

IRGC deals fresh blows to US fleet, regional infrastructure

TEHRAN — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has conducted a series of high-impact retaliatory strikes in the Strait of Hormuz, successfully targeting two US military vessels, eight oil tankers, and ten additional ships attempting to breach Iranian-designated prohibited zones under the explicit encouragement and protection of Washington.

A dawn statement issued on Wednesday by the IRGC confirmed that these decisive naval maneuvers were executed in direct response to a hostile, terrorist act carried out by American forces against five Iranian oil tankers in the Persian Gulf region. ▶ Page 2

Iran will strike 20 targets for every two hits by enemy, IRGC warns

TEHRAN— Iran will respond to any attack with a significantly larger number of strikes, the spokesman for the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) said Wednesday, warning that Tehran would target as many as 20 enemy positions if two or three Iranian targets were attacked.

Brigadier General Hossein Mohebbi made the remarks while speaking to reporters about the IRGC Navy's reported capture of a US unmanned submarine in the Strait of Hormuz, saying Iran's control and management of the strategic waterway had become "realized, certain and demonstrable." ▶ Page 2

Strategic folly of Iran war: a global economic catastrophe

TEHRAN- The recent war waged by the United States and Israel against Iran has been a catastrophic miscalculation, inflicting severe and likely irreversible damage on the global economy. While Americans grapple with soaring gas prices and inflation, the deeper, more systemic impacts of this conflict expose the reckless shortsightedness of U.S. policy in West Asia.

The most significant change has been the permanent alteration of control over the Strait of Hormuz. Before the war, this vital waterway was an international passage. Now, Iran has demonstrated its effective control by regulating traffic and directly challenging U.S. naval dominance. This shift has introduced a permanent risk premium into global energy markets and cemented a precedent for nations to exert sovereign control over strategic waterways. This is not a hypothetical "tail risk" but a proven, permanent geopolitical reality that threatens the foundation of global energy security. ▶ Page 4

South Koreans rally in Seoul against joining US war on Iran

TEHRAN — Mounting domestic public outrage in South Korea has collided directly with the United States' aggressive attempts to drag international allies into its unprovoked war against Iran.

Dozens of South Korean anti-war activists, civil society leaders, and ordinary citizens gathered across from the massive United States embassy compound in Seoul on Wednesday to demand that their government unequivocally reject Washington's pressure to deploy troops to the strategic Strait of Hormuz, fiercely slamming the ongoing campaign as an "illegal war."

The protesters unfurled banners and waved signs bearing powerful messages such as "Do not join a war of aggression." They voiced their collective indignation as South Korean political and military leaders continue to weigh a potential "contribution" to the waterway's security at the behest of the White House. ▶ Page 3

Moby-Dick Catch in Hormuz

Iran's capture of the American uncrewed submarine comes as Trump has repeatedly claimed that the US has annihilated Iranian naval forces

The IRGC Navy seized the vessel in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, dealing a significant blow to US regional operations.

The captured asset has been identified as the "Dive-LD," a cutting-edge autonomous vehicle developed by California-based Anduril Industries.

The Pentagon claimed the submersible had merely "malfunctioned" during routine surveying, asserting that it contained no classified technology.

Washington's reliance on such unmanned systems stems from an inability to risk manned assets in high-threat, contested environments.

Measuring 5.8 meters long and weighing 2.7 tonnes, this advanced submarine can reach operational depths of up to 6,000 meters.

Historical precedents suggest Iranian engineers will reverse-engineer the Dive-LD, a prospect that Russia and China are also eager to exploit.

It was designed for complex intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), alongside seabed mapping and critical infrastructure monitoring missions.

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

From war to resolution

Sobh-e-No analyzed Trump’s “invalid policy,” arguing that it stems from Washington’s inability to confront Iran’s power. After months of conflict and failure to counter Iran, the United States now intends to use another pressure lever — referring Iran’s case to the UN Security Council — in hopes of forcing Iran to yield. The current approach of the US and the International Atomic Energy Agency suffers from a “fundamental flaw”: attempting to resolve a crisis they themselves created through military action, without addressing its roots. As long as the Board of Governors refuses to condemn attacks on nuclear facilities under its supervision, calls for cooperation from Iran will not only be ineffective but counterproductive. What the West needs is a redefinition of cooperation — acknowledging that inspections during war or under threat of war differ fundamentally from inspections in peacetime. Otherwise, referring Iran’s case to the Security Council will, like military strikes, lead only to a deeper stalemate.

Khorasan: Beyond the new strategy
Khorasan evaluated Iran’s bold and strategic move to impose new controls on movement through the Strait of Hormuz. According to the paper, Iran’s action carries a message of symmetrical deterrence: if the United States threatens Iran’s access to international markets, Iran will raise the cost of passage for regional and global rivals by introducing a “shipping sanctions list.” In other words, Iran seeks to break the blockade by defining a sanctions-for-sanctions equation. Iran states that it does not intend to escalate tensions or take military action after implementing its new strategic lever in the Strait, but simultaneously with it — a move that could place additional strategic and operational pressure on the US military, which is already facing various constraints in weaponry and manpower.

Javan: The Strait of Hormuz as a global power lever
In an article, Javan discussed Iran’s control and assertion of sovereignty over the Strait

of Hormuz as a global power lever, arguing that such control elevates Iran to the status of a global power. The first reason for the strait’s strategic importance is the lack of sufficient capacity to replace it. Another factor is the concentration of energy demand in Asia: China, India, Japan, and South Korea are among the main importers of crude oil passing through the Strait of Hormuz, with roughly 80 percent of shipments destined for Asian markets. A further factor is the strait’s connection to the world’s spare oil production capacity. Disruption in the strait would not only halt part of exports but also complicate the use of spare production capacity in Persian Gulf states. In essence, the Strait of Hormuz is a classic “geopolitical chokepoint.” A real disruption there could simultaneously affect global oil and gas markets, transportation, electricity, energy-intensive industries, and inflation and growth indicators. Therefore, Iran’s assertion of sovereignty over the strait positions the country as a global power.

Hamshahri: Billions of dollars of Iranian funds still move through US banks
Despite the Trump administration’s intensified economic pressure on Iran, billions of dollars in Iran-related financial resources still pass through US banks each year — a situation that Western officials and researchers describe as a major vulnerability in Washington’s campaign to cut Iran off from the global financial system. While the Trump administration is tightening economic pressure, it faces an unexpected weak point in its effort to sever Iran’s access to global finance: its own banks. Some financial experts believe Washington’s efforts may have limited impact unless greater pressure is placed on US banks to scrutinize their correspondent banking relationships more rigorously. The US Treasury announced last year that in 2024 it had identified roughly \$9 billion in Iranian-linked funds that were transferred through American banks. Some researchers on Iran argue that if US banks act more proactively, this figure could be reduced.

VP: Iran was prepared as soon as Pezeshkian took the office

TEHRAN- Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said the administration of President Masoud Pezeshkian had prepared contingency plans for governing the country under wartime conditions from the beginning of its tenure, having anticipated the possibility of a full-scale conflict.
Speaking at a meeting with political parties and activists in Qom, Aref said the government had faced a difficult security environment from the early days of its tenure. He stated that the United States and Israel, which attempted to undermine Iran, had directly entered confrontation with the country, resulting in two wars.
The first vice president said the government had taken the possibility of a major conflict seriously from the outset and had therefore developed plans for maintaining



the country’s essential functions during both the 12-day war and the Ramadan war.
Referring to the 12-day conflict, Aref said Iran’s adversaries had expected the country to surrender within three days, but that calculation had failed because of ‘the continued public support and resistance of Iranians.’

Iran denounces Israeli aggression against Lebanon

TEHRAN - Iran has denounced Israel’s ongoing airstrikes across southern Lebanon, particularly attacks on residential areas that have killed and injured dozens of civilians.
In a statement issued on Wednesday, Iran’s Foreign Ministry slammed the latest Israeli attacks as part of its relentless aggression against Lebanon.
The ministry also praised the resilience of the Lebanese people in confronting the hegemony and occupation of the “child-killing” Israeli regime.
The statement stressed that Iran fully supports Lebanon as the country continues to defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.
It also referred to the overt US backing for

Israel’s attacks and occupation of several locations in southern Lebanon. The statement noted that Washington has thereby become a primary accomplice in Tel Aviv’s crimes and must be held accountable.
Israeli aircraft carried out strikes on the outskirts of Nabatieh al-Fawqa toward Kfar Tebnit, while sporadic artillery fire targeted Doha Kfar Rouman.
In the Tyre district, an Israeli drone released explosive canisters over the town of Mansouri while artillery shelling targeted the area.
Israeli forces also unleashed heavy machine-gun fire on the town of Majdal Zoun at dawn.
Israeli artillery further targeted the outskirts of Qabrikha in the Marjayoun district.

Iran will strike 20 targets for every two hits by enemy, IRGC warns

From page 1 ▶ He said Iran would use ‘its established capabilities’ in the Strait to respond to any hostile action.
“Any vessel that intends to pass through the Strait of Hormuz without taking Iran’s management of the waterway into consideration will definitely not be able to pass through,” Mohebbi said.
His comments underline the strategic importance Tehran attaches to the Strait, one of the world’s most critical maritime chokepoints and a major conduit for global energy shipments. Iran has repeatedly emphasized that its geographic position along the northern shore of the waterway gives it substantial leverage in any military confrontation in the Persian Gulf.
US naval forces have withdrawn
Mohebbi also addressed the deployment of US naval forces in the Persian Gulf before the beginning of the “US-Israeli war of aggression” against Iran.
He said between 30 and 40 US vessels and warships had previously been deployed inside the Persian Gulf but revealed that none remained in the area.
“Today, not even a single one



of them is present in this area, and US warships have withdrawn at least 400 kilometers from the Strait of Hormuz,” he said.
The IRGC spokesman also sought to underscore Iran’s ability to conduct strikes at considerable distances, saying advances in missiles and other weapons had expanded the range of Tehran’s retaliatory options.
“We also hit an aircraft carrier a few days ago at a distance of about 500 kilometers,” Mohebbi said.
He then issued a broader warning about the scale of any potential Iranian retaliation. “We have reached a point where if the enemy hits two or three of our targets, we will respond strongly

tended to exploit the geography of the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz, where narrow waterways and dense commercial traffic can complicate the operations of larger naval forces.
The Strait of Hormuz is especially significant because of its role in international energy markets. Millions of barrels of crude oil, condensate, and petroleum products pass through the waterway each day, making any sustained disruption potentially consequential for global oil supplies and prices.
For Tehran, however, the strategic value of Hormuz extends beyond its economic importance. Iranian officials have repeatedly presented control of the waterway as a component of national deterrence, arguing that the ability to threaten or restrict maritime traffic can raise the costs of military action against Iran.
Mohebbi’s warning therefore appears intended not only as a battlefield threat but also as a message of deterrence: any attack on Iranian territory or military assets, Tehran says, could trigger retaliation on a substantially larger scale.
Such statements remind one not ‘an eye for an eye,’ but ‘two eyes for an eye.’

IRGC deals fresh blows to US fleet, regional infrastructure



From page 1 ▶ According to military officials, the retaliatory salvo inflicted severe operational damage on both the targeted US warships and the commercial oil tankers. The statement further emphasized that the IRGC Navy retains absolute surveillance and administrative oversight over the vital maritime bottleneck, promising that Iran’s armed forces will continuously uphold national sovereignty and protect the maritime security of the Persian Gulf.
Simultaneously, the IRGC Aerospace Force delivered a crushing blow to American regional infrastructure by unleashing a high-precision

barrage of solid- and liquid-fueled ballistic missiles against the US al-Azraq Airbase in Jordan. Iranian military intelligence confirmed that the complex strikes directly impacted key infrastructure, including heavy maintenance and repair hangars, aircraft assembly facilities, and reinforced shelters housing hostile foreign F-35, F-16, and F-15 fighter jets.
Highlighting the compounding strategic failures of Washington’s military footprint, IRGC Spokesman Brigadier General Hossein Mohebbi declared on Wednesday that the United States lacks the fundamental capacity to maintain a long-term presence in West Asia. He revealed that relentless defensive pressure, combined with severe logistical depletion and collapsing troop morale, has forced American warships to retreat 400 kilometers away from the Strait of Hormuz. Mohebbi noted that the continuous attrition suffered by US naval assets has exposed the structural vulnerability of Washington’s aggressive force posture across the Middle East.
These heavy retaliatory measures take place amid the unprovoked war of aggression launched on February 28, 2026, when the United States and Israel initiated a massive, co-

ordinated air assault against Iranian defense networks, government command centers, strategic national infrastructure, and residential areas. Intended to force a geopolitical collapse and cripple Iran’s defense systems, the February 28 aggression immediately triggered a resolute defense response across the region. Iranian armed forces swiftly retaliated by launching ballistic missiles and heavy drone barrages at US bases across Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan, while simultaneously declaring strict navigational controls over the Strait of Hormuz.
The military exchanges highlight a broadening theater of war, where the Strait of Hormuz has emerged as the principal operational arena. Iranian military commanders have reiterated that any attempts by hostile foreign states or protected merchant fleets to violate Iran’s territorial authority or endanger regional shipping lanes will be met with immediate, unyielding counter-measures. Iran has reaffirmed that its forces remain fully committed to exercising complete control over the strategic waterway, ensuring that the defense of national soil and regional independence remains unwavering.

General Sharif: Iran regards Strait of Hormuz as strategic deterrent

TEHRAN — Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif, head of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Sacred Defense Documents Center and an adviser to the IRGC commander-in-chief, has described Iran’s ability to restrict or block maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz as a strategic and deterrent instrument of national power.
Speaking at a ceremony commemorating the Iranian forces and commanders, martyred during the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq war, Sharif highlighted the role of the late IRGC Navy commander Alireza Tangsiri in shaping Iran’s approach to the strategically vital waterway.
According to Sharif, the development of Iran’s ability to control the Strait marked a turning point in the way Hormuz was incorporated into the region’s strategic and military equations. He characterized the capability as a “strategic and deterrent weapon” available to the Islamic Republic.
Sharif said the experience of Iranian forces in the Strait during the Sacred Defense had demonstrated how control of a strategically important maritime passage could influence broader military calculations. He also argued that Iran’s experience in

the waterway had subsequently served as a model for the “Resistance Front.”
Hormuz as a pillar of Iran’s maritime strategy
Sharif’s remarks come as the Strait of Hormuz remains at the center of an escalating confrontation involving Iran, the United States and regional actors. The waterway, which separates Iran from Oman and links the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, is one of the world’s most important energy chokepoints.
The US Energy Information Administration estimates that 20.9 million barrels per day of oil passed through the Strait in the first half of 2025, equivalent to roughly 20% of global petroleum liquids consumption. Because alternative routes have limited capacity, any sustained disruption to shipping through Hormuz can have immediate consequences for global energy markets.
The strategic importance of the waterway has become even more pronounced amid the current conflict. The EIA estimates that oil and petroleum-liquid flows through Hormuz averaged only 4.9 million barrels per day in the second quarter of 2026, compared with 21.6 million barrels per day in the final quarter of

2025, before the conflict began. The disruption has contributed to significant volatility in global crude markets.
From Tehran’s perspective, the Strait is therefore not merely a commercial shipping route but also a key component of Iran’s asymmetric deterrence strategy. Iranian officials have repeatedly argued that the country’s geographic position along the northern shore of the waterway gives it significant leverage in any military confrontation in the Persian Gulf.
Sharif’s reference to Tangsiri also carries particular significance. Tangsiri, who commanded the IRGC Navy from 2018 until his martyrdom in March 2026, became closely associated with Iran’s maritime strategy and its emphasis on asymmetric capabilities, including fast attack craft, missiles, drones and other systems designed to complicate the operations of technologically superior naval forces.
Iranian officials have long maintained that the country does not seek to close Hormuz under normal circumstances, but that it retains the capability to restrict maritime traffic if confronted with ‘a major security threat.’ In this framework, the ability to disrupt the waterway is

presented primarily as a deterrent capability—one intended to raise the potential cost of military action against Iran rather than simply as an instrument for shutting down global energy supplies.
That strategic calculation gives Hormuz a significance extending well beyond the Persian Gulf. Any prolonged disruption would affect not only Iran and the Arab Gulf states but also major Asian energy consumers, including China, India, Japan and South Korea, which account for a substantial share of the crude and condensate transported through the waterway.
Sharif’s comments consequently reflect a longstanding Iranian military doctrine: control of the country’s surrounding maritime geography can compensate, at least in part, for conventional disparities with larger military powers and create a form of strategic deterrence based on geography, mobility and the ability to impose costs on an adversary.
Against the backdrop of the current confrontation, Tehran’s emphasis on Hormuz also signals that the waterway remains central to Iran’s calculations of national security and regional power.

Moby-Dick catch in Hormuz

Iran’s capture of the American uncrewed submarine comes as Trump has repeatedly claimed that the US has annihilated Iranian naval forces

TEHRAN — The successful capture and interception of a highly advanced, unmanned American underwater vehicle at the entrance of the strategic Strait of Hormuz by Iran is a decisive blow to Washington’s technological arrogance, exposing the profound vulnerabilities of the US military’s automated warfare apparatus.

Beyond a simple recovery, this tactical victory highlights Tehran’s ability to neutralize stealth and low-observable platforms across multiple domains, completely dismantling Washington’s multi-layered hybrid warfare strategy in the Persian Gulf.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy confirmed that the seizure was carried out in the early hours following a “complex intelligence and operational action,” showcasing Tehran’s absolute mastery over the strategic regional waterway. The captured asset has been identified as the Dive-LD, a cutting-edge autonomous unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) developed by California-based defense firm Anduril Industries.

Delivered to the US Navy’s Unmanned Undersea Vehicle Group 1 in 2025, the platform represents the pinnacle of modern American subsurface warfare. Measuring 5.8 meters in length with a 1.2-meter diameter and weighing roughly 2.7 tonnes, the modular platform boasts an operational depth of 6,000 meters (19,700 feet) and a 10-day endurance capacity.

Designed for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR), seabed mapping, mine countermeasures, and critical infrastructure monitoring, the \$2.5 million system was deployed to support American maritime operations amid the ongoing conflict. While Iran celebrated the operation as a monumental intelligence victory, Washington predictably sought to minimize its humiliation. The Pentagon claimed the submersible had merely “malfunctioned a day prior” during routine surveying and contained no classified sonar or radar.

Manufacturers at Anduril similarly framed the vessel as an “attributable” asset built for high-risk zones. However, media and regional analysts swiftly dismantled the US narrative, noting that retrieve-and-display operations of virtually intact, state-of-the-art platforms directly contradict claims of simple mechan-



ical drift. Defense analysts emphasized that the Dive-LD was engineered specifically with anti-detection features, low-acoustic signatures, and stealth design to avoid tracking—making its capture an even greater operational feat for the IRGC Navy.

According to military observers, Washington’s heavy reliance on unmanned systems stems from a critical weakness: the US military simply cannot afford the human cost or operational risk of sending manned assets into an arena dominated by Iranian anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Having been effectively deterred from operating manned forces in the region, the Pentagon turned to an uncrewed, three-layered domain strategy—utilizing aerial drones (UAVs), uncrewed surface vessels (USVs), and autonomous submersibles (UUVs).

Iran’s armed forces have now systematically crushed all three tiers of this hybrid doctrine. When the Dive-LD lost signal, the US military scrambled an MQ-9 Reaper drone to locate and recover the vessel, only for Iranian air defense systems to promptly shoot down the surveillance aircraft. By intercepting low-surface craft, neutralizing aerial surveillance, and penetrating the cyber and electronic command architecture of the stealth Dive-LD itself, Iranian electronic warfare units bypassed the submersible’s multi-layered network security, hacked its navigation, and brought the vessel safely under control.

The seizure fits into a long history of Iranian

electronic warfare and intelligence achievements, echoing the famous capture of the RQ-170 Sentinel stealth drone, MQ-9 Reapers, and various unmanned surface craft. Historical precedents indicate that Iranian defense engineers will successfully reverse-engineer the Dive-LD’s modular systems, accelerating Iran’s rapidly expanding domestic UUV and drone capabilities. This is a technology that Russia and China are keen to acquire. The intelligence coup unfolds against the backdrop of the devastating regional war ignited by joint US-Israeli aggression in late February.

Despite facing heavy aerial attacks, Iranian retaliatory strikes on US installations—including Al Udeid in Qatar, Ali Al Salem in Kuwait, Al Dhafra in the UAE, and the Fifth Fleet naval base in Bahrain—have severely disrupted Washington’s military footprint. The economic toll on the aggressors has been immense while Washington grapples with dwindling missile stockpiles.

The massive firing of \$4 million Patriot interceptors to counter low-cost \$50,000 Iranian Shahed drones highlights the unsustainable asymmetric calculus favoring Tehran. Furthermore, Iranian strikes on US regional facilities have thrown global markets into chaos. As the US naval blockade attempts to suppress maritime traffic, the IRGC’s seizure of the Dive-LD underscores a clear reality: Iran maintains full tactical control over the Strait of Hormuz, rendering American technological hubris useless in the face of domestic resolve.

LATEST NEWS

rendering force ineffective against Iran’s scientific progress.

■ Foreign Ministry condemns US attack on Iranian tankers

Iran’s Foreign Ministry has condemned a US attack on several Iranian oil tankers in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman, calling it a violation of the UN Charter. In response, Iran’s Armed Forces exercised their right to self-defense, striking US bases in Jordan and US vessels involved in the aggression. The IRGC reported that ballistic missiles targeted Jordan’s Al-Azraq Air Base, inflicting heavy damage on fighter jet shelters. Iran reaffirmed its determination to respond decisively to any further military aggression.

■ Foreign flights unaffected by new US sanctions on Iranian airlines: official

Iranian officials have confirmed that new US sanctions targeting 27 Iranian airlines have not disrupted international flights. Imam Khomeini Airport’s CEO stated that all flights are operating normally and that no cancellations have occurred. Meanwhile, the head of Iran’s Civil Aviation Organization described the sanctions as a repetition of failed policies, stressing that although costs may rise, Iran’s aviation industry will not be halted. Efforts to expand routes, including to Tunisia and Vietnam, continue as planned.

■ No advanced technology can evade IRGC surveillance in Hormuz: spokesman

The IRGC spokesperson has declared that no advanced technology can penetrate Iran’s surveillance layers in the Strait of Hormuz, following the capture of a US unmanned underwater vehicle. Brigadier General Hossein Mohebbi stated that the interception of the Dive-LD—one of the US military’s most advanced submarines—demonstrates Iran’s monitoring capabilities. He asserted that dominance over the Persian Gulf belongs to Iranian youth and called on US forces to leave the region.

■ IRGC: Assassination of Sunni cleric shows enemy’s attempt to create division among Muslims

The IRGC has condemned the assassination of Sunni Kurdish cleric Mamosta Mohammad Nezhati by separatist groups, describing it as an enemy attempt to create

division among Muslims. In a statement, the IRGC noted that the crime aims to undermine Shia-Sunni unity and disrupt social peace. However, it emphasized that such incidents have not weakened the bond between the two sects in West Azarbaijan Province, and have instead strengthened their unity since the Islamic Revolution.

■ Iran warns of response to noncompliance to Islamabad MoU

Iran’s deputy for communications affairs has affirmed that the Islamic Republic remains committed to the 14-point Islamabad memorandum of understanding, which he described as a significant achievement preserving national interests. However, Mehdi Tabatabaei warned that if the other side fails to honor the agreement, Iran will respond according to circumstances. He stressed that the memorandum is not untouchable and can be reviewed, while calling for realistic assessments of Iran’s situation and resilience.

■ Iran’s new consul general arrives in Basra, pledges to expand bilateral ties

Iran’s new Consul General in Basra, Mostafa Tarfi, has arrived in the city and pledged to expand bilateral cooperation across economic, cultural, scientific, and academic fields. Welcomed by local officials, Tarfi emphasized the deep historical ties between Iran and Iraq and expressed hope for developing cooperation. Key priorities include strengthening people-to-people relations, supporting trade, and expanding university linkages, as well as utilizing shared capacities for the benefit of both nations.

■ WSJ: recent Iranian attacks on US Navy equipment ‘concerning’

The Wall Street Journal has reported that Iran conducted an unannounced attack on US Navy vessels on Monday, following ballistic missile strikes on an aircraft carrier and destroyer. Although no US ships were damaged, officials expressed concern that Iran may be using more advanced weapons and receiving assistance from China or Russia. The report follows Iran’s capture of a US unmanned submarine and recent US strikes on Iranian tankers, with the IRGC issuing warnings to nearby vessels.

South Koreans rally in Seoul against joining US war on Iran

‘Do not send our youth into a sea of death’



TEHRAN — Mounting domestic public outrage in South Korea has collided directly with the United States’ aggressive attempts to drag international allies into its unprovoked war against Iran.

Dozens of South Korean anti-war activists, civil society leaders, and ordinary citizens gathered across from the massive United States embassy compound in Seoul on Wednesday to demand that their government unequivocally reject Washington’s pressure to deploy troops to the strategic Strait of Hormuz, fiercely slamming the ongoing campaign as an “illegal war.”

The protesters unfurled banners and waved signs bearing powerful messages such as “Do not join a war of aggression.” They voiced their collective indignation as South Korean political and military leaders continue to weigh a potential “contribution” to the waterway’s security at the behest of the White House.

With passions running high against foreign military entanglements, the crowd echoed a resounding plea directly toward the presidential office: “We cannot send our young people into a sea of death!”

The street demonstrations in the heart of Seoul unfolded after South Korean defense authorities disclosed that they had dispatched a specialized fact-finding mission to assess the situation on the ground in Hormuz. While official spokespersons in Seoul were quick to stress that no final decision had been made regarding any deployment, South Korea had previously acknowledged on Friday that it was actively considering “contributions” to US security efforts along the vital maritime corridor, provided that its own military readiness was not compromised.

Iran warns South Korea against succumbing to US blackmail

The prospect of South Korea’s potential military involvement in the Persian Gulf has drawn strong warnings from authorities in Iran, who have made it clear that any foreign intervention alongside hostile American forces will not go unanswered.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei has emphasized that such involvement would amount to “direct” support for the United States and would inevitably lead to serious consequences.

Publishing a detailed statement in the Korean language on his official X account on Monday, Baghaei underscored the historical depth of bilateral relations between the two countries. He noted that Iran and South Korea have maintained diplomatic and economic relations for more than 64 years, consistently developing ties on the firm basis of mutual respect. Tehran, he reiterated, has always attached great importance to its friendly ties with Seoul and values the long-standing bond between the two peoples.

However, Baghaei clearly delineated the boundaries of peaceful engagement amid Washington’s blatant violations of international norms. He stated that the Iranian nation is currently defending itself against acts of aggression and responding decisively to US war crimes against women and children.

Under the current fraught circumstances, the spokesman said it is abundantly clear that any operational participation or military presence by other parties in the Persian Gulf

and the Strait of Hormuz will constitute direct support for the aggressor and will have serious consequences.

Urging South Korean policymakers to maintain an independent foreign policy aligned with international law and long-term national interests rather than American adventurism, Baghaei stressed that no sovereign and responsible country would succumb to US pressure and blackmail to cooperate with the United States in its acts of aggression and heinous crimes against the Iranian nation.

“No sovereign and responsible country will submit to US pressure and blackmail to colude in committing acts of aggression and heinous crimes against the great Iranian nation,” Baghaei pointed out.

Outrage in Seoul over US war crimes

Tehran’s warnings have found strong resonance among informed segments of South Korean civil society, who see Washington’s unilateral actions as a dangerous violation of international order that threatens global peace.

Speaking to reporters outside the embassy, Jung Kyung-jik, an official representing the influential civic organization People’s Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, affirmed that Iranian concerns are grounded in legal reality. “As Iran has said, the deployment of our troops to the region would amount to direct participation in an illegal war,” Jung said.

Denouncing the horrific humanitarian and material toll inflicted by the American military offensive, Jung added: “There have been numerous violations of international law arising from US attacks on Iran, including the bombing of an elementary school and energy infrastructure.”

Similar warnings were echoed by Choi Young-ok, an activist with Korean Peace Solidarity for Sovereignty and Reunification, who stressed that subservience to Washington’s dictates would endanger the lives of South Korean service members. Choi warned that an overseas deployment would “inevitably lead to casualties” in an unjustified theater of conflict.

“Sending our troops to an illegal war waged by the United States is unacceptable,” Choi said, pointing out the absolute lack of global enthusiasm for Washington’s reckless endeavor. “There is no reason for us to send troops when no other country has done so or said it would.”

Under South Korean constitutional law, should Seoul decide to deploy armed forces to the strait, the executive branch cannot act unilaterally; it would require formal parliamentary approval by a majority vote in the National Assembly—a hurdle that grows increasingly steep as public opposition intensifies.

The current regional crisis trace its origins back to the unlawful military campaign launched on February 28, when the United States and Israel embarked on a coordinated, unprovoked assault against Iran’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Conceived in Washington and Tel Aviv with the illusion of achieving a rapid and decisive breakthrough, the war of aggression has instead evolved over the past six months into a crushing geopolitical and military quagmire for the aggressors.

Iran pushes for accelerated trade with Eurasia as minister wraps up Moscow visit

TEHRAN- Iran's Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, offering a positive assessment of the results of his Tuesday meetings with officials of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), announced the proposal of initiatives such as setting a base currency to accelerate transactions and appointing special representatives to resolve obstacles facing bilateral trade.

According to IRNA, Seyyed Ali Madanizadeh, speaking to reporters after separate meetings and talks with the Chairman of the Executive Board and the Minister of Trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission at the union's headquarters in Moscow, added: "We held very good sessions."

He stated: "On Iran's behalf, we expressed our interest and readiness to expand relations and fully implement the free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, and that we are prepared to cooperate with this union in various fields; the union's officials, in turn, expressed their willingness and interest in expanding ties with our country."

The Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, referring to the efforts of the enemies of the Iranian nation to fuel economic warfare and block trade and financial channels, said: "What is evident is that, thanks to God, these countries support Iran and our economy, and that Iran has managed to maintain production and trade relations with countries under the toughest conditions." He added: "The member states of the Eurasian Economic Union are equally committed and eager to develop these relations."

Strengthening Iran's presence in EAEU's 180-million-person market

Continuing his Moscow visit agenda for multilateral consultations, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance attended the Eurasian Economic Union's headquarters and met with the Chairman of the Executive Board and the Minister of Trade to discuss accelerating bilateral trade.

Seyyed Ali Madanizadeh, and Bakytzhan Sagintayev, Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission, emphasized their shared determination to expand cooperation during this meeting.

Prior to this meeting, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance held a separate session with Andrey Slepnev, Minister in charge of Trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission, and a group of union officials to review the progress of cooper-



ation following the implementation of the free trade agreement. Slepnev, noting that the second meeting of the Iran-EAEU working group would be hosted by Tehran in the coming months, expressed hope that the upward trend in bilateral trade would continue.

Iran's Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, and Mehdi Heydari, Deputy Minister of Economy and head of Iran's Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance, accompanied Madanizadeh during these meetings.

The free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union came into force in May 2025 after completing legal procedures in the signatory countries, subsequently eliminating customs duties on 87% of goods in bilateral trade.

Within this cooperation framework, the path has been smoothed for Iranian goods to enter the market of over 180 million people in the union's member states, and reciprocally, this opportunity is available for traders from the five signatory countries in commerce with Iran.

Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia are members of the Eurasian Economic Union, and Iran holds observer status in the union.

The Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance arrived in Moscow on Sunday for bilateral and multilateral consultations. On Tuesday, Madanizadeh met with his Russian counterpart to discuss the expansion of economic relations—a meeting that, according to him, brought about significant breakthroughs in the country's trade and economic sectors.

The Economy Minister also attended a brainstorming session on Monday evening with Iranian expatriate traders and economic activists residing in Russia, listening closely to their concerns.

TCCIMA trade delegation departs for New Delhi to attend BRICS business council meetings

TEHRAN- A trade delegation from the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA), led by Feryal Mostofi, Vice President, along with Shahab Javanmardi and Abbas Argon, other members of the chamber's board of directors, has departed for India to participate in the BRICS Business Council meetings and its specialized working groups.

The Tehran Chamber trade delegation, accompanied by Majid Ghasemi, head of the Iranian section of the BRICS Business Council, traveled to New Delhi with the aim of strengthening ties between Iran's private sector and economic actors from member countries of this international organization, identifying new cooperation opportunities, and exploring commercial and joint investment capacities.

The BRICS Business Council meetings and its specialized working groups will be held on September 11 and 12, 2026, in New Delhi. Private sector representatives from BRICS member countries will discuss and exchange views within the framework of specialized working groups on strategies for developing economic, commercial, and investment cooperation, as well as expanding interactions among economic actors from member states.

Iranian private sector representatives will also present their perspectives and proposals in various areas of the BRICS Business Council's activities during the specialized sessions.

The focus of these meetings will be on "economic resilience," "digital transformation," "cross-border trade facilitation," "transition from traditional (goods) trade toward the development of services sectors," "new technologies," "strengthening the role of women," and "startups" in the global economy.

BRICS: A platform for economic and commercial cooperation

BRICS emerged as a mechanism for coop-

eration among emerging economies with the participation of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Following the accession of South Africa and the expansion of its membership, it has become one of the most important frameworks for cooperation among Global South countries. Iran officially became a member of BRICS in early 2024.

BRICS operates with the objectives of expanding trade and investment, developing financial cooperation, strengthening the role of emerging economies, and increasing collaboration in areas such as energy, industry, agriculture, technology, and infrastructure.

The BRICS Business Council is the private sector body of the group, which identifies trade and investment opportunities, pursues joint projects, and conveys private sector proposals to governments by establishing connections between companies and economic institutions of member countries.

The council's activities are carried out through nine specialized working groups, including: Aviation, Financial Services, Infrastructure, Transport and Logistics, Manufacturing, Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence, Trade and Investment, Energy, Green Economy and Climate, Skills Development, Technology, and Agriculture and Food Security.

Iran's BRICS membership and opportunities ahead

Iran's membership in BRICS has paved the way for the active participation of the country's private sector in the Business Council and its working groups. Identifying trade partners, implementing joint projects, increasing exports, attracting investment, and developing cooperation in the fields of energy, transportation, agriculture, industry, and technology are among the most significant opportunities for Iran.

Strategic folly of Iran war: a global economic catastrophe

TEHRAN- The recent war waged by the United States and Israel against Iran has been a catastrophic miscalculation, inflicting severe and likely irreversible damage on the global economy. While Americans grapple with soaring gas prices and inflation, the deeper, more systemic impacts of this conflict expose the reckless shortsightedness of U.S. policy in West Asia.

The most significant change has been the permanent alteration of control over the Strait of Hormuz. Before the war, this vital waterway was an international passage. Now, Iran has demonstrated its effective control by regulating traffic and directly challenging U.S. naval dominance. This shift has introduced a permanent risk premium into global energy markets and ce-



mented a precedent for nations to exert sovereign control over strategic waterways. This is not a hypothetical "tail risk" but a proven, permanent geopolitical reality that threatens the foundation of global energy security.

Furthermore, the war has established China as the undeniable "most powerful force in the oil market". Through its strategic stockpiles and rapid energy transition, China has demonstrated a unique ability to modulate its

demand, effectively cushioning itself from an oil shock that the U.S. itself precipitated. The resulting surge in electric vehicle adoption and coal usage in China suggests that global oil demand may have permanently peaked, a direct consequence of the instability fostered by the U.S. war.

The United States has not only destabilized a critical region but has also accelerated the global energy transition on its adversaries' terms, weakened its own economic standing, and created a geopolitical environment from which it struggles to extract itself. This conflict stands as a stark example of how misguided foreign policy can boomerang, damaging the initiating nation's own economy and global standing far more than it harms its intended target.

'Iran-Iraq trade capacity can rise to \$20b'

TEHRAN- The head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, emphasizing the need to create new momentum in the economic relations between the two countries, stated that there is capacity for Iran-Iraq trade to reach \$20 billion, and that by resolving some domestic and foreign obstacles, this goal can be achieved.

According to a report by IRNA on Wednesday, Yahya Al-e Es'haq, speaking at a meeting of the Kermanshah Province Export Development Working Group chaired by the governor, referred to regional, global, and domestic conditions and added: "Today, many of our issues in various fields are tied to the economy, and a major part of the solutions for dealing with the current situation must also be pursued in the economic sphere and through practical measures."

The head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, referring to the selection of the title "Pilgrimage and Trade" to introduce the capacities of Kermanshah Province, stated: "Choosing this title can be one of the solutions to some problems, because the potential and actual capacity in this area is very high."

He added: "Kermanshah Province, geographically and in terms of having formal and informal borders, holds a special position and can play a significant role in the development of economic relations between Iran and Iraq."

Al-e Es'haq continued: "In a situation where Iran is facing various issues and threats, utilizing the economic capacities of neighboring countries can be one of the effective solutions for managing the current situation, developing relations, and creating new economic opportunities."

Stating that the goal of increasing Iran-Iraq trade to \$20 billion is not just a slogan, he said: "This figure is proposed based on experience and understanding gained from years of activity and examination of the economic relations between the two countries, and I believe that if we resolve some domestic issues and foreign obstacles, it is possible to achieve \$20 billion in trade between Iran and Iraq."

The head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, pointing to the capacities of Kermanshah Province, emphasized: "Given its geographical location, border capacities, human resources, and available facilities, Kermanshah has the necessary ability to play an effective role in achieving this goal, and reaching it is feasible."

Need to create new momentum in trade with Iraq

Al-e Es'haq, stressing that all officials and economic activists are responsible for the development of Iran-Iraq trade, said: "All of us must act upon the advice we give and create new momentum in this area."

He added: "The current situation and the existing trend are not sufficient for achieving the great goals of Iran-Iraq trade, and we must change our methods and approaches to bring about the expected developments."

The head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce emphasized: "The Iran-Iraq Chamber considers it its duty to be fully present in this path and will do everything in its power to develop the economic relations between the two countries."

Al-e Es'haq, referring to the presence of figures from Kermanshah in the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber, said: "Mr. Kashfi and Mr. Sanjabi are capable and influential forces from Kermanshah who are active in this field and, alongside the respected governor, can pursue the province's capacities more effectively."

He added: "If there is determination and demand from the provincial administration and officials of Kermanshah to follow up on issues, the Iran-Iraq Chamber is ready to stand by the province with all its strength."

The head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce stated: "It is not that the Iran-Iraq Chamber or other relevant bodies lack the capacity and means to help; there are numerous organizational capacities, facilities, as well as individual and specialized capabilities, and by changing our approach and properly utilizing them, we can resolve some of the existing problems."

At the end, Al-e Es'haq, again thanking the organizers of the meeting, expressed hope that: "With the continuation of these sessions, the creation of new momentum in the economic relations between Iran and Iraq, and close cooperation among officials, chambers of commerce, and economic activists, the groundwork will be laid for the development of trade between the two countries and greater utilization of the capacities of Kermanshah Province."

According to an IRNA report; Kermanshah Province shares a total of over 371 kilometers of common border with Iraq, and along this border, there are two official border crossings and five active border markets, and annually nearly three billion dollars worth of goods are exported abroad through these borders.

Also, in early October, Iran's ambassador to Baghdad said that the two countries are determined to deepen economic and commercial ties, adding that a bilateral trade target of \$30 billion is within reach.

Speaking at a joint meeting between the governors of Ilam in western Iran and Iraq's Maysan Province on the reopening of the Chilat border crossing, Mohammad Kazem Al-e-Sadegh announced that preliminary approval had been given to build the crossing.

He said the project fits into both governments' broader strategy to expand regional trade and economic cooperation.

Al-e-Sadegh said the new crossing could turn Ilam Province into a hub for economic exchanges. "If managed properly, this project will not only boost local economic activity and create jobs, but also directly improve the quality of life for border communities through infrastructure development," he said.

Highlighting the economic potential on both sides, the envoy described the Chilat corridor as a key facilitator for achieving the trade volume target.

"This border crossing can become a successful model for joint cooperation between Iran and Iraq," he said, adding that the move would increase the region's share of international trade and meet the needs of local border populations.

The opening of the Chilat crossing in Dehloran County, adjacent to the town of Ali Gharbi in Iraq's Maysan Province, is part of Tehran and Baghdad's agreements to strengthen cross-border economic cooperation, particularly in frontier provinces.

As announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$3 billion to Iraq during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22).

Foroud Asgari said that Iraq was Iran's second top non-oil export destination in the mentioned period.

Iran and Iraq have set a target of \$20 billion in annual trade, and businessmen and authorities of both countries are determined to meet that target.

In late May 2024, the head of the Department of Spatial Planning and Regional Planning of the Iranian Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) said that Iran exports some 2,200 products, valued at \$12 billion, to neighboring Iraq annually.

Speaking in a meeting entitled "Reviewing opportunities and challenges of attracting Iraqi investors and strengthening trade relations between the two countries in line with demarcating Iran in the regional value chain", Jafar Hosseini said that Iraq, benefiting from \$85 billion foreign currency reserves, 130 tons of gold reserves, and 147 billion barrels of proven reserves of crude oil, is among the richest countries in West Asia.

Currently, Iran exports over 2,200 various types of goods and products to Iraq, he said, adding that more than half of the active Iranian traders are present in the Iraqi market.

Developing the trade infrastructures to facilitate trade between the two countries, encouraging traders to invest in Iraq, promoting trade through dispatching and admitting trade delegations and participating in exhibitions of the two countries, etc. are suggested to strengthen the trade and economic relations between Iran and Iraq, he underlined.

On August 17, the second day of his visit to Iraq, Abdolnaser Hemmati, the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), met and held talks with Faleh Sari, Iraq's Minister of Finance, regarding outstanding financial claims, as well as technical and economic cooperation.

During the meeting, which was reported by IRNA from the Central Bank, the two sides emphasized the strengthening of economic ties and the need to utilize the technical capabilities of Iranian contractors in Iraq's reconstruction and development projects.

With the aim of accelerating the process of pursuing Iran's financial claims, specific technical proposals were presented by the Central Bank of Iran to the Iraqi government and were reviewed.

At the conclusion of the meeting, both parties stressed the continuation of cooperation to realize mutual interests and to uphold the dignity of the peoples of Iran and Iraq.

On the first day of his trip, which began on August 16, Hemmati also met with Mustafa Nizar al-Ani, Iraq's Minister of Trade. This meeting, held in the context of strengthening bilateral cooperation for the development of trade, investment, and monetary relations, saw both sides emphasize the extensive capacities available for expanding economic relations.

They held consultations on operationalizing previous agreements and raising the level of banking interactions between the two neighboring countries.

In this session, Hemmati highlighted the role of private sector activists in facilitating exports and imports of goods and stressed the necessity of adopting new mechanisms to expedite trade procedures, especially at entry points.

The Iraqi Trade Minister, in turn, welcomed the expansion of cooperation and reiterated his government's determination to resolve challenges facing economic actors and to reinforce trade ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Both meetings underscored the shared commitment of Iran and Iraq to deepen their economic partnership, address outstanding financial issues, and remove obstacles to smoother bilateral trade and technical collaboration.

Western nations launch trade bans as Israel escalates West Bank ethnic cleansing

By staff writer

TEHRAN — Abdul Karim Suleiman had been married for barely a month. On Tuesday, Israeli forces surrounded his home in Aqraba, fired anti-tank missiles into the walls, and waited.

His wife and mother were ordered out. Suleiman stayed inside. When he finally walked out alive, soldiers shot him dead and confiscated his body.

Relatives said he was executed in cold blood. His assassination is a single data point in a vast campaign of displacement, home demolitions, and settler violence sweeping the occupied West Bank.

Palestinians and rights monitors have long called it ethnic cleansing. Now, a growing bloc of Western governments is adopting the exact same vocabulary, fracturing the diplomatic shield that Washington has spent decades building around Israel.

A regime of bullets and bulldozers

The diplomatic skirmishes in European capitals unfold against a daily reality of dispossession.

In the southern Hebron hills, Israeli bulldozers stormed Khirbet Al Fakhit in Masafer Yatta. They flattened the homes of three families.

They crushed sheep barns. They destroyed a century old bakery. The military has spent years trying to expel these herding communities under the pretext of establishing firing zones.

Further north, armed settlers and soldiers descended on the village of Hajja. Villagers found themselves trapped between two lines of fire.

Troops and settlers unleashed live ammunition and stun grenades, killing a 19-year-old



Palestinian and wounding three others.

In Anata and the Shuafat refugee camp, Israeli forces imposed strict curfews. They ripped up major water lines and physically blocked ambulances from reaching the sick.

The annexation machinery is moving rapidly through the courts.

A judge recently rejected petitions to freeze a tender for 1,234 settlement units in the E1 corridor. Building here permanently severs the northern West Bank from the south.

It physically buries any remaining illusion of a contiguous Palestinian state. More than 750,000 occupiers now reside in illegal settlements.

London moves as Washington shields the occupier

The sheer scale of the land theft has forced a rare rupture in the West.

British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband stood in Parliament and officially declared the Israeli occupation of the West Bank unlawful.

He announced a sweeping ban on the import of goods produced in illegal settlements.

He pledged heavy sanctions on any company or individual

financing settlement expansion.

Miliband broke a long-standing Western taboo by stating that the British government recognizes the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians perpetrated by settler terrorists. The Israeli cabinet, he noted, has either turned a blind eye or offered active backing.

Eleven other nations followed suit. France, Canada, Spain, Ireland, and Norway are among the states committing to their own restrictions. French officials explicitly cited the frenzied expansion of settlements.

The United States reacted with immediate hostility. Ambassador Mike Huckabee launched a blistering attack on London.

He branded the British sanctions as “discrimination” against “the Jewish people.” Huckabee warned that American states, specifically Florida, could retaliate against British businesses.

Washington permits mild condemnations of individual extremist settlers, but the settlement enterprise itself remains heavily protected.

The Trump administration openly threatens economic war against any allied nation that dares restrict trade with the occupation.

Diplomatic retaliation and the threat of total war

Israel responded to the European sanctions by punishing Palestinians. Foreign Minister Gideon Saar ordered the closure of the British consulate in occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

This diplomatic mission serves as the primary liaison for Palestinians requiring travel documents and family reunification.

Closing it strikes directly at the civilian population rather than the British lawmakers who drafted the sanctions. Saar also announced a travel ban on twelve British parliamentarians.

On the ground, Israeli officials dropped all diplomatic pretenses. War Minister Israel Katz threatened to launch total war against the Palestinian Authority.

Katz declared that he and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the military to prepare a massive campaign targeting all infrastructure across the occupied territory.

Katz warned that the army would bring about the “complete defeat” of the West Bank.

He explicitly threatened to displace entire cities and villages, boasting about similar destruction inflicted upon Gaza and southern Lebanon.

For the families standing in the rubble of Masafer Yatta and the grieving relatives in Aqraba, European trade bans offer little protection against missiles and bulldozers.

The West Bank is already experiencing the early stages of total war.

The occupation races to cement an irreversible reality of annexation. Backed by American political muscle, Israel has consistently advanced its extermination campaign.

Comrade criminals



By Matin Jamshidi

TEHRAN- Almost all members of the Netanyahu cabinet are criminal, but some are “more criminal”.

If one asks who are more criminal ministers, most probably the answer is Itamar Ben Gvir, Bezalel Smotrich, and Israel Katz.

Each of these three ministers are proposing ways or backing the expulsion of the entire Palestinians from their homeland. They don't care at all that forced expulsion is a war crime under the Geneva conventions.

Israel Katz, the so-called defense minister, said on Sept. 2 that Israel had plans to expel Palestinians from Gaza but was waiting for Donald Trump's approval on where to displace the territory's nearly two million population.

A day later, Ben Gvir, the national security minister, set out a plan aimed to remove 250,000 Palestinians from Gaza in the first year, followed by the rest of its population over the next six years.

Smotrich has for months been urging full annexation of the West Bank and Gaza and expulsion of Palestinians from these two separate territories.

On Sept. 2, Katz shamelessly said Israel is ready to facilitate emigration “by any means.” He claimed that 80 percent of Gazans “want to emigrate.” However, he admitted if other countries be open to taking in them, the government “is organized and prepared to get them out — by sea, by air, by every way possible.”

He acknowledged that no country is willing to take them in and it is a roadblock to implementing the plan.

Contrary to Katz, Ben Gvir claimed there were countries that were “ready” to take in Palestinians from Gaza. However, he did not name those countries.

Ben Gvir, better called “torture minister,” said his plan to expel Palestinians is “real-

istic.”

Ben Gvir, who like other extremists seeks to supersede others in showing their animosity against the Palestinians in the run-up to the late Oct. elections, said his Jewish Power party would demand “a ministry in charge of emigration” during the formation of the next government. His 20-page proposal is entitled “National Work Plan for Voluntary Emigration from the Gaza Strip.” Probably, the most bitter part of his proposal is the term “voluntary” to cover up his ill intentions.

The Guardian wrote on Sept. 3 that the plan will be seen as coercive by the international community because of the dire conditions imposed on Gaza's population by Israel and because of Ben Gvir's explicit intention: to remove Gaza's Palestinian population.

Smotrich's disgust of Palestinians is as deep as Ben Gvir's. In early Sept. 2025, when certain European countries launched a campaign to recognize the Palestinian state, he unveiled a proposal to annex 82 percent of the West Bank in order to make the formation of a Palestinian state actually impossible.

Like Ben Gvir, Smotrich's record is full of shocking statements. In August 2024, he said “it may be just and moral” to starve and thirst 2 million Gaza residents.

Nearly 10 months into the Gaza war that started in Oct. 2023, he said, “You cannot fight Hamas with one hand and give them aid with the other. It's his money, it's his fuel, it's his civilian control of the Gaza Strip. It just doesn't work.”

Though Ben Gvir and Smotrich are extremely similar in their animosity against Palestinians or Arabs in large, Katz is also seeking the same ill intention toward Palestinians. His statements are comparatively a little bit less harsh because he served as foreign minister and his statements in his current position carry greater weight.

Is Israel reshaping its occupation of southern Lebanon?

By Ali Minabi

TEHRAN – In an attempt to secure legitimacy as an occupying force in Lebanon, Israel is seeking to promote the idea of a withdrawal along three lines to sidestep international demands and withdraw from the Lebanese border.

The Israeli regime's announcement in early September that it had established “operational control” over Ali al-Taher Hill was only one aspect of a broader picture taking shape in southern Lebanon. The hill, which rises about 600 meters and lies roughly 15 kilometers from the border, overlooks the surrounding area and connects the southern positions to the Iqlim al-Tuffah region.

While the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) claimed that it had cleared a tunnel network beneath the hill of Hezbollah fighters, the Lebanese resistance has yet to issue any comment. A Lebanese military official says the IOF controls only the southern entrances and monitors the northern ones with drones. The extent of their penetration into the network remains unclear.

At the same time, IOF airstrikes have extended beyond the “ground occupation zone.” The IOF destroyed the Ghundour Hospital in Nabatieh al-Fawqa and struck a Ministry of Finance building, civilian facilities, and homes. This was followed by a massacre in Kfar Rumman with nearly a dozen killed including children and paramedics.

Although the occupying regime claimed that the hospital had been used as a Hezbollah command center, targeting it without providing any evidence

grants the IOF the freedom to assault civilian infrastructure simply by making an allegation.

These developments come as the occupation regime, according to security officials cited by Kan 11, explores reducing the area it currently occupies to a strip three to four kilometers deep, following what has been called the “Gray Line,” with new military infrastructure to be built inside it.

The project has not yet received political approval, but it raises a question that goes beyond the scope of the withdrawal: Is the regime retreating from southern Lebanon, or reshaping its occupation?

Southern Lebanon between three lines

Following the recent discussion of the “Gray Line,” the south is now governed by three lines whose status differs radically.

The first is the Blue Line, established by the United Nations in 2000 to verify the IOF's withdrawal. It is not a final international border, but it serves as the practical UN reference line between Lebanon and the occupying entity.

The “Yellow Line” was declared by the IOF during the current aggression. In April, it published a map showing an occupation zone extending up to 10 kilometers deep, with around 20 new military posts. It forms part of the regime's new vision, which holds that “Israel's security borders” extend as far as its soldiers are capable of reaching.

The occupation government has provided a clear illustration of this model in the Gaza Strip, where the occupying line



continues to expand and push Palestinian families out, leaving behind barren land as a result of extensive bulldozing.

The third line, the “Gray Line,” is not yet official, but rather a regime project to reduce that depth.

Yet reducing the area of occupation does not necessarily mean reducing the scope of force. Control of high ground, such as Ali al-Taher, combined with fortified positions, drone surveillance, and air superiority, allows the IOF to retain a smaller strip of land while keeping wider “security” zones under surveillance and within range of fire.

A new occupation taking shape

The regime's current conduct in southern Lebanon evokes the model of its occupation that ended in 2000. That occupation relied on a long-term ground deployment, the “South Lebanon Army” (Lahad militia), and a civilian population living inside the zone. A potential occupation today, by contrast, could rely on fewer troops, more heavily fortified positions, and greater air and firepower control.

Trump hails AfD win in Germany's Saxony-Anhalt

U.S. President Donald Trump has congratulated Alternative for Germany (AfD) Tuesday for its landslide victory in the state of Saxony-Anhalt, where the far-right party won nearly 44 percent of the votes on Sunday.

“Wow! The Populist Party in Germany just had a really big night,” Trump wrote on Truth Social. “They finally got tired of the absolutely horrible Immigration rules and regulations which have hurt Germany so badly.” He concluded his message with a German variant of his Make America Great Again acronym, “MGGA!!!”

It is unusual for a sitting U.S. president to comment on German state elections, however the Trump administration has cultivated close ties with the AfD. U.S. Vice President JD Vance met the party's co-leader Alice Weidel at the Munich Security Conference in February 2025 and criticized Germany's “firewall” against the party. AfD officials visited the White House later that year, and senior Trump allies and administration figures have repeatedly backed the party.

Despite these extensive ties, AfD leaders have sought to distance themselves from

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

Iran into 2026
AVC Volleyball
Continental C’ship
QFs

TEHRAN – Iran defeated China 3-1 (25-23, 23-25, 25-22, 25-23) on Wednesday to book their place at 2026 AVC Men’s Volleyball Continental Championship.

Team Melli will meet Chinese Taipei on Friday in the competition’s quarterfinals.

Elsewhere, Japan will face India, Thailand play Australia and China face South Korea in the quarterfinals.

Teams were split into three pools with four teams each. Japan, hosts, were automatically placed in the top position of Pool A as the first seed, while the previous runners-up were placed at the top of Pool B as the second seed.

The next four teams from the FIVB World Ranking were placed across the first and second lines using the serpentine system. The third and fourth lines consisted of the remaining teams according to the ranking and were drawn in the ceremony.

The winning team will earn a direct quota place for the 2028 Summer Olympics, while the top three finishers will secure qualification spots for the 2027 FIVB Men’s Volleyball World Cup.

Reaching Nagoya
final no easy
task for Iran’s
women’s kabaddi:
Mazandarani

TEHRAN – Iran women’s kabaddi technical adviser Gholamreza Mazandarani says reaching the final of the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya will be a difficult challenge for his young and inexperienced squad.

Speaking about the Iran women’s national team’s recent training camp and friendly matches in India, Mazandarani stressed that achieving a strong result in Nagoya would require a long-term process.

“The process of getting results at the Asian Games is a long one, and we cannot achieve success that easily,” Mazandarani said. “The average age of our national team is under 22. Some players have limited experience at the domestic level, while others lack international experience and have never competed in overseas tournaments.”

Mazandarani said the coaching staff had hoped to arrange friendly matches against the senior national teams of India and Chinese Taipei, but that plan did not materialize. Instead, Iran played several matches against Indian club teams.

“Nevertheless, we had several useful friendly matches. Each of the teams we faced had two or three quality players who were part of India’s national team camp, although they did not play against us,” he said.

“For me as a coach, these matches were very useful. We won all of them, some by margins of more than 20 points and others by seven or eight points. Overall, they were acceptable and beneficial games.”

According to Mazandarani, playing against club sides provided valuable experience for Iran’s less experienced players and allowed the coaching staff to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

“The biggest weakness we have in international competitions is simply experience, and that is something that cannot be taught,” he said.

“A player from India may have played more than 500 matches at the international level, while an Iranian player may have played a maximum of 50 international matches. A kabaddi player needs to experience international competitions in order to learn and overcome their weaknesses.”

Mazandarani also praised Iran’s physical condition, saying he believes his team is among the strongest in terms of fitness.

“Physically, we are the best team and stronger than the other teams. Success will depend on the tactics we use. If we can implement those tactics

effectively, our chances of success are not small. We have to see how well the players can execute our plans and overcome their opponents,” he said.

Asked whether he could guarantee that Iran would reach the final in Nagoya, Mazandarani refused to make a 100 percent prediction.

“Nothing in life is 100 percent certain,” he said. “I already knew that we would have two difficult matches against India and Chinese Taipei. To reach the final, we have to beat at least one of these two teams. If we can defeat India in the group stage, our path to the final will become easier. Reaching the Nagoya final is not beyond our reach, but it will certainly not be easy.”

Jafari: Iran’s
women’s football
must focus on youth

TEHRAN – Iran women’s national team head coach Marzieh Jafari has stressed the importance of giving young and promising players more opportunities to break into the national team, as she looks to build a stronger squad for the future.

Iran are set to hold a six-day training camp in Tehran, with the upcoming FIFA international window providing Jafari and her coaching staff with an opportunity to assess both experienced players and emerging talents.

“We are trying to evaluate both experienced and young players and identify the squad we want to build,” Jafari said. “Our focus is not only on the present but also on the future. We want to make the national team younger and create a strong foundation for the years ahead.”

The coach added that around five days of the six-day camp will be dedicated to technical work, giving the coaching staff enough time to closely assess new players alongside established members of the squad.

“One of our main objectives is youth development,” Jafari said. “Players who have the ability and potential to play for the national team must be given the opportunity to be seen and become part of the national-team system.”

Jafari also highlighted the need to establish a strong B team as a pathway for talented players to eventually make the step up to the senior side.

“I have emphasized that we need to have a strong B team as the backbone of the senior national team,” she said. “The aim is to bring talented players into this system and, through proper planning, create a strong pool of players for the future.”

The coach also thanked domestic clubs for their cooperation with the national team, stressing that their support is vital for holding training camps and implementing the team’s preparation plans.

Jafari said the players have responded positively to the current camp and have shown strong motivation during training. Alongside technical and tactical preparations, the coaching staff are also focusing on physical conditioning while carefully managing the workload to reduce the risk of injuries.

“Our entire focus is on building a strong national team,” Jafari concluded. “We want a team that can achieve its current objectives while also being prepared for the future.” Through youth development, identifying new talent and building a strong pathway, I hope we can create a women’s national team worthy of Iran and achieve the goals we have set.”

Veisi steps down as
head coach of Zob
Ahan

TEHRAN – Abdollah Veisi stepped down from role of Zob Ahan head coach following poor results in the 2026/27 Iran’s Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

Zob Ahan lost to Persepolis on Monday 2-0 in Tehran and Veisi announced he would step down from his role.

Zob Ahan, under leadership of Veisi, has earned just six points in the previous six weeks.

Tractor lead the table with 16 points, followed by Persepolis (13) and Esteghlal (12 points).

Zob Ahan sit 14th in the 18-team table.

Religious tourism accounts for
56% of foreign arrivals to Iran

TEHRAN – Religious tourism accounted for 56 percent of the two million foreign tourists who visited Iran during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey has said.

“During the first five months of 1405 (which started on March 21, 2026), we succeeded in attracting two million tourists to the country, 56 percent of whom had traveled for religious tourism,” Mohseni-Bandpey told ISNA on Tuesday.

He said religious and pilgrimage tourism represented a valuable tourism resource for Iran and that the country’s Seventh National Development Plan had set out requirements for expanding the sector.

“Given the current situation in the country, this capacity can create conditions for the greater presence of foreign tourists,” he said.

The official said the figures demonstrated strong demand for religious travel from neighboring countries and stressed the need to improve tourism infrastructure, expand accommodation facilities and facilitate the movement of pilgrims.

He said the national pilgrimage task force held its first meeting in April 2025 in Mashhad and its second meeting is currently underway in Qom, with the aim of identifying and removing obstacles to the development of pilgrimage and religious tourism in Iran.



The deputy minister identified air transport as one of the main obstacles to the expansion of international tourism, saying limited direct flights made travel difficult for visitors from some countries.

“For example, a Shia Muslim from Indonesia or Pakistan who wants to visit the shrine of Hazrat Masoumeh (SA) has to enter the country through a third country, and this is an obstacle,” he said.

Iran is home to several major pilgrimage destinations that attract domestic and international visitors. Mashhad, in northeastern Iran, is the country’s principal pilgrimage center and is home to the shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of Shia Muslims. The shrine complex is also one of Iran’s most significant religious and architectural landmarks.

nificant religious and architectural landmarks.

Qom, south of Tehran, is another major center of Shia pilgrimage and religious scholarship. The city is home to the shrine of Hazrat Masoumeh (SA) and attracts pilgrims and religious visitors from Iran and other countries, particularly from communities in the Middle East and South and Southeast Asia.

Other religious destinations include Shiraz, where the shrine of Shah Cheragh is located, as well as a number of historic mosques, shrines and sacred sites across the country. Iran also has important pilgrimage and religious heritage sites associated with different faith communities, including Armenian Christian monasteries and Jewish historical and religious sites.

UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace undergoes emergency restoration



TEHRAN – The second phase of a comprehensive conservation and restoration program at Tehran’s Golestan Palace has begun, with priority given to preventing further damage before the onset of the rainy season, the head of the UNESCO-listed complex said on Wednesday.

Afarin Emami said that over the past six months, the Golestan Pal-

ace had implemented an emergency conservation plan focused on hazard removal, safeguarding vulnerable elements, preventing secondary damage, documenting the site and conducting detailed assessments of damage sustained during the 40-day war with US and the Israeli regime.

Following the completion of the

initial phase and specialist assessments, the complex has now entered the second stage, involving restoration projects aimed at stabilizing historic structures, preventing the deterioration of damaged elements and protecting the palace’s collections, Emami explained.

She identified the restoration of the roof covering, along with its metal and wooden truss and roof-beam components, as among the priorities. The elements were damaged during the conflict by shrapnel and projectiles resulting from explosions in neighboring buildings.

Restoration is also planned for damaged sections of plasterwork and painted decorative elements on the walls and porch of the Shams-ol-Emareh Palace, as well as its wooden doors and windows.

Located in the heart of Tehran’s historic core, the palace complex is one of the oldest in the city, original-

ly built during the Safavid dynasty within the historic walled city. Over time, it underwent several expansions, receiving its most defining features in the 19th century, when it was designated as the royal residence and seat of power by the Qajar ruling family.

The palace complex comprises eight main palace structures, primarily used as museums, along with the eponymous gardens, a central green space surrounded by an outer wall with gates, exemplifying the architectural and artistic achievements of the Qajar era, including the integration of European motifs and styles into Persian art. It served not only as the governing base of the Qajar kings but also as a residential and recreational compound and a center of artistic production during the 19th century. Through these activities, it became a primary source and hub of Qajar art and architecture.

Iran has registered more than 43,000 national heritage sites: minister

agency. He made the remarks during a visit to the center for documents of the Islamic Revolution.

The minister said the two forms of heritage were closely connected and together reflected the history and identity of the Iranian people.

“The values embedded in them can reveal the greatness of this nation and land to present and future generations,” the minister said.

Salehi-Amiri said Iran’s cultural identity could not be fully understood without considering its written heritage.

Museum featuring 220 sound and music artifacts
opens in Tehran’s Azadi Tower

TEHRAN – A museum, featuring more than 220 musical instruments and objects related to sound and music, has opened at Tehran’s Azadi Tower, bringing together instruments from Iran and other parts of the world as well as vintage sound-recording and playback equipment.

The opening ceremony was held on Tuesday at the Azadi Tower in the presence of Mehdi Shafiei, the deputy minister of culture for artistic affairs, and a number of artists, cultural heritage enthusiasts and music lovers.

The ceremony began with a performance by an ensemble playing Iranian musical instruments. Seyyed Mohsen Hosseini, head of the Azadi Tower, said the complex had sought in recent years to expand its museum-related activities alongside its cultural and artistic programs.

He said the new museum was intended not merely to display musical instruments and sound-re-

lated objects, but also to introduce part of Iran’s musical history and heritage, preserve related objects and documents, and provide a venue for specialized events.

Hosseini said the museum would help strengthen the Azadi Tower’s museum capacity and contribute to the preservation of Iran’s musical and sound heritage.

Tar player, researcher and collector Hossein Sajedinia, whose collection forms the basis of the museum, said preserving Iran’s sound and musical heritage required sustained cooperation between cultural institutions and artists.

He described the museum as the result of four decades of collecting and cultural activity.

Sajedinia said a sound museum was established in 2018 in the historic city of Tabriz as the country’s first private museum dedicated to sound and music. It was opened in one of the buildings belonging to the Ministry

of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

The collection now displayed at Azadi Tower includes more than 220 instruments and objects associated with sound and music. Iranian instruments on display include the tar, setar, kamancheh, santur, oud, ney, sorna, balaban and tom-bak, alongside instruments representing different cultures and regions around the world.

A section of the museum is devoted to historic technologies for

producing, recording and reproducing sound. It includes gramophones, phonographs, reel-to-reel and cassette tape equipment, vintage radios, telephones, bells, whistles and other sound-related objects.

The collection also includes ritual instruments, traditional sound-producing devices, children’s instruments and less familiar musical instruments, allowing visitors to explore music beyond the history and development of conventional instruments.

Corrigendum

Please refer to the Tender Notice issued by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Tehran regarding hiring of Janitorial Services, issued in Tehran Times newspaper on 9th September 2026.

It is informed that the bids must reach the office of the Head of Chancery, Embassy of Pakistan, Block # 1, Street Etemadzadeh, Main Fatemi Boulevard, Jamalzadeh Shomali, Tehran, before 1100 Hours *on Sunday 27th September, 2026. The technical proposals will be opened on the same day at 1130 hours* in the presence of the representatives of the bidders.

Qeshm, Taining Geoparks partner for natural heritage, sustainable development

TEHRAN - Iran's Qeshm Island and China's Taining Geoparks have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to help protect geological and natural heritage, while promoting sustainable development and supporting local communities.

The MOU was signed by the representatives of the two geoparks on the third day of the 9th Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN) Symposium 2026, which is taking place in Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark, Malaysia, from September 4 to 12.

It focuses on several areas, including the exchange of expertise in geopark management, the sharing of technical and specialized knowledge, conducting joint research projects, organizing collaborative training courses, and strengthening ties among local communities, geotourism operators, and other stakeholders of the two geoparks, IRNA reported.

The MOU also calls for promoting the potential of the two geoparks internationally through media outreach and joint marketing initiatives.

UNESCO Global Geoparks

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a



holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Their bottom-up approach of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular. At present, there are 241 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 51 countries.

Located in the Persian Gulf, Qeshm Island covers more than 1,400 square kilometers and is home to a range of geological, ecological and cultural attractions. The island's UNESCO-listed geopark forms part of the Zagros mountain belt and contains geological formations dating from the Late Precambrian to Cambrian periods. Qeshm Island UNESCO Global Geopark empowers its local communities through inno-

vative initiatives that preserve cultural heritage while supporting sustainable livelihoods.

Taining UNESCO Global Geopark is located in the northwest of Fujian Province, on the southeastern side of the mid-Wuyi Mountains. The landscape consists of mountains, hills and basins, with elevation decreasing from northwest to southeast.

9th APGN Symposium

The APGN connects UNESCO Global Geoparks across the Asia-Pacific region, fostering cooperation, knowledge exchange, and best practices in geopark management while supporting sustainable development and community engagement. Through regional collaboration and partnerships, APGN advanc-

es sustainable geotourism, promotes environmental education, and highlights the importance of geological heritage in conserving natural and cultural resources and supporting local economic development.

Promoting Sustainable Geotourism, supporting Geopark Development, strengthening Regional Cooperation, and enhancing Awareness and Education are the core objectives of APGN.

The APGN Symposium is a flagship regional event that brings together geopark professionals to share experiences, discuss innovations, and collaborate on future initiatives, supporting APGN's broader mission of preserving Earth's geological heritage while promoting cultural diversity, sustainable tourism, and the well-being of local communities.

The 9th APGN Symposium has brought together the international geopark community to share knowledge and strengthen collaboration in geotourism and sustainable development.

This year's theme, 'Celebrating Networking in Geotourism', highlights the importance of building resilient networks among geoparks to inspire innovation, foster meaningful connections, and lead transformative actions for sustainable development.

GII 2026 places Tehran 65th among top 100 science and technology clusters

TEHRAN - The Global Innovation Index (GII) has ranked Tehran as the world's 65th-largest science and technology (S&T) cluster this year, according to a report released by the UN's World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Each year, the GII identifies and ranks the world's top 100 innovation clusters. Using a bottom-up, data-driven approach that transcends administrative and political boundaries, the GII identifies geographic areas with a high concentration of inventors, scientific authors, and venture capital (VC) activity. These innovation clusters often extend across multiple municipalities or subnational regions and, in some cases, span two or more countries.

Three metrics determine the top 100: the locations of inventors listed in patent applications filed under the WIPO Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), the affiliations of authors of published scientific articles, and the locations of companies receiving venture capital funding.

The GII 2026, under the theme "Powering entrepreneurs at the frontier of science", examines how scientific breakthroughs become deep science startups and spin-outs.

The top 100 innovation clusters continue to be predominantly located in three regions—Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Northern America—accounting for 89 of the world's top 100 clusters. South-eastern Asia, Eastern Asia and Oceania hosts the most clusters of any region (36), followed by Europe (30) and Northern America (23).

In addition to China and India, six other middle-income economies have clusters among the top 100, including Brazil (1 cluster), the Islamic Republic of Iran (1), Egypt (1), Malaysia (2), Mexico (1), and Turkey (1).

Tehran is the only cluster within Iran that falls within the top 100 innovation clusters in 2026. In 2026, Tehran had 405 PCT applications, 58,732 scientific publications, 107 venture capital deals, 0.0 percent Share of global PCT applications, 0.7 percent share of global scientific publications, and 0.0 percent share of global venture capital deals, making it the 65th largest innovation cluster and 88

Global Innovation Index 2026 Ranking of World's Top 100 Innovation Clusters



innovation cluster by intensity, slipping down from 63rd and 85th, respectively in 2025.

The city's estimated cluster population, PCT application per capita, and scientific publication capita amount to 7,852,733; 52; and 7,497 respectively, IRNA reported.

The venture capital pre-deals per capita is about 14, and the total innovation intensity share per capita is 0.097.

In patent registration, medical technology ranked first (with 19 percent share), followed by computer technology, civil engineering, and pharmaceuticals.

Top publishing organizations in Tehran are University of Tehran with 5,232 articles, Islamic Azad University with 4,081 articles, and Iran University of Science and Technology with 3,725 articles. A majority of published articles are in engineering fields.

China and the United States lead the innovation cluster count for a fourth consecutive year. China has 25 clusters (one more than last year); the United States follows with 20 clusters (two fewer than last year).

Germany holds seven clusters within the top 100 in 2026, the most of any European economy. The United Kingdom (UK) retains four clusters, and France has two clusters within the top 100.

India maintains four clusters, Japan retains three clusters, and the Republic of Korea likewise

maintains three clusters, within the top 100. Canada retains three clusters within the top 100.

This year, 2 clusters entered the top 100: Riyadh (92nd) in Saudi Arabia, entering for the first time, and Fuzhou (96th) in China, rejoining after last appearing in 2024.

Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Guangzhou, Tokyo-Yokohama, San Jose-San Francisco, Seoul and Beijing are the world's five biggest "GII Innovation Clusters," or concentrations of innovative activity identified by WIPO through the analysis of international patent filings, scientific publications and venture capital deals.

Tehran among the world's most innovative cities

In a recent global ranking by StartupBlink 2026, Tehran's position has advanced by 20 spots, ranking 348 among the world's most innovative cities.

Tehran is home to 96 startups, making up 81 percent of all startups in the country. Tehran has approximately 1 startup per 100,000 people. In 2025, the ecosystem recorded an annual growth rate of over 36 percent. The city is currently ranked as the 1st strongest startup ecosystem in Iran, having remained stable since 2025. At the regional level, Tehran ranks 11th in West Asia, having moved up 2 spots since 2025.

According to Iran Innovation Zone, the achievement is the result of strengthening innovation infrastructure and developing inter-

actions among different sectors operating in the knowledge-based economy, Mehr news agency reported.

The report by StartupBlink has highlighted the role of Pardis Technology Park, the country's largest technology and innovation hub, as one of the driving forces of Iran's knowledge-based economy. The park hosts hundreds of knowledge-based and technology companies, creating business development infrastructure and providing a platform for enhancing cooperation among startups, investors, large industries, and institutions.

Moreover, hosting the International Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INOTEX) every year, Pardis Technology Park plays a key role in networking and connecting experts in the innovation ecosystem. According to the report, thanks to the capacities of Pardis Technology Parks, Iran's startup ecosystem ranks 95 globally.

The Innovation and Prosperity Fund and MCI (Hamrah Aval - Iran's first mobile operator) Ventures are the two other key agents that have developed Iran's innovation ecosystem by facilitating the growth of technology and knowledge-based companies.

Iran ranks 58th globally in 'Corporate Engagement', an indicator that reflects the effective interactions between large industries and innovative and technological companies.

Fintech, the leading industry in Iran, ranks 72nd globally, 5th in the Middle East, indicating the country's high capacity in the development of financial technologies. Iran Fintech Industry has 23 startups, representing 19 percent of all startups in Iran.

In the Global Startup Ecosystem Index 2026, Iran's startup ecosystem is ranked 103 worldwide, holding steady compared to the previous year. The Iranian startup ecosystem ranks 10th in West Asia, having remained stable since 2025. It ranks right after Oman and is followed by Iraq.

The country has 118 startups, representing one percent of all startups in the Middle East. This equals approximately one startup per 100,000 people. The ecosystem grew by +54.4 percent over the past year.

Iran moves to accelerate UN Narcotic Drugs Commission membership

TEHRAN - Iranian officials have discussed ways to expedite the country's membership in the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs and strengthen regional cooperation in this regard.

During the second meeting of the expert committee on international narcotics relations held on Monday, Brigadier General Hossein Zolfagari, the secretary general of the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), and Kazem Gharibabadi, the newly appointed chair of the expert committee on international narcotics relations, reviewed the reports on consultations conducted with the member states of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESOC), underlining the need to continue diplomatic efforts in Tehran, Vienna, and New York, Mehr news agency reported.

They underscored the significance of raising international support for the country's candidacy for membership of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs through holding meetings with the ambassadors of the targeted countries, and expounding on the country's experiences, capacities, and achievements in the fight against narcotics.

The second expert meeting also focused on the current status of the building of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the ways and frameworks for sustaining cooperation between Iran and the UNODC.

The officials highlighted that the future activities of the UNODC have to proceed based on mutual interests, and that Iran's participation should not be limited to covering costs; the cooperation should involve research projects in areas like prevention, treatment, and capacity building.

The UNODC office in Tehran has to play a more active role in fostering cooperation with neighboring and regional countries and to leverage its capacity to shape joint regional programs, the officials noted.

During the meeting, the participants also called for enhancing the operational capacity of the regional center for the study and treatment of substance use disorder to hold training courses and promote ties among countries in the region.

The officials explored potential for the development of collaborations with BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states, as well.

Supporting Iran's counter-narcotics work pays off beyond its borders

The UNODC has released a report, emphasizing the need to support Iran in the battle against narcotics.

Supporting Iran's counternarcotics work pays off beyond its borders, the report highlighted, saying it keeps drugs from reaching other regions, cuts into the money that funds organized crime, and supports public health by slowing the spread of addictive synthetic substances.

The main seizure of methamphetamine in and around Middle East and South-East Asia over the past few years has been reported in Iran, according to the report, which was published on Thursday.

Iranian seizure of methamphetamine increased from 30,393 kilos in 2022 to 40,453 kilos in 2025, placing the country at the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking.

In the first quarter of 2026 alone, Iranian authorities have intercepted 3,663 kilograms of methamphetamines destined for Europe and the Persian Gulf.

These weren't just street-level busts. These were five intelligence-led operations targeting industrial-scale shipments originating in Afghanistan, evidence that trafficking networks in the region are shifting toward synthetic drugs.

While international attention has primarily focused on the vast region's declining opium production, advanced criminal drug trafficking networks have successfully shifted toward manufacturing and exporting synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine, commonly known as meth. West Asia is now the epicenter of a synthetic drug boom.

Iran is strategically positioned along the "Afghanistan-West Asia corridor," which serves as the primary trafficking route for these illicit commodities. The clear signal from Tehran is that these substantial shipments are being intercepted before they can reach international markets. Yet, sustained success will require enhanced international cooperation and support.

Each interception reduces the illicit financial flows that fund organized crime and slows the spread of synthetic drugs into new markets. These shipments are not merely statistics. Each seizure disrupts a supply chain that would otherwise put methamphetamine on the streets of Europe and the Persian Gulf, while cutting into the earnings of organized criminal networks.

Through its Country Partnership Programme as well as the Cooperation Framework with the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNODC supports the country's efforts in advancing border technology with the procurement of detection scanners, strengthening labs' forensic capabilities to identify new synthetic compounds, as well as regional intelligence sharing.

Sustained donor investment is critical to prevent this route from becoming a gateway for synthetic drugs. However, the scale of the challenge demands more than financial contributions—it requires a collective and sustainable approach by the international community. By supporting UNODC's work in Iran, donor nations are investing in regional stability and international security, while also protecting their own borders from the flow of illicit substances.



New WHO envoy meets foreign minister at start of mission

John Jabbour, the newly appointed representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Islamic Republic of Iran, met with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Tuesday at the start of his mission, presenting his credentials and formally beginning his diplomatic duties in Tehran.

Jabbour is a senior public health practitioner specialized in epidemiology, with experience in global health governance, health security, and emergency preparedness and response.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He is the wisest and the most knowing man who advises people not to lose hope and faith in the Mercy of Allah and not to be too sure and over-confident of immunity from His Wrath and Punishment.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 18:37 Dawn: 4:18 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:44 (tomorrow)

Susan Sarandon says she is losing movie roles because of her support for Palestine

The Oscar-winning actor Susan Sarandon has said she is still losing work because of her outspoken support for Palestinians, despite what she described as a broader shift in public opinion against US support for Israel.

Speaking at the Venice film festival, where she is promoting her latest movie "The Echo Chamber," Sarandon said some parts of the film industry continued to shun her over her activism.

"I think that the narrative has completely changed in terms of the historical relevance of Palestine and the ties of Zionists with America and our politics," she said. "That has been a major revelation for people, how much money the United States gives to Israel, nobody really understood that."

US opinion polls have shown support for Israel softening and sympathy for Palestinians rising since the start of the Gaza war in 2023.

But the 79-year-old actor said her support for the Palestinian cause continued to carry professional consequences.

"I've still had movies taken away recently because there are agencies that are telling people not to hire me still," she told reporters. "But that's the power structure. I think [among] people, certainly internationally, I feel welcome."

An Academy Award winner for "Dead Man Walking," Sarandon rose to prominence in films including "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," "Bull Durham" and "Thelma and Louise."

She was dropped by her longstanding talent agency UTA in 2023 after remarks she made while attending pro-Palestinian rallies one month after the Hamas attack on Israel, including: "There are a lot of people afraid of being Jewish at this time, and are getting a taste of what it feels like to be a Muslim in this country."



The conflict has spilled into this year's Venice film festival, with activists calling on organizers to raise the Palestinian flag in recognition of Palestinian directors screening at the event.

The festival's artistic director, Alberto Barbera, has said this is impossible because Italy does not formally recognize the state of Palestine, but he has pointed to several films being shown on the Lido that show the struggle of ordinary Palestinians.

Sarandon said resistance to hiring outspoken critics of Israel remained particularly strong among major studios.

"If it is a major studio, I think it's not just with me but with other people who have been told that that is impossible," she said, thanking Andrea Pallaro, the director of "The Echo Chamber," for casting her.

"I found my family, I found my people and I'm OK," she said, sparking prolonged applause at the news conference.

In her latest film, adapted from the final screenplay by Italian film-maker Bernardo Bertolucci, Sarandon plays an ageing singer who hires a music producer recovering from drug addiction to work on a comeback album.

"The Echo Chamber" is one of 21 films competing for Venice's Golden Lion award, which will be presented on September 12.

Book on Martyr Leader published in Italian

TEHRAN – The Italian translation of the book "The Revolutionary with a Smile" about the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, has been released.

Translated by Nicola Hassan DiCola and published by Mario Pascale Editore and Green Palm Publications, the book features a collection of memoirs and testimonies of those who met the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, covering the entire span of his life, from his earliest childhood to the last days before his martyrdom, Mehr reported.

The book, with a foreword by Mohammad Reza Sabouri, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Italy, was released to bookstores and online sales platforms on September 1.

The bitter and heartbreaking incident that followed the military aggression of the United States and the Zionist regime against the Islamic Republic of Iran on February 28, which led to the martyrdom of Ayatollah Khamenei, a group of distinguished commanders of the armed forces, and a large number of defenseless people, especially 168 students and teachers of the Shajareh Tayyebah school in Minab, left a deep wound on the human conscience and the spirit of all free people of the world. This event was not merely the loss of great figures; it was a test of humanity's adherence to the lofty values of justice, inde-



Chi era l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei?
Questa domanda ha ricevuto, nel corso degli anni, molteplici risposte, soprattutto in Occidente, dove tante parole sono state spese per descrivere questa importante figura. Ma al di là della propaganda e delle narrazioni strumentali e ideologicamente schierate, chi era davvero l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei? Questo libro si pone l'obiettivo di fornire al pubblico italiano non la risposta a questa domanda, ma il materiale adatto affinché possa esso stesso raggiungere le proprie conclusioni. Il rivoluzionario col sorriso non è una biografia o un'autobiografia, né un manifesto politico o religioso, bensì una corposa sequela di memorie, narrazioni, aneddoti, racconti di coloro che hanno avuto modo di conoscere in prima persona questa grande figura storica. Non è dunque un ufficio politico a parlare, né un erede ereditario, né tantomeno un'entente statale: è l'Iran stesso, il suo popolo dalle mille sfumature a raccontare la Guida della Rivoluzione Islamica in tutti i suoi aspetti. Il bambino squattrinato, lo studente del seminario religioso, il rivoluzionario, il prigioniero nelle carceri dello Shah, il soldato sul campo di battaglia, il presidente della Naivse, la Guida della Rivoluzione... ognuna di queste fasi della vita dell'ayatollah Khamenei è toccata in questo libro attraverso gli occhi e i racconti di chi lo ha conosciuto, di chi lo ha vissuto con lui, di chi lo ha sostenuto e di chi lo ha criticato.



Green Palm

pendence, freedom, and human sanctity.

"When I heard the news of the Imam's martyrdom", Di Cola explained, "I said to myself: I wish there was a way to explain to Italians who Sayyed Ali Khamenei really was, and what an immense treasure humanity as a whole has lost. This book certainly represents a small step in that direction, but as small as a brick placed at the foundation of a great structure."

"The Revolutionary with a Smile" is not a biography or an autobiography, nor a political or religious manifesto, but rather a substantial collection of memoirs, narratives, anecdotes, and

accounts from those who had the opportunity to know this great historical figure firsthand.

The student at the religious seminary, the revolutionary, the prisoner in the Shah's jails, the soldier on the battlefield, the president of the nation, the Leader of the Revolution... each of these phases of Ayatollah Khamenei's life is touched upon in this book through the eyes and stories of those who knew him, those who lived with him, those who supported him, and those who criticized him.

Today, as these pages are opened before the readers, not only are the memory and name of the martyrs honored, but a man-



ifestation of global solidarity against violence and injustice is also depicted. These writings are proof that the truth cannot be silenced, and the memory of men and women who sacrifice their lives for great ideals will remain eternal in the collective memory of nations. It is hoped that this collection serves not only as a reminder of past suffering and sacrifice but also as an inspiration for a future in which justice prevails over force, truth over distortion, and humanity over violence and aggression; a future in which nations, relying on mutual respect and shared human values, build a worthier world for future generations.

Kiarostami films to go on screen at South Korean festival

TEHRAN- Six films by acclaimed Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami are scheduled to be screened at the 11th Ulsan Ulju Mountain Film Festival in South Korea, which focuses on works exploring mountains, nature, adventure, the environment and human experiences.

The program features "The Bread and Alley" (1970), "Orderly or Disorderly" (1981), and "The Chorus" (1982), alongside "Take Me Home" (2016), "No" (2010), and "Ten" (2002), offering audiences a journey through several decades of the director's distinctive cinematic language.

The films span Kiarostami's early experiments at Iran's Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) to one of his final cinematic works.

Festival organizers have designed the selection as a cinematic journey from "The Bread and Alley" to "Take Me Home," connecting the two works through recurring motifs of the alley, movement and the road that run throughout Kiarostami's cinema.

The festival's "Human" section, where the Kiarostami program is presented, is centered on the theme of challenge. Festival programmer Jinna Lee describes the second strand of the section as turning to the Iranian master who "laid the groundwork" for such cinematic challenges.

According to Lee, Kiarostami spent his career crossing boundaries between different media and dissolving the distinction between fiction and documentary. His approach to

filmmaking, she notes, can be traced from his early work at the IIDCYA to his later experiments with digital filmmaking and non-professional performers.

"The Bread and Alley," Kiarostami's early short about a boy confronted by a stray dog on his way home, is described by Lee as the film the director himself called "the mother of all my films." She highlights its combination of a child and an animal – two of cinema's most challenging subjects – and its simple story of an apparent enemy becoming a friend over a piece of bread.

"Orderly or Disorderly" takes a more experimental approach, presenting the same actions first in an organized manner and then in an anarchic one. Lee points to the film's movement from a school staircase to a Tehran intersection, describing it as a bold formal experiment beneath the surface of what initially appears to be an educational film.

"The Chorus" focuses on an elderly man who switches his hearing aid on and off to escape the noise of the streets of Rasht. At home, he waits for his granddaughter but fails to hear her arrival. Lee describes the film as an elegant cinematic experiment centered on sound itself, contrasting silence and noise, old age and youth, solitude and solidarity.

"No" presents another exploration of childhood and selfhood, using close-ups and off-screen sound to capture a child's firm declaration of independence. Lee places the film within Kiarostami's continuing experimentation with the relationship between everyday

life, performance and the cinematic frame.

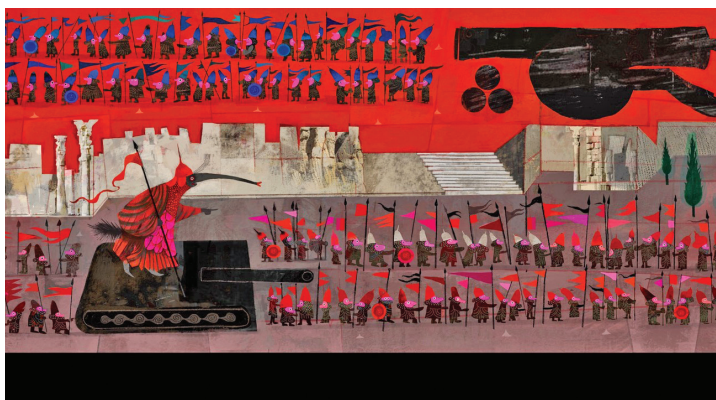
"Ten," Kiarostami's 2002 feature, marks another major stage in this evolution. The film, centered on a female protagonist, was made entirely from footage shot without the director's physical presence, embracing the freedom of digital video and allowing its nonprofessional performers to act without the constraints of a conventional film set. Lee describes it as a work that pushed innovation in both medium and form and marked a new stage in Kiarostami's cinema.

The selection concludes with "Take Me Home," a 2016 black-and-white short filmed in southern Italy. The film moves through stairways and alleys, returning to the motif that had accompanied Kiarostami since "The Bread and Alley." For Lee, it represents a journey that began with the alley of his debut and returns to it once more as the filmmaker's "beautiful farewell."

Taken together, the six films trace a recurring Kiarostami fascination with children, ordinary lives, movement, roads and alleys, while demonstrating his willingness to challenge conventional cinematic forms. Lee describes the selection as a letter from a "philosopher of the road," whose compassionate gaze toward children remained central to his work and who consistently left audiences to determine the ultimate meaning of his films.

The 11th Ulsan Ulju Mountain Film Festival will be held in South Korea from September 18 to 22.

Iranian illustrator among finalists of 2026 Golden Pinwheel Young Illustrators Competition



TEHRAN – An Iranian illustrator is among the finalists of the 2026 Golden Pinwheel Young Illustrators Competition in Shanghai, China.

Maryam Mahmoudi Moghadam is one of the 50 finalists at this year's edition of the competition, selected from among 2,100 participants, and the only artist from Iran in the list that

contains illustrators from 19 countries and territories across six continents, IRNA reported.

Her illustration is from the children book "Muri and Guri" written by Ahmad Akbarpour and published by Tooti Publishing House. The book has previously received the Bologna Award, the Best of the Best Award, and the iJungle Gold Medal.

Dedicated to recognizing emerging talent in children's book illustration, the competition provides young illustrators with opportunities for international exposure and professional recognition, while helping them expand the reach and commercial potential of their work through exhibitions, the annual yearbook, and promotional initiatives that connect illustrators with publishers, brands, and creative industries.

Throughout the summer, the Jury composed of five international experts, Emily Gravett (UK), Lee Jee Eun (South Korea), Charlotte Moundlic (France), Ruan Yunting (China), and Sun Zhaozhi (China), reviewed 2,100 entries using a shared online system and finalized their selection via digital conference.

The 50 finalists' artworks will be presented at the Golden Pinwheel Exhibition during the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair from November 13 to 15. Their illustrations will also be featured in the 2026 Golden Pinwheel Yearbook, which will be published in November and distributed among the Fair's exhibitors and partners.

From November 4, the finalists' works will also be available digitally through the Golden Pinwheel Online Gallery on the competition's official website. From that day to the opening of CCBF on November 13, viewers of the Online Gallery and visitors to CCBF will be invited to vote for their favorite works. The illustrator receiving the highest number of votes will win the Golden Pinwheel People's Choice Award.

Cartoon of Day



Israel Invasion
Cartoonist: Jason Lutes from Canada