

# Trump's Tower of Deceit: Epstein's Files Pull Back the Curtain

**Over three million pages of DOJ files fuel critical allegations, placing the U.S. president at the heart of Epstein's elite sex scandal network**



President Trump with Jeffrey Epstein at Mar-a-Lago in 1997.

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## American security and double standard of disorder

By Fatemeh Kavand

TEHRAN - While Donald Trump labels American protesters "professional agitators" and calls for their imprisonment or deportation, the very same pattern of behavior has for years been framed in Western narratives of insecurity in Iran as "civil protest"—a stark rupture in how order, security, and the legitimacy of violence are defined.

Trump's recent remarks on the widespread protests in Minnesota have once again brought an old yet unresolved contradiction to the media's forefront. Responding to attacks on public sites, including a church, Trump described the protesters as "professional," "trained," and "disruptive of public order"—individuals who, in his view, should either be imprisoned or expelled from the country. This stance is not only harsh but overtly security-driven, leaving no room for empathy under the banner of "protest."

Although such rhetoric is hardly new to the American public, it takes on a different meaning at the international level—especially when placed alongside the official and media narratives of the West regarding Iran's winter unrest. In those events,

## A framework for collective security in the Persian Gulf and West Asia

By Abbas Aghoundi

TEHRAN - The gradual erosion of the liberal international order and the emergence of a more coercive global environment have profoundly altered the security calculus for middle powers. In the current international landscape—often described as a "new world order"—the direct use of force by major powers has become increasingly normalized. While powerful states frequently violated the rules even under the liberal order, international norms and institutions nevertheless provided limited protection for smaller and mid-sized countries. That protective buffer has now largely disappeared.

As a result, middle powers can no longer rely on external guarantees or abstract norms for their security. They must instead take an active role in shaping the structures and arrangements that safeguard their interests. The central strategic question is how to achieve this.

## Putin hosts Iranian security chief in Kremlin

TEHRAN — President Vladimir Putin received Ali Larijani, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, for a high-stakes summit at the Kremlin on Friday.

Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali confirmed the meeting took place Friday evening, stating that the "main core of the conversations revolved around expanding relations between the two nations, particularly in the economic sphere."

Beyond the bilateral framework, the two politicians engaged in "thorough consultations on vital regional and global issues," ensuring a synchronized response to the evolving geopolitical landscape.

The summit followed the volatile security environment created by U.S. President Donald Trump's renewed threats of military action against the Islamic Republic and the U.S. military's military buildup in the Middle East.

The Kremlin has advocated for diplomatic solutions rooted in the absolute respect for Iranian sovereignty, viewing Tehran's stability as a cornerstone of regional peace.

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## Koozeh-Shekani: Where tradition, belief and renewal converge

TEHRAN - The Koozeh-Shekani ceremony is one of the nearly forgotten traditions observed on the eve of the last Wednesday of the Iranian calendar year, coinciding with Charshanbe Suri, in some villages and towns of South Khorasan province in eastern Iran.

Alongside customs such as jumping over bonfires (locally known as Tousho) and the celebration of the Dehqan (peasant) festival, Koozeh-Shekani was once widely practiced in the region.

Symbolically, Koozeh-Shekani closely resembles the spirit of Nowruz (the Persian New Year), as it represents the replacement of the old with the new, the transition from the past to the present, and the passage from hardship to prosperity.

In earlier times, it was customary in many parts of South Khorasan for people to break old pots and jars on the last Wednesday of the year. These vessels were typically those that no longer kept water cool or had developed algae inside, turning their interiors green. ► Page 6



## Leader visits Imam Khomeini's mausoleum ahead of revolution's 47th anniv.

TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei visited the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, on Saturday ahead of the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, renewing allegiance to the ideals that reshaped Iran and ended decades of foreign domination.

During the visit, Ayatollah Khamenei performed prayers at the shrine and paid tribute to the martyrs of the Revolution, reaffirming continuity between the founding principles of the Islamic Republic and Iran's present-day resistance to external pressure. ► Page 2

## Araghchi to Washington: Diplomacy is not a one-way street of dictates

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has delivered a sharp message to Washington and its European allies, asserting that while Iran remains open to "fair and balanced" diplomacy, it will never negotiate under the shadow of threats or accept dictates from foreign powers.

Speaking in a comprehensive interview with CNN Turk during his visit to Istanbul on Friday, Araghchi detailed his strategic consultations with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan.

The visit took place amidst a surge in U.S. military posturing and aggressive rhetoric from Washington. ► Page 2

## Army chief says 'Iran's finger on the trigger' as US talks up naval military buildup

TEHRAN — The commander-in-chief of Iran's Army (Artesh) has reaffirmed that the country's armed forces are on full combat alert, warning that any reckless move by the United States or Israel would backfire catastrophically, threatening not only their own forces but the entire region.

Addressing the "Young Soldier of the Armed Forces" ceremony on Saturday, Major General Amir Hatami said Iran's military operates at the highest level of readiness, with seamless coordination among all branches of the armed forces.

"Our enemies are constantly monitored," Hatami said. "Because we clearly understand their hostile intentions, our finger remains firmly on the trigger." ► Page 2

## World Bank says 3 governance indicators improved in Iran

TEHRAN — The World Bank said three of Iran's governance indicators improved in 2024, citing gains in government effectiveness, control of corruption and accountability.

In its latest Worldwide Governance Indicators report, the World Bank assesses countries across six areas: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption.

Scores range from zero to 100, with higher scores indicating better performance.

As Tasnim News Agency reported, Iran's score for voice and accountability rose marginally to 29.75 in 2024, up 0.01 points from the previous year, the report showed. ► Page 4

## How is Washington's oil-first strategy redrawing Libya's geopolitical map?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — The recent visits of Massad Boulos, adviser to U.S. President Donald Trump for the Middle East and African affairs, to Tripoli and Benghazi have ignited intense debate inside Libya.

The controversy deepened after the signing of a long-term oil agreement on the sidelines of the Tripoli Energy Summit, involving France's TotalEnergies and the American giant ConocoPhillips, with foreign investments exceeding \$20 billion.

While Washington frames these moves as support for unity and stability, many Libyans see them as a source of growing anxiety rather than reassurance.

In a post on X, Boulos described his meeting with Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah as "productive," stressing that unity and stability are essential to attract American investment. Yet this language, centered on investment rather than legitimacy, has raised suspicions about US priorities in a country still lacking an elected government. ► Page 5

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

## TEHRAN PAPERS

### The threat facing European security

Hamshahri analyzed the European Union's move to designate Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization. According to the paper, this hostile action by the EU is viewed by experts as a dangerous precedent inspired by Washington and Tel Aviv, and a clear violation of the principles governing international law. Observers of global affairs describe the EU's decision to place the IRGC on its so-called 'terrorist groups list' as largely symbolic and lacking any practical impact on Iran. They argue that the failed attempt to disarm Hezbollah in Lebanon is a telling example of how ineffective such Western approaches can be. The paper warns that any retaliatory response from Iran to this hostile EU measure would carry serious consequences for European states. The IRGC, which has acted as a major barrier against terrorist networks in recent years, has played a crucial role in preventing terrorist groups from penetrating Europe. The new hostile step, it argues, could expose Europe to growing security threats.

#### Khorasan: Military threats and their consequences

Khorasan addressed recent rumors and statements regarding a possible military confrontation between Iran and the United States. According to the paper, alongside speculation about renewed negotiations, Donald Trump's remarks on Friday amounted to a direct and explicit threat against Tehran. Referring to the movement of 'a massive fleet' toward Iran, Trump wrote on Truth Social that 'hopefully Iran will quickly come to the table' and negotiate a fair and equitable deal - no nuclear weapons - one that is good for all parties. Time is running out, it is truly of the essence! This explicit threat, combined with references to past military operations and the possibility of future strikes, clearly reflects Washington's strategy of maximum pressure and its attempt to impose its demands. Iran's response was firm and unequivocal, declaring that it would raise its defensive readiness to the highest level. This stance underscores Iran's emphasis on defense readiness and signals to the United States that any attempt to force Iran into accepting unilateral conditions will fail. It also demonstrates that, contrary to some media portrayals, Iran has no intention of surrendering to military pressure and will only consider negotiations if its national rights and interests are guaranteed.

#### Armane-Melli: What role would Israel play in a potential Iran-U.S. war?

Armane-Melli discussed Israel's potential role in a possible military confrontation between

Iran and the United States in an interview with international affairs analyst Hassan Beheshtipour. According to Beheshtipour, Israel's political turmoil, its economic challenges, U.S. strategic considerations, and Iran's own domestic realities all indicate that war is neither likely nor desirable—for any external actor or for Iran itself. Nevertheless, the risk of political exploitation of domestic discontent and the possibility that certain groups may take advantage of heightened tensions remains. Contrary to media narratives, Israel is not in a position to launch a large-scale war. Internal divisions and simultaneous engagements in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iran have imposed unprecedented financial and military burdens on the Israeli government. Under such circumstances, rhetorical threats serve more of a psychological function than an operational one. In the current volatile environment, some hardline factions—by promoting ideas such as a 'pre-emptive strike' on Israel—are effectively advancing the interests of Israel and the United States. A pre-emptive attack would not only hand Iran's adversaries a ready-made justification, but would also alienate Iran's current partners and draw previously neutral regional states into the conflict.

**Javan: A dangerous precedent and a deflection from internal crises**

In an article, Javan dealt with the European Union's recent decision to place Iran's IRGC on its so-called list of 'terrorist organizations.' The paper argues that the move has triggered widespread domestic reactions and serious legal and political criticism. According to the article, the decision lacks any basis in international law or independent expert assessment and represents a clearly biased, provocative, and costly step in the realm of international relations. From the perspective of Iranian public opinion, the measure is not merely an action against a military institution; it is perceived as a direct affront to national sovereignty, collective dignity, and the historical will of the Iranian people. The IRGC is an official and constitutionally recognized institution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is regarded as a central pillar of national defense responsible for safeguarding security, territorial integrity, and the country's strategic interests. Labeling a sovereign state institution as a terrorist constitutes a dangerous precedent in international law and a blatant violation of fundamental principles such as respect for state sovereignty and the prohibition of interference in internal affairs.

### Egypt urges de-escalation in calls with Iran and US

TEHRAN—Egypt has intensified diplomatic efforts to prevent renewed conflict in West Asia, holding separate phone calls with Iran's foreign minister and the U.S. Middle East envoy amid mounting regional concern that President Donald Trump's escalating rhetoric could push the region toward another war.

According to a statement released by Egypt's Foreign Ministry, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty spoke by phone with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff, exchanging views on regional developments and the urgent need to reduce tensions.

The ministry said Abdelatty stressed "the necessity of increasing efforts aimed at de-escalation, cooperation to establish calm, and preventing the region from being drawn into instability." He also emphasized the importance of prioritizing diplomatic solutions and achieving sustainable political agreements in support of long-term regional

security and stability.

Egypt's intervention comes as fears grow that tensions between Washington and Tehran could spiral into open conflict following recent riots in Iran, which were exploited by armed Mossad and CIA-affiliated groups seeking to destabilize the country. Analysts in Tehran warn that the failure of those unrest efforts has increased the likelihood that external actors may turn once again to direct military confrontation.

The diplomatic push is also unfolding against the backdrop of the June war, a brief but intense 12-day conflict that erupted after Israel attacked Iranian targets and the United States carried out strikes on Iranian facilities in the middle of indirect talks between Tehran and Washington. Iran responded with retaliatory operations, forcing a halt to hostilities and sharply raising the cost of further escalation.

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

### Iran, China and Russia to hold naval drill

TEHRAN—Iran, China, and Russia plan to hold a naval drill, codenamed "security belt", on the last day of the current Iranian month of Bahman (Jan. 21-Feb. 19), Tasnim reported.

Fleets from Iran's Army, the Islamic Revolution

Guard Corps (IRGC), China, and Russia will take part in the maneuver in the northern Indian Ocean.

The drill will be the eighth of its kind since 2019.

## Leader visits Imam Khomeini's mausoleum ahead of revolution's 47th anniv.

From page 1 ► Sunday marks the historic return of Imam Khomeini from exile in Paris in 1979—an event that ignited nationwide protests against the U.S.-backed Pahlavi regime and culminated in its overthrow. The anniversary is commemorated annually through the Ten-Day Dawn celebrations in Iran and by supporters of the Islamic Republic worldwide.

The Leader's public appearance came despite hostile media campaigns—most notably by London-based networks—falsely claiming that Ayatollah Khamenei was "hiding in an underground shelter" amid heightened tensions with the United States. Iranian officials say such reports are part of a broader psychological and information war aimed at projecting instability where none exists.

The visit also followed weeks of heightened rhetoric from U.S. President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly threatened Iran with military action. Earlier this month, Trump openly encouraged armed rioters to seize state institutions, promising that "help is on its way," while simultaneously presiding over a major U.S. military buildup in and around the Persian Gulf.

Peaceful protests over economic grievances—largely caused by years of U.S. sanctions—were hijacked on January 8 and 9 and then escalated through January 14 by foreign-backed armed groups and terrorist



President Masoud Pezeshkian and his cabinet team paid a visit to the shrine of Imam Khomeini on Saturday to renew their commitment to the principles set by the Imam as the 10-day celebrations marking the 47th year of the Islamic Revolution begin.

elements. The violence resulted in widespread arson, vandalism, and attacks on public infrastructure, shops, ambulances, and government facilities, leading to the deaths of scores of civilians and security personnel.

Despite the scale of the unrest, Iran says it successfully restored security, dismantled armed networks, and prevented the country from being dragged into chaos, frustrating what Tehran describes as a plan to pave the way for a second U.S. military assault in January.

With that scenario having failed, Trump has since shifted tactics—

from overt calls for violence to threats of war unless Iran accepts a U.S.-imposed deal, warning that any strike would be "far worse" than the June 2025 U.S. attack on Iranian nuclear facilities, which occurred just days before indirect nuclear talks.

Iran has categorically rejected threats and intimidation, insisting that diplomacy can only succeed on the basis of mutual respect and international law. Officials say Tehran is prepared for a nuclear agreement that guarantees Iran will not pursue nuclear weapons but will not dismantle its peaceful nuclear program or negotiate non-nuclear

issues under pressure.

President Masoud Pezeshkian, speaking at Imam Khomeini's shrine on Saturday, said that Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and certain European actors sought to inflame unrest and deepen divisions inside Iran.

"The goal was to fragment the country and turn social concerns into hatred and conflict," Pezeshkian said, noting that while some ordinary citizens were drawn into the streets, the use of firearms, arson, and attacks on security forces exposed the operation as something far beyond legitimate protest.

"In genuine social protests, people do not burn markets, attack ambulances, or kill soldiers," he added, stressing that the government remains committed to listening to citizens' economic concerns and addressing them responsibly.

Pezeshkian emphasized that the presence and guidance of Ayatollah Khamenei have consistently neutralized such plots, adding that Iran remains united and prepared to defend itself if confronted with aggression.

Iranian officials warn that any new U.S. or Israeli attack would not weaken the Islamic Republic, but instead risk a region-wide conflict with global consequences—a reality, they say, that makes coercion a dangerous and self-defeating strategy.

### Army chief says 'Iran's finger on the trigger' as US talks up naval military buildup



From page 1 ► He cautioned that any miscalculation would immediately endanger "their own security, their troops, the region as a whole, and the criminal Zionist regime," stressing that Iran would respond without hesitation.

General Hatami's remarks come in the aftermath of a failed U.S.-Israeli attempt to destabilize Iran internally in preparation for a second

military assault planned for January.

Peaceful protests over economic hardships—rooted in years of U.S. sanctions—were hijacked between January 8 and January 14 by coordinated networks linked to CIA and Mossad-backed operatives, turning demonstrations into violent riots across multiple cities. The unrest caused extensive vandalism, arson, and destruction of public infrastructure, and led to the deaths of around 2,500 people, including Iranian security personnel and ordinary civilians.

Despite the scale of the violence, Iran successfully dismantled the armed cells, restored order, and re-established nationwide security, depriving Washington of the internal collapse it had hoped would pave the way for another war.

With that plan having failed, U.S. President Donald Trump is now left weighing whether to launch a direct attack—an option analysts widely agree would not collapse the Islamic Republic but

instead ignite a full-scale regional war with global economic and security consequences.

General Hatami noted that Iran's defensive capabilities have advanced significantly since the 12-day war imposed by Israel and the United States in June, particularly in missile systems, air defenses, and deterrence doctrine.

He said the conflict transformed Iran's understanding of modern, hybrid warfare and exposed critical weaknesses in enemy strategy.

"Even Russia, despite more than three years of confrontation with NATO, does not possess the kind of battlefield experience we gained in those 12 days," Hatami said. "We confronted the full spectrum of enemy technology and hybrid warfare. We identified their weaknesses and our own strengths. Today, our defensive power is fundamentally different—and it is not something that can be destroyed."

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

### Araghchi to Washington: Diplomacy is not a one-way street of dictates

#### Iranian FM says 'U.S. must give assurances there will be no new attack or threat'

From page 1 ► Araghchi emphasized that Tehran and Ankara share a deep-rooted commitment to regional stability, standing together against "sinister plots" aimed at fragmenting the region.

"Iran has never abandoned diplomacy," Araghchi noted, confirming that intermediaries deliver messages from U.S. officials almost daily. However, he dismissed these overtures as "artificial" if they are accompanied by coercion.

"Negotiation is a give-and-take. No one can determine the result before the process begins. If the U.S. wants serious diplomacy, it must first abandon its policy of intimidation and treat Iran with mutual respect."

Addressing the recent history of U.S.-Israeli aggression, the For-

ign Minister pointed to the June 2025 strikes on Iran as a turning point that shattered trust. He said that those attacks occurred precisely while indirect talks were progressing in Muscat.

"The June aggression was a failure; they achieved none of their objectives and were forced to seek a ceasefire after 12 days. We have learned from that experience. Our ballistic missiles are ready, and our response to any new folly will be shocking and more powerful than ever before."

The foreign minister added that the U.S. "must give assurances that not only will it not launch a new attack, but even that there will be no threat."

Araghchi also addressed the European Union's recent "strategic blunder" in designating the

Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.

He characterized the move as a desperate act of submission to U.S. dictates. "The IRGC is a legitimate, constitutional pillar of our sovereign state. Without their sacrifices, Daesh [ISIS] would be operating in the heart of Europe today," he stated, warning that Iran's Parliament is prepared to reciprocate by blacklisting European militaries.

Touching on domestic issues, Araghchi clarified the nature of recent unrest, distinguishing between citizens with economic grievances and "armed terrorists" who hijacked protests to serve foreign agendas.

He said that official records show 3,117 fatalities. Of this figure, the minister said, over 2,000

are martyrs, mostly security personnel and civilians. He dismissed Western claims of much higher casualties as "big lies" intended to justify "regime change" fantasies that have no basis in reality.

In his discussions with Turkish top officials, Araghchi reiterated Tehran's position that the security of the region must be managed by regional states and not extra-regional powers.

He reaffirmed Iran's support for Syrian territorial integrity and the necessity of ending the Israeli occupation of Syrian lands.

"We are ready for any scenario," Araghchi concluded. "Whether through the path of diplomacy or the necessity of defense, the dignity of the Iranian nation is non-negotiable."

### Putin hosts Iranian security chief in Kremlin

TEHRAN—President Vladimir Putin received Ali Larijani, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, for a high-stakes summit at the Kremlin on Friday.

Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali confirmed the meeting took place Friday evening, stating that the "main core of the conversations revolved around expanding relations between the two nations, particularly in the economic sphere."

Beyond the bilateral framework, the two politicians engaged in "thorough consultations on vital regional and global issues," ensuring a synchronized response to the evolving geopolitical

landscape.

The summit followed the volatile security environment created by U.S. President Donald Trump's renewed threats of military action against the Islamic Republic and the U.S. military's military buildup in the Middle East.

The Kremlin has advocated for diplomatic solutions rooted in the absolute respect for Iranian sovereignty, viewing Tehran's stability as a cornerstone of regional peace.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov issued a sharp warning on January 26, stating that any military strike against the Islamic Republic would result in a

"serious destabilization" of the Middle East.

Peskov characterized the prospect of an attack as "another step toward serious destabilization of the situation in the region," stressing that Moscow expects all international parties to show restraint and resolve differences exclusively through "peaceful negotiations."

This stance builds on earlier statements from the Russian Foreign Ministry after the recent wave of unrest in Iran, which condemned "subversive external interference" in Iranian internal affairs and labeled threats of military force as "categorically unacceptable."

# A framework for collective security in the Persian Gulf and West Asia

From Page 1 ► As a result, middle powers can no longer rely on external guarantees or abstract norms for their security. They must instead take an active role in shaping the structures and arrangements that safeguard their interests. The central strategic question is how to achieve this.

Two broad approaches present themselves. The first is alignment: accepting a subordinate position in the hope that compliance with a dominant power will yield protection. The experiences of Ukraine, Syria, and other conflict zones demonstrate the limitations and risks of this strategy. The second approach is the pursuit of collective security. Attempts to shield a country behind ideological, political, or economic isolation have consistently produced fragility, stagnation, and long-term instability. Iran's recent experience underscores this reality with particular clarity. Collective action, therefore, is not merely an alternative—it is the only sustainable path forward.

Bilateral negotiations with a hegemonic power are inherently asymmetrical. While such talks should not be dismissed outright, they cannot form the backbone of a viable long-term strategy. A more effective approach is to embed diplomacy within a framework of collective security, enabling negotiations within a broader coalition rather than in isolation.

## Negotiation in the emerging global order

In today's international system, the primary question is no longer whether to negotiate with dominant powers, but how to do so. The real strategic choice lies between individual and collective negotiation. The underlying logic is simple: states that are absent from negotiations become objects of negotiation rather than participants in shaping outcomes. As famously noted by Canada's prime minister at the World Economic Forum in Davos, "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." President Emmanuel Macron's reported remark to Donald Trump—"We can do great things on Iran, but I don't understand what you're doing with Greenland"—reflects the same dynamic.

In this context, Iran increasingly risks being treated as a bargaining chip rather than an autonomous actor. The criti-



cal strategic issue, therefore, is whether Iran approaches negotiations alone or as part of a broader collective that amplifies its leverage and legitimacy.

### Regional conditions and strategic vulnerability

The aftermath of October 7, Israel's subsequent 12-day military confrontation with Iran, the suspension of indirect U.S.-Iran negotiations, and the persistence of a fragile "neither war nor peace" environment have placed Iran's security in a prolonged state of uncertainty. Explicit threats from both the United States and Israel, coupled with Washington's declared reluctance to resume negotiations, have elevated this uncertainty into a more immediate and existential concern.

Although Iran retains the capacity to defend itself, a more prudent strategy would be to alter the strategic framework within which threats are generated. Any opportunity for direct engagement with the United States should be pursued, but such engagement must be anchored in a broader regional vision. Without a clearly articulated strategic horizon, Iran's actions risk appearing reactive, tactical, and aimed primarily at buying time. Under such conditions, even negotiating partners may discount Iran's commitments and intentions.

Equally important, reliance on a single external partner—whether Washington or Beijing—is unlikely to succeed. Iran's relations with both powers must be pursued in parallel. The objective of a collective security framework is precisely to reshape the strategic environment by introducing additional stakeholders into the Iran-U.S. equation.

### Iran and the global value chain

The central analytical premise

of this framework is that a threat to Iran is not merely a threat to one state; it is a threat to the global value chain (GVC). Iran occupies a structurally significant position in international energy markets, trade corridors, and the supply of raw materials. Its geographic and economic role makes it a key node in global production and distribution networks.

Any sustained military threat or conflict involving Iran would therefore produce consequences far beyond the political sphere. Disruptions would ripple through energy markets, international trade routes, and industrial supply chains, imposing systemic costs on the global economy. From this perspective, threats directed at Iran are simultaneously threats to the interests of all actors whose economic lifelines depend on stability in the Persian Gulf and West Asia.

### Iran's strategic response

should therefore be to frame its security not as a narrowly national concern, but as a shared interest of the principal stakeholders in the regional segment of the global value chain. Negotiations with the United States should then take place within a collective, multilateral framework to establish a durable non-aggression arrangement.

### Security, trade, and the logic of interdependence

The global value chain encompasses complex networks of production, energy transmission, transportation, raw materials, technology, finance, and consumption, distributed across multiple countries from design to final delivery. These networks bind national economies together through deep interdependence. In the emerging global order, the security of these chains has become a central concern of both governments and multinational corporations.

Supply chain resilience is now widely recognized as a core component of national economic security. Recent U.S. actions and rhetoric—whether in Venezuela or Greenland—are best understood through this lens. What is often described as a "new world order" is, in practice, the outcome of supply chain realignment. This process has given rise to new forms of cooperation among states across security, economic, and technological domains, rendering trade and security increasingly inseparable.

States that remain marginal to global economic networks face declining relevance. Power in this environment is increasingly defined by a country's position in the global value chain, while economic interdependence translates into geopolitical influence. Iranian policymaking, however, remains primarily shaped by outdated bipolar frameworks and has yet to fully internalize these structural shifts.

### Iran's structural importance

Iran's role within the global value chain is frequently underestimated. Its strategic importance derives from several factors:

\* Iran holds approximately 10 percent of global oil reserves and 15 percent of natural gas reserves, placing it at the core of international energy security.

\* More than 20 percent of global oil trade—particularly supplies destined for Europe and East Asia—passes through the Strait of Hormuz, an area under Iran's geographic influence.

\* Iran serves as a critical hub for major international transport corridors, including East-West, North-South, the China-Persian Gulf route, and TRACECA.

\* It is a significant supplier of raw materials to downstream industries in major regional economies such as China, India, and Turkey.

Military threats against Iran would therefore trigger cascading effects: volatility in global energy markets, disruption of critical transit routes, increased pressure on alternatives such as the Suez Canal, higher transportation and insurance costs, weakened industrial supply chains, and elevated geopolitical risk across the Middle East.

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

## American security and double standard of disorder

From Page 1 ► widespread destruction of public property, armed attacks, the killing of security personnel and ordinary citizens, and the organized activity of violent groups were all present, yet many Western outlets portrayed them simply as "popular protests."

### Security narratives at home

In his comments on Minnesota, Trump explicitly emphasized the "trained" nature of the protesters. From his perspective, violent behavior cannot be the product of spontaneous social anger; it is instead the result of professional organization and direction. This is precisely the language long used in the security discourse of various states to describe organized instability—but it is deemed legitimate only when such events occur within U.S. borders.

Within this framework, an attack on a church is labeled a "riot," collective chants are seen as "planned madness," and disruptions of public order are treated as direct threats to national security. Even deportation is presented as a legitimate option—without mainstream Western media characterizing these positions as "the suppression of protest."

### Protest beyond the borders

Yet this same logic undergoes a sudden transformation when applied to Iran. During Iran's winter unrest, a network of hostile media outlets worked from the earliest hours to marginalize violence and cen-

ter an emotional narrative of "defenseless people." In this framing, armed attackers became "protesters," sabotage was recast as "civic action," and even the assassination of security forces was portrayed as a "natural response to repression."

The direct role of the United States and Israel in guiding the media, cyber, and even operational dimensions of these disturbances has been repeatedly exposed by Iranian officials and some independent reports. Billions of tomans in damage to infrastructure, the deaths of hundreds of Iranians, and the presence of trained elements carrying out violence under the guise of ordinary citizens never found a serious place in the dominant Western narrative.

### Media as a tool of legitimization

The core difference lies not in the nature of the events, but in how they are narrated. Western media, depending on geography and political interests, decide whether a violent act is called "protest" or "riot," a "popular movement" or "terrorism." This is the point at which security ceases to be a universal principle and becomes a political instrument.

Trump—the same politician who repeatedly threatened military action against Iran under the pretext of "supporting protesters"—now shows not the slightest tolerance for the concept of protest when confronted with domestic unrest. This duality is neither accidental nor cultural; it is rooted



in the logic of power.

### Selective security in the American order

In a political order where the United States sees itself as both architect and arbiter, security is not an absolute right but a selective privilege. If instability serves to weaken an independent state, it is celebrated as a "cry for freedom"; if the same instability threatens internal power structures, it is instantly reduced to "professional rioting."

Trump's recent remarks are less about Minnesota than they are a mirror of this double standard—a logic that reveals how the line between protest and disorder is drawn not by human or legal criteria, but by political interests. In such a landscape, what is ultimately sacrificed is not only truth, but the lives of human beings—labeled "protesters" in one moment and "agitators" in another, solely because the geography of violence has changed.

## SPORTS

### We need to criticize ourselves to fix weaknesses: Jafari

TEHRAN – Marzieh Jafari, head coach of Iran's women's national football team, says self-criticism is essential as the team prepare for the 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup.

Team Melli Banovan have been drawn into Group A, alongside Australia, Korea Republic, and the Philippines.

Iran will open their campaign against Korea Republic on March 2.

"The national team camp will begin on Feb. 11, after the conclusion of the Iran Women's Premier League, at the National Football Center," Jafari said. "We have only about one month until our first official match in the Asian Cup, which makes the preparation process very difficult and sensitive."

Referring to the limited time remaining before the tournament in Australia, she added: "Without a doubt, lack of time is one of our main challenges. Preparing a national team under ideal conditions requires more time, but at the moment we are dealing with league commitments and calendar limitations. Honestly, limited access to players has made the preparation process difficult, and this has caused us some concern. Self-criticism is a fundamental principle for us so that we can make more precise decisions in the remaining time."

"In this short period, we must work simultaneously on the players' mental, physical, and technical readiness and bring them to optimal condition. That is why every training session is extremely important, and we must make the most of every opportunity," she said. "The Asian Cup is a high-pressure tournament with a high technical level, and players must be fully prepared both mentally and physically."

Jafari emphasized that managing training load, maintaining player health, and improving team cohesion are key priorities. "We hope the players enter the camp without injuries, because at this stage any injury can significantly affect our preparation. With such limited time, there is no room to compensate for mistakes or long interruptions."

She also pointed to the team's recent preparations: "During the most recent FIFA window, when we traveled to Uzbekistan for two friendly matches, we played with our second team. We had planned to play a preparatory match in Australia before the Asian Cup, but that was not possible."

"We criticize ourselves so that we can correct our weaknesses in the remaining time. Our ultimate goal is the success of Iranian women. With unity, cooperation, and proper planning, we can send a prepared and cohesive team to Australia and be a worthy representative of Iranian women's football," Jafari concluded.

### Iran's Gorgan lose to Astana: 2025/26 FIBA WASL

TEHRAN – BC Astana rose to solo no. 2 in the 2025/26 FIBA WASL-West Asia League standings following a vengeful 88-73 victory over Shahrdari Gorgan at the Sardarya Velodrome on Friday night.

The Kazakhstan Basketball Championship outfit built a good lead in the second chapter before breaking away for good in the ensuing period on the way to getting back at the same team that spoiled their season debut.

But more than earning a measure of payback against their Iran Basketball League counterparts, the home team were able to get close with current first-placers Al Riyadi (4-2) as they improved their record to 4-1.

It's worth noting as well that the win enabled the crew to stay unbeaten at home - all of their wins thus far in the season were at the famed Velodrome, which has long been

the home of Kazakh national teams, too.

"Every game is very important for us because we need to stay high [in the standings] for the playoffs," offered Astana head coach Ramunas Crvika. "Because, we can have the homecourt advantage."

Four finished in double figures in the win, with guard Eric Day earning Capelli Sport Player of the Game honors after submitting 18 points, 8 of which he produced in the third quarter to help spearhead the pullaway.

"It feels really good," said Day, who also had 3 rebounds and 8 assists plus 2 steals, on beating Gorgan. "We just came in prepared, willing to do whatever it takes to get the win, and we were victorious today."

Robert Pan also registered 18 points, which he laced with 11 rebounds. Askar Maydekin delivered 16 points, while Alexandre Zhigulin chipped in 10 points and 6 boards for Astana, who tallied 24 assists as a unit.

The former WASL bronze medalists will look to extend their winning run to five when they take on Sagesse SC in a clash between streaking sides on February 4, Wednesday, at the Ghazir Club Stadium in Lebanon.

Perry Petty and Nosratollah Yazarloo had 14 points apiece for Gorgan, who fell to 3-2 following the loss.

Amirhossein Yazarloo made 12 points while Jordan Hamilton added 11 points for the two-time WASL-West Asia runners-up, who will try to get back on track when they take on Wednesday as well in Ghazir.

### Sepahan winger Asgari undergoes knee surgery

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team winger Mohammad Asgari has undergone knee surgery.

Asgari underwent a successful surgery on Friday.

Manouchehr Nikfar, the CEO of Sepahan Club, visited Asgari and was informed about the latest updates on the player's medical condition.

Asgari, who suffered an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury while playing for Iran's U23 national team, will begin the next stages of his treatment and rehabilitation in the near future.

### Ali Karimi close to joining Sepahan

TEHRAN – Kayserispor midfielder Ali Karimi is on the verge of returning to the Persian Gulf Pro League outfit Sepahan.

Karimi, a talented product of Sepahan's academy, joined the club's youth teams at the age of eight. After spending 12 seasons progressing from the youth levels to Sepahan's senior team and earning a call-up to Iran's senior national team following appearances for the youth and U23 sides, he spent two seasons playing abroad with Dinamo Zagreb and Lokomotiva Zagreb in Croatia. At the age of 23, the Iranian midfielder returned to Sepahan and, after one season, joined Esteghlal.

Karimi joined to Al-Qatar SC from Esteghlal and then joined Al-Duhail midway through the season. At the end of that campaign, he was transferred to Kayserispor in Turkey. After four seasons with the Turkish club, he is now a free agent and has received a new offer from Sepahan.

At the beginning of the season, Karimi was close to signing with Esteghlal, but an increase in his financial demands led the club to withdraw from the deal.

The former national team midfielder, who has been without a club for half a season, is now close to wearing Sepahan's jersey for the third time following a request from Moharram Navidkia and the start of negotiations by the club's management. Finalizing the deal depends on reaching a financial agreement between the parties.

## Paknejad plays down concerns over U.S. dealings with Iran's oil customers

TEHRAN – Iran's oil minister dismissed concerns that potential U.S. dealings with buyers of Iranian crude could undermine Tehran's oil sales or revenues, saying the country remains in control of its export strategy.

Mohsen Paknejad said worries that global oil prices could fall following U.S. moves to seize Venezuelan oil, pushing Iran's selling price below budget assumptions, were misplaced.

"The oil market is dynamic," Paknejad was quoted as saying by state broadcaster IRIB.

He added that base prices are set using global benchmarks that are outside Iran's control and depend on external variables.

He said Iran adjusts to market changes and coordinates closely with end buyers through negotiations that take operational costs into account, noting that supply conditions and demand volumes also shift seasonally.

"Different indicators affect pricing, and our colleagues take all of them into account



to secure the best possible selling price," the minister said.

Responding to concerns that the United States, having access to Venezuelan oil, might seek to strike deals with Iran's regular customers such as China, Paknejad said there was no cause for concern.

"We have full command of our area of work, and there is no need to worry about these issues," he said.

## World Bank says 3 governance indicators improved in Iran

From Page 1 ► The government effectiveness score increased to 37.61 in 2024 from 36.95 in 2023, while the control of corruption score edged up to 24.63 from 24.15, indicating a slight improvement in efforts to curb financial corruption.

However, Iran's performance declined in

three other indicators.

The political stability score fell to 38.89 in 2024 from 44.21 a year earlier.

Regulatory quality slipped to 31.03 from 31.7, while the rule of law score declined to 35.71 from 36.3 in 2023, according to the report.

## Iran's 4th Eurasia International Trade Exhibition postponed

TEHRAN- The fourth Eurasia International Trade Exhibition has been postponed to the second half of the Iranian calendar month Farvardin (late March/early April) to facilitate a more magnificent and grand-scale hosting of this international event.

According to an announcement by Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), the exhibition, which was scheduled to be held during February 1-4 at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, has been postponed due to disruptions in communication networks, logistical challenges, and the approaching holy month of Ramadan.

Based on the assessment of the Trade Development Organization, since one of the fundamental objectives of this event is to ensure better organization and dignified hosting of foreign guests and merchants, its holding has been rescheduled for the second half of Farvardin.

In this announcement, the TPO has stated that, given that the inaugural session of the Iran-Eurasia Trade-Economic Cooperation Meeting was also planned to be held on the sidelines of this exhibition, it is therefore appropriate that this purposeful event be held with comprehensive planning and a holistic view towards all its various aspects.

TPO Head Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi has recently referred to Iran's free trade agreement with Eurasia and added: "With the implementation of this agreement, 87 percent of goods exchanged between Iran and the five member countries of the Eurasian Union became subject to zero tariffs, creating an unprecedented capacity for an export leap. This agreement has created significant capacity for trade development between Iran and Eurasian countries. Consequently, Iran's exports to the Eurasian region experienced a 16% growth over the first eight months of this year."

Referring to research conducted at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, Dehghan Dehnavi stated: "If the goods Iran currently exports to various countries are matched with the goods Eurasian Union member countries import from other parts of the world, it will become clear that for Russia alone, there is approximately \$12 billion in potential trade capacity—a figure nearly ten times Iran's current exports to that country. This means that merely by activating exist-

ing capacities, exports can be multiplied. Furthermore, goods that are currently only produced for domestic consumption can be identified and potentially developed into export products, finding new markets in Eurasian countries."

He further emphasized the necessity of removing non-tariff barriers between Iran and Eurasian Union member countries, stating: "One such issue lies in the areas of standards and removing transportation obstacles. Currently, connectivity has been established on the eastern side of the Caspian Sea, and on the western side, the Rasht-Astara railway project is being pursued. New railway routes via Nakhchivan and Armenia are also under consideration. In the field of standards, a major non-tariff barrier is the lack of a common standard language between Iran and Eurasian countries, as differences in standard systems have caused problems for Iranian producers. Removing this obstacle can pave the way for export development."

The head of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran stressed the importance of promotional activities and increasing mutual understanding between traders of both sides, adding: "Creating spaces for dialogue, negotiation, and contract signing among economic actors is very important, and trade exhibitions are considered the most organized tool for achieving this goal."

"Currently, the private sector, especially in the medical equipment field, has been successful in this path and has managed to achieve significant exports to Eurasian countries by registering their products."

Referring to the role of customs in implementing the free trade agreement, Dehghan Dehnavi stated: "In the customs domain, Iran Customs has played an effective role in the joint committee negotiations. One important action is moving towards the electronic exchange of information, which can remove part of the non-tariff barriers. Additionally, good measures have been taken in rail transportation; the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways has reached important agreements with Eurasian countries and active railway routes have been established. However, in road transportation, we still face problems such as prolonged waiting times for trucks, which harms exports. This sector requires more serious measures."

## IMIDRO says 420 exploration maps to draw private investment

TEHRAN – Iran's Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) plans to use more than 400 newly produced exploration maps to attract private sector participation and reduce risk in mineral exploration, its head said.

Mohammadsaoud Samiee-Nejad said the production of 420 priority 1:50,000-scale exploration maps would provide baseline data to help identify critical and strategic mineral reserves, according to a report by state broadcaster IRIB.

He said the project is being carried out under a tripartite agreement between IMIDRO, the Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations of Iran, and the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade.

The six-year program, running from 2026 to 2031, is expected to require investment of about \$1.0 billion, with average annual financing needs of around \$170 million, Samiee-Nejad said.

He added that the project could lead to the identification of at least two world-class metallic mineral deposits with an estimated value of \$30 billion.

Samiee-Nejad said that under Iran's Seventh National Development Plan, exploration blocks will soon be offered nationwide through the Iran Mercantile Exchange in the form of investment packages. Exploration licenses will be transferred to qualified individuals or companies, grouping nearby deposits with similar minerals into single packages, he said.

Referring to Kerman province, he said the region holds more than 8 billion tons of proven mineral reserves across 42 types of minerals and accounts for about 140 million tons of annual extraction. Several of Iran's world-class mines, including Sarchesh-



meh and Miduk copper and Gol Gohar iron ore, are located in the province.

Samiee-Nejad said expanded exploration activity in recent years, including airborne geophysics, deep drilling and three-dimensional geological modelling, has opened new prospects in Kerman. Over the past five years, six exploration zones covering 32,000 square kilometers have been allocated to IMIDRO and its subsidiaries, leading to the identification of 50 promising areas, the issuance of five discovery certificates and 21 exploration licenses.

He also stressed the role of universities in supporting sustainable mining development, saying that responsible mining must balance economic value creation with environmental protection and long-term job opportunities, supported by skilled human capital and new technologies.

Iran's mining sector is a cornerstone of its non-oil economy, endowed with substantial and diverse mineral wealth. The country holds the world's largest zinc reserves, second largest copper reserves, and ranks among the top ten for iron ore, lead, and gypsum. Major mining and metallurgical complexes, such as the Sarcheshmeh and Miduk copper mines and the Chadormalu and Golgohar iron ore

mines, are pivotal to the industry. is therefore inextricably linked to the broader geopolitical landscape. If constraints ease, its immense reserves could be rapidly developed; if they persist, the sector will likely continue to operate well below its true potential, despite its foundational role in the national economy.

The Iranian Mines & Mining Industries Development & Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) is the paramount state-owned holding company and the central pillar of Iran's mining and metals sector. Established in 2004, its mission is to lead the strategic development, modernization, and integration of the country's vast mineral resources to reduce economic dependence on oil.

IMIDRO oversees a massive network of subsidiaries and affiliated companies across the entire value chain of key commodities. Its portfolio includes major national giants in steel (e.g., Mobarakeh Steel Company), aluminum (Iranian Aluminum Company), copper (National Iranian Copper Industries Company), and mineral exploration. It drives mega-projects aimed at increasing production capacity, promoting value-added processing (like turning ore into finished metal), and developing required infrastructure such as railroads and port facilities.

Nevertheless, the Iranian government actively promotes the sector as a strategic alternative to oil dependence. Policies aim to attract domestic and allied investment, increase the value-added through domestic processing (e.g., steel and copper cathode production), and develop downstream industries. There is a strong focus on boosting exports of processed minerals to regional markets.

Geopolitical factors remain the dominant influence. While partnerships with countries like China and Russia provide some capital and technical support, comprehensive Western sanctions continue to stifle growth. The future trajectory of Iran's mining sector

## China continues to be the most stable

## and reliable source of global economic growth



By Chinese Ambassador to Iran Cong Peiwei

TEHRAN- The 2025 Annual Report on China's Economy was released recently, attracting widespread attention from the international community.

In the context of global economic order being challenged by unilateralism, protectionism, and the impacts of geopolitical and regional conflicts, China's economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience and vitality, successfully achieving its key expected goals. Looking ahead to 2026, I would like to take this opportunity to share a few thoughts with our friends in Iran on China's economic achievements and potential, as well as how to address global economic challenges.

China's economy continues to maintain steady progress, moving towards new and improved development. Over the past five years, China achieved an average annual growth rate of approximately 5.4%. In 2025, China's GDP surpassed 140 trillion yuan for

the first time, with a year-on-year growth of 5%. Globally, China's economic growth rate ranks among the top of major economies, making it the most stable and reliable source of global economic growth, with an estimated contribution to world economic growth of around 30%.

In 2025, China remained the world's second-largest consumer market, with a 5.9% increase in industrial added value above designated size. China's total R&D expenditure has consistently ranked second in the world, and new growth momentum in green and digital industries is steadily taking shape. Overall, the long-term supportive conditions and basic trends for China's economic growth remain unchanged, exhibiting characteristics of strong stability, numerous advantages, resilience, and significant potential.

As 2026 marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan, the economy is expected to continue to perform steadily and positively. China will persist in expanding openness and achieving mutual benefits. China has always valued promoting the common prosperity of trade partners through its own development, committed to expanding the global economic and trade pie. China is not only willing to be the world's factory, but also keen to be the world's market. With the world's largest and most growth-oriented middle-income group, China's consumer market continues to rank second globally.

In contrast to the frequent tariff threats

issued by the United States, China is eager to share opportunities from its vast market with the world, striving to ensure that the benefits of development reach every country and every group.

We will continue to hold events like the China International Import Expo, further expand imports, and welcome enterprises from all countries to seize the opportunities created by China's efforts to expand domestic demand and boost consumption, offering more and better products and services.

China will firmly uphold multilateralism. In recent years, President Xi Jinping has proposed initiatives such as the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative, and Global Governance Initiative, offering Chinese solutions to address common global issues. China has always earnestly implemented the essences of President Xi's important speeches, promoting the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind, and firmly supporting multilateralism and free trade.

China is committed to maintaining an international system centered on the United Nations and an international order based on international law, actively advocating for inclusive and broad-based economic globalization, and supporting the liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment. We are dedicated to enhancing the representation of the Global South and developing countries and are willing to work with all countries to create a prosperous and sustainable future.

## TEDPIX drops 57,000 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Securities Exchange (TSE), lost 57,000 points to 3,924 million on Saturday, which is the first day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's

over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

On December 20, Hojatollah Seyedi, head of the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), said investor confidence has returned to the stock market and plans are in place to list up to 20 companies through initial public offerings by the end of the current Iranian year (late March 2026).

He said restoring confidence had been a prerequisite for deepening the market and expanding the role of the bourse in financing economic growth under the country's fourteenth government.

Speaking at a ceremony marking the start of trading at Tehran Securities Exchange (TSE), attended by First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref and Econ-

omy Minister Ali Madani-Zadeh, Seyedi said boosting capital formation had been a core objective since September last year, describing it as essential for sustainable economic growth.

He said government policies and support from the president had helped both deepen the market and expand it through new listings, adding that confidence peaked earlier this year.

# Trump's tower of deceit: Epstein's files pull back the curtain

Over three million pages of DOJ files fuel critical allegations, placing the U.S. president at the heart of Epstein's elite sex scandal network

TEHRAN – The newest release of the Epstein files has once again pulled U.S. President Donald Trump, along with a long list of powerful figures, into the center of a story that refuses to fade. The U.S. Department of Justice — the federal agency responsible for enforcing the law and overseeing the FBI — published more than three million pages of documents, along with thousands of images and videos, on Friday. What emerged is a portrait of Epstein's world that is both familiar and newly disturbing: a network of wealth, secrecy, and influence that stretched across politics, entertainment, business, and even intelligence circles.

Trump's name appears throughout the files, sometimes in routine references, but often in contexts that critics say reflect the darker social environment Epstein built around himself. One of the most serious entries is an FBI record documenting a tip from a caller who said their friend had been forced to perform oral sex on Trump in New Jersey more than three decades ago. The DOJ's own release states that the caller "reported an unidentified female friend who was forced to perform oral sex on President Trump approximately 35 years ago in NJ." According to the tip, the friend said she was "approximately 13-14 years old when this occurred."

The DOJ has rejected this allegation as unfounded and false, explaining that the release includes every public submission sent to the FBI, even fabricated ones. Still, the presence of such a claim in the files shows the kind of accusations that surrounded Trump whenever investigators examined Epstein's network.

The files also include a spreadsheet where the FBI logged sexual assault tips involving Trump. Many of these tips were anonymous or unverified, but the sheer number is striking. Critics argue that even if these claims did not lead to charges, they reveal the atmosphere of suspicion that followed Trump's name in the context of Epstein's world. They say it reflects the kind of environment where young girls, secrecy, and



powerful men mixed in ways that now look impossible to defend.

#### Maxwell's web of power

Other documents describe witness interviews that place Trump inside the social machinery built by Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. Maxwell, Epstein's longtime associate and later his convicted accomplice, played a central role in recruiting and managing the young girls Epstein abused. She was also the daughter of Robert Maxwell, the powerful media mogul and former politician whose global influence extended deeply into political and intelligence circles, particularly in Israel. Robert Maxwell's funeral on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (al-Quds), attended by top Israeli officials, remains a striking reminder of the family's prominence. Analysts have long argued that Ghislaine's access — shaped by her father's networks — helped Epstein move effortlessly through elite circles, including those with intelligence ties.

One witness recalled Maxwell introducing a woman to Trump in a way that felt similar to how she introduced girls to Epstein, using comments like "I think he likes you" and "aren't you lucky." Nothing in that account proves a crime, but it reinforces the impression that Trump was not a distant or accidental acquaintance. He was present in the same rooms, attending the same parties, and moving comfortably in the same atmosphere that later turned out to be built on exploitation.

#### The elite in Epstein's orbit

The release also sheds light on other high-profile figures who appeared in Epstein's orbit. Elon Musk appears in a 2012 email exchange where he seems to ask about "the wildest party on our island," contradicting earlier public statements distancing himself from Epstein. Howard Lutnick, now serving in the Trump administration, appears in emails planning a visit to Epstein's private island in 2012, despite previously claiming he had cut ties with Epstein years earlier. The files also include references to Bill Clinton, Prince Andrew, and numerous musicians and celebrities — Michael Jackson, Diana Ross, Mick Jagger, Chris Tucker — though the context of many photos remains unclear. Being named in the files does not imply wrongdoing, but the sheer range of powerful people connected to Epstein shows how wide his influence stretched.

Yet even with the dramatic photos and viral headlines, the most consequential parts of the story remain hidden. Large portions of the files are heavily redacted. Entire reports, names, and details — especially those of hundreds of victims — are obscured.

This concern is not unfounded. Investigative reporting from outlets such as Drop Site News, as well as some famous journalists, has highlighted Epstein's connections to intelligence-linked figures. Epstein collaborated with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and individuals tied to Israeli military intelligence. He facilitated security

agreements, surveillance projects, and political introductions that advanced strategic interests. Analysts argue that Epstein acted as a private intermediary, connecting intelligence agencies, political leaders, and wealthy elites — a role that may explain why he repeatedly escaped accountability.

Behind the headlines, the human cost remains the most important part of the story. Survivors like Virginia Giuffre and Maria Farmer tried to expose Epstein's crimes. Farmer reported Epstein to the FBI as early as 1996, describing stolen photos and threats to her home. Giuffre's testimony revealed a global trafficking network that exploited vulnerable girls and delivered them to powerful men. Many victims' stories remain hidden behind redactions, leaving the public with only fragments of the truth.

#### Mossad shadows over Trump's Iran threat

Some analysts argue that the timing of the latest Epstein file release may not be politically neutral. They suggest that Israeli intelligence interests, particularly Mossad, could see advantage in amplifying pressure on Trump at a moment of personal and political vulnerability. In this reading, the renewed visibility of Trump's name in the Epstein documents — embedded within the long-documented intelligence-linked milieu surrounding Ghislaine Maxwell and her father, Robert, whose connections spanned elite political and security networks including Israel — serves as leverage, encouraging a turn toward confrontation with Iran as a means of deflecting attention from a damaging scandal and reasserting authority through foreign escalation. The situation is intensified by a U.S. military buildup in the Middle East, including aircraft carriers and other major assets, alongside Trump's repeated threats of military action against Iran. It highlights how the prospect of conflict could be instrumentalized to paper over Trump's scandal — at significant geopolitical cost, along with unforeseen consequences for the United States.

## How is Washington's oil-first strategy redrawing Libya's geopolitical map?

From page 1 ►

#### Two governments, one oil prize

Libya remains divided between two rival authorities. In the west, the internationally recognized Government of National Unity, led by Dbeibah, governs from Tripoli. In the east, a parallel administration appointed by the House of Representatives and led by Osama Hammad operates from Benghazi, backed by Khalifa Haftar's forces and controls much of eastern and southern Libya.

Since 2011, this split has paralyzed state institutions and transformed oil wealth into a tool of political survival rather than national development.

Against this backdrop, Boulos' meetings with both camps — including his encounter with Belqasim Haftar, head of the Development and Reconstruction Fund in the east — have reinforced the perception that Washington is dealing with Libya as two separate markets rather than a single state.

Analysts argue that Boulos' approach effectively entrenches division. By concluding economic understandings with all parties, Washington strengthens each faction within its own territory.

Instead of encouraging compromise, these deals convince rival elites that they can bypass unity altogether while still enjoying international backing.

The result, analysts warn, is a hardened political stalemate dressed up as pragmatic diplomacy.

The Libyan Political Parties Coordination echoed this concern, stating it views Boulos' meetings "with suspicion," accusing them of recycling the same political figures and excluding

broader Libyan participation.

Such selective engagement, the group warned, deepens division and prolongs the transitional phase rather than ending it.

Other observers offer a sharper critique; they don't deny that Washington seeks to unify Libyan institutions — but argue that the objective is strategic control, not reconciliation.

From their perspective, Washington aims to consolidate Libya's oil, financial, and security institutions under an American-friendly framework.

This would serve two strategic goals: pushing Russia out of the Libyan arena and securing privileged access to one of Africa's largest oil reserves.

With confirmed reserves of around 48.4 billion barrels, Libya is too important to ignore, particularly amid global energy uncertainty. It is no coincidence that most agreements linked to Boulos' visits focus on oil, gas, refining, and production optimization.

The American approach does not stop at energy; Boulos also met military leaders from both east and west, praising joint US-supervised military exercises planned in Sirte.

Officially, these maneuvers are framed as confidence-building measures. In reality, they reflect a deeper logic: protecting oil infrastructure and investment corridors.

This merging of economic and security tracks reveals the essence of Washington's strategy: Stability is defined not by elections or constitutional order but by the uninterrupted flow of energy and the containment of rivals.

As long as Dbeibah and Haftar cooperate economically, their political rivalry can remain unresolved.

Another sensitive dimension is Libya's frozen assets abroad, estimated to be worth up to \$70 billion.

Reports suggest that Tripoli sought US mediation to ease restrictions on these funds in exchange for channeling investments through American companies.

While no comprehensive agreement has been finalized, the message is clear: access to Libya's own wealth may come with political and commercial conditions.

Observers also warn that this raises profound ethical and legal questions: Without an elected government, who has the right to negotiate such assets? And why should American firms be privileged over others?

Meanwhile, the United Nations efforts to organize elections and reunify Libya have repeatedly stalled as Washington's approach increasingly sidelines this track, favoring what analysts describe as an "economic-military" model of conflict management.

Elections, constitutional reforms, and popular legitimacy are pushed aside in favor of technocratic arrangements that keep the system functioning — but fragmented.

Libya's crisis now appears less like a diplomatic failure than a carefully maintained equilibrium. A divided country that exports oil, welcomes American companies, and limits Russian influence is acceptable — perhaps even preferable — to Washington.

For Libyans, however, this model offers no sovereignty, no accountability, and no future shaped by the ballot box. Without legitimacy, unity becomes a slogan, and stability becomes a commodity — profitable for outsiders, but hollow at home.

## 'Horrible massacres against civilians': Israel kills dozens of Palestinians in a single day



Rescuers carry the body of a victim amid the debris of Sheikh Radwan police station in Gaza City following an Israeli air raid [AFP]

TEHRAN — Israeli warplanes launched a new wave of air raids across the Gaza Strip on Saturday, killing dozens of Palestinians in yet another blatant violation of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire.

The attacks struck a tent sheltering displaced families in the Mawasi area northwest of Khan Younis, as well as residential buildings in Gaza City neighborhoods. By Saturday afternoon, more than 30 Palestinians — including children — had been killed.

According to Al Jazeera, the strikes occurred inside the so-called "yellow line," a zone Israel had previously designated as safe for civilians.

The Israeli military claimed the attacks were a response to what it called a violation of the October 2025 ceasefire agreement. In a statement, it said its forces — alongside the domestic intelligence agency — targeted individuals it labeled as Hamas and Islamic Jihad commanders. It further alleged that eight fighters were seen emerging from underground tunnels in eastern Rafah, though it provided no evidence to support these claims. Israel also said it struck a weapons storage site, a manufacturing facility, and two launch sites in central Gaza.

Hamas rejected Israel's narrative outright, calling the claims "a pathetic attempt to justify horrific massacres against civil-

ians." Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem described the attacks as a demonstration of Israel's "contempt for mediators, guarantor states, and all parties involved in the so-called 'Peace Council'" — the committee of global leaders handpicked by President Donald Trump to oversee his 20-point plan for ending Israel's war on Gaza.

Since the ceasefire took effect on October 10, Gaza's Government Media Office reports that over 520 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces. These deaths come on top of the staggering toll of Israel's broader assault: more than 71,600 Palestinians have been killed since October 7, 2023.

For Palestinians, these latest attacks reinforce a grim reality: even ceasefires brokered by Israel's closest ally offer no real protection. Displaced families sheltering in designated "safe zones" continue to be bombed. Civilian infrastructure — homes, apartments, police stations, and makeshift camps — remains a primary target. And each new round of Israeli strikes further erodes the credibility of international mediators who insist that diplomacy is working.

The pattern is unmistakable: Israel continues to act with impunity, shielded by U.S. political cover, while Palestinians — already exhausted, displaced, and starving — pay the price with their lives.

## Self-defense or slaughter: U.S. arms drive Israel's Gaza carnage

TEHRAN — The United States has approved more than \$6.6 billion in new arms sales to Israel even as Israeli forces continue to violate a Washington-brokered ceasefire announced in October last year. The State Department confirmed that Israel will receive 30 Apache attack helicopters and other U.S.-made military vehicles, despite the fact that these same systems have been repeatedly used against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In its announcement, the State Department claimed it is "vital to U.S. national interests" to ensure Israel maintains a "strong and ready self-defense capability." Yet since the ceasefire took effect on October 10, Israeli forces have killed more than 500 Palestinians. These deaths add to the devastating toll of Israel's broader assault. The Israeli army has killed over 71,600 Palestinians since October 7, 2023.

Human rights groups and UN experts have urged Washington to halt weapons transfers, arguing that U.S. arms have enabled what they describe as a genocidal campaign in Gaza. Their warnings stand in stark contrast

to the State Department's framing. Apache helicopters and armored assault vehicles are not defensive tools; they are offensive weapons used in densely populated civilian areas. Calling them instruments of "self-defense" obscures their real-world impact and shields the U.S. from responsibility for the destruction they help inflict.

The claim that Israel needs billions in offensive weaponry for protection also ignores the fundamental power imbalance of military occupation. Palestinians live under Israeli control without an army, navy, or air force. To portray one of the world's most heavily armed militaries as the vulnerable party is to invert reality and erase the daily violence Palestinians endure.

By approving massive arms sales while speaking the language of de-escalation, Washington undermines its own ceasefire and positions itself as an enabler rather than a mediator. The State Department's rhetoric reduces Palestinian suffering to a footnote in U.S. strategic calculations, even as entire neighborhoods in Gaza lie in ruins.

## Rafah border crossing: What the reopening reveals about Israel's next moves

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN — The scheduled opening of the Rafah border crossing on Sunday is another sign of the Israeli regime's larger scheme.

It shows how the Israeli occupation regime intends to handle the next stage, often called Phase Two, of the U.S.-led initiative for the Gaza Strip.

The terms at Rafah allow people to leave more easily than they can return. This cre-

ates a one-way flow that could change Gaza's population over time.

More importantly, it sets a pattern where basic needs are used as bargaining chips, tied strictly to the Zionist regime's security demands.

The reopening of the crossing follows two years of U.S.-backed genocide against the Palestinian population trapped inside the enclave.

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

## Koozeh-Shekani: Where tradition, belief and renewal converge



From Page 1 ► Some families placed symbolic items inside the pots: charcoal to represent misfortune, coins to signify prosperity and livelihood, and salt as a symbol of sharp vision and insight. Before the pot was broken, it was rotated over the heads of all family members. It was then handed to the woman of the household, who would climb to the rooftop and throw it down into the alley, shattering it. In some cases, staple crops of the season—such as barley, wheat, or beans—were added so that, after the pot broke, the grains would serve as food for birds.

The ceremony followed a specific ritual. On Wednesday evening, families brought firewood to the rooftop and filled the pot with water. A portion of the water was then poured into the four corners of the rooftop, after which the pot was thrown down from the roof and broken. At the moment of breaking the pot, participants recited verses such as:

My pain and affliction are poured into the pot (koozeh),  
May the pain and affliction of the pot be cast into the narrow alley (koocheh).

This verse is a deliberate play on words, as koozeh means "pot" and koocheh means "narrow alley."

Another commonly recited couplet was:

Go sorrow, come joy;  
Go hardship, come sustenance.

The ritual is rooted in the belief that by breaking the pot and discarding the misfortune symbolically placed within it, happiness and blessings would enter the household. A practical reason for the custom was the widespread use of unglazed earthenware pots for drinking water and storing food. People believed that using such pots for more than a year could lead to unhygienic conditions, as impurities would be absorbed into the pot's walls and potentially cause illness.

## Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad eyes revival of traditional spinning workshops

TEHRAN—Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad Cultural Heritage Department has put on agenda to revive traditional spinning workshops.

According to Miras Aria, Head of Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad Cultural Heritage Department Mojtaba Amir-Hosseini said on the sidelines of his visit to the obsolete spinning workshop in Morderaz village in Yasuj on Wednesday: "Supporting investors who apply to create the traditional spinning workshops in different parts of Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad is on the agenda of the Government."

Referring to the provincial nomadic capacities in providing raw materials for the traditional spinning workshops, he stated that due to the prevalence of traditional animal husbandry in the nomadic areas of Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, it is possible to provide high-quality yarn in the province. Investment in the field of spinning workshops, in addition to profitability, will also boost the production of industrial products, he added.

Amir-Hosseini said: "If each spinning workshop is set up, at least 15 people will be employed, and the raw materials needed by handicraft artists will be provided at 50 to 60 percent less than the current price."

## Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley

Enclosed between the high mountains of the Hindu Kush in the central highlands of Afghanistan, the Bamiyan Valley opens out into a large basin bordered to the north by a long, high stretch of rocky cliffs.

The Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley comprise a serial property consisting of eight separate sites within the Valley and its tributaries. Carved into the Bamiyan Cliffs are the two niches of the giant Buddha statues (55m and 38m high) destroyed by the Taliban in 2001, and numerous caves forming a large ensemble of Buddhist monasteries, chapels and sanctuaries along the foothills of the valley dating from the 3rd to the 5th century CE. In

He continued that Jajim weaving, tablecloth weaving, felt weaving, spinning, needlework, basket weaving, traditional embroidery and Siah-Chador weaving (weaving the nomadic black tents) are among the most important hand-woven crafts of Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad artists.

Amir continued that improving and increasing the quality of various Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad handicraft products will provide a better and easier basis for their sale.

Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad province is located in the southwestern part of Iran, bordering the provinces of Fars to the east, Chahar Mahal-Bakhtiari to the north, and Khuzestan to the west. The province covers an area of 15,563 square kilometers, with a population of about 706,000 people, the majority of whom are ethnic Lors.

Yasuj city is the capital of the province and the largest city in the region. The province has two distinct regions, the Zagros Mountains and the plains. The Zagros mountain range provides an excellent habitat for nomads who move from one place to another with their livestock. The nomads are a significant cultural aspect of the province.

(Source: UNESCO)

## Ancient Sadeh festival can reinforce social cohesion and unity, governor-general says

TEHRAN — Kerman's governor-general Mohammad-Ali Talebi said on Wednesday that the ancient Sadeh festival is a national ritual belonging to all Iranians and can contribute to social cohesion and unity.

Speaking on the sidelines of Sadeh celebrations in Kerman province, Talebi said the festival goes beyond a religious ceremony and should be viewed as part of Iran's shared cultural heritage, Miras Aria reported.

Talebi said Sadeh has deep historical roots in Iran and has, at times, faced neglect despite its national character. He added that the festival has historically carried limited religious aspects and cannot be attributed exclusively to a single community.

He said the Zoroastrian community has played a key role in preserving the festival, while stressing that Sadeh is an Iranian tradition open to all citizens.

Talebi said Kerman province was prepared to support broader celebrations of the festival, but added that the Zoroastrian community had opted for a more limited event this year in consideration of current conditions and in respect for victims of recent incidents.



The official then underlined that the festival has the potential to strengthen national solidarity by reinforcing shared values and social cohesion in support of national interests and territorial integrity.

Talebi said there is no distinction between Muslims and Zoroastrians in this regard, adding that all Iranians share the goal of promoting the

country's dignity.

29. It is traditionally celebrated 50 days before Nowruz, the Iranian New Year, and 40 days after Yalda Night.

Sadeh is observed in several Iranian cities, including Yazd, Isfahan and Shiraz, as well as among Iranian communities abroad. In 2023, UNESCO recognized Sadeh as a shared cultural heritage of Iran and Tajikistan.

## Natural heritage overlooked in Iran's tourism policy, researcher says



TEHRAN — Iran's natural heritage is an integral part of the country's national identity but remains poorly defined, under-prioritized and constrained by institutional conflicts, a natural heritage expert said.

Reza Ali-Asl, an expert on the registration of natural heritage sites, said Iran's natural monuments include protected areas, wildlife refuges, wetlands, old trees and special plant and animal species, but responsibility for them is divided between the Department of Environment (DoE) and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

"The DoE follows a conservation-oriented approach, while the Ministry of Cultural Heritage has an exploitation-based approach," Ali-Asl said. "This difference means that many natural monuments located in protected areas cannot be registered at all."

In an interview published on Saturday by Miras Aria, Ali-Asl criticized what he described as conceptual ambiguity, institutional conflict, lack of written resources, absence of fixed guidelines and structural neglect in the management of natural heritage.

He said natural heritage has yet to find a clear place in Iran's tourism and policymaking frame-

works, adding that even tourism professionals often struggle to define the concept.

"If you ask many tour guides who have completed eco-tourism courses to define natural heritage, they cannot," he said, adding that the focus of Iran's tourism industry has long been centered on historical and cultural monuments.

Ali-Asl said this focus has marginalized natural heritage despite Iran's extensive geographical, climatic and ecological diversity. "Every region, with its ecosystems, landscapes, species or ancient trees, represents natural heritage," he said.

He cited the registration of the ancient juniper tree known as "Ors Morad" in Kerman province as an example of the challenges involved, saying the process was only possible under exceptional circumstances due to the tree's border location.

Ali-Asl underlined that natural heritage is not considered a budget priority by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, although nature plays a symbolic role in Iranian culture.

"Mount Damavand is a symbol of Iran, and Mount Sabalan represents power and vitality... When the Zayandeh-Rood river flows, the people of Isfahan celebrate," he said, adding that rivers in Khuzestan province have historically shaped civilization.

"These examples show that natural heritage is not merely physical; it is part of our identity," he said.

He also pointed to traditional beliefs surrounding sacred trees in some regions as evidence of a deep-rooted cultural connection to nature, which he said has weakened in modern life.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ali-Asl described the registration process for natural monuments as lengthy and complex, involving multiple institutions including natural resources authorities, the

DoE and regional water agencies.

"Sometimes a wetland of national importance requires approval from a district governor because parts of the surrounding land are leased to villagers," he said, citing his experience with the registration of Marreh Wetland in Qom province.

"This shows that the legal framework for registering natural heritage has not yet matured," he said.

He also raised concerns about the condition of ancient trees in urban areas, particularly in Tehran, where centuries-old plane trees are being damaged by construction and asphalt.

"Old trees are part of the historical memory of cities, yet many are being suffocated by development," he said.

Ali-Asl criticized the lack of publicly accessible specialist resources and said existing research efforts remain fragmented and individual rather than part of a coordinated national strategy.

He also highlighted inconsistencies in guidelines for protecting and marking natural monuments, saying non-expert opinions are sometimes applied inappropriately.

"Every tree, habitat and animal has a story that can engage people," he said. "A 3,000-year-old tree may have as much narrative value as a historical caravanserai."

Ali-Asl said Iran has begun paying attention to natural heritage too late but warned that delays could prove costly.

"The situation is not critical, but we need a unified approach, clear guidelines and comprehensive resources," he said. "Natural heritage is part of our identity, and if we fail to plan for it today, tomorrow may be too late."

## Archaeological excavation permit issued for Nahavand historical fortress

TEHRAN—The Archaeological Research Institute has agreed to issue a permit for archaeological excavation in Nahavand fortress in Pay Qaleh neighborhood in Nahavand, Hamedan province.

Head of Hamedan Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department Mohsen Masoom-Alizadeh, announced the start of the archaeological excavation of Nahavand fortress and said: "This historical fortress is one of the important symbols of Nahavand, which has entered a new stage after years of neglect."

After the end of the excavation, the stages of restoration of the fortress will begin, and in the near future it will become one of the historical and touristic landmarks of the province, he pointed out.

According to IRIB, Masoom-Alizadeh said that based on initial evidence, the artifacts found in the area have great historical importance and can mark a new chapter in the history and culture of Nahavand.

Stating that the ultimate goal is to nationally register Nahavand fortress as one of the city's identical, historical,

and cultural indicators, he added that based on the criteria and before any development action in the area, it was necessary to conduct archaeological excavations and, with emphasis on the opinion of the Cultural Heritage Research Institute, therefore, the issue was included in the work plan of the Cultural Heritage Department.

Emphasizing the role of the

interdepartmental cooperation, he added that the cooperation between Nahavand Municipality, Hamedan Cultural Heritage Department, and the support of the city's representative in Iranian Parliament led to a move forward in the field of Nahavand tourism and provided the basis for the revival of one of the important tourism infrastructures of the city, a capacity that can play an effective role in the development of tourism in the region.

He continued that Nahavand

is one of the important coun-

ties in Hamedan province, with 325 historical and natural monuments, 128 of which have been

registered in the country's National Heritage List.

In addition, the existence of his-

torical hills with a history of more than 6,000 years indicates the unparalleled historical richness of the county, he added.

(See full text at [www.tehvantimes.com](http://www.tehvantimes.com))

## AUCTION SJSCO.

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Sirjan Jahan Steel Company is pleased to announce the sale and export of 10,000 tons SPONGE IRON FINES, on basis of FAS at the Buyer's warehouse in Bandar Abbas, IRAN according to INCOTERMS 2020. Interested applicants are hereby invited to obtain the tender documents by visiting the official website of Sirjan Jahan Steel Company at [sjoco.ir](http://sjoco.ir), through the Sales and customer portal, Tender and Foreign Tender section.

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# DOE underscores use of smart environmental protection systems

TEHRAN – Given that traditional methods can no longer meet the needs of a fragile environment, the integration of smart technologies for environmental conservation seems inevitable, an official with the Department of Environment has said.

Environmental challenges have turned into crises. The rate of environmental damage, the population growth, the surge in natural hazards such as climate change, drought, sand and dust storms, and floods have made the use of smart and innovative technologies a necessity to save the planet, IRNA reported.

The protected areas under the DOE's supervision now account for 12 per cent (19.8 million hectares) of the country's land area. To preserve these areas, the DOE has developed smart, specialized protection plans, IRNA quoted Hamid Zohrabi as saying.

Referring to frequent wildfires in the country's forests, the official said the plans include holding specialized training courses on extinguishing wildfires in cooperation with local communities.

To make environmental protection smarter, the DOE has signed a memorandum of understanding with a knowledge-based company. Accordingly, the DOE will be



equipped with a system that provides early warnings before a fire outbreak, the official added.

Since most protected areas are impassable and inaccessible, the DOE aims to install cameras and sensors to detect heat and fire sources early, Zohrabi noted.

The official went on to say that the pilot plan to utilize modern technologies in environmental conservation dates back to the Iranian year 1397 (2018) in Golesht National Park. However, the plan was not implemented due to some problems.

Presently, the DOE focuses on knowledge-based and participatory biodiversity conservation approaches. Besides innovative

technologies, local communities play a critical role in protecting the environment, the official stressed.

## DOE launches smart monitoring center

In December 2025, the DOE launched a smart monitoring center to provide real-time data on various environmental parameters, thereby improving management efficiency and reducing disaster risks.

The center collects online data from environmental sensors, processes, and analyzes the results. Such modern centers replace traditional, slow field monitoring with smart sensors and artificial intelligence to identify ecological changes instantly, and manage

natural resources more efficiently, IRIB reported.

Physical monitoring involves collecting data using traditional tools and methods, such as manual sampling of water or air, field visits to soil and plant species, or measuring ambient temperature with basic devices. This type of monitoring typically requires human presence on-site, and data is collected at specific time intervals. In sustainable development, physical tracking is of great importance as it directly shows the actual state of the environment. It is also essential for validating other data. However, it is inefficient, costly, and likely to contain human errors.

However, smart monitoring utilizes modern technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), AI, and big data analysis. It enables the continuous collection and analysis of data, providing accurate and quick insights into changes in the ecosystem. Smart management of the environment contributes to effective monitoring and the preservation of natural resources. It helps manage and curb the spread of contamination. And since decisions are made based on real-time data, they are much more efficient.

## Iran to host ANF specialized standardization workshop

TEHRAN – Iran will play host to a specialized standardization workshop for the member states of the Asian Network Forum (ANF) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committee (TC) 229.

The secretary of the headquarters for the Iran Nanotechnology Innovation Council, Emad Ahmadvand, proposed holding the workshop during the Forum on the sidelines of the 25th International Nanotechnology Exhibition and Conference, known as Nano Tech 2026, held in Tokyo, Japan.

The main objective of the workshop is to foster synergy among ANF member states and promote their role in developing international standards, nano.ir reported.

The country's second proposal invited the member states' laboratories to attend the Interlaboratory Comparison (ILC) program on the Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET), a technique for determining a specific surface area, which was also received by the participants. The laboratories participating in the program will share the results of their analyses on samples sent from Iran, and at the end of the program, they will exchange views on mechanisms to improve the quality of laboratory results.

Attending the ANF, Ahmadvand presented an account of the country's progress and accomplishments in the nanotechnology sector. Representatives from Japan, Iran, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and South

Korea attended the forum. The event provided a great opportunity for sharing expertise and developing regional collaboration in nanotechnology.

On the first day of the forum, Ahmadvand delivered a lecture expounding on the country's latest achievements and advancements in nanotechnology. The official elaborated on the current status of nanotechnology and its commercialization in Iran, showcasing the country's capacities, infrastructure, and political experiences.

Supported by the Organization for Development of International Cooperation in Science and Technology, Iranian knowledge-based companies are participating in Nano Tech 2026, took place from January 27 to 31.

## Nanotech constitutes 19% of Iran's inventions

The headquarters for nanotechnology has supported the promotion of 20 nanotechnology inventions in the country, which constitute 19 percent of the total inventions registered in 2024.

In the past year, 33 nanotechnology plans have been approved, for 23 of which contracts have been concluded, ISNA reported.

The headquarters has decided to identify, assess, and support innovative ideas to empower nanotechnology businesses.

Over the past Iranian year (March 2024 – March 2025), a total of 1,735 nanotechnology

products received nanoscale certificates from the Iran Nanotechnology Innovation Council and were commercialized by 201 companies.

The total sale of these products amounted to 973 trillion rials (equal to 700 million dollars) in the Iranian year 1403, indicating a 57 percent increase compared to a year earlier, and 72 percent in comparison to 200 trillion rials (140 million dollars) in the past four years. This growth is about 31 percent higher than the country's average annual inflation rate, IRNA quoted Ahmadvand as saying.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with reporters on the sidelines of the 16th Iran Nanotechnology Exhibition held in Tehran from November 2 to 5, 2025.

The export of these nano-products constitutes 10 percent of the sales, about 183 million dollars, the official added.

The sales value of domestically-manufactured nano-tech products over the past year is estimated to be around 1.8 million dollars based on the average daily dollar exchange rate, Ahmadvand further noted.

The official went on to say that the three main industrial sectors, including transportation, civil engineering, and nanomaterials, had the highest share of the market, respectively.

More than a quarter of the country's secondary market for nanotechnology products is related to the automotive and transportation sectors, he added.

## Third national event on 'future schools' to be held



TEHRAN – The third national event on future schools will be held this month, highlighting the use of modern technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and blended learning in fostering thinking skills and creativity, as well as collaboration among the future generation of students.

Future school and the public education system (the role of teacher and student in future schools, modern teaching and learning approaches, schools and students with specific needs); Future school, a center for education and development of community (schools as social institution for the development of the neighbourhood, school's interaction with cultural, social, and urban institutions); Future school and physical environment (designing green schools, utilizing renewable energies and modern construction technologies); and Future school, equipment, educational technologies (modern educational tools and technologies, AI-based learning platforms, digital infrastructures) will be the four key topics of the event.

Technology and knowledge-based companies, consulting engineers, universities and research centers, science and technology parks, professors and students, and researchers in technical, engineering, humanities, art, and psychology fields are among the main target audiences of the event.

## 'Iran Digital' aims to teach AI to four million students

Iran Digital, a national program, aims to teach artificial intelligence (AI) to four million students free of charge in the next Iranian calendar year, which will begin on March 21, an official with the Ministry of Education has said.

Supported by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, the first phase of the initiative was launched in June 2025.

Since then, two million students have joined the program to master AI from introductory courses to programming, ISNA quoted Seyyed Ali Hosseini as saying.

Moreover, more than one thousand teachers are learning AI, attending both online and virtual training sessions. In the next four months, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with Sharif University of Technology, will train 200,000 teachers, Hosseini noted.

Currently, some 16 million students are studying in the country. Throughout the seventh National Development Plan (2023–2027), the Ministry of Education has to complete teaching AI to two million students. These in-

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TEHRAN TIMES

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## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Special clinic to be launched to relieve bereaved coronavirus families

A special clinic will be opened for the first time in the country to provide free psychological services to families who have lost their loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The clinic is called "Soog" (literally meaning mourn) will be inaugurated at Shahid Beheshti Educational and Medical Center in Zanjan province on Wednesday.

The outbreak of coronavirus has changed the lifestyle of many families, Ehsan Fakoor, head of the mental health department of Zanjan University of Medical Sciences said.

Sudden changes in life cause stress, while the coronavirus itself has doubled the stress due to its contagion and the number of lives it has claimed in the world to date, he regretted.

Psychological services for parenting and family counseling, especially counseling related to coronavirus such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression and anxiety, etc. will be provided free of charge in this center, Fakoor noted.

## افتتاح 'کلینیک سوگ' برای تسکین خانواده‌هایی که اعضا خود را بر اثر کرونا از دست داده‌اند

رئیس گروه بهداشت روان دانشگاه علوم پزشکی زنجان از افتتاح نخستین کلینیک سوگ در کشور برای ارائه خدمات رایگان روان‌شناختی به خانواده‌هایی که اعضا خانواده خود را به دلیل ابتلاء به کرونا از دست داده‌اند خبر داد و اظهار کرد: این کلینیک ۲۳ مهرماه امسال در مرکز آموزشی درمانی شهید بهشتی زنجان کار خود را آغاز خواهد کرد. فکور با بیان اینکه شیوع ویروس کرونا باعث شده است تا سبک زندگی سیاری از خانواده‌ها دچار تغییر شود، ادعا داد: ایجاد تغییرات ناگهانی در زندگی باعث ایجاد استرس می‌شود، این در حالی است که خود ویروس کرونا به دلیل واگیردار بودن و نیز آمار فوتی‌هایی که تا به امروز در دنیا به جا گذاشته، این استرس را در چندان کرده است. وی اظهار داشت: خدمات روان‌شناختی فرزندپروری و مشاوره خانواده، ویزه مشاوره‌هایی که مرتبط با کرونا مانند وسوس و افسردگی و اضطراب وغیره به صورت رایگان در این مرکز ارائه خواهد شد.

## Association of elites to help improve national productivity and efficiency

TEHRAN – The Association of Iranian Elites and Knowledge-Based Companies has decided to take a step toward improving the country's managerial system and productivity by identifying and introducing capable managers from among elites.

Studies show that the country's main problem is an inefficient economy and high prices. Such issues have led to reduced productivity, inefficiency, and a lack of meritocracy in the country's management system, Abuzar Shahpari, the head of the Association, has said.

Accordingly, we decided to take action by

identifying and introducing capable elites and managers and to play an effective role in improving the country's management system, he added.

This process will begin by identifying and supporting elites to enter city councils and urban management areas across the country, he noted.

The Association has asked Saeed Mohammad, with a successful track record in management and fighting corruption, to lead this movement. More details will be announced on February 24, coinciding with Engineer's Day.



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FEBRUARY 1, 2026

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*He who is greedy is disgraced; he who discloses his hardship will always be humiliated; he who has no control over his tongue will often have to face discomfort.*

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:18 Evening: 17:50 Dawn: 5:39 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:05 (tomorrow)

## Iranian director stages reading of Woody Allen's "Death" in Tehran

TEHRAN- A stage reading of Woody Allen's play "Death" was held at Neauphe-le-Chateau Theater in Tehran on Saturday.

Morteza Sabahi was the director of the reading performance, which was based on a Persian translation by Shahram Zargar.

The performance was held by a cast composed of Reza Tahmasebi, Tahmineh Tinafar, Dina Ghazanfarian, Helia Qasemi and Ghazaleh Ramezani.

"Death" is a comedic play, first published in 1975 as part of Allen's collection "Without Feathers," which also includes "God" and other short stories. The play serves as a humorous homage to Eugène Ionesco's 1959 work, "The Killer," and inspired Allen's 1991 film "Shadows and Fog."

The plot centers around Kleinman, a timid salesman who is abruptly awakened one night by a mob led by a man named Hacker. This vigilante group is determined to apprehend a serial killer known for frequently changing his methods. Hacker claims to have a comprehensive plan in place, but when Kleinman inquires about his role, each member of the group reveals that they only know their specific tasks. This secrecy is meant to keep the killer unaware of their intentions. Eventually, they leave Kleinman alone on the street to await further instructions.

As he stands guard, Kleinman encounters a doctor who expresses his interest in the case, hoping to understand the psychology of a psychopath. After their conversation, the doctor departs, leaving Kleinman to hear unsettling screams in the night. He then meets Gina and they engage in a philosophical discussion about death and the nature of life in the universe. Shortly after Gina leaves, the doctor returns but is mortally wounded by the elusive killer.

Amid the chaos, a policeman and another man discover the doctor's body. They inform Kleinman that Hacker has also been murdered, betrayed by a faction within his own mob that disagreed with his strategies. As tensions rise, both factions demand Klein-



man's allegiance, leading to a chaotic brawl.

Things take a turn when a third mob arrives, having enlisted a clairvoyant named Hans Spiro to identify the killer. In a shocking twist, Spiro declares Kleinman to be the maniac. The two factions unite to hold a mock trial, sentencing him to death. Just as Kleinman is about to be hanged, another man interrupts to announce that the real killer has been spotted, prompting the mob to hastily abandon their plans.

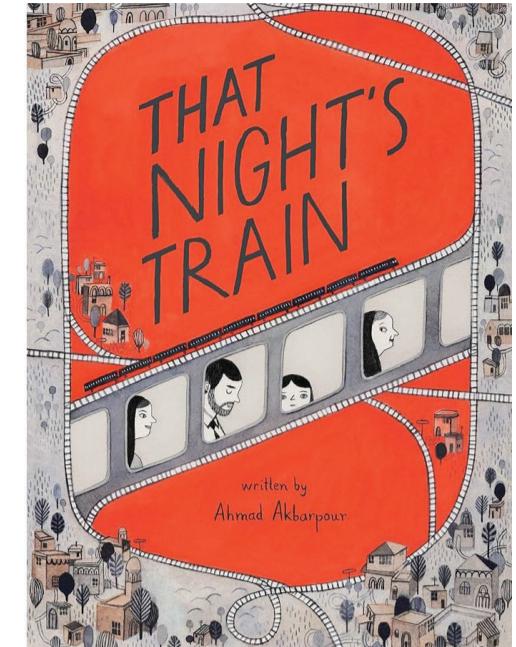
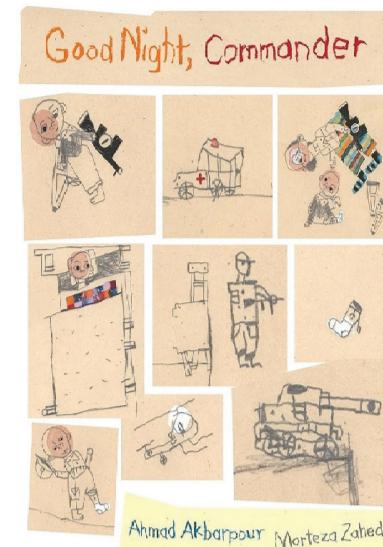
Left alone once more, Kleinman encounters the actual killer, who bears an uncanny resemblance to him. The killer admits to being a psychopath but claims he can easily feign sanity before fatally stabbing Kleinman. As Kleinman lies dying, the mob returns and squabbles over his lifeless body until he finally succumbs. Moments later, another member of the mob arrives with news of the killer's whereabouts, leading them to disperse yet again. Through its absurdity and dark humor, "Death" explores themes of existential dread and the chaotic nature of human behavior in the face of mortality.

## Cartoon of Day



Trump's Plans for Managing Gaza  
Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

# Iranian children's author Ahmad Akbarpour nominated for 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Awards



Ahmad Akbarpour and two of his most famous books

TEHRAN – The International Board on Books for Young People has announced the shortlist for the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Awards, with an Iranian author in the list.

Presented every two years, the awards honor international authors and illustrators for their contributions to children's literature, and are the highest international recognition given to creators in the field. This year, Ahmad Akbarpour from Iran is one of the six authors nominated for the awards in the authors section, ISNA reported.

The other nominees in this section include Maria José Ferrada from Chile, Timothée de Fombelle from France, Lee Geum-ji from the Republic of Korea, Pam Muñoz Ryan from the United States, and Michael Rosen from the United Kingdom.

In the illustrator section, there is no artist from Iran. The contenders include Beatrice Alemagna from Italy, Linda Bondestam from Finland, Cai Gao from China, Gundega Muzikante from Latvia, Walid Taher from Egypt, and María Wernicke from Argentina.

The writing award was first given in 1956, the illustration award in 1966. The former is sometimes called the Nobel Prize for children's literature.

The awards are named after Hans Christian Andersen, a

19th-century Danish author of fairy tales, and each winner receives the Hans Christian Andersen Medaille (a gold medal with the bust of Andersen) and a diploma.

Born in Fars Province, Ahmad Akbarpour, 55, is a novelist and author of short stories and children's books. He got his bachelor's degree in psychology from Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran and his master's degree in children literature from Shiraz University in Shiraz.

He began writing for adults before turning to children's and young adult literature after discovering Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu's "Twenty-Fifth Hour". A student of Reza Barahani and Houshang Golshiri, he soon started writing fiction for adolescents, adopting a postmodern style of writing.

Introduced to Iran's Children's Book Council, he submitted his first poem, and soon became one of Iran's most celebrated authors for young readers, with over 50 books to his name.

His short novel "That Night's Train" (1999) received the Book of the Year award from Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. During his career, Akbarpour discussed such topics as fear, loneliness, and peace.

In some of his works, he shows his disdain for the destructive impact of war on children. His

children's anti-war book "Good Night Commander" and "That Night's Train," illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault, were published in English by Groundwood Books in the U.S. and Canada in 2010 and 2012, respectively.

Known for inventive storytelling that challenges conventional narratives, Akbarpour invites readers to think critically and empathetically, weaving universal themes such as peace, friendship, and family into works like "The Giant and the Bicycle".

His versatility spans humor, fantasy, realism, and myth, as seen in "Good Night Commander," "Roc Girl," and "That Night's Train". He also addresses social issues, including the experiences of children with special needs or from marginalized backgrounds. His stories often collaborate closely with Iranian illustrators, enhancing their visual and emotional impact.

Translated into multiple languages including English, German, Korean, Chinese, Turkish, Italian, Portuguese, and Arabic, and adapted into films, his works have earned recognition including the 2024 White Ravens list (Munich), the National Children's Literature Festival of Shiraz, and inclusion in Iran's "Must Read and Influential Books of the Last Thirty-Three Years." He was shortlisted for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2023 and 2025.

The most distinguishing characteristic of his works is their humor, which makes his writings captivating and agreeable. Akbarpour, who is always on the lookout for new and different elements, is thus able to look at his subject from a different perspective in some of his works and pull the reader's imagination along. He has also had the experience of rewriting some old legends. He conducted some research and gathered Persian satire proverbs and traditional children's games.

Beyond writing, Akbarpour mentors emerging writers through workshops, helping shape the next generation of Iranian children's literature. His commitment to creativity, inclusivity, and critical thinking has made him a leading voice in global children's literature.

The shortlisted authors and illustrators for the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Awards were chosen from a list of 78 nominations from 44 countries, on a 10-member jury led by Shereen Kreidieh, founder of Arabic children's publishing house Dar Asala and president of the Lebanese Board of Books for Young People.

The two winners will be announced at the Bologna Children's Book Fair on April 13. The medals will be presented at the 40th IBBY World Congress, to be held from August 6 to 9 in Ottawa, Canada.

## "Wall of Tears": 50ft Brooklyn mural pays tribute to children killed in Gaza

First is Wesam Iyad Mohammed Abu Fsaife, a 14-year-old boy. Last is or Sabah Omar Saad al-Masri, an eight-year-old girl. These names of two children mark the beginning and end of the "Wall of Tears," a massive art installation paying homage to the 18,457 children killed in Gaza between October 7, 2023 and July 19, 2025.

Created by artist Phil Buehler, it opened next to Pine Box Rock Shop bar at 12 Grattan Street in Brooklyn, New York, on Thursday, The Guardian reported.

Made of waterproof and UV-coated vinyl, the 50ft long, 10ft tall sand-colored mural lists the children killed in Gaza by the order in which they died, based on data from the Gaza health ministry. This will be punctuated by photos and stories of individual children, drawing on reports by the Guardian and Washington Post newspapers.

"If you approach from a distance, it looks like almost an abstract painting and that draws people in to see, what is that?" Buehler, 69, said. "Then you'll see they're names of the children killed in Gaza since October 7, 2023, and there are thousands of them stretching down the block."

"Then you'll be drawn in further, I hope, to see the faces, read the stories of some of the few dozen I've scattered throughout the fence. That's the part that gets me when I look at it. You see these faces full of joy and hope, snapshots from graduations and birthday parties and family gatherings and knowing that these kids' lives were just cut short."

The artist reflects: "You can't not think about your own kids and your own families. I hope that might lead people to think about how they might help, even if it's just, take a photo of the mural and pass it along on their social media to their friends and family because hearing something from someone you know is important."

Buehler has previously designed huge murals including "Wall of Lies," displaying more than 20,000 lies told by Donald Trump during his first term as president; the "Wall of Liars and Deniers," listing 381 Republican election deniers running in the 2022 midterms; the "Wall of Shame," chronicling the actions of more than 1,500 January 6 rioters; and "Empty Beds," highlighting the abduction of nearly 20,000 Ukrainian children by Russia.

He worked on the "Wall of Tears" with his regular collaborator, the non-profit Radio Free Brooklyn. The project is necessarily out of date before it opens: it only records deaths up until last July because that was the most recent update to the Gaza health authorities' database; hundreds more children have been killed since then, even after a ceasefire in October 2025.

"This is probably one of the hardest ones I've worked on emotionally," Buehler says. "I always think of this quote attributed to Stalin, that a single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic. People can relate to one person's suffering but then they tune out or get overwhelmed by thousands and the destruction and death in Gaza is one of those stories."

Despite harsh weather, Buehler opened the installation on Thursday to coincide with the

second anniversary of the death of Hind Rajab, a five-year-old left to bleed out among the bodies of six family members after their car was targeted by an Israeli tank, leaving it with 335 bullet holes, according to the Forensic Architecture research group.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society released audio recordings of Hind's final hours, documenting repeated, urgent requests for rescue and call handlers, increasingly distressed themselves, assuring her that help was on the way. This real-life audio can be heard in the "The Voice of Hind Rajab," a Tunisian film by the director Kaouther Ben Hania that has been nominated for an Oscar in the international feature category.

The war in Gaza has been a divisive issue in New York, which with nearly 1 million Jews has the biggest Jewish population outside Israel. Efforts to brand Zohran Mamdani, a champion of Palestinian rights, as antisemitic, fell flat as he won election to become New York's first Muslim mayor.

Buehler rejected the notion that opposition to the war equates to antisemitism. "Conflating those two things makes it more difficult to talk about," he said. "You can't have that conversation at all. I worry a little bit about that with this piece."

"I talked to a lot of both Palestinian and Jewish friends. Most of my Jewish friends are liberal Jews and their reaction was, it's a tragedy, their heart goes out for these kids and these families, but they are afraid bringing attention to it will bounce back as antisemitism," he added.