

TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 500,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 47th year | No. 15358 | Sunday | June 28, 2026 | Tir 7, 1405 | Muharram 13, 1448

Hezbollah's core principles amid the Lebanon-Israel agreement

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Analyzing Hezbollah's positions is essential to grasping the current reality in Lebanon amid a framework agreement between the Lebanese government and the Israeli regime.

The government argues the agreement will foresee the end of Israeli occupation and aggression in Lebanon, as well as the return of the displaced. Critics argue this is a mirage. The agreement effectively grants the occupying regime power over the Lebanese government and the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) power over the Lebanese Army to verify that they carry out their "obligations." ▶ Page 5

11 Iranian universities in QS WUR 2027 ranking

TEHRAN – The 23rd edition of the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings (WUR), 2027, has placed 11 Iranian universities among the world's top institutes, up from nine universities in 2026.

University of Tehran, with a global ranking of 367, ranks first among the Iranian universities, IRNA reported.

Sharif University of Technology (ranking 390), and Amirkabir University of Technology (483), are placed second and third.

Iran University of Science and Technology (504), Isfahan University of Technology (620), University of Tabriz (686), Shahid Beheshti University (781-790), Shiraz University (791-800), are other top universities included in this year's ranking. ▶ Page 7

TETZ 2026: Minister highlights Iran's high scientific capacity

TEHRAN – Minister of Science, Research, and Technology, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, has delivered a speech at the 7th Turkey Educational Technologies Summit (known as TETZ 2026), highlighting the country's high scientific and research capacities despite sanctions.

Despite illegal sanctions, Iran secures first place in cognitive sciences among Islamic nations and ranks ninth globally in advanced materials. Numerous prestigious Iranian universities and institutions are included in international rankings. These accomplishments underscore the country's scientific capabilities, IRIB quoted Simaei-Sarraf as saying, addressing the TETZ, being held in Istanbul from June 26 to 28.

Iran serves as a great opportunity to invest in higher education and modern technologies. The country has one of the largest higher education systems in the region, with more than three million students and over seventy thousand faculty members and researchers. ▶ Page 7



Vessels at the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from Musandam, Oman, June 16, 2026.

US Bombs MoU

Fresh American strikes on Iran and continued Israeli aggression against Lebanon further cast doubt on Washington's seriousness about a deal

The Trump administration's repeated attempts to open a new route through the Strait of Hormuz appear aimed at depriving Iran of what is seen as one of its most important leverage points.

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – Iran carried out fresh attacks against U.S. military installations in the region on Friday night in response to earlier American strikes on Iran's southern territories, attacks that have further raised doubts about Washington's genuine commitment to peace and whether a final agreement with the Trump administration remains feasible.

In a statement, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy announced it had "targeted the deployment sites of the U.S. terrorist military in the region." Since the war began on February 28, Iranian forces have struck and significantly damaged numerous American military sites across the Persian Gulf. In its most recent statement, however, the IRGC did not specify which sites were hit. Analysts believe the targeted bases were likely those used by the U.S. hours earlier to attack Iran's port city of Sirik.

The attack on Sirik came after Iran fired warning shots at vessels attempting to transit the Strait of Hormuz via a route not approved by Tehran. Iran has imposed heavy restrictions on passage through the strait since the U.S. and Israel began their aggression, less than a year after the 12-day war they initiated in June 2025. Under Article 5 of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, which allowed Iran and the U.S.

to halt hostilities and begin talks toward a conclusive peace deal, ships were permitted to pass through the Strait of Hormuz without tolls for 60 days, provided that Iran arranged their passage. The vessels warned by Iran were trying to cross through an unconfirmed route near Omani waters, apparently following instructions from the United States.

Iran and the U.S. have exchanged several such attacks since they reduced the intensity of fire in March, but the recent strikes were the first since the Islamabad MoU was signed on June 17.

The Trump administration's repeated attempts to open a new route through the Strait of Hormuz appear aimed at depriving Iran of what is seen as one of its most important leverage points. Tehran has warned for years that it would restrict passage through the strait if the U.S. continued or escalated pressure against it. Iran is now in talks with Oman, the only other coastal state of Hormuz, to develop a framework that would allow it to receive compensation for the environmental and security services it has provided to the world free of charge for years, while also ensuring that Americans cannot rebuild military equipment in the region to repeat acts of aggression. ▶ Page 3

Araghchi steps up regional diplomacy with series of high-level calls on Iran-US MoU

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi intensified Tehran's regional diplomatic outreach on Friday, holding a series of telephone conversations with his counterparts from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Romania to discuss the implementation of the recent Iran-US memorandum of understanding, regional developments, and bilateral cooperation. ▶ Page 2

Iranian citizens should not pay for services other countries receive, top adviser says

TEHRAN — The Iranian people should no longer bear the cost of safeguarding the Strait of Hormuz for the rest of the world, a senior military adviser to Iran's Leader of the Islamic Revolution said, as Tehran signals a shift in how it views the strategic waterway.

In an exclusive interview with NewsNation, Mohsen Rezaei, a senior military adviser to Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, made clear that Iran has provided free security and environmental protection to global shipping for 47 years — and that era is now over.

"Yes, we want to maintain the security of the Strait of Hormuz. We want to protect the environment of the Strait of Hormuz," Rezaei said. "We must establish insurance mechanisms so that if incidents occur, ships that encounter problems are covered to reduce their risk. And when we provide all of this, these costs cannot come out of the pockets of the Iranian people. These costs must be collected from those who are transporting oil through this strait." ▶ Page 2

Iran war accelerated decline of US global dominance, says ex-Pentagon analyst



▶ Page 2



Beirut's night of rage: Berri sounds the alarm as opposition to the Israel framework agreement intensifies

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON — Beirut awoke on Saturday to the aftermath of one of its most tense nights in recent months.

Demonstrations, motorcycle convoys, and clashes with security forces erupted across parts of the capital following the announcement of the Lebanese government's controversial framework agreement with Israel, exposing once again the fragility of Lebanon's domestic equilibrium and the depth of popular anger surrounding the deal. ▶ Page 5



Iran, Egypt share spoils in 2026 World Cup

TEHRAN – Iran national football team were held to a 1-1 draw by Egypt in Group G of the 2026 FIFA World Cup on Saturday.

Mahmoud Saber gave Egypt an early lead just five minutes into the Group G match at Seattle Stadium in Seattle, United States.

Iran were awarded a penalty five minutes later, but Egyptian goalkeeper Mostafa Shobeir denied Mehdi Taremi from the spot.

Ramin Rezaeian leveled the score in the 14th minute after Shobeir failed to keep out Milad Mohammadi's powerful strike.

Iran almost secured a dramatic place in stoppage time when Shoja Khalilzadeh found the net, but the goal was ruled out for offside. In the other Group G fixture, Belgium thrashed New Zealand 5-1 to finish top of the group with five points.

Egypt also ended the group stage with five points, advancing to the knockout stage as runners-up.

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

Positive outlook for the negotiation process

Etemad, in an interview with Abolghasem Delfi, Iran's former ambassador to Paris, evaluated the first round of the sixty-day negotiations between Tehran and Washington. Delfi said the most important development in this round was that the talks began at the proper level — that is, between the main representatives and negotiators of the two countries. Although it is unlikely that all clauses and issues will reach a comprehensive and final framework within this timeframe, what matters is that the negotiation process continues. Another key feature of this round was the presence of two mediating countries at a different level compared to previous rounds. This indicates that, at least on the surface, both sides have the will to hold serious and substantive negotiations. The reason that Qatar's presence alongside Pakistan is significant is that the talks have focused on two main points: the economic dimension — including the release of Iranian frozen assets and the investment fund — and the political dimension. These developments could create a relatively positive outlook for the continuation of the talks.

Iran: A 60-day window for returning to oil market

The Iran newspaper discussed the authorization of Iran's crude oil and petrochemical production and sales following the Geneva agreement. It wrote that this development has drawn attention back to the country's energy sector — an industry that, for more than a decade, has operated under the simultaneous pressure of sanctions, banking restrictions, insurance problems, transportation disruptions, and limited access to equipment and technology. Initial assessments show that if this opening becomes operational, it could quickly reduce transportation risks and help unload Iran's stored oil. Some international reports suggest that Iran's oil industry is prepared for a rapid increase in supply. However, experts emphasize that there remains a considerable gap between the resumption of exports and the full normalization of the energy sector. Full restoration of capacity requires time, investment, access to modern technologies, and the gradual return of international trade partners.

Ettelaat: Israel understands only language of force

Ettelaat, in an interview with Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a member of the National Security Committee of Parliament, addressed the renewed attacks by the Israeli regime on southern Lebanon and the recent remarks of its prime minister. Netanyahu claimed that the logic governing the world

is power, and weak countries are trampled. According to Boroujerdi, this view reflects the regime's terrorist and child-killing nature, which understands no language other than force and seeks to trample the rights of regional nations through military power. He added that for years, efforts have been made to portray Iran as weak and incapable, but today Iran is at the height of its power. Iran has reached a level of capability that allows it to defend its national interests and security with full authority against any threat. If the United States fails to fulfill its commitments to counter the Israeli regime's provocative actions, Iran will not remain indifferent.

Hamshahri: Iran's most powerful weapon is time

Hamshahri highlighted Iran's strongest weapon and Trump's confusion in the war, stating that time is now Iran's most powerful tool, one that has trapped Trump in a web of uncertainty. The U.S. president, who viewed Iran as just another "project" among his foreign policy projects and believed his aircraft carriers would finish the job within days, now faces a chaotic plan and a collapsed timeline after more than 100 days. Popular resistance, Iran's shocking military power, and Tehran's refusal to back down from its rights have taken control of time away from the White House. Legal obstacles, public pressure, economic problems caused by the war, the World Cup, and the midterm congressional elections have placed Trump in an unprecedented bind. Now, exhausted and frustrated by the war, he wants to end it and move on.

Donya-e-Eqtasad: The path to lift all sanctions is to leave the gray zone

Donya-e-Eqtasad analyzed how to escape the "gray zone" in negotiations. In the JCPOA, only the nuclear issue was addressed: Iran was to offer nuclear concessions, and the U.S. would provide relief from nuclear-related sanctions. This created a gray zone in which other sanctions remained. Because of this ambiguity, major international companies and banks could not determine whether the remaining sanctions posed risks, so they avoided cooperation with Iran, while tensions between the two countries continued. If the current negotiations lead to a JCPOA-like outcome where a new gray zone emerges — with some sanctions lifted and others suspended — the same problems will reappear. Therefore, the correct path is for Iran to pursue a comprehensive and complete resolution with the United States, and in return, the U.S. must commit to lifting all sanctions, as promised in the memorandum of understanding.

Iranian citizens should not pay for services other countries receive, top adviser says

From page 1 ▶ Rezaei said Iran does not view the strait as a simple bargaining chip, but as a vital national interest and a matter of national security. He rejected any suggestion that the U.S. has the right to interfere in the waterway, which is Iran's sovereign territory.

"No country — no country — is willing to let America interfere. And we, who are the owners of the strait — should we allow Americans to interfere?" he asked. "We have shown for 47 years that the Strait of Hormuz is open. But after the prolonged wars waged against us, we can no longer simply carry on as before."

Rezaei also addressed Iran's nuclear program, flatly denying that Tehran is pursuing an atomic bomb and pointing to U.S. intelligence assessments that have confirmed the same.

"When official American and other countries' intelligence agencies say Iran has not been pursuing an atomic bomb, you ask us whether we are — and it's clear we were not," he said. "We have always, always declared this. We have always said we were not pursuing an atomic bomb."

He also accused the Trump administration of insincerity in the current negotiations, which resumed last week in Switzerland with Qatari and Pakistani mediators. The talks come after two previous rounds were derailed by surprise American and Israeli attacks on Iran.

"We have still not seen any serious change in the behavior of Mr. Trump and his team," Rezaei said. "We feel they are simply buying time from us. They want to manage America's domestic issues — for example, to get inflation and the banking crisis under control, hold the elections, and then the games will be over."

"We have yet to see a serious move, a turning point in American behavior," he added. "Therefore, we have very little hope that this agreement will actually happen."

Rezaei insisted that the U.S. must first accept Iran's rights under international law before any deal can be reached.

"The first issue is that the American government must accept that the Iranian people have rights — rights recognized under international law, within which Iran operates," he said. "America must accept these rights."

Iran, Pakistan deepen strategic partnership as Pezeshkian visit spurs trade and connectivity initiatives

TEHRAN— Iran and Pakistan are moving to deepen their strategic partnership, with political and economic cooperation gaining fresh momentum following Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's recent visit to Islamabad and a series of measures to expand bilateral trade and cross-border connectivity.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony at the Pakistan Naval Academy in Karachi on Saturday, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif described President Pezeshkian's June 23 visit as a reflection of the warm and brotherly relations between the two neighboring countries. He said the outcomes of the visit would further strengthen bilateral ties and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to regional peace, describing the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding between Iran and the United States as a significant diplomatic achievement for Islamabad.

The Iranian president held separate meetings during the visit with President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, focusing on regional developments and avenues for expanding bilateral cooperation.



Rooted in centuries of shared history, cultural affinity, and close geographical proximity, Iran and Pakistan have steadily sought to broaden their economic partnership despite regional and international challenges. During President Pezeshkian's visit, discussions extended beyond the implementation of the Iran-US memorandum of understanding— brokered through Pakistan's mediation—to include practical measures for strengthening trade, transport connectivity, energy cooperation, and investment. Both governments reaffirmed their commitment to unlocking the full potential of

bilateral economic relations and advancing their long-standing objective of increasing annual trade to \$5 billion.

Reflecting that commitment, Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has officially designated the Taftan border railway station as a land customs facility for import and export operations, a move expected to significantly facilitate cross-border rail freight and enhance formal trade with Iran.

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, the decision followed consultations between the heads of the Iranian and Pakistani railway adminis-

trations and subsequent official correspondence calling for the activation of the Taftan railway crossing.

Under the FBR notification, the 11.75-hectare Taftan railway station has been authorized to conduct cargo loading and unloading, customs clearance, and import-export processing, formally integrating the terminal into Pakistan's customs network.

The development is expected to streamline customs procedures, accelerate the movement of goods, reduce transportation costs, and improve the efficiency of bilateral logistics. Officials and trade experts also believe the new customs facility will help curb smuggling and informal trade by directing commercial flows through regulated channels with standardized inspection and documentation procedures.

The initiative marks another concrete step toward strengthening Iran-Pakistan economic integration, as both countries seek to transform political goodwill into expanded trade, improved border infrastructure, and deeper regional connectivity.

Araghchi steps up regional diplomacy with series of high-level calls on Iran-US MoU

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi intensified Tehran's regional diplomatic outreach on Friday, holding a series of telephone conversations with his counterparts from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Romania to discuss the implementation of the recent Iran-US memorandum of understanding, regional developments, and bilateral cooperation.

In separate calls with UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, and Romanian Foreign Minister Oana Toiu, Araghchi briefed his counterparts on the latest progress in implementing the understandings reached between Tehran and Washington, outlining Iran's positions and the diplomatic consultations underway.

The foreign ministers exchanged views on the evolving regional situation and reaffirmed the importance of sustaining dialogue, preserving the diplomatic process, and supporting initiatives to strengthen peace, security, and long-term stability across West Asia. They also emphasized the need for continued consultations to ensure the effective implementation of the understandings reached and to promote broader regional cooperation.

In his conversation with Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the Emirati foreign minister underscored the importance of diplomacy and expressed hope that ongoing negotiations would produce constructive outcomes to foster regional peace and stability.



Romanian Foreign Minister Oana Toiu welcomed efforts to reduce tensions in the region and stressed the importance of honoring mutual commitments under the diplomatic process, while both London and Cairo reiterated their support for continued diplomatic engagement and regional stability.

Araghchi also held talks with Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, during which the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and recent diplomatic developments. The Iranian foreign minister thanked Islamabad for hosting President Masoud Pezeshkian during his recent official visit and expressed hope that agreements reached during the visit would be implemented at all levels.

For his part, Dar briefed Araghchi on Pakistan's ongoing efforts to secure the release of Iranian crew members detained aboard

the Lenore-Davina vessel, reaffirming Islamabad's commitment to pursuing the matter with the relevant authorities.

The two ministers also stressed the importance of continued coordination and diplomatic engagement to promote lasting peace, regional stability, and stronger bilateral cooperation.

Araghchi also held a telephone conversation with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil Pinto on Saturday, extending Tehran's condolences to the government and people of Venezuela following the devastating earthquake. Araghchi reaffirmed Iran's solidarity with Venezuela during the difficult circumstances and announced Tehran's readiness to provide humanitarian assistance and participate in relief and rescue operations to support those affected by the disaster.

Iran war accelerated decline of US global dominance, says ex-Pentagon analyst

Karen Kwiatkowski says the war hastened a new regional order

TEHRAN — Karen U. Kwiatkowski, the retired U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel and former Pentagon analyst, believes the recent U.S.-Israeli war against Iran has accelerated the decline of American global dominance while strengthening the emergence of a multipolar regional order.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, she argues that Washington failed to achieve its strategic objectives, discusses the evolving security architecture of West Asia, examines the political calculations behind the conflict, and assesses the prospects for a lasting understanding between Tehran and Washington.

Below is the full text of the interview:

Some believe that Netanyahu, by promoting the idea of regime change, drew Trump into a war with Iran. To what extent do you agree with this view?

Yes, on the first part. Netanyahu and his political agents in Congress

have been advocating for a hot war with Iran for several decades, and when Trump ordered the bombing in June 2025 and initiated the war on February 28th of this year, it was at the behest and advocacy of Netanyahu. There is evidence for this from many sources, but specifically in the actual statements made by the State Department, the Pentagon, and the President himself.

However, the rationale of regime change is simply a popular catchphrase, used by the U.S. and Israel, and others, in order to justify the expansion of empire. The U.S. and some countries in Europe, as well as Israel, work very hard to "change" any leadership not conducive to U.S., European, or Israeli interests through candidate support and opposition efforts, CIA-driven color revolutions, assassination, and election manipulation. When this does not work, war or military conflict is initiated. I doubt that those in

Tel Aviv or Washington actually believe that military assault delivers effective regime change — often it is simply a gamble that from the chaos a more useful leader will emerge, or can be temporarily installed, usually accompanied by pallets of dollars. War, of course, is a profitable business for both the U.S. and Israeli state-aligned oligarchies.

"Regime change" is a well-used narrative, but the fundamental reason for the war on Iran was, for both Trump and Netanyahu, a land and resource grab, and an attempt by the U.S. to solidify control over the (Persian) Gulf states and expand the Abraham Accords investment opportunities. In this, they underestimated both Iran and most of the (Persian) Gulf States.

In your view, what impact will the war have on the future geopolitical landscape?

First, the geopolitical landscape has been shifting and evolving to-

wards this moment for at least the last 15 years, as the U.S. military has become more fragile and expensive, and the Military Industrial Complex at home seeks to expand and profit rather than to contract in the absence of wars and customers. A key driver of this recent change is technology and the exceptional domestic progress of major nations of the world to innovate more rapidly and more cheaply than the U.S. and Europe can innovate. Other drivers are the aging demographic in the West, a decline in educational standards, and the suffocating domestic intervention by Western governments in their own shrinking productive and engineering base. What I am trying to say is that the U.S. and most of the West are no longer a place of human freedom and creativity — the locus for human opportunity and liberty appears to be shifting eastward.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Fresh American strikes on Iran and continued Israeli aggression against Lebanon further cast doubt on Washington's seriousness about a deal

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – Iran carried out fresh attacks against U.S. military installations in the region on Friday night in response to earlier American strikes on Iran's southern territories, attacks that have further raised doubts about Washington's genuine commitment to peace and whether a final agreement with the Trump administration remains feasible.

In a statement, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy announced it had "targeted the deployment sites of the U.S. terrorist military in the region." Since the war began on February 28, Iranian forces have struck and significantly damaged numerous American military sites across the Persian Gulf. In its most recent statement, however, the IRGC did not specify which sites were hit. Analysts believe the targeted bases were likely those used by the U.S. hours earlier to attack Iran's port city of Sirik.



The attack on Sirik came after Iran fired warning shots at vessels attempting to transit the Strait of Hormuz via a route not approved by Tehran. Iran has imposed heavy restrictions on passage through the strait since the U.S. and Israel began their aggression, less than a year after the 12-day war they initiated in June 2025. Under Article 5 of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, which allowed

Iran and the U.S. to halt hostilities and begin talks toward a conclusive peace deal, ships were permitted to pass through the Strait of Hormuz without tolls for 60 days, provided that Iran arranged their passage. The vessels warned by Iran were trying to cross through an unconfirmed route near Omani waters, apparently following instructions from the United States.

Iran and the U.S. have exchanged several such attacks since they reduced the intensity of fire in March, but the recent strikes were the first since the Islamabad MoU was signed on June 17.

The Trump administration's repeated attempts to open a new route through the Strait of Hormuz appear aimed at depriving Iran of what is seen as one of its most important leverage points. Tehran has warned for years that it would restrict passage through the strait if the U.S. continued or escalated pressure against it. Iran is now in talks with Oman, the only other coastal state of Hormuz, to develop a framework that would allow it to receive compensation for the environmental and security services it has provided to the world free of charge for years, while also ensuring that Americans cannot rebuild military equipment in the region to repeat acts of aggression.

Iraq PM reaffirms good-neighborly relations with Iran, says he wants shift toward economic partnership with US

TEHRAN—Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Al-Zaidi has reaffirmed that Baghdad's relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran are founded on the principles of good-neighborliness, mutual respect, and shared interests, while outlining Iraq's vision for expanding economic cooperation with the United States following the conclusion of American military presence in the Arab country.

In an interview with Sky News Arabia, Al-Zaidi said his upcoming visit to Washington would mark "a new phase of cooperation" between Iraq and the United States based on mutual interests and respect, rather than serving as a ceremonial visit.

The prime minister announced that the US-led international coalition's combat mission will conclude in September, after which Iraq intends to transition its relationship with Washington from military cooperation to a long-term economic and investment partnership.

"Our objective is to move from a security-based partnership to a sustainable economic partnership that serves the interests of both nations," Al-Zaidi said, noting that Iraq has instructed the ministries of oil, electricity, and communications to prioritize leading American companies in projects related to energy, telecommunications, technology, and infrastructure development.

He added that Iraq's Ministerial Council for the Economy has approved major energy projects involving international firms, including Chevron, Halliburton, and HKN, while opening new opportunities for investment in oil fields and exploration blocks. He also revealed plans for strategic cooperation with Starlink to strengthen Iraq's digital infrastructure.

Al-Zaidi said Baghdad also plans to discuss an Energy and Development Fund with the United States that could support additional oil production ranging from 500,000 to two million barrels per day, depending on market conditions and production capacity, and potentially beyond OPEC quota constraints.

Addressing Iraq's internal security, the prime minister stressed that the state alone must retain the monopoly on the legitimate use of force, while acknowledging the role armed groups had played in combating terrorism. He said the current stage requires all security activities to be conducted exclusively through state institutions.

Reaffirming Iraq's regional foreign policy, Al-Zaidi said relations with Iran are based on good-neighborly ties, mutual respect, and common interests, consistent with Baghdad's approach toward all neighboring countries.

"Iraq accepts dictates from no party," he



said, emphasizing that all policy decisions are guided by the principle of "Iraq First."

He further stressed that Baghdad's efforts to deepen economic cooperation with the United States are driven solely by Iraq's national interests and are not directed against any other country.

"Iraq does not pursue a policy of regional alignments or hostility," Al-Zaidi said. "Our country seeks to serve as a platform for dialogue, connectivity, and stability rather than a theater of confrontation."

The Iraqi prime minister also welcomed all diplomatic initiatives aimed at easing regional tensions, including the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the United States.

LATEST NEWS

■ Iran registers reservation over PUIIC final communiqué on Palestine

Iran's parliamentary delegation formally registered reservations over sections of the final communiqué adopted at the 20th Conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIIC), citing inconsistencies with Tehran's longstanding position on Palestine. The delegation objected to references to the two-state solution, the 1967 borders, and language implying recognition of Israel, requesting that its written reservation be incorporated into the conference's official records and documents.

■ Araghchi pledges to pursue justice for Sardasht chemical attack in Int'l forums

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, marking the anniversary of the chemical bombing of Sardasht, reaffirmed the Islamic Republic of Iran's commitment to pursuing the humanitarian and legal dimensions of the tragedy through international mechanisms.

Araghchi stressed that securing justice for the victims of the Sardasht attack and other war crimes is not only a national responsibility but also a global imperative to uphold human conscience and prevent the recurrence of such atrocities.

He also underscored Iran's longstanding commitment to combating weapons of mass destruction and reaffirmed Tehran's dedication to advancing a just, durable, and sustainable peace.

■ Maliki, Iranian envoy discuss stronger Iran-Iraq cooperation

Former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki met Iran's ambassador to Baghdad on Saturday to discuss bilateral ties, regional developments, and ways to strengthen cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

During the meeting, al-Maliki stressed the importance of maintaining Iraq's coordination with its regional environment and supporting efforts that contribute to the country's security and stability.

The two sides also reviewed avenues for expanding cooperation in line with the interests of the Iranian and Iraqi peoples and exchanged views on the latest political and security developments in the region.

Iran's Ambassador to Iraq Mohammad Kazem Al Sadeq reaffirmed Tehran's commitment to developing relations with Iraq and enhancing bilateral cooperation and coordination across areas of mutual interest, the statement said.

■ Hezbollah cites Iran-US MoU in rejecting Lebanon-Israel framework agreement

Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem has rejected a US-backed framework agreement between Lebanon and Israel, describing it as a violation of Lebanese sovereignty and warning that it would legitimize Israel's continued occupation. Qassem urged adherence instead to the Iran-US memorandum of understanding, arguing that it secured a ceasefire in Lebanon. He also said Tehran suspended implementa-

tion of the agreement until Washington pressured Israel to accept a ceasefire after refusing to comply with its initial provisions.

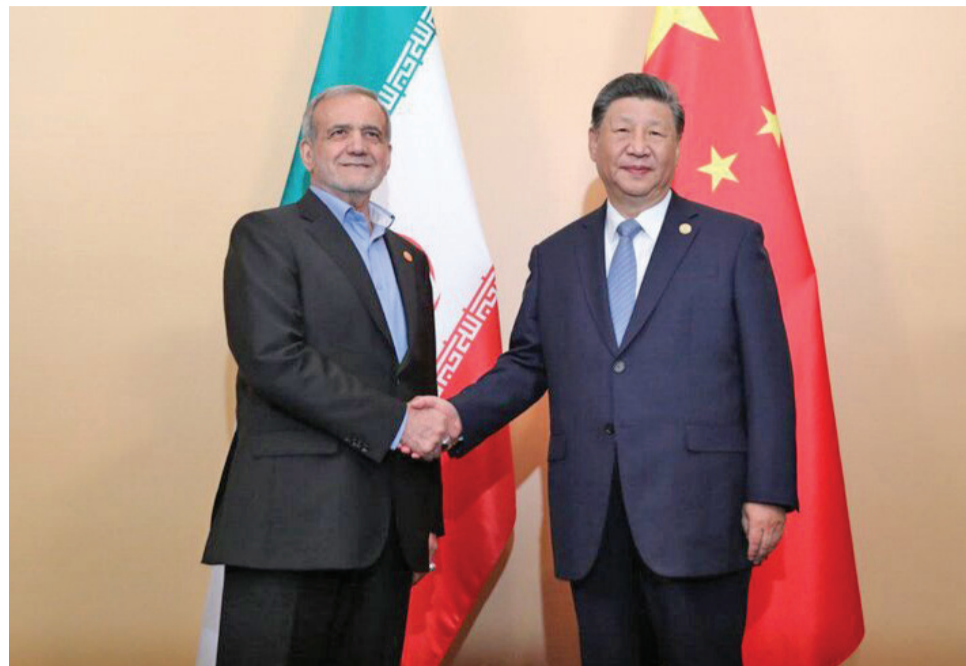
■ Iran, Armenia reaffirm commitment to expanding economic cooperation

Senior Iranian and Armenian officials reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation and promoting regional stability during talks in Yerevan. Hamid Pourmohammadi, Iran's vice president and head of the Planning and Budget Organization, conveyed President Masoud Pezeshkian's greetings to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for the victory of the Prime Minister's party in the Armenian Parliament. The two sides reviewed progress on cross-border infrastructure projects, customs modernization, and cooperation in energy, agriculture, and mining, while emphasizing the implementation of existing agreements and deeper economic engagement.

■ Iranian MP accuses US of undermining ceasefire and diplomatic process

Ebrahim Azizi, chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, accused the United States of violating the ceasefire and undermining ongoing negotiations with Iran following reported US strikes on Iranian targets. In a post on X, Azizi said Washington had once again demonstrated its lack of commitment to diplomacy by attacking Iran during negotiations, warning that such actions would ultimately prove counterproductive and damage prospects for a lasting agreement.

Even China and Iran need greater mutual trust



By Hongda Fan

SHAOXING, Zhejiang – Wars often redefine international relationships. The recent conflict between Iran and the United States may prove to be one of those moments. As military confrontation gives way to diplomacy, Tehran is sending a clear signal: rebuilding and strengthening relations with China has become one of its highest foreign policy priorities.

The clearest indication came from reports that Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf—who also serves as Iran's Special Representative for China Affairs—is expected to visit Beijing. His recent speeches in Tehran leave little doubt about the direction of Iran's diplomacy. Iran is no longer looking only for stronger economic cooperation with China. It wants a broader strategic partnership, one that includes political coordination, investment, technology, infrastructure and regional security.

Yet Ghalibaf's remarks also reveal an uncomfortable reality. Five years after China and Iran signed their 25-Year Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement, the partnership has yet to reach the level that either side originally envisioned.

Iranians believe China has been too cautious in implementing the 25-year cooperation agreement, either due to its ties with Arab countries or anti-Iran US sanctions

The reasons are not difficult to identify. International sanctions have complicated China's commercial engagement with Iran, while years of domestic political and economic uncertainty have discouraged large-scale investment. At the same time, Beijing has pursued a balanced Middle East policy, strengthening ties not only with Iran but also with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other Persian Gulf states. Such a strategy inevitably limits how far and how fast China is prepared to deepen cooperation with Tehran.

From Iran's perspective, however, the picture looks rather different. Many Iranians believe Beijing has been excessively cautious in implementing the comprehensive cooperation agreement and believe Beijing has been overly cautious in developing relations with Iran and too willing to yield to pressure from the United States. Some also believe that China's position on the three islands in the Persian Gulf has failed to reflect what Tehran regards as one of its core national interests.

These different interpretations expose a more fundamental problem. The greatest obstacle to deeper China-Iran cooperation is not the absence of shared interests. It is the shortage of strategic trust.

This matters now more than ever. West Asia is undergoing one of its most significant geopolitical transformations in decades. Regional powers are pursuing greater strategic autonomy, expanding their diplomatic options and reducing excessive dependence on any single great power.

In this changing environment, China and Iran have every reason to work more closely together. But shared interests alone cannot sustain a long-term strategic partnership.

That requires confidence in each other's intentions.

Building such confidence will not be easy. One challenge lies in how each country understands its own place in the international system.

Following what Iranian leaders regard as a successful defence of the country during the recent conflict, many in Tehran believe Iran's international standing has risen substantially. They increasingly see their country not merely as a regional power but as an influential actor whose voice should carry greater weight in shaping regional and international affairs.

Meanwhile, Beijing increasingly sees China as a superpower on a par with the United States. From this perspective, although Iran is an important regional partner, the two countries naturally occupy different positions within the global hierarchy. Such differences in strategic self-perception can easily produce mismatched expectations, making mutual trust more difficult to build.

None of this, however, diminishes the strong complementarity between the two countries.

Iran possesses abundant energy resources, a strategic geographical location and enormous development potential. Even to ensure the continuity of its political system, Tehran will need to pursue necessary reforms. Such reforms are likely to make Iran a stronger and more prosperous country. As regional tensions gradually ease and sanctions are expected to become less restrictive, Iran is likely to attract growing international investment.

Even if European and American companies eventually return to the Iranian market, China will continue to enjoy important advantages. Chinese companies have accumulated valuable experience in Iran over many years, while Chinese products have become increasingly competitive in both quality and affordability. China has also made internationally recognised advances in high-technology sectors, further enhancing its attractiveness as a long-term economic partner for Iran.

Meanwhile, Iran itself is unlikely to abandon its policy of diversified diplomacy. Tehran has consistently sought to avoid excessive dependence on any single external power, and that principle will almost certainly remain central to its foreign policy after the war. China therefore does not need to become Iran's exclusive partner to remain one of its most important strategic partners.

Ultimately, China and Iran are connected by converging interests. Yet if the two countries genuinely hope to transform their relationship into a mature strategic partnership, economic cooperation alone will not be enough. Greater strategic trust must become the foundation of future cooperation.

Against this backdrop, Ghalibaf's expected visit to China is about much more than diplomacy. It offers both governments an opportunity to address long-standing misunderstandings and reinforce political confidence at a time when the Middle East is being reshaped by profound geopolitical change.

Strategic partnerships are built on common interests. Enduring partnerships are built on trust. China and Iran have already established the first. Their next challenge is to achieve the second.

Iran-China reach preliminary agreement to sign railway customs cooperation document



TEHRAN- The heads of customs of Iran and China agreed to sign a railway customs cooperation document with the aim of facilitating and increasing trade exchanges between the two countries.

According to IRNA from the Customs Administration of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the heads of customs of Iran and China, in a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the World Customs Organization (WCO) summit, reviewed the grounds for increasing cooperation between the two customs administrations to develop trade exchanges.

In this meeting, Forud Asgari, Deputy Minister of Economy and head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, and Zhang Baofeng, Deputy Minister and head of the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China, discussed the signing of a railway customs cooperation document to effectively utilize railway capacities between the two countries with the aim of increasing trade exchanges.

Benefiting Iranian and Chinese economic operators from special customs facilities within the framework of the support package for Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) was another issue that the two sides discussed regarding its operationalization.

Increasing educational cooperation and exchanging experiences between customs experts of the two countries, as well as continuous cooperation on benefiting from experiences related to the implementation of coordinated border management, were among the topics reviewed in this bilateral meeting.

The head and a group of members of the Board of Directors of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, along with a number of representatives from chambers of commerce, specialized committees, economic organizations, and joint chambers of commerce, met and held talks with Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf on June 17.

This meeting focused on Iran-China economic relations and took place on the eve of Qalibaf's visit to that country, during which over 30 proposals were presented by private sector to the parliament speaker.

Samad Hassanzadeh, Head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, speaking on Wednesday, at a consultation meeting of the Special Representative for China Affairs with the Iran Chamber, held under the slogan "Sustainable Economic Cooperation between Iran and China" at the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, described the attendees at the meeting with Qalibaf as including a group of members of the Board of Directors of the Iran Chamber, representatives of chambers of commerce, representatives of specialized committees, economic organizations, and joint chambers of commerce, and said: We wish the best of success for all the people, especially the entrepreneurs who created epics in the 12day war and the Ramadan War and demonstrated their competence to the whole world.

Ghadir Ghiyafeh, Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, looking at Iran-China relations from a macro perspective, said: We must first understand China's development model and see where China is headed by 2035 and 2050, and based on that, align the Iran-China development document with China's future path

so that for Chinese entrepreneurs, presence in the Iranian market becomes a priority.

Ghiyafeh, emphasizing the formulation of a development plan convergent with China's development policies, listed artificial intelligence, advanced technologies, and electric vehicles as China's priorities. He noted: To pursue the Belt and Road Initiative in Iran and consolidate Iran as a regional hub for the Persian Gulf and Eurasia, we must be the connection center for China to West Asia, which requires extensive investment and inviting the Chinese to participate in this investment.

The Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, proposing the establishment of special Iran-China cooperation zones in special economic zones to increase exports and expand investment, emphasized the alignment of Iran's industrial and trade policies with China's 2035 horizon, and stated: We must find a serious place for ourselves in the Chinese value chain and integrate into it.

Ghiyafeh announced the preparation of the Iran-China economic relations development document at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture and said: Today, we must address the establishment of a joint Iran-China investment fund. The horizon for economic cooperation between the two countries by 2035 should focus on participation in value and logistics chains, energy, mining and mineral industries, and modern technology, so that relying on Iran's natural resources and human capital, our country transforms from an exporter of raw and semiraw materials to an exporter of processed products with high added value.

He considered a safe and stable environment for Chinese investors and Iranian economic activists as a prerequisite for expanding Iran-China relations and emphasized: For Iran to become China's strategic partner, many steps must be taken, one of the most important of which is the stability of laws in the field of foreign investment.

Majidreza Hariri, Head of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce, at this meeting emphasized the need for a unified command for centralized policymaking in the field of relations with China to determine priorities, stressing the need to elevate the level of Iran-China economic relations. He stated: So far, we have mostly used China for financing, but in longterm plans, we must increase this level.

Hariri, advising Qalibaf to focus on the main policymaking of economic exchanges, stated: The issue of institutionbuilding raised by the Head of the Research Center of the Iran Chamber is a valid point, but care must be taken so that this idea does not lead to parallel institutions, and the focus should be on policymaking.

He considered regional cooperation as a bridge that can bring Iran and China closer together, and noted: We should create the platform and guarantee for the Chinese to build a refinery in Makran, receive crude oil, and transport the products themselves.

The Head of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce described the supply chain issue as China's current concern and emphasized: In the supply chain field, we must introduce ourselves in a way that attracts the Chinese. We have the potential to connect China to the Arabian Peninsula and Africa via a 22kilometer sea bridge.

Iranian delegation under title 'Minab 168' attends Shanghai Business Forum

TEHRAN- Ghadir Ghiyafeh, the Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, speaking at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Business Forum in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, emphasized the need to strengthen economic cooperation among member states and declared that despite the recent aggression by the United States and Israel against Iran, the resistance and resilience of the Iranian nation has strengthened the country's determination to develop regional cooperation and economic integration more than ever before.

He described participation in this meeting as an opportunity for direct dialogue among the private sectors of member states and stated: The Iranian delegation, in memory of the 168 students who lost their lives on the first day of the recent attacks in the city of Minab, has chosen the name "Minab 168" for its delegation so that the memory of these children will forever remain alive in the collective memory of the Iranian nation.

Referring to the growing position of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the global economic order, he added: This organization stands at a historic turning point, and the collective member states have the capacity to go beyond the framework of merely regional cooperation and become one of the most influential and stable economic poles in the world.

Ghiyafeh, referring to recent geopolitical developments, said: Despite the pressures and the recent aggressive war by the United States and Israel against Iran, the exemplary resistance of the Iranian people has not weakened the national will but has strengthened it. These circumstances have caused Iran to seek deepening economic cooperation and strengthening regional ties with doubled motivation.

The Vice President of the Iran Chamber further emphasized the need for transformation in economic cooperation patterns among SCO member states and stated: The future of economic cooperation in the region must



go beyond the framework of traditional trade and move toward more advanced models such as joint investments, technology transfer, and the formation of integrated regional value chains.

According to him, Iran, as a vital crossroads connecting East and West, enjoys a privileged position to facilitate these connections, and this capacity can serve the development of economic cooperation among the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Ghayfeh also announced: The Iran Chamber of Commerce, as the representative of the country's private sector, is fully committed to this vision and is ready, in close interaction with chambers of commerce, development institutions, investment agencies, and economic actors of member states, to define joint projects and, by reducing operational risks and removing trade barriers, create new grounds for economic cooperation in the region.

He emphasized in conclusion: The future of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will be shaped not on short-term rivalries but on the basis of long-term common interests and sustainable partnerships, and Iran is ready to play a role as a reliable and committed partner along this path and to take steps alongside other members to build a prosperous future for the region.

Iran and Kyrgyzstan chambers of commerce discussed trade issues

Ghadir Ghiyafeh, Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agricul-

ture, and Temir Sariev, Head of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Kyrgyzstan, met and held talks on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Business Council meeting at the Kyrgyzstan Chamber of Commerce in Bishkek.

The Vice President of the Iran Chamber, referring to the historical and cultural ties of the two countries along the Silk Road, emphasized the importance of the private sector's role in strengthening cooperation within this economic bloc and stated: Given the strong infrastructure and existing capacities within the framework of the Shanghai, Eurasian, and ECO treaties, we can implement joint economic projects. There is also potential to increase the volume of trade between the two countries from the current figure (about \$100 million) to \$2-2.5 billion in the future.

During this meeting, both sides emphasized the development of economic relations, the use of the capacities of the Shanghai Treaty, and the establishment of a joint investment fund.

Temir Sariev, Head of the Chamber of Commerce of Kyrgyzstan and former Prime Minister of the country, while offering condolences and sympathy for the martyrdom of a number of Iranian figures and people in the recent imposed war, praised the unparalleled resistance of the Iranian people against recent pressures and long-term sanctions. He described Iran's geopolitical position in the region as very powerful and commendable and said: The reconstruction and revival of

economic relations will certainly begin rapidly in Iran.

Sariev also announced the readiness of Kyrgyz businessmen to actively participate in the Iranian market and added: Connecting China's railway lines to northeastern Iran will make transit routes much shorter and smoother.

In the final part of this meeting, the focus of the talks was on operational and executive solutions. The Iranian delegation, emphasizing the need to adopt a market-oriented approach, proposed the formation of more serious cooperation in the field of technical and engineering projects. In this regard, it was decided that capable and up-to-date companies would participate in joint projects to ensure mutual benefits for both countries.

Also, to accelerate the trade development process, the following specific proposals were put forward:

- Defining a commodity basket: Identifying and introducing a basket of goods in which the two countries have comparative export and import advantages.

- Forming a joint working group: Establishing a specialized working group between the chambers of commerce of Iran and Kyrgyzstan for continuous and precise exchange of market information.

- Training and market introduction: Holding joint online courses to introduce the capacities and market needs of the two countries to traders and economic actors.

- Creating a business council: Establishing a joint business council and planning for face-to-face business-to-business (B2B) meetings between economic actors of the two countries.

Finally, one of the most important axes raised in these talks was the proposal to establish and activate a joint investment and cooperation fund among the 10 member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—an initiative that can serve as a strong financial backing for implementing infrastructure projects and developing multilateral cooperation within this economic bloc.

Tehran, Muscat decide to form a joint committee to implement provisions of customs agreement

TEHRAN- The heads of customs of Iran and Oman, on the sidelines of the World Customs Organization summit, emphasized the operationalization of the provisions of the agreement on mutual administrative assistance in customs matters and proposed the formation of a joint committee regarding the implementation of the agreement's provisions.

According to IRNA from Iran's Customs Administration, Forud Asgari, Deputy Minister of Economy and head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, and Said bin Khamis al-Ghaithi, head of the Royal Customs of Oman, in a bilateral meeting, emphasized increasing and expanding customs cooperation in line with the provisions of the signed agreement in customs fields.

The proposal to conduct study visits to customs offices and ports of destination and origin, as well as holding periodic meetings between the customs administrations of the two countries, were among the topics reviewed in this meeting.

Other topics discussed in this meeting included the development of mutual cooperation and exchange of experiences in the field of combating smuggling and customs violations,

and holding continuous joint meetings between customs managers of the two countries for maximum coordination to facilitate trade.

Holding joint meetings to exchange educational experiences, given the establishment of the World Customs Organization Regional Training Center (RTC) in the Islamic Republic of Iran's Customs Administration, was one of the points raised by Iran's Customs in this meeting.

Iran and Oman signed 18 memoranda of understanding in various fields during the official two-day visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Muscat in May 2025.

The agreements, signed on the sidelines of the Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee meeting, aimed to deepen ties in multiple sectors, including legal, economic, political, cultural, educational, health, defense, media, technology, energy, and mining.

In a symbolic gesture highlighting cultural and historical bonds, officials from both nations also unveiled a commemorative joint postage stamp.

President Pezeshkian arrived in Muscat on May 27 at the official invitation of Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Following a formal welcoming ceremony at

Muscat International Airport, Pezeshkian held a meeting with Oman's Sultan. The visit continued with a joint session between high-ranking delegations from both countries.

During the meeting, Pezeshkian said that Iran is ready to boost cooperation with Oman in all fields, adding that the two countries possess capabilities that can be employed for the well-being and progress of the two nations as well as that of other regional nations.

"We are ready to do whatever is within our capability for the dignity and greatness of Muslims. Each of us has capacities that can be employed for the well-being and progress of one another and of other nations in the region," Pezeshkian said.

Sultan Haitham also welcomed closer ties, saying that he agrees that if the avenues for business activities are opened, the two countries "will witness a significant leap in the bilateral relations."

"The relations between Iranian and Omani ports must be developed, and the rail capacity from northern to southern Iran is of great commercial importance to us," he said, adding that more support is needed for cooperation in the energy sector.

Iran, South Africa emphasize development of cooperation in energy sector

TEHRAN- Iran's Minister of Oil held talks with the Minister of Electricity and Energy of South Africa regarding the development of bilateral cooperation in the energy sector, Shana reported.

Mohsen Paknejad, on the sidelines of the 11th Meeting of BRICS Energy Ministers, on June 25, on

the second day of his visit to India, met with Kgosientsho Ramokgopa, the Minister of Electricity and Energy of South Africa, and emphasized the development of bilateral cooperation.

The 11th BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting was successfully convened on 25 June 2026 in Gu-

rumang, Haryana, under India's BRICS Chairship 2026 under the overarching theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability."

The meeting brought together Energy Ministers, Vice Ministers, and senior officials from BRICS member countries to deliberate

on key global energy challenges and opportunities and to advance practical cooperation across the energy sector. Representatives from leading international organizations, including the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) the New Development Bank (NDB), also participated in the deliberations.

Hezbollah's core principles amid the Lebanon-Israel agreement

From page 1 ▶ A day after the U.S.-brokered agreement was signed in Washington, the IOF continued to drop bombs in southern Lebanese towns and villages, while the IOF continued to advance towards the outskirts of Kfar Shuba. Lebanon's state news agency said the Farah amusement park in the Nabatieh al-Fawqa area was hit by an IOF drone attack. Al-Tiri town came under bombardment, and the IOF set fire to the forest of Markaba.

Critics argue that the terminology used by Lebanese officials, such as "sovereignty" and "territorial integrity", sounds appealing, but pursuing sovereignty by "surrendering" to an adversary is a reckless approach, particularly given that successive Lebanese governments have attempted and failed to achieve this goal both before and after 2000. Again, this agreement lacks any clause that holds the Israeli regime accountable for its war crimes in Lebanon.

The terms of the agreement, being celebrated by Washington's largest Zionist lobby, AIPAC, have not helped Lebanese officials make their case to the public either. The only language that the Israeli regime understands is the language of resistance. The position of Hezbollah is pivotal, as the agreement is aimed at eliminating Lebanon's largest power of resistance, which risks another civil war. Lebanese Parliament speaker Nabih Berri has warned against sedition, after a night of unrest by Lebanese protesters who poured their anger at the agreement on the streets of Beirut.

Despite the setbacks it has suffered, Hezbollah has remained a key and influential force in Lebanon's political and security equation. In fact, its presence and influence have strengthened following the failure of the illegal U.S.-Israeli war against Iran and Israel's inability to accomplish its goals in Lebanon.

Perhaps the clearest insight into the Lebanese resistance movement's current positions comes from the speeches of its Secretary-General, Sheikh Naim Qassem, who has delivered a series of statements in recent months that serve as the basis for identifying Hezbollah's fundamental principles for the next phase.

A review of Sheikh Qassem's speeches shows that he begins with an assessment of the current situation, which he regards



as extremely dangerous because of an "international U.S.-Israeli conspiracy project." He underlines that it represents "the greatest threat our country, our children's future, and our values could face."

In his Ashura speech, he outlined key elements of this project, which he believes is fundamentally aimed at "completely and existentially eliminating the resistance from Lebanon."

Among the most significant points are:

- Reversing the November 27 agreement following the fall of the Syrian government, because "the balance of power has changed," according to Zionist and American assessments, a view also adopted by Hezbollah's domestic opponents.

- Relying on Lebanon's political authorities to provide political cover for the Israeli aggression while intensifying the blockade on the resistance at every level.

- Inciting conflict between the Lebanese Army and the Lebanese resistance, attempting to provoke Christian-Sunni-Shia strife, and pressuring Syria to intervene from the east so that, together with the Zionist regime in the south, it forms a pincer movement against Hezbollah.

- Benefiting from international and Arab political backing that exerts pressure in multiple directions in favor of the Israeli regime and against the Lebanese resistance.

- Utilizing the capabilities of multiple intelligence agencies to provide Tel Aviv with information and various forms of support.

According to this assessment, all of these efforts are being carried out under the direct supervision of the United States, which oversees the plan and coordinates its implementation across every level and direction.

In several speeches, Sheikh

Naim Qassem has addressed how Hezbollah intends to confront a major and dangerous plot targeting it, based on a set of principles that can be regarded as the foundations of Hezbollah's conduct in the coming period.

No return to the pre-March 2 reality

Hardly any of Sheikh Qassem's speeches omit this point, making it one of the central pillars of Hezbollah's current political approach. Based on the Secretary-General's remarks, the issue amounts to a red line from which there can be no retreat, regardless of the pressure or the cost.

Conducting the confrontation in the spirit of Karbala

This position is closely linked to the previous one. Hezbollah believes that the current period is the most dangerous since its founding. Sheikh Qassem has emphasized the gravity of the moment by stating that the purpose of the war imposed on Hezbollah is to remove it from the political equation and erase its existence.

Accordingly, Hezbollah frames the confrontation as an existential struggle in every sense of the word, requiring readiness to endure whatever sacrifices and costs may be necessary. This is a message the Lebanese resistance consistently directs to both its domestic opponents and its external adversaries.

Commitment to the option of resistance

Sheikh Qassem repeatedly affirms Hezbollah's commitment to the path of resistance and its readiness to activate that option as long as the Israeli occupation and aggression continue. This position is rooted in the firm belief that "the resistance is the only guarantee for liberating the land and achieving independence and sovereignty in the face of occupation."

Rejecting continued occupation and the so-called 'freedom of movement'

Sheikh Qassem's language on this issue is exceptionally clear and reflects a firm, irreversible decision. According to the Secretary-General, Hezbollah will not accept the continuation of any form of occupation, nor will it accept what the Zionist regime calls "freedom of movement" within Lebanese territory.

Sheikh Qassem expresses this position in direct, unequivocal terms:

"Let the Israelis and everyone else know that remaining on Lebanese land is impossible. There are no security zones for the enemy, and there is no piece of land inside Lebanon where the Israeli (occupation) army can remain. We have a national army, and it is the one deployed on our territory."

He also stresses that the Lebanese resistance will not tolerate any violation, stating: "Any violation will be confronted, any violation will be fought, and any violation will be dealt with in whatever manner we deem appropriate."

This position stems from the belief that Hezbollah forfeits its rationale if it accepts occupation or Israeli aggression as a fait accompli.

Preserving national unity and Lebanon's internal balance

This principle is evident in Sheikh Qassem's remarks on the failure of attempts to create conflict between the Lebanese resistance and the Lebanese Army, as well as the failure to provoke Sunni-Shia sectarian strife. His praise for those who refused to be drawn into such efforts further underscores Hezbollah's commitment to national unity and its rejection of any form of internal conflict.

On the domestic political front, Sheikh Qassem repeatedly reaffirms Hezbollah's commitment to the Taif Agreement and its adoption of a flexible approach that respects Lebanon's delicate internal balance.

He also offers reassurances to Lebanon's various communities and calls on all political forces, including the government, to deal wisely with the country's unique political structure, arguing that it cannot withstand reckless policies or attempts by one side to dominate another.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

When the American arsonist wears a rescue uniform in Venezuela

The cynical theater of the U.S. military's aid in a sanctioned and suffering nation



By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The twin earthquakes that struck north-central coastal Venezuela on June 24, registering magnitudes of 7.2 and 7.5, brought immense destruction to Caracas and La Guaira.

With the death toll nearing 1000 as of writing this article, Western media frames the catastrophe as an isolated natural event met by American charity.

However, the harrowing reality on the ground tells a much darker story. That thousands of victims have remained trapped for days, while families helplessly listened to their loved ones perish, is the result of a man-made blockade.

Enforced vulnerability and sanctions

For years, unilateral U.S. sanctions systematically starved Venezuela of the financial resources and industrial procurement necessary to maintain its civil defense infrastructure.

These restrictions blocked heavy machinery, hydraulic equipment, and vital spare parts.

When the ground shook, local municipal teams were left structurally paralyzed. While regional neighbors such as Colombia and Mexico scrambled to send immediate assistance, the critical first hours were lost to an engineered technological poverty.

Now, the very architects of this deprivation present themselves as benevolent saviors. Although Colombian President Gustavo Petro explicitly urged Washington to lift the blockade to maximize recovery capacity, the U.S. Treasury merely issued a restrictive, temporary waiver known as General License No. 60.

Arriving nearly 48 hours late, this narrow mechanism keeps all frozen Venezuelan assets locked while offering a superficial public relations window.

The situation is bleak. The economic arsonists arrive with a garden hose, demanding absolute gratitude for relieving a fraction of the misery they carefully manufactured while they continue positioning themselves to plunder the very resources that made Venezuela a target in the first place.

Military footprints under charitable veneer

This highly publicized humanitarian pivot must not be viewed separately from the lawless aggression that reshaped the country earlier this year.

On January 3, U.S. forces illegally abducted President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, plunging Caracas into turmoil.

Since this overt exercise in forced political engineering, Washington has sought ways to firmly entrench its military presence and validate an interim political structure. The

earthquake may have provided a perfect pretext.

The deployment of Southern Command assets, including the USS Fort Lauderdale, C-17 airlifts, and teams under Kevin J. Jarrard from the U.S. Marine Corps, serves a dual purpose.

Under the guise of search and rescue, Washington is putting boots on the ground, establishing logistical perimeters around critical Caribbean ports and mapping internal infrastructure.

Additionally, the promotional videos released by SOUTHCOM represent a soft-power campaign to normalize a military occupation, transforming an act of imperial intrusion into an essential stabilization project.

Israeli incursion and 'a good crisis'

Equally troubling is the announced arrival of Israeli aid delegations in Venezuela. Since Hugo Chávez severed diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv in 2009 in protest of Israel's assault on Gaza, Venezuela has remained one of the few countries in the region to maintain a clear political distance from Israel and its regional agenda.

That longstanding barrier is now being quietly dismantled amid the chaos of a national tragedy. Israeli and Zionist aid organizations, including IsraAID, Natan, ZAKA, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, have announced plans to deploy personnel to Venezuela.

Israel has likewise confirmed that it is assessing the situation and preparing an official aid mission. Notably, some organizations are mobilizing from neighboring Colombia, where they already maintain an operational presence close to Venezuela's borders.

In the aftermath of a disaster, doors that would normally remain closed can suddenly be opened, granting outsiders access to local authorities, critical infrastructure, communications networks, and sensitive geographic information.

Thus, the influx of Israeli personnel raises the prospect of a long-term political, intelligence, and strategic presence established under the cover of emergency relief.

The rubble will eventually be cleared, but the networks, relationships, and footholds established in the aftermath could remain long after the emergency has passed.

While Venezuelans dig through rubble and mourn their dead, Washington and Tel Aviv are using the pretext of humanitarianism to advance objectives that extend well beyond disaster response.

Beneath their rhetoric lies a familiar logic, elucidated in a quote attributed to Winston Churchill and infamously repeated by the ultra-Zionist former White House chief of staff and presidential hopeful Rahm Emanuel in 2008: "Never let a good crisis go to waste."

Beirut's night of rage: Berri sounds the alarm as opposition to the Israel framework agreement intensifies

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON — Beirut awoke on Saturday to the aftermath of one of its most tense nights in recent months.

Demonstrations, motorcycle convoys, and clashes with security forces erupted across parts of the capital following the announcement of the Lebanese government's controversial framework agreement with Israel, exposing once again the fragility of Lebanon's domestic equilibrium and the depth of popular anger surrounding the deal.

The agreement, signed in Washington under American auspices, links an eventual Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory to the verified disarmament of non-state armed groups and the gradual expansion of the Lebanese Army's authority.

For its opponents, however, the text amounts to a de facto legitimization of Israeli oversight over Lebanon's internal affairs, occupation, and security arrangements.

The protests appeared largely spontaneous. Groups of young men, many carrying Lebanese and Resistance flags, rode through central Beirut and along the airport road, chanting against what they described as a "humiliating surrender agreement."

Security forces moved to disperse the gatherings, leading to scuffles and scenes that quickly rekindled fears of in-

ternal confrontation.

The most significant political reaction came from Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, whose brief statement carried the weight of Lebanon's historical experience.

"My people in Lebanon, all of Lebanon, this is 'sedition,'" he warned, urging restraint and invoking the advice of Imam Ali (AS) to avoid becoming instruments in times of discord.

Berri's choice of words was striking. It reflected an awareness that the dispute over the agreement risks evolving from a political crisis into a dangerous communal and national rupture.

Hours earlier, Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem had declared the defeat of the Israeli-American project and announced the beginning of a "new phase."

His statement portrayed the latest regional developments as a strategic turning point and insisted that the Resistance had emerged from the recent confrontation with renewed legitimacy and purpose.

The juxtaposition of these two messages was notable. While Qassem spoke of a new stage shaped by the failure of Israeli and American objectives, Berri's intervention underscored the danger that the next phase could also become one of internal discord if political actors fail to manage the crisis responsibly.

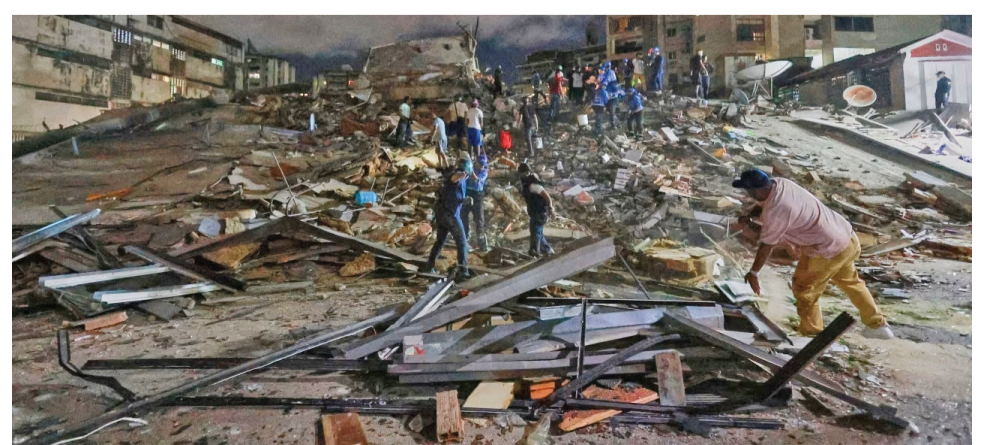
Equally significant were the ambiguous signals surrounding the events. The protests were presented as spontaneous expressions of popular anger, yet the scale and speed of mobilization hinted at deeper currents of dissatisfaction that extend well beyond organized political structures.

Meanwhile, the heavy-handed response by security forces raised further questions about the state's ability to contain public anger without deepening social polarization.

The ambiguity extends to the agreement itself. Supporters portray it as a path toward restoring state authority and ending the cycle of conflict, while opponents view it as an unprecedented concession that effectively places Lebanon's sovereignty under external conditions and supervision.

What unfolded in Beirut was therefore more than a night of protests. It was a stark reminder that Lebanon remains caught between competing visions of sovereignty, security, and resistance.

Berri's warning against sedition and Qassem's declaration of a new phase together frame a pivotal moment for the country—one in which the greatest threat may not be the agreement alone, but the possibility that its consequences could ignite divisions that Lebanon can scarcely afford to revisit.



Iran coach Ghalenoei rues missed chances against Egypt

TEHRAN - Iran head coach Amir Ghalenoei praised his players' performance against Egypt but expressed frustration over his side's inability to convert their chances.

Iran were held to a 1-1 draw by Egypt in their final Group G match at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, finishing the group stage with three points. Team Melli endured a frustrating evening, missing a penalty, striking the woodwork twice and having a stoppage-time goal ruled out for offside.

Speaking after the match, Ghalenoei said: "Let me say how proud I am of my country, my people and this team. It was a fantastic match and I believe everyone enjoyed it as much as I did. We created so many chances and deserved to win."

"We conceded from their only real opportunity, while we failed to convert 10 chances. We also had a goal disallowed because they said Shoja Khalilzadeh was five centimeters offside," he added.

The Iranian coach also praised the Pharaohs, saying: "Egypt are a great team and I wish them every success. Despite all the difficulties we have faced, I don't think football justice was on our side today."

Reflecting on his team's misfortune, Ghalenoei said: "Perhaps this is another test from God. Maybe God is testing me. But I still have complete faith in my players. We are a very complete team in attack."

Asked about Iran's chances of progressing to the knockout stage, he said: "Now we have to wait and see what happens tomorrow. I would also like to thank all the Iranian fans, both inside and outside the stadium, for their tremendous support."

A defensive identity defined Iran's World Cup campaign

TEHRAN - Iran's World Cup campaign has so far been defined not by attacking flair or possession football, but by discipline, organization and defensive resilience.

After a 1-1 draw with Egypt in their final Group G match, Team Melli finished third in the group and must now wait for results elsewhere to determine whether they will advance as one of the tournament's best third-placed teams. Regardless of their fate, one thing has become clear: Iran have built their campaign around defending first and attacking only when opportunities arise.

The approach was evident from the opening match against New Zealand. Iran failed to impose themselves despite facing the lowest-ranked side in the group, settling for a draw after producing only brief moments of attacking quality. Instead of pressing high or controlling possession, Iran preferred to sit deep, remain compact and rely on quick transitions. While the strategy avoided defeat, it also left the team chasing points later in the tournament.

The same conservative philosophy was on display against Belgium. Facing one of Europe's strongest squads, Iran adopted an even deeper defensive block. The back line stayed compact, the midfield worked tirelessly to close passing lanes, and Belgium found it difficult to create clear-cut opportunities. The result was a goalless draw that represented one of Iran's finest defensive performances in recent years. However, the match also highlighted the team's biggest weakness. Iran rarely threatened in attack and finished the contest with few genuine scoring chances, appearing satisfied with a point rather than pursuing victory.

Against Egypt, Iran needed three points to maximize their chances of direct qualification, but the tactical blueprint barely changed. Team Melli defended with numbers behind the ball, looked to capitalize on set pieces and counterattacks, and struggled to sustain possession in the final third. Even after falling behind, Iran continued to play cautiously instead of committing more players forward. Their late equalizer kept qualification hopes alive, while a stoppage-time winner was ruled out for a marginal offside after a VAR review, leaving the match level at 1-1.

Throughout the group stage, Iran demonstrated admirable defensive discipline. The defenders remained well organized, the midfield consistently tracked runners, and the team conceded relatively few clear opportunities despite facing technically

superior opponents. Such structure reflected a coaching philosophy centered on minimizing mistakes rather than taking risks.

Yet the tournament also exposed Iran's limitations in possession. The team often struggled to build attacks through midfield, leaving the forwards isolated. Transitions were slow, overlapping runs from full-backs were limited, and creative passing around the penalty area was infrequent. Too often, attacks ended with hopeful long balls or crosses that were comfortably dealt with by opposing defenses.

Persepolis part ways with Osmar Vieira

TEHRAN - Persepolis are set to part company with head coach Osmar Vieira, with the club expected to appoint Dragan Skocic as his successor in the coming days.

The decision follows Persepolis' defeat to Chadormalou in the AFC Champions League 20 qualification play-off, a result that ended the Tehran giants' hopes of securing a continental berth for next season.

According to reports, the club's board has reached a final decision to terminate Vieira's contract after the disappointing end to the campaign. The Brazilian coach is expected to officially leave his position shortly.

Persepolis have already moved quickly in their search for a replacement, opening negotiations with former Iran national team head coach Dragan Skocic. Discussions between the two parties are understood to be at an advanced stage, with only the final details of the agreement remaining.

Skocic is expected to be unveiled as Persepolis' new head coach in the near future.

The Croatian manager is no stranger to Iranian football, having previously guided the Iran national team and also enjoyed a successful spell with Tractor. His familiarity with the league and proven track record have made him the club's preferred choice to lead Persepolis into the new season.

The appointment is expected to mark the beginning of a new chapter for the Reds as they aim to bounce back from the disappointment of missing out on Asian competition and challenge for domestic silverware next season.

Iran captain Taremi hits out at FIFA

TEHRAN - Iran football team skipper Mehdi Taremi questioned whether his side were welcome at the World Cup, strongly criticizing the conditions they are playing under in the United States after they drew 1-1 with Egypt on Saturday to possibly secure a knockout spot.

Taremi missed an early penalty and crashed a header off the crossbar, before an apparent late winner for Iran, which would have guaranteed progress out of the group stage at the seventh attempt, was ruled out for offside.

Iran have also had to grapple with travel restrictions, though the U.S. said that Iran would be allowed to travel from their Mexican base two days before the game instead of one, Reuters reported.

Taremi, however, said conditions were unfair, described the tournament as a logistical "disaster" and called on global governing body FIFA to try to resolve the situation.

"FIFA, they have to solve every problem here but unfortunately they couldn't stop, since the beginning," Taremi told reporters.

He added that FIFA President Gianni Infantino had visited the Iran changing room after their first game "and he said, 'it's just the beginning', but the group-stage finishes tomorrow and we don't have our logistics people here".

Taremi continued: "How (is it) possible we always have to travel to Tijuana? We love the people of Mexico. We love Tijuana, it's so good, they are so humble people. We love them. But as professional players, in a professional competition, it's not right."

He also suggested that Iran's presence at the tournament was no longer welcome, though they could find themselves in the round of 32 if results in Saturday's group games go their way.

Taremi asked: "Who wants to help us? Who? If they want us to be out - OK, let's (be) out, let's get out. But that's not fair."

Official highlights Tirgan as key element of Iran's intangible cultural heritage

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism has described the ancient festival of Tirgan as one of the country's most significant elements of intangible cultural heritage, saying it reflects enduring links between nature, mythology and Iranian society.

In a statement published by IRIB news agency on Saturday, Mohammad-Ebrahim Zarei said Tirgan represents values including hope, prayers for rainfall, social solidarity and respect for water as the source of life.

"Tirgan is one of the brightest manifestations of Iran's cultural calendar," Zarei said. "It is a deeply rooted celebration that has remained alive and dynamic in the country's cultural memory through the centuries."

Celebrated on the 13th day of the Iranian month of Tir, which usually falls on July 2 or 3 in the Gregorian calendar, Tirgan is traditionally associated with water, rainfall and the protection of natural resources. In many parts of



Iran, the festival has historically been marked by water-splashing ceremonies, prayers for rain and rituals honoring water, an element regarded in Iranian culture as a symbol of purity, life and renewal.

According to Iranian mythology, the festival is closely linked to the legend of Arash the Archer (Arash-e Kamangir), a legendary hero who is said to have determined the borders of ancient Iran by shooting an arrow over

a great distance. Zarei said the story symbolizes sacrifice, patriotism and responsibility toward the nation's collective destiny while reflecting the historical relationship between people, land and identity.

According to the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, festivals such as Tirgan form an important part of Iran's intangible cultural heritage alongside the country's historical monuments. It said research,

documentation, preservation and promotion of such traditions contribute to safeguarding Iran's cultural identity and passing it on to future generations.

Zarei also underlined that Tirgan offers an opportunity to reflect on enduring cultural values, including respect for nature, social responsibility, solidarity and hope.

Tirgan, also known as Jashn-e Tirgan, is one of Iran's oldest seasonal festivals and is traditionally observed as a rain festival. Alongside Nowruz, Yalda Night and Mehregan, it is among the country's best-known ancient celebrations.

Today, the festival is observed primarily by Iranian Zoroastrian communities, although its historical significance extends beyond religious practice. Historical accounts of Tirgan appear in the writings of medieval scholars including Abu Saeid Gardezi, Al-Biruni and Al-Masudi, as well as in the accounts of European travelers who visited Iran during the Safavid period.

Archaeologists say continued excavations at Kalgeh Zarrin could deepen understanding of Elymaean kingdom



TEHRAN - Archaeologists leading excavations at the ancient site of Kalgeh Zarrin near the southwestern Iranian city of Masjed Soleyman said continued scientific research, stronger protection measures and investment in cultural tourism could help reveal new information about the ancient Elymaean kingdom while contributing to local economic development.

The excavation directors said the archaeological site, which dates to the 2nd century B.C. and is listed as one of Iran's national heritage sites, occupies a strategic position for studying the political, economic, social and religious structures of the Elymaean state, which ruled parts of southwestern Iran during the Parthian period, Miras-e Aria reported on Friday.

Ali Hozhabri, one of the excavation directors, said potential discoveries of architectural remains, rock reliefs and petroglyphs could provide new evidence about the Elymaean kingdom's political organization and social structure.

"The study of these reliefs is not limited to archaeology," Hozhabri said. "They can also offer valuable information for historians, sociologists and anthropologists about power relations, social organization and cultural practices in ancient society."

Co-director Ayyoub Soltani said the Elymaean kingdom emerged as a powerful semi-independent state following the rise of the Seleucid Empire and during the Parthian era. He said its territory extended across

much of present-day provinces of Khuzestan, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Lorestan, Ilam and parts of Isfahan province.

According to the excavation directors, the kingdom's economic strength was based on the minting of its own coinage, control of trade routes leading to Mesopotamia, maritime commerce through the Persian Gulf, and agricultural and livestock production.

They said Elymaean coins discovered in the northern Arabian Peninsula indicate the kingdom's regional commercial influence and its role in trade networks linked to the Persian Gulf.

The archaeologists described Masjed Soleyman, together with Izeh, as one of the principal political and religious centers of the Elymaean kingdom. They said the construction of what they described as the largest stone platform in ancient Iran, along with numerous temples and ceremonial complexes, reflected the city's importance within the kingdom.

According to the researchers, the Kalgeh Zarrin temple, which contains iconography associated with the Mithraic tradition, may also provide evidence of religious diversity and tolerance within Elymaean society.

Hozhabri and Soltani said previous discoveries at the site, including sculpted heads, coins and rock reliefs, as well as studies of architectural remains and pottery, underline the site's archaeological significance. They said continued excavations, subject to adequate conservation measures, could provide further information on the history and culture of the period.

The archaeologists said local authorities have begun efforts to promote cultural tourism centered on Kalgeh Zarrin. They said establishing an on-site museum could increase visitor numbers, extend tourist stays and contribute to the local economy.

They also emphasized the importance of involving local communities in heritage conservation, saying modern approaches to

cultural heritage management require the participation of residents, private-sector stakeholders and civil society organizations.

The researchers said the creation of local non-governmental organizations could strengthen community participation, attract investment and improve protection of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. They added that institutions such as the National Iranian Oil Company and the municipality could also contribute to conservation efforts through their social responsibility programs.

Among the principal challenges facing urban archaeological sites, the excavation directors cited disputes involving private landowners, urban development projects and insufficient long-term monitoring. They said greater public awareness, dialogue with local communities, targeted land acquisition and revisions to heritage protection legislation would help improve long-term preservation.

The archaeologists said urban excavations play an important role not only in rescuing threatened archaeological remains but also in documenting the historical development of cities while balancing urban expansion with the protection of cultural heritage.

Kalgeh Zarrin, located in central Masjed Soleyman, dates to the 2nd century B.C. The site was added to Iran's National Heritage List in 1986.

According to sources, Masjed Soleyman was known as Asak during the Elamite period and formed part of the Simash region of the ancient Elamite civilization. Elam was one of the major civilizations of the ancient Near East, occupying territory that largely corresponds to the modern Iranian provinces of Khuzestan and Ilam. Rather than functioning as a single unified ethnic kingdom throughout its history, Elam consisted of a federation of regional polities before periods of political unification. The Elamite language, now extinct, was spoken across the region from the Mesopotamian plain to the Iranian Plateau and is documented in inscriptions dating back to the mid-third millennium B.C.

Research and creativity essential to preserving traditional pottery painting: ceramic artist

TEHRAN - An Iranian ceramic painter said the long-term survival of traditional pottery painting depends on sustained research, creativity and continuous training, adding that artistic commitment rather than commercial considerations has been the driving force behind her work for more than two decades.

Mahboubeh Kamalinejad, a designer and ceramic painter, said she has worked in pottery painting since 2003 and that many artists in the field began their careers through personal interest and a commitment to preserving traditional art.

"In the early years, many of us worked without pay simply to learn and help preserve this art,"

Kamalinejad said in an interview with Miras Arya.

She said the distinguishing feature of the workshop where she works is the combination of practical experience with research, with each piece based on study, analysis and new ideas rather than reproducing existing patterns.

Kamalinejad said innovation in pottery painting comes from combining artistic elements from different historical periods while adapting designs to the form and visual characteristics of ceramic objects.

She added that artists seek to draw on the traditions of Iranian art while incorporating their own cre-



ative perspectives to produce original works suited to the medium.

Kamalinejad identified limited public exposure and weak external communication as among the main challenges facing the sector. She said stronger media engagement and more professional promotion of artworks could help attract younger artists and new practitioners.

She said producing carefully researched works remains the primary objective for artists, rather than responding to market demands.

"Many of these works are the result of months or even years of continuous effort," she said, adding that completed pieces are later presented at exhibitions in Iran and abroad.

Kamalinejad said creating more opportunities to introduce pottery painting to wider audiences, expanding research support and strengthening education for younger generations would help ensure the continued development of the traditional art form.

TETZ 2026: Minister highlights Iran's high scientific capacity

From page 1 ▶ According to science minister, cultural and social requirements need to be institutionalized in the design and deployment of these technologies, which will help pave the way to promote social trust, facilitate the use of smart education, and its acceptance without posing data governance risks at national and international levels.

The official went on to say that the development of smart education requires the enhancement of synergy, the exchange of expertise, and the utilization of shared capacities of countries more than ever. He expressed hope that the summit would lay the basis for the expansion of academic ties, the exchange of knowledge, and the development of collaborative initiatives in the smart education sector, which would in turn expand higher education at national, regional, and global scales.

TETZ 2026 is taking place as a globally focused AI-driven EdTech event. The international summit has brought together global leaders and stakeholders to explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can transform education and how it can be used for peace, humanity and common tomorrows.

Science ministry finalizes AI action plan

The Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology has announced the finalization of an AI action plan, which highlights the pivotal role of AI in the country's scientific advancement.

The plan has been developed in cooperation with the Vice Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy, IRNA reported.

The action plan was unveiled during a meeting held on December 3, 2025, with the presence of First Vice-President Mohammad-Reza Aref.



The main pillars of the action plan include 'transformation in education and training human resources, 'empowering research and innovation capacity building', 'promoting and commercializing AI', 'expanding science diplomacy and international cooperation', and 'improving the scientific status of the country'.

Empowering research and innovation capacity building involves the establishment of five national laboratories in selected universities, development of interdisciplinary majors at post-graduate programs focusing on AI, the inclusion of 'AI and digital transformation' for undergraduate students, essential for engineering majors, and supplementary for other majors.

Promoting and commercializing AI focuses on selecting and supporting a number of universities as the country's AI research and development center. Supporting the development of at least 3 fundamental AI models (including language vision models) based on domestic data, and launching a platform

to collect and share research and educational data securely.

Expanding science diplomacy and international cooperation highlights expediting the formation and growth of AI startups and holding AI competitions.

Expanding science diplomacy and international cooperation involves enhancing educational and research collaborations with top universities from Shanghai and BRICS member states, as well as members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Cooperation on AI regulations, standardization, and collaboration with Iranian elites and experts living abroad are among other goals.

Improving the scientific standing of the country underlines maintaining and improving the country's international ranking in AI, indexing at least 8 specialized journals in the first and second quartiles, increasing support for top researchers and patents, as well as strengthening scientific associations and national AI networking.

The Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology plans to launch 15 artificial intelligence (AI) laboratories at universities across the country to develop and test fundamental AI models.

The headquarters for AI technology development has been established in this regard, IRNA quoted Mohammad-Hadi Zahedi, an official with the science ministry, as saying in February.

Reference laboratories will be set up at top universities, proportional to their scientific work, publications, and products, as well as the number of students and professors, Zahedi said.

The establishment of a specialized working group for the development of educational courses with a focus on interdisciplinary training programs in AI, he added.

Launching an AI development fund, addressing and maintaining AI privacy, security, data governance, and regulatory compliance are among the issues that need to be considered, Zahedi concluded.

11 Iranian universities in QS WUR 2027 ranking



From page 1 ▶ Iran University of Science and Technology (504), Isfahan University of Technology (620), University of Tabriz (686), Shahid Beheshti University (781-790), Shiraz University (791-800), are other top universities included in this year's ranking.

The QS World University Rankings methodology combines reputation evidence, research performance, and employability outcomes into a weighted framework designed to compare institutions globally. By structuring the ranking around lenses and clearly weighted indicators, QS aims to make the drivers of overall performance transparent, while eligibility thresholds help ensure institutions are compared on a broadly consistent basis.

Fifty percent of an institution's QS World University Ranking position is based on the Research and Discovery Lens, comprised of Academic Reputation (30 percent) and Citations per Faculty (20 percent) Indicators.

Twenty percent of an institution's position is based on its performance in the Employability and Outcomes Lens. This Lens is made up of Employer Reputation (15 percent) and Employment Outcomes (5 percent).

Global engagement (15 percent), Learning experiences (10 percent), and Sustainability (5 percent) are the three other indicators used to evaluate the universities.

Not all higher education institutions are eligible for the QS World University Rankings, and not all eligible institutions proceed to be ranked. In the flagship QS World University Rankings, only around 1,500 institutions are ranked to ensure data quality, though it assesses over 8,000 as part of a usual cycle.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Imperial College London, Stanford University, University of Oxford, and Harvard University are the top five universities in QS ranking.

Recent rankings

The 16th edition of the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026 has included 10 Iranian universities in three broad subject areas.

The 2026 edition of the QS World University Rankings by Subject features 55 narrow subjects across five broad subject areas.

In the Engineering and Technology category, Sharif University of Technology, with a global ranking of 252, is placed first in the country. The university's best global ranking is in Engineering-Petroleum (20); it ranks 151-200 in civil and structural engineering, engineering-mechanical, as well as electrical and electronic engineering.

University of Tehran is placed second, with a ranking of 288 globally. It ranks 23rd in engineering petroleum. The university ranks between 201 and 250 in chemical engineering, engineering-mechanical, and electrical and electronic engineering.

Amirkabir University of Technology, with a global ranking of 401-450, is placed third. Its best global ranking is in Engineering-Petroleum (51-100).

Iran University of Science and Technology ranks 451-500 in the world, and fourth in the country.

In the Life Sciences and Medicine category, Tehran University of Medical Sciences (312). Tehran University of Medical Sciences ranks between 151-225 in Nursing, and 151-200 in Pharmacy and Pharmacology.

University of Tehran (401-450) is placed second, nationwide, next to Iran University of Medical Sciences. It ranks 151-200 in Pharmacy and Pharmacology.

Iran University of Medical Sciences and Shiraz University of Medical Sciences (401-500) rank third, jointly. Shiraz University of Medical Sciences ranks 251-300 in Pharmacy and Pharmacology.

Mashhad University of Medical Sciences is placed between 501-550 globally; it ranks 201-250 in Pharmacy and Pharmacology.

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences (SBMU) is placed between 501-550.

Tabriz University of Medical Sciences ranks 501-550. It ranks 151-225 in Nursing, and 151-200 in Pharmacy and Pharmacology.

In the Natural Sciences category, University of Tehran, with a global ranking of 336, is placed first. It ranks 201-250 in Environmental Sciences, 301-350 in Material Sciences, and 351-400 in Mathematics.

Sharif University of Technology is placed second, ranking 401-450 globally. It ranks between 201-25 in Material Sciences.

The SClmago Institutions Rankings (SIR) 2026 has ranked 166 Iranian universities among the top institutions in the world, up from 164 in 2025.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences and University of Tehran are placed among the top ten institutions in West Asia, ranking 5th and 10th, respectively.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences (with a global ranking of 701) is the top university in the country.

University of Tehran and Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and Health Services are placed second and third, respectively.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences rank 37 in Dentistry (first in West Asia), 49 in Dermatology, 73 in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, 81 in Otorhinolaryngology, 94 in Infectious Diseases, 96 in Public Health, Environment and Occupational Health, 98 in Urology, 108 in Ophthalmology, 131 in Medicine (first in West Asia), 139 in Epidemiology, 159 in Nephrology, 176 in Surgery, and 189 in Critical Care and Intensive Care Medicine.

University of Tehran ranks 71 in Architecture, 72 in Business, management, and Accounting (first in West Asia), 76 in Geography, Planning, and Development, 112 in Energy (first in West Asia), 128 in Geology, 137 in Civil and Structural Engineering, 169 in Atmospheric Science, 208 in Religious Studies, 242 in Earth and Planetary Sciences, 248 in forestry, and 290 in Aquatic Science.

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences ranks 96 in Pathology and Forensic Medicine, 106 in Urology, and 130 in Dermatology.

Tabriz University of Medical Sciences ranks 109 in Pharmacology, Toxicology, and Pharmaceuticals (2nd in West Asia), and 182 in Urology.

Golestan University ranks 132 in Social Sciences, and 155 in Education (first in West Asia).

In Environmental Sciences, Iran Polymer and Petrochemical Institute ranks 1st in West Asia (130 globally), University of Tehran ranks third in West Asia.

In Architecture, University of Gilan ranks 70, and Iran University of Science and Technology ranks 80 globally.

University of Kashan ranks 66 globally in Ocean Engineering.

In Biomedical Engineering, Lorestan University of Medical Sciences, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, and Mashhad University of Medical Sciences rank 74, 245, and 261, respectively.

Iranian delegation attending SCO Women's Forum

TEHRAN – A delegation headed by Narjes Abolqasemi, an official with the Vice-presidency for Women and Family Affairs, is participating in the Women's Forum of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

With the theme "Women's Leadership," the SCO Women's Forum is being held on June 26-27, IRNA reported.

The forum discusses current issues related to women's roles in public and political leadership, their participation in economic development, and new opportunities in the context of digital transformation.

Representatives of government agencies from SCO member states, international organizations, and civil society, as well as experts, women entrepreneurs, and women's movement leaders, are participating in the forum.

Women's economic, social empowerment

The administration pays special attention to empowering

women in social and economic areas, as well as improving their access to social services and facilities through implementing certain national programs.

According to Zahra Behrouz-Azar, the Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs, more than 2,700 female managers were appointed in the country as deputy ministers, director generals, deputy director generals, governors, district governors, and heads of research institutes in the past two years.

"President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration has always highlighted the importance of national unity and empowering women. As a result, for the first time, we have Sunni female governors in the country," IRNA quoted Behrouz-Azar as saying in August 2025.

The official went on to say that in Iranian year 1403 (2024 – 2025), efforts were made to identify and address harmful issues to women, including the bill on the elimination of violence against women, the hijab,



and women riding motorcycles. Moreover, the vice-presidency for women and family affairs has offered loans and other facilities for childbearing.

Iran has always focused on programs that empower women, particularly those who are heads of household, economically and socially. Actions taken by the country have always aimed to promote women's status by observing the principles of the constitution and Islamic teachings, Behrouz-Azar said.

Referring to the country's remarkable achievements in edu-

cation, health, science, technology, and entrepreneurship, she underscored the prominent role of Iranian women in these fields, Mehr news agency quoted Behrouz-Azar as saying in November 2024.

The official further said the seventh National Development Plan has stressed the need to overcome barriers to women's professional development. Accordingly, the current administration has put supporting women's entrepreneurship and home business growth on the agenda despite unfair sanctions.

Persian zebra's population soars in Kavir National Park

TEHRAN – Persian zebra was about to go extinct in Kavir National Park, Semnan province, almost three decades ago, but successful conservation efforts have brought them back to life, with their population increasing from 13 individuals in the Iranian year 1363 (1984-1985) to 55 this year.

The conservation efforts include reintroducing the species, breeding in captivity, and transferring them from different habitats to the national park, IRNA reported.

Monitoring water resources, veterinary quarantine, physical protection of the habitat, and the gradual release of zebras are



among the other important measures taken in the conservation program.

The Persian zebra is a subspecies of onager, which is critically in danger of extinc-

tion. Onagers used to have a large population in West Asia, Central Asia, and China, but now it has become extinct in most areas.

The low population of zebras is due to several reasons. They have poor reproduction ability, with one out of every three foals of this species surviving.

The probability of male zebra foal survival is poor because the male zebra does not accept the male foal and kills it, causing a decline in the zebra population.

The long gestation period and a lack of twin pregnancies are the other effective factors in the low population of zebras in Iran.



Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**

Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 43051601

Email: info@tehrantimes.com

Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

Advertisements Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430

Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 43051505

Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430



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

JUNE 28, 2026

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Success is the result of foresight and resolution, foresight depends upon deep thinking and planning and the most important factor of planning is to keep your secrets to yourself.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:08 Evening: 19:45 Dawn: 3:05 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 4:51 (tomorrow)

Documentary play “The Leader” to premiere during farewell ceremonies for Ayatollah Khamenei



TEHRAN- The documentary play “The Leader”, written and directed by Pejman Shahverdi, is set to be staged in conjunction with the farewell ceremonies for the Martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

According to the public relations office of the Art Bureau, the production—developed by the Sooreh Performing Arts Center and produced by Amirhossein Shafiei—will be performed at various locations across Tehran from July 1 to 7.

The play, which is entirely field-based and documentary-style, has been produced in three languages of Persian, English, and Arabic. It provides a comprehensive narrative of the different stages of the Martyred Leader’s life, spanning from his birth and the pre-revolutionary era to his presidency, his presence on the war fronts, his tenure as the Leader, and his ultimate martyrdom.

The ensemble cast features Masoud Kordi, Ali Dehrizi, Alireza Hosseini, Noushin Moazami, Hossein Aanizadeh, Erfan Kaviani, Bahar Bouryayi, Aram Bouryayi, Zahra Kavosi, and Zahra Sadat Hosseini.

Following the coordinated US- Israeli attack on February 28, which targeted key national facilities in Iran, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei,

the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, was martyred. Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei has since been appointed as the new Leader by the Assembly of Experts.

The martyrdom of the Ayatollah Khamenei was not merely the loss of a political figure, but the departure of a spiritual guide whose entire life was dedicated to the pursuit of justice and the liberation of the oppressed. This ultimate sacrifice, born from the depths of a conflict fueled by imperialist ambitions, has left an indelible mark on the collective soul of the Iranian people and the wider Muslim world, transforming a moment of profound grief into a catalyst for renewed resistance and steadfastness.

As the nation prepares for the official farewell ceremonies scheduled for next week, a wave of solemnity and devotion is sweeping across the country. These ceremonies, which will see millions of mourners gather in a sea of grief and pride, are expected to transcend mere ritual, serving as a grand manifestation of the people’s loyalty and unwavering bond with their leader. The funeral processions will not only be a final goodbye but a powerful testament to the enduring legacy of the Martyred Leader, reaffirming the nation’s commitment to the path of truth and dignity in the face of external threats.

Cartoon of Day



Gaza, the World, and the World Cup
Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

New “Art & War” exhibition at TMoCA showcasing Iranian epic works on Ashura, Shahnameh

TEHRAN – The fifth exhibition in the “Art & War” series, titled “Iranian Epic Painting: From the Shahnameh to Ashura,” is underway at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA).

The exhibition, including works from the museum’s treasured collection, offers a fresh perspective on the long-standing tradition of epic painting in Iran. It presents significant works from the country’s two major epic traditions: Ferdowsi’s “Shahnameh” and the events of the Day of Ashura, IRNA reported.

The exhibition features twelve outstanding paintings by renowned masters of the Coffeehouse Painting (an Iranian genre of narrative painting) tradition, including Mohammad Modabber, Abbas Boloukifar, Ahmad Khalili, Hossein Hamedani, Ali-Akbar Lermi, Mohammad Farahani, Hassan Esmailzadeh, and Reza Hamidi.

Salar Rafeian, a curator at the TMoCA, writes in a note about the exhibition that Iranian epic painting, particularly in the form of Coffeehouse Painting, should not be viewed merely as religious, epic, or folk paintings.

Rather, these works constitute a popular visual medium for recreating collective memory and sustaining a pictorial tradition that stretches from Mani’s “Arzhang” through Persian miniature painting, Shi’a iconography, and the tradition of Naqqali (Persian storytelling performance).

In their works, the heroes of the Shahnameh and the martyrs of Karbala, on the Day of Ashura, stand alongside one another as parts of a shared ethical memory, one that constantly invites society to reflect upon its relationship with the true nature of power and responsibility.

Iranian visual storytelling



in these paintings emerges through the interplay of dependent and independent motifs. As a result, these paintings are not static images, but rather living maps of an entire cosmos, where history, mythology, nature, and the supernatural coexist simultaneously.

Here, art is not simply a means of depicting the world but a means of imagining a more impartial one, where the image itself becomes the shared language of memory, justice, and resistance.

The “Art & War” program provides a unique opportunity to revisit and analyze how wars influence the formation of different art movements.

The exhibition has been planned as an artistic reaction to the 40-day American-Zionist assault on Iran (from February 28 to April 8), which martyred

about 3,500 people, including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, several officials and military commanders, as well as numerous civilians, including women and children.

During the 40-day war (also known as the Ramadan War), besides some military targets, the US and Israel launched organized attacks against civilian infrastructure, including residential homes, hospitals, refineries, power plants, schools, universities, art and cultural spaces, bookstores, museums, and ancient sites in several cities, causing total or partial damage and injuring innocent people.

Through the “Art & War” program, the TMoCA has made some treasured works available to audiences, so that with each visit, they can gain deeper insight into the impact of art when confront-

ing historical and contemporary crises.

Established in 1977, the museum has more than 4,000 items that include 19th and 20th-century world-class Iranian, European, and American paintings, prints, drawings, and sculptures. Being the biggest collection of Western art in the eastern world, it includes works from almost all artistic periods and movements.

Most of the museum area is located underground with a circular walkway that spirals downwards with galleries branching outwards. Western sculptures by artists such as Ernst, Giacometti, Magritte, and Moore can be found in the museum’s gardens.

“Iranian Epic Painting: From the Shahnameh to Ashura” opened on June 23 at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and will remain open to visitors until July 3.

New book documents US-Zionist war crime in Minab

TEHRAN- Amir Kabir Publications in Tehran has announced the upcoming release of “Blood-Tears of Minab”, authored by Hamidreza Mohajerani.

The work seeks to provide a documented narrative of the oppression, resilience, and hope of the people of Minab in the face of US-Zionist crimes.

The project aims to preserve a vital part of Iran’s historical memory and pay tribute to the steadfast and bereaved people of Minab. The book delves into the human and social dimensions of the war crime perpetrated by the United States and the Zionist regime at the Shajareh Tayyebeh school, which resulted in the martyrdom of 168 students and teachers.

In response to this tragic event, Amir Kabir Publications decided to fulfill its cultural mission by transforming the account of the incident into a lasting literary work.

To this end, the renowned author and translator Hamidreza Mohajerani was commissioned to document the tragedy through direct presence in the region and extensive interviews with the families of the victims, witnesses, and local residents.

Mohajerani spent one month in the southern city of Minab, meeting closely with the families of the martyrs of the Shajareh Tayyebeh school. While the resulting work is categorized as a novel, it transcends the boundaries of a typical drama or romance, serving instead as a fact-based narrative of a crime and its devastating human consequences.

Billy Collins’s “Horoscopes for the Dead” published in Persian

TEHRAN – The Persian translation of the poetry book “Horoscopes for the Dead” by Billy Collins has been released in the bookstores across Iran.

Saeid Saeidpur has translated the poems from English into Persian and Morvarid Publication has brought out the book, ISNA reported.

Billy Collins is widely acknowledged as a prominent player at the

table of modern American poetry. In this collection, the verbal gifts that earned him the title “America’s most popular poet” are on full display.

The poems in “Horoscopes for the Dead” cover the usual but everlasting themes of love and loss, life and death, youth and aging, and solitude and union. With simple diction and effortless turns of phrase, Collins is at

once ironic and elegiac.

Smart, lyrical, and not afraid to be funny, the poems extend Collins’s reputation as a poet who occupies a special place in the consciousness of readers of poetry, including the many he has converted to the genre.

Billy Collins, 85, is an American poet who served as the Poet Laureate of the United States from 2001 to 2003. He was a Disting-

confirmed a final death toll of 168 victims, with at least 95 others sustaining severe injuries, marking one of the most harrowing atrocities of the conflict’s opening day.

While US and Zionist authorities initially attempted to distance themselves from the carnage as images of the ruins flooded social media, rigorous forensic and digital investigations have since exposed the truth. An extensive analysis by Al Jazeera’s digital investigations unit, utilizing over a decade of satellite imagery and ground-level video, confirmed that the school was a distinct civilian facility, isolated from any military installations for at least ten years. Furthermore, satellite data revealed that the school was “triple-tapped”—hit by three separate, deliberate strikes—proving the attack was not a mistake, but a calculated targeting of children.

This conclusion has been echoed by the international community’s most reputable news outlets. Investigations by The New York Times, BBC Verify, CBC, and NPR have all independently concluded that the United States was responsible for the strike. These findings have sparked global outrage and raised fundamental questions regarding the “intelligence” used to justify the bombing, as the pattern of the attack suggests the direct targeting of an educational institution. The Minab school tragedy now stands as a somber testament to the immense human cost of this aggression and a primary focal point for international demands for accountability.

guished Professor at Lehman College of the City University of New York, retiring in 2016.

Collins was recognized as a Literary Lion of the New York Public Library (1992) and selected as the New York State Poet for 2004 through 2006. In 2016, Collins was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. As of 2020, he is a teacher in the MFA program at Stony Brook Southampton.