

TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 500,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 47th year | No. 15332 | Saturday | May 23, 2026 | Khordad 2, 1405 | Dhu al-Hijjah 6, 1447

Is Trump's Diplomacy a Ruse?

Field Marshal Asim Munir arrives in Tehran to advance mediation efforts between Iran and the US



► Page 3

Iran condemns US sanctions on envoy to Beirut, Lebanese officials

TEHRAN- The Iranian Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned the US Treasury Department's "illegal and unjustified" sanctions against Mohammad Reza Raouf Sheibani, Iran's ambassador-designate to Beirut, as well as several Lebanese officials and citizens.

In a statement issued on Friday, the ministry described the move as yet another example of the "rogue behavior" of the US ruling establishment and its disregard for the fundamental principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the principle of respect for the national sovereignty of states. ► Page 2

Iran envoy condemns UNSC silence over US threats and war crimes

TEHRAN- Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations has sharply criticized the UN Security Council for its silence regarding US threats against Iran and violations of international humanitarian law during the recent conflict involving the United States and Israel.

Speaking on Wednesday during a UN Security Council open debate on the "Protection of Civilians," Amir-Saeed Irvani called on the Council to break its silence over 'systematic violations of international law' committed during the recent "illegal war of aggression" against the Islamic Republic. ► Page 2

Strait of Hormuz closure shakes Europe: Oil price forecast soars 46%

TEHRAN - The European Commission has issued a stark warning that the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz - triggered by the ongoing war in West Asia - will drive Brent crude prices to an average of \$91.2 per barrel in 2026, a staggering 46% jump from previous estimates. The revised forecast, published Thursday in the EU's Spring 2026 Economic Outlook, signals what officials call the most severe energy shock to hit Europe since the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Just months ago, before the outbreak of hostilities involving Iran, the Commission had predicted a modest \$62.4 per barrel for 2026 and \$63 for 2027. Those figures have now been torn up. "The energy shock resulting from the war in the West Asia and the de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz is the single most important driver of this upward revision," the report states explicitly. ► Page 4

Disgusting remarks against Sumud activists

TEHRAN — Israeli Transport Minister Miri Regev has boasted about the mistreatment of activists from the Global Sumud Flotilla detained by Israel, saying that "prison is the place for terrorism supporters".

These remarks are disgusting and indescribably insulting. What Regev and co-thinkers say or act is a blow to human wisdom and conscience.

Is anybody who, out of his or her compassionate feelings, bears the difficult task of a maritime journey to Gaza from very long distances to show sympathy toward the besieged people of Gaza and symbolically bring a certain amount of humanitarian aid, a "terrorist"!!!

Contrary to what Regev claims, anybody who mistreats these philanthropists and designates them as terrorists must be held accountable for his or her callous behavior or acts.

These activists' hearts are full of empathy for more than two million people who have been subjected to the most heinous crimes since October 7, 2023. This is not a matter to be attributed to religion. It is just a matter of humanity.

Hezbollah drones wreak havoc on IOF in southern Lebanon

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Hezbollah continues to confront Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) in southern Lebanon and target soldier and vehicle gatherings with drones.

In its latest operations, the Lebanese resistance movement targeted an IOF Namer armored personnel carrier in the town of Debel with a loitering drone, achieving a direct hit.

In six separate operations, resistance fighters targeted IOF gatherings of military vehicles and soldiers near the port of Naqoura, Rishaf, Naqoura, Debel, Hadata, and in Tayr Harfa with a swarm of loitering drones, confirming direct hits.

Hezbollah further announced that an IOF artillery emplacement in Rishaf and Aita al-Shaab were targeted with loitering drones, while a similar emplacement in Bint Jbeil was also struck with a loitering drone.

Earlier, the IOF had admitted that the commander of the 401st Armored Brigade was seriously wounded, while a combat officer and a reserve soldier were also injured, due to an exploding drone blast in southern Lebanon.

We can all thrive when the Abu Dhabi syndicate folds

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The Al Nahyan crime family has achieved a grim, singular trifecta: it has alienated its local citizenry, reduced its nine-million-strong migrant workforce to indentured cogs, and transformed a historic mercantile hub into a forward-operating base for the genocidal U.S.-Israeli military-intelligence complex.

The glittering skyline of Abu Dhabi is a performative monument, a high-rise mirage designed to distract from a fundamentally fragile structural core.

The regime currently operates on a rentier-garrison paradox: it attempts to project aggressive, regional military power while relying entirely on an imported labor force that it treats as a security risk.

It is a fragile venture capital fund of the Bani Fatima crime syndicate with a flag. Federal decapitation, the surgical removal of this oppressive monopoly, is the only route to structural equilibrium.

► Page 5

Iran's red lines and America's shrinking options

By Batool Subeiti

LONDON - The Iranian response to the United States has so far included all the principles that cannot be compromised. It focuses decisively on Iran's rights, which it says are non-negotiable. The response emphasizes the key points that must be part of any agreement, namely three fundamental issues: Firstly, Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz as part of its geography, considering it a right that cannot be compromised, along with establishing mechanisms to regulate ship passage.

Second, including Iran's allies in any agreement, with Iran and its allies considered one entity and any violation in the region would constitute a breach of the agreement. Third, ► Page 2



Pezeshkian: Government fully supports strengthening armed forces

TEHRAN- Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has praised the country's Armed Forces, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran Army, for demonstrating a high level of operational readiness and defensive capability in confronting aggression by the United States and Israel.

During a meeting with Army Commander Amir Hatami, the president expressed appreciation for the courage, commitment, and performance of Iran's military forces in responding to recent threats and attacks. ► Page 2

UK academics warn of war damage to Iran's cultural heritage

TEHRAN - A group of prominent British academics, museum curators, and fellows of the British Academy has expressed deep concern over reported damage to Iran's UNESCO-registered world heritage sites amid war with the US and Israeli regime.

In a letter published by The Times, they cited damage to the Golestan Palace in Tehran and several sites surrounding Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Square, including the Imam Mosque aka Masjid-e Shah, Ali Qapu, and Chehel Sotoun Palace. It also reports the complete destruction of a provincial museum in Khorramabad. Beyond direct bombing, the academics warn that pollution from damage to oil depots and refineries risks causing irreversible harm to ancient sites such as Persepolis, Pasargadae, and the rock-reliefs at Bisotun. ► Page 6

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Iran's model of symmetric deterrence in an asymmetric war

Kayhan, in an article on Iran's new deterrence model, wrote: "The common assumption is that Iran's energy infrastructure is a vulnerability and an easy target in wartime." However, Iran's new deterrence strategy is built on the principle that any damage to these infrastructures will trigger a chain of reciprocal insecurity and infrastructural destruction. Iran has managed to establish a balance of destruction, shifting the cost of any attack on its energy facilities beyond its borders and turning it into an existential crisis for the entire global capitalist system and industrial network. Based on this logic, any strike on Iran's refineries or pipelines would immediately lead to widespread attacks on and destruction of oil and gas wells, pumping stations, and energy infrastructure belonging to Israel and US-aligned hostile states in the region. This approach confronts the United States with the reality that destroying Iran's infrastructure would mean the collapse of the economies of its regional allies and, consequently, a crash in financial markets and industry in the US and Europe.

Iran: Riyadh's changing perception of Tehran's power

The Iran newspaper, in an interview with Hossein Ajorlou, a senior West Asia analyst, evaluated Saudi Arabia's reported proposal for a non-aggression pact with Iran. The publication of reports about Riyadh's proposal has once again raised questions about the future of the security balance in West Asia. Riyadh is also concerned about the potential consequences of the current situation. It fears that Iran might escalate asymmetric actions, intensify attacks, or activate aligned regional actors. Also, a severely weakened Iran could create space for greater influence by actors such as Israel, Turkey, or other regional rivals—an outcome not necessarily in Saudi Arabia's favor. Thus, it appears Riyadh seeks to prevent sharp and uncontrolled shifts in the regional balance. The main goal is to establish a regulatory mechanism in Iran-Saudi relations—one

that contains tensions and provides Saudi Arabia with a minimum level of security.

Hamshahri: Washington's political infighting over war with Iran

Hamshahri, in a commentary on a session originally intended to review the US defense budget for 2027, wrote: A meeting had been scheduled to examine the U.S. defense budget for 2027, but quickly turned into an unusually fierce confrontation over the prospect of war with Iran, revealing deep divisions in Washington over objectives, costs, and even the meaning of victory in such a conflict. The heated clash in Congress was not just another routine political dispute; it exposed a profound rift in Washington over the Iran issue—a rift rooted in the absence of a coherent strategy, ambiguity in objectives, and even a crisis in defining what victory would mean in this confrontation.

Etemad: Eastern supporters will not enter confrontation

Etemad, in an interview with Majid Mohammad-Sharifi, an international affairs expert, examined Russia's and China's positions on Iran and the current conflict with the US and Israel. According to the expert, China and Russia want the region's political situation to return to its pre-war state, though their views on developments in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz differ due to divergent interests. Both countries will support the Islamic Republic of Iran and may provide some military or intelligence assistance, but such support will be limited and not "game-changing. Given their other priorities—Taiwan and the trade war for China, and Ukraine for Russia—they do not wish to enter direct confrontation with the US over Iran. Therefore, the outcome of this standoff will largely depend on the military balance and the capabilities of the parties on the battlefield. Although some assistance has been provided and may continue, this does not amount to the formation of a solid, armed bloc.

Iran envoy condemns UNSC silence over US threats and war crimes

From page 1 ▶ Iravani expressed regret over the Security Council's failure to fulfill its responsibilities in response to war crimes committed by the United States and Israel during their military operations against Iran.

He further accused the two countries of deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, including an elementary school in the southern Iranian city of Minab, which resulted in the deaths of more than 168 students and school staff.

"The Security Council must not remain silent or indifferent to the repeated and daily threats made by the president of the United States against Iran," Iravani said, referring to threats to bomb Iran "back to the Stone Age," destroy its economic and industrial infrastructure, and target Iranian nuclear scientists and senior officials.

"The normalization of such threats of force, acts of aggression, and inflammatory

rhetoric by a permanent member of the Security Council sets a dangerous precedent," he added.

The Iranian envoy also asserted that the United States, Israel, and any parties that assisted or facilitated the attacks must bear full legal and international responsibility for crimes committed against the Iranian people.

"No state should be permitted to shield itself behind political protection while violating the UN Charter and targeting civilians with impunity," he stated.

Iravani further urged the international community to recommit itself to the core principles of the UN Charter, including sovereign equality among states, non-use of force, peaceful resolution of disputes, and respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of nations.

Tehran Friday prayers leader says Iran will overcome challenges

TEHRAN – Tehran's interim Friday prayers leader said Iran will successfully overcome current challenges and hardships despite 'ongoing conspiracies and pressure campaigns orchestrated by the country's adversaries.'

Speaking during Friday prayers at the campus of the University of Tehran, Mohammad Javad Haj Ali Akbari emphasized that the Iranian people have defeated all plots devised by the country's enemies — particularly the United States and the "criminal Zionist regime" — since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, adding that they would once again thwart hostile efforts against the nation.

Referring to sanctions, economic pressure, and "cognitive warfare" against Iran, Haj Ali Akbari stated that the enemies are

now targeting Iran's economic foundations rather than engaging in direct military confrontation.

"Today, instead of bullets, our enemies have restricted the country's sources of income through sanctions on oil exports and the banking sector," he said.

The cleric further argued that Iran's adversaries have employed all available means to weaken the country internationally, but said the vigilance, unity, and solidarity of the Iranian people had neutralized those efforts.

He also warned against 'attempts to weaken national resilience through the promotion of consumerism and luxury culture,' saying such measures are intended to undermine public livelihoods and erode the Iranian people's resistance.

Iran condemns US sanctions on envoy to Beirut, Lebanese officials

From page 1 ▶ The Foreign Ministry also strongly denounced the US sanctions imposed on several Hezbollah representatives in the Lebanese Parliament, officials affiliated with the Amal Movement, and a number of Lebanese military and security officials.

According to the statement, these "despicable measures" are intended to undermine Lebanon's national sovereignty and sow discord within Lebanese society. It added that the sanctions further demonstrate the continued complicity of the US ruling establishment with the "aggressive and occupying Zionist regime" in pursuing military aggression and committing 'heinous crimes against Lebanon.'

The statement further asserted that Lebanon's various political and social groups would undoubtedly defend the country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity by preserving national unity and



cohesion, and would thwart the Zionist regime's objectives by resisting aggression and ending occupation in Lebanon.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also reaffirmed its determination to strengthen its longstanding and friendly relations with Lebanon across various sectors in line with the interests of both nations, the statement added.

The United States announced

on Thursday sanctions against nine individuals, including Iran's ambassador-designate to Lebanon, accusing them of obstructing the so-called peace process in Lebanon and impeding efforts to disarm Hezbollah.

According to the US Treasury Department, the sanctioned individuals include four Hezbollah members: Mohamed Abdel-Mottaleb Fanich, a leader in Hezbollah's executive council;

Nizammedine Fadlallah, an elected member of the Lebanese Parliament; and longtime officials Ibrahim al-Moussawi and Hussein Al-Hajj Hassan.

Also targeted were Iran's ambassador-designate and two security officials affiliated with the Hezbollah-allied Amal Movement, Ahmad Asaad Baalbaki and Ali Ahmad Safawi.

In addition, two security officials — Samir Hamadi, a branch chief in the Lebanese Armed Forces, and Khattar Nasser Eldin, a senior official in Lebanon's General Directorate of General Security — were sanctioned for allegedly sharing "important intelligence" with Hezbollah over the past year, according to the Treasury Department.

In response, Hezbollah said in a statement that the sanctions were an "attempt to intimidate the free Lebanese people" and would have "absolutely no practical effect on our strategic choices."

Pezeshkian: Government fully supports strengthening armed forces

From page 1 ▶ President Pezeshkian said the decisive, intelligent, and deterrent responses carried out by Iranian forces had prevented adversaries from achieving their objectives against the country.

He described the Army's role in safeguarding national security, preserving Iran's territorial integrity, and strengthening deterrence capabilities as "strategic and decisive."

According to the president, the Armed Forces — particularly the "committed, popular, and revolutionary Army" — demonstrated the country's defensive strength through strong operational preparedness, intelligence awareness, coordinated command structures, and effective combat ca-

pability.

"The government stands fully alongside the Armed Forces and will support strategic programs aimed at enhancing the country's defense capabilities," he said, referring to initiatives including logistical support, modernization of military equipment, development of operational infrastructure, and expansion of deterrence capacity.

The president also stressed the importance of close coordination between the government and the military under the current regional conditions, noting that national unity and the strength of the Armed Forces constitute the main pillars of Iran's security and stability.

During the meeting, Major General Hatami presented a report on the Army's latest operational status and defensive missions, including measures taken to counter 'hostile activities.'

Hatami also pointed to efforts aimed at restoring and enhancing combat readiness during the ceasefire, saying the Army had strengthened coordination mechanisms, upgraded operational capabilities, and incorporated field experience to maintain full preparedness.

He added that Iranian military personnel remain firmly committed to defending the country's security, independence, and territorial integrity.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman named the official voice of 'Minab 168' negotiating team

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – Iran has appointed Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei as spokesperson for its delegation in talks with the United States.

In a decree issued on Friday, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who also leads the negotiating team with the US, named Baghaei as the spokesperson for the "Minab 168" delegation. Qalibaf described him as "a revolutionary figure with expertise in international law," noting his valuable diplomatic experience. He hoped Baghaei's precision and sense of responsibility would help him clearly present Iran's positions to the world and respond to the questions of the "noble and brave" Iranian nation.

The negotiating team has been named "Minab 168" in honor of the 168 people—mostly schoolchildren—killed in the US-Israel strike on the Shajarah Tayyeb elementary school in Minab on February 28, the same day the two aggressors launched a wid-

er military attack against Iran. By choosing this name, Iran links the diplomatic track to a national tragedy and emphasizes unity, resilience, and the human cost of aggression.

Baghaei's appointment also fits into Iran's broader strategy of presenting a unified and coordinated voice in its diplomacy. He already took part in the April 11 Islamabad round of Iran-US talks, showing that he was involved in the process before being formally appointed.

As the Foreign Ministry's spokesperson, he has long experience delivering Iran's positions in a clear and disciplined manner, making him a natural choice to speak for the negotiating team.

This unified approach is especially important now because President Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that Iran's political and military leadership are fighting each other. These claims are part of a broader effort to portray Iran as divided or unstable. Iran rejects these accusa-



tions, and Baghaei's appointment is meant to show the opposite: that the country's institutions are coordinated and working together.

Some Western and hostile media outlets also try to suggest rivalry between Iran's Foreign Ministry and other state bodies. But Iran's foreign-policy system is based on coordination, not competition. This is reflected in Qalibaf's own role. He is not only the Speaker of Parliament but was recently appointed as Iran's

special representative for China affairs, and he previously served as a senior IRGC commander. His background shows how Iran's political and military institutions operate together within one national framework.

Iran has also explained why it is participating in the talks. Officials say the goal is to translate Iran's battlefield successes into diplomatic achievements, and that Iran only talks to the United States to secure its national interests, not because of pressure or weakness. This message is central to Iran's strategy of projecting confidence and unity in both military and diplomatic arenas.

By appointing Baghaei, Qalibaf ensures that the "Minab 168" team speaks with one clear, authoritative voice. The decision strengthens Iran's unified approach to the negotiations, reduces the risk of mixed messages, and reinforces the country's emphasis on cohesion and national purpose at a critical moment.

Iran's red lines and America's shrinking options

From page 1 ▶ affirming Iran's nuclear rights guaranteed under international law and by the International Atomic Energy Agency, through its participation in and signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This includes the resulting rights to uranium enrichment under international supervision, and that the right to enrichment is non-negotiable.

As for the remaining nuclear-related issues, they can be discussed, and Iran may offer certain compromises in that regard. The other issues that the United States considered objectives and causes for war have failed to be achieved, and Iran considers them outside the framework of negotiations, such as hypersonic ballistic defense capabilities, or what is described as Iran's regional influence through its relations with allies.

The American position in response to Iran's reply has been awkward and constrained, and it may have only limited weak options. Firstly, the American blockade against Iran

in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea cannot be comprehensive or complete. Secondly, it cannot be permanent or sustainable. Thirdly, it encourages the creation of land alternatives and routes through the Caspian Sea, including trade via Iran's extensive borders with many neighboring countries.

Therefore, the naval blockade imposed by America cannot be highly effective. Iran has become accustomed to dealing with different kinds of sanctions and has gained extensive experience in overcoming them. Additionally, an important point is that all the strength Iran has achieved has come because of sanctions. Self-sufficiency in utilizing its resources and productive capacities, including food, medicine, defense, and services, was achieved under the harshest sanctions. In fact, it became a driving force for creating alternatives and strengthening sovereignty.

Iran therefore sees the current naval blockade as an opportunity to strengthen its

internal and external trade movement.

Especially considering that this war has given Iran increased external credibility as the only power willing to fight fiercely in defense of its interests, and the only one that stood against American hegemony and struck back when attacked.

In addition, the war provided an opportunity for asserting sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz and bringing this strategic card openly into use. It has done so in a way that has weakened America's grip and its ability to pressure countries and companies into complying with US sanctions, under the threat of penalties. In reality, the damage those countries and companies could suffer if they became involved in blocking Iran would be greater than the consequences of not complying. This is another important card in Iran's hands.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Field Marshal Asim Munir arrives in Tehran to advance mediation efforts between Iran and the US

By staff writer

TEHRAN - Despite diplomatic efforts, mainly involving Pakistan, to secure a permanent end to the US-Israeli war on Iran, President Donald Trump appears determined to maintain pressure on Tehran rather than seek a lasting political settlement.

A ceasefire on April 8 paused the joint US-Israeli aggression that initially began on February 28. The truce was achieved after Trump agreed to Iran's terms, which also led to Pakistani-mediated talks between Tehran and Washington in Islamabad on April 11.

However, those negotiations failed due to what Iran described as the Trump administration's "excessive, unrealistic, and unacceptable" demands.

Pakistan's mediation efforts

Nonetheless, Pakistan has continued its efforts to bridge the gap between the two sides. The visits of senior Pakistani officials to Tehran are being viewed in this context.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met visiting Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Tehran again on Friday to discuss the latest proposals aimed at ending the war. The Pakistani minister arrived in Tehran on Wednesday. Pakistan's Chief of Defense Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, also arrived in Tehran late on Friday for talks with senior Iranian officials.

Distrust between Iran and the United States has deepened over the past year. This is because the US attacked Iran twice while the two sides were engaged in negotiations: once in June 2025 and again in late February this year.

Verification of Trump's claims

During both wars, Trump claimed victory. He has said that the United States destroyed Iran's military capabilities during the 39 days of war that were paused by last month's truce. Nonetheless, American officials speaking to US media have rejected such claims.

On Thursday, citing four sources familiar with US intelligence assessments, CNN called into question claims about the extent to which US-Israeli strikes had degraded Iran's military capabilities in the long term. Before the ceasefire, US intelligence sources had told CNN that roughly half



of Iran's missile launchers were still intact and that thousands of one-way attack drones remained in Iran's arsenal despite daily US and Israeli strikes. Thursday's report put the figure at two-thirds, stating that Iran was rebuilding its military-industrial base faster than expected.

Such revelations indicate that Trump was forced to reach a ceasefire with Iran because of the failure of his military strategy. A similar view was reflected in comments made by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz late last month. Merz said on April 23 that the United States was being "humiliated" in its war with Iran, warning that Washington lacked a clear path out of the conflict as Tehran gained the upper hand.

Trump's new approach appears to oscillate between calls for a ceasefire and threats of renewed military action in an attempt to create a fabricated sense of victory over Iran while also seeking a face-saving exit from the conflict.

The United States Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees military operations in the Middle East, said on Thursday that the USS Abraham Lincoln was maintaining "peak readiness" in the region.

In a social media post, CENTCOM said its forces remained ready while "enforcing the US blockade against Iranian ports."

In line with that approach, Trump has used the naval blockade imposed on Iran in mid-April as a form of economic warfare. It appears that both economic pressure and repeated calls for a ceasefire are intended to gloss over military setbacks on the battlefield.

On Thursday, Trump reposted a New York Post op-ed linked to a pro-Israeli think tank that has long supported military action against Tehran.

The article called on the United

States to "sustain the blockade and accompanying economic warfare."

Another ruse?

The post came after US media widely reported that Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were at loggerheads during a phone call on Tuesday over the future of the Iran war.

Netanyahu reportedly pushed the United States to resume attacks, while Trump resisted new strikes in hopes of reaching a deal.

Some analysts believe there are big differences between Trump and Netanyahu, while others say reports of tense talks between the US president and the Israeli prime minister are merely a ruse aimed at diverting attention from possible new strikes against Iran.

Iran has stressed that it remains open to diplomacy, but that its armed forces are prepared to respond if a new war begins.

Trump appears frustrated by the failure of military action against Iran and now seems to be using diplomacy in an attempt to force Tehran into submission. He has threatened that if Iran does not meet his demands, he will launch a new war, but so far, his threats have largely rung hollow.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, speaking in Helsingborg, Sweden, during a NATO meeting, said "there's been some slight progress" toward a deal with Iran, but added, "I don't want to exaggerate it."

Rubio said the main issues in the negotiations were Iran's position on the Strait of Hormuz and its nuclear program.

Iran has said that it will maintain control over the Strait of Hormuz and that vessels transiting through the waterway should coordinate with Iranian armed forces.

The United States is asking Iran to ship out more than 400 kilograms of enriched uranium, which is believed to be buried beneath nuclear sites bombed by the US in June last year. Iran says it will never transfer the enriched uranium to a third country, but that it is willing to discuss the level of uranium enrichment in the second stage of negotiations if the US meets certain demands.

Iran's conditions

Iran said on Thursday that it had received and was reviewing Washington's response to Tehran's latest ceasefire proposal.

Iran's demands include guarantees of non-aggression, the lifting of anti-Iran sanctions, the unfreezing of Iranian assets, compensation for damage inflicted by the US and Israel during the war, recognition of Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, and an end to Israeli strikes in Lebanon.

However, it appears unlikely that the White House will agree to these terms. This is because Trump's objective in talks with Iran appears to be Iranian capitulation. In effect, he seems intent on achieving through negotiations what he failed to accomplish on the battlefield. As a result, the US approach to talks with Iran does not appear genuine.

Trump's hollow diplomacy

In an article titled "This Guy Has No Will for a Deal," published days before the 12-day war in June last year, the Tehran Times warned that Trump preferred continued confrontation with Iran over genuine diplomatic engagement.

Trump has been under the illusion that he could implement a Venezuela-style scenario in Iran through political and military decapitation. The failure of this strategy was reflected in what US officials recently told The New York Times. They acknowledged that Iran's "successful resistance" and "enormous resilience" had complicated Washington's war aims and strengthened Tehran's position on the battlefield.

Presently, the ball is in Trump's court. He can either renew the war and risk further humiliation, as suggested by the German chancellor, or pursue genuine diplomacy, which appears unlikely based on his pattern of behavior.

Iranian duo win gold medals at 2026 Asian Taekwondo Championships

TEHRAN - Iranian fighters secured two additional gold medals on Friday during the second day of the 27th Asian Taekwondo Championships in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

The second day of action at the M Bank Arena featured competitions across the men's -58kg and -74kg weight classes, alongside the women's -49kg and -73kg divisions. Competitors at the tournament are fighting for continental titles as well as qualification spots for the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

Reigning world champion Abolfazl Zandi captured the gold medal in the men's flyweight (-58kg) category with a dominant performance.

Zandi faced South Korea's Jang Hui-chan in the final, securing a commanding victory by winning two consecutive rounds. This victory marks Zandi's third consecutive major international title, adding to his gold medals at the Senior World Championships and the Under-21 World Championships.

Zandi began his tournament run with a first-round bye before defeating Mohammed Ali of the United Arab Emirates 2-0. He followed that up with another 2-0 victory against Jordan's Mohammad Bassam in the quarterfinals, before booking his place in the final by defeating Uzbekistan's Omonjon Otajonov.

Amir Sina Bakhtiari doubled Iran's gold medal count for the day by winning the men's lightweight (-74kg) division. Bakhtiari faced China's Zhao Shan in the final, winning two straight rounds to claim the championship title and officially secure his quota for the 2026 Asian Games.

Bakhtiari opened his campaign with a 2-0 victory over Vietnam's Dang Pham. He then advanced to the semifinals by defeating Saudi Arabia's Tareq Hamed by the same scoreline, before clinching his final berth with a victory over Kazakhstan's Eldar Birimbay.

The double-gold performance on Friday follows a strong opening day for the Iranian delegation. On Thursday, reigning Olympic champion Arian Salimi won gold in the men's heavyweight (+87kg) category, while Yasin Valizadeh secured a silver medal in the men's flyweight (-54kg) division.

Iran to play Mali in 2026 World Cup preparation

TEHRAN - Iran have added a second friendly to their pre-World Cup itinerary, announcing a June 4 meeting with Mali during their training camp in Antalya, Turkey.

The Iranian football federation confirmed the fixture, which follows a warm-up match against Gambia on May 29.

"Iran's national football team will face Mali on June 4 in its second friendly match of the Antalya training camp in Turkey," it said in a statement.

Team Melli arrived in Turkey on Monday to begin preparations and to complete visa formalities ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Iran are drawn in Group G alongside Belgium, Egypt and New Zealand. They open their campaign against the All Whites on June 15 at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, before facing Belgium and Egypt later in the group stage.

With the tournament fast approaching, Iran's back-to-back friendlies against African opposition - Gambia and Mali - are aimed at fine-tuning tactics and squad selection as they look to make a deep run in what will be their third consecutive World Cup appearance.

Rouzbeh Cheshmi ruled out of 2026 World Cup

TEHRAN - Iran defensive midfielder Rouzbeh Cheshmi has been ruled out of the 2026 FIFA World Cup after suffering a hamstring injury during training in Antalya, Turkey.

The 32-year-old Esteghlal captain, an import-

ant figure in Team Melli's squad, picked up the injury during the team's third training session at its pre-World Cup camp on Thursday evening. Medical staff immediately removed him from the session, and initial assessments indicate a left hamstring strain that will keep him out of the tournament.

Cheshmi is set to undergo an MRI scan to assess the full extent of the damage, although early signs suggest the injury is serious enough to end his World Cup hopes.

A mainstay in Iran's defense and a veteran of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, Cheshmi's absence is a major setback for the head coach ahead of Iran's Group G matches against Belgium, Egypt, and New Zealand. His leadership, experience, and ability to score from set pieces will be deeply missed as the team continues its preparations in Antalya.

Iran open their campaign against the All Whites on June 15 at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, before facing Belgium and Egypt later in the group stage.

Iran dominate Bangladesh in CAVA Women's Volleyball Championship opener

TEHRAN - The Iranian women's national volleyball team signaled their championship intent on Friday, kicking off their CAVA (Central Asian Volleyball Association) campaign with a clinical 3-0 (25-6, 25-9, 25-10) demolition of Bangladesh.

The tournament, hosted in Nepal from May 22 to 29, sees the top regional sides vying for continental glory.

Under the guidance of head coach Lee Do-hee, Iran wasted no time asserting their technical and tactical superiority. From the opening serve, the Iranians overwhelmed their opponents, cruising to a comfortable victory in straight sets.

The match was a showcase of dominance for the Iranian squad, who arrived in Nepal fresh off a productive training camp in Thailand. Following an exceptional all-around performance, Iran's Sepinood Dastbarjan was rightfully named Player of the Match for her stellar contributions across all facets of the game.

With the first win under their belt, Iran look to maintain their momentum in the group stage, where they are pooled alongside Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.

The team's next challenge awaits on Sunday as they prepare to face a resilient Sri Lankan side.

The Central Asian Volleyball Association (CAVA) is one of five zonal associations of governance in volleyball within the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC). It governs indoor volleyball and beach volleyball in Central Asia and South Asia.

Iran's Para powerlifter Izadi snatches gold at Oran 2026

TEHRAN - Alireza Izadi of Iran claimed a gold medal at the Oran 2026 Para Powerlifting African Open Championships on Thursday.

He lifted 542kg in total, followed by Nigerian Ibrahim Dauda (522kg) and Egyptian Abdalla El-hout (512kg) in the Men's Up to 59 kg.

Also, Mahdieh Mohammadian seized a silver medal with a total lift of 302kg.

Egyptain powerlifter Nawal Ramadan won the gold, lifting 359kg and the bronze medal went to Moroccan Meryem Hamouch with 177kg.

Plenty of stars, including Paralympic and world champions, gathered in Oran from 21 to 24 May for the 2026 African Open Championships.

In total, 152 athletes - 92 men and 59 women - from 20 nations are in action across four days.

Fifteen African nations are set to compete, alongside five delegations from outside the region: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Kazakhstan. Host nation Algeria tops the entry list with 27 athletes, followed by Egypt (20), Iran (16), and Nigeria (13).

The African Open Championships form a mandatory part of the qualification pathway for the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games, making the competition particularly important for athletes seeking valuable ranking points.

LATEST NEWS

Iran, Austrian FMs hold talks on bilateral issues

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his Austrian counterpart Beate Meinel-Reisinger have discussed the latest international developments and their bilateral relations.

During the phone call late on Thursday, the two top diplomats exchanged views on the bilateral relations and the latest diplomatic developments.

Iran dismisses German President's 'unnecessary war' label for US-Israeli aggression

Iran has rejected German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's characterization of the US-Israeli attacks on Iran as an "unnecessary war."

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei stated that the aggression constituted a clear violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and a blatant act of military aggression against a sovereign state.

While acknowledging that the crisis stems from the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and that the war could have been avoided, Baqaei stressed that the UN Charter recognizes no concept of a "necessary war." He called on all nations committed to international law to unequivocally condemn the attacks and demand accountability from the aggressors.

Russia oppose any new armed aggression against Iran: Lavrov

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has stated that Moscow is categorically opposed to any recurrence of armed aggression against Iran or the use of force to interfere in its affairs.

Speaking at an international forum in Greater Eurasia, Lavrov condemned the

US military presence in region a 'threat, not source of security': Iran

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei told VICE News that past experience proves US military forces in the region act as a threat, not a source of security.

Baqaei stressed that Iran respects regional sovereignty but will exercise self-defense. He called for an end to sanctions, release of frozen assets, and the lifting of the US naval blockade - a flagrant violation of international law.

IRGC intelligence: US assumptions of 'easy, quick' war against Iran proven false

The IRGC Intelligence Organization announced that following failed US-Israeli attacks in June 2025 and February 2026, along with the collapse of an April blockade, Washington's assumption of a quick and easy military operation against Iran has been exposed as a fallacy.

US intelligence now admits Iran is rapidly rebuilding missile sites, launchers, and drone production - far faster than initial estimates. Iran reportedly retains 70% of its pre-war missile stockpile and access to 90% of underground facilities.

IRGC navy oversees passage of 35 vessels through Strait of Hormuz

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Navy announced that 35 vessels, including oil tankers, container ships, and other commercial carriers, have safely transited the Strait of Hormuz over the past 24 hours.

The passage was conducted after obtaining necessary authorization and under the security coordination of Iranian naval forces.

The IRGC Navy stated that despite insecurity caused by "terrorist US military" aggression, it has established a safe waterway for shipping and global trade.

US military presence in region a 'threat, not source of security': Iran

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei told VICE News that past experience proves US military forces in the region act as a threat, not a source of security.

Baqaei stressed that Iran respects regional sovereignty but will exercise self-defense. He called for an end to sanctions, release of frozen assets, and the lifting of the US naval blockade - a flagrant violation of international law.

Int'l media delegation visits bombed Minab school

On Thursday, May 21, 2026, a 57-member delegation of international media representatives visited the Shajareh Tayyebeh Girls' Elementary School in Minab, southern Iran.

The school was brutally bombed by US-Israeli coalition forces on the morning of Saturday, February 28, 2026, in an attack that killed over 168 schoolchildren.

Foreign journalists witnessed firsthand the site of what remains one of the deadliest strikes against civilian infrastructure during the imposed war on Iran.

Rubio: 'We would all like to see a deal with Iran'

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters in Sweden on Friday that Washington hopes for a deal with Iran to keep the straits open.

"We would all like to see a deal with Iran in which the straits are open... that is what we all hope for," Rubio said.

Over 12.7m tons of long steel products produced in a year

TEHRAN- According to the statistics of the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA), 12.712 million tons of long steel products was produced in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year 1404 (ended on March 20).

Based on the ISIPA data, the country's long steel products output in 1404 fell 1.1 percent from the production figure in 1403, which was 12.856 million tons.

Long steel products are shaped steel items where the length significantly exceeds the cross-section dimensions, including rebar, wire rod, merchant bars, sections (I-beams, angles, channels), and railway rails. They are typically produced through hot rolling of billet or bloom in rolling mills, followed by cooling, straightening, and cutting to length.

Rebar and wire rod dominate demand, driven by construction and infrastructure—used for concrete reinforcement, fencing, nails, cables, and mesh. Merchant bars serve structural framing, fasteners, and general engineering. Rails and heavy sections support railways, bridges, and heavy machinery. Unlike flat products, long products are highly customizable in shapes, lengths, and grades, often requiring smaller batch sizes.

Globally, long steel accounts for roughly one-third of finished steel consumption, with strong ties to urbanization and construction cycles. Micro-alloyed and high-strength rebars improve earthquake resistance and reduce material use. Electric arc furnace mini-mills frequently produce long products from scrap, offering lower carbon footprint. As developing nations build roads, buildings, and railways, demand for long steel remains robust, while advanced economies focus on specialty bars and high-quality wire rod for automotive and industrial applications.

It is worth mentioning that according to the statistics of the Iranian Steel Producers Association, steel production in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year 1404 has recorded a growth of over six percent.

The association has published the statistics for the year 1404 of the country's steel chain. Accordingly, despite intensified energy restrictions, due to optimal management and the introduction of new capacities—both in production and in energy self-sufficiency by steelmakers—Iran's steel production increased by 6.2 percent. Thus, Iran's steel production in 1404 reached 32.1 million tons, equaling the production level of 1402.

The total production volume of steel products in the country in 1404, however, experienced a reverse trend, declining by 1.8 percent. Meanwhile, sponge iron recorded the highest production growth among steel chain products, with a 16-percent increase. However, in the upstream of the steel chain, production of pellets and iron ore concentrate remained at the same levels as the previous year.

According to this report, the significant growth in sponge iron production—due to new capacities coming online on one hand—and the stabilization of pellet and iron ore concentrate production on the other hand, indicates a worsening shortage of raw materials for direct reduction units. However, with the shutdown of more than 14 million tons of sponge iron production capacity due to damages caused by the third imposed war, this shortage will be temporarily absent.

A 3.8-percent increase in steel ingot production against a 1.1-percent decrease in long steel product production indicates the need to develop steel ingot exports. It is noteworthy that the shutdown of more than two million tons of steel ingot capacity due to the third imposed war can be compensated by activating idle capacities for producing this product.

Production of various steel sheets in 1404 remained almost at the level of the previous year. Meanwhile, slab production saw a double-digit growth of 10.2 percent. Unfortunately, due to the damages inflicted on slab-producing companies during the imposed war, the balance of the flat steel products chain has been disrupted, making the import of slabs and hot-rolled sheets necessary and urgent.

Iran's steel industry is a cornerstone of its non-oil economy, having grown into a significant global player. In 2025, the country produced approximately 32 million tons of crude steel, securing its position as the world's 10th-largest producer.

Beyond crude steel, Iran is a major force in the global direct reduced iron (DRI) market. The nation produced roughly 37 million tons of DRI in 2025, accounting for about a quarter of the world's total supply. This DRI is used by its modern electric arc furnace (EAF) mills, which form the backbone of its steelmaking capacity. However, the indus-



try has faced severe headwinds. In early 2026, military strikes on key facilities, including the country's two largest steel plants, caused major disruptions. This came on top of long-standing challenges like international sanctions, domestic inflation, and energy shortages from power and gas cuts.

Despite these obstacles, the sector remains a vital export earner. It exports a significant portion of its output, with semi-finished steel products being a primary driver. While its immediate outlook is clouded by conflict, Iran's steel industry is a testament to resilience and strategic industrial development on the global stage.

Iran's steel industry produces a comprehensive range of products, from semi-finished materials to value-added goods, supporting construction, automotive, infrastructure, and manufacturing. The sector can be broken down into several key categories:

Semi-Finished Steel

The industry's backbone consists of products like billet, bloom, and slab, with Iran producing over 20 million tons of these in an eight-month period alone.

Flat Steel Products

Led by Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC), the largest steel producer in the West Asia and North Africa, Iran's flat steel output includes hot-rolled and cold-rolled coils, as well as coated products such as galvanized and pre-painted sheets. These high-quality sheets are used in major national projects, including large-scale water pipelines.

Long Steel Products

Specialized in by companies like Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO), this segment includes:

- * Rebar (reinforcement bars) for construction
- * Structural sections like I-beams, H-profiles, channels, and angles
- * Railway rails – ESCO is Iran's sole producer of rail tracks

Tubular and Finished Steel Products

These include various welded pipes, galvanized tubes for water and gas, and advanced automotive steel grades like CK45 and S650MC high-strength sheets, which have recently been produced locally to reduce import dependence.

Overall, the diversity of products demonstrates Iran's growing self-sufficiency and its role as a significant global steel producer.

According to the data released by the World Steel Association (WSA), Iran's crude steel production rose 15.1 percent year-on-year to 2.6 million tons in January 2026.

The figures show Iran maintained its position as the world's tenth-largest steel producer, outperforming the broader global trend.

Global crude steel production across 69 countries totaled 147.3 million tons in January, down 6.5 percent compared with January 2025.

China, the world's largest steel producer, recorded a 13.9 percent decline in output to 75.3 million tons. India produced 15.1 million tons, up 10.5 percent year-on-year, while the United States posted a 3.3 percent increase to 7.1 million tons.

South Korea's output rose 5.0 percent to 5.6 million tons. Japan produced 6.8 million tons, down 0.5 percent, and Brazil's production fell 1.4 percent to 2.7 million tons.

Germany registered a 15 percent increase to 3.1 million tons, while Russia's output declined 7.4 percent to 5.5 million tons. Turkey produced 3.4 million tons, up 5.8 percent year-on-year.

The data indicate that while global steel production contracted at the start of 2026, Iran expanded output at a double-digit pace, consolidating its ranking among leading producers.

According to World Steel Association's previous report, Iran's steel production reached three million tons in December 2025, registering more than 16 percent growth compared to the same period last year.

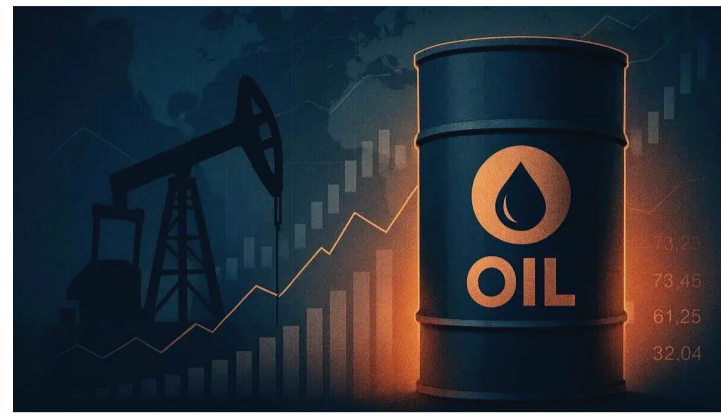
The country remained in tenth place globally with a total steel production of approximately 32 million tons in 2025.

Strait of Hormuz closure shakes Europe: Oil price forecast soars 46%

TEHRAN – The European Commission has issued a stark warning that the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz – triggered by the ongoing war in West Asia – will drive Brent crude prices to an average of \$91.2 per barrel in 2026, a staggering 46% jump from previous estimates. The revised forecast, published Thursday in the EU's Spring 2026 Economic Outlook, signals what officials call the most severe energy shock to hit Europe since the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Just months ago, before the outbreak of hostilities involving Iran, the Commission had predicted a modest \$62.4 per barrel for 2026 and \$63 for 2027. Those figures have now been torn up. "The energy shock resulting from the war in the West Asia and the de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz is the single most important driver of this upward revision," the report states explicitly.

According to the Commission's



Worst-case scenario still ahead

analysis, following U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, 2026, crude prices surged roughly 65% by April 29. The virtual shutdown of the Strait – a chokepoint through which about one-fifth of global oil passes – has already slashed maritime oil flows by 15% and liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments by 20%. Brussels now warns that oil and gas prices could remain 20% above pre-war levels for the foreseeable future.

In a particularly grim passage, the report cautions that if the Strait disruption and fighting persist, "the worst-case scenario has not yet materialized." Energy prices may not peak until late 2026, and the European economy might fail to recover through 2027. The knock-on effects are already visible: eurozone growth for 2026 has been cut to 0.9% (down from 1.2%), while inflation

in the eurozone has been revised up to 3.0% (from 1.9%) and to 3.1% across the entire EU.

Analysts note that the 46% forecast hike underscores how deeply the crisis is reshaping Western economic calculations. With Iran exercising effective control over the strategic waterway, global energy markets are bracing for prolonged turbulence. One Brussels-based energy economist, speaking on condition of anonymity, said: "We have not seen a supply-side shock of this magnitude since the 1970s oil embargo."

The Commission's spring report leaves little room for optimism, describing the Strait of Hormuz closure as the biggest energy shock to Europe since the invasion of Ukraine. For now, EU member states are scrambling to secure alternative supplies, but the report makes clear that no short-term fix can replace the lost throughput from the world's most vital oil artery.

Strategic view of Iran-China rail corridor, a prerequisite for preserving Iran's position in Silk Road

TEHRAN- The head of the China Desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran said: "A strategic view of the Iran-China rail corridor is a prerequisite for preserving our country's position in the Silk Road."

According to a report from the Public Relations Office of the Yazd Chamber of Commerce, Mehdi Farazi, speaking at a meeting with entrepreneurs from this province, added, referring to the challenges and capacities of rail transport between Iran and China: The Islamic Republic of Iran has anticipated all transport models in its basic documents for cooperation with China, and now requires a strategic perspective to preserve and develop its position in the region's transit corridors.

Stating that maritime transport has a long history in Iran-China exchanges, he said: In the 1990s, air transport development also took shape through Mahan Air, such that prior to the recent military developments, the number of this airline's flights to China was 15 per week, which increased to 20 per week after the war.

According to Farazi, this shows that disruptions to sea routes even affect the aviation sector, and entrepreneurs must define short-term and medium-term alternative models for crisis situations.

The head of the China Desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, referring to the launch of the Yiwu-Iran rail route in 2016 concurrent with the Chinese president's visit to Iran, stated: The most important challenge for this route from the beginning has been the lack of return cargo from Iran to China.

He added: The private sector at that time called for reciprocal government support to sustain this route, while China, with a strategic view of the Belt and Road Initiative, managed to consolidate its logistics chain through phased subsidies and export management.

Farazi continued: In 2022, it was also proposed that revenue from the transit of Chinese goods to Europe be allocated as a subsidy to Iran's rail export and import sector to ensure the route's sustainability.

He also announced a proposed plan for the complete exemption of government ownership rights

for export goods transported by rail and said: This proposal has a legal budget line in parliament and could be an effective incentive for developing rail transport.

Farazi, criticizing the lack of coordination among the country's various transport sectors, asserted: While the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines has had an official office in Shanghai for over 25 years, such cohesion and presence have not yet been established in the rail sector. He added: Disagreements and lack of coordination among responsible bodies have made decision-making more complex, and without a strategic view, temporary solutions will not meet the country's needs.

Referring to some regional political disputes on transit routes, he said: Disagreements between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan at times caused restrictions on train passages, but Iran has tried, with a strategic view, to cement its position as the heart of the rail Silk Road.

Regarding the current state of rail transport between the two countries, the head of the China Desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: According to the additional protocol to the Tehran document, rail transit time should be 14 days, and any delay is subject to a fine, but following an interim order from China's National Development and Reform Commission during the recent military developments, transit time increased to about 40 days.

He added: This issue was also raised in telephone conversations between Dr. Araghchi and the Chinese side, and with political follow-ups, the rail route was reactivated.

Farazi also emphasized that technically, there is no problem with the bogie-changing process or trains entering Turkmenistan.

Referring to the activity of three major Chinese forwarder companies cooperating with Iran, Farazi said: The main challenge in rail and sea transport is the return of empty containers to China due to the lack of export cargo from Iran.

According to him, the accumulation of two thousand empty containers at Apirin station is a result of wartime conditions and lack of internal cohesion and requires immediate reform.

Nearly \$6.4m in facilities paid to implement industrial support package

TEHRAN- The Director General of Monetary and Credit Operations of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) stated: From January 8 to May 4, selected banks disbursed 1,076 trillion rials (about \$6,329,411) in facilities across 25,548 cases to support producers affected by the government's new foreign currency policy.

According to IRNA reporting from the Central Bank, Mehdi Sahabi, referring to the banking network's performance exceeding the approved ceiling in granting support facilities to producers impacted by the government's new currency policy, said: This performance demonstrates the maximum cooperation of selected banks in implementing the industrial support package.

He stated that the Council of Ministers, in its meeting on January 7, approved the payment of these support facilities upon the proposal of

the working group under Article 13 of the regulations for ensuring food security and improving people's livelihoods.

He further emphasized: Accordingly, the banks' quotas were determined in January, and the relevant implementation guidelines were communicated to 17 operating banks in February.

The Director General of Monetary and Credit Operations of the Central Bank concluded: Under the aforementioned guidelines, the relevant ministries submitted the list of eligible units to the Central Bank and the working group for forwarding to the operating banks.

Meanwhile, on May 16, the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) identified controlling inflation as the main priority of monetary policymaking and said: All actions and

programs of the Central Bank are carried out within the framework of this strategic goal.

According to IRNA reporting from the Central Bank, Abdolnaser Hemmati, emphasizing the control of the country's chronic inflation factors such as the monetization of the government's budget deficit due to the effects of war and the continuation of sanctions, stated: While supporting the stability of the government's financing system, the Central Bank pursues the necessary measures to minimize its inflationary effects.

The head of the Central Bank's Supreme Council stated: In the area of monetary policy, the Central Bank seriously pursues controlling and reducing the pace of liquidity growth to prevent the experience of high liquidity growth and the resulting inflation.

He added: This policy is doubly important especially in circumstances where the rial financing needs of the government have increased due to declining government revenues. Liquidity growth and the monetary base are under precise daily management, and liquidity absorption tools are employed to manage it.

Hemmati said: Preserving and rebuilding the production and supply chain is also on the Central Bank's agenda. Accordingly, in the current circumstances, preventing commodity shortages and preserving employment have gained higher priority. The banking supervision duty is also completely focused on this axis so that credit resources are effectively placed at the service of producers, exporters, and employment preservation without creating systemic risk.

We can all thrive when the Abu Dhabi syndicate folds

From page 1 ▶ By returning the UAE to a true confederation of autonomous emirates, we can finally decouple regional prosperity from one family's pathological and predatory centralization of power.

The geography of dysmorphia

The criminal Al Nahyan clique suffers from a severe case of geographic body dysmorphia. They occupy the historic sands of Arabia, yet their psychological and corporate alignment resides entirely in Tel Aviv and Washington.

They endure the daily chore of performing Arab and Muslim leadership while their military grids, bank accounts, and strategic loyalties are tied to Israel's startup scene and Pentagon procurement cycles.

Forcing these made men to remain in the Persian Gulf is essentially a human rights violation against their own ambitions. A compassionate Mediterranean Retirement Act would be the ultimate geopolitical optimization.

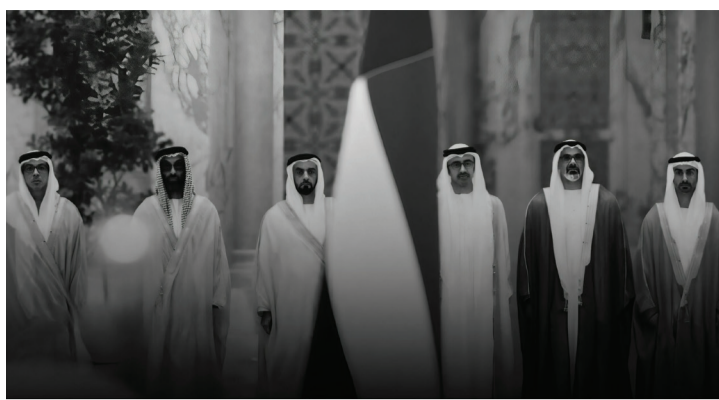
Give them their luxury penthouses overlooking the Haifa port. Let them converse exclusively in Hebrew, which clearly suits their deeper talents and affinities, invest in AI drone startups without the tedious mask of shell companies, and escape the cultural friction of governing a population they view as service staff.

It is a win-win: the UAE recovers its sovereign dignity, and the family finally achieves total self-actualization in their true spiritual homeland.

Emancipating the Al Maktoums and the Al Qasimis

A primary domestic victim of the Abu Dhabi monopoly is Dubai. Since the 2008 financial bailout, Dubai has been forced to serve as the kinetic lightning rod for Abu Dhabi's reckless regional adventurism, dragging its proud mercantile soul into the crosshairs of missile barrages during the recent U.S.-Israeli-Emirati campaign of aggression against Iran.

A post-Al Nahyan reality means the financial emancipation of the



Al Maktoums. They could revert to their core competency: unaligned hyper-mercantilism.

Imagine a Dubai that functions as the independent mercantile republic it was always meant to be, restoring organic trade routes with Iran and Eurasia rather than serving as collateral damage for the Zionist kleptocracy of the Bani Fatima crime syndicate.

Concurrently, Sharjah's Al Qasimi rulers could reclaim their budgets and reject the imported, hyper-secularized Zionist tech culture pushed by the capital, reclaiming their authentic Arab-Islamic identity and restoring the pre-1971 autonomy that actually allowed the Persian Gulf to flourish.

This path is infinitely preferable to the alternative: watching the federation drift back toward the Stone Age, a journey not particularly long for people who still fondly romanticize their tribal raiding past, while tasting ever more sophisticated missiles and drones from an unknown country growing tired of playing target practice.

Dismantling the panopticon

The most profound beneficiaries of this sovereign restructuring would be the millions of exploited expatriates.

The current UAE is a giant, glass-walled panopticon. Passport seizures, biometric tracking via intrusive software, and deportation for pro-Palestine whispers define a caste system that makes the glittering facades feel like a gilded cage.

Dismantling this security regime allows for the transition from a hyper-exploitative caste system to a normalized, regulated labor market.

When the "security" focus shifts from policing workers to facilitating trade, the remittance corridors that sustain the families of millions of Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis become significantly more secure.

We are talking about ending a system where the heat-death of laborers is treated as a routine operating expense.

As for the Western moralists perpetually preoccupied with "liberating" the region: here is a cause actually worthy of your attention, assuming, of course, that the Al Nahyan-funded think-tank grants and luxury junkets aren't too comfortable to abandon.

A liberated UAE would finally force these virtue-signaling actors to reconcile their empty rhetoric with the skeletal, exploitative reality they have so conveniently ignored for years.

Restoring the maritime commons

Geopolitically, the removal of the Al Nahyan crime family de-Zionizes the maritime commons of the Persian Gulf.

During the recent campaign of aggression against Iran, the capital hosted Israeli soldiers and air defense batteries, placing active Zionist military footprints alarmingly close to the Iranian coastline. This turned the Persian Gulf from a shared lake into a tripwire.

Eliminating this dynasty vaporizes the most dangerous forward-operating intelligence bubble in the region. Without Abu Dhabi floating Israel's isolated wartime economy through asymmetric subsidies, proxy conflicts would rapidly de-escalate.

Riyadh need not worry about keeping that seat empty at the next OPEC+ summit. A decentralized, post-regime UAE will likely rejoin the fold soon enough, trading its current penchant for backstabbing and Zionist-aligned adventurism for the quiet, profitable cooperation that actually serves the Persian Gulf.

Beyond the Persian Gulf, this benign dismantling also acts as a massive regional fire suppression system.

Abu Dhabi's fingerprints are smeared across the continent's most brutal theaters, from the logistical lifeline fueling the genocidal RSF in Sudan to the destabilizing meddling in Libya and the long, ruinous stalemate in Yemen.

By weaponizing sovereign wealth into a private syndicate of chaos, the Al Nahyans have effectively outsourced their geopolitical ambitions through proxy destruction. Cutting the purse strings of the Bani Fatima syndicate is a vital humanitarian intervention.

Starving these proxy wars of their primary financier would cease the export of instability, finally allowing these fractured nations to begin the slow process of stitching their societies back together.

The skyscrapers do not need to fall; they just need to stand on authentic foundations rather than terror and U.S.-Israeli fealty.

By replacing a crime family masquerading as a modern state with a decentralized mosaic, we ensure that the region finally stops paying interest on a political illusion. This is the Hegelian synthesis after decades of exploitative thesis.

This article does not necessarily represent the views of the Tehran Times.

Disgusting remarks against Sumud activists

Ben Gvir tramples human dignity of philanthropists



TEHRAN — Israeli Transport Minister Miri Regev has boasted about the mistreatment of activists from the Global Sumud Flotilla detained by Israel, saying that "prison is the place for terrorism supporters".

These remarks are disgusting and indescribably insulting. What Regev and co-thinkers say or act is a blow to human wisdom and conscience.

Is anybody who, out of his or her compassionate feelings, bears the difficult task of a maritime journey to Gaza from very long distances to show sympathy toward the besieged people of Gaza and symbolically bring a certain amount of humanitarian aid, a "terrorist"!!!

Contrary to what Regev claims, anybody who mistreats these philanthropists and designates them as terrorists must be held accountable for his or her callous behavior or acts.

These activists' hearts are full of empathy for more than two million people who have been subjected to the most heinous crimes since October 7, 2023. This is not a matter to be attributed to religion. It is just a matter of humanity.

Regev, a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, posted a video from Ashdod port in southern Israel showing the arrival of a ship carrying dozens of detained flotilla activists under the title: "This is what will be done to terrorism supporters who came to break the blockade on Gaza."

But imprisoning more than two million people in a tiny land and subjecting them to different types of inhumane behavior, ranging from massacring, starving, and depriving them of health services, are viewed as malicious and terrorist acts.

In fact, these activists are human rights defenders that the world should be proud of.

For example, it is comical to call Margaret Connolly, the sister of Irish President Catherine Connolly, one among 12 Irish citizens detained by Israel, a terrorist supporter. She is a physician who probably feels more obligated toward the sufferings of the Gaza people.

If, as Regev claims, anybody who seeks to break the Gaza deadlock is a terrorist supporter, then Swedish citizen Greta Thunberg, the world's most prominent environmental and human rights activist, is also a terrorist supporter and should be kept in prison.

Israeli officials are biased and reckless to the extent that they don't know what meaning their words carry. A great majority of people around the world sympathize with the downtrodden Palestinians, especially those in Gaza. This sense of sympathy toward Palestinians is supported by different opinion polls in various countries over the years. Based on the remarks of Regev, it should be concluded that all those people who back the Palestinians are supporters of terrorism as well.

Based on this filthy statement by the Israeli transport minister, all the countries, even European backers of Israel, who on different occasions have voted for the restoration of the basic rights of Palestinians and pushed for the formation of an independent

Palestinian state in the UN, are backers of terrorism. Also, it should be concluded from Regev's statement that only Israel and the U.S. stand for human rights and fight against terrorism.

Regev claimed the activists had come "trying to harm Israel's sovereignty and break the naval blockade on Gaza".

Is any effort to defy the siege on Gazans really a breach of Israeli "sovereignty"?

In fact, current Israeli officials—including Regev, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, National Security Minister Ben Gvir, as well as Netanyahu and other ultra-extremist Zionist leaders in the past—who have created severe hardships for Palestinians and denied them the right to a state as recognized by UN Security Council resolutions, are sponsors of terrorism and must be held accountable for their actions in international tribunals.

Israel not only has aborted all plans to allow Palestinians to have their own land or country, but it is also continuing to squeeze more than two million people in the tiny strip of Gaza based on the Yellow Line. Similarly, it is driving Palestinian from their homes and farms in the West Bank and Jerusalem by using different ploys.

"Prison is the place for supporters of terrorism, and of course, we will send them back to their home countries," Regev said.

If the transport minister is correct, then these "supporters of terrorism" must be kept in jail and penalized for backing terrorism and should not be sent to their homelands.

The mad minister tramples human dignity

On Wednesday, a video published by Ben-Gvir showed scenes related to the mistreatment of Global Sumud Flotilla activists, who were depicted kneeling with their hands bound and foreheads to the ground, after being detained while attempting to sail towards the Gaza Strip. At the same time, Ben-Gvir, while taunting the detained activists, was waving an Israeli flag.

The video by Ben-Gvir, captioned "That's how we welcome the terrorism supporters. Welcome to Israel," shows the activists on the deck of a military boat while the Israeli national anthem plays.

The scene of inhuman treatment even drew backlash from those Western countries, which were or may still be facilitating Israel's crimes against Palestinians.

"It is intolerable that these protesters, among whom there are many Italian citizens, are subjected to this treatment, which violates human dignity," Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said in a statement.

Also, Steffen Seibert, Germany's ambassador to Israel, labelled Ben Gvir's treatment of detained activists as "wholly unacceptable and incompatible with the basic values of our countries."

Of course, Ambassador Seibert must be reminded that his country was the second enabler of Israel in its brutality against Gazans since October 2023, coming just after the United States.

Hezbollah drones wreak havoc on IOF in southern Lebanon

From page 1 ▶ The regime's news site Walla, citing senior IOF officers, reported that "the situation in southern Lebanon poses a major challenge to Israeli (occupation) forces because staying in the same area for a long period, while Hezbollah operates fiber-optic drones that are very difficult to detect and intercept, presents a very significant operational challenge."

Walla, citing military sources, revealed details of the injury to 401st Brigade Commander Colonel Meir Biderman, whom Hezbollah targeted. It noted that Biderman entered "a building in southern Lebanon that was defined as protected in order to rest inside it, and was then attacked by a drone."

Citing the same sources, it pointed out that "Hezbollah succeeded in gathering intelligence, tracking Israeli (occupation) army activity in the area, detecting the forces' presence inside the building, then executed the attack on the building where the brigade commander was inside. He was seriously wounded and remains under sedation and on artificial respiration after surgery to remove shrapnel from his head."

The IOF announced that due to another exploding drone strike, a soldier was seriously wounded, a combat officer was moderately wounded, and two other soldiers were also moderately wounded. Additionally, a combat officer and two other soldiers were lightly wounded.

Hebrew news outlets have reported that ten IOF soldiers have been injured, some in serious condition, amid two separate incidents

involving Hezbollah's attack drones.

Haaretz noted that the 401st Brigade commander had been appointed after the previous brigade commander was killed in Jabalia in the Gaza Strip. The newspaper acknowledged that "the current round of fighting in Lebanon is characterized by the increasing danger posed by Hezbollah's exploding drones."

The newspaper quoted military sources as saying that the "exploding drones" operated by Hezbollah via fiber optics have become the primary source of injuries in the army, which cannot find technological or electronic solutions to shoot them down. Investigations indicated that operational indiscipline and failure to follow protection instructions led to severe injuries, most recently the serious wounding of Colonel Biderman.

Also reserve paratrooper officer Major Itamar Spier was killed in a clash with a Hezbollah fighter in southern Lebanon. During his regular service, Spier was an officer in the elite Maglan unit. The newspaper noted, "A very thin layer of soldiers continues to bear the burden of the war and pay the heaviest price."

In details of an incident revealed by Haaretz, a platoon commander in the Golani Brigade, Captain Maoz Recanati, was killed by a loitering drone fired by Hezbollah while he was securing an inspection tour for 36th Division Commander Brigadier General Yefthah Norkin near the Litani River. The newspaper confirmed that the tour was conducted during daylight, defying risks imposed by Hezbollah, even though the army



now restricts its movements in that area to nighttime for fear of drones.

Reservist Colonel Hanoch Dauba said, "The story goes beyond a timing mistake for a field tour," stressing that the army lacks real operational control over the area. Dauba highlighted, "There is presence and destruction of infrastructure, but the enemy, which we were told suffered a crippling blow, still dictates the operational pace and battle conditions."

In the absence of a political vision, field commanders told Haaretz their primary mission has become "bringing soldiers home safely," amid the continuous threat from the Lebanon front. Reservist Major General Tamir Hayman described the goal of "dismantling Hezbollah" as impossible, asserting that "the army is incapable of occupying Lebanon or forcing the group's disarmament, especially given the acute manpower crisis." The newspaper noted that the IOF's chief of staff is raising "ten red flags" warning about the state of his force's manpower.

Hezbollah's military media has been publishing almost daily footage on its Telegram channel of its fiber-optic drones attacking IOF soldiers, vehicles, tanks, and even the regime's Iron Dome.

On Thursday, the occupation army radio stated that the IOF "detected two armed men in southern Lebanon hundreds of meters from the border fence opposite the settlements of Bir'am and Doviv. A drone was called in and carried out a strike at the location."

According to Hebrew Channel 12, "security officials estimate that this was an attempted infiltration" into northern settlements "with the aim of carrying out an operation. Following the incident, residents of the settlements of Doviv, Bir'am, and Metat near the fence were instructed to remain inside their homes."

The same channel reported that "residents in the settlements near the fence said after being informed of the incident: How can armed elements reach the fence while the Israeli (occupation) army is inside southern Lebanon?"

Chinese audience embraces Iran's Golestan Palace in TV program



TEHRAN - A video showcasing Iran's UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace has drawn engagement from Chinese audiences after being broadcast by China's state-owned broadcaster China Global Television Network as part of a program marking International Museum Day.

The segment, which featured a fusion of traditional Khorasani music and imagery of the historic Golestan Palace in Tehran, was aired within CGTN's cultural initiative titled "Bridging the World Through Museums." The program highlighted museums and cultural sites across multiple continents, aiming to promote intercultural dialogue through shared heritage narratives.

According to Hussein Khalifi, the representative of Iran's Touring & Automobile Club, the Iranian submission stood out among entries from several countries and received significantly higher viewership compared with other featured clips.

"The video combining traditional music and the architectural beauty of Golestan Palace attracted considerable attention from Chinese audiences and became one of the most viewed segments," Khalifi told ISNA on Wednesday.

He said the video was broadcast during CGTN's International Museum Day coverage in China, where museums from around the world were featured in a collaborative cultural showcase.

Khalifi added that the use of regional Iranian music helped shape the tone and emotional resonance of the video, noting that Chinese viewers have shown increasing interest in Iranian cultural and historical content in recent years.

The CGTN initiative, which was held on May 18 to coincide with International Museum Day, presented 15 museums, and their galleries and cultural spaces from eight countries as platforms for cross-cultural dialogue. The broadcaster described museums as institutions that preserve "the traces of human civilization" and function as spaces where memory, culture and shared stories shape how societies understand the world.

In its coverage, CGTN emphasized that museums across regions and historical periods serve as living spaces of interaction rather than static repositories of artefacts. It said that through collections, artistic expression and public en-

agement, museums continue to foster dialogue between cultures and generations.

The program featured a series of site-specific cultural performances and visual presentations. At China's Old Summer Palace, also known as Yuanmingyuan, light installations were projected against the ruins of western-style mansions, illustrating a convergence of Chinese and European aesthetics. In Greece, performers appeared near the Acropolis, blending music with one of the world's most recognizable heritage sites overlooking the Aegean Sea.

In Tunisia, at the Bardo Museum, poetic verses were recited in a setting designed to highlight the coexistence of multiple historical narratives within a single cultural space.

Within the program, Golestan Palace was framed as a representation of Iran's layered artistic and architectural heritage. The palace complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was presented as a cultural crossroads where Iranian decorative arts and European architectural influences intersect.

CGTN described the palace as a space where traditional Iranian music resonates through mirrored halls and tiled courtyards, creating what it called a dialogue between centuries of artistic tradition. It also noted that the site functions as a museum complex connecting artefacts from different historical periods and regions, reflecting the movement and exchange of artistic ideas across geography and time.

The broadcaster further stated that museums such as Golestan Palace reveal "layers of human identity over time," linking distant generations through cultural expression passed into the future.

Khalifi said the production of the Iranian segment involved coordination between Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry, the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, and the Owj Arts and Media Organization, which contributed to the development of the video content.

Golestan Palace is one of Tehran's oldest historical complexes and is registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list under recognition for its architectural and cultural significance. The site dates back to the Qajar era and includes a series of royal buildings, halls and courtyards reflecting both Persian artistic traditions and later European influences.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Portobelo-San Lorenzo

The Fortifications on the Caribbean side of Panama: Portobelo and San Lorenzo are located along the coast of the Province of Colón. There are diverse fortification sites around the Bay of Portobelo, denominated San Fernando fortifications: Lower Battery, Upper Battery and Hilltop Stronghold; San Jerónimo Battery Fort; Santiago fortifications: Castle of Santiago de la Gloria, Battery and Hilltop Stronghold; the old Santiago Fortress; ruins of Fort Farnese; the La Trincheras site; the Buenaventura Battery; and the San Cristóbal site. Forty-three kilometers away, at the mouth of the Chagres River stands the San Lorenzo Castle (originally "San Lorenzo el Real del Chagre") with its Upper Battery as a separate structure.

The component parts of the property represent characteristic examples of military architecture developed by the Spanish Empire in its New World territories largely between the 17th and the 18th centuries. The first plans for for-

tifying the entrance to the Bay of Portobelo and the mouth of the Chagres River were prepared in 1586 by Bautista Antonelli. Following his recommendations, the first fortifications in Portobelo were begun in the 1590's. As a whole, these structures comprised a defensive line to protect Portobelo's harbour and the mouth of the Chagres River, which were the Caribbean terminals of the transcontinental route across the Isthmus of Panama. The defensive system includes fortifications in different styles, some of them skilfully integrated into the natural landscape as part of its military defensive design. They were also adapted to the changing needs of defensive technologies in the course of three centuries in order to protect the capital resources sent from colonial America to Spain after crossing the Isthmus of Panama. In the earliest constructions, a military style with mediaeval features prevailed, while in the eighteenth century the structures were rebuilt in the neo-classical style, which

can be observed at the forts of Santiago, San Jerónimo and San Fernando, and also at San Lorenzo.

On the regional scale, these military compounds belonged to a larger defensive system, including Veracruz (Mexico), Cartagena (Colombia), and Havana (Cuba), to protect the route of commercial trade between the Americas and Spain. Portobelo, where the famous fairs were held, was one of the principal Caribbean ports and played a leading role controlling the imperial trade in the Americas.

The site is a key element to the understanding of the adaptation of European building models and their impact on the New World transformation during the modern era. This property demonstrates the strategic organization of the territory and represents an important concept of defense and technology development mainly between the 17th and 18th centuries.

(Source: UNESCO)

Isfahan positioned as regional medical tourism hub

ISFAHAN - Iran is seeking to strengthen its position as a regional hub for medical tourism by leveraging its specialist physicians, advanced treatment centers and competitive costs, tourism minister said during a visit to Isfahan's Healthcare City.

Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri made the remarks on Wednesday during an official trip to Isfahan, where he also inaugurated the five-star Seasons Hotel as part of the Healthcare City.

He described the healthcare city project as one of the most advanced health-oriented developments in the country, saying Isfahan—already recognized as a cultural and historical center—is now on course to become a strategic hub for medical tourism in Iran and the wider region.

"Today is a memorable day for us; one of the largest healthcare complexes in the country has reached operational stage," Salehi-Amiri said, according to remarks carried by the ministry's public relations office. He added that the facility would be capable of serving patients from across Iran as well as international visitors seeking medical services.

The minister emphasized the role of private sector investment in the project, noting that the complex was developed without reliance on bank loans and was financed entirely through direct private capital. He described this as a significant achievement



supported by provincial authorities in Isfahan.

According to Salehi-Amiri, the Healthcare City covers approximately 280,000 square meters of built-up area and is equipped with high-level medical infrastructure, architectural design standards and specialized treatment facilities.

The newly opened hotel includes 125 accommodation units and a capacity of 320 beds, and is designed to function as a health-oriented hospitality facility supporting patients and accompanying visitors.

The minister said the adjacent hospital component of the project is expected to open in the near future, adding that the broader complex would create a transformative impact on Iran's healthcare system and medical

tourism industry.

Salehi-Amiri stated that Iran has already made notable progress in attracting foreign patients. He said 1.2 million medical tourists entered the country in the Iranian year 1403 (March 2024–March 2025), generating approximately \$2 billion in foreign exchange revenue.

Under Iran's Seventh Development Plan, authorities aim to increase the number of medical tourists to more than 2 million annually and raise revenues to around \$6 billion, he said.

The government is preparing to unveil a "comprehensive health tourism system" developed jointly by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare. The system is expected

to formalize coordination across the sector and improve Iran's competitiveness in the regional medical tourism market.

Salehi-Amiri outlined three key competitive advantages for Iran in this sector: highly qualified specialist and sub-specialist physicians, advanced and well-equipped medical centers, and significantly lower treatment costs compared with regional competitors—estimated at between one-third and one-fifth of prices in other countries.

He said these advantages have already attracted patients from Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Persian Gulf states and other parts of Asia.

"The combination of skilled medical professionals, advanced infrastructure and affordable costs has positioned Iran as an attractive destination for health tourism," he said.

The minister also pointed to the potential role of the Iranian diaspora, estimating that between seven and nine million Iranians living abroad represent a strategic opportunity for the sector. He said many expatriates are interested in receiving medical treatment in their country of origin.

Officials hope that Isfahan, traditionally known for its cultural heritage, architecture and tourism attractions, will now extend its profile into healthcare services, creating a dual identity as both a cultural and medical tourism destination.

UK academics warn of war damage to Iran's cultural heritage

TEHRAN - A group of prominent British academics, museum curators, and fellows of the British Academy has expressed deep concern over reported damage to Iran's UNESCO-registered world heritage sites amid war with the US and Israeli regime.

In a letter published by The Times, they cited damage to the Golestan Palace in Tehran and several sites surrounding Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Square, including the Imam Mosque aka Masjid-e Shah, Ali Qapu, and Chehel Sotoun Palace. It also reports the complete destruction of a provincial museum in Khorramabad. Beyond direct bombing, the academics warn that pollution from damage to oil depots and refineries risks causing irreversible harm to ancient sites such as Persepolis, Pasargadae, and the rock-reliefs at Bisotun, Naqsh-e Rostam, and Bishapur. Zoroastrian sites in and around Yazd are also said to be at risk.

The signatories stressed that this represents a loss for global cultural heritage, not only for

the people of Iran. The letter was signed by Professor Ladan Akbarnia of the Fitzwilliam Museum; Dr Lindsay Allen of King's College London; Professor Ali Ansari and Dr Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis of the British Institute of Persian Studies; Professor Susan Babaie of the Courtauld Institute of Art; Dr Paul Collins of the British Museum; Dr John Curtis FBA; Professor Robert Hillenbrand FBA; Professor Almut Hinze FBA; and Professor Nicholas Sims Williams FBA.

The main scholar who initiated this move is John Curtis. A former Keeper of the Middle East Department at the British Museum and a leading scholar of Iranian archaeology, he has long been distinguished by his unwavering commitment to the preservation of Iran's cultural heritage. His own research—spanning the Iron Age, the Elamite and Achaemenid periods, and the material culture of pre-Islamic Iran—has fundamentally shaped modern understanding of the country's ancient civilizations. Beyond his



scholarly output, Curtis has rendered exceptional service to Iranian heritage through decades of fieldwork, curatorial advocacy, and international collaboration, often at politically sensitive moments. It was his initiative that galvanized the recent collective action of British academics, curators, and fellows of the British Academy, leading to the urgent letter published in The Times. By mobilizing this high-profile warning over the bombing of sites such as Golestan Pal-

ace and the pollution threats to Persepolis, Curtis once again demonstrated his deep-seated belief that Iran's millennia-old legacy is a matter of global, not merely national, heritage—an heritage that he has spent a lifetime studying, defending, and bringing to the world's attention.

The letter, published in The Times correspondence section on March 27, underscores growing international concern over the protection of Iran's millennia-old heritage in times of war.

First Announcement



ESCO
Esfahan Steel Company

Notice of International Public Tender No.948258

Subject: Purchasing 33,280 Liter Fire-Resistant Hydraulic Oil (HFC46)

Row No.	Type of Tender	Tender No.	Publication Frequency	Tender Subject	Deadline for Receiving Tender Documents and Submitting Techno-commercial Bids	Opening Date of Techno-commercial Bids
1	International Public Tender	948258	2	Fire-Resistant Hydraulic Oil (HFC46) (33,280 Liter)	02.June.2026	06 and 07 June 2026

Notes:

- 1) To receive tender documents, please refer to ESCO's Eitaa channel (Enquiries/Tenders) through the link of eitaa.com/escomonaghese.
- 2) For more information, please refer to ESCO's Eitaa channel (Enquiries/Tenders) through the link of eitaa.com/escomonaghese.

Health minister meets WHO officials in Geneva

TEHRAN – Iranian Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi has held meetings with the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and WHO director for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO), Hannan Balkhi, discussing ways to enhance health cooperation.

The officials met on the sidelines of the 79th World Health Assembly (WHA) being held from May 18 to June 23 in Geneva, Switzerland. An Iranian delegation led by the health minister is participating in the event.

During the meeting with Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Zafarqandi delineated on the US-Israeli war impact on the country's health system, presenting photographs documenting damage to health infrastructure, and urged the WHO to provide vaccines and medical equipment for the healthcare system which has been disrupted by the aggressors in the recent imposed war, IRNA reported.

The official also elaborated on the ceaseless efforts of the healthcare system and staff to provide medical services to the people.

He also highlighted the need for rebuilding health capacities and procuring essential health equipment, lauding Adhanom Ghebreyesus for condemning attacks on Iranian medical centers.

For his part, the WHO General-Director referred to the war's impact on humans, highlighting that peace is the best medicine. He hoped that talks would replace wars.

The official emphasized pursuing the provision of vaccines and medical tools through the WHO channels.

Holding a meeting with Balkhi, the two sides underscored the need for the continuation of joint international efforts in the health sector.

Referring to the complicated situation and challenges that face the region, and their impacts on the health sector, Balkhi voiced regret over war consequences in Iran, expressing solidarity with Iranians, particularly the victims of Shajarah Tayyebah elementary school in Minab, Hormozgan province.

She highlighted that the WHO EMRO will continue to cooperate with Iran to achieve health goals, especially eradicating diseases such as hepatitis C.

Zafarqandi, for his part, underscored the need to expand collaborative efforts between Iran and the WHO, expounding on the uninterrupted delivery of health-care services such as vaccination and pregnancy care to people.

Delivering a talk at the 79th WHA, the health minister called on delegations attending the event to condemn attacks against civilians and health infrastructures, noting that 'health can and must remain a bridge for peace.'

"Today, I am speaking on behalf of a nation under an unprovoked attack not only against its army, but against its civilians, children, environment, and health infrastructure," Zafarqandi said, addressing the 79th WHA Assembly.

"Just a few days ago, a school in Minab (Hormozgan province) was struck. 168 students and their teachers were killed at their desks. They were not combatants; they were children with dreams."

The official went on to say that the death toll, number of casualties, and destruction are horrifying.

A total of 376 children un-



der the age of 18 are killed, and more than 33,000 civilians are injured; this is clear evidence of indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets. 63 hospitals and 195 other health infrastructures are damaged, and 27 medical staff are killed.

Let us recall the World Health Organization, the WHO Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, says, 'bombing a hospital or school is not a miscalculation. These are war crimes. Full stop.'

Let me be clear, the Pasteur Institute of Iran, the pillar of our country's health system for over 100 years, has been directly hit.

Attacking a school or hospital is attacking the future and the fundamentals of ethics.

Iran calls on this Assembly to condemn attacks on civilians and civilian health infrastructures.

Yet, despite all these attacks, our health system continues to function with pride. We will not be broken, and our national team of health stands with the people of Iran in any condition. Health can and must remain a bridge for peace."

Holding talks with counterparts

On the sidelines of the 79th WHA, Zafarqandi has convened several meetings with counterparts from different countries, like Oman, Lebanon, India, and the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ICRC).

On Wednesday, the minister met his Brazilian and Pakistani counterparts.

In a meeting with Syed Mustafa Kamal, Pakistan's Health Minister, Zafarqandi highlighted the need for boosting cooperation in transporting medicines and medical devices, as well as utilizing the capacity of the two countries for vaccine development.

The official also commended Pakistan's extensive efforts to make peace in the region.

For his part, Kamal highlighted that neighbors always support each other, and from a national security perspective, they should cooperate to maintain and promote health. Referring to Pakistan's plans to boost vaccine manufacturing capacity, the official welcomed the idea of collaborating with Iran in this sector.

Meeting the Minister of Health of Brazil, Alexandre Padilha, Zafarqandi emphasized promoting scientific cooperation and health ties within the BRICS framework, noting that the current scientific collaborations between the two countries would help lay the ground for the expansion of ties in the field of health.

Padilha, for his part, detailed Brazil's capacity and facilities in the field of health, and proposed that the two countries follow up on the development of scientific interactions through forming a joint working group incorporation with health sector and diplomatic services of the two countries; the idea was well-received by Iran's health minister.

In separate meetings with

Omani and Lebanese health ministers, Zafarqandi highlighted the need for boosting solidarity to confront any aggressions.

During the meeting, Hilal bin Ali Al Sabti, Omani Health Minister, voiced his country's readiness to enhance cooperation with Iran in the medical and pharmaceutical sectors. He welcomed the expansion of scientific exchanges and the development of advanced treatments in both countries.

For his part, Zafarqandi highlighted the capabilities of Iran's health system in providing health and medical services to Iranians in all fields, including advanced treatments such as organ transplants and cancer treatment.

The two sides proposed to form two scientific and economic working groups to pursue solutions to strengthen cooperation in the health sector.

The health minister also met



Lebanese Minister of Public Health Rakan Nassereddine.

The officials discussed the impacts of the US-Israeli war against the two countries, condemned the illegal assaults, and highlighted the need for promoting solidarity among nations to confront aggressors, preserve peace, and establish stability in the region.

On Tuesday, Zafarqandi explored avenues to expand cooperation with his counterparts from BRICS member states in different fields of the health sector.

Holding a meeting with the Indian Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Jagat Prakash Nadda, Zafarqandi highlighted the role of India in the pharmaceutical industry and emphasized the need for the enhancement of ties in the field of health.

For his part, Prakash Nadda expounded on India's capacity in the health sector and announced the country's readiness to maintain and promote cooperation with Iran.

The two sides agreed to form a joint committee to follow up on the development of academic, medical, and pharmaceutical ties.

Also, Zafarqandi held meetings with his Russian, Brazilian, Chinese, South African, Egyptian, and Ethiopian counterparts, elaborating on the impacts of the US-Israeli war on the country's civilian and health infrastructures, while discussing ways to

enhance collaboration among the BRICS member states in the health sector.

The health minister also held a meeting with Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ICRC).

During the meeting, Zafarqandi highlighted the recent war's impacts on healthcare facilities and medical centers, stressing that attacks on health infrastructures have severely damaged the health system and medical staff.

Referring to the destruction of the Pasteur Institute of Iran, he warned about the consequences and health risks.

The official said that since the beginning of the imposed war against Iran on February 28, medical staff, in cooperation with the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), emergency teams, and firefighters, were among the first to be present in the fields to provide medical services.

Lauding the ICRC for dispatching aid consignments to the country, Zafarqandi called for expanding humanitarian cooperation.

For her part, Spoljaric Egger censured the attacks on civilian and medical infrastructures, while commending the unprecedented operational capabilities of the health ministry and the IRCS, noting that the ICRC has nothing to add to strengthen the

high capacity of the two organizations.

The official noted that the ICRC is exploring new avenues to raise funds and receive contributions from international donor states to address humanitarian needs.

WHA79 is bringing together delegations from WHO Member States to set global health policy and advance the Organization's strategic priorities.

It is built upon the momentum of last year's 78th World Health Assembly, which adopted the Global Action Plan on Climate Change and Health, an updated road map for an enhanced global response to the adverse health effects of air pollution, and the elevation of climate change as the first strategic objective of WHO's Fourteenth General Program of Work.

This year's Assembly theme is "Reshaping Global Health: A Shared Responsibility". The key discussions cover Global Health Architecture Reform, Universal Health Coverage and Traditional Medicine, prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, antimicrobial resistance, health emergency preparedness and response, mental health and social connection, health, and climate change.

Strategic Roundtables bring together delegates, experts from WHO, partner agencies, and civil society to discuss current priorities and next solutions on vital issues for global public health.

Working together to preserve Iran's precious biodiversity



By Mehdi Garshasbi

TEHRAN - Iran ranks among the top 20 countries in the world for biodiversity and is home to a variety of plant and animal species. However, in recent years, certain actions have destroyed habitats and pushed many species to the brink of extinction.

So far, more than two million plant and animal species have been identified in the world, of which 43,000 exist in Iran. In fact, there are 11 types of ecosystems in the world, including aquatic, terrestrial, natural, and artificial ecosystems. Iran has 9 of these 11 ecosystems. Also, out of the 42 types of wetlands in the world, 41 types have been identified in Iran.

According to the Department of Environment, some 2,000 animal species, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and inland fish, and about 1,200 fish species have been identified in the country's ecosystems. Of these species, 210 mammal species, 640 bird species, 300 reptile species, 23 amphibian species, and 350 inland fish species can be mentioned.

According to statistics, Iran can be considered the cradle of genetic diversity in the world. Even in international classifications, it is considered among the countries with high biodiversity. However, Iran's biodiversity, like the rest of the world, faces many challenges such as habitat destruction, overhunting, drought, and climate change.

Studies show that 148 vertebrate species in the country are endangered, including critically endangered species, endangered species, and critically vulnerable species.

Given the current circumstances, let's all

join hands to protect biodiversity, because the future of the Earth, the future of life, and the future of the next generations depend on our decisions and actions today.

Acting locally for global impact

May 22 is celebrated as the International Day for Biological Diversity. This International Day for Biological Diversity, under the theme "Acting locally for global impact", a powerful idea is placed at the center: major changes begin on a small, local scale. The success of this plan to reverse biodiversity loss depends on the strength of local actions—on the commitment of communities, organizations, and governments working together.

As the global community is called to re-examine our relationship to the natural world, one thing is certain: despite all our technological advances, we are completely dependent on healthy and vibrant ecosystems for our water, food, medicines, clothes, fuel, shelter, and energy, just to name a few.

This involves respecting, protecting, and repairing our biological wealth.

In December 2022, the world came together and agreed on a global plan to transform our relationship with nature. The adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework sets 23 targets for 2030 and four global goals for 2050 to stop and reverse the loss of nature.

Among its goals: restore 30% of degraded ecosystems, conserve 30% of land, waters, and seas, reduce the introduction or settlement of invasive alien species by 50%, and mobilize \$200 billion per year for biodiversity, all by 2030.

Infertility treatment offered to couples from Australia, England, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan

TEHRAN – Couples from Australia, England, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan have received infertility treatment at Royan Institute in the current Iranian calendar year, which started on March 21.

In this regard, 10 babies have been born as a result of the treatment of foreign infertile couples at the institute's specialized infertility treatment center, IRNA reported.

This success highlights the scientific and therapeutic status of Royan Institute in the international arena and indicates the increasing trust of foreign patients in Iran's medical knowledge and experience in the field of infertility treatment, Mehdi Lotfpanah, the public relations director of Royan Institute, said.

As one of the leading scientific and medical centers in the region, Royan Institute has been able to provide extensive services in the fields of infertility treatment, reproductive medicine, stem cells, and regenerative medicine for more than three decades, utilizing up-to-date knowledge, advanced equipment, and experienced experts, he added.

Royan's treatment department hosts thousands of Iranian and international couples annually, providing services such as IVF, ICSI, egg and embryo freezing, preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), modern infertility treatments, and specialized consultations, he concluded.

Royan intl. congress

The 27th Royan International Reproductive Medicine Congress and the 22nd Royan International Stem Cell Technology Congress will be held in Tehran from September 2 to 4, 2026.

This year, seven specialized workshops and a pre-congress symposium on obesity were held a few weeks before the event for students and researchers, which was well received.

Offering Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits for various medical, paramedical, and midwifery disciplines, the scientific event provides a valuable opportunity for professionals and specialists to update their knowledge in the field.

A total of 515 out of 600 submitted articles are accepted; these involve 129 articles in Reproductive Biomedicine Congress, 195 posters and 16 lectures, 237 articles in Stem Cell Biology and Technology Congress, 220 posters and 17 lectures, and 67 articles in Nursery and Midwifery Seminar, 63 posters and four lectures.

Six selected best articles will be awarded at the opening ceremony of the Congress, on Wednesday, which will be held both in person and online.

The event will host 36 lecturers from 19 foreign countries, including Germany (Prof. Janems Adjaye), Qatar (Dr. Mohammad Mostafa Arafa), France (Prof. Laurent David), Austria (Dr. Victori Deneke), Spain (Dr. Nicholas Garrido Pushalt), Italy (Dr. Local Gianiroli), Japan (Prof. Kazuhiro Kawamura), Russia (Dr. Daria Kuznetsova), New Zealand (Prof. Bjorn Oback), and China (Dr. Zhen Liu), as well as 59 national lecturers.

In 2024, a total of 33 international scientists and researchers from the U.S., England, Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Turkey, China, Russia, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Qatar, and India presented lectures in the Congress.



Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**
 Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 43051601
 Email: info@tehrantimes.com
 Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
 Advertisements Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430
 Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 43051505
 Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430



No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.O. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

MAY 23, 2026

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The greatest Jihad is to battle your own soul. To fight the evil within yourself.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:01 Evening: 19:29 Dawn: 03:12 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 04:53 (tomorrow)

New Enqelab Square mural honors martyred Leader, President



TEHRAN- On the occasion of the second anniversary of the tragic helicopter crash that claimed the lives of former President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions, known as martyrs of service, a new large-scale mural was unveiled on Thursday at Tehran's Enqelab Square.

The mural features Martyred Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, alongside former President Ebrahim Raisi, and other officials who lost their lives in the May 2024 incident, Mehr reported.

The artwork, commissioned to commemorate the martyrs of service, is emblazoned with the title "Martyr of the Republic" and the patriotic slogan "Life Sacrificed for Iran." The design aims to pay tribute to the service and ultimate sacrifice of those on board the helicopter, depicting them as symbols of national devotion.

Enqelab Square, one of the city's most prominent public spaces, frequently hosts thematic murals reflecting major national events and ideological milestones.

In a tragic helicopter crash in 2024, President Raisi, along with prominent officials including former Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, former governor of East Azarbaijan Province Malek Rahmati, and former Friday prayer leader of Tabriz Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Ale-Hashem, lost their lives while traveling to the provincial capital, Tabriz.

The accident was caused by dense fog that severely limited visibility in the region, leading to a fatal crash. The incident shocked the nation and resulted in the loss of several key figures who played significant roles in Iran's political and religious spheres.

Following the coordinated US- Israeli attack on February 28, which targeted key national facilities in Iran, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, was martyred. Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei has since been appointed as the new Leader by the Assembly of Experts.

Having served for decades as the preeminent symbol of resistance against global hegemony, his loss in a targeted US strike sparked a wave of unprecedented grief and spiritual awakening across the Islamic world. Far from demoralizing the public, his martyrdom has been viewed by millions as the ultimate sacrifice for the country's sovereignty, further delegitimizing the actions of the aggressors and solidifying the national identity around the principles of steadfastness.

This transition of leadership has acted as a catalyst for national mobilization. The Iranian people have transformed their collective mourning into a powerful movement of national resolve, signaling to the international community that the revolutionary framework remains unshakable.

Cartoon of Day



Ben Gvir
 Cartoonist: Becs from Argentina

"Eyes of Minab" installation honors martyred children at Tehran Book Garden

TEHRAN- Following its initial display at Tajrish Square, the art installation titled "Eyes of Minab" has been relocated to the Khial-estan walkway of the Tehran Book Garden, drawing public attention once again to the tragic martyrdom of schoolchildren in southern Iran.

The art project serves as a somber tribute to the 168 students and staff of the Shajareh Tayyebeh Elementary School in Minab, who were martyred during the recent US-Zionist aggressions.

By displaying large-scale images of the eyes and parts of the faces of the martyred children, the installation seeks to remind the international community of the human cost of these crimes and the innocence of the victims.

Commissioned by the Tehran Municipality Beautification Organization and produced by the Sooreye Omid Institute Arts and Media Institute, the project was executed by architectural designer Reza Golpayegani.

The relocation of the installation to the Book Garden, a major cultural hub in the capital, ensures that a wider audience, particularly families and youth, can engage with this visual narrative of resistance and remembrance.

Earlier in April, in an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, artist Reza Golpayegani provided an extensive look into the conceptual framework and the emotional weight of the work.

Inspired by the haunting power of children's gaze, Golpayegani focused specifically on the eyes of the students martyred during the US-Zionist coalition airstrikes to symbolize their enduring souls and the fragmented futures of their families. Despite the heavy subject matter, the artist noted that the public has been drawn to the puri-



ty and beauty of the images rather than being repelled.

Golpayegani viewed this project as a form of spiritual resistance and a traveling memorial intended to visit other affected cities, ensuring the narrative of victims like Makan Nasiri—whose remains are still missing—is never lost to history. By capturing these gazes, the artist aims to educate future generations on the immense cost of national sovereignty and the profound innocence sacrificed during the conflict.

On February 28, the Shajareh Tayyebeh girls' elementary school in Minab, Hormozgan province, became the site of a devastating massacre as the United States and Israel initiated their strikes against Iran.

While dozens of girls and boys aged between 7 and 12 were beginning their lessons, the school was

targeted by a missile strike that caused the building to collapse, trapping children and teachers beneath the rubble. Iranian authorities confirmed a final death toll of 168 people, with at least 95 others wounded, marking one of the most harrowing incidents of the conflict's opening day.

Despite attempts by US and Israeli authorities to distance themselves from the carnage as images of the tragedy spread across social media, detailed forensic and digital investigations have painted a starkly different picture.

An analysis by Al Jazeera's digital investigations unit, utilizing over a decade of satellite imagery and recent video clips, revealed that the school was a clearly distinct civilian facility, separated from any adjacent military sites for at least ten years. Furthermore, witness accounts and satellite-based anal-

yses confirmed that the school was triple tapped by three separate, deliberate strikes, leaving no doubt about the nature of the attack.

The international community has faced mounting evidence regarding the responsibility for this atrocity, with investigations from major global outlets including The New York Times, BBC Verify, CBC, and NPR all concluding that the United States was responsible for the strike.

These findings have raised fundamental questions about the intelligence used to justify the bombing, as the patterns of the strike suggest a direct targeting of a civilian educational institution. The Minab school tragedy now stands as a somber testament to the immense human cost of the aggression and a focal point for those demanding international accountability.

Iranian short film "Myanmar" wins two awards at Fisheye International Film Festival

TEHRAN - The Iranian short film "Myanmar," written and directed by Hannaneh Daliri, has won two awards at the 11th Fisheye International Film Festival, which was held in early May in the UK.

In its ninth international screening, the 2025 film received the awards for Best Screenplay in a Short Film and Best International Short Film at the festival, Mehr reported.

In the 17-minute film, Mohammad, the youngest son of the family, falls into a coma. While his mother is away on a pilgrimage and unaware of the situation, the family faces a tense moral crisis that threatens to tear them apart.

The film features performances by Habib Dehghan-Nasab, Hossein Pourkarimi, Reyhaneh Razi, Mehdi Sabaghi, and Bardia Daliri.

Hannaneh Daliri is an independent Iranian filmmaker, writer, and director. She earned a

Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts in 2022, along with degrees in Economics and a Master's in Business Administration from Islamic Azad University. In 2018, she completed directing and performance training at a private institute.

Fisheye is an independently-run film festival based in High Wycombe, a town halfway between London and Oxford in the UK.

Named after the fisheye lens, designed to capture an all-round view, it is a serious UK platform for independent filmmakers - built on rigorous curation, international reach and meaningful industry connection - while remaining deeply rooted in its local community.

The festival is a celebration of filmmaking in all forms, and invites new and different views and voices. The festival is mainly focused on screening high quality shorts and feature films.



Iranian feature "My Daughter's Hair" to attend 34th Raindance Film Festival

TEHRAN - The Iranian feature film "My Daughter's Hair" directed by Hesam Farahmand will take part in the 34th Raindance Film Festival, which will be held from June 17 to 26 in London.

Also known as "Raha," the 110-minute drama won the Best Film award at the 23rd Alice nella Città film festival in Rome, Italy, last October, and the award for the Best Debut Feature Film Director at the 56th International Film Festival of India last November, Honaronline reported.

The film follows a struggling family in an unstable economy. Tohid and his wife and children have an average life. Until a very simple event shatters the story of their lives.

Tohid buys a second-hand laptop with money earned from selling his daughter's hair, bringing temporary joy. However, a conflict soon emerges with a wealthy family over the laptop's true ownership. As tensions rise, Tohid confronts

harsh realities that reshape his life and his family's future, forcing him to fight for what truly matters.

A production of 2025, the film delves into the hidden struggles of everyday people. Inspired by real experiences, the director has sought to create authentic characters navigating a world where justice is uncertain, and choices shape destiny. The film combines poetic visuals with social realism, offering a story that resonates beyond borders.

The cast includes Shahab Hosseini, Ghazal Shakeri, Zoha Esmailifard, Arman Mirzaee, Hadi Eftekharzadeh, Mohammad Reza Samian, and Mahni Mehrparvar.

The 34th Raindance Film Festival has selected 85 narrative and documentary features, 112 short films and 27 immersive projects. Forty-eight of the features - 56% of the total - come from first-time directors, and a new best horror feature prize has been added to the jury competition for 2026.

The full feature slate spans material on topics including the Southport riots, fracking in West Texas, the Rohingya refugee crisis, bride slavery in India, artificial intelligence and the deforestation of Canada's Boreal Forest.

Other international competition titles include the world premieres of Mexican coming-of-age mystery "Jardines Del Bosque" and debut Estonian feature "Fränk," alongside UK premieres of Venice-awarded "Lost Land" and Indian narrative feature "Paro: The Untold Story of Bride Slavery".

Documentary competition highlights include "Gaslit," executive produced by Jane Fonda, which follows the activist across oil fields in West Texas and Louisiana; "Ghost in the Machine," which premiered at Sundance and examines the origins of artificial intelligence; and "Copeland," a world premiere portrait of Stewart Copeland, drummer of English rock band The Police.

Raindance is the UK's largest

independent film festival and is officially recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the USA, BAFTA, and the British Independent Film Awards. Winners of categories such as Best Animation Short, Best Documentary Short, and Short of the Festival will qualify for the Oscar®, and selected shorts may also be considered for BAFTA awards.

Since 1992, Raindance has championed a new wave of creative and innovative filmmakers in the UK and around the world. The Raindance Film Festival takes place in Central London, offering international filmmakers a West End premiere and an authentic London experience.

The festival attracts over 16,000 visitors each year, including buyers, distributors, festival programmers, financiers, producers, press, and film enthusiasts.