

Trump's "help is on the way": the TOEFL ban edition

By Mehdi Garshasbi

TEHRAN – The United States is increasingly making education itself a target of economic pressure on Iran, raising a fundamental question: if Washington claims to target the Iranian government rather than the Iranian people, why are ordinary students being denied access to internationally recognized educational opportunities?

The US Treasury Department indefinitely suspended General License G on August 24, a measure that had for years permitted certain educational and academic services in Iran.

The authorization encompassed standardized testing activities and services associated with university admissions. Following the suspension of the authorization, the U.S.-based Educational Testing Service (ETS) confirmed the immediate suspension of TOEFL and GRE testing services in the country. ▶ Page 7

Netanyahu and the approaching election

By Ali Minabi

TEHRAN – Benjamin Netanyahu's election strategy is based on keeping his camp united and avoiding a prison sentence domestically or in The Hague as a war criminal.

Netanyahu is focused on only one issue these days: the next election, which is less than two months away, particularly in light of the figures emerging from public opinion polls. ▶ Page 5

4,600-year-old board game, decorated bone comb unearthed at UNESCO-listed Burnt City in southeast Iran

TEHRAN – Archaeologists excavating the ancient Burnt City in southeastern Iran have unearthed a 4,600-year-old board game, a decorated bone comb and exceptionally well-preserved organic remains, offering new clues about the social and everyday lives of the city's inhabitants during the third millennium BC.

The discoveries were made during the 21st season of archaeological excavations at the UNESCO-listed site, according to Rouhollah Shirazi, head of the excavation team at Shahr-e Sukhteh, also known as Shahr-i Sokhta or the Burnt City. ▶ Page 6

Sirous Moqaddam turns Minab tragedy into "Empty Grave"

TEHRAN- Iranian filmmaker and painter Sirous Moqaddam says his deep personal attachment to southern Iran and his encounter with the families of the Minab school victims inspired him to create "Empty Grave," a painting dedicated to the children killed in the tragic attack on a school in the southern city of Minab.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Moqaddam spoke about the motivation behind the work on the sidelines of the opening of the group exhibition "Minab School," which brings together works by a number of prominent contemporary Iranian visual artists in response to the tragedy.

The exhibition opened on Friday, August 28, at the Art Bureau in Tehran. Organized by the Nam Cultural and Artistic Institute, the exhibition features works created voluntarily by Iranian artists seeking to preserve the memory of the children and teachers who lost their lives in the attack. ▶ Page 8



The site of a deadly US strike targeting a wedding celebration in Sirik, Hormozgan Province, southern Iran, on September 1, 2026

US strike on wedding in Kouhestak, Sirik County, southern Iran, kills 5, injures dozens

They Came For a Wedding Dance Trump Gave Them The Dance of Death

▶ Page 3

Camp Titin: Iran's strike on a US Marine facility signals a wider strategic challenge

By Hossein Amiri

TEHRAN — Iran's ballistic-missile strike on the US Marine Corps facility known as Camp Titin in Jordan could prove far more consequential for Washington than the damage inflicted at a single military site. The attack demonstrated that Iranian forces could reach a US position on the Gulf of Aqaba, hundreds of kilometers from the main theater around the Persian Gulf, while simultaneously striking or threatening American military infrastructure across several regional countries.

The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) said Wednesday that it had launched an intensive ballistic-missile attack against Camp Titin in southern Jordan in retaliation for recent US strikes inside Iran. The IRGC stated that the at-

tack killed several US personnel and destroyed several facilities and helicopters.

Jordan, meanwhile, claimed its air defenses intercepted 10 of 13 ballistic missiles entering its airspace and did not confirm a strike on the US facility or American casualties.

The conflicting accounts make it premature to assess the physical damage at Camp Titin. But the strategic significance of the attack does not depend entirely on whether the base suffered extensive destruction.

Why Camp Titin matters

Camp Titin is located near Aqaba, at the

northern end of the Red Sea and close to Jordan's borders with Israel and Saudi Arabia. The location gives the facility particular importance for US-Jordanian military cooperation, Marine Corps training, and rapid-response activities.

Its targeting is significant because it represents a geographic expansion of Iran's ability to threaten US military positions. Tehran has previously focused much of its military leverage on the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. By striking at a US position near Aqaba, Iran demonstrated that moving American forces farther from the immediate Persian Gulf theater does not necessarily place them beyond the reach of Iranian missiles. ▶ Page 2



China's Vice Finance Minister Liao Min and PBOC Governor Pan Gongsheng at the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in Asheville, US

China urges 'equal consultation' at G20, rejects external interference in Middle East

China has called on the United States and other G20 members to uphold "equal consultation" after the group's finance chiefs and central bank governors meeting ended without a joint communiqué, expressing "deep regret" over the lack of consensus.

"China had actively and constructively participated in discussions across all G20 tracks since the US assumed the group's rotating presidency for 2026, working to promote practical outcomes," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told reporters in Beijing, Global Times reported. ▶ Page 5

IRGC: Two oil tankers disabled after hitting sea mines

TEHRAN — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) announced on Wednesday that two oil tankers were disabled after striking sea mines while attempting to transit the Strait of Hormuz.

In a statement, the IRGC said the tankers had evacuated their crews after being encouraged by the American military and had been placed at the disposal of US-linked elements to pass through an unauthorized route.

The IRGC Navy had previously warned of the dangers inherent in traversing this mined passage, the statement read. It added that shipping companies that abandon legal routes to yield to US deception and place their vessels at the disposal of the enemy will face severe, imminent penalties.

How Iran disabled the largest US naval base in West Asia

TEHRAN — The strategic architecture of the Persian Gulf underwent a seismic realignment with the outbreak of the US-Israeli war on Iran that began on February 28. In a rapid and calculated operational response to the aggression, the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran executed precision retaliatory strikes against key military hubs across the region, dealing a severe and crippling blow to Washington's forward-deployed infrastructure. ▶ Page 2

Pourmohammadi reflects on a crucial meeting with martyred Leader before 12-day war

TEHRAN- Hamid Pourmohammadi, Head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization and Vice President, disclosed during a televised interview the foresight and preparatory steps taken by the executive branch in anticipation of renewed sanctions and possible conflict following Donald Trump's return to office. He explained that as early as two months before the conclusion of the Iranian year 1403 (mid-February 2025), the Planning and Budget Organization had initiated the development of a proactive counter-sanctions strategy, having anticipated the most severe scenarios, including a total blockade of oil exports. Recognizing essential goods and pharmaceuticals as the most vulnerable sectors, he obtained the President's approval to strengthen strategic reserves of these critical supplies. ▶ Page 2

Economic siege will not halt Iran's trade: ICCIMA official

TEHRAN- The head of the Customs Committee of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), emphasizing that sanctions and economic sieges cannot completely halt the country's foreign trade, said: Given Iran's geographical location, geopolitical capacities, and numerous neighbors, the country has diverse routes available to continue its trade exchanges.

Mohammad Reza Farouqi stated in an interview with IRNA regarding America's claim of an economic siege: Given the vastness of the country and Iran's special position in the region, it is not possible to completely place the country under a trade blockade. On the other hand, many neighboring countries need Iran's capacities in various fields, and this very fact provides the basis for the continuation of economic and trade relations.

He added: Alongside the existing capacities in regional trade, programs are also being pursued to remove internal trade barriers, in order to reduce the problems facing traders and economic actors. ▶ Page 4

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

America's humanitarian masks

Siasat-e-Rooz dedicates its editorial to the US exploitation of Venezuela's oil, arguing that Trump's approach is partly rooted in Washington's failure in the Strait of Hormuz and partly a continuation of the same "promise-based" policy whose expiration date has long passed. The global community and the American public, it writes, no longer judge events based on Trump's personal social-media posts but on the realities on the ground. Today, the world acknowledges that Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz is definitive, and Trump cannot claim—through fabricated posts—that the strait has been reopened. Venezuela, the paper argues, is not a savior or a solution but merely a temporary painkiller that will turn into a political scandal rather than an achievement for Trump. The truth, it concludes, is that the United States is not a rescuer but a plunderer whose humanitarian masks conceal only the destruction and theft of other nations' wealth.

Sobh-e-No: Tehran disrupts Trump's game

Sobh-e-No, in a commentary on Iran's strategy against Trump's attacks, argues that the strike on Larak and Iran's missile response can be interpreted as part of a controlled "playing with fire" scenario. The United States seeks to pressure Iran without crossing certain red lines, preserving its bargaining chips for post-election negotiations. In this environment, the most likely scenario until the congressional elections is the continuation of controlled tensions—neither a major agreement nor a major war. But since Trump is neither willing to return to the Islamabad understanding nor bold enough to start a full-scale war, Iran can break this equation by introducing new initiatives and upending Trump's strategy. Today, Trump is less inclined toward war and more focused on avoiding political defeat. Iran, acting with strategic intelligence, must exploit this vulnerability to secure indirect concessions and maintain national cohesion.

Resalat: Iran's decisive response to the US crime in Larak

The simultaneous, multi-layered response of Iran's armed forces to the recent

US attack on Larak Island once again underscored the stability of deterrence and the unchanged balance of power in the Persian Gulf and West Asia. This new round of confrontation shows that Washington's tactical calculations to compensate for its regional deadlocks are immediately met with costly and strategic responses from Tehran. Assessments of these developments confirm that Iran, in addition to maintaining full control over the vital waterway of Hormuz, has implemented a new model of coordinated response between diplomacy and the battlefield. The message to Washington and its allies is explicit: any aggressive action will not undermine Iran's territorial security; instead, it will expand the circle of insecurity to commercial exchanges and the deployment centers of hostile forces across the region.

Ettelaat: Diplomacy under siege

Ettelaat, in an article on the difficult path between Iran and the United States, writes that these recent developments show relations have once again drifted away from the logic of negotiation and entered the realm of hard deterrence, reciprocal threats, and operational posturing. If until recently, dialogue was considered a way to manage the crisis, the current rhetoric of officials on both sides is now designed less for understanding and more for reinforcing positions and raising the costs for the opponent. In such an atmosphere, diplomacy has not completely disappeared, but it is no longer the primary force shaping events. The trajectory of developments indicates that negotiation has shifted from an independent political track to a component of power competition. Iran's message is resistance against surrender; America's message is continued pressure until it secures a tangible concession. Until these two logics meet at a manageable point, the Middle East will remain suspended between weak diplomacy and a war-ready posture.

Pourmohammadi reflects on a crucial meeting with martyred Leader before 12-day war



From page 1 ► Pourmohammadi identified a pivotal moment as the meeting held on March 29, 2025 (Farvardin 9, 1404), convened at the behest of the late Major General Bagheri. During this gathering, senior military and civilian officials were summoned before the Supreme Leader. The Leader described the upcoming year as extraordinarily delicate for Iran and the region, urging all officials to prepare for adverse conditions without reliance on external actors. He prioritized the welfare of the populace as the foremost concern and issued a stark warning that the enemy's primary move would be an assassination attempt against the gathered officials, instructing everyone to be ready to sacrifice their lives if necessary. Notably, three-quarters of those present at this meeting were later martyred.

Two days subsequent to this, on March 31, 2025, Pourmohammadi recounted that General Bagheri orchestrated a session of the Supreme National Security Council. Attended by current and former commanders and secretariat officials, this meeting saw the presentation of a comprehensive strategic plan—imbued with a wartime tone—stemming directly from the Leader's prior re-

marks. The plan encompassed short-term, medium-term, and long-term strategies, aimed at preparing the nation for an almost catastrophic scenario.

He further emphasized that from the beginning of the Iranian year (March 21, 2025), the country had been operating under semi-war and crisis conditions, despite the absence of any large-scale military exercises since the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988). Pourmohammadi reaffirmed his personal commitment to fiscal discipline, resource conservation, and the accumulation of reserves for medicines and essential commodities, underscoring that the administration recognized it was entering a series of compounded challenges.

Finally, Pourmohammadi recounted that on the night of June 13, 2025 (Khordad 23, 1404), at midnight, news arrived of Israel's offensive and the successive assassinations of commanding figures. After an initial period of shock and disorientation, efforts were undertaken to restore composure. Authorities promptly compiled and assessed a comprehensive list of emerging issues and resource shortages, preparing the nation for the difficult days ahead.

Camp Titin: Iran's strike on a US Marine facility signals a wider strategic challenge

From page 1 ► That has implications for the broader US force posture in West Asia. American forces are dispersed across a network of bases in Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. These installations provide Washington with the infrastructure needed for air operations, intelligence, surveillance, logistics, and rapid reinforcement.

Iran's latest response sought to turn that network into a vulnerability.

A coordinated pressure campaign

The Camp Titin attack was not an isolated event. Within the same period, Iran announced missile and drone operations against US positions in Kuwait and Iraq, while the Iranian Army reported attacks involving loitering munitions against US-linked positions and radar installations in the UAE and Bahrain.

The geographical spread is what makes the latest escalation particularly important.

For Washington, protecting one base is manageable. Protecting a dispersed military architecture stretching from the Gulf of Aqaba to the Persian Gulf and northern Iraq is considerably more demanding. It requires continuous air-defense coverage, intelligence and surveillance, interceptor missiles and the ability to rapidly reinforce threatened installations.

The latest attacks therefore confront the United States with a difficult strategic equation: its military superiority remains overwhelming, but its regional footprint also provides Iran with multiple targets.

That distinction matters because the United States does not need to lose large numbers of personnel for the attacks to become strategically costly. Repeated attacks can force Washington to disperse aircraft, move personnel, reinforce air



defenses, alter flight patterns, and spend expensive interceptors to defend relatively fixed installations.

The Hormuz factor

The pressure is compounded by the continuing confrontation over the Strait of Hormuz.

Before the war, roughly one-fifth of globally traded oil passed through the waterway. Although Washington has argued that its military operations have restored greater freedom of navigation, commercial traffic remains substantially below prewar levels, while the latest escalation has again pushed oil prices higher. Brent crude rose above \$95 a barrel as fighting intensified.

This gives Iran a form of leverage that is difficult to eliminate through air strikes alone. Tehran does not have to defeat the US military conventionally to impose strategic costs. It can threaten shipping, attack regional military infrastructure and force Washington to devote increasing resources to protecting its personnel and partners.

Iran's strategic position

The latest developments have revived a debate among Western analysts over whether Iran has retained — or regained — a degree of strategic leverage despite the damage inflicted on its military and economy.

Analysts believe that Tehran had gained the upper hand by May, citing its ability to rebuild offensive capabilities and exploit the strategic leverage provided by the Strait of Hormuz.

Former US Defense Secretary Mark Esper similarly said in August that Iran's negotiating posture suggested Tehran believed it had the upper hand and had become more emboldened.

Those assessments do not imply that Iran has achieved conventional military superiority over the United States. Rather, they point to a different measure of power: the ability to deny an adversary an easy path to victory.

Iran has demonstrated that it can remain militarily relevant despite sustained US pressure and can impose costs outside its own territory. The United States, by contrast, faces the challenge of maintaining a large regional military presence while protecting that presence from increasingly dispersed Iranian attacks.

A surprise for Trump?

For President Donald Trump and his administration, the developments of the past two days could be particularly uncomfortable because they challenge the assumption that renewed American military pressure would narrow Tehran's options.

Washington has vastly great-

er airpower, intelligence capabilities and financial resources. Yet the latest Iranian response has shown that those advantages do not automatically translate into control of the regional battlespace.

The Iranian army and IRGC's attack on Kuwait, Bahrain, Erbil, the UAE, and other US bases in the region indicates that Iran may not have superior equipment but does hold a strategic advantage.

The surprise is not necessarily that Iran retaliated — Tehran had repeatedly warned that US attacks would trigger a response. The more important surprise is the breadth of the response and its geographical reach, extending from Jordan and the Persian Gulf states to Iraq in a matter of hours. Reuters described the latest exchange as the most intense direct US-Iran fighting since July.

For the Trump administration, Camp Titin is therefore more than another military target in an expanding war. It is a warning that attempts to push US forces farther from the Strait of Hormuz may not remove them from Iran's strike envelope — and that Washington could face a widening contest in which protecting its regional military network becomes almost as important as striking Iran itself.

The central strategic question is consequently no longer simply whether the United States can inflict greater damage on Iran. It is whether Washington can convert that military superiority into a sustainable political outcome while Iran retains the ability to expand the battlefield, threaten US forces across the region, and keep Hormuz as a source of strategic leverage. The events of the past two days suggest that, despite its enormous military advantages, the Trump administration may have underestimated how difficult that task would be.

How Iran disabled the largest US naval base in West Asia

From page 1 ► At the very center of this collapse is Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain, the largest and most critical US naval installation in West Asia. For decades, the sprawling facility served as the operational headquarters for the US Navy's Fifth Fleet and the primary command-and-control node for American naval hegemony across the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Arabian Sea, and the Red Sea. Constructed and expanded to project American power directly onto Iran's doorstep, the base housed thousands of military personnel, advanced command centers, logistical stockpiles, and deep-water berthing infrastructure. It was treated by the Pentagon as an untouchable fortress capable of sustaining carrier strike groups, guided-missile destroyers, and amphibious ready groups indefinitely.

However, when the US-Israeli war on Iran commenced on February 28, Iran's targeted missile and drone salvos shattered that assumption within the opening hours of the conflict. By striking critical command facilities, logistical depots, and support infrastructure at NSA Bahrain, Iran effectively

neutralized the base's ability to function as a forward headquarters. The strike stripped the US Navy of its secure onshore rear-echelon support, forcing an immediate evacuation of personnel and cutting off the Fifth Fleet from its primary logistical lifeline in the region.

The lingering consequences of this operational setback were brought into sharp relief during a recent worldwide town hall held by the US Navy's top brass, including Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Daryl Caudle and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy John Perryman. Speaking before an audience of sailors at Fort Meade, Maryland, and connected remotely to personnel worldwide, Caudle faced direct questions regarding the ongoing crisis resulting from the strikes.

The first question of the day came from a seaman who asked about household goods displaced by an Iranian attack on Bahrain at the start of the war with Iran. Caudle said a return to the base was not imminent.

"We're not getting back in there anytime soon," he said. "I just want to be complete-



ly honest with that. But we're working real hard to develop a scheme of maneuver in order for you to get your things."

This direct statement from the Chief of Naval Operations serves as official recognition of the operational void created by Iran's defensive strikes. Rather than discussing force projection or operational readiness out of Manama, the Navy's highest-ranking admiral was reduced to addressing how displaced sailors might eventually retrieve their abandoned household goods through a scheme of maneuver.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Qalibaf: Iran and the Axis of Resistance share a fundamental path against arrogance

TEHRAN- Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Iran's Parliament Speaker, articulated on Wednesday during a meeting with Bassem Naim, the head of Islamic Relations for Hamas, that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Axis of Resistance are intricately and profoundly aligned on a unified trajectory in confronting global arrogance. Reflecting on five decades of resistance, he emphasized that this struggle has consistently been depicted as a righteous war against falsehood, evolving new forms at each stage.

The Speaker underscored that the true essence of the Resis-

tance Axis resides in its opposition to tyranny. He warned that should Iran ever cease its battle against the United States and the Zionist regime in all their manifestations, such a moment would signify its unequivocal defeat. Nonetheless, he clarified that his government does not categorically reject negotiation; rather, it regards diplomacy as a tactical tool subordinate to the overarching strategy of resistance.

Addressing the ongoing Iran-US negotiations, Qalibaf noted that, pursuant to Article One of MoU, Tehran has insisted on ending the hostilities waged

against Iran and its allies within the Resistance Axis. He contrasted this stance with the initial American proposal, which comprised fifteen articles demanding the complete cessation of Iran's missile, nuclear, and resistance activities. He further emphasized that all elements of the Resistance Axis are fully cohesive and that maintaining this unity is vital for sustaining the righteous struggle.

Qalibaf also highlighted Washington's failure to implement its commitments under the Islamabad Memorandum, warning that the United States must honor its obligations be-

fore Iran proceeds with reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

During the meeting, Bassem Naim lauded Iran's military and political resilience, observing that while many regional states were caught unawares by Tehran's steadfast stance against the United States, Hamas had always anticipated that the enemy would be taken by surprise in any confrontation with Iran. He reaffirmed that the Palestinian struggle against the Zionist regime would persist relentlessly until every remnant of that regime is eradicated from Palestinian soil.

They came for a wedding dance Trump gave them the dance of death

TEHRAN – A fresh wave of deadly missile strikes carried out by United States military forces against civilian infrastructure and residential gatherings across southern Iran on Tuesday night has left over a dozen people dead and scores of others wounded, triggering widespread outrage and renewed calls for international criminal accountability over blatant violations of international humanitarian law.

The overnight aggression struck three separate locations in the vicinity of Ahvaz and Aghajari in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, alongside a series of lethal bombardments across the southern coastal province of Hormozgan.

The most egregious atrocity occurred in the coastal town of Kouhestak, situated in Hormozgan's Sirik County, where American ordnance struck an active family wedding ceremony at around 8:00 p.m. local time on Tuesday. The horrific blast turned a peaceful gathering into a scene of carnage, killing at least five civilians and severely injuring 68 others, with women and children making up a large share of the casualties. Local medical personnel confirmed that a four-year-old child was among those killed on the spot.

Following the massacre, the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) issued an official statement attempting to justify the fatal strikes, falsely claiming that American forces had launched attacks exclusively on targets belonging to Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). CENTCOM attempted to link the aggression to what Washington described as recent Iranian actions against commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and alleged security threats to US forces stationed in the region.

Provincial officials and local witnesses vehemently dismissed Washington's narrative, stressing that the struck site in Kouhestak was a clearly identifiable residential and social venue hosting a traditional family wedding reception with hundreds of non-combatants present.

The devastating strike on the Kouhestak wedding has drawn swift and unequivocal condemnation from legal observers, human rights defenders, and Ira-



nian humanitarian bodies. In an official letter submitted to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) demanded immediate legal action and a formal investigation following the US missile attack on the ceremony.

In its statement, the IRCS emphasized that given the reported civilian character of the location as the venue of a family wedding ceremony, as well as the presence of civilians at the site, the incident raises serious concerns under international humanitarian law and warrants an independent, impartial, thorough, and effective investigation.

The IRCS underscored that the Kouhestak massacre, which left innocent families devastated, constitutes a clear war crime under all established legal frameworks.

Senior Iranian officials have reacted with sharp indignation to the latest wave of American aerial assaults. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf forcefully condemned the attack on the wedding ceremony, stating that the deliberate targeting of civilians at schools, sports complexes, and social gatherings shows that Washington is operating and killing "like Satan."

In a post on social platform X on Wednesday, Qalibaf stated that the Kouhestak bombing represents an indivisible part of a sustained campaign against defenseless civilians, referencing earlier high-casualty strikes against an educational center in Minab and a sports facility in Lamerd. He wrote: "Minab school: children massacred. Lamerd sports hall: kids slaughtered. Kouhestak wedding: children killed with families. If a power acts like Satan,

picks targets like Satan, and kills like Satan, it's Satan. Shields a junior Satan that does the same? It's THE Great Satan."

Hassan Ghashghavi, spokesman for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, also questioned how the United States military could claim advanced reconnaissance capabilities while repeatedly hitting soft civilian targets. Ghashghavi stated that a regime which claims to utilize comprehensive satellite coverage to monitor even the smallest movement on Earth cannot credibly claim it failed to distinguish military installations from a school, a sports venue, or a wedding ceremony. He added that the United States has for decades dropped bombs and missiles on defenseless populations while routinely leaving the justification of its crimes to post-facto inquiry committees.

The latest strikes on Khuzestan and Hormozgan are part of an intensifying military confrontation that began on February 28, when joint military escalation by the United States and Israel plunged the region into active hostilities. During 39 days of war, Washington and Tel Aviv carried out repeated air and missile incursions across Iran, resulting in widespread civilian bloodshed that contradicts Western claims of precision targeting. A Pakistani-mediated memorandum of understanding reached between the US and Iran on June 17—designed to underpin the ceasefire that had paused hostilities since April 8—was violated by the administration of President Donald Trump.

The tragedy in Kouhestak follows earlier high-casualty attacks that shocked the nation. On the first day of the war on February

28, a catastrophic US strike hit a school in the city of Minab in Hormozgan province during peak school hours, killing 168 people, the vast majority of whom were young school children attending class alongside their teachers and school staff. The horrific loss of 168 lives in Minab triggered instantaneous global outrage, prompting protests across international capitals, emergency statements from international legal bodies, and direct condemnations from human rights watchdogs that denounced the carnage as a flagrant breach of the Geneva Conventions and international legal protections afforded to educational facilities.

That tragedy was compounded shortly afterward in Lamerd, Fars Province, where an aerial strike blasted a community sports hall during scheduled youth sports training sessions. The attack in Lamerd killed young athletes, coaches, and spectators, critically wounding scores more and reducing a vital public recreation center to rubble.

The deliberate bombing of the Minab school, the Lamerd sports hall, and now the Kouhestak wedding ceremony underscores a continuous and documented pattern of attacks on protected civilian sites. Legal experts note that the sheer scale of non-combatant casualties across Minab, Lamerd, and Kouhestak dismantles any pretense of collateral damage and demonstrates systemic negligence and criminal disregard for human life.

Shortly following the latest aggression in Khuzestan and Hormozgan, Iran's Armed Forces responded by staging a series of combined retaliatory operations featuring precision ballistic and cruise missile strikes alongside advanced long-range drone barages targeting regional American military installations and strategic interests.

Iranian military and diplomatic officials have reiterated that the Islamic Republic will exercise its legitimate right to self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, affirming that unprovoked aggression against Iranian soil, citizens, and civilian infrastructure will be met with decisive responses and relentless pursuit of justice through international legal tribunals.

LATEST NEWS

■ Pakistan: Islamabad MoU remains practical framework for Iran-US dialogue

Pakistan announced that the Islamabad Memorandum continues to serve as a practical framework for dialogue between Iran and the United States, despite fresh military escalation and sharp rhetoric from Donald Trump. Foreign Ministry spokesman Tahir Andabi stated that parties frequently issue "harsh and tough" statements during periods of heightened tension, emphasizing that such pronouncements do not constitute a repudiation of the memorandum.

■ MP: US has no choice but to withdraw completely from region

Ebrahim Azizi, head of Iran's parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, declared that Washington faces no option other than a full withdrawal from the region. Following overnight US strikes on Iranian provinces, Azizi said American forces have reached a "strategic dead end" and lack the capability to confront Iran's Armed Forces. He warned that the US would receive a "decisive and devastating response," emphasizing that American presence brings only insecurity to the region.

■ Rezaei to US: Iran's new strategy will 'shatter your foundations'

Major General Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, warned Washington that Tehran's newly adopted strategy would dismantle its regional presence. In an X post, Rezaei said US efforts to salvage its "imposed war" are failing as

the conflict enters its seventh month without achieving strategic objectives. "With this desperate flailing, not only will you fail to climb out of the hell you have created, but you will soon witness how Iran's new strategy in battlefield, diplomacy, and countering the economic blockade will shatter your foundations," he stated.

■ Iranian MP questions US failure to distinguish civilian targets

Hassan Qasqhavi, spokesperson for Parliament's National Security Commission, questioned how the United States could fail to distinguish military targets from civilian sites after a US strike on a Sirik wedding ceremony. "The regime that claims its satellite coverage monitors even the smallest creature on Earth—how can it fail to distinguish between military targets and a school or wedding?" he wrote on X. He added that Washington and its allies have bombed defenseless people for decades, leaving justification to "fact-finding committees."

■ Araghchi, Hamas official hold talks on Palestine developments

Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi met with Bassem Naim, a Hamas political bureau member, in Tehran on Wednesday to discuss Palestine's latest developments. Naim conveyed condolences from new Hamas chief Khalil al-Hayya over the martyrdom of Iran's late Leader and other officials. He briefed Araghchi on Israeli attacks in Gaza and the West Bank, efforts to Judaize al-Quds, and Palestinian prisoner treatment. Araghchi reaffirmed Iran's firm

support for Palestine and its commitment to defending the Palestinian cause at international forums. (66 words)

■ Iran denies claims of Chinese 'conditions' for ties expansion

The Office of Iran's Special Representative for China Affairs rejected as "completely baseless" media reports alleging Beijing set specific conditions for expanding bilateral relations. The office emphasized China's "firm and explicit opposition to unilateral US sanctions" as evidence of Beijing's supportive approach. It reaffirmed that Tehran-Beijing relations are rooted in mutual respect and a comprehensive strategic partnership, with cooperation across political, economic, and investment sectors progressing steadily. The office urged domestic media to avoid speculation that could undermine Iran's national interests.

■ SCO summit delivers political blow to US anti-Iran strategy

Lebanon's Al-Binaa newspaper reported that the SCO summit in Bishkek dealt a significant political blow to US calculations, with leaders condemning US-Israeli attacks on Iran and affirming Tehran's sovereignty. The Bishkek Declaration rejected unilateral sanctions inconsistent with WTO rules and affirmed Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy. The analysis noted that Trump failed to build an international front against Iran, instead facing a bloc representing 43% of the world's population, as SCO members moved toward establishing independent financial mechanisms.

Turning weddings into funerals: the specialty of America's terrorist army



By Maede Zaman Fashami

TEHRAN – In war, people do not always die in uniform. Sometimes, they die wearing wedding clothes. Sometimes, while putting henna on their daughter's hands. Sometimes, sitting beside a pot of rice and meat. And sometimes, they have no idea what the aircraft circling several kilometers above them has mistaken them for.

That is why the story of American attacks on weddings in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Iran is not simply a story about airstrikes. It is the story of the moment when a family gathering, within a matter of seconds, becomes a scene where survivors are left searching through the wreckage for pieces of the people they love.

This report begins in Kuhestak, in southern Iran, at a house that was hosting a wedding on the day American attacks on Iran resumed.

The details of the incident are still emerging. According to the Iranian Red Crescent, shrapnel from an American missile struck a residential home where a wedding ceremony was taking place. Initial reports said four people, including a child, were killed and more than 60 were wounded.

Among the early accounts was the testimony of an eyewitness who was himself injured and hospitalized after the attack.

He said he had heard fighter jets before reaching the area. Then, just as he arrived, an explosion occurred. He described it as extremely powerful, saying that bricks, stones, and concrete struck his face and head. Other people were injured as well. And when he described those who had been there, he said simply: "They were all ordinary civilians."

The bride's father, Mr. Malahi, gave another account of the attack. He said that three missiles struck their home and another building in the courtyard, destroying both structures and killing four wedding guests.

One of the palm trees in Mr. Malahi's yard also became another casualty of the American attack.

Another person who described the previous night's attack was a friend of the groom. He said that no one at the wedding was a member of the military and that everyone present was a civilian.

Christiaan Triebert, an investigative journalist with The New York Times' Visual Investigations team, later posted about the incident, saying that fragments reportedly recovered from the attack on the wedding in Kuhestak had been identified as components of an SLAM-ER missile. Boeing, the manufacturer of the cruise missile, describes the SLAM-ER as one of the most precise weapons in the US Navy's arsenal.

That highly precise weapon turned an Iranian wedding in Sirik into a funeral and took the life of four-year-old Amirali.

But Kuhestak was not the first wedding to come under an American attack.

To understand how a wedding ceremony can become a deadly scene within minutes, we have to travel to southern Afghanistan, to the village of Kakarak.

Shahbibi was at a wedding that night. It was past two in the morning, and the celebration was still going. Women had gathered in one of the houses, clapping and dancing, while drums could be heard from another. Outside, as was customary at Afghan rural weddings, men were firing their rifles into the air.

The wedding was alive with noise. But above the village, American aircraft were flying overhead.

Shahbibi later told The Washington Post that the celebration was so loud that they did not hear the aircraft. Then, suddenly, the bombs came. People began running, and the dust became so thick that they could no longer see around them. Shahbibi broke her leg as she tried to escape in the chaos.

The attack took place in Kakarak, in Uruzgan Province, and surrounding villages. At the time, American and other coalition forces were searching the area for remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and US military officials said the region was believed to have a possible militant presence.

The American military account differed sharply from that of the survivors.

US officials said coalition forces had come under fire in the area and that a ground team had reported anti-aircraft fire. American aircraft then returned fire toward the location from which the shooting was believed to have come.

But the villagers told a different story.

They said no one had fired at the American aircraft. The gunfire heard from the ground, they said, was simply part of the wedding celebration, men firing rifles into the air as part of a local tradition.

Several survivors who spoke to reporters at a hospital in Kandahar said they had been attending a wedding attended by hundreds of people. They said the men had fired into the air to celebrate the marriage.

Shamana, an 18-year-old woman hospitalized after the attack, said she saw people running, screaming, and falling to the ground when the shooting and bombing began. She had been attending the same wedding, her hands still decorated with wedding henna.

Abdul Qayyum, another survivor, described what happened after the attack, when American forces entered the area. He said American soldiers asked him who had fired at the helicopters. He told them he did not know. One soldier attempted to restrain him, but another stopped him because of his age.

Nurses at the Kandahar hospital spoke of children who had been wounded and had lost their parents. One of them, six-year-old Ghulam, was badly injured and lost both of his parents in the attack. One of the villagers also said that numerous members of his family had been killed.

Several days later, journalists reached Kakarak itself.

What remained at the site showed traces of a celebration interrupted in the middle of the night. Shoes belonging to women and children, cooking pots, and other signs of the wedding were scattered among the debris and fragments of the attack. The Washington Post reported that the mud walls of the compound where the ceremony had taken place were marked by bullet impacts, while craters and fragments from the attack could also be seen.

A few days later, an Afghan government report put the death toll at 48, saying that all but three of those killed were women or children.

Meanwhile, the American account also evolved.

In the early hours after the attack, officials said that one of the bombs might have strayed from its intended path and struck civilians. Later, Pentagon officials placed greater emphasis on the claim that American forces had responded to anti-aircraft fire and that the resulting engagement may have caused the casualties.

Even within the official American account, then, there was uncertainty about exactly what had caused the deaths.

But subsequent investigations and visits to the site raised a more fundamental question.

If anti-aircraft fire had really come from the area, why was there no evidence of an anti-aircraft weapon at the site?

The Washington Post reported that American forces and investigators found no anti-aircraft weapon there, while villagers insisted that the only weapons fired had been the rifles men used to celebrate the wedding.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran accelerates joint oil, gas fields development in 2 years



TEHRAN- According to IRNA, Iran holds approximately 158 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves—ranking third or fourth in the world—and over 32 trillion cubic meters of natural gas reserves, placing it second globally after Russia, making it one of the world's primary energy hubs. This hydrocarbon wealth is largely concentrated in the Zagros sedimentary basin in the southern and southwestern onshore areas and the Persian Gulf basin.

The beating heart of the country's gas production is the giant South Pars field (shared with Qatar), which supplies over 70% of Iran's consumed gas. The development of its various phases, up to Phase 11, has been completed, and various pressure boosting projects are now vigorously ongoing.

In addition to South Pars, independent fields such as Kangan, Nar, Tabnak, Aghar, and Dalan, as well as newer fields like Kish and Farzad (A and B), now complement the country's gas supply chain, although onshore, promising news of new gas field discoveries continues to emerge each year.

The bulk of Iran's crude oil production comes from the fractured limestone reservoirs of the Zagros in the southwest, particularly in Khuzestan Province—through major and mature fields such as Ahvaz-Asmari (Iran's largest oil field), Marun, Gachsaran, Aghajari, and Rag Sefid, which, despite decades of extraction, still bear the main burden of production but require Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR/IOR) methods and continuous gas or water injection.

In West Karun, development focus in recent decades has been on fields in the West Karun area, including the Azadegan oil field in its southern and northern sections—considered the world's largest joint oil field—as well as the Yadavaran, Yaran, and Darkhovayn fields, which hold the bulk of the country's potential for increasing heavy and semi-heavy oil production.

In the Persian Gulf, key fields such as Soroush and Nowruz, Doroud, Abuzar, Bahregansar, and Sivand-Esfand are active. The most challenging segment involves border-sharing joint fields—including the Arash gas field (Al-Durra) on the shared border with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the Hengam oil field with Oman, and the Forouzan and Esfandiar fields with Saudi Arabia—whose exploitation and legal boundary delimitation consistently require active energy diplomacy and the adoption of advanced drilling technologies.

In this context, Petropars, as the engineering and execution arm (general contractor/E&P) for mega-scale upstream projects, has played a vital and historic role in the design, financing, and development of key phases of the shared South Pars field—including Phases 1, 4 and 5, 6 to 8, Phase 12 (as the largest phase), and ultimately the border Phase 11.

During the period when international companies like Total and Eni withdrew, Petropars managed to keep the country's gas and condensate production chain operational by leading domestic consortia and managing offshore and onshore megaprojects. Currently, it is also responsible for developing parts of the Farzad B gas field, supplementary phases of the South Azadegan oil field, and participation in the strategic South Pars pressure boosting projects.

Phase 11 gas production doubled

Over the 24 months of the 14th administration, the Petropars Group, focusing on developing joint hydrocarbon fields, managed to more than double gas production from South Pars Phase 11, bring the country's largest oil

processing unit (CTEP) with a capacity of 320,000 barrels per day into full operation, and move the strategic South Pars pressure boosting project into the execution phase.

A review of the Petropars Group's two-year track record shows that the company, by simultaneously pursuing two strategies—accelerated development of border fields and implementation of maintenance projects to sustain future production—has achieved a tangible record of increasing the country's oil and gas capacity.

At the most border-bound point of the South Pars joint field, gas production from Phase 11 rose from about 12 million cubic meters per day at the start of the 14th administration to over 26 million cubic meters per day by June 2026 (Khordad 1405), following drilling and well completion, with the number of drilled wells in this phase increasing from 4 to 11.

With the connection of the 11th well—4,300 meters deep—to the nationwide pipeline, production from Platform 11B surpassed 915 million standard cubic feet per day.

Simultaneously, the jacket for location 11A, with 700 meters of pile driving on the seabed, was installed and stabilized, and the construction progress of its deck reached the 50% mark.

In the oil sector, at the shared South Azadegan field, over 17 months, with 5,806 meters of new and remedial drilling and acidizing operations on 22 wells, more than 63,000 barrels were added to daily oil production capacity.

With the introduction of 38 domestically manufactured downhole pumps after a two-year hiatus, the number of commissioned wells in the central package of this field increased to 49, and its production capacity rose to over 84,200 barrels per day.

Furthermore, with the full commissioning of all four trains of the South Azadegan Central Oil Processing Plant (CTEP), the nominal capacity of the largest processing facility in the history of Iran's oil industry reached 320,000 barrels per day—a facility that has so far processed over 28 million barrels of oil and forms the main infrastructure for West Karun development.

On the other hand, to counter the natural decline of the reservoir and sustain the country's gas production, the national mega-project for pressure boosting at South Pars entered the execution phase. In this regard, basic engineering studies for Hub 1 were completed, preparations began for installing 9 compressors onshore for Phase 12, and the contract for constructing the 2,500-ton jacket for the offshore RP-1 platform was issued.

In the Balal and Farzad B fields, execution records were also set: at Balal, following the installation of the 1,760-ton jacket and completion of the first well, the construction progress of the 500-million-cubic-foot deck rose from 4% to over 75%. At the joint Farzad B field, a 60-meter jacket weighing 1,485 tons, along with a temporary drilling platform, was completed and ready for offshore installation operations.

During this period, Petropars doubled its active offshore rig capacity (increasing from 2 to 4 rigs), launched the field phase of intelligent pipeline pigging using advanced MFL and TFI tools, and simultaneously, through the integration and coding of 26,000 item types in warehouses, completed the comprehensive reorganization of its supply chain and contracts.

Economic siege will not halt Iran's trade: ICCIMA official

TEHRAN- The head of the Customs Committee of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), emphasizing that sanctions and economic sieges cannot completely halt the country's foreign trade, said: Given Iran's geographical location, geopolitical capacities, and numerous neighbors, the country has diverse routes available to continue its trade exchanges.

Mohammad Reza Farouqi stated in an interview with IRNA regarding America's claim of an economic siege: Given the vastness of the country and Iran's special position in the region, it is not possible to completely place the country under a trade blockade. On the other hand, many neighboring countries need Iran's capacities in various fields, and this very fact provides the basis for the continuation of economic and trade relations.

He added: Alongside the existing capacities in regional trade, programs are also being pursued to remove internal trade barriers, in order to reduce the problems facing traders and economic actors.

The head of the Customs Committee of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, referring to the state of the country's foreign trade, continued: Various routes are also being pursued in the area of foreign trade, and the goal is to ensure that the flow of the country's exchanges does not come to a halt even under increased sanctions pressure.

Referring to Iran's membership in trade agreements, he said: Pacts such as the Eurasian Eco-



nomie Union (EAEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) represent important capacities for developing the country's trade relations, and these agreements are being implemented and pursued.

Farouqi emphasized: The sum of these capacities shows that Iran's foreign trade will not be locked down despite restrictions and external pressures, and by utilizing the capacity of neigh-

bors, regional pacts, and reforming internal barriers, the path of the country's trade exchanges can be sustained.

He noted: Bilateral and regional monetary pacts and financial memoranda of understanding with neighboring countries, by reducing dependence on intermediary currencies and facilitating liquidity flow, play a key role in smoothing foreign trade and developing the country's non-oil exports.

Rial-based trade mechanism with neighbors being designed: TPO official

TEHRAN- The Deputy for Commercial Services of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), referring to the country's plans to expand trade with neighboring countries, said: To facilitate trade exchanges with countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, proposals have been made to establish a rial-based trade mechanism, and this matter is being reviewed in cooperation with the banking system and exchange offices.

Mohammad Sadeq Ghannadadeh stated on Wednesday in an exclusive interview with IRNA: A significant portion of Iran's exports go to countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, and in some cases, traders from these countries obtain rials to purchase goods from Iran. Therefore, we have proposed that a clear procedure be established for this type of exchange with neighboring countries.

He added: Although exports must ultimately generate foreign currency, to resolve existing problems and facilitate trade with neighboring countries, we are designing mechanisms with the help of the banking system and exchange offices, and the necessary proposals have also been submitted to the Central Bank. Currently, the final procedure has not yet been implemented at the Central Bank, and the matter is under review.

Ghannadadeh noted the government's plan to develop trade with

neighboring and aligned countries and explained: For different countries, tailored to the conditions and capacities of each, programs have been designed in the areas of trade, transportation, financial and banking systems, payment methods, and alternative trade methods.

He continued: These programs are being pursued on a country-by-country basis through working groups, joint committees, joint commissions, and exchanges of trade delegations, in order to resolve issues and obstacles in the path of developing trade relations.

The Deputy for Commercial Services of Iran's Trade Development Organization, referring to negotiations with Pakistan, said: Recently, we have followed this process with Pakistan, and subsequently, necessary negotiations and actions will also be carried out for Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, and other target countries.

Decline in trade after the war was inevitable

Assessing the state of Iran's foreign trade after the recent war, Ghannadadeh stated: It was natural that after the war, the country's trade would face a decline, and this reduction was largely unavoidable due to increased risk in the international arena, especially in the field of transportation and maritime logistics.

Pakistani ambassador hails Iran's crash test center as successful private sector model

TEHRAN - Pakistan's ambassador to Iran has described the crash test center as a successful example of Iran's private sector, stating: "We can begin this cooperation by drafting and signing a preliminary agreement. We hope that conditions will soon move in a direction that allows us to provide the necessary and additional infrastructure to expand this cooperation."

According to a Wednesday report by IRNA from the Automotive Safety and Quality Testing Company (AQS), Pakistani Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, during a visit to the automotive test center, praised the facility as a successful model of Iran's private sector and expressed his satisfaction with the opportunity to tour the site.

The Pakistani ambassador also responded to proposals regarding bilateral cooperation in the automotive sector, discussing the feasibility study of cooperation conditions, as well as holding webinars and online training sessions for automakers and parts manufacturers in the Pakistani market.

Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, referring to current conditions and political constraints, said: "Given the present situation, we can initiate this cooperation by drafting and signing a preliminary agreement. We hope that conditions will soon progress in a way that allows us to pro-

vide the necessary and greater infrastructure for expanding this cooperation."

Subsequently, the Pakistani delegation toured all facilities and sections of the crash test center. At the end of the visit, a mandatory COP (Conformity of Production) frontal impact test was conducted on one of the country's vehicles in the presence of a representative from Iran's National Standards Organization. The results will be shared with the automaker and the organization after analysis.

Private sector steps toward realizing \$10-billion Iran-Pakistan trade vision

At the beginning of the meeting, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Iran Quality and Standard Inspection Company welcomed the Pakistani delegation and described the automotive crash test center as the only and largest testing facility in Iran. Saeed Tajik stated: "This center was launched last year with full private sector investment and a major stake held by the Iran Quality and Standard Inspection Company, aimed at reducing traffic accident fatalities."

Tajik noted the significant accident statistics on Pakistan's roads and addressed areas of cooperation with Pakistani automakers and parts manufacturers in crash testing, as well as engagement with Pakistan's Standards Or-

ganization, as a shared commercial opportunity between the two countries.

Hesameddin Hallaj, Deputy for International Affairs and Trade Development at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, also viewed the visit as a timely opportunity for bilateral cooperation and expressed optimism about interactions between Iranian and Pakistani companies.

Referring to the Iran Expo 2026, scheduled to be held in November, he announced readiness for a Pakistani trade delegation, facilitated by the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, to participate in the event, visit the testing center, and engage in commercial exchanges.

Notably, crash tests such as R 94, 95, and 34 have recently become mandatory in Pakistan, and the visit was conducted to enable Pakistani automakers and parts manufacturers to utilize Iran's crash test center.

Iran and Pakistan took a significant step toward deepening economic ties, signing a memorandum of understanding to expand trade cooperation during the 10th session of the Joint Trade Committee held in Islamabad, in early August. Both sides reaffirmed their mutual commitment to achieving the ambitious \$10 billion target in bilateral trade and advancing toward a formal free trade agreement.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Netanyahu and the approaching election

From page 1 ► His concerns have grown following the announcement of the formation of a new right-wing party, Amcha Yisrael (People of Israel), which could weaken the coalition and threaten the Religious Zionism Party, led by Bezalel Smotrich, by putting its ability to cross the electoral threshold at risk.

At the same time, there is no guarantee that the new right-wing party itself will win seats, which would give the opposition a greater margin for victory.

Although Netanyahu has succeeded in overcoming the sharp decline in the popularity of the Likud Party, which he leads, and of the governing coalition following the October 7 attack, he cannot completely escape responsibility for that failure, despite refusing even to acknowledge partial responsibility.

The opposition, along with a broad segment of the regime's society, continues to refer to his government as the "October 7 government."

The more successful the opposition is in bringing the issue to the forefront of public attention, the greater the pressure on Netanyahu, particularly as it repeatedly emphasizes his failure to achieve an absolute victory on all fronts. This is in addition to his inability to bring the genocidal war in Gaza to a decisive military conclusion, as well as his failure to translate what he describes as "military achievements" into political breakthroughs.

By contrast, Netanyahu's repeated claims of unprecedented successes, including the assassination of leaders of the Axis of Resistance, the occupation of Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria, and strikes against Iran, do not, according to his opponents, give him a clean slate with settlers over the "disaster" that occurred under his watch.

The Gaza and Lebanon fronts also remain unresolved, with no political or military conclusion. The failure appears even more evident in Iran, following the exposure of the Mossad's failed plan to bring down the Islamic Republic and Iran's ability to withstand the aggression and rebuild its military capabilities, particularly its ballistic missile arsenal, which succeeded in striking the regime's targets.

This has kept the home front in a state of anxiety and tension, after Netanyahu spent years promising that he was best positioned to destroy the Iranian threat through



cooperation with the United States in a war against Iran.

Another problem facing Netanyahu is the deterioration of relations with the U.S. administration, as well as his personal relationship with President Donald Trump.

Netanyahu's most recent visit to the White House reflected a cooling in relations between the two sides. During the first term of his presidency, Trump repeatedly praised Netanyahu on social media, called for him to be pardoned more than once, and described Netanyahu's appearance before the court as a form of injustice rather than a reward for what he had done for the Zionist regime.

Trump also launched an attack on the regime's president, Isaac Herzog, for failing to respond to his request to pardon Netanyahu over corruption charges. In recent months, however, Trump has offered Netanyahu no comparable support. On the contrary, several statements by Trump and members of his team have been interpreted as casting doubt on Netanyahu's chances of winning the next election.

The deterioration in relations between the two allies is primarily attributed to U.S. involvement in the illegal war against Iran, which American and Israeli circles have blamed on the pressure Netanyahu put on Trump and the plans he presented to him: plans whose failure was subsequently demonstrated by events on the ground.

Netanyahu, a fugitive wanted for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza by the International Criminal Court, does not give up easily. He is prepared to fight for political survival to his last breath and does not hesitate to use every tool and means available to keep himself in power.

For him, the end justifies the means; what he cannot achieve through deception, tactics, and

favours, he seeks to accomplish through more of the same.

He knows that the experience of governmental instability exhausted settlers before the current coalition's victory and the political battle was settled in his favor.

Netanyahu is seeking to heat up various fronts because his supporters on the right and far right are drawn toward escalation and confrontation and are energized by them.

He therefore plans to keep the aggression fronts active, particularly in Gaza, the occupied West Bank, and Lebanon, as well as Syria, given the latitude for aggressive military operations that the U.S. administration has granted it on these fronts.

If the U.S. were to further expand the regime's room for maneuver toward Iran, which is unlikely at this stage, Netanyahu would not hesitate to resume the aggression against Iran.

That could provide him with the justification he is looking for to postpone the election because of the war, should his fears of defeat grow.

The West Bank, meanwhile, appears to be the electoral arena most suited to the war criminal and the far right, amid the silence of the U.S. administration.

Netanyahu is weighing his options and examining them with considerable calculation in an effort to control the voters' agenda, so that his government's failures are pushed to the bottom of the list, particularly the major failure of the October 7 attack.

The shortest, least costly path in security and political terms, and the one most attractive to his right-wing base, appears to be the West Bank. He can deliberately push the situation there toward more deterioration by providing covert and overt support for set-

tlar terrorism and their escalating terror attacks against Palestinians and their property.

This would come alongside political measures and continuing international violations, including efforts to take control of UNRWA facilities, most recently the Qalandia Institute, as well as the events in the village of Qusra south of Nablus and the destruction of a Palestinian monument by one of the governing coalition's lawmakers. It also includes support for and the establishment of additional settlement outposts in Areas A and B.

Netanyahu has already begun circulating media and political leaks suggesting that the Palestinian Authority could collapse, alongside reports that reservists' leave has been canceled and that combat battalions are being re-inforced in the West Bank out of concern over a "security deterioration."

These leaks are being directed by Netanyahu and his team to shape settler public opinion, mobilizing the right in Netanyahu's favor, and pushing the October 7 issue down the list of priorities for the public.

In the Gaza Strip, Netanyahu's rhetoric has grown increasingly threatening as he searches for a pretext to intensify the genocidal war, even if the excuse is children's kites, to justify escalation and derail the agreement for the second phase of the ceasefire.

Netanyahu understands that he still has time to escape the trap of political collapse by adopting security, political, and media strategies, and that he can benefit from the fragmentation of his opponents.

Ultimately, however, the election will alter little regarding the regime's status as the primary source of regional insecurity. The reasoning may hinge less on individual personalities and more on a deeply entrenched strategic and political paradigm.

Both Netanyahu and his main challenger Gadi Eisenkot, share hawkish worldviews. Eisenkot, leader of the Yashar (Straight) Party, pioneered the "Dahiye doctrine of disproportionate force". The regime's political survival is tied to endless war in the region, which has long fueled its pariah status and international isolation. In essence, the next prime minister, regardless of identity, will retain a confrontational posture, perpetuating the cycle of tension across West Asia.

compelled Washington to negotiate on Iranian terms. Unlike the Federal Reserve's domestic measures raising interest rates to suppress demand Iran offers cooperation and trade routes rather than occupation and regime change.

The empirical evidence is unequivocal. IMF projections confirm the economic paradox. Depleted American arsenals validate the military imbalance. Diplomatic overtures from Riyadh and Abu Dhabi signal the collapse of US strategic credibility. Iran has not merely survived the most powerful empire; it has emerged as the indispensable regional power. The Zionist project for regional hegemony lies buried beneath Qatar's damaged LNG infrastructure and the empty Patriot canisters across Saudi bases. The American cat retreats, its claws broken, while Iran assumes its position at the center of a new Persian Gulf order, one that Arab monarchies in the Persian Gulf, after decades of servitude, are finally embracing.

The old balance is giving way to something more uncertain. Iran has not emerged stronger because it escaped the costs of war, but because, despite those costs, it remains impossible to exclude from any serious settlement of the Gulf's future. The real question is no longer whether Iran can be pushed to the margins, but whether Washington can still dictate regional rules as it once did. In the Persian Gulf, Jerry has stopped running. He has found his ground, raised his voice, and forced the cat to reckon with him. Tom may still be larger, richer, and more heavily armed but size alone no longer guarantees control. The next chapter will be written by those capable of enduring pressure and shaping what comes after it.

Palestinian resistance repels covert Israeli kidnapping mission in Gaza City

By staff writer

TEHRAN — Israeli special forces slipped into the crowded Katiba district of western Gaza City before dawn on September 1. They did not leave unnoticed.

According to local reports, alert Palestinian security personnel detected the infiltration immediately, cornering the covert unit and sparking a fierce urban gunfight.

The Resistance fighters engaged the infiltrators directly, surrounding the compromised squad.

Facing the imminent capture of its own operatives, the Israeli military panicked. Israeli commanders flooded the airspace with over a dozen heavily armed drones and warplanes to salvage the botched mission.

For 35 minutes, low-flying aircraft rained missiles and smoke bombs onto residential blocks.

The intensive aerial bombardment had a single objective. It was a desperate cover operation to extract the trapped commandos.

The withdrawal came at a cost to Palestinian civilians. Medics at al-Shifa Hospital received the bodies of at least three people from the Katiba strikes, including two children.

Other strikes in the Tal al-Hawa neighborhood and near Baladiya Park pushed the morning death toll to five.

Israel Katz

Israeli War Minister Israel Katz scrambled to frame the humiliating exposure as a tactical victory.

He claimed his forces successfully detained a Hamas internal security official. Palestinian field sources dismantled that narrative quickly.

Local reports said the Resistance inflicted casualties on the infiltrating unit, forcing a chaotic retreat that left behind military equipment.

Israel simply leveled the surrounding civilian infrastructure to hide its operational failure.

Hamas warns the mediators

The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, immediately denounced the raid.

Hamas officials issued detailed statements condemning the operation as a calculated massacre in a densely populated displacement zone.

The movement contacted international mediators, including Nikolay Mladenov, to demand maximum pressure on Israel.

Hamas leadership made their position absolute. Israel is intentionally sabotaging the October 2025 Sharm el-Sheikh ceasefire framework.

Washington continues to provide diplomatic cover and heavy munitions for these relentless assaults.

Since the American sponsored truce supposedly took effect in October 2025, Israeli forces have murdered over 1,300 Palestinians.

The broader genocide that began in October 2023 has now claimed more than 73,400 lives, with thousands more incinerated by thermonuclear weapons or buried under concrete.

China urges ‘equal consultation’ at G20, rejects external interference in Middle East

From page 1 ► He said the G20, as a primary platform for international economic cooperation, "should conduct coordination on major global economic issues in an objective, fair and balanced manner, based on consultations and equal participation."

"China hopes the US, as the presidency, and all members will follow these principles, respect the legitimate concerns of all parties and work toward positive outcomes" at the G20 Leaders' Summit in Miami, Guo said.

The US is the current chair of the bloc of the world's 20 largest economies and hosted the meeting in Asheville, North Carolina, this week.

According to the US Treasury, China objected to several points in the statement released by the G20 chair, the US, Tuesday at the end of the two-day meeting.

Beijing reportedly differed over the phrases "imbalances" as well as "non-market policies," according to Financial Times.



Targeting the basic elements of survival

Israel relies more on missiles and bombs. It wages a systematic war on Palestinian survival.

On August 24, Israeli warplanes obliterated a newly built desalination plant in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood.

That facility had provided clean water to 17 displacement shelters, offering a brief respite for a thirsty population.

Now, desperate families walk miles carrying plastic containers just to find groundwater.

The United Nations reports that 90 percent of the population lacks reliable access to safe drinking water. Children are increasingly hospitalized with severe intestinal illnesses.

This deliberate ecocide is beginning to bleed across the nominal borders.

The total destruction of Gaza power and sanitation grids forces 100,000 cubic meters of raw sewage into the Mediterranean Sea every day.

Ocean currents push this waste straight north. The resulting fecal contamination and toxic algae blooms have repeatedly forced the shutdown of the Ashkelon desalination plant in southern Israel.

Tel Aviv engineered a public health catastrophe in Gaza, and the pathogens are migrating.

Toxic rubble and a failing occupation

Israel is also hauling millions of tons of pulverized Gaza debris into undisclosed locations across the occupied territories.

Euro-Med Monitor tracks roughly 100 trucks moving this material daily.

The rubble is heavily contaminated with asbestos, heavy metals, unexploded ordnance, and decomposing human remains.

Shifting this toxic load risks poisoning the groundwater and soil in Israeli settlements.

The environmental blowback highlights a glaring reality. The regime cannot sustain its scorched earth campaign without poisoning the very land it claims.

Winter is approaching. More than 1.5 million Palestinians face extreme food insecurity as the occupation regime blocks essential aid and heavy machinery needed for flood prevention.

Yet the Resistance holds its ground. The Katiba operation proved that the Palestinian security apparatus remains vigilant and highly capable, even after years of relentless bombardment.

Israel can drop bombs on civilian parks, destroy water plants, and violate ceasefires daily, but it cannot manufacture a victory against a population determined to survive.

Persian Gulf equilibrium: The fracturing of US hegemony

By Syeda Farheen Naqi Mossavi

TEHRAN — The metaphor of Tom and Jerry has long served foreign journalists describing the Federal Reserve's pressure on Wall Street. That narrative, however, is a sideshow. The real contest unfolds in the Persian Gulf, and the dynamics defy cartoon logic entirely. Iran, cast as Jerry, does not flee; it stands its ground, exhausts its adversary, and systematically neutralizes American capabilities.

The International Monetary Fund's 2026 Persian Gulf economic projections offer a stark revelation. Iran's economy is forecast to contract by 6.1 percent this year, a severe blow attributable to American sanctions. Yet Qatar, home to the Al Udeid Air Base and a cornerstone of US regional strategy, is projected to shrink by 8.6 percent, with Kuwait also registering negative growth. The nation Washington seeks to isolate is outperforming its closest allies, rendering the administration's declared "most crushing economic operation" a self-defeating exercise that has inflicted greater harm on friends than on the designated foe.

This outcome stems from two strategic factors. Iranian strikes crippled Qatar's Ras Laffan liquefied natural gas complex—the world's largest removing approximately 17 percent of its export capacity with repairs requiring three to five years. More consequentially, Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz has severed Qatar's primary revenue route to European markets. Doha responded with a 30 percent reduction in departmental budgets and an 85 percent cut to overseas aid. The emirate's vulnerability exposes a fundamental failure of its American patron to guarantee

maritime security, undermining Washington's protective commitments.

Militarily, the United States confronts a depletion of its advanced interceptor inventory. Patriot and THAAD systems have been drawn down to critically low levels, with some estimates indicating losses of up to three-fifths of total stockpiles. Requests from Saudi Arabia for replenishment have been denied, revealing an arsenal stretched beyond capacity. Iran has exploited this asymmetry through a cost-exchange strategy: deploying inexpensive, mass-produced drones that compel the US to expend million-dollar interceptors per engagement. This arithmetic has exhausted American defensive resources, forcing a strategic reevaluation.

The conflict's impetus traces directly to Israeli advocacy for direct US military confrontation with Iran. Washington's compliance has, however, transformed American military installations across the Persian Gulf from protective shields into liability magnets. Persian Gulf Arab monarchies have consequently initiated back-channel communications with Tehran, as confirmed by Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf. Their calculus reflects a sober assessment that the US security umbrella no longer functions, with Patriot batteries depleted and alliance commitments hollowed out.

For these states, a homegrown regional order now appears as the sole viable alternative. Iran has demonstrated resilience through sustained sanctions, bombing campaigns, and strategic retention of its nuclear and missile programs while exercising precise control over the Strait of Hormuz. This endurance has

Javanmardi banned three years for doping

TEHRAN - Para athletics athlete returned adverse analytical findings for oxandrolone, a Prohibited Substance, and forfeited gold medal obtained at the New Delhi 2025 World Para Athletics Championships

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has banned Para athletics athlete Aliasghar Javanmardi for a period of three years for committing an anti-doping rule violation (ADRV), in breach of the IPC Anti-Doping Code.

The Iranian athlete returned adverse analytical findings (AAF) for a Prohibited Substance in two urine samples provided out-of-competition. The first sample was collected on 22 September 2025 by his National Anti-Doping Agency, the Iran NADO, and the second sample was collected by the IPC on 24 September 2025 at the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships in New Delhi, India. Both AAFs were considered together as one single ADRV for the purposes of the Code.

The substance was oxandrolone. The substance is included on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) 2025 Prohibited List under the class S.1.1 Anabolic Androgenic Steroids (AAS).

The athlete was provisionally suspended by the IPC on 28 October 2025 pending a resolution of his case, Paralympic.org reported.

The athlete subsequently accepted his commission of the ADRV, and the consequences proposed by the IPC. As a result of his violation, the athlete will be ineligible for competition and other sporting activities (other than authorized anti-doping education or rehabilitation programs) for three years from 28 October 2025 ending on 27 October 2028.

All results obtained by the athlete from the date the first sample was collected (22 September 2025) until the commencement of the Provisional Suspension are disqualified, with all resulting Consequences, including forfeiture of any medals, points and prizes. This includes disqualification of all results obtained by the Athlete in the New Delhi 2025 World Para Athletics Championships and forfeiture of the gold medal obtained by the athlete in the men's shot put F35 competition, Paralympic.org reported.

Each athlete is strictly liable for the substances found in their sample. An ADRV occurs whenever a prohibited substance (or its metabolites or markers) is found in their bodily sample, whether or not the athlete intentionally or unintentionally used a prohibited substance or was negligent or otherwise at fault.

As a signatory of the World Anti-Doping Code (the WADC), the IPC remains committed to a doping-free sporting environment at all levels. The IPC has established the IPC Anti-Doping Code in compliance with the general principles of the WADC, including the WADC International Standards, expecting that, in the spirit of sport, it will lead the fight against doping in sport for athletes with an impairment.

Iran's fastest man matches national record after eight years

TEHRAN - Iranian sprint star Hassan Taftian has matched his own national record in the men's 100 meters for the first time in nearly eight years.

The Iranian National Athletics Championships are currently underway in Shiraz, with the men's 100m event taking place on the opening day of competition on Monday, September 1.

According to the Iranian Athletics Federation, Taftian clocked 10.03 seconds to equal the Iranian national record in the 100m.

The 33-year-old remains Iran's national record holder in the event, having first set the 10.03-second mark in 2019, ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. That performance also secured him an Olympic qualification spot.

Taftian's latest record-equaling performance came despite a 0.4 m/s headwind, making the achievement even more notable.

After almost eight years, Iran's fastest man has once again matched the national standard in the blue-riband sprint event.

Alipour targets fifth gold of his sporting career

TEHRAN - Iranian para-athletics star Amirhossein Alipour is determined to add another gold medal to his impressive collection at the 2026 Asian Para Games in Nagoya, as he looks to strengthen his path toward qualification for the next Paralympic Games.

Alipour, an F11 shot putter, has already claimed four gold medals at major world and Asian competitions and is now preparing for his second appearance at the Asian Para Games.

Speaking about his preparations for Nagoya, Alipour said he began his training program after competing at the World Championships in India. He has continued his preparations both through national training camps and independently.

"So far, I have reached around 70 to 80 percent of my ideal fitness level," Alipour said. "With the training program I will follow until our departure for Japan, I expect to reach 90 to 100 percent readiness."

The Iranian thrower made his Asian Para Games debut at Hangzhou 2022, where he won the gold medal at just 19 years of age. He was one of the youngest members of Iran's delegation at the event.

"That was my first experience at the Asian Para Games and winning the gold medal at such a young age was very special and memorable for me," Alipour said. "I am determined to repeat that achievement in Nagoya."

For Alipour, gold is more than just another medal. The 2026 Asian Para Games represent an important step in his campaign to secure qualification for the next Paralympic Games.

"I believe every athlete goes into a major competition aiming for gold. No athlete competes hoping to win anything other than the best medal," he said. "I am going to the Asian Para Games with the same goal—to defend my title from the previous edition."

Alipour has enjoyed a remarkable run of success on the international stage. According to the Iranian thrower, every major competition he has entered has ended with him standing on top of the podium.

"I have won gold at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, the World Championships in Japan, the 2024 Paris Paralympics and the World Championships," he said. "With four world and Asian gold medals already, I am now preparing to win my fifth. This gold is particularly important because the Asian Para Games are one of the significant events in the qualification process for the Paralympics."

His immediate focus, however, remains Nagoya, where he hopes to make another statement with a fifth major gold medal.

"I want to go to the qualification events with the Nagoya gold behind me and then fight for another Paralympic title," Alipour said.

Mohammad Mohebi joins Rijeka

TEHRAN - Rijeka have completed the signing of Iran international Mohammad Mohebi, adding an experienced and versatile attacker to Matjaz Kek's squad on the final day of the transfer window across much of Europe.

The 27-year-old passed his medical before signing a two-year contract at Rujevica. Mohebi arrives as a free agent following the expiration of his contract with Russian side Rostov, meaning Rijeka did not have to pay a transfer fee.

The Iranian said the club's ambitions played an important role in his decision to move to Croatia.

"Thank you for the warm welcome. I did some research into the history of the city and the club and saw that there are big ambitions here. I liked that and that's why I came to Rijeka. I hope we can try to win trophies together," Mohebi said.

4,600-year-old board game, decorated bone comb unearthed at Burnt City in southeast Iran

TEHRAN - Archaeologists excavating the ancient Burnt City in southeastern Iran have unearthed a 4,600-year-old board game, a decorated bone comb and exceptionally well-preserved organic remains, offering new clues about the social and everyday lives of the city's inhabitants during the third millennium BC.

The discoveries were made during the 21st season of archaeological excavations at the UNESCO-listed site, according to Rouhollah Shirazi, head of the excavation team at Shahr-e Sukhteh, also known as Shahr-i Sokhta or the Burnt City.

Shirazi said the latest finds include a previously unknown type of board game, an engraved bone comb, remains of organic materials including eggshell, textiles and leather, as well as previously undocumented burial practices.

"These discoveries can provide researchers with new information about less-known aspects of the life, culture and social relations of the inhabitants of the Burnt City," Shirazi said, according to the report published by Miras Aria on Wednesday.

Situated about 56 kilometers south of Zabol in Sistan-Baluchestan province, the Burnt City covers about 273 hectares and was inhabited from the late fourth millennium through the third millennium BC. Its occupation continued through four major cultural periods.

Archaeological excavations at the site began in 1967. Ten seasons were conducted before the 1979 Islamic Revolution under the direction of Italian archaeologist Maurizio Tosi. Following the establishment of Iran's Cultural Heritage Organization, excavations resumed under the direction of Iranian archaeologist Seyyed Mansour Seyyed-Sajjadi and continued for another 20 seasons.

The excavations have provided evidence of the inhabitants' cultural, social and economic life and their extensive contacts with Central Asia, the Makran coast, Oman and the Persian Gulf, the Indus Valley, southwestern Iran and Mesopotamia.

Mining activity halted near Persepolis following heritage site intervention

TEHRAN - Mining operations at a sand and gravel quarry near the UNESCO-listed Persepolis have been halted following efforts by the World Heritage Site's office and an order from the prosecutor of Marvdasht county, the head of the site has said.

Mohammad-Javad Jafari on Tuesday said mining activities are prohibited within the three designated buffer zones of the archaeological complex under its protection regulations.

"Any mining activity within the site's three buffer zones is prohibited, and carrying out such activities constitutes a violation of the legal regulations," Jafari said.

He stressed that protecting historical heritage is not limited to the direct preservation of monuments and rock reliefs, but also includes safeguarding the site's protected area, buffer zones and cultural landscape.

English edition of Gilgamesh magazine resumes publication after five-year hiatus

TEHRAN - The English-language edition of Gilgamesh, an Iranian quarterly magazine focusing on heritage and tourism, has resumed publication after a five-year hiatus, with its 10th issue dedicated primarily to the restoration of historic buildings.

The 148-page issue takes international readers on a journey through Iran's history, culture, art, architecture and nature, covering subjects ranging from Lake Urmia and ancient trees to



New evidence of everyday life

The 21st excavation season began on July 20, 2026, focusing on three areas: one in the residential quarter and two in the cemetery.

In the northeastern part of the residential area, archaeologists identified two architectural phases and a range of evidence associated with everyday activities as well as craft production.

The finds include substantial quantities of animal remains, tools, stone-working debris, plain and decorated animal figurines and hearths within architectural spaces.

Shirazi said the evidence suggests that the area should not be regarded as a purely industrial quarter. Rather, it appears to have served as a place where residents carried out everyday activities alongside certain forms of craft production.

The cemetery has yielded a diverse collection of finds, including new burial types, organic remains, plain and decorated pottery and polychrome ceramics.

A 4,600-year-old game

One of the most significant discoveries of the latest season is a distinctive type of board game dating to the third millennium BC.

Shirazi said the discovery could offer a new perspective on social life and forms of entertainment at the ancient settlement.

Together with other evidence from the cemetery, the game suggests that life at the Burnt City extended beyond subsistence, production and the fulfilment of

basic needs, pointing instead to a society with diverse and complex social and cultural practices.

Egg, textile and leather remains

Archaeologists also recovered evidence of organic materials, including eggshell, textile fragments and leather.

The preservation of organic materials is particularly significant in archaeology because such remains generally deteriorate under the effects of environmental conditions, natural processes and the passage of time.

Their survival can provide more direct evidence of past lifestyles, technologies, economic practices and patterns of consumption, Shirazi said.

Decorated bone comb

Another notable discovery is an engraved bone comb that, according to Shirazi, has no known counterpart so far from the region. Comparable examples have only been reported from some archaeological sites in Central Asia.

The comb and its engraved decoration could contribute to studies of artistic practices, manufacturing technology, ornamentation, grooming and the cultural and social relationships of the Burnt City's inhabitants, he said.

An significant Bronze Age settlement

The Burnt City was a major center of the Helmand civilization and one of Iran's most important archaeological sites. Situated in a region that once formed part of Bronze Age trade networks

crossing the Iranian plateau, the settlement provides evidence of long-distance cultural and commercial contacts.

The dry desert environment has contributed to the preservation of structures, burials and numerous artifacts, making the site an important source of information about the emergence of complex societies and their interactions during the third millennium BC.

The city was inhabited through four main periods until around 1800 BC. Previous excavations have revealed evidence of sophisticated weaving, decorative arts, stone carving and painted pottery.

According to UNESCO, changes in watercourses and climate contributed to the eventual abandonment of the settlement in the early second millennium BC.

Shirazi said continued archaeological research could reveal further unknown aspects of the civilization and shed light on the transition from a relatively limited rural way of life to the emergence of a large, organized and complex urban settlement.

Interdisciplinary studies

The latest excavation season also includes a range of interdisciplinary studies aimed at reconstructing life at the Burnt City in greater detail.

Researchers are carrying out OSL sampling for dating, collecting organic material from residential and cemetery contexts for radiocarbon dating, conducting anthropological studies, taking samples for ancient-DNA analysis and examining human skeletal remains for evidence of disease and trauma.

Shirazi said combining archaeological evidence with the results of interdisciplinary research could help researchers reconstruct the inhabitants' social relations, lifestyles, technologies, health conditions and cultural connections more accurately.

The findings, he added, could further highlight the importance of the Burnt City as a key archaeological source for understanding the development of urban civilizations during the third millennium BC.

The archaeological site was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1979 and remains one of Iran's major cultural tourism destinations.



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Trump’s “help is on the way”: the TOEFL ban edition

By Mehdi Garshasbi

TEHRAN – The United States is increasingly making education itself a target of economic pressure on Iran, raising a fundamental question: if Washington claims to target the Iranian government rather than the Iranian people, why are ordinary students being denied access to internationally recognized educational opportunities?

The US Treasury Department indefinitely suspended General License G on August 24, a measure that had for years permitted certain educational and academic services in Iran.

The authorization encompassed standardized testing activities and services associated with university admissions. Following the suspension of the authorization, the U.S.-based Educational Testing Service (ETS) confirmed the immediate suspension of TOEFL and GRE testing services in the country.

Duolingo also announced that its English Test was unavailable in Iran and for users with Iranian identification documents. The restriction is particularly significant because the test had become an affordable alternative for students who could not easily access more expensive international examinations.

The development follows the earlier suspension of IELTS testing inside Iran. IDP Education announced that January 31, 2026, would be the final IELTS test date in the country, citing financial and regulatory factors beyond its control. Iranian applicants have consequently been forced to consider travelling abroad simply to obtain the language certification required for university applications.

For students, however, these are not merely commercial services. A language examination can determine whether an applicant can submit a university application, qualify for a scholarship or meet the admission requirements of an international institution. Removing access to such examinations therefore creates an additional barrier to education.

International human-rights law recognizes education as a fundamental right. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes “the right of everyone to education,” while UN guidance emphasizes that access to education must be provided without discrimina-



tion. UNESCO likewise identifies equality of opportunity and non-discrimination as fundamental principles of the right to education.

Against that backdrop, the impact of sanctions on Iranian students raises serious questions about whether political and economic pressure can be reconciled with the international commitment to protecting educational access.

Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, has criticized sanctions targeting international exams such as the TOEFL for Iranian nationals, saying such measures aim to force Iran into submission.

“The enemy’s objective is to use sanctions to force our country to surrender, and it has tried various forms of sanctions so far,” ISNA quoted Simaei-Sarraf as saying on Tuesday.

He said academic sanctions were not unprecedented, noting that several Iranian universities have been under sanctions for years and that academic papers submitted with Iranian affiliations have faced rejection.

“What is interesting now is that simply taking an exam is being prohibited based on Iranian nationality and citizenship,” the minister said.

“These are no longer the same old measures; this is Stone Age behavior,” he added. “Trump claimed that he wanted to take Iran

back to the Stone Age, but he himself is behaving in an entirely primitive and barbaric manner.”

Meanwhile, the reaction among Iranian users on social media has reflected precisely this concern. One user described the situation bluntly: “This only affects the common Iranian person.” Another wrote that educational sanctions “only punish ordinary people.” An Iranian student described how years of preparation for TOEFL had been thrown into uncertainty after the test was suspended.

In January, Donald Trump urged Iranian anti-government protesters to keep protesting, saying “help is on its way”.

After bombing Iran, killing more than 140 students at the Minab school on the very first day of the imposed war on February 28, and killing thousands of ordinary civilians, the United States—having failed to achieve its objectives and failed to secure the victory it sought—is now apparently continuing its “help” through these absurd measures.

Education is supposed to build bridges between societies, not become collateral damage in political disputes. When access to those bridges is restricted because of nationality, the consequences are felt not by officials, but by students sitting at home, preparing for examinations and trying to build their futures.

Sanitation services, safe water restored in war-affected provinces

TEHRAN – The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), in cooperation with national and local authorities and partners, has supported the delivery of essential water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) equipment and emergency supplies to nine provinces affected by the recently imposed US-Israeli war against the country.

The effort helps maintain and restore safe water and sanitation services in Sistan-Baluchestan, Hormozgan, Khuzestan, Bushehr, Kordestan, Lorestan, Fars, Markazi and Ilam provinces, UNICEF website announced in a press release in August.

The support is helping keep safe water flowing, restore disrupted services and manage wastewater safely for more than one million children and family members.

The supplies include 26 solar-powered water disinfection and chlorination systems to help keep drinking water safe during power disruptions, four portable water-quality monitoring sets, and 17 submersible sludge pumps for wastewater management.

A further 10 tonnes of calcium hypochlorite have been distributed for water disinfection. The equipment and supplies have reached affected areas.

Protecting access to safe water during emergencies

When conflict damages or disrupts water and sanitation systems, the consequences for children can be immediate. Reduced access to safe drinking water and functioning sanitation increases the risk of disease and can leave families without services they depend on every day.

Keeping water disinfected, monitoring its quality and ensuring wastewater systems



continue to function are critical to protecting public health and preventing further disruption to essential services. Through the distributed equipment and supplies, UNICEF, together with national authorities and partners, is helping sustain essential WASH services for more than one million children and their family members, while strengthening the capacity to respond quickly when water and sanitation systems are damaged or disrupted.

Preparing to respond when services are disrupted

Keeping emergency WASH equipment and supplies ready for rapid deployment can help reduce delays when water and sanitation services are damaged or disrupted. UNICEF works closely with national partners to strengthen emergency preparedness and maintain critical supplies that can support water disinfection, water-quality monitoring and wastewater management during emergencies.

This preparedness helps ensure that critical WASH support can reach affected communities quickly, allowing UNICEF and its partners to help protect children’s and families’ access to

safe water and sanitation when they need it most.

WASH FIT to help health facilities improve services

Funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) are supporting the Ministry of Health and Medical Education to strengthen water, sanitation and hygiene services in health facilities nationwide.

The initiative supports introducing and institutionalizing the Water and Sanitation for Health Facility Improvement Tool, known as WASH FIT, across Iran’s health system. The tool helps health facilities identify risks and plan practical improvements in areas such as safe water, sanitation, hygiene, waste management, environmental cleaning, workforce, management, and energy and environment, UNICEF’s website announced in a press release on July 17.

Children and families across Iran will benefit from efforts to make health care facilities more resilient and hygienic and better equipped to prevent infections.

Building national capacity

The initiative began with a national workshop held in Tehran in

October 2025, which brought together 40 environmental health experts from Universities of Medical Sciences from 25 provinces.

The workshop prepared participants to support health facilities in assessing their water, sanitation and hygiene conditions and identifying priority areas for improvement. It built on an earlier national assessment of health facilities and a roadmap developed by WHO to strengthen these essential services across the country.

Expanding training across the country

Following the national workshop, a series of provincial cascade training workshops has started from April 2026. Environmental health experts from hospitals and urban and rural health centers take part in the trainings.

Participants learn how to assess conditions in health facilities, identify risks, and prepare action plans based on the needs of each facility. These skills will help health workers improve hygiene standards, reduce the risk of infections, and provide safer services for patients, including children and mothers.

UNICEF and WHO are also working with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education to integrate WASH FIT into the national health system, ensuring its sustainable implementation and scale-up.

By strengthening the skills of health professionals and supporting a consistent approach across the country, the initiative aims to improve the quality and safety of health services for children, families, patients and health workers.

Islamic World Science and Technology Exchange Office unveiled

TEHRAN – The Islamic World Science and Technology Exchange Office (STEP-AUT) has been unveiled with the aim of developing and systematizing scientific and technological exchanges, expanding scientific diplomacy, and connecting Iranian researchers with a network of scientists, scholars, and universities across the Islamic world.

The office was launched on Tuesday in cooperation with the Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation and Amirkabir University of Technology. It seeks to transform the scattered scientific capacities across the Islamic world into an active, structured and measurable network, while creating opportunities for academic cooperation, faculty and student exchanges, research opportunities and the implementation of joint projects.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, Ali Soroush, president of Amirkabir University of Technology, described the development of scientific ties and networking as a continuation of a deep-rooted tradition in Iranian and Islamic culture.

“Science cannot be confined, and the expansion and dissemination of knowledge have always been part of the scientific and cultural heritage of Iran and the Islamic world,” he said.

Soroush stressed the need to move beyond individual and fragmented contacts toward organized, network-based cooperation, adding that the more structured scientific relations become, the broader their impact and outcomes will be.

He said STEP-AUT could provide a platform for developing sustainable interactions among scientists and universities.

Soroush described international scientific cooperation as a two-way process, emphasizing that Iran and its universities can not only benefit from global experience but

also have the capacity to make a significant impact in many scientific and technological fields and move toward achieving greater scientific prominence.

He added that this confidence should be instilled in younger generations of researchers.

Ehsan Qaboul, head of the Ministry of Science’s Center for International Scientific Cooperation, also identified synergy, convergence and networking as key components of scientific diplomacy.

“There is considerable potential for expanding Iran’s scientific and academic cooperation with various countries, particularly those in the Islamic world, stressing that these opportunities should be transformed into sustainable and targeted partnerships.”

Qaboul described the establishment of the Islamic World Science and Technology Exchange Office as an initiative aimed at facilitating and accelerating scientific relations among Muslim countries. Referring to the Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation’s activities in this area, he described the foundation as a source of pride for the country’s scientific diplomacy.

He also stressed the importance of showcasing Iran’s scientific and technological capabilities and achievements and moving away from an “island-based” approach toward the creation of an integrated network.

Emphasizing the need to use data and integrated information systems for decision-making and policymaking, Qaboul said that consolidating the capacities of universities, research institutes and science and technology parks could prevent information fragmentation and strengthen data-driven governance in the field of scientific diplomacy.

WFP releases July report on Iran

TEHRAN – The World Food Program (WFP) has released a report, expounding on activities in Iran over the month of July.

In July, WFP food assistance reached 35,611 beneficiaries, including Afghan and Iraqi refugees, through a hybrid combination of in-kind food and cash-based transfers (CBT).

Refugees are assisted with a staple food basket, which includes fortified wheat flour (a ration of 9 kg per person, reduced from 12 Kg since the month of November 2025 due to funding shortfalls).

Under CBT modality, WFP continued to provide cash assistance to support the essential living costs of vulnerable refugees. The transfer is IRR 8 million (USD 5.3) for households headed by men and IRR 9 million (USD 6) for households headed by women.

Following the resolution in late July of technical issues caused by June 13 cyberattacks on Tejarat Bank, WFP financial service providers, June and July cash transfers were completed on July 21 and 22.

By July, WFP Iran helped ease the financial burden associated with the gluten-free dietary needs of 58 refugee celiac patients from WFP’s beneficiaries by providing them with an extra cash amount of IRR 9.7 million (USD 6.5) per person as a replacement for their usual food entitlement.

WFP supported 409 refugees with disabilities across eleven settlements, each receiving an additional monthly cash support of IRR 3 million (USD 2), on top of their regular aid. Initially launched in two provinces, the initiative was gradually expanded to cover 11 settlements in Saveh, Semnan, Bani Najaf, Sarvestan, Bezileh, Abazar, Rafsanjan, Bard-sir, Jahrom, Meybod, and Torbat-e-jam.

The school feeding program and education incentives are currently suspended due to summer holidays, and will resume with the start of the new academic year.

In July, WFP supported 29 income-generating projects in 18 settlements to improve economic resilience and self-sufficiency for 303 refugees, 38 percent of whom were women, and the remainder were youth. These activities included welding, tailoring, baking, farming, and other trades, providing opportunities for women and youth to develop practical skills, strengthen social

connections, and actively engage with their communities.

In 2025, WFP sustained food assistance to some 33,300 vulnerable refugees living in 20 settlements across 13 provinces, including 404 refugees with disabilities (40 percent women) who received monthly cash top-ups. About 183 women and 190 men received WFP livelihood support.

WFP doubled cash transfer values since January 2025, safeguarding access to food amid price volatility and protecting the most vulnerable households.

Assistance remained uninterrupted, with targeted adjustments: wheat flour entitlements reduced from 12 kg to 9 kg (Nov-Dec) and school snacks paused (Oct-Dec) to stretch limited resources.

To promote girls’ education and reduce barriers to attendance, approximately 2,629 girl students received cash incentives as part of WFP’s commitment to empowering young women. Some 9,261 boys and girls and their teachers benefitted from WFP school snacks.

For more than four decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has hosted Afghans fleeing conflict and hardship. In 2025, WFP remained essential to protecting the food security of vulnerable refugees residing in 20 settlements, where households rely on shelter, education and primary health care by the Government and other humanitarian actors, complemented by WFP’s monthly food assistance (through cash and in-kind modalities).

The program’s focus is on maintaining a dignified minimum basic needs while prioritizing those with the highest vulnerability, including households headed by women and persons with disabilities.

Operations are implemented in close collaboration and coordination with the Center for Alien and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (CAFIA), WFP’s primary governmental counterpart, and with International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO) and UN agencies, mainly the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to ensure coherent refugee support and referral pathways.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



SEPTEMBER 3, 2026

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

One of the worst forms of betrayal is being disloyal with things entrusted in one's possession.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:04 Evening: 18:48 Dawn: 4:12 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:38 (tomorrow)

Poster of 15th International 100-Second Film Festival unveiled

TEHRAN – The official poster for the 15th edition of the International 100-Second Film Festival has been unveiled.

This year's edition of the festival will be held from September 15 to 18 in Tehran, under the directorship of Mohadeseh Pirhadi, Mehr reported.

The upcoming edition will host works focusing on three main themes: "National: Battle for the Future," "International: Battle for the Children of the World," and "Special: Battle for the Homeland."

These themes are designed to provoke thought on the precarious nature of the future, the urgent need for the protection and rights of children globally, and the enduring spirit of patriotism and national identity.

According to the festival secretariat, the selected works for this edition will compete in the following categories: "Fiction," "Animation," "Artificial Intelligence," and "Documentary."

Moreover, a series of specialized international workshops across nine countries, will be held to advance media literacy, filmmaking, and explaining new narratives.

The specialized cinema and media workshops will be organized with the goal of empowering artists and building international networks. Designed around the transfer of technical expertise and the theoretical foundations of modern storytelling, this educational initiative has created a platform for synergy among filmmakers and art-focused bloggers.

In the intensive segment of the project, 40 filmmakers and bloggers of diverse nationalities will take part. The course curriculum, developed under the guidance of Mohsen Saberi, Sajjad Soleimannejad, and Hossein Naghavi, centers on modern documentary filmmaking, ideation in short films, and the application of artificial intelligence in cinema, to convey new standards of content production to the participants.

Designed to create a coherent current of artistic output, these intensive courses go beyond classic classroom education and are



shaping a global network for articulating new media narratives. Careful documentation of the processes, recording of the instructors' experiences, and the compilation of workshop outputs—besides enhancing the participants' technical knowledge—will provide a sustainable foundation for future joint media productions.

The festival is renowned for its stringent time constraints, which challenge creators to deliver a complete and impactful narrative within a very limited window.

Since its inception, the festival has served as a prestigious platform for discovering new talents and experimenting with the art of the short, pushing the boundaries of how much emotion and information can be conveyed in a few fleeting seconds. The upcoming edition promises to be a diverse gathering of international perspectives, reflecting the shared struggles and hopes of humanity through the lens of a camera.

The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization is the organizer of the festival.

Sirous Moqaddam turns Minab tragedy into “Empty Grave”

TEHRAN- Iranian filmmaker and painter Sirous Moqaddam says his deep personal attachment to southern Iran and his encounter with the families of the Minab school victims inspired him to create “Empty Grave,” a painting dedicated to the children killed in the tragic attack on a school in the southern city of Minab.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Moqaddam spoke about the motivation behind the work on the sidelines of the opening of the group exhibition “Minab School,” which brings together works by a number of prominent contemporary Iranian visual artists in response to the tragedy.

The exhibition opened on Friday, August 28, at the Art Bureau in Tehran. Organized by the Nam Cultural and Artistic Institute, the exhibition features works created voluntarily by Iranian artists seeking to preserve the memory of the children and teachers who lost their lives in the attack.

“I was proud to be part of this gathering, and I had the opportunity to create and present the painting ‘Empty Grave’ for the exhibition,” Moqaddam said.

He recalled that efforts had begun among artists to organize a collective exhibition following the tragedy, saying that the opportunity to participate in the project carried a particular significance for him.

“I have several kinds of personal attachment, but most importantly, I am a child of the south myself, and I have a special attachment to this part of the country,” he said.

Moqaddam said his connection with the victims became more personal after meeting the family of Makan Nasiri, a seven-year-old missing martyr.

“When I became acquainted with the Makan's family and witnessed their grief and sorrow, I considered it my duty,” he mentioned.

The artist said that a subsequent meeting with families of the Minab victims in Mashhad further shaped his approach to the subject.

“After that, at a meeting in Mashhad with the families of the Minab martyrs, I decided to create a more specific work. From that moment on, the idea that there should be a painting of an empty grave in this collection remained in my mind,” he explained.

For Moqaddam, the empty grave serves as a powerful image of absence. Rather than depicting the moment of the attack itself, the painting focuses on what remains afterward: a space that should have been filled by a child whose life was cut short.

The choice of the subject also reflects the broader role that the “Minab School” exhibition seeks to give to art: turning an individ-



Sirous Moqaddam (C) speaks to Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abbas Araghchi, at the opening of the group exhibition “Minab School” at the Art Bureau in Tehran on August 28.

ual tragedy into a lasting visual record.

The exhibition was organized in the aftermath of the February 28 attack on the Shajareh Tayyeb elementary school in Minab, Hormozgan province. The strike occurred as students were beginning their school day, killing and injuring a large number of people.

According to Iranian authorities, the final death toll from the attack reached 168, while at least 95 others were wounded. The victims included children and teachers, making the incident one of the most devastating episodes of the conflict that began that day.

The tragedy has since become a major subject of remembrance in Iran, with artists turning to painting and other forms of visual expression to preserve the memory of the victims.

At the opening of the exhibition, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi described the students killed at the school as symbols of heroism for the Iranian people and stressed that the incident would not be forgotten or forgiven. He also highlighted the ability of art to preserve historical events and communicate messages in ways that speeches and written statements sometimes cannot.

“The works are documents of the legitimacy and victimhood of the Iranian people and the children who were deliberately and unjustly targeted in this war,” Araghchi said at the opening.

Moqaddam's “Empty Grave” is among the works that approach the tragedy not simply as a historical event but as an emotional experience for the victims' families and the wider community.

The exhibition includes works by a wide range of established Iranian artists, among them Behzad Shishegaran, Gholam-Ali Taheri, Morteza Asadi, Kazem Chalipa, Ali Nedai, Hassan Yaqouti, Abdolha-

mid Ghadirian, Mostafa Goudarzi, Nasser Seifi, Jamshid Haqiqatshenas, Seyyed Masoud Shojai Tabatabai, Kamyar Sadeqi, Seyyed Ali Mirfatah, Mahyar Charmchi, Mostafa Qorbani, Hossein Eini-bakhsh and Mohammad-Ali Naderi, alongside Moqaddam.

The collective nature of the exhibition is significant, as the artists participated voluntarily and sought to address the tragedy through different visual languages. While some works recall the victims directly, others use metaphor, symbolism and abstraction to explore loss, grief and remembrance.

The exhibition consequently functions both as a memorial and as an artistic response to the tragedy. Its organizers have sought to ensure that the memory of the victims remains present through contemporary Iranian art.

The role of art in preserving the memory of the Minab victims has also been emphasized by officials. Araghchi said at the opening that paintings, films, poetry and music can convey messages that may not be fully communicated through conventional diplomatic statements or speeches. He expressed hope that the exhibition could eventually be presented in other countries so international audiences could learn about the Iranian children who were killed.

“Minab School” will remain on display at the Art Bureau in Tehran through September 22, offering visitors an opportunity to view the artists' different interpretations of the tragedy and the lives lost.

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

While dozens of girls and boys aged between 7 and 12 were be-

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

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

An analysis by Al Jazeera's digital investigations unit, utilizing over a decade of satellite imagery and recent video clips, revealed that the school was a clearly distinct civilian facility, separated from any adjacent military sites for at least ten years. Furthermore, witness accounts and satellite-based analyses confirmed that the school was triple tapped by three separate, deliberate strikes, leaving no doubt about the nature of the attack.

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

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

Cartoon of Day



Trump... the oil dog

Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

Abbas Kiarostami's retrospective in Sao Paulo

TEHRAN – The IMS Cinema in Sao Paulo, Brazil, is presenting a retrospective of the work of the Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami, one of the great names in world cinema.

From his early short films made at Kanoon (Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents) to the feature films that made him internationally famous, the exhibition covers five decades of activity and restless cinematic thought, ILNA reported.

Until September 27, his short, medium, and feature films will be screened in restored 2K copies. A rare opportunity to discover or revisit, in almost its entirety, the poetics and practice of an artist who expanded the possibilities of the moving image from Iran to the world.

The program includes films such as “The Bread and the Alley” (1970), the director's first short film, up to his last feature film, “24 Frames,” released posthumously in 2017, passing through works such as the celebrated Koker trilogy, which includes “Where Is My Friend's House?,” “Life and Nothing More,”

and “Through the Olive Trees”; “Close-Up,” one of the films responsible for bringing his work to the world's attention; and “Taste of Cherry,” winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1997.

Abbas Kiarostami (1940 – 2016) was an Iranian film director, screenwriter, poet, photographer, and film producer. An active filmmaker from 1970, Kiarostami had been involved in the production of over 40 films, including shorts and documentaries.

In later works, “Certified Copy” (2010) and “Like Someone in Love” (2012), he filmed for the first time outside Iran: in Italy and Japan, respectively.

His films “Where Is the Friend's House?” (1987), “Close-Up,” and “The Wind Will Carry Us” were ranked among the 100 best foreign films in a 2018 critics' poll by BBC Culture. “Close-Up” was also ranked one of the 50 greatest movies of all time in the famous decennial Sight & Sound poll conducted in 2012. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest and most influential filmmakers of Iran, and of all time.

Kiarostami had worked extensively as a screenwriter, film editor, art director, and producer and had designed credit titles and publicity material. He was also a poet, photographer, painter, illustrator, and graphic designer. He was part of a generation of filmmakers in the Iranian New Wave, a Persian cinema movement that started in the late 1960s and emphasized the use of poetic dialogue and allegorical storytelling dealing with political and philosophical issues.

Kiarostami had a reputation for using child protagonists, for documentary-style narrative films, for stories that take place in rural villages, and for conversations that unfold inside cars, using stationary mounted cameras. He is also known for his use of Persian poetry in the dialogue, titles, and themes of his films. Kiarostami's films contain a notable degree of ambiguity, an unusual mixture of simplicity and complexity, and often a mix of fictional and documentary elements. The concepts of change and continuity, in addition to the themes of life and death, play a major role in Kiarostami's works.