

## Leader: US President Used All Available Leverage Out of Desperation to Reach MoU



President Masoud Pezeshkian signs a memorandum of understanding at his office in Tehran, Iran, on June 18, 2026, after it was signed by his American counterpart, Donald Trump

### Pezeshkian hails Qatar, Pakistan, and Tajikistan for supporting diplomacy and regional peace

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has praised the constructive roles played by Qatar, Pakistan, and Tajikistan in supporting diplomatic efforts that culminated in a recent memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Iran and the United States aimed at ending the US-Israeli war of aggression and promoting regional stability.

In separate telephone conversations on Thursday with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, ▶ Page 2

### Tehran, Moscow focus on banking co-op development, facilitating trade exchanges

TEHRAN– The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), in a meeting with the Governor of the Central Bank of Russia, emphasized the expansion of banking cooperation, increasing bilateral trade, and strengthening the North-South Corridor.

According to the Public Relations Department of the Central Bank, Abdolnaser Hemmati, in a meeting with Elvira Nabiullina, the Governor of the Central Bank of Russia, said: Iran seeks to strengthen economic and political relations with Russia. ▶ Page 4

### Iran warns of consequences as Ben-Gvir says ‘all of Lebanon must burn’

TEHRAN – Iran has strongly condemned Israel's latest military attacks on Lebanon and denounced inflammatory remarks by Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, warning that the continued escalation by the Tel Aviv regime poses a serious threat to regional and international security.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reacted sharply to a public statement by Ben-Gvir, who called for “all of Lebanon” to burn and urged harsh retaliation against Lebanese civilians.

In a post on social media, Araghchi stressed that the remarks should not be viewed as the rhetoric of a fringe extremist but rather as the position of a senior member of the Israeli cabinet.

“This is not a rant by a random genocidal lunatic. It is a public post by the national security minister of the Israeli regime,” Araghchi said. ▶ Page 3

## Tehran–Washington MoU: A clear admission of Iran’s military and political upper hand

*President Pezeshkian has hailed the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding as a “historic document” and a demonstration of Iran’s strength on the world stage.*

TEHRAN – The memorandum of understanding signed on Wednesday between Tehran and Washington marks the clearest political acknowledgment yet of Iran's victory in the joint US-Israeli aggression that began on February 28. What started as a massive military campaign aimed at destroying Iran's military capabilities and collapsing the Islamic Republic has ended with Washington accepting terms shaped by Iran's resilience and military achievements.

On the first day of the strikes, Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several senior

military commanders were martyred. The attack was intended to break Iran's chain of command and force the country into rapid collapse. Instead, Iran responded with a coordinated and extensive missile and drone campaign targeting Israel and American bases across the Persian Gulf region.

The scale and precision of Iran's retaliation surprised US and Israeli analysts, who had expected Iran's military infrastructure to be crippled.

Iran's attacks inflicted severe damage on US installations, radar systems, and military equipment. American media later ac-

knowledged that several bases in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE suffered operational disruptions. At the same time, Iran asserted control over the Strait of Hormuz, restricting shipping and sending shockwaves through global markets. The move contributed to rising fuel

prices and inflation inside the United States, adding economic pressure to Washington's military setbacks.

Ultimately, after failing to achieve its military objectives, President Donald Trump agreed to a ceasefire with Iran on April 8. Iran's diplomatic engagement following the truce—combined with its demonstrated military preparedness—pushed Washington toward accepting the terms that now appear in the MoU. The interim agreement is widely seen as a political translation of Iran's battlefield success.

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### The war on Muharram epitomizes the Bahraini monarchy's terminal terror

By Garsha Vaziran

TEHRAN — The sulfurous sting of tear gas has become the Al Khalifa regime's preferred incense for the month of Muharram.

In the early hours of June 17, the village of Abu Saiba, a quiet Shia enclave on the outskirts of Manama, was turned into a battlefield.

It is a one-sided assault by the ruling monarchy against the faithful. As residents hung black banners and prepared the Husseiniyas, security forces swept in with the singular, pathetic purpose of tearing down fabric. ▶ Page 5



### Civilian deaths mount in southern Lebanon as Israeli aggression escalates despite ceasefire

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Despite the so-called ceasefire agreement, the Israeli regime has intensified its attacks on southern Lebanon, killing at least 30 people, including women and children.

Reporters on the ground in southern Lebanon have said that seven civilians were killed in a single strike carried out by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) on the town of Doueir.

According to Lebanese media, IOF attacks have killed several civilians and injured others, with many airstrikes reported in towns across the Nabatieh municipality and its surrounding communities. ▶ Page 5

### Iran offers proposals to foster SCO scientific ties

TEHRAN – Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, has put forward three proposals to enhance academic, research, and technological collaborations among the universities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states.

“Universities are custodians of shaping the future of societies. Today, they are faced with different challenges like revising curricula, making research projects applicable, making theses and research studies more useful to the societies. SCO can serve as a platform for member states to boost their academic capacities through an executive and problem-based network,” IRNA quoted Simaei-Sarraf as saying.

The official made the remarks while addressing the tenth meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Education Ministers, which took place in Minsk, ▶ Page 7

## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## A power lever is not negotiable

Kayhan, in an article, described the Strait of Hormuz as a deterrent weapon that cannot be negotiated away. According to the paper, Trump's retreat to the negotiating table is the result of Iran's battlefield strength and the steadfastness of the Iranian people. Even if we do not have missile access to US soil, the strategic lever of the Strait of Hormuz is a deterrent weapon that brings the war onto American territory. This major achievement must not be lost. The Strait of Hormuz is our strategic deterrent weapon; there must be absolutely no bargaining over this lever of power. The paper argues that the security arrangements and strategic equations of West Asia will not return to the pre-Ramadan War era. Iran must preserve its capability to close the Strait of Hormuz and even Bab al-Mandab. It must also maintain its ability to target US interests and positions in the region. While preserving diplomatic firmness, Iran must keep its military, defensive, and deterrent posture at the highest possible level. We must beware of Washington's deceit.

## Shargh: A difficult path lies ahead

Shargh, in an interview with Mohammad Irani, former Iranian ambassador to Kuwait and Jordan, examined Iran's path after the recent understanding. According to this diplomat, under current conditions, we have no choice but optimism. The approach now taken is the correct one. Given the complexity of Iran-US relations in recent years, Iran gradually found itself in a situation where even relations with some neighboring countries became strained, and the country faced a kind of political, economic, and sanctions-related encirclement. Now, it appears that a serious effort is underway to exit this situation. This approach is a form of diplomatic prudence — a sign that Tehran seeks to move beyond this phase and achieve outcomes that serve national interests and needs. In such circumstances, more than ever, the negotiating team must feel that it enjoys the support of the nation. This is not merely a political performance; it is a national necessity that must be recognized.

## Resalat: The Islamabad Understanding; a manifestation of Iran's victory

Resalat described the Islamabad understanding as a manifestation of Iran's victory. It wrote that throughout the past three and a half months, Trump pursued one major goal through repeated narrative-building: falsely projecting US victory in war and diplomacy. But on the battlefield, Washington

and Tel Aviv achieved none of their declared objectives in their aggression against Iran. In diplomacy as well, the Islamic Republic displayed its soft power, backed by the people, to the White House. The Iranian negotiating team's insistence on its clear red lines in Islamabad — and its determination to preserve and even expand those red lines going forward — reduced America's room for maneuver in diplomacy and negotiations. Under such conditions, Trump's claims about achieving a good understanding for the US amount to a reverse narrative of the war and negotiation scene. The paper concludes that America's defeat in this equation is evident.

## Etemad: Iran's economic outlook

Etemad spoke with Saeed Laylaz, a political and economic analyst, about Iran's economic prospects. Laylaz believes the recent Iran-US understanding could not only reshape regional political dynamics but also pave the way for big economic and social changes in Iran and even in US relations with other countries. If Iran uses the new opportunities wisely, its economy could enter an upward trajectory in a relatively short time. It may even be possible to return to pre-crisis GDP levels within less than one to one and a half years. However, this depends on economic policymaking that is precise and grounded in global economic realities. Iran has significant capacities in energy, industry, and human capital, which, if properly activated, can generate substantial economic growth.

## Jam-e-Jam: Negotiation under threat cannot last

Jam-e-Jam argued that what is seen today strongly recalls one of Iran's most important foreign-policy experiences in recent decades: the JCPOA. Signs of the same pattern are emerging again. On one side, Iran emphasizes ending the war, removing threats, and halting conflict on all fronts. On the other side, Trump and Vance, while welcoming the understanding, keep the option of military attack on the table. If the understanding is to truly mark the end of the war, the first condition is abandoning the language of threat — otherwise the logic of a two-stage negotiation process collapses. The plan was for the war to end first, and then for complex issues to be discussed in a calm environment without military pressure. If the shadow of bombs and threats remains over the talks, what distinguishes this situation from the period before the understanding?

## Iran denies reports of Hormuz closure, rules out IAEA inspections



TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Ministry has dismissed media reports claiming that the Strait of Hormuz has been closed and denied allegations that Tehran has invited the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to conduct new inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei described reports of a closure of the strategic waterway as unfounded, stressing that commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz is continuing normally.

According to Baqaei, Iran's Armed Forces have implemented the necessary measures, in line with the June 18, 2026, Memorandum of Understanding on ending the war, to ensure the safe passage of commercial vessels through the strait. He emphasized that maritime traffic remains uninterrupted.

The spokesman also rejected claims circulated by some media outlets that the Islamic Republic of Iran had invited the IAEA to inspect its nuclear facilities, stating that no such invitation has been issued.

Referring to the MoU on ending the war, Baqaei noted that Article 8 of the agreement provides for negotiations on the nuclear issue for 60 days, subject to the fulfillment of the prerequisites outlined in Article 13.

He further explained that under Article 9 of the memorandum, the status of Iran's nuclear program will remain unchanged throughout the 60 days. Consequently, routine IAEA inspections at facilities already subject to monitoring, including the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, will continue as before.

However, Baqaei stated that any future inspections or renewed access to facilities where IAEA activities were suspended following 'the criminal military attacks by the United States and the Israeli regime' will depend on the course and outcome of the forthcoming negotiations.

## Tehran-Washington MoU: A clear admission of Iran's military and political upper hand

From page 1 ▶ The MoU reflects the new balance of power. It requires the immediate end of all military operations, including in Lebanon, where Israel continues to violate the agreement with ongoing strikes. It lifts the US naval blockade on Iran and reopens the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping under mechanisms coordinated between Iran and Oman, the only two coastal states of the strait. The document also launches a 60-day verification and negotiation period covering sanctions relief, the nuclear file, reconstruction, economic development, and a monitoring system for implementation. The United States has committed to ending all sanctions and releasing frozen Iranian assets, while also working with regional partners on a \$300 billion reconstruction plan for Iran.

Iranian officials have emphasized that the agreement is built on "active distrust" of the United States. They stress that the MoU is not a diplomatic concession but a recognition of Iran's strength. President Masoud Pezeshkian described it as a "historic document" that sends a message from a powerful Iran: peace is possible only on the basis of mutual respect and acknowledgment of Iran's sovereignty. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei stated that Iran's military and diplomatic capabilities forced the United States to accept terms it had rejected before the war.

US and Israeli media have indirectly confirmed this shift. Analysts in Washington now speak of a "strategic setback" and a "collapse of deterrence," while Israeli com-



mentators warn that the war exposed deep vulnerabilities in Israel's defenses and its dependence on US support. Iran demonstrated that American bases across the Middle East are within reach and that any future conflict would carry enormous costs for Washington.

As Iran enters the 60-day negotiation period, the message to Washington is unmistakable. If the United States wants to avoid deeper strategic losses, it must comply fully with the MoU it has already signed. Any attempt to violate its frameworks will simply recreate the same pressures that forced Washington to negotiate in the first

place. Iran has already shown that it can impose far greater costs than the US and Israel anticipated, including its decisive move to close the Strait of Hormuz during the war—a step that shook global markets and exposed the vulnerability of Western economies. And if Washington hopes to transform this temporary understanding into a lasting agreement, it must ensure that Israel ends its strikes in Lebanon permanently. Continued Israeli violations not only undermine the MoU but risk reigniting a confrontation that the United States has already learned—militarily, politically, and economically—it cannot win.

## Pezeshkian hails Qatar, Pakistan, and Tajikistan for supporting diplomacy and regional peace

From page 1 ▶ Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, Pezeshkian expressed appreciation for the support and cooperation of regional partners during a critical period of diplomacy.

Speaking with the Qatari emir, the Iranian president commended Doha's responsible engagement and mediation efforts, describing Qatar as a key contributor to creating a favorable environment for negotiations. He emphasized that Iran highly values the role of friendly and brotherly countries in advancing dialogue and reducing tensions across the region.

Pezeshkian stated that the MoU would not have been possible without the goodwill and diplomatic support of countries such as Qatar, Pakistan, and other Islamic nations. He stressed that stronger political, economic, and cultural cooperation among Muslim countries can play a significant role in fostering regional stability, security, and sustainable development.

For his part, Sheikh Tamim welcomed the agreement and reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to diplomacy, dialogue, and de-escalation efforts. He described relations between Tehran and Doha as strategic and stable and called for full adherence by all parties to the commitments outlined in the memorandum.

In a separate conversation with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Pezeshkian praised Islamabad's diplomatic engagement, saying Pakistan's constructive role in facilitating negotiations would remain in the memory of the Iranian nation.

The Iranian president thanked Prime Minister Sharif, Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, and Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi for their support of diplomatic initiatives that helped lay the groundwork for the understanding aimed at ending hostilities. He said Pakistan's approach reflected the spirit of Islamic solidarity, regional responsibility, and the deep-rooted relations between the two neighboring coun-

tries.

Sharif welcomed the conclusion of the MoU and described it as an important step toward strengthening peace and stability in the region. He reaffirmed Pakistan's readiness to continue supporting diplomatic initiatives and expressed interest in expanding cooperation with Iran in science and technology, agriculture, trade, industry, and other sectors.

The Iranian president also held talks with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, during which the two leaders welcomed the agreement and emphasized the importance of strengthening peace and stability throughout the region.

Pezeshkian thanked Tajikistan for its supportive and fraternal stance toward Iran and highlighted the deep historical, cultural, and civilizational ties between Tehran and Dushanbe. He expressed hope that greater unity and coordination among Islamic and regional countries would help counter destabilizing policies and contribute to sustainable peace

and security.

President Rahmon congratulated Iran on reaching the agreement, describing the development as a source of hope for the peoples of the region. He reaffirmed Tajikistan's readiness to expand cooperation with Iran across economic, trade, tourism, investment, and cultural sectors.

The three separate conversations underscored a growing regional consensus in favor of diplomacy, dialogue, and multilateral cooperation following the recent agreement. Iranian officials view the MoU as a significant step toward reducing tensions, preventing further escalation, and opening new opportunities for regional cooperation and stability.

The discussions also reflected Tehran's broader policy of strengthening relations with neighboring and Islamic countries, which Iranian leaders regard as essential for promoting collective security, economic development, and lasting peace across the region.

## Araghchi expands diplomatic consultations as world supports Iran-US MoU



TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has intensified diplomatic consultations with regional and international counterparts following the conclusion of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Iran and the United States, as Tehran seeks to consolidate support for the agreement and ensure its full implementation.

In his latest diplomatic engagement on Friday, Araghchi held a telephone conversation with Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad

Ishaq Dar, during which he expressed appreciation for Islamabad's efforts, initiatives, and good offices throughout the negotiations that led to the conclusion of the memorandum.

The Iranian foreign minister praised Pakistan's constructive role in facilitating dialogue and advancing the diplomatic process, while emphasizing that the United States bears responsibility for ensuring an end to hostilities on all fronts, including Lebanon. Araghchi warned that any violation of the commitments contained in the

memorandum would be attributable to Washington and cautioned against the consequences of failing to uphold those obligations.

For his part, Ishaq Dar welcomed the ongoing diplomatic process and reaffirmed Pakistan's support for the continuation of negotiations to achieve positive, durable, and mutually beneficial outcomes. The two ministers also reviewed bilateral issues and stressed the importance of maintaining close consultations and coordination.

The conversation followed a series of telephone discussions held by Araghchi on Thursday with senior officials from France, Kuwait, and Cyprus, as well as separate talks on Wednesday with the foreign ministers of China and Russia.

During his discussions with French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot, Araghchi highlighted Washington's responsibility to fully implement the memorandum and secure an end to military operations across all fronts, including Lebanon. He also pointed to the opportunities created by the agreement for expanding

Iran-France economic and trade cooperation. He also called for strong support from the international community and the United Nations Security Council for the emerging diplomatic process.

Barrot welcomed the agreement and reiterated France's support for diplomacy, describing the memorandum as an opportunity to promote lasting peace, stability, and security in the region. Both sides also emphasized the importance of ensuring safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and safeguarding the stability of the strategic waterway.

In a separate conversation with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrar Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Araghchi reaffirmed Iran's commitment to its good-neighborliness policy and stressed the importance of continued dialogue with Persian Gulf countries to strengthen regional engagement and address outstanding concerns. The two sides agreed to continue consultations on bilateral and regional issues.

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

# Leader: US president used all available leverage out of desperation to reach MoU

TEHRAN - The latest message from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, has received strong backing from Iranian political and military officials, underscoring national unity following the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the United States.

In his message on Thursday, the Leader said Iranian officials had made extensive efforts to reach the MoU based on compassion and goodwill. He stated that US President Donald Trump had been eager to reach the agreement out of desperation.

"The passionate and loyal Iranian nation, as you have been informed, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the presidents of Iran and America," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

He added, "In the course of reaching this stage, officials, out of compassion and goodwill, made many efforts, and it was the US president who, out of desperation, used various leverage points for this purpose."

Ayatollah Khamenei said he had initially held a different view but authorized the MoU based on commitments made by President Masoud Pezeshkian, who, as head of the Supreme National Security Council, vowed on behalf of himself and other members to safeguard the rights of the Iranian nation and the Resistance Front.

The Leader said President Pezeshkian also stated that he would not accept any excessive US demands.

"From this moment, we — meaning you, the proud nation, and this humble servant — will await the fulfillment of the stated conditions. But it is obvious that the in-person negotiations that will take place in the future will not mean accepting the enemy's view," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The MoU, signed remotely by Pezeshkian and Trump, calls for a permanent end to hostilities across all fronts, the removal of



the US naval blockade within 30 days, the restoration of commercial traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a reconstruction plan worth at least \$300 billion, and the lifting of US sanctions.

Under the agreement, the two sides have entered a 60-day negotiation period aimed at reaching a comprehensive final agreement.

The MoU followed the US-Israeli aggression that began on February 28. An April 8 ceasefire paused the hostilities. Iran's strong military response to Israel and US bases in the Persian Gulf region left Trump with no option but to agree to the ceasefire.

Iranian officials have vowed to fully implement the Leader's guidelines.

In a statement issued Thursday night, President Pezeshkian described the Leader's message as a clear and decisive roadmap defining the responsibilities of all state institutions in safeguarding Iran's national interests and dignity.

Pezeshkian expressed deep gratitude for the Leader's guidance and unwavering support.

He emphasized that the message plays a central role in setting the framework for talks and clarifying the duties of all relevant bodies.

He highlighted the Leader's support for the efforts of Iranian officials and negotiation teams working to secure the interests of the Iranian nation, describing

it a major source of encouragement for continuing this strategic path.

The president stressed that all executive and decision-making bodies of the Islamic Republic consider themselves fully committed to following the Leader's directives.

Iran's Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Iranian officials will treat the directives of Ayatollah Khamenei as the guiding principle in upcoming negotiations. He stressed that negotiators will not allow the US and Israel to undermine the rights of the Iranian nation and the Axis of Resistance.

In his statement, Qalibaf said the MoU is not the end of the road, but the beginning of a difficult and complex struggle to fully secure Iran's legitimate rights from a "covenant-breaking" adversary.

The Supreme National Security Council issued a statement on Friday assuring the Leader and the Iranian nation that it will strictly implement Ayatollah Khamenei's directives in safeguarding the rights of the Iranian people and the Resistance Front, honoring the blood of martyrs, and advancing future talks based on Iran's national interests and welfare.

The council added that it "will not rest until the full rights of the Iranian people are secured and the pure and sacred blood of our martyrs is avenged."

It also said that, with full distrust of the "treacherous and covenant-breaking enemy," and with close monitoring of negotiations and implementation of agreements, any violation by the US side will be met with reciprocal measures according to a pre-determined plan.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) also hailed the Leader's message, saying it strengthens national unity and increases hope among the people and fighters in preserving Iran's achievements.

The IRGC said the Iranian people and fighters expect the political arena to complement the battlefield in safeguarding national rights.

It stated that the aggressors have been defeated on the battlefield and forced to retreat and seek negotiations.

The IRGC further warned that if the adversary resorts to excessive demands or violates Iran's rights, its forces — more powerful than ever across all domains of warfare — stand ready to deliver a decisive and historic response.

Similar messages were issued by other senior Iranian political and military officials.

The unified response from Iran's political and military institutions highlights the central role of the Leader's message as the guiding framework for national policy following the signing of the MoU with the United States.

While the agreement opens a structured path toward negotiations and de-escalation, Iranian officials have consistently emphasized that its implementation must be firmly anchored in Iran's sovereign rights, mutual commitments, and strategic balance.

At the same time, the strong alignment around the Leader's directive underscores the cohesion of Iran's decision-making structure as the country enters a new phase of diplomacy, combining engagement with firm deterrence and a clear insistence on reciprocity and national dignity.

## Iran warns of consequences as Ben-Gvir says 'all of Lebanon must burn'

From Page 1 ▶ The Iranian foreign minister described the Israeli government as a regime driven by perpetual conflict, arguing that its policies threaten not only the region but also broader international peace and stability. He warned that the regime's expansionist and militaristic approach has fueled recurring crises across West Asia and undermined diplomatic efforts aimed at restoring security.

Separately, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei strongly condemned Israel's attacks on multiple areas across Lebanon, which reportedly resulted in the deaths and injuries of dozens of Lebanese citizens and caused extensive damage to residential neighborhoods and infrastructure.

Baqaei characterized the operations as acts of aggression and terrorism, warning of the "serious and immediate consequences" of the continued escalation by "the occupying and genocidal Zionist regime."

The spokesperson further held the United States responsible for enabling Israel's actions through its political and military support. He also referred to Clause 1 of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding on ending the war, dated June 18, 2026, which identifies the cessation of hostilities in Lebanon as an integral component of a broader agreement to end conflicts across multiple fronts in the region.

**Seyed Abbas Araghchi** @araghchi-6s  
This is not a rant by a random genocidal lunatic. It's a public post by the national security minister of the Israeli regime.

The genocidal death cult headquartered in Tel Aviv is a threat to all of humanity. It threatens all humans. Its only interest is permanent war.

For every tear of an Israeli mother, a thousand Lebanese mothers must weep. All of Lebanon must burn!

Baqaei emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran would take "all necessary measures" to safeguard its national interests, security, and the rights of its allies.

The latest escalation comes amid growing regional tensions and continued Israeli military operations on several fronts. Iran has repeatedly warned that attacks against Lebanon, particularly those targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, risk expanding the conflict and further destabilizing the region. Tehran has also reaffirmed its support for Lebanon's sovereignty and for resistance movements that it says play a crucial role in deterring Israeli aggression and defending regional security.

## Did Iran defeat America at the negotiating table?

By Mir Mohammad Alikhan

ISLAMABAD - The official 14-point memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States does not read like the document Washington and Tel Aviv said they were fighting to impose. It does not announce regime change in Tehran. It does not place Iran's missile program on the table. It does not remove Iran's enriched material from Iranian territory. It does not demand an unconditional surrender. Instead, it opens a 60-day diplomatic window in which Iran receives immediate military and economic relief, while the most sensitive nuclear questions are deferred to future negotiations.

That is why the central question is unavoidable: did Iran, after suffering heavy damage in war, manage to turn battlefield pressure into diplomatic leverage?

**What were America and Israel trying to achieve?**

The political language from Washington and Tel Aviv throughout the war pointed to three core objectives.

First, they wanted to break the Iranian state's strategic confidence, if not force outright regime change. Second, they wanted to neutralize Iran's nuclear capability in a way that would be visible, irreversible and externally controlled. Third, they wanted to reduce Iran's regional influence, especially through Lebanon and other linked fronts.

Measured against those objectives, the MOU is a strikingly different outcome. Iran's political system remains in place. Its missile program is not mentioned. Lebanon is not treated as a separate Israeli security file, but as part of a wider ceasefire covering all fronts. The enriched uranium issue is not resolved through seizure or removal, but through a mechanism to be negotiated and implemented under monitoring.

In simple terms, the war began with maximalist expectations. The interim text ends with negotiated ambiguity.

**Did Iran surrender on the nuclear issue?**

No. Iran reaffirmed that it will not seek or develop nuclear weapons, but that is not the same as surrendering its entire nuclear program.

The most important detail is the treatment of enriched material. The MOU provides that Iran's stockpile will be addressed through an agreed mechanism, with the minimum method involving down-blending inside Iran under international monitoring. This matters because the material is not being immediately transferred abroad, and Iran's broader enrichment needs are left for the final agreement.

This is not a total American victory. Wash-

ington wanted a clean, dramatic result: destruction, removal, or full outside control. What it got was a technical process inside Iran, under supervision, with the final terms still pending.

For Tehran, that is a major diplomatic gain. It avoided the image of surrender. It preserved negotiating space. It moved the hardest question from the battlefield to the technical table.

**Where did Iran gain immediate relief?**

Iran's immediate gains are visible in the sequencing of the MOU.

The United States is expected to begin removing its naval blockade and related impediments after the signing. It is also expected to issue waivers connected to Iranian crude oil, petroleum products, banking, insurance and transport services. The text also opens a path for frozen or restricted Iranian funds and assets to become usable.

These provisions matter because before the war Iran was economically constrained. Sanctions limited oil sales, banking access, insurance, shipping and investment. A damaged but still standing Iran has now secured language that begins to loosen those restrictions.

The key victory is not that all sanctions disappear overnight. They do not. The key victory is that sanctions relief, oil waivers, frozen assets and reconstruction financing are now embedded in the official negotiating framework. Iran has moved the sanctions question from the margins to the center of diplomacy.

**What is the significance of the \$300 billion plan?**

The reported \$300 billion economic and reconstruction plan is one of the most politically important parts of the MOU.

Trump may insist that the money is not direct American funding. That distinction matters domestically for him. But for Iran, the source of the money is less important than the removal of American obstruction. If regional partners, sovereign funds, private investors or international mechanisms are to finance reconstruction, they still require legal, financial and sanctions-related space.

That is why the MOU's reference to licenses, waivers and permissions is crucial. Iran does not need Washington to write one large check. It needs Washington to stop blocking the channels through which capital, oil revenues, insurance, shipping and reconstruction finance can move.

Before the war, Iran was boxed in. After the war, the MOU places Iran inside a reconstruction and economic normalization conversation. That is a major reversal.

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

## LATEST NEWS

■ **Russian senator: Attack on Iran was one of most stupid actions by US**

Russian Senator Alexei Pushkov says that none of the US goals in the imposed war against Iran have been achieved. The attack on Iran was one of America's most stupid actions.

■ **CENTCOM says lifted naval blockade on Iran**

US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced Thursday that American military forces have officially lifted the comprehensive blockade on all maritime traffic entering and exiting Iranian ports and coastal areas.

"American forces are not impeding the transit of vessels to or from Iranian ports," US Central Command said in a statement on social media. "All US military blockade enforcement efforts have ceased."

■ **Russian specialists to return to complete Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant expansion**

Iran's Deputy Energy Minister, Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, announced that an agreement has been reached with Russia's Energy Minister under which Russian nuclear specialists will soon return to Iran to resume work on Units 2 and 3 of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant.

According to Rajabi Mashhadi, the agreement was finalized during a bilateral meeting between the two sides, paving the way for Russian technical teams to restart construction activities and advance the completion of the project in the near future.

■ **Pakistan to send delegation to Ayatollah Khamenei funeral**

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that an official Pakistani delegation will attend the funeral ceremonies of the late Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, following an invitation from Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. Speaking before Pakistan's National Assembly on Friday, Sharif described Iran as a brotherly neighboring nation and reaffirmed Islamabad's solidarity.

■ **Iran introduces expedited Strait of Hormuz transit procedures under Islamabad MoU**

Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Affairs Authority (PGSA) has announced new transit procedures for vessels navigating the Strait of Hormuz following the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding between Iran and the United States. In a statement issued on Friday, the authority said ships complying with the new requirements will receive expedited passage through the strategic waterway. During the 60-day period outlined in the agreement, no transit fees will be charged, while costs related to security, safety, environmental services, and Iranian insurance coverage will be borne by the Iranian government. Authorities also stressed that transit requests must be submitted at least 48 hours in advance to ensure safe and uninterrupted navigation.

■ **Further Israeli attacks on Lebanon could impede US-Iran negotiations**

If Israel continues to occupy and launch attacks on southern Lebanon, it could severely impede negotiations between the US and Iran, says defense analyst Alex Alfirraz Scheers.

While US officials have sought to minimize the impact of Israel's military actions in Lebanon, the Iranians have steadily maintained that "the ceasefire between the US and Iran is closely interlinked, if not inextricable, from what's going on in the Lebanese front," Alfirraz Scheers told Al Jazeera from London.

"So, it is very possible that Israeli military activity in southern Lebanon and beyond ... could prove to be a serious obstacle to how negotiations between the US and Iran actually flow going forward."

The analyst said it remains unclear whether the US could exert sufficient pressure on Israel to rein in its troops.

He added that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his allies, and Israeli parties across the political spectrum adamantly oppose halting operations in southern Lebanon.

■ **Swiss analyst says Iran emerged stronger from US agreement**

A Swiss foreign policy analyst has described the recent memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States as a diplomatic and economic success for Tehran. Hicheme Lehmici, Secretary of the Geneva International Peace Research Institute (GIPRI), told TASS that the agreement appears to favor Iran, particularly through sanctions relief and the unfreezing of Iranian assets. While noting that both sides can present the deal as a diplomatic achievement, he argued that Iran gained the upper hand strategically and economically. Lehmici also warned that Israeli policies remain the main risk to long-term regional stability.

■ **Iran wants guarantees of ceasefire in Lebanon before it resumes talks with US: CNN**

Iran has requested guarantees that hostilities in Lebanon will end before resuming talks in Switzerland with the United States, CNN quoted a diplomat as saying.

According to him, the Islamic Republic has "asked for guarantees that hostilities in Lebanon will end, as outlined in the signed agreement." "Mediators are currently working to resolve the issue," he added.

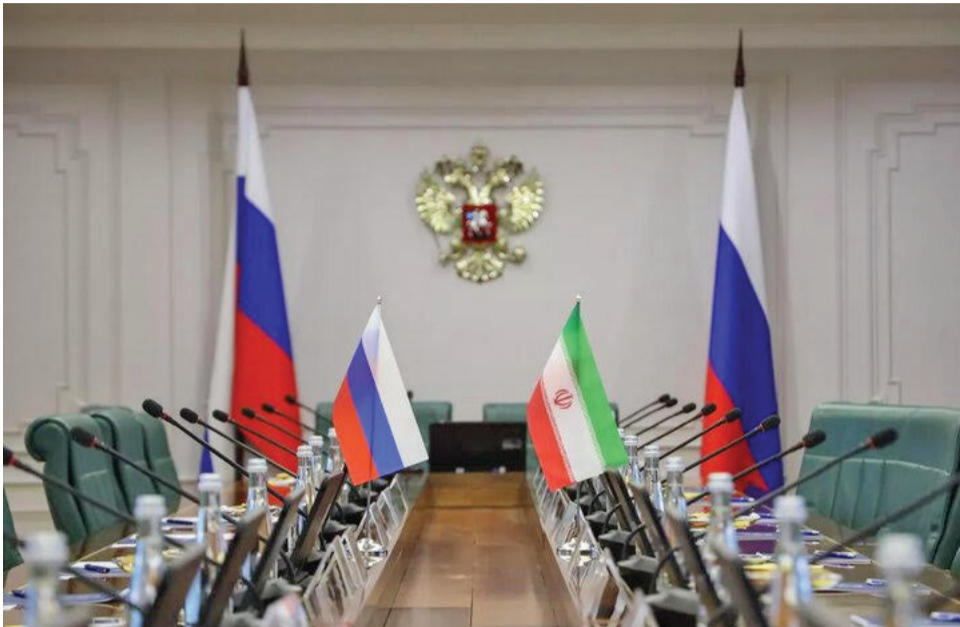
The planned talks have been "temporarily postponed following the Israeli strikes in Lebanon," the diplomat told CNN, without elaborating on when mediators expect the talks to resume.

■ **US-Iran agreement could hinge on Israeli actions in Lebanon**

Rania Khalek, a US journalist and political commentator, says the future of the US-Iran agreement may hinge on whether the Trump administration is willing to ensure that Israel complies with the ceasefire.

"The first point in the memorandum of understanding is a cessation of hostilities," Khalek said. "From Iran's perspective, continued Israeli strikes would be a violation of that understanding."

## Tehran, Moscow focus on banking co-op development, facilitating trade exchanges



From Page 1 ► The Governor of the Central Bank of Russia also emphasized the necessity of creating financial infrastructure independent of third countries and said: The use of national currencies in trade exchanges and the development of banking relations between the two countries can reduce the impact of sanctions on the economies of Iran and Russia.

### Agreement to activate permanent banking committee between central banks of Iran and Russia

At the end of this meeting, the two sides agreed to activate the permanent banking committee between the central banks of Iran and Russia to follow up and accelerate the implementation of joint banking and financial programs.

### CBI governor emphasizes strengthening North-South Corridor and developing trade finance for Iran and Russia

During a visit to Mir Business Bank in Russia, the Governor of the Central Bank, emphasizing the strategic importance of developing economic relations between Iran and Russia, called for the expansion of banking cooperation, increasing the capacity for financing bilateral trade, and strengthening the role of this bank in supporting the International North-South Corridor.

According to IRNA from the Central Bank, Abdolnaser Hemmati, during this visit, referring to the development trend of this bank's activities in recent years, stated: Mir Business Bank has made significant progress compared to the past, and the measures taken in this institution can help complete the supply chain and provide more services to entrepreneurs of the two countries.

Emphasizing the importance of developing economic relations between Tehran and Moscow, he added: The development of the North-South Corridor must be pursued more seriously. Accordingly, plans to develop the capacities of the northern regions of the country, expand maritime transport, and focus more on supplying goods through the Russian route are on the agenda.

Referring to the policy of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to develop economic cooperation with Russia, the Governor of the Central Bank said: The government's will is to expand bilateral trade, and the banking network will seriously support this path. The volume of exchanges between the two countries has much more capacity for growth, and strengthening financial and banking infrastructure can pave the way for achieving this goal.

Referring to his negotiations with the head of the Central Bank of Russia, Hemmati said: We expect Russian banks to cooperate more in opening letters of credit for Iranian parties so that mid-term financing and facilitation of imports of needed goods can be provided. In return, the development of Iran's exports to the Russian market will also be pursued.

He assessed the role of Mir Business Bank as important in developing economic relations between the two countries and added: This bank has taken effective measures over the past years and can serve the expansion of trade and financial relations between Iran and Russia more than ever.

The Governor of the Central Bank also emphasized the necessity of observing the professional principles of international banking

and risk management and said: Credit decisions must be made solely based on banking regulations and criteria, and any action outside the professional frameworks must be avoided; because risk management is one of the main pillars of sustainability and success of banks.

In another part of his speech, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Central Bank considered increasing the capital of Mir Business Bank as one of the ways to strengthen the position of this bank and stated: Greater participation of Iranian banks and financial institutions in the capital structure of this bank can significantly increase its operational capability and financing capacity.

At the end, while thanking the managers and employees of Mir Business Bank, he emphasized the Central Bank's support for the development plans of this bank and strengthening its presence in the Russian market.

### A new currency policy has been designed to facilitate trade

The Governor of the Central Bank, in a meeting with a group of prominent Iranian entrepreneurs in Russia, referring to the country's new currency policies, emphasized that the Central Bank's approach is to move towards enhancing the volume of trade between the two countries by utilizing monetary and banking instruments.

Hemmati said in this meeting: The Central Bank's policy is to move towards the integration of the foreign exchange market, not necessarily making it a single-rate market, and the main goal is to create stability and reduce problems for economic activists in the field of foreign trade.

The highest-ranking official of the Central Bank also, referring to his meetings and negotiations with Russian officials, said: In these negotiations, emphasis was placed on strengthening policies for developing trade and economic relations between Iran and Russia, and proposals including the use of joint financial mechanisms and currency swaps have also been raised.

Referring to the importance of facilitating trade finance, he added: The Central Bank is pursuing the resolution of some problems related to opening letters of credit for importers through cooperation with the Russian banking network.

In another part of his speech, the Governor of the Central Bank, referring to the country's monetary policies, stated: Controlling inflation, preventing the excessive growth of the monetary base, and creating stable conditions in the economy are among the most important priorities of the Central Bank.

At the end, Hemmati, emphasizing the importance of direct communication with entrepreneurs, said: I insisted on meeting with Iranian entrepreneurs during this trip to hear their issues and problems firsthand and to take action to follow up and resolve them.

In this meeting, Iranian entrepreneurs present in Russia also raised their views, proposals, and some issues related to financial and trade exchanges, and the Governor of the Central Bank, while answering their questions and concerns, emphasized following up on the raised issues within the framework of banking and economic cooperation between the two countries.

# Iran presents its priority project list to Islamic Development Bank

TEHRAN- The Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and Head of the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran, as the alternate member of the Board of Executive Directors of the Islamic Development Bank, met and held talks with Mohammed Al-Jasser, the President of the Islamic Development Bank.

According to IRNA from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, this meeting was held on the sidelines of the 51st Annual Meeting of the Board of Executive Directors of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in Baku, the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mehdi Heydari, Head of the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran in this meeting, while once again congratulating Mr. Al-Jasser on his election and appointment as President of the Islamic Development Bank, emphasized the continued support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the Bank and declared his country's expectations from the Islamic Development Bank to maintain and enhance interactions with Iran as a major shareholder.

Heydari announced: A specific plan has been initiated to resolve financial issues between the two sides. Currently, part of the commitments has been fulfilled, and other commitments will be implemented within a short period



Appreciating the Islamic Development Bank for its cooperation in financing the country's projects, he pointed to the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Bank and its economic capacities for implementing various projects, and added that removing existing obstacles and challenges for advancing and increasing financial cooperation between the two sides is on the agenda as one of the main programs of the Investment Organization.

Heydari announced: A specific plan has been initiated to resolve financial issues between the two sides. Currently, part of the commitments has been fulfilled, and other commitments will be implemented within a short period

of time.

He emphasized: In order to accelerate processes, it is necessary, within the framework of coordinated joint action, while fulfilling existing commitments, to also define a joint program for financing the introduced and finalized projects of our country.

In this meeting, a list of priority projects was presented to the President of the Islamic Development Bank, and the issue of capacity building and training, as well as holding bilateral or multi-lateral workshops focused on the Islamic Development Bank, was also emphasized.

Mohammed Al-Jasser, while welcoming the presence of the

Iranian delegation at the meeting, emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the major shareholders and reliable partners of the Islamic Development Bank, and in the new circumstances that have emerged, suitable capacity and opportunity will be provided for further cooperation.

He added: The role and position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region is important, and the implementation of development projects in this country will not only help its economy but will also boost the regional economy and further progress of neighboring countries.

The President of the Islamic Development Bank, referring to the issues, requests, and proposals raised, expressed hope that we will soon witness the further expansion of cooperation between the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The 51st Annual Meeting of the Board of Executive Directors of the Islamic Development Bank, under the slogan "Regional Convergence for Sustainable Prosperity," was held from June 16 to 19, 2026 in Baku.

## Iran's plan to connect electricity grids of SCO member states welcomed

TEHRAN- The Deputy Head of the Renewable Energy Organization and Electricity Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) announced the welcoming of Iran's plan to connect the electricity grids of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states and said: The development of renewables has increased the opportunity for convergence.

According to IRNA from the Renewable Energy Organization and Electricity Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), Hamidreza Azimi at the 6th Meeting of Energy Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, added: Based on the statement read by the Deputy Minister of Electricity and Energy of the Ministry of Power, following constructive consultations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Secretariat of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the plan "Initiative for Convergence and Electricity Connection of Member States" was proposed by Iran, which was welcomed by the countries present at this meeting.

The Deputy Head of the Renewable Energy Organization and Electricity Energy Efficiency Organization stated: In this regard, the Ministry of Power of the Islamic Republic of Iran has presented a concept note for this initiative, in which the exchange of policy experiences in demand management, energy market regulation, and infrastructure devel-

opment are also among the other important axes of cooperation.

### A 5-fold increase in capacity of solar power plants over past year

Azimi said: The Islamic Republic of Iran, in order to diversify its energy basket and protect the environment, has more than quintupled the capacity of its solar renewable power plants over the past year.

He clarified: This approach of developing renewable power plants, while reducing dependence on fossil fuels, results in annual savings of 2.5 billion cubic meters in gas consumption, reduces pollutants, and prevents the emission of 4.93 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> gas, and also plays an important role in the stability of the electricity grid, improving agricultural productivity, and developing the welfare and security of the country and the region.

### Iranian delegation visits largest waste-to-energy plant in Central Asia

On the sidelines of the 6th Meeting of Energy Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Kyrgyzstan, the Iranian delegation visited the Bishkek waste incineration plant as the largest waste-to-energy plant in Central Asia.

In this visit, which was conducted with the presence of Mostafa Rajabi-Mashhadi, the Deputy Minister of Electricity and Energy of the Ministry of Power, and Hamidreza Azimi,

Senior Advisor and Deputy Head of SATBA, Kyrgyz officials provided explanations about this plant, which was built with a \$95 million investment by a Chinese company and is the first and largest waste-to-energy plant in Central Asia.

This facility, inaugurated in December 2025, converts more than 1,000 tons of municipal waste per day into electricity and generates approximately 23 to 30 megawatts of power. The development phase of this project began in June 2026, and upon its completion, the processing capacity will reach 3,000 tons of waste per day and electricity generation will reach about 90 megawatts. At this stage, the plant will be able to generate approximately 307 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually and play a significant role in supplying electricity to Bishkek.

The goal of implementing this project is to reduce environmental pollution, convert municipal waste into clean energy, and develop energy infrastructure in the capital of Kyrgyzstan. According to the investment contract, the electricity generated by this plant will be sold to the Kyrgyz Ministry of Energy for 35 years at a price of 7 cents per kilowatt-hour.

According to this report, the 6th Meeting of Energy Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was held on Friday, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

## Iran ready to provide sovereign guarantees to contractor companies in Pakistan's projects

TEHRAN- Mehdi Heydari, Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and Head of the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran, held bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the 51st Annual Meeting of the Board of Executive Directors of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in Baku with the Deputy Minister of Economy of Pakistan.

According to IRNA from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, Mehdi Heydari, Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and Head of the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran, in a meeting with Sajid Manzoor Asadi, Deputy Minister of Economy of Pakistan, while thanking for the support and effective measures of the Pakistani government in the recent developments in the region, emphasized that the relations between the two countries are strategic and this issue should also be significantly reflected in the economic relations between the two sides.

Referring to the numerous programs and issues on the agenda with the Pakistani side, Heydari added: The most important issue in increasing economic cooperation is the existence of banking platforms. Despite recent developments and the possibility of further openings, our bilateral economic relations should not be affected by external factors.

He pointed to the suitable capacity of Chabahar for investment and the presence of Pakistani nationals, the measures taken to create a joint free zone, and the provision of a platform for the presence of entrepreneurs.

Sajid Manzoor Asadi, referring to the brotherly and historical relations between the two countries, emphasized that the Pakistani government has always been a supporter and companion of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He pointed to the capacity of border markets between the two countries and various areas of cooperation and said that issues

should be pursued within a coherent framework.

He also announced the holding of the meeting of the Joint Economic Cooperation Committee and agreements between the parties, and declared Pakistan's readiness to advance agreed-upon issues.

Heydari further emphasized the necessity of utilizing all available capacities, including the joint investment company, and said that the agreed axes will be formulated in the form of an executive agenda and presented to the Pakistani side.

Considering the capacity of Iranian contractor companies and the possibility of exporting technical and engineering services, he emphasized the government's readiness to provide sovereign guarantees to support Iranian companies for presence in Pakistan's economic projects.

The Pakistani side, while welcoming this proposal, raised the holding of a virtual meeting with qualified Iranian companies, and it was decided that the capacities

of commodity trade and investment, including in border areas, will be one of the priorities of the cooperation program between the two countries.

In last December, Iranian and Pakistani business representatives agreed to pursue the creation of a joint trade committee and work towards boosting bilateral trade to \$10 billion, during a meeting in Karachi aimed at strengthening private-sector cooperation and facilitating cross-border commerce.

The discussions were held between Iran's consul general in Karachi, Akbar Issa Zadeh, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPC-CI), and a delegation from Iran's Qazvin Chamber of Commerce, according to Iranian state media.

The meeting focused on expanding commercial ties, identifying opportunities for joint investment in key sectors and addressing challenges hindering the growth of economic relations between the two neighboring countries.

# Civilian deaths mount in southern Lebanon as Israeli aggression escalates despite ceasefire

From page 1 ▶ According to Lebanese media, IOF attacks have killed several civilians and injured others, with many airstrikes reported in towns across the Nabatieh municipality and its surrounding communities.

Since the early hours of Friday, IOF warplanes have launched heavy airstrikes targeting the towns of Arabsalim, Kaouthariyet El Saiyad, Nabatieh al-Fawqa, Toulina, Kfar Tebnit, and Aaichiyeh.

Additional strikes hit the towns of Bani Hayyan, Srafa, the outskirts of Deir al-Zahrani, Habboush, Toul, Jbour, and Jibchit.

IOF artillery also shelled the towns of Bani Hayyan, Srafa, Qlaileh, and Zebdine.

In the east, reporters on the ground said that three civilians were killed and five others wounded from IOF airstrikes around the city of Baalbek.

An airstrike hit the Tal al-Abyad area at the northern entrance to Baalbek, while an IOF drone strike targeted the outskirts of the city on Friday. Another town in the Baalbek district was also struck.

Lebanon's National News Agency reported that one civilian was killed and another wounded in a drone strike in the Jezzine area. An IOF strike on the Deir al-Zahrani road in southern Lebanon killed one person and injured another.

The IOF aggression also stretched to the Litani River channel near the western Bekaa.

The timing of the latest escalation is particularly notable, coming just as a new round of talks was set to begin under a recently signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Islamic Republic of Iran and



the United States aimed at ending hostilities on all fronts, including Lebanon.

For the occupying regime's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the IOF's renewed aggression comes at a critical juncture.

Netanyahu has consistently opposed diplomatic initiatives that could restrict IOF aggression, the withdrawal of occupying forces, or pave the way for a broader regional de-escalation.

Many experts had warned that Netanyahu would seek to obstruct any U.S.-Iran agreement before it could gain momentum. Reports now suggest that Iran has postponed the opening round of talks with the United States following the mutual signing of the MoU in light of the latest escalation in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, on Friday, the IOF announced the deaths of four troops, including Battalion 52 commander Lt. Col. Dor Gdalia Ben Simhon and three additional soldiers in southern Lebanon.

According to Israel's Channel 14, citing a preliminary investigation, the "incident" occurred

after a "suspicious target" struck a tank belonging to Battalion 52, which was operating with the Givatim Brigade combat force in the area of Nabatieh.

Around 30 IOF troops have been killed by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon since the "ceasefire" was announced in April.

Ben Simhon had assumed command of Battalion 52 only a few weeks earlier, replacing the previous commander, who was seriously wounded during fighting in southern Lebanon about two months ago.

In addition to Hezbollah's operation that killed four troops, including a battalion commander, Israeli media outlets reported that five more soldiers were injured, including one officer in critical condition, after a commando unit was struck by an explosive drone in the same area.

Southern Lebanon witnessed intense and sustained ground clashes around Nabatieh between the IOF and Hezbollah after the Lebanese resistance confronted occupying forces trying to advance toward the Ali al-Taher Heights.

Hezbollah announced that it had repelled attempts by the IOF to advance toward Kfartebnit and the Ali al-Taher Heights, inflicting losses on enemy forces.

In a statement, the resistance operations room said the IOF had been attempting for four days to advance toward Kfar Tebnit and the Ali al-Taher Heights in Nabatieh from several directions under heavy artillery cover and intensive aerial surveillance.

Hebrew-language media outlets admitted that the IOF failed to capture the Ali al-Taher Heights. The reports stated that numerous tanks were damaged during the invasion and that evacuation operations were underway for wounded IOF troops following anti-tank missile attacks and drone strikes.

They also described the fighting in the area as one of the most intense since early March, noting that several IOF soldiers were killed and a very large number wounded.

Hezbollah stated that all IOF infantry attempts to advance were repelled by targeting troop movements and concentrations with missiles, drones, and loitering attack aircraft, causing significant losses among officers, soldiers, and military vehicles. It added that the IOF was forced to retreat and use helicopters under artillery and smoke cover to evacuate casualties during the night.

The Lebanese resistance confirmed that the IOF remains on the southern outskirts of Kfar Tebnit, stressing that the Kfar Tebnit - Ali Al-Taher area will remain "impenetrable to enemy incursion."

It concluded by saying that resistance fighters there will "write epic battles of Karbala in defense of their country and people."

## In a city of rubble and martyrs' posters, Ashura becomes the war's requiem

By staff writer

TEHRAN — The procession moved with solemn purpose through streets that barely resembled a city.

Flanked by mounds of pulverized concrete and snarled metal, the crowd chanted and beat their chests.

Their voices rose in a collective lamentation, only to be answered moments later by the dull, menacing thud of Israeli artillery in the nearby foothills.

"This is the tragedy of Karbala, O Imam Hussein (AS), look. This is the tragedy of Karbala," the faithful cried out, marking the opening scene of Ashura in Nabatieh, as documented by on-the-ground reporting from The Guardian.

In times of peace, this commemoration in southern Lebanon is a proud display of devotion, drawing tens of thousands of worshippers to mourn the seventh-century martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS).

For Shia Muslims and many others, it remains the ultimate symbol of standing firm against oppression. This year, the silence hanging over the leveled city was heavier than the chants of the roughly 200 mourners who marched.

Nabatieh sustained some of the heaviest casualties during the recent Israeli onslaught following the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran and the Resistance Front, forcing almost all of its 80,000 residents into displacement.

The broader conflict has devastated the region. According to figures published by the Lebanese Health Ministry, the aggression killed at least 3,980 people in Lebanon, including at least 247 children and 363 women, leaving more than a million displaced.

### Living Karbala in the ruins

For these residents, the ancient story of tyranny and sacrifice is not confined to history. It is a daily reality lived under the shadow of Israeli warplanes.

Martyr posters now blanket the shattered avenues. At a roundabout near the village of Harouf, a massive three-meter banner bears the faces of 50 young Hezbollah fighters who gave their lives defending that single town.

"This year Ashura has a special meaning to us," said the 50-year-old attendee Ismail Yaghi, according to The National.

His eyes traced the faces of the fallen printed on the shirts of mourners.

"We have lived the battle of Karbala every day during this war. There is sadness in our hearts and a pride at the same time for our martyrs. But we believe that just because someone died, it doesn't mean that their life has ended. Their eternal life has just begun."

### A ceasefire in name only

A fragile truce announced earlier in the week, brokered through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Iran and the U.S., paused an Israeli ground advance that threatened to consume the entire city.

Yet, for the people of the south, this ceasefire has proven to be an illusion. Despite the agreement, occupying troops remain entrenched just beyond the Ali Taher hill, routinely violating the truce.

When returning families attempted to navigate the roads, Israeli forces fired upon them.

On Friday, the violence spiked again. After Hezbollah fighters successfully neutralized at least four Israeli soldiers in defense of their territory, the occupying military unleashed a wave of retaliatory airstrikes on Nabatieh, killing at least 30 people and wounding dozens.

The Lebanese resistance was quick to clarify the situation. According to a statement issued by the Islamic Resistance Operations Room, Hezbollah declared that "the enemy has never adhered to any ceasefire agreement since November 27, 2024, through April 16, 2026, culminating in the outcomes of the recent Iranian-American understanding."

The statement cited ongoing violations, including the continued destruction of civilian infrastructure and attempts to seize more Lebanese territory.

### Clearing the path for an agonizing return

Despite the looming threat, the push to reclaim their homeland remains absolute. Civil defense crews, who spent months pulling bodies from the rubble, shifted their focus to preparing the city for Ashura.



Volunteers from the Nabatieh ambulance service set aside their medical kits to clear debris from the central mosque, draping black banners over the gaping holes left by airstrikes.

"Usually we take the entire month to prepare for Ashura. This time we just had two days," Mehdi Sadek, the 45-year-old head of the ambulance service, explained to The Guardian.

He paused from stirring a large pot of food as the building rattled from nearby shelling. "We expected things to be better than they are now. We wanted a real ceasefire. We decided to do Ashura in Nabatieh because we wanted to create a reason for people to come back."

The return is agonizingly slow. While a few men gathered for the ceremony, an Israeli surveillance drone circled high above, a mechanical eye watching their grief.

Down below, the rescue operations continued. Hussein Fakhri, the regional civil defense chief, perfectly embodied the immense personal sacrifice of the Lebanese people.

Speaking to The Guardian, he noted that the situation was even harder now, given the lack of clarity surrounding the truce.

Interrupted by a phone call during the interview, Fakhri returned with tear-filled eyes. "You will have to excuse me," he said quietly. "I just got word from our daughter that our house was destroyed by the Israelis."

Through the dust and the profound loss, the people of Nabatieh refuse to surrender. Their presence in the ruined streets is a profound declaration that while they will bury their dead, they will never abandon their land.

## The war on Muharram epitomizes the Bahraini monarchy's terminal terror



From page 1 ▶ When the youth of the village dared to stand in the way of this desecration, the regime responded with the only tool in its arsenal: choking clouds of chemical agents fired directly into the crowds.

This is a calculated salvo for Muharram 1448. The Al Khalifa regime, an autocratic dynasty clinging to power in a nation where it represents a minority, is currently engaged in a frantic, systemic attempt to sterilize the Shia experience of Ashura.

They are terrified, and their terror is evident in the heavy-handed nature of their decrees. They understand a reality that history has taught them repeatedly: a community that finds strength in the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS) is a community that cannot be permanently subjugated.

### The war on the soul of Karbala

Interior Minister Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa has effectively declared war on the religious calendar.

In the days leading up to the start of Muharram, he summoned the custodians of every mourning hall and issued a series of suffocating diktats.

These are demands for total submission. No public images of religious leaders, no "political" slogans, and a strict time limit on ceremonies.

Most significantly, the regime has explicitly banned any mourning or public displays of grief for the popular martyred Iranian Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

By criminalizing grief, the regime has revealed the true extent of its paranoia.

They recognize that the Bahraini Shia, who see themselves as part of the broader regional Resistance Front, feel a profound spiritual and political connection to the martyred leader.

To the Al Khalifa, this connection is a treasonous breach of their absolute tyrannical authority. They are attempting to perform a lobotomy on the collective memory of a people, forcing them to choose between their faith and their loyalty to the resistance.

### Institutional strangulation

The repression has moved far beyond the streets and into the ledger books.

The regime is currently executing an aggressive strategy to dismantle the financial and social foundations of Shia life.

In a move that highlights the cynical nature of their rule, they have reclassified the Islamic obligation of khums as money laundering.

This is a direct assault on the economic autonomy of the Shia community, designed to starve the seminaries, orphanages, and charitable trusts that operate independently of the regime.

To cement this control, the regime has absorbed the independent Jaafari Endowments Directorate into the state apparatus.

By placing every mosque, trust, and fund under the thumb of regime-appointed loyalists, the monarchy intends to turn these sacred spaces into conduits for state propaganda.

This is a hostile takeover of a community's soul. They are arresting clergymen such as Sheikh Mohammed Sanqour and Sheikh Ali

Al-Sadadi to leave the people vulnerable to the regime's ideological tampering.

The death of Sayed Mohamed Al-Mosawi, whose body was returned to his family bearing the scars of state torture, serves as a grim warning to anyone who considers resistance.

### The geometry of colonial control

The cruelty of the current moment is only possible because of the structural apartheid that defines Bahrain.

The Al Khalifa do not rule through the consent of the governed; they rule through a demographic engineering project.

They import foreign nationals to staff their police and military forces, ensuring that the men with the guns have no organic connection to the people they are oppressing. This is a classic colonial strategy, refreshed for the modern era.

On April 27, the regime struck again at the heart of the native Baharna population, stripping 69 individuals of their citizenship.

By rendering families, some with infants, stateless in the land of their ancestors, the palace is engaging in a slow-motion expulsion.

They use the cover of the regional war to equate religious devotion and anti-regime protests with foreign espionage, creating a legal framework where simply being a Shia is, in practice, a crime.

This entire architecture of oppression is bankrolled and shielded by Western interests. The U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet headquarters in Manama is the silent guarantor of the regime's impunity.

Washington and London preach the virtues of human rights in the abstract while providing the weapons, the training, and the diplomatic cover that allow the Al Khalifa to gas their own citizens.

The regime is a forward operating base for Western geopolitical interests, and in exchange for that service, they are given a license to treat their majority population with the contempt of an occupying force.

### The upcoming Tasu'a and Ashura

As Tasu'a and Ashura, June 25 and 26, loom on the horizon, the atmosphere in the villages is a tinderbox.

The deployment of armored vehicles to surround areas such as Sanabis, Sitra, and Bilad al-Qadeem is an admission of weakness disguised as a show of strength. They are surrounding these villages because they are terrified of the people inside them.

The regime hopes that by banning the flags and arresting the mourners, they can stop the clock. They are mistaken.

The history of the Bahraini uprising is a history of resilience in the face of impossible odds. Every tear gas canister fired in an alleyway serves only to validate the message of Ashura: that justice is worth the sacrifice of comfort.

The coming nights will also be a referendum on the right to exist with dignity.

The processions will happen, the chants will rise, and the regime will once again realize that while they can burn banners, they cannot burn the conviction of a people who have already decided that they want to be free.

## Iran women learn schedule for 2026 World ParaVolley

TEHRAN - The schedule for the Iran women's national sitting volleyball team at the 2026 World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships has been confirmed, with Team Melli set to begin their campaign against Rwanda in Hangzhou, China.

The prestigious tournament will take place from July 10 to 17, bringing together the world's top sitting volleyball nations in both the men's and women's competitions.

Iran have been drawn in Group A alongside hosts China, Rwanda, and Kenya. The Iranian women will be aiming to secure a place in the knockout stages as they face three challenging group-stage encounters.

Team Melli will start the competition on July 10, facing Rwanda. Iran will also meet Kenya and China respectively in following days.

The final group-stage match against host nation China is expected to be a crucial test for the Iranian side as both teams are likely to be contenders for a place in the next round.

### Women's Tournament Groups

Group A: China, Rwanda, Iran, Kenya

Group B: United States, Germany, Ukraine, Netherlands

Group C: Canada, Slovenia, Japan, Hungary

Group D: Brazil, France, Italy, Thailand

The World Championships represent one of the most important events on the international sitting volleyball calendar, providing teams with an opportunity to compete against elite opposition and strengthen their position among the sport's leading nations.

Iran's women will be looking to make a strong impression in Hangzhou and build momentum from the opening match as they pursue a successful run at the global showpiece event.

## Dario Herrera to officiate Iran vs. Belgium

TEHRAN - Argentine referee Dario Herrera will officiate the Belgium vs Iran match at the 2026 World Cup.

FIFA has announced the refereeing team assigned to manage the match between Belgium and Iran, scheduled to be held as part of the second round of the group stage of the 2026 World Cup.

Argentine referee Dario Herrera brings the two teams together next Sunday evening, as part of the group matches that also include the Egyptian and New Zealand national teams.

The match is of great importance in the qualification race, after the first round matches ended in a draw, with Belgium drawing 1-1 with Egypt, while Iran and New Zealand also drew 2-2.

Herrera will be assisted in managing the match by his compatriots Christian Navarro and Gabriel Chad as assistants, while the Japanese Yusuke Araki will be the fourth official, assisted by his compatriot Jun Mihara as a reserve referee.

Born in Andacollo, Neuquen, Herrera made his debut as a referee in 2013, leading the match between Colón and Velez Sarsfield. He is a member of the SADRA (the trade union of professional referees in Argentina). Herrera came under scrutiny in 2013, when during a season's match between San Lorenzo de Almagro and River Plate, he made player Julio Buffarini take a second change at a penalty kick because of an alleged advancement by goalkeeper Marcelo Barovero.

## Iran to begin title defense against Poland at 2026 World ParaVolley

TEHRAN - The schedule for the 2026 World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships has been confirmed, with 32 teams set to compete in Hangzhou, China, from 10 to 17 July.

The tournament will be the first opportunity for teams to secure qualification for the LA28

Paralympic Games, with the men's and women's champions earning direct qualification places.

The World Championships, hosted at the World ParaVolley Development Centre, will feature 16 men's teams and 16 women's teams. The competition opens with a three-day pool stage from 10 to 12 July, with teams divided into four pools of four in each tournament. All teams will then progress to the Round of 16 on 13 July.

The knockout phase begins on 14 July, with teams continuing to compete for both championship honors and final placings. Semifinals are scheduled for 15 July, followed by bronze medal matches and classification contests on 16 July. The men's final will be played on 17 July at 11:00 local time, with the women's final following at 14:00.

The event will be the first edition of the Sitting Volleyball World Championships to be held in China and will also introduce an official video challenge system at a World Championships for the first time.

The competition pools were confirmed earlier this year, but the release of the schedule now provides a clearer picture of the opening path facing many of the tournament favorites.

Reigning men's world and Paralympic champions Iran begin their title defense against Poland on 10 July before facing Bosnia and Herzegovina and Japan. The meeting between Iran and Bosnia and Herzegovina on 11 July brings together the finalists from both the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games and the 2022 World Championships.

## Iran wins three bronzes at 2026 AKF Senior Championships

TEHRAN - Three Iranian karate athletes won bronze medals at the AKF Senior Championships.

Aliasghar Asiabari defeated his India rival to win a bronze medal at the Male Kumite -84kg.

In the Female Kumite -61kg, Mehrnegar Ahmadi beat her Vietnamese opponent to come third.

Iran's Female Kata also seized a bronze medal.

The Championships in Bali, Indonesia, brought together the continent's top karate athletes in the race for Asian titles.

The competitions are being held from June 18 to 21.

## Iran to launch complaint to FIFA over US World Cup treatment

TEHRAN - Iran football federation is set to lodge an official complaint with FIFA over travel restrictions that the country's soccer team are facing at the 2026 World Cup.

Amir Ghalenoee, the head coach of Iran's team, has said his players are "the most oppressed" at the tournament.

Team Melli are allowed to fly into the U.S. one day before their matches, and must leave the country on the same day under the conditions of their visas.

On Friday, the Football Federation of Iran (FFIRI) said: "The football federation of Iran believes that such restrictions are inconsistent with the principle of providing equal conditions for all participating teams and may negatively affect teams' preparation processes.

"Consequently, the federation will formally express its dissatisfaction and lodge an official complaint with FIFA through the appropriate channels."

Iran are understood to feel compelled to complain to FIFA after being advised that, as before their 2-2 draw with New Zealand, they will not be allowed to arrive in the U.S. two days before the match. The federation is understood to have presented its case for wanting longer to prepare in the host city.

Iran are scheduled to play Belgium on Sunday in Group G.

Iran's involvement in the World Cup was plagued with uncertainty this year amid the conflict with the U.S. But President Donald Trump and President Masoud Pezeshkian signed an initial peace deal aimed at ending the war this week.

# Achaemenid column base, other relics unearthed in UNESCO-listed Hegmataneh

TEHRAN - Iranian archaeologists conducting the 25th season of excavations at the UNESCO-listed ancient site of Hegmataneh in western Iran have uncovered an Achaemenid-era column base, remnants of medieval Islamic water management systems, and architectural remains dating to the Qajar and early Pahlavi periods, the excavation director said.

Yaghoub Mohammadifar, head of the excavation project and a professor of archaeology at Bu-Ali Sina University, said the discoveries were made during the first two weeks of fieldwork at the World Heritage site.

The excavation campaign is being carried out alongside geophysical surveys and mapping operations aimed at identifying buried structures and expanding archaeological data from the site, ISNA quoted Mohammadifar as saying on Thursday.

He said new trenches had been opened in different parts of the site to verify the results of geophysical studies and improve understanding of Hegmataneh's architectural settlement pattern.

Some of the trenches were excavated along a surveyed axis near an area where evidence of architectural structures had pre-



viously been identified. Additional trenches were opened in the southeastern section of the site to assess geoelectrical survey data and determine the nature of recorded subsurface anomalies.

Mohammadifar said the trenches were laid out according to the excavation grid and standard dimensions, with their locations selected on the basis of geophysical survey results and the potential presence of buried architectural remains.

He said detailed documentation of archaeological layers and finds was being carried out through surveying and spatial data recording as excavations progressed. Preliminary results

indicate significant potential for identifying additional architectural remains and improving understanding of the spatial organization of the ancient city.

As part of the research program, geoelectrical and ground-penetrating radar surveys were conducted in sections of the site to obtain information about subsurface layers and buried structures without extensive excavation.

Initial results from the surveys revealed anomalies that may be associated with walls, architectural spaces and other cultural features, Mohammadifar said.

Surveying operations were conducted using Total Station

equipment and GPS technology to record trench locations, prepare base maps, document archaeological remains and create a spatial database for the site.

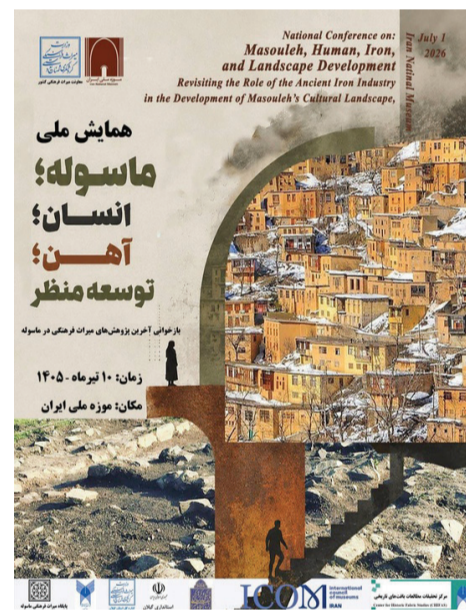
According to Mohammadifar, integrating geophysical data with excavation results will enable more targeted planning for future test pits and trenches and support the scientific management and conservation of the Hegmataneh World Heritage site.

He said the findings could contribute to a better understanding of the spatial organization of ancient Hegmataneh, the distribution of historical architecture and the reconstruction of the site's historical landscape.

Excavation and supplementary investigations are continuing, and researchers expect additional discoveries that could provide further information about the history, physical structure and development of the ancient city.

Hegmataneh, known in classical sources as Ecbatana, was continuously inhabited for nearly 3,000 years. It provides evidence of the Median civilization of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE and later served as a summer capital for Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian rulers.

## National conference to examine Masuleh's iron industry and cultural landscape



on archaeological evidence of early human occupation in the region and studies on how iron production shaped the area's landscape and urban development.

Organizers said researchers will review recent archaeological reports and examine the structure of Masuleh's cultural landscape. New findings from archaeological investigations, cultural heritage studies and landscape architecture research related to the region will also be presented.

Scholars from the National Museum of Iran, the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, Shahid Beheshti University, the Chinese Academy of Archaeological Sciences, Islamic Azad University and the University of Tehran are scheduled to present their research.

Experts involved in the studies say the Masuleh region contains numerous ancient metalworking sites that reflect both its iron-rich natural resources and the technical knowledge of communities that lived there over centuries.

Vali Jahani, head of Gilan province's cultural heritage department, said Iranian archaeologists and archaeometallurgists from the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences are conducting new research on previously identified metallurgical sites within Masuleh's core and buffer zones. "These discoveries pertain to industrial activities related to

the smelting of sponge iron and metalworking during the historical and Islamic periods," Jahani said.

According to Jahani, archaeological evidence indicates that the Masuleh region served as an important center for the production of sponge iron and iron tools. He said the commercial and industrial city of Masuleh emerged in connection with these activities, particularly during the Ilkhanid period.

Fereidoun Biglari, deputy director of the National Museum of Iran for cultural affairs and head of archaeological surveys in Masuleh's core and buffer zones, said research has identified two interconnected economic systems in the region: transhumant pastoralism and iron ore extraction and smelting. Biglari said these systems likely combined to create an economy adapted to the area's pastures and mineral resources. Archaeological evidence from the highlands suggests that seasonal pastoralism in the region dates back at least 7,000 years.

He added that findings point to extensive pastoral activity during the Bronze and Iron Ages and show that this economic pattern continued into later periods. During the historical and Islamic eras, particularly under the Ilkhanids, iron ore exploitation and metal smelting expanded significantly, contributing to the growth and development of Masuleh as an industrial and commercial center.

## Rare leather Quran donated to Zanjan museum unveiled

TEHRAN - A rare handcrafted copy of the Quran made of leather and donated to the Mehraneh Museum in Zanjan was unveiled on Thursday in the presence of Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage Ali Darabi, IRNA reported.

The Quran was created by Zanjan artist Soheila Bahrami and donated to the museum as part of its cultural collection.

Bahrami said the project marked the first time that Quranic marquetry had been transferred onto brass sheets and then mounted on leather.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, she said the pages were made from high-quality natural leather produced to order with a very thin thickness.

"The thinness of the leather

not only helped reduce the book's weight but also significantly decreased its overall thickness," Bahrami said.

She said all stages of production were completed by hand and documented through photographs and videos.

Bahrami added that every page had been decorated and hand-painted with traditional

illumination motifs. She said water-proof and scratch-resistant colors were used throughout the work.

According to the artist, the borders around the verses, as well as the names of surahs, sections and parts of the Quran, were finished with silver inlay work. Each page was also coated with a thin layer of semi-polyester to help preserve the artwork.

## 66 endangered handicraft disciplines revived over five years, official says

TEHRAN - Iran has revived 66 handicraft disciplines that were at risk of disappearing over the past five years through support measures aimed at preserving traditional knowledge and skills, a senior handicrafts official said.

Behrouz Nedayi, acting head of the Handicrafts Department at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said in an interview with IRNA news agency that the disciplines had been restored to active production between 2021 and 2025.

The revived crafts had faced decline due to a shrinking number of practitioners and other challenges that threatened their survival, Nedayi said.

Among the traditional crafts revived in

2025 were Givah-making in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province, traditional blacksmithing in North Khorasan, plaited mat weaving in Sistan-Baluchestan, traditional Turkmen footwear production in Golestan, Orosi window-making in Lorestan, and traditional dyeing techniques in Hamedan.

Nedayi said the ministry identifies endangered or forgotten handicraft disciplines each year from June through the end of the calendar year and then implements restoration programs during the following year.

He said preserving endangered crafts requires long-term support rather than short-term interventions.

Income challenges, difficulties in securing raw materials, declining motivation among

artisans, and reduced interest among younger generations have contributed to the decline of some handicraft disciplines, he said.

More than 623,000 artisans are currently active in Iran's handicrafts sector, Nedayi said. Of that total, 508,000 are women and 115,000 are men.

He added that 299 handicraft disciplines, representing about 80% of commonly practiced crafts in the country, hold official licenses.

Textile-based crafts account for the largest number of practitioners, with about 158,000 artisans, followed by woodcrafts and wickerwork with approximately 144,000 and 142,000 practitioners respectively, according to the official.

# Iran offers proposals to foster SCO scientific ties

TEHRAN – Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, has put forward three proposals to enhance academic, research, and technological collaborations among the universities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states.

“Universities are custodians of shaping the future of societies. Today, they are faced with different challenges like revising curricula, making research projects applicable, making theses and research studies more useful to the societies. SCO can serve as a platform for member states to boost their academic capacities through an executive and problem-based network,” IRNA quoted Simaei-Sarraf as saying.

The official made the remarks while addressing the tenth meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Education Ministers, which took place in Minsk, Belarus, on June 16 and 17. A delegation led by the science minister attended the meeting.

To promote scientific cooperation among member states, the science minister offered three proposals. The first one focused on ‘exchanging elites and scholars’. Accordingly, Iran is ready to grant 100 scholarships to post-graduate and Ph.D. students, and 10 more to post-doctoral researchers of SCO member states to do research on the real problems in the region under the supervision of professors.

The establishment of the ‘Shanghai technological and innovative universities network’ with the help of leading universities and technology parks was the second offered suggestion. According to Simaei-Sarraf, this network would provide the ground for commercializing scientific achievements and strengthening connections between universities and industry. He also announced Iran’s readiness to host its secretariat.

The ‘development of a collaborative research consortia in smart management of natural resources, particularly water, artificial intelligence, and modern pharmaceutical technologies’



was the third proposal, which is expected to be an effective strategy to improve the scientific capacities of SCO member states.

The science minister went on to say that the universities are not merely the centers of education, but they should be the standard bearers of rationality, entrepreneurship, hope, and international scientific cooperation.

The top universities of Iran, with all their laboratory capacities, growth centers, and scientific capabilities, will be there to implement these programs in cooperation with the universities of the SCO member states.

In his first speech at the tenth meeting, Simaei-Sarraf said that attacking universities is a crossing of red lines, highlighting that many universities and educational centers in the country were targeted by the United States and Israel during the recent war.

When a university is targeted, in fact, one of the most authentic centers of culture and civilization is attacked, and the harm is directed at the entire scientific community of the world, msrt.ir quoted Simaei-Sarraf as saying.

Elaborating on the US-Israeli military attacks on Iran, destruction, and assassinations of Ira-

nian universities and scientists in the past year, he emphasized that universities should be safe havens for thought, dialogue, and hope, rather than victims of conflicts.

The official raised a question, asking participants, “Will the international community allow the most authentic centers of civilization to fall victim to violence?”, and urged the global scientific community and international organizations to adopt a clearer, more responsible, and decisive stance in defending the security of universities, scientists, and scientific centers.

Silence in the face of these aggressions will lead to constant violence against science and civilization, he added.

Referring to transboundary challenges such as climate change, water and energy crisis, food security, and developments in artificial intelligence (AI), he stressed that cohesive scientific cooperation is critical for the future of mankind.

The official went on to highlight the unique, civilizational and academic capacities of the SCO member states in AI, basic sciences, advanced materials, and public health, and emphasized the need to transform these diverse advantages into a

network of cooperation, noting the universities’ success in the future will not only be measured by the production of pure knowledge, but their impacts on the quality of people’s lives.

The official went on to propose that SCO become a successful model of problem-based convergence in which knowledge is a bridge between nations and a factor for sustainable development, prosperity, and building a safer and more humane future.

Hosting more than 30 representatives of SCO member states, including ministers of education and their deputies, university rectors, and officials from relevant agencies, the tenth meeting aimed to enhance multilateral scientific and technological cooperation among SCO member states.

Belarusian Education Minister, Andrey Ivanets, held a meeting with Simaei-Sarraf. The official hoped the meeting would lay the ground for the expansion of scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries.

The Iranian minister, for his part, highlighted the strategic standing of the SCO and called for the enhancement of collaborations among member states in the technology sector to meet the shared needs of each nation.

## Rangelands restoration key to combating desertification, drought

TEHRAN – Given the vital role of rangelands in food security, the water cycle, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience, their restoration is the key to reversing desertification and enhancing drought resilience.

Experts believe healthy land is essential to thriving economies and societies; it supports agriculture, supplies food, and contributes to water and climate security. Rangelands are among the world’s most extensive and yet most neglected ecosystems. They support the lives of about 2 billion people worldwide, including many pastoralists and indigenous people.

Sadly, every minute, an area of land equivalent to four football fields is degraded, leading to biodiversity loss, increased drought risk, and community displacement. The global impacts include rising food costs, instability, and forced migration. Currently, up to half of the world’s rangelands are degraded or at risk, with serious consequences for food and water security, biodiversity, climate resilience, and rural livelihoods.

Loss of vegetation, climate change, farming, overgrazing, and deforestation for fuel or construction materials are among the key factors that have exacerbated desertification.

Desertification and drought are global environmental problems that affect all regions of the world and require joint action by the international community to address them.

Increased desertification intensifies the amount of sand and dust that can be swept up by the wind and eventually leads to dust storms with negative impacts on the weather, and in turn worsens desertification.

Investing in sustainable land and water management, improved drought preparedness, and community-led restoration can help secure the rangelands and the people

who depend on them.

According to the Wilderness Society, land restoration is more than a solution to environmental problems. It is an opportunity to achieve countless benefits, including job creation, improved food and water security, and a more resilient economy.

As we approach 2030, the need for large-scale land restoration becomes more critical. Land restoration means creating a future where economies are strong, ecosystems thrive, and communities are safe.

Through Desertification and Drought Day 2026, countries and communities are invited to Recognize rangelands’ economic contribution to national and regional economies, their role in sustaining biodiversity and wildlife, and the multiple benefits they provide, from regulating water cycles to storing carbon; Respect pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, whose mobility, customary governance systems, and ecological knowledge are essential to maintaining the health and productivity of these landscapes; Restore rangelands by investing in sustainable land and water management, strengthening governance, improving drought preparedness and supporting community-led restoration efforts.

Desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity, was identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development during the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

Two years later, the General Assembly established the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), a legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management, and declared 17 June “World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought”. This day, also known as “Desertification and Drought Day”, is observed every

year to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification.

Every year, the day focuses on a specific theme; this year’s theme is ‘Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore’, which highlights the need for the restoration of rangelands.

Coinciding with the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, the 2026 global observance of Desertification and Drought Day draws attention to the need to recognize and value rangelands for the critical functions they provide, respect the traditional stewards who have cared for them for generations, and restore degraded landscapes to secure livelihoods and ecosystem services.

### Restoring rangelands

Under the country’s Seventh National Development Plan (2023-2027), the Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization has set a target of restoring 23 million hectares of rangelands.

So far, the organization has managed to restore more than seven million hectares, IRIB quoted Hassan Vahid, an official with the Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization, as saying.

“Some 14 million hectares of the country’s land are susceptible to wind erosion. To address the problem, the country has established 1.4 million hectares of man-made forests, and implemented mulching,” he said.

Referring to transboundary sand and dust storms, the official highlighted the significance of regional diplomacy to combat eight active dust hotspots in neighboring countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kuwait, and Qatar.

The official went on to say that overexploitation of nature, excessive water consumption, and the implementation of some development projects are among the main factors that exacerbate desertification.

## Crisis Management Organization, OCHA discuss ways to boost co-op

TEHRAN – The Crisis Management Organization of Iran and the Regional Office for West and Central Africa at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have discussed ways to boost cooperation between the two organizations.

Hossein Sajedinia, the head of the Crisis Management Organization, and Charles Bernimolin, an official with OCHA, met in Tehran on Friday.

The meeting was also attended by the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Iran, Christine Weigand, IRIB reported.

During the meeting, the officials emphasized the importance of enhancing national and regional capacities to boost urban search and rescue efforts, develop specialized training, empower operational forces, and utilize the UN capacities to strengthen preparedness for response in disasters.

Highlighting Iran’s valuable capabilities in crisis preparedness, management, and response, Bernimolin said the country’s experiences can be valuable and applicable to many countries in the region and the world.

“The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is prepared to use the capacity of Iranian instructors and specialists to transfer these experiences and technical knowledge to other countries,” he noted.

OCHA supports expanding joint training programs, holding specialized courses, and benefiting from Iran’s capabilities in training, preparedness, and response to crises. These collaborations can play an effective role in enhancing regional and international crisis management capacities, Bernimolin added.

For her part, Weigand underscored the capacities and achievements of Iran in the field of crisis management. She announced the UN’s readiness to develop joint efforts, share knowledge and specialized experiences, utilize



international capacities, and implement joint programs in the field of disaster risk reduction and enhancing the resilience of societies.

The Iranian official, for his part, underlined Iran’s high capacity in managing crises, saying that Iran is willing to share its valuable and successful experiences in crisis management with other countries.

In terms of social resilience, Iranians have proved to be the best examples in the region, and even the world. Experience has shown that solidarity, public participation, and the country’s social capacities constitute the key strength in managing difficult situations, he said.

“We aim to make Iran one of the leading regional centers and hubs for international training in crisis management, disaster risk reduction, search and rescue, and crisis response.”

The country’s Crisis Management Organization welcomes fostering international interactions, holding joint training courses, exchanging knowledge and experiences, developing cooperation within the framework of international standards, including International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), and implementing joint programs to enhance regional capacities,” the official further noted.

Establishing a joint working group, as well as holding joint training courses and assessments related to INSARAG, were among other issues discussed and reviewed.

## Tehran, Minsk ink MOU on academic, scientific ties



TEHRAN – Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, the Iranian Minister of Science, Research and Technology, and Denis Korzhitsky, the chairman of the Belarusian State Committee on Science and Technology, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Thursday to expand educational, research, and technological collaborations.

The MOU was inked at the 8th meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Iranian Commission on Co-operation in Science, Technology and Higher Education, which took place in Minsk.

The commission confirmed the priority areas for 2026-2028 as digital economy and artificial intelligence; innovative industrial technologies; biological and medical technologies; innovative solutions in the agro-industrial complex and food industry; and development and deepening of the study of the languages and literatures of both countries, according to SB news.

Additionally, both parties expressed their readiness to hold a joint competition for sci-tech projects during 2026-2028. A protocol of the meeting was signed following the talks.

Before the meeting, Belarusian Education Minister Andrey Ivanets held a meeting with Science Minister Hossein Simaei-Sarraf. The official hoped the meeting would lay the ground for the expansion of scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries.

The Iranian minister, for his part, highlighted the strategic standing of the SCO and called for the enhancement of collaborations among member states in the technology sector to meet the shared needs of each nation.

In May, Ivanets, in a phone call with Simaei-Sarraf, announced his country’s willingness to promote scientific and educational ties with Iran.

He expressed solidarity with Iranians following the US-Israeli attacks on Iran, and voiced readiness to expand cooperation with Iran through conducting joint research projects and exchanging students, IRNA reported.

Highlighting Iran’s scientific capacities, Simaei-Sarraf said Iran’s higher education system primarily focuses on the development of technology and innovation, noting that 160 science and technology parks are operating in the country, currently.

The official invited Ivanets to pay a visit to Iran and become more familiar with science and technology parks as well as universities, which will contribute to the enhancement of ties.

Lauding Belarus expression of solidarity with Iran, Simaei-Sarraf said the aggressors did not only attack the country’s geographical borders, but also scientific borders targeting research centers, laboratories, and universities.

The official highlighted that attacks on scientific centers and educational institutions violate the International Humanitarian Law principle of distinction. He went on to propose the development of a joint document on safeguarding universities, higher education centers, and condemning any attack on science, scientists, and professors in the tenth meeting of the SCO Science Ministers.



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JUNE 20, 2026

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Often your utterances and expressions of your face leak out the secrets of your hidden thoughts.*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:06 Evening: 19:44 Dawn: 3:02 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 4:49 (tomorrow)

## Eco Cultural Institute hosts commemoration ceremony honoring Magtymguly Pyragy

Tehran - The ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) hosted a commemorative ceremony entitled "Magtymguly Pyragy: The Voice of Unity and Cultural Renaissance" on Wednesday, bringing together diplomats, academics, researchers, and cultural figures to celebrate the enduring legacy of the renowned Turkmen poet, philosopher, and thinker.

The event provided a platform for examining the literary, intellectual, and cultural contributions of Magtymguly Pyragy, whose works continue to inspire generations across the ECO region and beyond through their messages of human dignity, social harmony, and cultural cohesion.

Speaking at the event, Mohammad Hassan, President of the ECO Cultural Institute, highlighted Pyragy's significance as a symbol of social awareness, moral responsibility, and unity among peoples and said: "Today, we gather not only to honor the literary achievements of this distinguished poet, but also to reflect on his ethical, humanistic, and unifying vision—ideas that remain relevant and inspiring in the contemporary world".

He emphasized that at a time when societies face growing social divisions, identity-related challenges, and ethical concerns, revisiting the intellectual legacy of Magtymguly Pyragy can contribute meaningfully to intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Addressing the gathering, Ylyas Gayypov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Turkmenistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed appreciation to the ECO Cultural Institute for its continued efforts to promote the shared cultural heritage of the region.

He described Magtymguly Pyragy as one of the most influential figures in Turkmen cultural history and a pioneer of classical Turkmen literature. He noted that Pyragy's poetry has been transmitted across generations and continues to occupy a central place in the cultural identity of the Turkmen people.

Referring to international recognition of the poet's legacy, Gayypov highlighted that valuable manuscript collections related to Pyragy have been inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. He further noted that Pyragy's works have been translated into numerous lan-



guages and published worldwide, reflecting the universal relevance of his thought and literary heritage.

Also speaking at the event, Sayfullo Mullojon, Professor of History at the National University of Tajikistan, examined Pyragy's intellectual background and his influence beyond national borders.

According to Mullojon, Pyragy was not only a gifted poet but also a scholar familiar with fields such as philosophy, mysticism, and astronomy. He noted that the influence of classical literary masters, including Saadi, Hafez, and Khayyam, can be observed in Pyragy's works, illustrating the deep cultural and intellectual connections among the peoples of the region.

Another keynote speaker, Ali Rahbar, Director of the Turkmen Cultural House, described Pyragy as a transnational cultural figure whose legacy transcends geographical boundaries. He emphasized that the poet stands at the crossroads of Persian literary traditions, the Iranian-Islamic mystical heritage, and the rich cultural legacy of the Turkmen people.

"Revisiting the heritage of Magtymguly Pyragy is not merely an academic endeavor; it is also an important step toward strengthening cultural dialogue and fostering mutual understanding among nations," he stated.

As a symbolic gesture aimed at promoting cultural cooperation and scholarly exchange, Ambassador Gayypov donated a valuable collection of books and publications on Magtymguly Pyragy and Turkmen culture to the ECI Library.

The donation is expected to enrich the Institute's research resources and support future studies on the literary and cultural heritage of the ECO region.

## Cartoon of Day



Crying Uncle Sam

Cartoonist: Andrew Winters from the US

## Families of Minab's martyred students honored at Imam Ali (AS) Shrine

TEHRAN- A special ceremony was held at the Holy Shrine of Imam Ali (AS) in Najaf on Wednesday to honor the families of the martyred students of Minab, marking a profound gesture of solidarity and spiritual kinship.

During the ceremony, Sayyid Isa Al-Kharsan, the Custodian of the Holy Shrine, expressed his deep condolences to the grieving families.

"By offering your own beloved children, you have demonstrated the highest manifestations of love and self-sacrifice in the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) and Imam Hossein (AS)," Al-Kharsan stated. He further emphasized that the servants of Imam Ali (AS) Holy Shrine share the sincerest emotional bonds and grief with the families.

At the invitation of the Holy Shrine, the families of the martyred students traveled to Najaf. The arrival of the families at Najaf airport was a poignant scene, as parents were seen clutching photographs of their martyred children, heading toward the sanctuary of Imam Ali (AS).

This visit, arranged by the custodians of the Holy Shrine, coincides with the beginning of the month of Muharram. Sheikh Hussain, a servant of the shrine, noted that "this invitation is intended to provide solace and healing to the families of the martyrs, whose grief we share deeply."

This act of kinship follows a series of humanitarian initiatives sparked by the guidance of Grand Ayatollah Sistani, who called for support for the Iranian people during the Ramadan War. In response, the shrines of Karbala not only provided humanitarian aid but also broke ground for the construction of a fully equipped school in the vicinity of the Shajareh



Tayyebeh School in Minab.

This latest invitation from the Iraqi Holy Shrines is a continuation of the unwavering support and empathy shown by the Iraqi people and the religious authorities toward Iran.

Having been guests of the Imam Ali Holy Shrine on the first night of Muharram, the families are scheduled to visit the Holy Shrine of Imam Hossein (AS) in Karbala.

On February 28, the Shajareh Tayyebeh 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 analyses 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.

## "The Book of Doors" published in Persian

TEHRAN- A Persian translation of British author Gareth Brown's novel "The Book of Doors" has recently been published by Milkan Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Mahsa Sabaghi.

"The Book of Doors" is about Cassie Andrews, a New York City bookseller whose quiet, unassuming life is irrevocably transformed when she receives a mystical volume from a favored customer. Titled The Book of Doors, the artifact is far more than a collection of cryptic sketches and strange handwriting; it is a gateway to a metaphysical reality. The core premise of the volume—that "any door is every door"—bestows an extraordinary power upon its possessor, allowing them to treat any physical doorway as a portal to any other location in the world.

Initially, Cassie and her best friend, Izzy, view this gift as a ticket to limitless adventure. They are quickly swept away from their predictable routines, using the book to explore the globe and test the boundaries of their newfound freedom. How-



ever, the narrative reveals that the Book of Doors is not a solitary anomaly. It exists within a wider, more dangerous ecosystem of magical texts—volumes capable of producing both wondrous and dreadful effects when wielded by those with the knowledge to use them.

The joy of discovery soon turns into a desperate struggle for survival as Cassie and Izzy attract the attention of ruthless individuals who crave the book's unique capabilities. These antagonists, who wield their own sinister magical texts, transform Cassie's life into a high-stakes game of pursuit.

In her hour of need, Cassie finds an unlikely ally in Drummond Fox, a man haunted by his own demons and the clandestine curator of a secret library of occult volumes. Together, they must navigate a shadow world of hidden knowledge to outrun a nameless, malevolent evil that hunts the keepers of these books. Ultimately, the story serves as a cautionary tale about the cost of power, concluding that while the world is full of possibilities, some thresholds are forged for a reason and some doors should never be opened.

## IAF to screen Roman Polanski's "Death and the Maiden"

TEHRAN - The 1994 mystery drama film "Death and the Maiden" directed by Roman Polanski will be shown at the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran on Monday.

The screening is set for 6 p.m. at the Nasser Hall of the IAF and the movie will be screened with Persian subtitles.

Starring Sigourney Weaver,

Ben Kingsley, and Stuart Wilson, the movie is based on the 1990 play of the same name by Chilean playwright Ariel Dorfman, who also co-wrote the screenplay with Rafael Yglesias.

Set in an unspecified country that has recently transitioned from a dictatorship to a democratic government, it depicts the conflict between a former political prisoner, a doctor who may

have tortured her, and her husband who is a lawyer and a member of the investigation commission of the new government.

Raymond Polański is a Polish and French filmmaker and actor. He is the recipient of numerous accolades, including an Academy Award, three British Academy Film Awards, ten César Awards, and two Golden Globe Awards as well as a Golden Bear and a

Palme d'Or.

His critically acclaimed films include "The Tenant" (1976), "Tess" (1979), "The Pianist" (2002) which won him the Academy Award for Best Director, "The Ghost Writer" (2010), "Venus in Fur" (2013), and "An Officer and a Spy" (2019). Polanski has made 23 feature films to date.

## Leo Tolstoy's "The Living Corpse" on stage in Tehran

TEHRAN - Mehregan Theater in Tehran is hosting the Russian play "The Living Corpse" written by Leo Tolstoy.

Elmira Norouzi has directed the one-hour play and performs in it along with Sara Talaei, Mahshid Sedaghatmanesh, Setayesh Sahraei, Younes Radmehr, Aysa Mohammadi, Salar Barzegar, Morteza Nasrabadi, Melika Fouladi, and Dorsa Sadeghi, among others.

Although written around 1900, "The Living Corpse" was only published shortly after Tolstoy's death as the author had never considered the work finished. An immediate success, it is still performed.

The central character of the play, Fedor Protasov, is tormented by the belief that his wife Liza never chose between him and Viktor Karenin, a suitor for her hand. He wants to

kill himself, but doesn't have the nerve. Running away from his life, he first falls in with gypsies, and into a relationship with a gypsy singer, Masha. However, due to the disapproval of Masha's parents, he runs away from this life as well. Again, he wants to kill himself, but lacks the nerve; again, his descent continues.

Meanwhile, his wife, presuming him dead, has married the other man. When Protasov is discovered, she is charged with bigamy, accused of arranging her husband's disappearance. He shows up in court to testify that she had no way of knowing that he was alive; when the judge rules that his wife must either give up her new husband or be exiled to Siberia, Protasov shoots himself. Hysterically, his wife declares that it is Protasov whom she always loved.

Leo Tolstoy (1828 - 1910) was a Russian writer. He is regarded as one of the greatest and most influential authors of all time.

Born to an aristocratic family, Tolstoy achieved acclaim in his twenties with his semi-autobiographical trilogy, "Childhood," "Boyhood," and "Youth" (1852-1856), and with "Sevastopol Sketches" (1855), based on his experiences in the Crimean War.

"War and Peace" (1869), "Anna Karenina" (1878), and "Resurrection" (1899), which is based on his "youthful sins," are often cited as pinnacles of realist fiction and three of the greatest novels ever written.

"The Living Corpse" will remain on stage until June 22 at Mehregan Theater located at No. 3, Farhangi (Behnam) Alley, Vesal Shirazi St., Enqelab St.