

Open letter on Iranian prisoners draws criticism over its framing of war

TEHRAN – An open letter signed by a group of Western academics, writers, activists and former and current political prisoners has drawn criticism from other scholars and anti-war activists, who argue that its focus on Iran's domestic developments risks obscuring the central issue of the conflict: the foreign military assault on the country.

The letter, addressed to what it calls Iran's "prisoners of conscience," condemns executions, arbitrary arrests, torture, alleged sham trials and the targeting of ethnic minorities. ► [Page 2](#)

Israel steps up attacks on Syria hours after top Syrian diplomat meets Mossad chief

By staff writer

TEHRAN — Before dawn on Monday, six Israeli armored vehicles and an infantry company crossed into western Daraa, sweeping homes in the Syrian village of Ma'ariya under hovering surveillance drones before withdrawing back across the occupied Golan frontier.

Hours later, another Israeli unit moved into southern Quneitra, raiding the village of Sayd al-Hanout after detaining a local shepherd near al-Rafid the day before. The ground advances coincided with a blast near Palmyra's regional directorate. ► [Page 5](#)

Israel intensifies airstrikes, artillery shelling across southern Lebanon

TEHRAN — Israeli forces escalated their unprovoked assault on southern Lebanon through the weekend and into Monday, combining high-explosive airstrikes with systematic home demolitions and brutal scorched-earth tactics.

The expanding offensive shreds the remnants of a United States-sponsored June framework agreement that Washington falsely presented as a mechanism for a gradual Israeli withdrawal.

Instead, American diplomacy has functioned as a reliable shield for continued aggression. The regime currently occupies ground more than ten kilometers inside Lebanese territory and shows absolute intent to remain. ► [Page 5](#)

International competition launched to design Minab school martyrs' memorial

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN – The International Landscape and Memorial Space Design Competition for the Minab School Martyrs' Cemetery has been officially launched, seeking to create a lasting memorial space that honors the victims, preserves their stories and conveys a message of peace and resistance.

The competition, titled "Architecture; Beyond Consolation — for Peace and Life," was introduced during a press conference held at the Malek National Library and Museum on Monday, where organizers outlined the objectives, design approach and procedures of the international call. ► [Page 8](#)



An Iranian family on the northern shore of the Strait of Hormuz, with a disabled ship visible in the background.

Trump Turns to Smoke and Mirrors

The US president amplifies distorted claims about Qalibaf on Truth Social, using media fabrications to obscure the setbacks of his war on Iran

Trump's Iran fantasies stretch from regime change to military dominance, Hormuz control and economic collapse, exposing his growing disconnect from reality

TEHRAN — President Donald Trump has turned to psychological warfare and media fabrications in a desperate attempt to distract from the failure of the US military and economic war against Iran.

Such underhanded attempts became even more apparent after Trump reposted a link on Truth Social from the US conservative news outlet Newsmax, which grossly distorted comments made by Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf during his recent diplomatic trip to Iraq.

Newsmax sensationalized the story under the title "Iran Parliament Speaker: 'We Are Hungry, We Cannot Survive,'" attempting to cook up a false narrative of Iranian vulnerability by deliberately twisting Qalibaf's words. Misquoting the Iranian

Parliament speaker, the outlet wrote that no matter how strong military power becomes, if people are hungry, they will not be able to endure. Western outlets immediately spun the story to suggest that Iran is on the verge of collapse and that the US war against Iran, coupled with Washington's unrelenting economic pressure, could bring down the Islamic Republic.

Nonetheless, a look at Qalibaf's actual speech delivered in Persian tells a completely different story and sheds light on what was truly said. In a high-level meeting with Iraqi and Iranian economic activists,

Qalibaf spoke strategically about the vital need for sovereign nations to maintain both military and economic strength. In this section of his address, the Parliament speaker stressed that alongside formidable military power, economic growth, robust domestic production, and dynamic financial activity are essential pillars to maintaining a country's overall strength and national resilience. He emphasized that military power alone cannot guarantee a country's long-term survival if the domestic economy is neglected. In fact, Qalibaf firmly believes that alongside continuously strengthening its defense capabilities, Iran must also bolster its economic foundation and overcome its internal financial challenges precisely to withstand hostile foreign economic pressure. ► [Page 3](#)



Qalibaf tells Asim Munir: US bad faith hinders regional stability

TEHRAN — Pakistan's Chief of Defense Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, held talks with senior Iranian officials, including Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, in Tehran on Monday.

During the meeting, Qalibaf pointed to the US failure to honor its commitments under the memorandum of understanding President Donald Trump signed with Iran on June 17.

"The commitments made by both sides under the memorandum of understanding are clear. ► [Page 3](#)

Pezeshkian: Iranians highly vigilant to be deceived by enemies

TEHRAN– Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has asserted that the Iranian people are more vigilant than ever and cannot be deceived by their criminal and duplicitous adversaries.

Speaking on Monday at a ceremony held in Tehran, Pezeshkian noted that the martyrdom of ministers, commanders, and ordinary citizens represented a profound loss inflicted upon the nation by those who falsely claim to champion human rights and democracy.

Criticizing the hypocritical conduct of self-proclaimed human rights advocates, President Pezeshkian stated: "For years, they have labeled the Islamic Republic of Iran a terrorist state and a sponsor of terrorism. Yet, since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, they have systematically assassinated our officials, commanders, and scientists across every era." ► [Page 3](#)

Tehran warns countries supporting US military actions of consequences

TEHRAN — Iran warned on Monday that countries allowing the United States or Israel to use their military bases, facilities or equipment for operations against Iran could face consequences, as Tehran hardened its position over the ongoing regional crisis and rejected any attempt to end the conflict on terms dictated by its adversaries.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaie said Iran's diplomatic strategy was being adjusted to reflect changing regional and international conditions, while emphasizing that Tehran would continue using bilateral and multilateral channels to defend what it considers its national interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity. ► [Page 3](#)

IRGC: Threats to Iran's infrastructure will draw heavy strikes on US vital interests

Brigadier General Hossein Mohebbi, spokesman for Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), issued a stark warning on Monday, asserting that any US attempts to target Iran's critical infrastructure would provoke severe strategic retaliation against America's vital interests.

Speaking in a televised address, General Mohebbi dismissed 'the enemy's miscalculation' regarding Iran's military capabilities. "Contrary to the enemy's assumption that Iran's weapons stockpiles are limited, our production of smart and precision-guided missiles continues unabated," he stated. ► [Page 2](#)

40th Islamic unity conference to be held in Tehran, Qom, Mashhad

TEHRAN — The 40th International Islamic Unity Conference will be held in Tehran, Qom, and Mashhad, according to the secretary-general of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought.

Hamid Shahriari said on Monday that the conference's online sessions have begun. He added that nearly 140 foreign guests from 30 countries will attend, with about 80 of them participating in person. Four decentralized conferences will also be held in West Azarbaijan, Kurdistan, Golestan, and Razavi Khorasan provinces, IRNA reported. ► [Page 2](#)

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

The oil market now ignores Trump's messages

Kayhan, in an article, examined Trump's desperation in the current situation. Trump's frustration and anger come at a time when Axios acknowledged that changes in oil prices in response to Trump's social-media posts about the Iran war have steadily declined over time. Fluctuations in oil prices ripple across the US and global economies, and the conflict has caused unprecedented disruption in supply. In the early weeks, markets overreacted to many of Trump's posts. But for months now, the market has been ignoring them, because they do not reflect reality and have no connection to the number of barrels actually leaving the Strait of Hormuz. The erosion of Trump's influence over oil markets carries political consequences, as Democrats use energy prices as a cudgel against Republicans in the midterm elections. In the first few months, the White House was highly successful in controlling the narrative and pushing prices down — but it has now lost that leverage.

Ettelaat: Maintaining good relations with neighbors is essential for Iran

Ettelaat evaluated the Mecca Pact. Although Iran currently has no tension with Turkey or Pakistan, it is possible that under certain circumstances — and with Saudi financial assistance to these two countries combined with US provocation — tensions could emerge. For this reason, Tehran need not be overly sensitive about the Mecca Pact. If the pact adopts a strongly oppositional stance toward Israel, it would be an opportunity for Tehran. If it remains indifferent toward Israel but shows sensitivity toward Iran, it becomes a threat. The Mecca Pact could, at a critical moment, be inflamed by Riyadh and Washington, clouding Iran's relations with Ankara and Islamabad. In any case, it is better for Iran to keep its good relations with its neighbors strong and to further reinforce them, while remaining highly alert and prepared for all possible scenarios, risks, and breaches of commitment, even in the worst case.

Arman-e-Emrooz: A challenging situation

Arman-e-Emrooz assessed the intensification of US sanctions and the naval blockade of Iran through three possible scenarios. Amid these developments, it appears that one of the three scenarios will soon unfold. One possibility is that the Trump administration steps back and announces progress in negotiations, meaning the harsh sanctions will not be implemented. The second scenario is that the plan is announced and executed, but after a short period it is quietly set aside as both sides show flexibility and a negotiation process begins. The third possibility is that the severe economic sanctions continue until the US midterm elections and

are then accompanied by military strikes to reshape the situation on the ground. Each of these three scenarios has its supporters, but two factors strongly influence them: first, the degree of firmness on current positions; and second, the election results soon to be held in the US and Israel.

Shargh: A crisis in the global economy

Shargh, in an analysis, examined the global economic crisis triggered by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The flight of oil tankers from the strait amid escalating military tensions has pushed shipping rates to more than four times their pre-war levels. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has now become a crisis for the global economy. This unprecedented surge in transport costs brings a chain of negative consequences. First, the final cost of oil for consumer countries has risen sharply, meaning greater pressure on household budgets and intensified inflation worldwide. Second, countries lacking sufficient strategic reserves face serious challenges in securing their required oil and may encounter fuel shortages. Third, higher transport costs raise the final price of essential goods and industrial raw materials, since oil plays a key role in the production and transport of many products. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has imposed a full-scale economic crisis on the world — one that affects all countries, from major importers to ordinary consumers.

Resalat: Disrupting the Arab-American coalition-building game

American strategists openly speak of efforts to unite the Persian Gulf Arab states against Iran. Our diplomacy must anticipate the adversary's moves and deprive them of the pretexts for coalition-building. The agreement to restore relations with Saudi Arabia, along with expanding ties with the UAE and Qatar, must be upgraded from a mere political truce to deep economic and security linkages. If the Persian Gulf states develop tightly interwoven commercial and economic interests with Iran, they will not easily play Washington's anti-Iran puzzle. We must show our neighbors that regional security is unified and indivisible. Any provision of bases to the United States or the Israeli regime for actions against Iran's interests endangers the security and investment climate of the entire region.

At the same time, proposing non-aggression pacts and cooperation for securing maritime navigation neutralizes the pretext for foreign fleets to remain present.

40th Islamic unity conference to be held in Tehran, Qom, Mashhad

From page 1 ► The main conference will open on Thursday, August 27, at the Islamic Republic of Iran's International Conference Center, with President Masoud Pezeshkian attending, Shahriari said, adding that eight books published by the Research Institute for Islamic Proximity Studies will also be unveiled during the event.

The program includes a session on Islamic awakening, foreign guests' participation in Friday prayers, a dinner hosted by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, and a dedicated academic session at Qom's seminary, which is being held for the first time as part of the conference.

The event will conclude on Sunday, August 30, in Mashhad, with the participation of Sunni and Shia scholars from neighboring provinces.

The conference will examine Islamic unity, peace, security, and collective strength, focusing on Islamic identity, governance, the resistance economy, contemporary developments, Palestine, and Lebanon, as well as the role of religious scholars in strengthening cooperation across the Muslim world.



Open letter on Iranian prisoners draws criticism over its framing of war

From page 1 ► It describes Iranian political prisoners as being caught “between two blades of a scissors” — one representing the Islamic Republic and the other the United States and Israel.

The signatories call on the Iranian authorities to end executions and release political prisoners, while also calling on Washington and Israel to end what they describe as their “barbaric wars and brutal sanctions.”

The list of signatories includes figures such as Angela Davis, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Judith Butler, Rashid Khalidi, Robin D. G. Kelley, Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Walden Bello, among others.

Yet the letter has prompted a broader debate over whether placing Iran's political prisoners at the center of the discussion, while the country is under military attack, creates a misleading equivalence between domestic developments and an external war.

Critics question the letter's political framing

One critic, writing under the name Carlos on X, described the letter as politically problematic despite believing that its signatories included people with long records of opposition to imperialism and political repression.

Noting the participation of figures including Davis, Abu-Jamal, Khalidi, Kelley, Gilmore and Butler, Carlos wrote that these were not people who could simply be dismissed; several had spent their lives in anti-imperialist and Black liberation movements.

But he argued that the letter nevertheless adopted ‘a misleading framework.’

Its central metaphor, he wrote, was the image of the Islamic Republic on one side and US-Israeli imperialism on the other, with the Iranian people caught between them. According to Carlos, the framing “inserts a symmetry” between the two sides while failing to adequately distinguish between a state facing an external military attack and the domestic political system governing it.

Carlos also questioned the timing and potential political consequences of the letter. He argued that, regardless of what individual signatories intended, the text could function as part of a broader political narrative used to justify pressure on Iran.

He specifically criticized the letter for invoking allegations including sham trials, systematic torture and the targeting of minorities without providing detailed sourcing in the text. He argued that similar language has historically been



used in campaigns preceding regime-change efforts.

His criticism was echoed, in a different form, by Ajamu Baraka, an international human-rights activist and political organizer. Baraka did not reject criticism of Iran itself. Instead, he distinguished between criticizing a government and taking a political position in the context of war.

“No one is above criticism,” Baraka wrote. “Comrades who signed that letter need to understand the difference between criticism & political positioning.”

He argued that the signatories had chosen a political position that, in his view, gave legitimacy to U.S. military violence against Iran.

The reaction from legal scholar Nina Farnia was also critical. Farnia shared material relating to the letter while defending her own position on the conflict. Her broader intervention questioned the decision by progressive voices in the United States and elsewhere to focus publicly on condemning Iran at a moment when, in her view, greater attention should be directed toward opposing the war and sanctions imposed by their own governments.

Historian and scholar Adnan A. Husain similarly questioned the political timing of the letter. In a post responding to the debate, he maintained that publishing an open letter focused on condemning Iran, while the United States and Israel were engaged in military and economic pressure against the country, risked shifting political attention away from opposition to the war.

Husain wrote that the Western left was moving toward public condemnation of Iran “just when” the United States was turning increasingly to economic pressure and political subversion. He argued that activists should instead organize against the war and sanctions imposed by their own government.

David Miller, Political sociologist, producer, and former

professor at the University of Bristol said, all signed the disgraceful letter to the Guardian denouncing the Islamic Republic of Iran, the world's leading anti-imperialist state.

Worse, they compare the Republic with the Zionist/US imperialist aggressor. What we (and they) should be doing is defending the Republic. The Islamic Republic of Iran is not only defending itself, the Palestinians, Lebanon, and the resistance movement. It's also defending all of humanity and indeed civilization against the depredations of Jewish supremacist imperialism. This is an existential matter for the whole world.

Susan Abulhawa, Palestinian author and activist, has issued a sharp critique of mainstream framing that portrays the US-Israeli confrontation with Iran as a balanced conflict between two equal sides.

In a statement shared on her platform, Abulhawa argues that such framing ignores a “profound asymmetry of power.” She describes Iran as a nation crippled by decades of sanctions, now fighting an “existential anti-imperial struggle,” while facing a nuclear-armed U.S.-Israeli empire with unlimited military resources, surveillance, and near-total dominance over global political, legal, and information systems.

Abulhawa takes issue with minimizing language in a recent letter, which referred to “current, indiscriminate waves of US-Israeli military assaults.” She says that this understates the scale of destruction, citing unprovoked attacks on a school that killed 180 children and teachers, the assassination of Iran's spiritual leader and much of its leadership, and strikes on civilian infrastructure including water systems, farmland, and power grids. She also highlights the downing of Iran Air Flight 655 by the U.S., which killed 290 civilians, and decades of assassinations of Iranian scientists and commanders—all of which went unanswered.

The activist also criticizes the letter for failing to contextual-

ize Iranian arrests of detainees, arguing that while some imprisonments may be wrongful, others involve individuals who confessed to espionage for Mossad or terrorism, including a group that brutally murdered a young Quran reciter. She insists that any fair assessment must engage with Iran's legitimate security concerns.

Abulhawa concludes that the conflict is not a symmetrical confrontation but an anti-imperial struggle against overwhelming imperial force distinction, she says, is crucial for honest analysis.

Questions over the signatories' motives and the letter's focus

Without direct statements from each signatory, it would be difficult to establish that they all interpreted the letter in precisely the same way.

The criticism therefore raises a legitimate journalistic question rather than providing a definitive answer: what exactly did each signatory intend to endorse?

That question is particularly relevant because the letter was published during a period of military confrontation. The document gives substantial attention to Iran's domestic political developments, while the external conflict appears largely as one half of a broader framework of “dual oppression.”

For critics, this framing risks placing the government of a country under attack and the states conducting military operations against it within a single conceptual structure, without sufficiently addressing the different forms of power and responsibility involved.

But the timing and framing matter. A government's policy inside the country and another state's decision to wage war against that country are separate questions. They can both be condemned, but they carry different legal, political, and moral implications. Treating them as interchangeable risks obscuring the question of responsibility for the conflict itself.

The debate over the letter therefore goes beyond Iran's domestic politics. It raises a broader question for international intellectual and human-rights circles: how should activists respond when a country facing external military attack is also accused of serious internal repression?

What remains less clear is whether all those whose names appear beneath the letter share the same interpretation of that argument.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

IRGC: Threats to Iran's infrastructure will draw heavy strikes on US vital interests

From page 1 ► The IRGC spokesman further emphasized that the United States has now come to fully comprehend the consequences of military action against Iranian infrastructure. “Today, America has understood well that if it operationalizes its threats against Iran's infrastructure, it will face heavy strategic blows at energy chokepoints and against its own vital interests,” he warned.

General Mohebbi also highlighted the failure of “the enemy's theatrical attempt to reopen the Strait of Hormuz,” noting that such objectives have remained unachieved due to Iran's deterrence posture and regional influence.

The remarks come amid heightened tensions between Iran and the United States, with both sides exchanging warnings over military posturing and strategic assets in the Persian Gulf region.

The spokesman for the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps dismissed US President Donald Trump's remarks claiming the Strait of Hormuz belongs to America as baseless, unre-

alistic and pure fantasy, stressing that not a single American warship is currently present in the Persian Gulf.

Brigadier General Hossein Mohebbi, in an interview with Fars News Agency, referred to Trump's recent comments on the Strait of Hormuz and said: “Even members of Trump's own administration have not taken his words seriously. These claims are unacceptable on the global stage as well.”

Mohebbi stated that if it is claimed the Strait of Hormuz belongs to the United States, or that America has kept it open so that ships can pass through it, journalists and media outlets can use their extensive resources and satellite data to examine the actual status of vessel traffic and reveal the reality to the people of the world.

He emphasized that if the strait is truly under American control, they should demonstrate their presence in the region and prove on the ground what they claim.

Mohebbi noted: “Before the war, at least



30 to 40 US warships were present in the Persian Gulf, but today not even a single American warship is in the Persian Gulf. US military assets are currently positioned at least about 400 kilometers away from the Strait of Hormuz.”

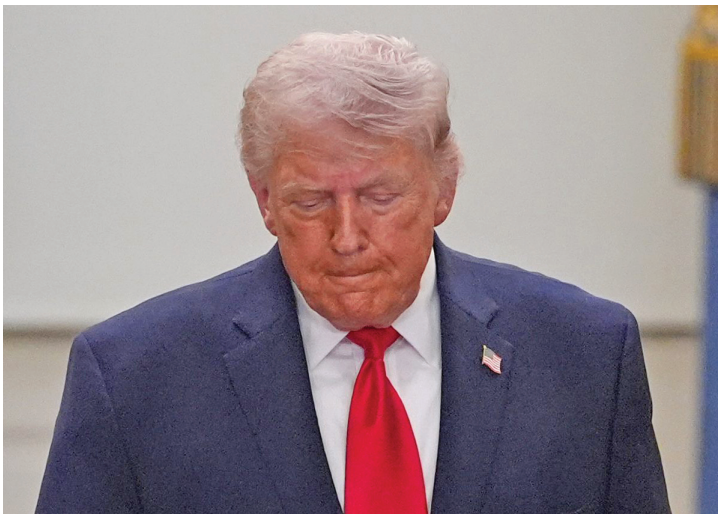
Regarding Iran's level of readiness, he stressed: “Our readiness is 100 percent, and no disruption has ever occurred in the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The field conditions and what is observed in the region today differ from the claims of the other side.”

Trump turns to smoke and mirrors

The US president amplifies distorted claims about Qalibaf on Truth Social, using media fabrications to obscure the setbacks of his war on Iran

From Page 1 ▶ The media deception occurs against the backdrop of the aggressive US-Israeli war launched on February 28, a joint assault intended to cripple the Islamic Republic that ultimately backfired on its aggressors. When launching the operation, Trump openly declared an intent to force regime change, directly telling the Iranian population to take over their government. Yet, far from achieving its maximalist objectives or collapsing the government, the conflict resulted in the rapid depletion of the US military arsenal, exposing the logistical limits and strategic overreach of American hegemony.

Detailed technical assessments and reports from major American military outlets confirm that months of high-intensity operations have severely drained US weapons stocks—expending nearly two-thirds of its Patriot air defense interceptor inventory, roughly 40 percent of its THAAD interceptors, and a third of its Tomahawk cruise missile supply, while virtually exhausting its precision strike ballistic missiles like ATACMS and PrSM. American military analysts have been forced to admit that Washington simply lacks the industrial manufacturing pace to replenish these advanced systems, proving that claims of having completely wiped out Iranian military power are detached from reality. Iranian military officials have repeatedly dismissed these US proclamations, noting that Iran's defense apparatus remains fully operational, inte-



grated, and capable of sustained deterrence.

Despite these clear tactical setbacks, Trump has continued to operate under extreme geopolitical delusions. Chief among them is his absurd, repeated assertion that the Strait of Hormuz—one of the world's most vital maritime choke points—is now sovereign American territory. Trump has publicly voiced this bizarre claim at least three times. He first floated the idea to a campaign crowd in Long Island, saying that after defeating Iran, he would declare the Strait a territory of the United States. He then doubled down during a press interaction at Joint Base Andrews, claiming the US possessed total control over the region and treated it as American ground. Shortly after, he amplified the delusion by sharing maps on Truth Social depicting the international waterway explicitly tagged as new US terri-

tory.

Iranian officials and regional observers were quick to point out the unhinged nature of these statements. Officials in Tehran noted that the vast distance between Washington's military capability and its land-grab fantasies exposes the White House's complete detachment from realities on the ground. The Strait remains an international waterway bordered by sovereign nations, and no amount of Truth Social posts can grant Washington legal or physical ownership over foreign territorial waters.

Trump's unfulfilled claims extend directly to his cycle of military threats, which have repeatedly collapsed into abrupt strategic retreats. This recurring pattern has become so glaring that analysts, financial markets, and international media outlets now widely refer to it as the TACO pattern, an acronym for "Trump Always Chickens Out". Time and

again, Trump has issued dramatic ultimatums—threatening to bomb Iranian power plants, target critical energy infrastructure on Kharg Island, or send the country back to the Stone Age if his demands were not met within tight deadlines. Yet every single time the deadline expired and Tehran refused to submit, Trump backed away, offering unilateral extensions, claiming a deal was near, or citing requests from foreign leaders to pause military action.

Having failed to secure a decisive victory on the battlefield, facing a depleted arsenal, and caught in a cycle of empty threats, Washington attempted to shift its focus back to financial strangulation. Trump orchestrated an "economic D-Day" plan against Iran—an aggressive economic warfare operation aimed at crushing the nation's commercial lifelines and starving its people into submission.

Yet, as Iran's steadfast endurance neutralizes these hostile measures, Trump's declared "economic D-Day" has crumbled into another total failure, exposing the utter limits of American coercive leverage. Facing structural defeat on both the military and financial fronts, the White House has resorted to a classic plan to divide and rule—using media fabrications, psychological manipulations on Truth Social, and false narratives about figures like Qalibaf to sow division and disguise Washington's growing impotence on the global stage.

Qalibaf tells Asim Munir: US bad faith hinders regional stability

From Page 1 ▶ It was the United States' failure to honor its commitments that undermined regional stability and gave us yet another reason not to trust Washington," Qalibaf said.

Munir, for his part, said he would continue efforts to help restore regional peace. He arrived in Iran earlier on Monday.

The Pakistani-mediated MoU established framework terms to cease hostilities. While subsequent US aerial strikes and naval blockades disrupted the agreement, Pakistan had already demonstrated its diplomatic role by helping

facilitate the April 8 ceasefire that paused the 39-day war that the US and Israel launched on Iran on February 28.

Tehran has repeatedly expressed its gratitude to Pakistan for its diplomatic support and conflict-resolution efforts during critical moments of crisis. Beyond defense cooperation, economic partnership remains central to their bilateral relationship. Under comprehensive joint agreements, Tehran and Islamabad are actively expanding cross-border infrastructure, trade market access, and energy links. These initiatives



aim to scale bilateral trade volume from over \$3 billion to a targeted \$10 billion, reflecting a mutual

commitment to leveraging shared geography for long-term economic integration and regional peace.

LATEST NEWS

■ South Africa offers Iran legal cooperation against Israel

South Africa has expressed readiness to cooperate with Iran in pursuing international legal action against the US and Israel over alleged crimes. The offer was made during the BRICS Legal Forum in New Delhi, where South Africa's delegation head cited its ICJ genocide case against Israel and invited Tehran to joint legal efforts.

■ IRGC vows strategic cooperation with government to counter sanctions

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps has declared full readiness for strategic cooperation with Iran's government to counter the enemy's economic war. In a statement marking Government Week, the IRGC emphasized that synergy between state and military institutions is key to bypassing multilayered sanctions and strengthening national resilience against US pressure.

■ Iran reports human rights progress in first quarter of 2026

Iran's Human Rights Council has published a report detailing judicial and social measures from March to June 2026. Achievements include the release of over 20,000 prisoners through leniency, reconciliation in 44% of disputable cases, and the release of 2,407 prisoners via blood money committees. Non-judicial advances include solar energy expansion and healthcare improvements.

■ China warns US over sanctions on Iran trade

China has warned that sanctions and

pressure will not resolve disputes and pledged to protect its legitimate interests amid US threats against Tehran's trading partners. Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian urged restraint, stating that tensions serve no party's interests, as Washington prepares sweeping penalties targeting Iranian oil buyers, particularly China.

■ Iraq proposes joint security council with Iran and Saudi Arabia

Iraq has proposed establishing a joint security council between Iran and Saudi Arabia to ease regional tensions, citing a "crisis of trust" as the main obstacle. Iraqi National Security Adviser Qasim al-Araji confirmed the proposal was submitted to both nations. Neither country has yet commented on the initiative.

■ Deputy FM ridicules US claims of military victory over Iran

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi has mocked US claims of dismantling Iran's military and nuclear capabilities. In a post on X, he questioned why Washington would need the "largest financial offensive in history" against a country it claims is already defeated, calling the contradiction an admission of America's failure.

■ Sunni Basij member martyred in Zahedan

A Sunni member of the Basij volunteer force, Nader Sarani Sakhi, was martyred by assailants in Zahedan on Sunday. The IRGC condemned the attack, pledging to punish the perpetrators. His funeral will be held on Tuesday. The incident has strengthened

resolve to confront insecurity in Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

■ Government fully supports armed forces: official

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, Deputy Chief of the Iranian Army, has reaffirmed the government's full support for the Armed Forces during Government Week. He stated that the government stands beside the military in defending Iran, addressing public needs, and countering pressure and threats.

■ US figures on Hormuz oil flows disputed: Reuters

Reuters has highlighted a discrepancy between US Energy Secretary Chris Wright's claims of 15 million barrels per day passing through the Strait of Hormuz and tracking data estimating around 5 million bpd. Analysts say Asian import data in coming weeks will determine whether US figures are accurate or overstated.

■ Supporting US economic war is 'act of war,' Iran's top security official warns

Iran's SNSC Secretary, Major General Mohsen Rezaei, has declared that any nation supporting the US economic war against Iran will be viewed as committing an "act of war." He warned that if the economic war continues, "not a single drop of oil will be exported" through the Strait of Hormuz or the Persian Gulf.

Pezeshkian: Iranians highly vigilant to be deceived by enemies

From Page 1 ▶ Elsewhere in his address, the president acknowledged the economic hardships the country is facing, emphasizing, "We will overcome these difficulties through unity and solidarity between the people and government officials."

He further warned that the "criminal US government and the Israeli regime" would never succeed in exploiting divisions within the country if Iranians remained united. "The enemies are leaving no stone unturned to sow discord among us," he said, urging vigilance in thwarting their malicious objectives.

Pezeshkian concluded by reaffirming that patience, solidarity, and hope remain the cor-



nerstones of the Islamic Republic's unyielding resilience in the face of mounting external pressures and threats.

Tehran warns countries supporting US military actions of consequences



From Page 1 ▶ TEHRAN — Iran warned on Monday that countries allowing the United States or Israel to use their military bases, facilities or equipment for operations against Iran could face consequences, as Tehran hardened its position over the ongoing regional crisis and rejected any attempt to end the conflict on terms dictated by its adversaries.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said Iran's diplomatic strategy was being adjusted to reflect changing regional and international conditions, while emphasizing that Tehran would continue using bilateral and multilateral channels to defend what it considers its national interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Speaking at his weekly press conference in Tehran, Baqaei said Iran could not rely on diplomatic methods developed under different circumstances and needed to continuously strengthen its diplomatic capabilities. He described the US campaign of economic pressure as "economic warfare" and said Tehran had repeatedly characterized such measures as economic terrorism.

The spokesperson said Washington was using multiple forms of pressure against Iranians because of their insistence on national sovereignty, independence and dignity. He warned that Iran had already issued, and would continue to issue, warnings concerning countries that cooperate with US actions against the Islamic Republic.

Tehran rejects war settlement dictated by aggressor

The Iranian spokesman also sought to clarify President Masoud Pezeshkian's recent comments that it would be preferable to end the war while Iran was in a position of strength.

Baqaei rejected interpretations that the remarks indicated Tehran was prepared to make concessions to its adversaries. He said Iran had not initiated the conflict and would not permit the war to end on conditions imposed by the party responsible for the aggression.

"We will show no leniency toward the aggressors," Baqaei said, arguing that Iran had been defending its territorial integrity and national sovereignty. He added that the aggressor should be held accountable.

According to Baqaei, the Iranian leadership had repeatedly made clear that the country would not surrender to coercion or domination. He said the government and all branches of the Iranian state had acted with unity during the 40-day conflict as well as during an earlier 12-day war.

The remarks underscore Tehran's insistence that any future diplomatic process must take place without what it regards as coercive demands from Washington or its allies.

The spokesman also criticized the United States for what he described as repeated breaches of commitments in previous negotiations, including the 2015 nuclear agreement and other diplomatic understandings. He said Iran had repeatedly responded to what it considered goodwill gestures from Tehran with broken promises.

Warning to countries providing bases

Baqaei issued one of his strongest warnings to countries whose military infrastructure could be used by the United States or Israel in operations against Iran.

Responding to reports concerning American military facilities and aircraft in European countries, he said Tehran had previously made clear its position on Bulgaria and confirmed reports that several US KC-135 refueling aircraft had departed the country.

Baqaei argued that allowing foreign military forces to use national bases and facilities for attacks on Iran could amount to participation in aggression under international law. He said Iran had no dispute with the people of Bulgaria but viewed the use of facilities there in support of US and Israeli military operations as problematic.

He further warned that Iran considered itself entitled to respond against the source of an attack.

"It is Iran's right to target the source and origin of any act of aggression," Baqaei said, adding that Tehran would show no leniency in defending the country.

The warning comes amid heightened sensitivity over the role of foreign military bases and logistical facilities in any potential resumption of hostilities.

Strait of Hormuz becomes a key flashpoint

The Strait of Hormuz was another major focus of the briefing, with Baqaei rejecting claims in US media and official circles that the strategic waterway had become fully open to shipping.

He disputed reports citing oil flows ranging from 5 million to 17 million barrels per day and claims of a sharp increase in maritime traffic. Baqaei described the figures as part of what he called a media and psychological campaign, arguing that insecurity created by US and Israeli actions had affected conditions in the region and around the strait since February 28, 2026.

The comments highlight the strategic importance of Hormuz, through which a significant share of global energy supplies normally passes, and signal that Tehran continues to regard security and traffic through the waterway as closely linked to the wider regional conflict.

Baqaei said Oman's Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, who was scheduled to visit Tehran, would discuss bilateral relations as well as security and shipping routes in the Strait of Hormuz. At the same time, he rejected suggestions that the Omani visit was connected to the simultaneous visit by Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir.

Diplomacy continues amid economic pressure

Despite the confrontational rhetoric, Tehran said diplomatic engagement with neighboring countries remained active.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran discovers major gas field “Takhteh” in Fars province worth \$45b



TEHRAN- The Exploration Director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has announced that the newly discovered “Takhteh” gas field in Fars Province has an estimated economic value of approximately \$45 billion, describing it as one of the most significant gas discoveries in the country over the past two decades.

In an interview with Shana, Seyyed Mohied-din Jafari detailed the discovery of the Takhteh gas field, stating that it is located 10 kilometers northwest of the city of Khonj and approximately 35 kilometers from the old gas fields of “Shanul” and “Homa.”

He explained that the total gas in place at this field amounts to 7,500 billion cubic feet. With a recovery factor of 72%, approximately 5,700 billion cubic feet of this volume is recoverable.

Jafari noted that the gas from the Takhteh field is sweet, emphasizing: “This gas does not require a sweetening process, so it will follow a shorter path in development and processing compared to sour gas fields.”

Equivalent to 15 years of production from one phase of South Pars

Jafari stated that the recoverable gas from Takhteh is equivalent to about 15 years of production from a standard phase of South Pars, and added: “This reserve can play a significant role in meeting the country’s gas demand.”

He announced that the field is about 50 kilometers long and 4 kilometers wide, and described it as “one of the most complex exploration structures discovered in the last 20 years” in terms of geological complexities.

Referring to the field’s geological challenges, Jafari explained: “Multiple layer repetitions and faulting in the upstream sections of the

reservoir made exploration operations highly difficult. Nevertheless, exploratory drilling continued to a depth of about five kilometers underground, and upon entering the reservoir, a significant volume of gas was discovered in a thickness of approximately 450 meters.”

20 million barrels of recoverable condensates

Jafari also reported the presence of 27 million barrels of gas condensates in the Takhteh field, noting that about 20 million barrels of this amount are recoverable. Combined with the gas reserves, this brings the field’s economic value to around \$40 billion.

Regarding the exploration timeline, he said: “The drilling of the Takhteh exploratory well alone took about 17 months. After completing exploration operations and conducting final tests, the obtained data were carefully analyzed.”

The Exploration Director of NIOC further emphasized that the entire exploration process of the Takhteh field was carried out by Iranian personnel, stating: “All exploration stages—from geological studies and geophysical activities to drilling operations—were conducted using the capabilities of Iranian forces.”

Jafari added: “The technology, equipment, and tools used in this operation are also Iranian. In technical, equipment, and engineering sectors, there was no need for foreign personnel or companies.”

He described the Takhteh gas field as a fully Iranian discovery and stressed: “This achievement demonstrates that the country’s technical, engineering, and specialized capacity in oil and gas exploration has reached a level where complex exploration projects can be successfully completed without reliance on foreign parties.”

Iran to put 199 agro-processing projects into operation during Government Week

TEHRAN- The Head of the Center for Development of Mechanization and Agricultural Industries has announced the inauguration of 199 agro-processing and food industry projects during Government Week.

According to IRNA from the Ministry of Agriculture, Karim Zolfaghari added: “These projects have the capacity to absorb and process approximately 1.82 million tons of agricultural raw materials and will create employment for 12,427 people, marking an important step in increasing the productivity of agricultural products.”

The Head of the Center for Development of Mechanization and Agricultural Industries stated: “In addition to the projects set to be inaugurated during Government Week, 761 semi-finished agricultural industry projects with physical progress exceeding 50% are currently underway across the country. If financial resources are secured and these projects are completed and operationalized, the capacity to absorb and process about 10 million tons of agricultural raw materials will be added to the country’s industrial capacity.”

He added that in line with developing the capacity of agricultural industries and completing the production process, over 16,700 operating licenses have been issued so far. “These units collectively have the capacity to absorb more than 114 million tons of agricultural raw materials and create employment for approximately 270,000 people,” he said.

Regarding the ranking of provinces in terms of projects to be inaugurated during

Government Week, Zolfaghari specified: “In terms of investment value, the provinces of West Azarbaijan, Mazandaran, and Markazi rank first to third, respectively; and in terms of the number of projects, Khuzestan, West Azarbaijan, and Kerman rank first to third, respectively.”

He added: “In terms of job creation, West Azarbaijan, Khuzestan, and Mazandaran have secured the top ranks in the country.”

The Head of the Center for Development of Mechanization and Agricultural Industries described the development of agro-processing and food industries as one of the most important tools for preventing raw material sales, reducing waste, and increasing the added value of agricultural products, stating: “We must act in such a way that a greater share of the country’s production, after processing and packaging, is offered to domestic and export markets with higher added value.”

He said: “Processing industries can transform the country’s agricultural production advantage into an export advantage, especially since global markets are moving toward high-quality, standardized products with proper packaging and traceability.”

Zolfaghari added: “Upgrading technology, smartening production and processing processes, improving packaging, increasing productivity, and complying with export standards are requirements for the development of processing industries, and investment in this sector must receive greater attention than in the past.”

Iran-Cuba economic ties: Unlocking investment potential amid sanctions, legal reform

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- On a global stage increasingly defined by economic fragmentation and unilateral sanctions, two nations with decades of experience in navigating external pressures—Iran and Cuba—are actively seeking to deepen their bilateral economic ties. Recent high-level exchanges and business delegations signal a mutual determination to translate longstanding political solidarity into tangible commercial partnerships.

At the heart of these efforts lies a complex interplay of opportunity and obstacle: Cuba’s gradual opening to private sector participation, Iran’s resilient industrial base, and the persistent logistical and financial barriers that have thus far constrained substantive cooperation.

This report synthesizes the outcomes of two key diplomatic and business engagements—a meeting in Tehran between the Head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce and the Cuban Ambassador, and a subsequent Iranian business delegation visit to Havana in late 2025. While the first part details bilateral discussions on frameworks and aspirations, the second part captures the delegation’s on-the-ground exploration of specific investment projects. Together, they paint a comprehensive picture of a partnership poised for growth, provided that regulatory transparency and payment mechanisms are adequately addressed.

Strategic dialogue in Tehran: laying the groundwork for cooperation

In a significant diplomatic exchange, Samad Hassanzadeh, Head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), met with Jorge F. Lefebvre Nicolás, the Cuban Ambassador in Tehran, at the place of ICCIMA on August 24, to assess the evolving landscape of Iran-Cuba economic relations. The meeting underscored a shared recognition that while political ties are robust, economic interaction remains below its potential, primarily due to logistical and monetary transfer challenges.

Hassanzadeh opened the dialogue by affirming Iran’s readiness to enter the Cuban market, contingent upon the resolution of two critical bottlenecks: transportation and financial settlements. He stated unequivocally that “if logistical and monetary transfer issues are resolved, Iranian investors will enter the Cuban market.” He identified several promising sectors for joint cooperation, including offshore farming, sugar production, automotive parts, and sanitary products. These areas, he noted, align with Iran’s industrial strengths and Cuba’s import substitution needs.

The Cuban Ambassador responded by detailing the significant legal and structural reforms underway in Cuba. He explained that intensified U.S. sanctions have compelled the Cuban government to overhaul its economic model, pivoting toward a more robust private sector. This shift, he emphasized, has now gained legal status, permitting private banks,



exchange houses, and a broader role for foreign investment in previously state-dominated sectors. Ambassador Nicolás invited Iranian investors to consider opportunities in fuel supply and distribution—now managed by Cuba’s private sector—as well as hospitality, where Spanish companies once held sway, and agriculture, where Vietnam has already pioneered land-lease arrangements. He also highlighted mining (nickel and quartz), car rental services, and renewable energy as areas ripe for Iranian participation.

Legal reforms and the private sector as a catalyst

A central theme of the Tehran meeting was the changing legal framework in Cuba. Hassanzadeh stressed the need for written documentation of these new laws to enable the Iran Chamber of Commerce to disseminate accurate information to its members. He recalled previous negotiations with Cuban officials during his visit to Cuba, where proposals for specialized committees to address trade barriers were discussed but not yet implemented. He urged the Cuban side to provide formal investment packages and clear regulatory guidelines, noting that Iranians, having navigated forty years of sanctions-induced restrictions, are uniquely equipped to operate under constrained conditions. He framed economic engagement not merely as a profit-seeking venture but as a religious and moral duty to stand alongside other nations, improving living standards through mutual cooperation.

Ambassador Nicolás acknowledged that transportation remains the primary operational hurdle, yet he expressed confidence that solutions exist, including route reconfiguration and alternative payment corridors that avoid the dollar-based system. He proposed practical next steps: holding online B2B meetings through the embassy, organizing a delegation of interested Iranian companies to visit Cuba, and facilitating a reciprocal Cuban business mission to Iran. He stressed that Iranian companies unafraid of sanctions can operate in Cuba using any currency, and that the Cuban embassy stands ready to act as a bridge for market familiarization.

Sectoral opportunities and the call for concrete action

Hassanzadeh provided additional granularity on potential cooperation areas. He reported on his visits to Cuban farms and sugar production facilities, concluding that joint investment in sugarcane cultivation and sugar processing holds considerable promise. He also floated the idea

of designating free trade zones in Cuba exclusively for Iranian products, which would serve as a distribution hub for the Caribbean and Latin American markets. Furthermore, he revealed that official invitations have been extended to Cuba’s Economy Minister, Industry Minister, and Chamber of Commerce President to visit Iran, hoping that such a high-level visit would expedite mutual understanding and deal-making.

The Cuban Ambassador reinforced these overtures by reiterating that Cuba’s new legal framework allows foreign investors to repatriate earnings, a critical assurance for any potential investor. He noted that even the supply and distribution of fuel—a strategic sector—has been privatized, demonstrating the depth of Cuba’s commitment to economic transformation. He concluded by underscoring that this is a favorable moment for Iranian companies, especially large chain enterprises, to enter the Cuban market, provided they move swiftly to understand the new investment laws.

Havana business delegation; from dialogue to due diligence

Moving from high-level political discourse to operational engagement, an Iranian business delegation led by ICCIMA Head Samad Hassanzadeh visited Havana in late November 2025 to explore concrete investment projects aimed at reviving Cuba’s idle industrial capacity.

The delegation’s agenda was far more specific than the Tehran discussions, focusing on rehabilitating dormant factories and establishing joint ventures in sectors where Iran possesses proven technical expertise. In meetings with Cuban officials, Hassanzadeh requested a comprehensive list of non-operational plants, particularly in sugar and cement, to guide Iranian companies seeking investment opportunities. He argued that Iran could play a pivotal role in restoring Cuba’s once-prominent sugar industry, leveraging Iranian machinery and agricultural technology. Similarly, he noted that joint cement production would be more cost-effective than continued imports, and Iranian investors were prepared to construct several cement plants, provided clear regulatory conditions and investment guarantees are established.

Industrial revival and mining as a long-term pillar

ICCIMA Deputy Head Ghadir Ghiyafteh expanded on the industrial front, describing mining as a cornerstone for enduring cooperation. He characterized Cuba as a resource-rich but underdeveloped mining market, where Iranian firms—with ad-

vanced technical expertise in mineral exploration, extraction, and processing—could contribute significantly. He specifically mentioned cobalt and nickel production, from geological surveys to processing, and noted that Iranian engineering companies are ready to assist in training Cuban specialists for a planned national steel plant. Khuzestan Steel Company has already signaled its readiness to collaborate. Ghiyafteh projected that a clear legal framework could help push bilateral trade volumes to one billion dollars within five years, targeting construction, roadbuilding, food industries, agriculture, and mining as preferred sectors for Iranian investors.

In a separate meeting with Cuba’s Minister of Domestic Trade, Hassanzadeh urged the preparation of a formal investment package tailored for Iranian companies. He reiterated Iran’s industrial depth across agriculture, mining, petrochemicals, tourism, and energy, but emphasized the necessity of transparent rules and investment security. The Cuban minister responded positively, stating that President Miguel Díaz-Canel had ordered ministries to identify opportunities for importing food, clothing, and consumer goods from Iran, following the 2025 Havana International Fair (FIHAV). The minister stressed that Cuba aims to boost domestic production as a buffer against U.S. sanctions and is prepared to support foreign investors willing to assume risk.

High-level endorsement and the way forward

The visit culminated in a symbolic yet significant moment during Iran National Day at FIHAV 2025. Hassanzadeh declared that the presence of Iranian manufacturers reflected a shared commitment to expanding cooperation, urging both countries to translate political ties into economic outcomes. He outlined additional areas for Iranian contribution, including dam construction, road and housing projects, hydropower development, and renewable energy. Cuba’s Industry Minister, Eloy Álvarez Martínez, echoed this sentiment, calling for practical cooperation to match political solidarity, citing the 2023 comprehensive cooperation agreement as an essential framework for small, medium, and large firms to form direct partnerships.

Most notably, President Miguel Díaz-Canel personally visited Iran’s pavilion at the fair, where he was received by Hassanzadeh, Ghiyafteh, and Iran’s Ambassador to Cuba, Zabiollah Naderi. The Cuban president engaged with representatives of Iranian companies, learning about their products and export capacities. He expressed hope that the exhibition would pave the way for enhanced mutual cooperation and emphasized that his government supports the expansion of economic exchanges and joint investments. His visit underscored the political will at the highest level to pursue tangible results, particularly in petrochemicals, food industries, industrial equipment, and commercial services.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

IDRO, SATBA pledge closer ties to boost renewable energy development

TEHRAN- A meeting was held between the Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade and Chairman of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO)’s Board of Directors, and the Deputy Minister of Energy and Head of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), with the aim of strengthening joint cooperation and accelerating the implementation of renewable energy projects.

According to IRNA from IDRO, Farshad Moqimi, Deputy Minister and Chairman of IDRO’s Board of Directors, at this meeting, referring

to the organization’s actions in the field of facilitation and construction of solar power plants, said: The Organization for Development, with serious targeting for the development of solar power plants and participation in numerous projects in industrial towns and various regions of the country, is seeking to solve the energy problem of industries through diversifying sources and using clean energy.

Moqimi, emphasizing cooperation and synergy between the two entities, IDRO and SATBA, considered the role of the industry sector

important in the development of renewable energy and the implementation of related projects.

Mohsen Tarzatab, Deputy Minister of Energy and Head of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), also at this meeting, emphasizing the necessity of strengthening cooperation and interaction between the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, described the development of joint cooperation as essential for accelerating the implementation of renewable energy projects.

Iraq's uncertain future amid America's "withdrawal"

By Ali Minabi

TEHRAN – Iraq's political, economic, and security fragility amid mounting U.S. pressure threatens its sovereignty and stability, while placing the burden of its accumulated crises on ordinary citizens.

What is unfolding today amounts to a carefully engineered American effort to entangle a state that is being deliberately weakened in a battle to seize a "sovereignty" defined by conditions that Iraqis themselves did not write.

The sensitive matter revolves around the purported U.S. withdrawal from Iraq by the end of September, as well as the U.S. demand that all weapons be placed under state control. It requires dusting off files from the bitter memories of the period Iraq endured: the breakdown of security, sectarian war, political conflict, the near-total absence of public services, and the lack of stable and dignified livelihoods.

Among the issues that have flooded social media and become the subject of public discussion are the following:

The Ba'athist voices: These are the voices of the so-called "return" project, which the former executioners of Iraq hope to use to pour the oil of a tried-and-tested alternative onto the fire of the neighboring enemy. In reality, this is nothing more than a convenient scapegoat that does not actually exist.

Jurf al-Nasr: A card being sharpened and wielded to reignite sectarian war. Jurf al-Nasr is the closest area to the capital Baghdad that Daesh reached in the summer of 2014. At the time, some members of the terror group were falsely accused of belonging to Sunni tribes.

Political failure: Something that observers of Iraq's political scene have come to recognize before, during, and after every government, albeit with different timing, implications, and consequences arising from the actions of the U.S. architects of Iraq's "emerging democracy."

Security and public-service failures: This is a particularly sensitive issue that conceals the backbone of Iraq's post-2003 crisis. Despite the abundance of logical and realistic avenues for addressing it, there has been a failure to produce fundamental solutions capable of removing the country from the weaknesses and vulnerabilities created by a political mindset that monopolizes decision-making and planning, sidelines competence and professionalism, and creates a corrupt environment in which



reconstruction and development projects are exploited.

Reviving the specter of protests: The fact that the scale of protests in Baghdad and other provinces is rising as the countdown to September starts is hardly a coincidence. It appears to involve a calculated effort to exploit the situation. The demands themselves are realistic and legitimate, making them an ideal gateway for turning the protests into a national security threat. The events of October 2019 offer a clear lesson in how popular anger can be provoked and then exploited with outside interference.

The timing of the U.S. withdrawal represents an attempt to rearrange Iraq's internal and external cards by exploiting the pressure points of the economy and sectarianism.

Because Iraq is dealing with a web of actors and forces, it must also be examined by the influences surrounding them. The latest statement by Kataib Hezbollah, delivered by its security official Abu Mujahid al-Assaf, confirms the position of the Iraqi resistance: an agreement to disarm would leave Iraq defenseless, with no internal protector, while facing accelerating economic hardship and an unrelenting sectarian conflict.

What is truly striking is not the tone or timing of the statement, but the silence hanging over the many political forces and parties that claim to be "patriotic."

Why do they not tell the people the truth about what is happening? And why this abandonment? Do the Iraqi people deserve this kind of unspoken abandonment? Are they to be left with the politicians they entrusted with at the helm, sailing them toward shores where dignity and honor are replaced by humiliation, internal bloodshed, and submission to American dictates?

The truth is that this silence does not reflect helplessness; rather, it reflects an implicit agreement to "let matters take their course."

It is as though there is a broad

understanding, even if it has never been publicly declared, that the state will be weakened, the resistance will lose its weapons, and society will remain divided along sectarian lines. Why? Because this reality both serves and harms different interests at the same time:

The United States exits the immediate sphere of responsibility and leaves its regional and Persian Gulf allies to manage affairs. It remains in the control room without stepping onto the battlefield except on its own terms. This is the first crucial objective.

It then moves to the second phase of the project: turning Iraq into a staging ground and supply base for the decisive confrontation with the Islamic Republic of Iran. That is the second crucial objective, because Iraq would become Iran's most dangerous flank in terms of national security.

The political parties retain their political influence, even if the state itself is weakened, while the resistance remains a form of "legitimate opposition."

The court preachers and corrupt crisis profiteers will control a significant portion of the media machinery, in particular U.S.-funded TV channels, which have already embarked on multiple campaigns of intimidation and misinformation, thereby creating the appropriate ground for translating these forces and interests into action.

This scenario is not the product of a conspiracy. Rather, it is the result of intersecting interests and circumstances that have imposed themselves on Iraq.

The United States wants to gradually weaken Iraq; Iran is preoccupied with its war with the United States and the Zionist regime in addition to economic warfare; some Persian Gulf states want an opportunity to weaken the anti-Israeli Shia alliance, even if indirectly.

Iraq, as both a state and a people, therefore remains the loser, stripped of the political courage and strategic foresight needed to say "no" to U.S. pressure. And

this is precisely what Washington needs from any state: a "legitimate" government that carries out "orders" without argument.

This is particularly dangerous because the line separating the illegal war being waged against Iran from the war being waged against Iraq has become increasingly blurred. After the United States failed to achieve its objectives through its broader confrontation with the Islamic Republic, the campaign of economic terrorism failed to bring down Iran, while military action failed to produce a decisive victory, it turned toward a policy of "encirclement from the periphery."

And because a "weak" Iraq, which shares both a border and a cultural and religious heritage with Iran, has become the ideal instrument, it will serve as a chess piece in the pressure campaign against Tehran. In this way, Iran will once again find itself surrounded.

This approach also encourages Washington's sectarian partners to stoke the embers of Sunni-Shia conflict. Added to this is the revival of Ba'athist rhetoric, not to remind people of the past for purposes of comparison, but to summon its ghosts to frighten the present.

Economic collapse as a weapon of war

Because hunger and austerity have become America's alternative armies to conventional military force, the U.S. architects of this project have planted in the path of Iraq's future: the threat of economic collapse, hunger, and the withholding of salaries.

This is a grim possibility for a state that depends almost entirely on oil revenues and is already struggling even to pay public-sector salaries; a state whose currency has weakened against the dollar and whose streets are more over the rising cost of living. Moreover, the solutions proposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are the same old prescriptions: reducing public spending, meaning, in practice, cutting salaries; opening markets, meaning allowing foreign goods to destroy domestic industry; and implementing "liberal" reforms, meaning turning the state into an intermediary for foreign capital.

The inevitable result of this convergence, entrenchment, and mutual exploitation at the expense of the country's higher interests will not be a stable Iraq. Instead, Iraq will become an arena for conflict managed by others, while an illusion of a nonexistent national debate is maintained.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

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Straight Truth

TEHRAN TIMES

5

Israel intensifies airstrikes, artillery shelling across southern Lebanon

From page 1 ► The weekend violence centered heavily on the strategic Ali Al Taher heights east of Nabatieh.

Israeli fighter jets hammered the ridge and the adjacent Dabsha hills with heavy missiles, while artillery batteries fired illegal white phosphorus shells.

Some have indicated that these strikes may be preparing the battlefield for broader incursions to isolate the heights and create a so-called buffer zone.

Similar tactical maneuvers define the central sector. Ground units launched military operations targeting Beit Yahoun, Haddatha, and Ayta al-Jabal, villages that had escaped direct Israeli occupation prior to the supposed June truce.

On Monday, the sheer destruction accelerated across dozens of civilian areas.

In the border town of Houla, Israeli engineering units deployed heavy bulldozers to raze civilian infrastructure while artillery bombarded the adjacent Wadi al-Saloqi valley.

Further west, an Israeli quadcopter dropped sound bombs to terrorize residents in Al-Man-souri.

Israeli forces stationed in Khiam systematically detonated residential blocks in the town's western neighborhood near the Al-Mabarrat schools.

Deliberately ignited fires consumed nearby agricultural properties. Thick smoke blanketed the sky above the leveled homes.



Israeli warplanes simultaneously hit the Dawha neighborhood in Kfar Romman.

A drone strike there targeted a motorcycle, assassinating two individuals.

A massive explosion ripped through Haddatha following yet another deliberate military demolition.

Over 45 separate strikes punished the south within a 24-hour span, relentlessly tearing through Qanatra, Barachit, Mayfadoun, Mays al-Jabal, and Srobbine.

The human cost of this U.S.-backed war continues to compound. Lebanese health authorities count over 4,348 people killed and 12,307 wounded since the March offensive began, with more than a million displaced.

Israel routinely ignores United Nations resolutions demanding it leave occupied Palestinian and Syrian lands, instead applying the exact same expansionist violence to Lebanon.

Blood waters famous lemon trees in Sudan's Bara

Bara was known for its lemon trees. Scores were planted in this North Kordofan market town, and as winter turned to spring the streets were thick with the scent of their blossom.

Today, after sieges, battles and massacres of civilians, Bara is destitute. Its trees have been showered with blood instead of rain.

Before the Sudanese war broke out in April 2023, around 100,000 people lived in Bara.

Some of them can still be seen around the town, but they lie lifeless on the roads, refused burial by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitaries who gunned them down.

Middle East Eye has spoken to several sources who visited Bara in recent days, people who gained rare access after the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and its allies managed to decisively retake the town from the RSF in July.

They described how corpses lay everywhere. The luckiest of Bara's dead were sitting in shallow graves or entombed in the relative privacy of their homes.

Rotting flesh has replaced lemon blossom as Bara's signature scent. If left undressed, an engineer working in the town warns, these bodies could poison its entire water supply.

"Bara's water sources come from underground water and wells that have a depth

of no more than 20 to 30 metres, and it's very probable that the decomposed bodies may have mixed with these sources," the engineer told MEE.

"If this happens, we may face a big threat to the people's lives and even the livestock."

'Everything had been destroyed'

Control of Bara, which lies on the strategic route that links Khartoum to resource-rich Kordofan, has seesawed in recent months.

After subjecting it to several raids, the RSF captured the city in October 2025, using it as a base to pummel SAF stronghold el-Obeid, 60km away, with drone strikes.

The RSF, a UAE-backed paramilitary force accused of genocide by the United States and several rights groups, has committed atrocities across Sudan.

In Darfur, its ethnically charged massacres left tens of thousands dead in the cities of el-Geneina and el-Fasher.

Osman Abdulatif, a member of Bara's popular resistance committee backing the SAF against the RSF, believes similar scenes took place in his town, too.

"The clashes and RSF atrocities that have taken place in Bara haven't been reported like in other areas, but we believe that the RSF has killed hundreds of people inside Bara and the villages around it," he told MEE in el-Obeid.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israel steps up attacks on Syria hours after top Syrian diplomat meets Mossad chief

From page 1 ► The raids unfolded hours after the top diplomat of the Ahmad "al-Jolani" al-Sharaa government, Asaad al-Shaibani, sat across from Mossad Director Roman Gofman in Jordan, according to reports from Axios and AFP.

The U.S.-mediated meeting was advertised as an effort to lower regional temperatures following an August 18 Israeli strike on the Abu al-Duhur airbase in Idlib.

Instead, the rapid sequence of military operations demonstrated the stark reality on the ground: the so-called diplomatic negotiations in Amman have done nothing to halt Israeli troop movements inside Syria.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented seven Israeli ground incursions across Daraa and Quneitra within a single 24-hour window on Monday.

Local monitors counted over 60 military violations between August 15 and August 21 alone, ranging from land-leveling and

surveillance camera installations to makeshift military checkpoints.

Rather than isolated raids, these operations form a continuous campaign to carve out operational freedom deep inside Syrian territory.

Air operations follow the same aggressive logic. The August 18 attack on Abu al-Duhur involved eight separate waves of strikes targeting runways and storage facilities.

Israeli officials claimed the strike pre-empted a Turkish military buildup at the base. Both Ankara and Damascus denied the existence of any such deployment, while U.S. Special Envoy Tom Barrack called the bombing "an unnecessary escalation."

Yet, days after briefly announcing a pause in contacts over the incident, al-Shaibani traveled to Jordan to discuss a proposed U.S.-supervised special operations room supposedly meant to deconflict Israeli, Turkish, and Syrian military move-



Asaad al-Shaibani



Roman Gofman

ments.

Since the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in December 2024, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has framed the new political reality in Damascus as a strategic opportunity.

Tel Aviv unilaterally voided the 1974 disengagement agreement, seized Mount Hermon, and established forward outposts in the buffer zone.

Roughly 80 percent of subsequent Israeli air strikes have hit Quneitra, Daraa, and Damascus, aiming to keep Syria's military

infrastructure dismantled.

Accommodation has brought the "al-Jolani" al-Sharaa government no security.

In Jordan, the Syrian side reportedly insisted on a full Israeli withdrawal to pre-December 2024 lines and reaffirmed its right to rebuild a national army.

Tel Aviv treats negotiations as a stall tactic to solidify its presence on the ground, while Washington brokers talks without placing boundaries on Israel's aggressive maneuvers.



Overcome with raw anguish, a young boy screams in grief while surrounded by weeping women during the funeral of -14year-old Islam Ahmad Maher Ajouri on August 2026 ,24. Ajouri was killed by Israeli gunfire during a raid on the Askar Refugee Camp in the occupied West Bank.

Izadyar aims to make Asian Para Games medal record untouchable

TEHRAN - Iranian para-swimmer Shahin Izadyar, the most decorated Paralympic swimmer in the country's history, is determined to add to his record haul of 24 Asian Para Games medals at the upcoming Nagoya Games.

Izadyar is currently training in Mashhad as part of Iran's 15th preparatory camp for the Games, which will run until Sept. 29. The Nagoya Asian Para Games are scheduled to begin on Oct. 19.

Speaking to Tehran Times, Izadyar said he is in good shape and focused on delivering strong performances in Nagoya.

"I am doing everything I can to achieve the best results within my ability. I am preparing well and hope to return home with good results," he said.

Izadyar made history at the 2018 Asian Para Games in Jakarta, winning an extraordinary six gold medals and one silver. At the Hangzhou edition, however, he collected two silver and three bronze medals.

The Iranian star stressed that his performance in Hangzhou should not be viewed as a failure.

"Winning those medals was valuable in itself," Izadyar said. "If we consider that performance a failure, we should remember that Michael Phelps once won eight gold medals at a single Olympic Games. It was never expected that such a level of success would be repeated at every edition."

With competition in para-swimming often decided by fractions of a second, Izadyar knows that medals cannot be guaranteed.

"Winning a medal cannot be predicted, especially in swimming, where hundredths of a second can make the difference," he said. "Nevertheless, I will give everything I have to stand on the podium."

The veteran para-swimmer now has one clear objective in Nagoya: to return home with more medals and make his record of 24 Asian Para Games medals even harder to surpass.

Wheelchair basketball coach Soltani pleased with Turkey camp

TEHRAN - Iran national wheelchair basketball team head coach Behrouz Soltani expressed satisfaction with his team's preparations in Turkey, saying the squad followed their plans and are now ready to begin their campaign at the Ottawa 2026 IWBF World Championships.

The Iranian national wheelchair basketball team, preparing for the upcoming World Championship, held a training camp in Turkey and played six friendly matches against Turkey and Poland. Iran recorded four wins and two defeats during the camp.

Soltani said the camp and the friendly matches had significantly contributed to the team's preparations and helped the coaching staff gain a deeper understanding of the players and the team's overall condition ahead of the 2026 IWBF World Championships.

"Turkey, as the hosts, and Poland were our opponents in the tournament. We played three matches against each team. We defeated Poland in all three games, while we beat Turkey once," Soltani said.

"However, the main objective of the camp and these matches was not the results. We wanted to improve our preparations for the World Championship, and we achieved that very well."

The head coach added that his players' performances in Turkey had increased his confidence ahead of the tournament.

"Based on what I saw from the players in Turkey, I am more hopeful that we can reach an ideal level for the World Championship," he said.

The World Championship will also determine the continental qualification berths for the

Paralympics qualifying tournament. Soltani stressed that Iran will be targeting positive results while also using the competition as an important step toward the Asian Para Games.

Iran's next training camp will begin in Tehran on Sept. 6 and continue without interruption until the team's departure for Canada.

Regarding Iran's opponents, Soltani said his team have been drawn into Group D alongside Morocco, Germany and Canada.

"Our opponents are currently playing preparation tournaments. We monitor their situation on a daily basis because, if we want to achieve our desired result at the World Championship, we must get positive results from the group stage," he said.

Soltani also confirmed that Iran's 12-player squad for the World Championship has already been finalized and expressed hope that preparations would continue according to plan until the team travel to Canada and the tournament officially begins.

The Ottawa 2026 IWBF World Championships will be held from Sept. 9 to 19.

Iran handball team edge out Serbian team in friendly

TEHRAN - Iran's men's handball team continued their training camp in Serbia with a hard-fought victory, defeating Grago Jovac of the Serbian Premier League 29-28 in a tightly contested friendly match.

The squad, which began its Serbian camp on Friday, are preparing for the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya. This match was just the latest step in an intensive eight-day program that will see the Iranian side play five friendly fixtures in total against local opposition.

The one-goal triumph showcased the team's resilience and tactical discipline against a physically imposing Serbian opponent. With the margin so narrow, every defensive stand and counterattack mattered, and the Iranian players delivered when it counted most.

Playing in Serbia provides valuable experience against European styles of handball, which are known for their pace and physicality. These matches give Iran's coaching staff a chance to test different lineups, rotate players, and build the chemistry needed for a strong showing at the Asian Games.

The friendly win has boosted morale within the camp. The players return to training with renewed confidence, knowing they can compete against quality opposition.

As the camp continues, all eyes remain on Nagoya 2026, where Iran hope to challenge Asia's elite and bring home a medal. Each friendly brings them one step closer to that goal.

Iran lose to China at 2026 AVC Women Asian Championship

TEHRAN - Iran lost to China 3-0 (25-14, 25-23, 25-14) at the 2026 AVC Women Asian Continental Championship on Monday.

Yushan Zhuang led China with 18 points, while Iran's Fatemeh Khalili bagged nine points.

Iran, who had started the campaign with a 3-1 win over Chinese Taipei in Pool A, will face Iraq on Tuesday.

The 2026 AVC Women's Volleyball Continental Championship is the 23rd staging of the AVC Women's Volleyball Continental Championship, a biennial international volleyball tournament by the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) with China Volleyball Association (CVA).

The tournament takes place at Tianjin Olympic Center Gymnasium in Tianjin, China from Aug. 21 to 30.

The top eight teams at the end of the preliminary round will advance to the quarterfinals.

The quarterfinals are scheduled for Aug. 27-28, followed by the semifinals on Aug. 29. The bronze-medal match and final will take place on Aug. 30.

Kerman's Pateh has potential to become global brand: official

TEHRAN - Pateh, a traditional embroidered handicraft deeply rooted in the history and cultural identity of Iran's Kerman province, has the potential to become a recognized global brand if commercialization, branding and market development are strengthened, a provincial handicrafts official said.

"Pateh is not merely a handicraft product, but a rooted art that is intertwined with the history and culture of Kerman and reflects an important part of the province's cultural and artistic heritage," Kerman's deputy handicrafts chief Gholamreza Farrokhi said.

The official added that the craft has been passed down through generations within families and local communities, with this continuity playing an important role in preserving its authenticity and ensuring its cultural reproduction.

Pateh is a hand-stitched art form largely based on the skills and creativity of women in Kerman. Farrokhi said supporting the craft could help generate income for families, strengthen the local economy and expand home-based employment.

He stressed the need to give greater attention to the commercialization of Pateh while



preserving its authenticity and quality. Market-oriented designs, professional packaging, standardization, marketing and the creation of sales networks could increase the added value of Pateh products and strengthen the livelihoods of artisans, he said.

Professional and targeted branding is also essential for promoting Pateh nationally and internationally, Farrokhi added. A distinctive visual identity, a clear narrative, a credible trademark and an appropriate marketing strategy could make the craft more recognizable in target markets and facilitate its entry into international markets.

"Pateh of Kerman has the po-

Dome installation begins at Shams Tabrizi mausoleum in Khoy



TEHRAN - The installation of the dome at the mausoleum of Shams Tabrizi in Khoy, a major architectural project in northwestern Iran, has begun, according to the director general of

West Azarbaijan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department.

Morteza Safari said on Monday that the project's distinctive engineering and architectural

features would make the dome a prominent urban landmark in Khoy.

The dome will have a total height of 15.5 meters, placing it among the tallest domes built in northwestern Iran, Safari said.

He added that the first phase of the project, involving construction of the concrete structure, had been completed, while work was continuing on a 9.5-meter-high steel framework.

The dome has been designed as a double-shell structure. Its exterior will feature traditional brickwork, while the interior will be decorated with plasterwork and karbandi, a traditional Iranian architectural technique involving geometric ornamental vaulting.

According to Safari, the brick-

ized exhibitions, cultural events and target markets, as well as through e-commerce and new media. Stronger links between artisans and commercial operators, along with improved packaging and presentation, could further raise awareness of the craft in domestic and international markets.

Pateh Douzi, in which colorful stitches cover much of the surface of a textile, is among Kerman's best-known traditional handicrafts and souvenirs.

Because textiles are vulnerable to deterioration, few ancient Pateh pieces have survived. However, accounts and travel documents dating to the Safavid era indicate that the craft was practiced in Kerman at the time. One of the oldest surviving examples, dating to around 1869, was used as a cover for the tombstone of Shah Nematollah Vali, the Persian Sufi master and poet who lived in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Farrokhi described Pateh as a "living heritage" that connects Kerman's past with the present and future, saying intelligent branding and commercialization could help transform the traditional art from a valued local craft into a product with a recognizable international identity.

work has been inspired by historical periods and incorporates innovative, project-specific techniques intended to distinguish the structure from similar architectural projects.

The dome is expected to serve not only as an important cultural and memorial structure but also as an example of contemporary architectural and engineering achievement in northwestern Iran, he said.

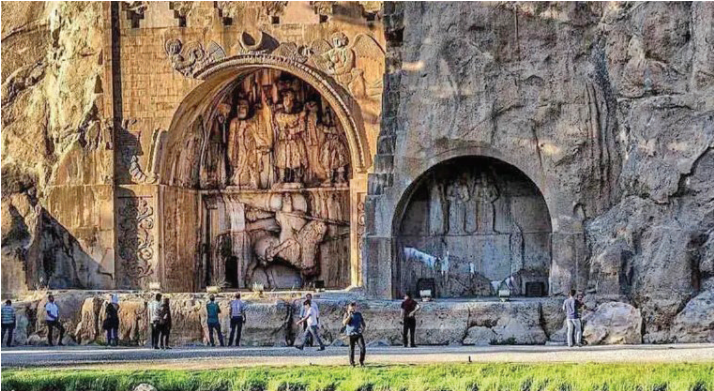
Shams Tabrizi (1185-1248) was a 13th-century Persian mystic whose teachings profoundly influenced Jalal al-Din Rumi. He is the namesake of Rumi's Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi and is traditionally associated with Rumi's spiritual transformation. Khoy, in West Azarbaijan province, has historically served as a crossroads of culture and commerce.

Iraqi students to become 'tourism ambassadors' for Kermanshah

TEHRAN - Iraqi students studying in Iran's Kermanshah province are expected to be trained as "tourism ambassadors" to help promote the province's historical and cultural attractions in their own country, a provincial tourism official said on Sunday.

The plan was discussed during a coordination meeting between the Kermanshah's Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts and the head of Kermanshah branch of Islamic Azad University, which focused on potential areas of cooperation in tourism.

Fahimeh Roshan, the depart-



ment's deputy for tourism, said tourism guide training courses for students were also being considered. Graduates could take the relevant examination and, if successful, obtain tourism guide

cards and benefit from related facilities.

Roshan highlighted Kermanshah's extensive historical heritage, noting that the province

has more than 4,000 registered and unregistered historical sites.

"Training tourism guides can create employment in the near future and help promote and introduce the culture and history of this region," she said.

Roshan also emphasized the growing role of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in tourism, saying the province sought to draw on students' knowledge and the capabilities of young people to strengthen Kermanshah's presence in digital tourism and AI and introduce its attractions to international audiences.

AI workshop explores technology's role in tourism development in West Azerbaijan



TEHRAN - An educational workshop on the applications of artificial intelligence in tourism

was held in Iran's West Azarbaijan province to strengthen the capabilities of tourism profes-

sionals, improve digital services and explore the potential of emerging technologies in developing the sector.

Managers of travel agencies, hoteliers and other tourism-sector professionals attended the workshop which was held on Sunday, Miras Aria reported.

The latest applications of artificial intelligence in the tourism industry were discussed during the training program, including the use of data mining to analyze traveler behavior, intelligent chatbots for providing round-the-clock services, and targeted

content production to attract tourists.

Participants were also introduced to successful international examples and ways of using AI-powered platforms to increase productivity and improve the performance of tourism businesses, the report said.

West Azarbaijan is located in northwestern Iran and borders Azerbaijan and Turkey to the north, Turkey and Iraq to the west, East Azarbaijan and Zanjan provinces to the east, and Kordestan province to the south.

Iran proposes BRICS to establish network centered on children’s human capital

TEHRAN – Iran’s representatives at the BRICS Child Futures Forum have proposed developing a BRICS knowledge network focused on children’s human capital.

Hosted by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the event was held on the sidelines of the 18th BRICS Academic Forum (BAF), held on August 23 in Lucknow, India.

The forum, titled ‘Investing in Children, Securing the Future: Human Capital for the Next BRICS Decade’, brought together policymakers, researchers, development practitioners, experts and youth representatives to discuss priorities for advancing child and adolescent wellbeing across BRICS. Discussions focused on investing in children as a foundation for human capital, alongside themes of health and nutrition, climate resilience, technology and innovation, youth leadership, and partnerships.

Addressing the forum, Iranian officials, Morteza Daman-Pak Jami, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), and former Ambassador to Lisbon, and Omid Babelian, Diplomat and Research Fellow, Institute for Political and



International Studies, detailed Iran’s perspectives and experiences in safeguarding children and strengthening human capital during crises, IRNA reported.

Daman-Pak Jami suggested that BRICS member states use available capacities, foster collaboration in education, health, youth, universities, science, technology, and social development, and then leverage them to forge a coherent approach to human capital.

Highlighting the importance of the life-cycle approach to human capital development, he stated that investment in human capital must begin in the early years of life and persist through early

childhood development, education, skills training, and entry into the labor market.

He also elaborated on the country’s achievements in health and children’s education.

Referring to illegal US-Israel attacks against Iran, he said the war was a blatant violation of international humanitarian law, and highlighted the need for upholding children’s right to education amidst war and crises.

“The attacks on Shajareh Tayyebbeh Elementary School in Minab, Hormozgan province, are a typical example of the humanitarian consequences of aggression and violation of children’s right to education and safety.

Schools must be safe environment for the education and upbringing of the next generation under all circumstances. The global community must not remain indifferent to attacks on children and educational institutions,” he further noted.

For his part, Babelian said protection, empowerment, and integration are three principles to strengthen human capital. Children and young people must retain access to education, healthcare, social protection, and essential services during crises, while also having the opportunity to participate meaningfully in shaping their own futures, he added.

“When we speak of human capital, I can no longer think of numbers and charts. For me, human capital has a face: the face of a child sitting in a classroom, a young person in a laboratory trying to discover a better medication, a student dreaming of building a better future, and families that—despite all hardships—still pin their hopes on their children’s tomorrow.

Protecting human capital should not be limited to saving their lives during crisis; it should ensure a future in which they can thrive.”

Iranian, Iraqi universities ink cooperation MOU

TEHRAN – Mazandaran University and Iraq’s Kut University have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to boost educational, research, and technological cooperation, and foster ties among the universities of the two countries.

During a meeting held in Iraq, representatives from the two universities expounded on their capacities, highlighting the need to enhance academic interactions, IRNA reported.

The signed MOU is centered on exchanging students and professors, holding collaborative educational courses, expanding scientific and research programs, as well as establishing joint educational majors.

Boosting ties in evolving scientific and technological fields, including implementing joint research projects and organizing joint courses in artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and advanced materials, were among other issues discussed.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Iranian officials paid a visit to the Persian language teaching center at Kut University to learn more about the capacities and activities of the center, and discussed ways to enhance collaborations with the center.

Mazandaran University has recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Iraq’s Wasit University to expand international scientific cooperation.

Iraq seeks to boost scientific, academic ties with Iran

On August 6, Iraqi officials in a meeting with Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, called for expanding academic, scientific, and technologi-

cal cooperation with Iran.

The science minister met Iraq’s Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Haider Abd-Daht AL-Rubaie, Iraq’s Minister of Health, Abdul-Hussein al-Mousawi, and Acting Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Abdul Hussein Al-Mussawi, in Baghdad, IRNA reported.

During the meeting, the two sides underscored the need to expedite the implementation of the previously signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs).

Sharing Iran’s expertise in higher education development to achieve quantitative and qualitative goals, addressing the needs of Iraq’s substantial youth population, as well as attracting genius Iraqi students, and enhancing research collaborations were among the key focuses of the talks.

Simaei-Sarraf also held a meeting with Iraq’s National Wisdom Movement leader Sayyed Ammar al-Hakin.

Underlining the extensive scientific and academic capacities of Iran and Iraq, both parties exchanged views on strategies for promoting scientific cooperation, expanding joint research collaborations, and developing academic interactions between the higher education institutions of the two countries.

In April, Simaei-Sarraf and Al-Aboudi underlined the need to boost scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries.

The officials also discussed ways to develop collaborations on artificial intelligence (AI) utilizing the capacities of the two nations, IRNA reported.



During a meeting held in Tehran on April 18, Al-Aboudi announced that the establishment of a branch of Tehran University of Medical Sciences in Iraq has been put on the agenda.

For his part, Simaei-Sarraf voiced Iran’s readiness to share the country’s scientific, research, and educational achievements with Iraq to help enhance bilateral ties.

The official said that Iranian and Iraqi students have conducted a total of 350 joint research projects so far, which needs to be improved considering the available capacities.

Referring to an upcoming Iran-Iraq science week, which is scheduled to be held in Isfahan and Fars provinces, Simaei-Sarraf said the event was delayed because of the [US-Israeli imposed] war, but it will be held at the earliest convenience.

As the two officials agreed, AI and smart education will be among the topics to be discussed during the Iran-Iraq science week. The event is expected to lay the basis for holding a joint conference on AI in the near future.

Some 60 earthquakes hit Iran in a week

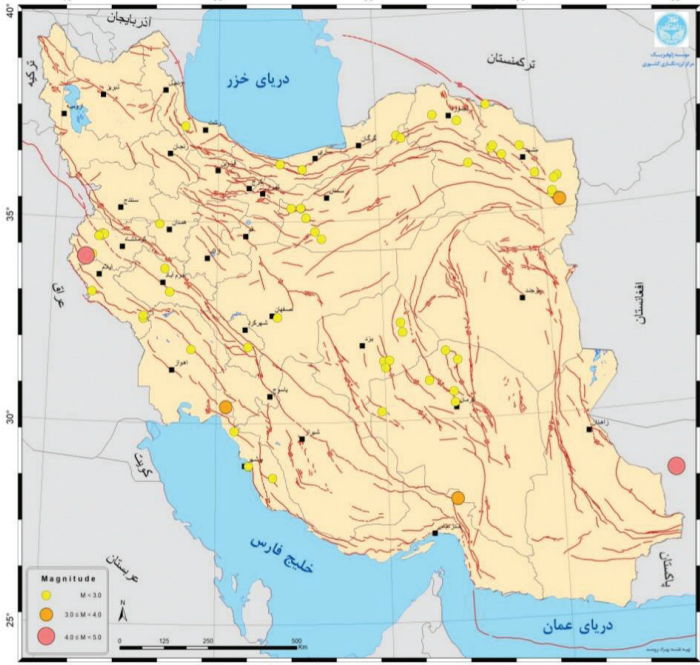
TEHRAN – A total of 59 earthquakes have been recorded across the country in a week from August 15 to 21, according to the seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Statistically, 54 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3, three earthquakes with a magnitude between 3 and 4, and two earthquakes with a magnitude between 4 and 5 have occurred in the country, irsc reported.

Of the total quakes, one had a magnitude of 4.2 on the Richter scale, which occurred on August 19th in Kermanshah provinces.

Among the provinces of the country, Khorasan Razavi experienced the highest number of earthquakes with 13, followed by Kermanshah and Kerman each with 7, and Semnan with 6 earthquakes.

During the same period, no earthquakes were recorded in Tehran,



East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Ardabil, Alborz, South Khorasan, Zanjan, Fars, Qom, Qazvin, Kordes-

tan, Gilan, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, Markazi, and Hormozgan provinces. A total of 2,380 earthquakes with

a magnitude of more than 2.5 on the Richter scale were recorded across the country over the past calendar year (March 2025–March 2026), according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran, Mehr news agency reported.

Out of recorded earthquakes, 910 had a magnitude greater than 3, 130 had a magnitude greater than 4, and 15 had a magnitude greater than 5 on the Richter scale.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes in the world occur in Iran, but more than 6 percent of the victims of the world’s earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes.

National Youth Population Award slated for November

TEHRAN – The fourth National Youth Population Award is set to be held on November 15, with the aim of strengthening the institution of the family, advancing effective demographic policies and initiatives, and encouraging greater public participation in implementing the Youth Population Law.

Organized by the National Population Headquarters, the event aims to raise public awareness about the importance of population issues, encourage young people to get married and start a family, showcase successful and inspiring role models, strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation and synergy, as well as support research, innovation, and initiatives in the youth population field, IRNA reported.

Highlighting principles and values such as sustainable population development, social justice, public participation, innovation and science-based approaches, and the preservation of human dignity, the event seeks to recognize leading individuals, families, institutions, and organizations, and promote successful experiences in fostering youth population.

The event will be organized across seven categories including media, non-governmental organizations, executive agencies, private companies and institutions, managers, elites, and families. The measures, performance, and actions of the participants will be assessed in accordance with the indicators, metrics, and points approved by the National Population Headquarters.

‘Aging rate in Iran exceeds global average’

The rate of aging in Iran is growing faster than the global average, so that the country will be among the oldest countries in the world in 25 years, the head of the Welfare Organization said in January.

Based on the World Health Organization (WHO) age classification in 2025, the elderly population constitutes those aged 60 and older. Accordingly, 14 percent of the country’s population is old now, ISNA quoted Seyed Ja-

vad Hosseini as saying.

A population is considered to be young, with seven percent of people being 60 or older; when seven to 14 percent of people are over 60, the country is said to be aging. Countries with 14 to 21 percent and 21 to 27 percent of people aged 60 or over are aged and super-aged, respectively, the official said.

In the Iranian year 1395 (2016 – 2017), only 9.5 percent of the population was aged over 60, and the global average aging rate was about 12 and 13 percent. In the Iranian year 1415 (2036 – 2037), the figure will rise to 15 percent in Iran and 16.5 percent in the world. However, in 1430 (2051 – 2052), the figure will reach 31 percent in Iran, and 21.5 percent in the world. The life expectancy in Iran has increased, but the birth rate has lowered, Hosseini stressed.

According to the latest census, the number of aged citizens in the country is growing by 3.62 percent, which is five times faster than the total population growth rate, which is 1.24 percent. For the time being, elderly women account for 52.3 percent of the total population, outnumbering men (47.7 percent), ISNA quoted Saber Jabbari, an official with the health ministry, as saying.

Despite offering incentives to encourage childbearing in line with the youth population law, the desired growth in the youth population has not been accomplished yet. It is one of the most important challenges facing the country.

“At best, Iran’s population with a total fertility rate of 2.5 will reach 102,890,000 by the next seven years,” IIRB quoted Mohammad-Javad Mahmoudi, an official with the Civil Registration Organization, as saying.

The official noted that the fertility rate has remained stable at around 1.6 over the past two years. This trend has heightened concerns about a continued decline in population growth in the coming years and the growing likelihood of Iran becoming one of the world’s oldest countries.

Iran attends STI Ministerial Meeting in India

TEHRAN – The president of the Iran National Science Foundation (INSF) participated in the 14th BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Ministerial Meeting held on August 21 in Chennai, India.

The meeting, held on Friday, brought together delegates from BRICS member states including Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.

Senior officials and representatives from BRICS member states discussed ways to expand scientific, technological, and innovative cooperation, strengthen knowledge-based economies, and benefit from the capacities of BRICS member states, IRNA reported.

On the sidelines of the event, Mohammad-Reza Hormozinejad met with Umesh V. Waghmare, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.

The officials explored the potential to develop scientific and technological ties between Iran and India within the BRICS framework.

The 14th meeting was held under the theme ‘Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability’. It placed a people-centred and humanity-first approach at the heart of STI cooperation, with emphasis on sustainable development, resilient and high-quality growth, social inclusiveness and the use of innovation and technology to improve the welfare and quality of life of people across BRICS nations.

Emerging Technologies (such as Artificial Intelligence, quantum technologies, advanced materials, biotechnology), inclusive Innovation (the idea that technological innovation should remain accessible, affordable, trusted and sustainable) were among key focuses of the meeting.

Tehran, New Delhi to boost scientific ties

Iranian and Indian officials highlighted the need to foster scientific ties between the two countries, particularly in education, research, technology, and innovation sectors.

Acting Minister for Science, Research and Technology of Iran, Masoud Shams-Bakhsh, and India’s Minister of Education, Shri Pralhad Joshi,

met on Friday on the sidelines of the 13th BRICS Education Ministers’ Meeting held from August 5 to 7 in Odisha, India.

The meeting focused on expanding academic interactions among Iranian and Indian universities, promoting cooperation among scientific institutions, enhancing educational opportunities for students and researchers, and benefiting from existing capacities and digital education to empower the new generation and promote innovation, IRNA reported.

Moreover, Shams-Bakhsh, along with Mohammad-Nabi Shahiki Tash, Deputy Minister for Technology and Innovation, Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and their delegation paid a visit to India’s International Center for Genetic Engineering (ICGEB), ICGEB.org reported.

The delegation was received by the Director of ICGEB New Delhi, who, together with the Centre’s Group Leaders, engaged in productive discussions on advancing scientific collaboration, promoting research partnerships, and exploring opportunities for future cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The interaction highlighted the shared commitment to fostering excellence in biotechnology, innovation, and capacity building through international scientific engagement.

Discussions focused on enhancing scientific cooperation, fostering research partnerships, providing training to Iranian researchers, and exploring future opportunities in biotechnology and innovation.

As part of the visit, the delegation toured the ICGEB Biofoundry and several of the Centre’s state-of-the-art research facilities. The visit provided an overview of ICGEB New Delhi’s cutting-edge research programmes, advanced technological platforms, and innovation ecosystem, showcasing the Centre’s contributions to biotechnology research in human health, agriculture, industrial biotechnology, and sustainable development.

The visit reaffirmed the importance of international partnerships in addressing global scientific challenges and strengthening cooperation in science, research, and technology.

“The Suicide Shop” will remain on stage until September 4 at the Homa Theater, located at Ziba Dead-End, Nofel Loshato St., Hafez St.