souls—joined him in defiance, sacrificing their lives. The women and children who stood with them were taken captive. And now, this massive crowd marches every year to declare that truth endures.

As our master Hussain (AS) said, we may face the harshest deaths, our access to food and water may be cut off by the most brutal regimes and unjust laws—but “we will never accept humiliation.”

The heat is unbearable, forcing us to pause our journey at midday. But as the sun softens, people resume their path in waves.

A middle-aged woman from



## Iran to boost petrochemical capacity by 35m tons under 5-year plan

TEHRAN – Iran plans to raise its nominal petrochemical production capacity by 35 million tons to 131.5 million tons a year by the end of its Seventh National Development Plan (2022- 2027) through 66 expansion projects, a senior official said, targeting an average annual growth of eight percent.

Hossein Alimorad, planning and development director at the National Petrochemical Company (NPC), said the projects, some of which will be commissioned by the end of this year (late March 2026), will also focus on extending the value chain in methanol, ethylene, propylene and aromatics to increase the share of higher value-added products in exports and reduce dependence on basic commodity sales.

He said the strategy was designed with a realistic view of resource constraints, aiming to add an extra 1.5 to two percent to the targeted economic growth through productivity gains.

Under the plan, Iran's nominal petrochemical capacity will rise from the current 96.6 million tons to 131.5 million tons. By 2027, capacity will increase by 11.6 million tons for propylene, 700,000 tons for methanol derivatives, 3.3



million tons for ethylene (excluding polyethylene), 8.6 million tons for polyethylene, and 3.0 million tons in aromatics downstream.

Alimorad said growth will come mainly from investment and new plants rather than from efficiency gains, but removing production bottlenecks such as feedstock supply, equipment shortages and maintenance delays could allow output to reach full nominal capacity. He added that the program also includes job creation and greater reliance on domestic financing and capital markets.

## Steel, petrochemicals drive half of Iran's free trade goals with Eurasia

TEHRAN – Steel and petrochemicals are expected to account for 50 percent of the objectives set under Iran's free trade agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Iranian officials said, highlighting the sectors' pivotal role in boosting exports and activating trade opportunities in the region.

Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), said the FTA, which entered into force on May 15, 2025, is unprecedented for Iran, reducing tariffs on 87 percent of traded goods.

He noted that while previous preferential trade agreements with the EAEU had expanded trade volumes, this latest agreement presents a unique opportunity for deeper integration.

"Trade agreements create both opportunities and challenges. The overall outcome is positive for both sides if vulnerabilities are addressed and opportunities maximized," Dehnavi said.

He emphasized that steel and petrochemical industries are major drivers of production and exports, and leveraging them effectively could

achieve half of Iran's FTA objectives.

The official called on the private sector to actively engage in Eurasian markets, pointing to research identifying which Iranian products have the highest export potential.

"Private companies should focus on maximizing profitability, while policymakers ensure collective benefits such as employment, economic growth, and foreign currency inflows," he said.

Dehnavi also noted that export opportunities vary across member states, highlighting Russia as one of the most lucrative markets for Iranian products and promising further studies to optimize engagement in the region.

According to Elham Haji Karimi, head of the Iran-EAEU FTA secretariat, the agreement, signed in December 2023 after more than two years of negotiations, covers 11 chapters, including trade in goods, technical measures, sanitary standards, rules of origin, customs cooperation, dispute resolution, government procurement, and sectoral cooperation in transport, energy, automotive industries, and free trade zones.

# South Korean embassy in Tehran awards Iranian youth for K-Food writing competition

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- The South Korean Embassy in Tehran organized a special cultural event on Wednesday, August 13, bringing together young Iranians to share their passion for Korean cuisine.

The gathering, held at the residence of South Korean Ambassador Mr. Kim Junpyo, was graciously hosted by the ambassador and his wife, alongside Cultural Attaché Mr. Kim Jongoh.

The event welcomed 25 honorary reporters from Korea. net who had participated in an article-writing competition titled "My Favorite K-Food & Why I Love It!" held between July 22 and August 28. This exclusive occasion also commemorated 2025 Journalist Day, honoring the contributions of media enthusiasts.

Ambassador Kim opened the ceremony with a welcoming speech, emphasizing the importance of cultural exchange. The attendees engaged in lively discussions, exchanging perspectives on Korean culinary traditions and their personal connections to K-food.

The event highlighted the deepening cultural ties between South Korea and Iran, fostering mutual appreciation through the universal language of food.

The following is the text of Mr. Ambassador's speech.

"Good afternoon.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all here today, and I wish to express my sincere appreciation for taking the time to join us.

First and foremost, I extend my warmest welcome to the Korea. net honorary reporters in Iran. Your dedication and participation are truly valued.

I would also like to convey my heartfelt thanks to Ms. Mahnaz



Abdi from the Tehran Times for graciously joining us to deliver today's lecture.

On July 22, we organized an article contest under the theme "My Favorite K-Food and the Reason." An impressive 25 honorary reporters participated in this meaningful event.

The submissions we received went far beyond simply describing the taste of Korean cuisine. They captured the rich culture and traditions of Korea, as well as the warmth and sincerity that K-Food represents. These were moving stories that demonstrated how K-Food serves as a bridge connecting Korea, Iran, and the wider world.

Your vivid accounts — featuring dishes such as tteokbokki, mandu, gimhap, and kimchi jigae, familiar to many through K-dramas — have brought these foods closer to readers in Iran and around the globe.

You are true cultural ambassadors, playing an invaluable role in connecting our two nations and cultures. I hope you will continue to help deepen mutual understanding and foster closer ties between Korea and Iran.

I also hope that today's gathering will be an opportunity for all

of you to share your thoughts and experiences, and to gain inspiration from the insightful lecture delivered by our distinguished guest from the Tehran Times. I look forward to seeing your continued contributions and outstanding work.

Allow me to share one further announcement. As part of the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs' digital public diplomacy and global campaign, we are currently conducting a challenge and content contest under the theme "Vibe with Us."

Last June, during the 12-day conflict, I received messages from several Iranian friends who, despite the fear and hardship caused by continuous bombardments, found comfort and strength in Korean culture. Their words brought me great encouragement during that time.

I hope that this challenge will serve as a meaningful opportunity to share such heartfelt stories with audiences around the world, especially those that speak of friendship, comfort, and solidarity through K-culture.

This campaign will run until the end of October. Further details will be shared on Instagram. I kindly ask for your active participation and support in promoting

the event so that many more Iranians may join us.

I sincerely hope today's meeting will be both memorable and rewarding for all of you.

Once again, welcome, and thank you very much for your presence here today."

Following Mr. Ambassador's opening remarks, Mahnaz Abdi, an editor at Tehran Times international daily, delivered an insightful presentation on effective article writing, using Korean cuisine as a thematic example. Her talk provided practical tips while highlighting the cultural significance of K-food.

The spotlight then shifted to the five outstanding participants whose articles were selected as the best among the 25 submissions. Each winner took the stage to present their work, sharing personal reflections on their favorite Korean dishes and what made them so special.

Guests were then treated to a delicious Korean lunch, where traditional flavors won over everyone's palates, further deepening their appreciation for Korea's culinary heritage.

The highlight of the event was the awards ceremony, where the top five winners—judged by Mahnaz Abdi—were announced. In ascending order, from fifth place to first, each honoree received their award, with the grand prize presented by the Ambassador himself.

Before concluding, all participants received special Korean gifts from Mr. Ambassador and his wife as tokens of appreciation. The event ended with a group photo, capturing the spirit of cultural connection and diplomacy—a powerful reminder that food is not just sustenance but also a bridge between nations.

## Tehran, Nairobi set \$1b trade goal after joint committee meeting

From Page 1 ► The agreements cover diplomatic training, health and medical services, housing and urban development, renewable energy, investment, and the creation of a joint trade cooperation committee.

Including a deal signed on the previous day, the total number of agreements reached is nine.

Nouri called for full use of both countries'

capacities, describing Kenya as the gateway to East Africa and Iran as Kenya's route to the Caucasus and Central Asia. He said agriculture, fisheries, seeds, and livestock feed were among the main sectors identified for deeper cooperation.

The two countries also agreed to establish a committee to facilitate and monitor the implementation of agreements, and reaffirmed

their commitment to peace, security, counter-terrorism, and expanded trade.

Mudavadi said the talks built on historic ties and could provide a strong foundation for future cooperation, noting Iran's potential role in strengthening Kenya's food supply chain.

The eighth meeting of the joint commission will be hosted by Iran in 2027.

## Iran's non-oil exports reach \$16.5b in 4 months

TEHRAN – Iran exported 48 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$16.5 billion in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21–July 22), down five percent from the same period last year, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said.

Foroud Asgari, who also serves as deputy economy minister, said petrochemical exports made up the largest share of the total, generating \$6.9 billion in revenue.

That figure represents a 10 percent drop compared with the same period a year earlier.

Other major export items included natural gas at about \$1.3 billion, liquefied petroleum gas at \$1 billion, methanol at \$789 million, and butane and petroleum gases at \$914 million.

China was Iran's top export market in the period, purchasing \$4.5 billion worth of goods. Iraq ranked second with \$3.0 billion, followed by the United Arab Emirates with \$2.1 billion, Turkey with \$1.6 billion, Afghanistan with \$790 million, Pakistan with \$603 million, and Oman with \$591 million.

Asgari noted that despite the overall decline in exports, trade ties with regional neighbors remained strong, accounting for a significant portion of shipments.

He emphasized that Iran is seeking to expand its export markets further by diversifying products and targeting countries in Asia, Africa and Eurasia.

Imports during the same four-month period totaled 176 million tons worth \$17.6 billion. Key import goods included gold bullion worth \$1.0 billion, corn at \$1.1 billion, rice worth \$688 million (634,000 tons), sunflower seed oil at \$132 million, soybeans at \$569 million, mobile phones at \$504 million, wheat at \$344 million, barley at \$310 million, and sesame and soybean products at \$212 million.

The UAE was the largest source of imports at \$5.4 billion, followed by China at \$4.5 billion and Turkey at \$2.5 billion, with Germany, Russia and the Netherlands sup-

plying smaller amounts.

Asgari said customs operations in ports have returned to normal following recent incidents, with only administrative buildings damaged. Cargo clearance resumed on the second day after the incident through online declarations, and construction of a new customs building at the original site is under way without a tender process to speed completion, he added.

Iran exported over 152 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$57.8 billion in the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, 2025.

This marked a 10 percent increase in volume and a 15.62 percent rise in value compared to the previous year, according to Abolfazl Akbarpour, the deputy head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration for planning and international affairs.

Imports totaled 39.3 million tons valued at \$72.4 billion, representing a 0.77 percent decline in weight but an 8.22 percent increase in value from the previous year. The result was a non-oil trade deficit of \$14.6 billion, largely due to the import of over \$8.0 billion worth of raw gold bars, which accounted for 11.12 percent of the total import value.

Iran's main non-oil exports included natural gas, liquefied propane and butane, methanol, liquefied petroleum gases and hydrocarbon gases, and gas condensates.

Natural gas was the top export item, with an average customs value of \$314 per ton.

Other leading exports were petroleum bitumen, urea, non-alloy iron and steel billets, iron or steel bars, and polyethylene.

The top destinations for Iran's exports were China at \$14.8 billion, Iraq at \$11.9 billion, the United Arab Emirates at \$7.2 billion, Turkey at \$6.8 billion, Pakistan and Afghanistan at \$2.4 billion each, and India at \$1.9 billion. These seven countries accounted for \$47.6 billion, or 82.3 percent of Iran's total non-oil export value.

## International Tender

No.: 04.T/859

Security Printing and Minting Organization (SPMO) of Central Bank of Islamic Republic of IRAN intends to procure the following equipment through a public tender from eligible and qualified companies:

One unit of each CNC Engraving and Milling Machine, Grinding Machine for Engraving/Milling Cutters and respective spare parts adequate for five years of operation and consumables for three years, as well as on-site installation and training, according to the specifications and conditions outlined in the tender documents.

### Required documents:

- 1- Bid Bond Guarantee equal to 37,500 euros or its equivalent in IR Rial, will be issued by participants, according to the received documents in favor of SPMO, marked as Tender Guarantee.
- 2- The bidders are requested to submit their company profile, articles of association, turn over including list of supplied goods, client list, etc. for the last 3 years.
- 3- It should be noted that the priority for bidders is given to the domestic participants in equal conditions.

The tender documents consisting of technical specifications, requirements, price and packing conditions, required guarantees, terms of payment, shipment, delivery, installation and training are available on demand. For receiving them, please contact us via the following address, fax or E-mail until 2025/08/26:

Commercial Director

Security Printing and Minting Organization

No. 191, Pasdaran Ave., Tehran, I.R. of IRAN P.O. Box: 1664647111

Fax: +98 21 22842033 – +98 21 22840053 E-mail: [spmo@cbi.ir](mailto:spmo@cbi.ir)



# Iranian, Pakistani research centers sign MOU on technology

TEHRAN – Pardis Technology Park has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) to expand cooperation in vocational training, sharing technology, and promoting research and innovation.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of President Masoud Pezeshkian's two-day visit to Pakistan, which started on August 2, Mehr news agency reported.

The MOU aims to strengthen technological collaborations, promote research and innovation in fields of common interest, and foster joint efforts among organizations, institutions, and high-tech research centers of the two countries.

It is centered around various sectors such as biotechnology, environmental protection technologies, nanotechnology, and advanced materials engineering, industrial and manufacturing technologies, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, medicinal plants, medical equipment, energy, and renewable energy sources, as well as electronics.

It also focuses on the establishment of science and technology parks, tech-hubs, start-ups, innovation acceleration centers, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and venture capital.

Knowledge-sharing in high-tech companies, market research



for advanced products, and market access in respective countries are among other parts of the MOU.

## Tehran, Islamabad to boost scientific ties

In April, Iran's deputy science minister, Abolfazl Vahedi, and Pakistan's Science Minister, Khalid Hussain Magsi, discussed ways to develop collaborations between universities of the two countries.

The officials met on the sidelines of the first International Conference on Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI): Catalysts for Regional Connectivity and Sustainable Development in the ECO Region (ECONEX 2025), on April 17–18, held in Islamabad, Pakistan, IRNA reported.

The meeting centered around benefiting from the academic engagement of the two countries to further scientific and research

interactions among students and professors.

Vahedi also invited the Pakistani official to participate in the second ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)–15 Dialogue Platform hosted by Tehran.

The first International Conference on STI was jointly organized by the ECO Science Foundation, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, and the ECO Secretariat.

In 2024, a delegation of Pakistani academic members headed by Mukhtar Ahmed, the chairman of Pakistan's higher education commission, visited Iran's House of Innovation and Technology (iHiT) on January 15, IRNA reported.

“The main challenges in the development of Islamabad–Tehran relations have been overcome, and the two countries are

ready to further boost ties in higher education, science, and technology,” the Pakistani official said.

Mukhtar Ahmed, in a meeting with Amir-Hossein Mir-Abadi, the former head of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology's center for international affairs, said Iran and Pakistan are confronting similar problems and challenges; these common issues can lay the basis for boosting mutual relations and cooperation. “Pakistan is interested in cooperating and interacting with Iran in scientific and technological fields,” he added.

Exchanging academic staff, including professors and students, and conducting joint projects were among the main options to expand cooperation between Iran and Pakistan.

Talking about setting up national pavilions in different countries, Ahmed said Pakistan is ready to hold Iranian pavilions, too.

He hoped that the bilateral cooperation would be extended into regional cooperation, including other countries such as India and Bangladesh.

For his part, Mir-Abadi said, “Iran is ready to cooperate with Pakistan in technological fields. Information and communication technology, agriculture, and health are among the fields in which the two countries can boost cooperation.”

## FM lauds IRCS services to pilgrims during Arbæen

TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has commended the Iranian Red Crescent Society's (IRCS) services provided to people during the Arbæen pilgrimage.

“The number of referrals to the IRCS clinic in Iraq is very high,” Araghchi said, adding that from 3:00 to 9:00 am, some 800 pilgrims visited the center, and the number of patients would even reach 4,000 during the day.

He made the remarks while paying a visit to a medical center run by the IRCS in the shrine city of Najaf, Iraq.

“They offer a wide range of services, such as visiting patients, administering injections and serums, which is praiseworthy. Words cannot express gratitude and appreciation to the voluntary services,” the IRCS website quoted Araghchi as saying.

From July 26 to August 14, the IRCS has provided health services to some 4.1 million pilgrims. The IRCS health staff visited 1.05 million patients. About 1.39 million pilgrims have benefitted from para-clinic services (like serum therapy, wound dressing), and 1.6 million others received medicines. During the same period, the IRCS staff also transferred some 249 wounded or dead individuals from Iraq to the country.

Arbæen, commemorating Imam Hussein's martyrdom on the 40th day after Ashura, is the world's largest annual pilgrimage. This year it fell on August 14.

Each year, millions of Shia believers trek the 80-kilometre Najaf–Karbala route in a

faith-driven, transnational movement that embodies Islamic unity, solidarity, and the enduring call for justice.

This year, a total of 8,200 rescue workers of the IRCS, including relief workers, physicians, and nurses, will offer services to people in Iraq during the Arbæen pilgrimage, according to the head of the IRCS.

Moreover, some 7,000 IRCS forces are working in the country on the routes and borders, IRIB quoted Pirhossein Kolivand as saying.

Four hospitals will provide services on the Najaf – Karbala highway. Also, the number of medical mawkibs (voluntary stations) increased in Kabala, Najaf, and Samarra, he added.

Pilgrims will be able to benefit from medical, health, and nutritional consultations through mobile applications free of charge, Kolivand noted.

The official went on to say that the IRCS will use more than 200 special vehicles and ambulances to perform their tasks during the Arbæen pilgrimage.

### Iraq lauds IRCS for services

In August 2024, Iraqi health minister Saleh Mehdi Al-Hasnawi commended the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) for its outstanding efforts to offer services during the Arbæen pilgrimage.

Meeting an Iranian delegation, led by Kolivand, Al-Hasnawi said, “The Iranian Red Crescent Society's cooperation with Iraq's



health ministry in providing health services to pilgrims is praiseworthy,” the IRCS website reported.

“Medical services are being carried out in collaboration with the two parties for all the pilgrims, including Iranians and Arabs,” he added.

On August 5, 2024, Iranian and Iraqi officials held a meeting in Baghdad to review and discuss strategies to facilitate the Arbæen pilgrimage and ensure the safety of pilgrims.

Iran's Deputy Minister of Interior, Majid Mirahmadi, and Kolivand, in a meeting with the Iraqi Minister of Interior, Abdul Amir al-Shammari, followed up on the latest arrangements made regarding the Arbæen pilgrimage.

During the meeting, the Iranian officials obtained permission to operate IRCS rescue helicopters as well as ambulances and bring necessary medicine and equipment to provide medical services to pilgrims.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Shiraz University, Chinese Academy of Sciences sign MOU

Shiraz University and Chinese Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences (RCEES) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand cooperation in scientific and research projects, IRNA news agency reported on Tuesday.

Joint research activities through the Silk Road Research Program, joint publication of articles and books, study opportunities for faculty and doctoral students, use of laboratory facilities, experience exchange workshops especially in the field of natural disasters, droughts, floods, medicinal plants, biodiversity, land degradation and international joint research projects were among the mutually agreed programs.

## دانشگاه شیراز و موسسه تحقیقات منابع طبیعی چین تفاهم نامه امضا کردند

دانشکده کشاورزی به نمایندگی از دانشگاه شیراز با موسسه تحقیقات منابع طبیعی آکادمی علوم چین سند تفاهم نامه همکاری های علمی-پژوهشی مشترک امضا کرد.

به گزارش ایرنا، زمینه بهره برداری عملیاتی از ظرفیت های تفاهم نامه حاضر به ویژه در زمینه فعالیت های پژوهشی مشترک از طریق برنامه پژوهشی راه ابریشم، نشر مشترک مقالات و کتب، فرصت های مطالعاتی اعضای هیات علمی و دانشجویان دکتری، استفاده از امکانات آزمایشگاهی، برگزاری کارگاه های تبادل تجربه به ویژه در حوزه حوادث غیرمترقبه طبیعی، خشکسالی، سیل، گیاهان دارویی، تنوع زیستی، تخریب سرزمین و طرح های پژوهشی مشترک بین المللی در قالب برنامه های مشترک مورد توافق طرفین مورد بحث و بررسی قرار گرفت.

# SOCIETY

AUGUST 16, 2025

Straight Truth

TEHRAN TIMES

7

## Land subsidence affects 254 plains nationwide: official

TEHRAN – According to the head of the Crisis Management Organization, Hossein Zafari, around 254 areas and plains in different provinces of the country are affected by land subsidence.

Kerman, Khorasan Razavi, and Tehran provinces are the most affected by the phenomenon, ISNA quoted Zafari as saying.

Land subsidence varies from 2-18 centimeters in different parts of the country, he added.

The concentration of population in cities, climate change, low rainfall, frequent droughts, and increased underground water extraction intensified land subsidence in the country since the early 1970s, the official noted.

Land subsidence occurs in two ways: in some areas, the uniform subsidence results in the entire plain to descend evenly with no visible surface signs, but in some other areas, asymmetrical subsidence causes visible damage on the ground's surface. Evaluating and monitoring the phenomenon is an ongoing process, Zafari added.

Referring to high-risk areas in Tehran province, the official said the south, southwest, southeast, as well as the southern regions of Tehran province, are prone to subsidence risk.

Highlighting the fact that overconsumption of underground water is the main contributor to the land subsidence, Zafari said part of the operational plans and measures of the Crisis Management Organization focus on the prevention of excessive water consumption, and the other part is centered around reforming laws and regulations, as well as practices used for the construction and maintenance of vital structures and facilities in affected areas. However, the main mission of the organization is to monitor and follow up on the actions required by the responsible institutions and agencies.

### Widespread land subsidence: a national crisis

Water supply in Iran largely depends on rainfall, snowmelt, and underground aquifers, but decades of over-extraction have left groundwater resources severely depleted. While the global water resources are stretched by climate change and human population growth, the farms and industries are increasingly turning to groundwater to fill their needs.

Unfortunately, pumping of groundwater can cause the ground surface to sink as aquifers below are drained and the architecture of the ground collapses. This phenomenon is called land subsidence. This article attempts to introduce the phenomenon and the underlying causes, mainly in Tehran:

With a population of over 15 million residents, including a large floating populace, Tehran is now on the precipice of a severe land subsidence crisis. Established in 1953, the National Cartographic Center (NCC) of Iran has proved its role as the main leader of map production and spatial information in the country. According to Iran's NCC, some regions are sinking at alarming rates of 31cm per year, wreaking havoc on the vital infrastructure and historical sites, making it a national crisis. Cracked homes, tilting mosques, and endangering historical sites like the ancient ruins of Persepolis are some of the examples. Even a modern infrastructure like the Imam Khomeini International Airport has not escaped the adverse effects of land subsidence.

According to another source, scientists from the GFZ German Research Center for Geosciences in Potsdam used satellite data to reveal the extent of the subsidence. The team used a tool known as Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR), which can spot even the most minute difference in ground deformation. They revealed that land around Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) was sinking at around 5 centimeters per year – which unfortunately was one of the more moderate areas of subsidence.

This crisis is unlike earthquakes or severe weather phenomena that make media and TV coverage on an international scale. Land subsidence is invisible because it occurs at a very slow pace, but its impact cannot be ignored.

Other causes for this phenomenon are attributed to scarcity of rainfalls, uneven dis-



tribution of water, high climatic variation, and mismanagement of the precious water resource. Subsidence is also associated with mining. Demographic factors such as the population explosion is also cited. Just about 50 years ago, Tehran had a population of only two million. The rapid expansion of the urban population has made the task of water distribution even more difficult.

The Amirkabir Dam, which passes through the Karaj River, has shrunk by seven percent to 22.09 billion cubic meters, a spokesman of the Iranian Water Resources Management Company Isa Bozorgzadeh was quoted recently. The concrete dam, 30 km northwest of capital, was built in 1961 to supply Tehran with water and electricity.

Latyan Dam is a buttress dam located less than 25 km from Tehran, south of the city of Lavasan. Constructed between 1963 and 1967, it is one of the main sources of water and electricity for Tehran. With a capacity of 95 million cubic meters, the dam has been operational since 1967.

Seventy percent of Tehran's water comes from five nearby dams, including Amirkabir and Latyan. According to the state media reports, as of March 5, the reservoirs are only 13 percent full.

A look back five years ago, in May of 2019, Mehr news agency reported that Amirkabir Dam was 93 percent full, an increase of four percent compared to the year before. The significant improvements were attributed to the exceptional water torrents that spring that covered almost all provinces after six decades.

Unfortunately, this year water shortage has also been due to the low precipitation, which the Ministry of Energy has said barely reached 93.8mm from early October to mid-March, a dramatic shortfall from the national average of 157.8mm, a 60 percent reduction.

Under the circumstances, reduction of water use, minimization of waste, and recycling of water are good first steps. Optimization of water usage is bound to reduce the water consumption and can reduce the overextraction of groundwater.

Last year, President Masoud Pezeshkian called for the relocation of Iran's political and economic center away from Tehran, citing the capital's mounting environmental and infrastructural challenges.

“We have no choice but to move the country's political and economic center closer to the southern waters,” he said, adding that the current development trends in Tehran are unsustainable, particularly given the city's water scarcity.

“Whatever we do, we're just wasting time. We have no choice but to move the country's economic and political center to the south, closer to the sea,” he said.

Given Tehran's large population and being the economic heart of the country, the air pollution has become part of this problem. The quality of air in the capital contaminates the water storage in the form of ice on the mountain to the rivers downstream.

The underlying cause of this crisis stems from groundwater over-extraction, rising from 10 cubic meters per second in 2020 to 17.5 in 2023. Although it decreased to 14.5 in 2024, these levels remain unsustainable.

Without immediate reforms in water management and infrastructure planning, the capital city faces escalating risks to its infrastructure, heritage sites, and population.

The unsustainable global practices for managing water resources will eventually lead to tighter restrictions and supply cuts. It will make today's uninterrupted and never-ending supply of water look like a dream.

While today's global wars are on land and energy resources, the future wars will inevitably be fought over a more vital resource.



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AUGUST 16, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*It is enough wisdom for you that it clarified salvation and depravity for you.*  
**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times    Noon:12:9    Evening: 19:12    Dawn: 3:53 (tomorrow)    Sunrise: 5:25 (tomorrow)

## What’s in Tehran art galleries

\* Paintings by Farhad Tavakoli are on display in an exhibition at Negar Gallery.

The exhibit named “Dreaming Trees, Standing Mountains” will be running until August 25 at the gallery, which can be found at No. 5, Bahrami alley, Mashahir Street, Qaem Maqam Farahani Avenue.

\* Shamis Gallery is showcasing paintings by Ali Abbasi in an exhibition.

The exhibit named “Weary Shadows” will run until August 29 at the gallery located at 8 Daniali St., Andarzgu Blvd. in the Farmanieh neighborhood.

\* Ev Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Samaneh Eshaqi. The exhibit named “Morphology” will be running until August 22 at the gallery located at 5 Arabi Alley, North Kheradmand St.

\* An exhibition of paintings by Mahsa Mirbabai, Sogand Safa, Negin Hemati, Sadaf Bakhtiari and several others is underway at Ebteda Gallery.

Entitled “Attachments”, the exhibition will run until August 20 at the gallery located at 35 Farrokhi Alley, near Vali-e Asr Square.

\* A collection of paintings and sculptures by a number of Iranian artists is currently on view in an exhibition at Kavin Gallery.

The exhibit named “Flower” will be running until August 20 at the gallery located at No.24, Pesian St. Zaferanieh Neighborhood.

# Iranian artworks sold at Bonhams’ online auction of Modern and Contemporary Middle Eastern Art

Untitled oil on canvas painting by Sirak Melkonian

TEHRAN – Two works by Iranian artists were sold at the Bonhams’ London online auction of Modern and Contemporary Middle Eastern Art, which took place on August 14.

The collection presented at the auction comprised 45 pieces by various artists from the Middle East, including 10 by artists from Iran, ILNA reported.

The Iranian artists whose works were presented at the auction were Sirak Melkonian, Ebrahim Olfat, Babak Kazemi, Marcos Grigorian, and YZ Kami. However, only two works by Melkonian and Olfat were sold at the event.

An untitled oil on canvas painting by the late artist Melkonian (1930-2024), executed in 2020, was sold for \$13,888.

The other sold work was titled “Eshgh (Hafez Poem)” by Olfat, 46. The calligraphy painting, ink and gold leaf on canvas, executed in 2012, realized \$5,207.

Sirak Melkonian, an Iranian-Armenian painter and one of the founders of the modern art movement in the country, passed away last August in Toronto, Canada, at 93.

Born in Tehran, Melkonian met Marcos Grigorian, a prominent Iranian-Armenian modernist painter, after graduating from high school and learned modern European art and the art of

the world from him. Melkonian’s early works had a figurative and realistic approach.

In 1957, he won the Contemporary Iranian Artists Award at the Iran-America Society, and in 1958, he won the Imperial Court Prize at Tehran Biennial. Grigorian encouraged him to move to Italy to study art at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma. He quit studying there and continued learning art experimentally. He participated in the Venice Biennale and soon afterward won the Paris Biennale prize.

In the early 1960s, Melkonian began focusing more specifically on abstraction in his work, and became a leading figure in the Iranian art scene, due to his successes at home and internationally.

Melkonian founded the Azad Art Group in the early 1970s, with some other important artists living and working in Iran at the time. They were introduced formally at the Tehran International Art Fair in 1974, pushing the boundaries and understanding of conceptual art and installation works in Iran.

Limited color palettes and the emphasis on line and form in Melkonian’s works have always been more important than the subject. The figurative language of his works has found an expressionist and then abstract side

Calligraphy painting “Eshgh” by Ebrahim Olfat

over time. Melkonian’s mastery of visual qualities of line and color has created a perfect cohesion and balance that may be considered the closest common feature of his works with pristine nature.

Melkonian exhibited his work in over 140 exhibitions worldwide, from Tehran to Paris, New York to Yerevan. His works can be found in major public and private international collections; such as the Niavaran Palace, TMOCA, and LACMA.

Ebrahim Olfat, an international artist specializing in calligraphy, holds a Master’s degree in Graphic Design from Azad University, is a graduate of the Iranian Calligraphers Association, and earned a medical degree from Iran University of Medical Sciences in Tehran.

He is proficient in more than 20 different calligraphic scripts, including Nastaliq, Shekasteh Nastaliq, Thuluth, Naskh, Kufic, Ruqah, and Diwani, and his works feature a diverse range of calligraphic compositions. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions and international auctions.

Olfat is best known for his unique lightboxes—works that combine light and modern calligraphy—which have been showcased and sold multiple times at prestigious international auctions such as Sotheby’s London

(2011), Christie’s Paris (2011), and Christie’s Dubai (2012).

The modern and contemporary Middle Eastern art market has experienced significant growth since the category began gaining recognition among collectors regionally and globally over the past decade. Twentieth century Arab and Iranian Art has witnessed an extraordinary development that is in keeping with the rich artistic legacy of the region and is reflected in the world’s long-standing fascination and interest in Middle Eastern art and culture.

Bonhams has maintained a significant international presence in the market since the early years of its development. During the inaugural sale of modern Middle Eastern art in Dubai in 2008, Bonhams broke 33 world records and witnessed the first Middle Eastern artwork to achieve an auction sale of over one million dollars; Iranian artist Farhad Moshiri’s stunning mixed media work “Eshgh”.

Since then, Bonhams has firmly established itself as one of the leading auction houses in the category, holding regular bi-annual sales first in Dubai and now in London, in recognition of the growing international market for art from the Middle East and surrounding regions.

## Arasbaran Cultural Center to review “The Life of David Gale”

TEHRAN- “The Life of David Gale”, a 2003 thriller movie by English film director Alan Parker, will be reviewed at the Arasbaran Cultural Center in Tehran on Sunday evening.

Film critic Kurosh Jahed is set to attend a screening of the film followed by a review session.

“The Life of David Gale” is a polarizing film that delves into the moral complexities of capital punishment. Starring Kevin Spacey, Kate Winslet, and Laura Linney, the movie follows the harrowing story of David Gale, a philosophy professor and anti-death penalty activist who finds himself on death row for a crime he claims he did not commit.

The film opens with Gale (Spacey) awaiting execution in Texas, with only days left before his sentence is carried out. Determined to share his story, his lawyer arranges an exclusive interview with journalist Bitsey Bloom (Winslet), known for her discretion. Through a series of flashbacks, Gale recounts his downfall.

Once a respected professor and vocal opponent of capital punishment, Gale’s life unravels after a drunken encounter with Berlin, a disgruntled former student who falsely accuses him of rape.

Though the charges are dropped, the scandal destroys his career and family. His wife takes their son and moves abroad, leaving Gale to spiral into alcoholism.

His only solace comes from fellow activist Constance Harraway (Linney), but when she is found murdered—appearing to have been raped and suffocated—Gale becomes the prime suspect. Forensic evidence, including his DNA, seals his conviction, and he is sentenced to death.

As Bloom investigates, she uncovers inconsistencies in the case. A mysterious man named Dusty Wright stalks her, leaving clues that suggest Gale was framed. Eventually, Bloom discovers a hidden videotape revealing that Harraway, terminally ill with leukemia, staged her own death to appear as a murder. Wright, her accomplice, helped fabricate evidence to implicate Gale—all part of a scheme to expose the flaws of the death penalty by ensuring an innocent man was executed.

Despite Bloom’s frantic efforts to halt the execution, Gale is put to death before the truth surfaces. The released tape sparks public outrage, but a final, private recording delivered to Bloom confirms Gale’s complicity: he

knowingly participated in his own framing to martyr himself for the cause.

“The Life of David Gale” was met with widespread criticism. On Rotten Tomatoes, it holds a dismal 19 percent approval rating, with critics panning its implausible plot and heavy-handed messaging. Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times awarded it zero stars, arguing that the film inadvertently discredits death penalty opponents by portraying them as deceitful. Meanwhile, Richard Roeper called it a “dazzling mess.”

Despite the backlash, the film remains a thought-provoking, if flawed, examination of justice, sacrifice, and the ethics of capital punishment. Alan Parker’s final directorial effort leaves

audiences questioning whether the end—exposing systemic failures—justifies the means.

Sir Alan Parker, the acclaimed English director (1944–2020), began his career crafting award-winning TV ads before transitioning to film. Known for his stylistic versatility, he mastered genres from musicals such as “Fame” and “Evita” to gripping dramas like “Midnight Express” and “Mississippi Burning”. His works earned 19 BAFTAs, 10 Golden Globes, and six Oscars. Knighted in 2002 for contributions to cinema, Parker also co-founded the Directors Guild of Great Britain. Honored with BAFTA’s highest accolade in 2013 and the Royal Photographic Society’s Lumière Award in 2000, his legacy endures through his films and archived work at the BFI.